

**Complete text of
NAHJUL-BALAGHA
[PATH TO THE PEAK OF ELOQUENCE]**

By

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع)

Compiled by al-Sharif al-Radhi

Edited by Yasin T. al-Jibouri

[Note:]

(Here, we formatted the Sermons Section only, the sections of Letters and Sayings will be set as soon as possible)

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Mutahhari's book *Sayri dar Nahjul-Balagha*

This is the first part of Martyr Mutahhari's book *Sayri dar Nahjul-Balagha*. It consists of the Introduction and the first section of the book. The Introduction, which the author presumably wrote before giving the book to the publisher, is dated January 15, 1975.

SECTION ONE

The book consists of seven sections. In the first section, he discusses the two main characteristics of *Nahjul-Balagha*, its literary excellence and multi-dimensionality, quoting various viewpoints expressed about Imam Ali's eloquence in general and *Nahjul-Balagha* in particular. In the second section, the author discusses the theological and metaphysical ideas embedded in *Nahjul-Balagha*, comparing them with parallel viewpoints with which Muslim orators and philosophers are familiar. The third section deals with *ibada* (adoration) and its various levels. The fourth section deals with the Islamic Government and Social Justice. The fifth, which deals with the controversial issue of caliphate (*khilafa*) and the superior status of Ahl al-Bayt (□), is deleted from this translation. The sixth and the seventh sections discuss *Nahjul-Balagha's* ethical teachings, in particular the Islamic Concept of *zuhd* (asceticism), the meaning of the life in this world (*dunya*), so often condemned in *Nahjul-Balagha*, and the meaning of the contrast between life in this world and that in the Hereafter, which is also a recurring theme.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps it may have happened to you, and if not, you may still visualize it: Someone lives on your street or in your neighborhood for years. You see him at least once a day and habitually nod to him as you pass by. Years pass by in this manner till, one day, you accidentally get an opportunity to sit down with him and become familiar with his ideas, views and feelings, his likes and dislikes. You are amazed at what you have come to know about him. You never imagined or guessed that he might be as you found him and never thought that he was what you later discovered him to be.

After that, every time you see him, his face, somehow, appears to you to be different. Not only this, your entire attitude towards him is altered. His personality assumes a new meaning and a new depth, and you develop respect for him in your heart, as if he were a person other than the one you thought you knew for years. You feel as if you have discovered a new world.

My experience was similar to such an analogy with regard to *Nahjul-Balagha*. Since the years of my childhood, I was familiar with the title of this book, and I could distinguish it from other books on the shelves in my father's library. Years later, during my studies, first at the theological school of Mashhad, and later at Qum, when I was finishing the last stages of the preliminary education in theology called *sutuh*, during all those days, I kept hearing the title *Nahjul-Balagha* more often than that of any other book after the Qur'an. Some of its sermons on piety I had heard so many times that I almost remembered them by heart. Nevertheless, I must admit, like all my colleagues at the theological seminary (*hawza `ilmiyya*), I was quite ignorant of the world of *Nahjul-Balagha*. We had met as strangers and passed by each other in the manner of strangers. This went on till the summer of 1325 (1946) when, in order to escape the heat of Qum, I went to Isfahan. A trivial incident brought me into contact with a person who took my hand and led me somehow into the world of *Nahjul-Balagha*.

When this happened, I realized that till then, I knew little about this book. Later, I wished that I would also find someone who would introduce me to the world of the Qur'an. Since then, the image of *Nahjul-Balagha* was transformed in my eyes. I became fond of it, and gradually my fondness grew into love. It was now a different book from the one which I had known till that moment. I felt as if I had discovered an entirely new world. Sheikh Muhammed 'Abdo, the former *mufti* of Egypt who edited and published *Nahjul-Balagha* with a brief commentary, introducing this book to the Egyptians for the first time, says that he had no knowledge of this book till he undertook its study far from home in a distant land.

He was struck with amazement and felt as if he had discovered a precious treasure trove. He, thereupon, immediately decided to publish and introduce it to the Arab public. The unfamiliarity of a Sunni scholar with *Nahjul-Balagha* is not surprising; what is surprising is that *Nahjul-Balagha* should be a stranger and alien in its own homeland, among the Shi'a (followers) of Ali (A.S), and that in the Shi'i theological schools as well, in the same way as Ali (A.S) himself has remained isolated, a stranger in his own land. Evidently, if the content and ideas of a book, or if the feelings and emotions of a person, do not harmonize with the mentality of a people, that book/person practically remains isolated like a stranger in an alien world, even though the name of such a person/book may be mentioned with great respect and admiration.

We, theology students, must admit our estrangement from *Nahjul-Balagha*. We have built a mental world of our own which is alien to the world of *Nahjul-Balagha*. As I write this Preface, I cannot abstain from recalling with sorrow the memory of that great man who introduced me for the first time to the world of *Nahjul-Balagha* and whose acquaintance I treasure as one of the

most precious experiences of my life, something which I would not exchange for anything else. Neither day nor night passes without my remembering him or mentioning him with gratitude. I daresay that he was a divine scholar ('*alim rabbani*) in the true sense of the word, although I dare not claim that I was a learner of the path of deliverance (*muta'allim 'ala sabil al-najat*). [1] I remember that whenever I met him, I was always reminded of the following poetry of [the renown Persian poet] Sa`di:

*The devout, the ascetic, and the Subi,
Are all toddlers on the path;
If there is any mature man,
It is none other than the 'alim rabbani.*

He was a *faqih* [2], a philosopher, a man of letters and a physician, all at the same time. He was well versed in *fiqh* (jurisprudence), philosophy, Arabic and Persian literature as well as in the traditional medicine. And he was considered a specialist of the first order in some of these fields. He was a masterly teacher of *al-Qanun*, the treatise of ibn Sina in medicine, which does not find a teacher these days. Many scholars of the theology school attended his lessons. Yet it was not possible for him to confine himself to one single field, and his spirit revolted against any kind of restrictions. Of his lectures, the most that interested him were those on *Nahjul-Balagha* which threw him into ecstasy. It seemed as if *Nahjul-Balagha* had opened its wings and he, having mounted them, was taken on a journey through strange worlds beyond our reach.

It was evident that he lived on *Nahjul-Balagha*; he lived it and breathed with it. His spirit was united with this book; his pulse throbbed and his heart beat in harmony with *Nahjul-Balagha*. Its sentences were always on his lips and their meanings engraved upon his heart. When he quoted its passages, tears would flow from his eyes, soaking his gray beard. During the lessons, his encounter with and involvement in *Nahjul-Balagha* would make him totally oblivious of his surroundings. It was a very educative as well as an attractive spectacle. Listening to the language of the heart from someone whose great heart is full of love and wisdom has altogether a different effect and attraction. He was a living example of the saints of the bygone days. These words of Ali (A.S) fully apply to him:

AlHad it not been for the fact that Providence had decreed the years of their life, the passionate yearning for Divine rewards and fear of chastisement would not have permitted their souls to remain in their bodies even for a moment. Their realization of the greatness of the Creator has made everything besides Him insignificant in their eyes. [3]

This refined man of letters, the speculative philosopher, the great *faqih*, the adept man of medicine and the excellent master of theology was the late Hajj Mirza Ali Aqa al-Shirazi al-Isfahani, sanctified by Allah, a man of truth and wisdom who had attained deliverance from the finite self and selfhood and had merged with the Infinite Truth.

In spite of his sublime scholarly status and eminent social status, his sense of commitment to the society and burning love for Imam al-Husain (ؑ) compelled him to deliver sermons from the *minbar*. His sermons, since they came from the heart, had a deep effect on the hearts of his listeners. Whenever he visited Qum, the scholars of the first rank would persuade him to deliver his sermons from the *minbar*. [4] His sermons were charged with a passionate purity and sincerity that rendered them profoundly effective. They were not just words to be heard but a spiritual state to be experienced.

He, however, refrained from leading congregational prayers. One year, during the holy month of Ramadan, after a great deal of persuasion, he accepted to lead the prayers at *Madrasat al-Sadr*

for that month. In spite of the fact that he did not come regularly and refused to stick to any regular schedule, unprecedented crowds of people came to attend the prayers led by him. I heard that such strength declined in the *jama`at* in the neighborhood mosques and he, too, discontinued.

As far as I know, the people of Isfahan generally knew him in person and liked him. He was also loved at the theology school of Qum. The *`ulma'* of Qum would eagerly set out to see him at the news of his arrival in the city. Like all other restrictions, he also refused to be bound by the conditions set for having admirers and followers. May Allah shower His infinite mercy upon him and lodge him in the company of His *awliya'* on the Day of Resurrection.

Despite all his merits, I do not claim that he was familiar with all the worlds which *Nahjul-Balagha* embraces or that he had set his foot in all the domains encompassed by it. He had explored only a portion of its realms, and that a portion of *Nahjul-Balagha* had been incarnated in his personality. The universe of *Nahjul-Balagha* includes numerous worlds: the world of *zuhd* (renunciation of worldly pleasures) and *taqwa* (piety), the world of *`ibada* (worship, devotion) and *'irfan* (mystic knowledge), the world of *hikma* (wisdom) and philosophy, the world of moral preaching and guidance, the world of eschatology (*malahim*) and mysteries (*mughayyabat*), the world of politics and social responsibilities, the world of heroism and bravery, etc., too many worlds to be conquered by any single individual. Hajj Mirza Ali Aqa al-Shirazi had explored only a portion of this great ocean and knew it well.

NAHJUL-BALAGHA AND PRESENT-DAYS ISLAMIC SOCIETY

The alienation from *Nahjul-Balagha* was not confined to me or to others like me. It pervaded through the Islamic society. Those who understood this book, their knowledge did not go beyond the translation of its words and the explanatory notes for its sentences. The spirit and the content of the book were hidden from the eyes of everyone. Only lately, it may be said, has the Islamic world begun to explore *Nahjul-Balagha*. In other words, *Nahjul-Balagha* has just started its conquest of the Muslim world.

What is surprising is that one part of *Nahjul-Balagha*, in Shi`ite Iran as well as in Arab countries, was first discovered either by atheists or non-Muslim theists who revealed the greatness of the book to the Muslims. Of course, the purpose of most or all of them was to utilize *Nahjul-Balagha* of Ali (A.S) for justifying and confirming their own social views. But the outcome was exactly the opposite of what they had desired. This is so because, for the first time, the Muslims have realized that the views expressed grandiloquently by others have nothing new to offer, and that they cannot surpass what is said in *Nahjul-Balagha* of Ali (A.S) or translated into action through the conduct (*sira*) of Ali (A.S) and his disciples such as Salman al-Farisi, Abu Tharr and `Ammar. The outcome was that instead of supporting the pretentious views of those who wished to exploit *Nahjul-Balagha*, Ali (A.S) and his book defeated their purpose. Nevertheless, it must be accepted that before this had taken place, most of us had little knowledge of *Nahjul-Balagha*, and it hardly went beyond appreciation of few sermons about the virtues of piety and abstinence. Nobody had yet recognized the significance of the valuable epistle of Master Ali (A.S) to Malik al-Ashtar al-Nakh`i; nobody had paid any attention to it.

As stated in the first and second chapters of this book, *Nahjul-Balagha* is a collection of sermons, precepts, epistles and aphorisms of Ali (A.S) compiled by Sayyid al-Sharif al-Radhi almost a thousand years ago. However, neither the recorded words of Master Ali (A.S) are confined to those collected by Sayyid al-Radhi, nor was he the only man to compile the sayings of Amir al-Mu`minin. Al-Mas`udi, who lived a hundred years before Sayyid al-Radhi, in the

second volume of his work *Muruj al-Thahab*, writes the following: "At present, there are over 480 sermons of Ali (A.S) in the hands of the people, whereas the total number of sermons included by Sayyid al-Radhi in his collection is only 239.

There are, at present, two kinds of work that must be accomplished with respect to *Nahjul-Balagha*, so that Ali's thought and views on various important issues expressed in *Nahjul-Balagha*, which are still relevant and are direly needed by the present-day Islamic society, may be brought to light. The second kind of work required in relation to *Nahjul-Balagha* is researching the sources (*isnad*) and the documents relevant to its contents. Fortunately, we hear that Muslim scholars in various parts of the Islamic world are devoting themselves to undertaking both of these important tasks.

This book is a collection of a series of articles which originally appeared in the journal *Maktab-e-Islam* during from 1351 - 52 (1972-73), now presented to the learned readers in the form of the present book. Formerly, I had delivered five lectures on this topic at the *Husainiyyah Irshad*. [5] Later, I took up with the idea of writing a series of articles to deal with the subject in greater detail.

From the outset, when I chose to call it "*Sayri dar Nahjul-Balagha*" (A Journey into *Nahjul-Balagha*), I was aware that my attempt would not deserve to be called more than a journey, or a short trip. This work, by no means, deserves to be called a research. I neither had the time nor the opportunity to conduct a research, nor did I consider myself fit for undertaking such a task. Moreover, a profound and comprehensive research study of the contents of *Nahjul-Balagha*, an exploration of the ideology of Ali (A.S) , and, besides, a research about documenting its contents, is the job of a group, not of a single individual. But, as it is said, that which cannot be attained in its entirety is not to be abandoned entirely [6]. And since humble attempts open the way for great tasks, I embarked upon my journey. Unfortunately, even this journey was not completed. The project that I had prepared for, and which the reader shall find mentioned in the third chapter, remained incomplete because of many preoccupations. I do not know if I will ever get the opportunity to continue my journey through *Nahjul-Balagha*. But it is my great desire to be able to do so.

LITERARY MARVEL

Nahjul-Balagha is a magnificent collection of the inimitable sermons, invocations (*du'as*), wills or pieces of advice, epistles and aphorisms of Amir al-Mu'minin, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), compiled by Sayyid al-Sharif al-Radhi (may Allah be pleased with him) about one thousand years ago. Time and years have not only failed to diminish the impressive freshness of this work but have, instead, added constantly to its value as new concepts and ideas have emerged therefrom.

Ali (A.S) was undoubtedly a man of eloquence. He delivered a large number of speeches that became famous. Likewise, numerous sayings containing philosophical wisdom were heard from him. He wrote many letters, especially during the days of his caliphate, which his admirers recorded and preserved with remarkable interest and zeal. Al-Mas'udi (d. 346/955-6 A.H.), who lived almost a hundred years before Sayyid al-Radhi (d. 406/1115 A.H.), in the second volume of his book titled *Muruj al-Thahab*, under the heading "*Fi thikr luma' min kalamih, wa akhbarih, wa zuhdih*", says the following:

That which has been preserved by people of Ali's sermons, delivered on various occasions, exceeds 480 in number. Ali (A.S) used to deliver his extempore sermons without any prior preparation. The people recorded [7] his words and practically derived benefit from them. [8]

The testimony of an informed researcher and scholar like al-Mas`udi bears out the large number of Ali's speeches that were extant during his time. Only 239 of these have been handed down to us in *Nahjul-Balagha*, whereas their number, as mentioned by al-Mas`udi, was more than 480.

Moreover, al-Mas`udi informs us about the extraordinary dedication and ardor of various groups of people in recording and preserving Ali's words.

SAYYID AL-RADHI AND *NAHJUL-BALAGHA*

Sayyid al-Sharif al-Radhi, or Sayyid al-Radhi, as he is commonly called, was an ardent admirer of Ali's speeches. He was a scholar, a poet and a man of cultivated taste. Al-Tha`alibi, his contemporary, says the following about him:

He is the most remarkable man among his contemporary and the noblest amongst the Sayyids of Iraq. Family and descent aside, he is fully adorned and endowed with literary excellence. He is the most remarkable poet among the descendants of Abu Talib, though there are many distinguished poets among them. To say that of all the Quraish no poet could ever surpass him would not be an exaggeration. [9]

It was on account of Sayyid al-Radhi's earnest love for literature in general, and his admiration of Ali's discourses in particular, that his interest was mainly literary in compiling Ali's words. Consequently, he paid a greater attention to those passages which were more prominent from the literary point of view. This was the reason why he named his anthology "*Nahjul-Balagha*" [10] which means the Apath of eloquence, giving little importance to mentioning his sources, a point rarely ignored by compilers of *hadith* (traditions). Only at times does he casually mention the name of a certain book from which a particular sermon or epistle has been cited. In a book of history or *hadith*, it is of primary importance that the sources be precisely identified; otherwise, little credence can be given to it. The value of a literary masterpiece, however, lies in its intrinsic beauty, subtlety, elegance and depth. Meanwhile, it is not possible to assert that Sayyid al-Radhi was entirely oblivious of the historical value and other dimensions of this sacred work, or that his attention was exclusively absorbed by its literary qualities.

Fortunately, after Sayyid al-Radhi, others took up the task of collecting the *isnad* of *Nahjul-Balagha*. Perhaps the most comprehensive book in this regard is *Nahj al-Sa`ada fi Mustadrak Nahjul-Balagha* by Muhammed Baqir al-Mahmudi, a distinguished Shi`a scholar of Iraq. In this valuable book, all of Ali's extant speeches, sermons, decrees, epistles, supplications and sayings have been collected. It includes *Nahjul-Balagha* and other discourses which were not incorporated by Sayyid al-Radhi or were unavailable to him. Apparently, except for some aphorisms, the original sources of all the contents of *Nahjul-Balagha* have been accounted for. [11]

It should be mentioned that Sayyid al-Radhi was not the only man to compile a collection of Ali's utterances; others, too, have compiled various books with different titles in this field. The most famous of them is *Ghurur al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim* by al-Amudi on which Muhaqqiq [verifier] Jamal al-Din al-Khunsari has written a commentary in Persian which has been recently printed by the University of Tehran through the efforts of the eminent scholar Mir Jalal al-Din, the al-Urumawi traditionist.

Ali al-Jundi, dean of the faculty of sciences at the Cairo University, in the Introduction to the book titled *Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) : Shi`ruh wa Hikam* cites a number of these collections some of which have not yet appeared in print and still exist as manuscripts. These are:

1. *Dustur Ma`alim al-Hikam* by al-Quda'i, the author of *Al-Khutat*;
2. *Nathr al-La'a li'*; this book has been translated and published by a Russian Orientalist in one bulky volume.
3. *Hikam Sayyidina Ali (A.S)* : A manuscript of this book exists in the Egyptian library, Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya.

TWO DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Since the earliest times, two distinct merits have been recognized as distinguishing Ali's discourses: Firstly, literary elegance (*fasaaha*) and eloquence (*balaagha*) ; secondly, their characteristic multi-dimensional nature. Any of these two qualities suffices for regarding Ali's words as valuable, but the combination of these two qualities (i.e. matchless eloquence, literary elegance and their multi-dimensional natureCin that they deal with diverse and occasionally incompatible spheres of life) has made it almost miraculous. For this reason, Ali's speech occupies a position in-between the speech of the human being and the Word of Allah. Indeed, it has been said of it that it is above the speech of beings and below the Word of the Creator. [12]

LITERARY BEAUTY AND ELEGANCE

This aspect of *Nahjul-Balagha* requires no introduction. Any reader of a cultivated literary taste, one capable of appreciating linguistic elegance and charm, surely realizes it. Basically, beauty is something perceived and experienced and not described or defined. *Nahjul-Balagha*, even after nearly fourteen centuries, has retained the same attractiveness, freshness, charm and beauty for the present-day audience that it provided the people of earlier days. Here, we do not intend to give an elaborate proof of this claim. Nevertheless, as a part of our discourse, we shall briefly describe the marvellous power of the words of Ali (A.S) in moving hearts and infusing them with the feeling of wonder. We shall start with Ali's own times and follow the effect of his discourses through the changes and variations in taste, outlook and mode of thought during different successive ages up to the present day.

The companions of Ali (A.S) , particularly those who had a taste for language and literary grace, greatly admired him as an orator. Abdullah ibn `Abbas is one of them. He, as al-Jahiz points out in his *Al-Bayan wal-Tbyin*, [13] was a powerful orator. He did not conceal his passion for listening to Ali (A.S) speak or the enjoyment he derived from it. Once, when Ali (A.S) was delivering his famous sermon called *al-Shaqshaqiyya*, [14] ibn `Abbas was also present. While Ali (A.S) was speaking, an ordinary man from Kufa handed him a piece of paper containing some questions, thus causing Ali (A.S) to discontinue his speech. Having read the sheet of paper, Ali (A.S) did not continue his speech in spite of Ibn `Abbas urging him to do so. Ibn Abbas later expressed his deep regret on that occasion, saying, ANever in my life was I ever so sorry for interrupting a speech as I was for interrupting this sermon. [15]

Referring to a certain letter that Ali (A.S) had written to Ibn `Abbas, the latter used to say, AExcept for the speech of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , I did not derive so much benefit from any utterance as I did from this one. [16]

Mu`awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan, Ali's most contumacious enemy, also acknowledged the Imam's extra-ordinary eloquence. When Muhqin ibn Abu Muhqin forsook Ali (A.S) and joined Mu`awiyah, in order to please Mu`awiyah, whose heart surged with ill-will and bitterness towards Ali (A.S) , he told him, AI have left the dumbest of men and come to you. The flagrancy of this kind of flattery was so obvious that Mu`awiyah himself reproached him saying: >Woe unto you! Do you really call Ali (A.S) the dumbest of men?! Quraish knew nothing about eloquence before him. It was he who taught them the art of eloquence.

Effect of Ali's Oratory

Those who heard Ali (A.S) speaking from the *minbar* were very much affected by his words. His sermons made hearts tremble and drew tears from the eyes. Even today, who can hear or read Ali's sermons without a tremor passing through his heart? Sayyid al-Radhi, after narrating Ali's famous sermon *al-Gharra'*, [17] says the following: AAs Ali (A.S) delivered his sermon, tears flowed from the eyes of the listeners and hearts quivered with emotion.

Hammam ibn Shurayh, one of Ali's companions, was a man with a heart full of love for Allah and a soul burning with spiritual fire. At one time, he requested Ali (A.S) to describe the qualities of the pious and the God-fearing. Ali (A.S) , on the one hand, did not want to turn down his request and, on the other, he was concerned that Hammam might not be able to bear what Ali (A.S) would say. He, therefore, evaded this request, giving only a perfunctory description of piety and the pious. Hammam was not only dissatisfied with this, his eagerness was heightened, so he beseeched Ali (A.S) to speak with greater elaboration. Ali (A.S) commenced his famous sermon and began to describe the characteristics of the truly pious. He enumerated about one hundred and five [18] qualities of such human beings and went on to describe more. But as Ali's words flowed in fiery sequence, Hammam was carried away to the very extremes of ecstasy. His heart throbbed terribly and his spirit was driven to the furthest limits of emotion. It advanced in eagerness like a restless bird trying to break out of its cage. Suddenly, there was a terrible cry and the audience turned around to find out that it came from no other man than Hammam himself. Approaching him, they found out that his soul had already left its earthly abode to embrace an everlasting life. When this happened, Ali's remark, which carried both eulogy and regret, was: AI feared this would happen. Strange, yet this is how effective admonition affects sensitive hearts. [19] This is an example of the kind of influence which Ali's sermons had over the minds and the hearts of his contemporaries.

VIEWS OF ANCIENT AND MODERN SCHOLARS

After the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Ali (A.S) alone has the distinction of being one whose speeches and sayings were recorded and preserved by the people with particular care.

Ibn Abul-Hadid quotes 'Abdul-Hamid al-Katib, the great master of Arabic prose [20] who lived during the early part of the second Hijri century, as saying, AI learned by heart seventy sermons of Ali (A.S) , and from that time onwards, my mind always overflowed [with inspiration].

Ali al-Jundi also relates that when Abdul-Hamid was asked about what had helped him most in attaining literary excellence, he replied, AMemorizing the discourses of the >bald one'. [21]

Throughout the Islamic history, the name of Abdul-Rahman ibn Nubatah is proverbial for oratory among the Arabs. He acknowledges that his intellectual and artistic attainments are indebted to Ali (A.S) . Ibn Abul-Hadid quotes him as saying: AI committed to memory about a hundred discourses of Ali (A.S) ; since then, this has served me as an inexhaustible treasure [of inspiration].

Al-Jahiz was a celebrated literary genius of the early third century of the Hijra, and his book *Al-Bayan wal-Tbyin* is regarded as one of the four main classics of Arabic literature [22]. Often, in his book, he expresses his great wonder and immense admiration for Ali's discourses. From his remarks, it is evident that a large number of Ali's sermons were commonly known to the people of his day. In the first volume of his *Al-Bayan wal-Tbyin*, [23] after mentioning that some

people praise precision in speech or prefer silence and disapprove profusion, al-Jahiz writes the following: AThe profusion of speech that has been regarded with disapproval is futile talk, not so what is fruitful and illuminating; otherwise, Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) and Abdullah ibn `Abbas were men of prolific speech.

In the same volume of his work, he quotes this famous sentence of Ali (A.S) : [24] AThe value of a man lies in what he has mastered. [25]

Al Jahiz then devotes half a page to expressing his admiration for this sentence and writes further:

Alf our book did not contain anything but this sentence, it would suffice it. The best speech is one the little of which makes you dispense with much of it, one in which the meanings are not concealed within words but stand out.

Then he remarks saying, AIt appears as if Allah the Almighty has enveloped it with His glory and covered it with the light of wisdom proportionate to the piety and *taqwa* of its speaker.

Al-Jahiz, in the same work, where he discusses the oratory of Sasa'ah ibn Suhan al-'Abdi [26], says the following: ANo greater proof of his excellence as an orator is required than the fact that Ali (A.S) occasionally came to him and asked him to deliver a speech.

Sayyid al-Radhi's following remarks in appreciation and praise of the speech of Imam Ali (A.S) are famous: AAmir al-Mu'minin Ali (A.S) was the reservoir and fountainhead of eloquence which derived its principles from his speeches and revealed its secrets through him. Every orator of mark tried to imitate him and every preacher learned from him the art of eloquence. Nevertheless, others lagged far behind him while he excelled them all. His speech (alone) bears the imprint of Divine Wisdom and the fragrance of the Prophet's eloquence.

Ibn Abul-Hadid is a Mu`tazilite scholar of the 7th. Hijri/13th A.D. century. He was a masterly writer and an adept poet, and, as we know, a man who adored Ali's discourses. Accordingly, he expressed his profound admiration for Ali (A.S) repeatedly throughout his book. In the Introduction to his famous commentary on *Nahjul-Balagha*, he writes the following: ATruly have Ali's discourse been regarded as inferior only to that of the Creator and superior to that of all creatures. All people have learned the arts of oration and writing from him. Suffices to say that people have not recorded even one-tenth of one-twentieth of the speech of any other companion of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , of what they recorded and preserved of Ali's discourses, although there were many eloquent persons among them.

Again, it is sufficient that a man such as al-Jahiz has so much praise for Ali (A.S) in his book *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin*.

Ibn Abul-Hadid, in the fourth volume of his commentary, says the following about Imam Ali's letter to Abdullah ibn `Abbas (written after the fall of Egypt to Mu`awiyah's forces and the martyrdom of Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr, a letter in which Ali [□] breaks the news of this disaster to Abdullah, who was then in Basra) : [27]

ALook how eloquence has given its reins into the hands of this man and is docile to his every signal! Observe the wonderful order of words coming one after the other to bow in his presence, or gushing like a spring that flows effortlessly out of the ground. Praise to Allah! An Arab youth grows up in a town like Mecca, one who has never met any sage or philosopher, yet his discourses have surpassed those of Plato and Aristotle in eloquence and profundity. He has no discourse with men of wisdom, yet he has surpassed Socrates. He has not grown up among warriors and heroes but amongst traders and merchants, for the people of Mecca were not a warrior nation but traders, yet he emerges as the greatest of all warriors of supreme courage who

have ever walked on the face of earth. Khalili ibn Ahmed [al-Farahidi, the renown linguist] was asked once: AOf Ali (A.S) , Bastam, and `Anbasah, who was the most courageous? Replied he, ABastam and `Anbasah should be compared with other men; Ali (A.S) was superior to human beings. He came from the Quraish who were not the foremost in eloquence, for the most eloquent among Arabs were Banu Jurham, although they were not famous for wisdom or wit. Yet Ali (A.S) surpassed even Sahban ibn Wa'il and Qays ibn Sa`dah in eloquence.

Modern Perspectives

During the fourteen centuries that have passed since Ali's times, the world has seen innumerable changes in language, culture and taste. One may be led to think that Ali's discourses, although they might have invoked the adoration of the ancient ones, may not suit the modern taste. But one would be surprised to learn that such is not the case at all. From the point of view of literary form and content, Ali's discourses have the rare quality of transcending the limits imposed by time and place. That Ali's discourses are universal in their appeal to men of all times we shall discuss later. Here, after quoting the views of classical writers, we shall quote the relevant views expressed by our contemporaries.

The late Sheikh Muhammed `Abdo, formerly Mufti of Egypt, is a man who came to know *Nahjul-Balagha* by accident. This preliminary acquaintance grew into a passionate love for the sacred book, leading him into writing a commentary on it. It also prompted him to undertake making it popular among the Arab youths. In the Preface to his commentary, he says the following: AAmong all those who speak the Arabic language, there is not a single man who does not believe that Ali's discourses, after the Qur'an and the *ahadith* of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , are the most noble, the most eloquent, the most profound and the most comprehensive.

Ali al-Jundi, once Dean of the Faculty of Sciences at the Cairo University, in his book titled *Ali ibn Abu Talib: Shi`ruhu wa Hikamuh*, writing about Ali's prose saying the following: AA certain musical rhythm which moves the innermost depths of the soul is characteristic of these discourses. The phrases are so rhymed that it can be called poetic prose.

He then quotes Qudamah ibn Ja`fer as saying: ASome have shown mastery in short sayings and others in long discourses, but Ali (A.S) has surpassed all others in both of these, even as he has surpassed them in other merits as well.

Taha Husain, the renown Egyptian writer, in his book *Ali wa Banuh* (Ali [□] and His Sons), recounts the story of a particular man during the Battle of al-Jamal. The man is in doubt as to which of the two sides is on the right track. He says to himself, AHow is it possible that such personalities like Talhah and al-Zubayr should be at fault? He informs Ali (A.S) of his dilemma and asks him whether it is possible that such great personalities and men of established repute should be in error. Ali (A.S) answers him in the following: AYou are seriously mistaken and have reversed the measure! Truth and falsehood are not measured by the worth of individuals. First, find out what is true and what is false, then you will see who stands by the truth and who is with falsehood.

What Ali (A.S) means is: AYou have reversed your measuring criteria. Truth and falsehood are not measured by the nobility of birth or by how base and lowly one's birth is. Instead of regarding truth and falsehood as the measure of nobility and meanness, you prejudge persons by your own pre-conceived notions of nobility and meanness. Reverse your approach. First of all, find out the truth itself, then you will be able to recognize who are truthful. Find out what

falsehood is, then you will identify those who are wrong. It is not significant which person stands by the truth and which one sides with falsehood.

After quoting Ali's above-mentioned reply, Taha Husain says the following: ANext to the Revealed Word of Allah, I have never seen a more glorious and admirably expressed view than this reply of Ali (A.S) .

Shakib Arsalan, nicknamed "*Amir al-Bayan*" (the master of clear speech), is another celebrated writer. Once in a gathering held in his honor in Egypt, a speaker mounted the rostrum and, in the course of his speech, remarked saying, AThere are two individuals in the history of Islam each one of whom can truly be called *Amir al-Bayan*: one is Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) and the other is Shakib [Arsalan]. It was then that Shakib Arsalan (1871-1946) felt very irritated. He left his seat and walked to the rostrum. Deploring the comparison which his friend had just made between Ali (A.S) and himself, he said: AWhat comparison can there be between Ali (A.S) and me?! I am not worth to be compared even to the strap of Ali's sandals! [28]

In the Introduction to the book titled *Imam Ali (A.S)* by George Jurdaq, a Lebanese Christian writer, Michael Na'imah, also a Lebanese Christian writer, says the following: AAli (A.S) was not only a champion on the battlefield but also a hero in *all* other fields: in the sincerity of heart, in the purity of conscience, in the spell-binding magic of speech, in true humanitarianism, in the fineness and warmth of faith, in the height of tranquility, in the readiness to help the oppressed and the wronged, and in total submission to the truth wherever it may be and whichever form it assumes. He was a hero in *all* these fields.

I do not intend to quote more from the writings of those who paid tributes to Ali (A.S) , for the above-quoted remarks are sufficient to prove my point. One who praises Ali (A.S) extols his own merit for:

*He who admires the Sun's brilliance extols himself:
My two eyes are bright and my vision is not clouded.*

I conclude my discourse with Ali's own statement about himself. One day, one of his companions attempted to deliver a speech. He could not; he found himself tongue-tied. Ali (A.S) said to him: AYou should know that the tongue is a part of man and under the command of his mind. If the mind lacks stimulation and refuses to budge, his tongue will not assist him. However, if the mind is ready, his speech will not give him a respite. Indeed, we (*Ahl al-Bayt*) are the masters of (the domain of) speech. In us are sunk its roots and over us are hung its branches. [29]

Al Jahiz, in the *al-Bayan wa al-tabyin*, relates from Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn Ali (A.S) that Ali (A.S) once said: AWe (*Ahl al-Bayt*) are superior to others in five qualities: eloquence, good looks, forgiveness, courage, and popularity with women! [30]

Now, we shall take up another characteristic of Ali's discourses which, in fact, is the main theme of this book, that is, multi-dimensionality.

NAHJUL-BALAGHA AMONG LITERARY CLASSICS

Most nations possess certain literary works which are regarded as Amasterpieces or Aclassics. Here we shall limit our discussion to the classics of Arabic and Persian literature whose merits are more or less perceptible by us, leaving the other classics of the ancient world, of Greece and Rome and so on, and the masterpieces of the modern age from Italy, England, France and other countries to be discussed and evaluated by those who are familiar with them and are qualified to discuss them.

Of course, an accurate judgment about the classics of Arabic and Persian is possible only for scholars who have specialized in classical literature. But it is an accepted fact that everyone of these masterpieces is great only in a particular aspect, not in each and every aspect. To be more precise, every one of the authors of these classics displayed his mastery only in a single, specific field to which his ingenuity was confined. Occasionally, if one left his special field to tread other grounds, he failed miserably.

In Persian, there are numerous masterpieces in mystical *ghazal*, general *ghazal*, *qasidah*, epic, spiritual and mystical allegorical poetry, etc. But, as we know, none of the world renown Persian poets has succeeded in creating masterpieces in all these literary forms. Hafiz is famous for mystical *ghazal*, Sa`di for anecdotes and general *ghazal*, Firdawsi for epic, Rumi for his allegorical and spiritual poetry, Khayyam for his philosophic pessimism and Nizami for something else. For this reason, it is not possible to compare them with one another or prefer one over the other. All that can be said is that each one of them is foremost in his own field. If occasionally one of these poetic geniuses left his special field to try another literary form, a visible decline in quality was readily perceptible. The same is true of Arab poets of the Islamic and pre-Islamic periods. There is an anecdote in *Nahjul-Balagha* that once Ali (A.S) was asked this question: AWho is the foremost among Arab poets? Ali (A.S) replied: ATo be sure, all poets did not tread one and the same path so that you may tell who is the leader and who is the follower. But if one were forced to choose one of them, I would say that the foremost among them was al-Malik al-Zilleel (the wantonly wandering king, nickname of >Imri`ul-Qays). [31]

In his commentary, Ibn Abul-Hadid cites with *isnad* (authentic sources/references/transmitters) an anecdote under the above-mentioned comment. Here is what he writes: ADuring the holy month of Ramadan, it was Ali`s custom to invite people to dinner. The guests were offered meat, but Ali (A.S) himself abstained from eating the food which was prepared for the guests. After the dinner, Ali (A.S) would address them and impart moral instruction to them. One night, as they sat for dinner, a discussion commenced about the poets of the past. After the dinner, Ali (A.S) , in the course of his discourse, said: >The faith is the criterion of your deeds; *taqwa* is your shield and protector; good manners are your adornment, and forbearance is the fortress of your honor. Then, turning to Abul->Aswad al-Du`ali, who was present there and then and who had moments ago taken part in the discussion about poets, said, >Let us see, who in your opinion is the most meritorious of poets?`

Abul->Aswad recited a verse of Abu Dawud al->Ayadi, remarking that in his opinion, Abu Dawud was the greatest poet. AYou are mistaken; such is not the case, Ali (A.S) told him, whereupon the guests, seeing Ali (A.S) taking an interest in their discussion, pressed him to express his opinion as to whom he considered to be the best among poets. Ali (A.S) said to them, AIt is not right to give a judgment in this matter for, to be certain, the pursuits of the poets are not confined to a single field so that we may point out the forerunner among them. Yet, if one were forced to choose one of them, then it may be said that the best of them is one who composes not according to the period`s inclinations, nor out of fear and inhibition, [but he who gives free rein to his imagination and poetic inspiration]. Asked as to whom this description would fit, Ali (A.S) replied, AAl-Malik al-Dilleel, Imri`ul-Qays.

It is said that when someone inquired about who the most eminent poet of the *Jahiliyyah* (the pre-Islamic period) was, Yunus ibn Habib al-Dhabbi (d. 798 A.D.), the famous grammarian, answered as follows: AThe greatest of poets is Imri`ul-Qays when he mounts his steed [i.e. when he composes epic poetry motivated by the feelings of courage and bravery and the passions

roused on the battlefield], al-Nabighah al-Thubyani [the genius belonging to Banu Thubyan] when he flees in fear [i.e. when he expresses himself on the psychological effects of danger and fright], al-Zuhayr ibn Abu Sulma when he takes delight [in something], and al-A`sha [her name meaning "one who cannot see very well"; male version is : "a'sha"], when he is in a merry and joyful mood. Yunus meant to say that every one of these poets had a special talent in his own field, one in which his works are considered as masterpieces. Each of them was foremost in his own specialty beyond which his talent and genius did not extend.

`ALI'S VERSATILITY

One of the outstanding characteristics of Imam Ali's sayings, which have come down to us in the form of *Nahjul-Balagha*, is that such sayings are not confined to any particular field alone. Ali (A.S) , in his own words, has not trodden one single path only but has covered diverse grounds which occasionally are quite antithetical. *Nahjul-Balagha* is a masterpiece but not of the kind which excels in one single field such as the epic, the *ghazal*, the sermon, the eulogy, the satire or the love poetry. Rather, it covers multifarious fields as shall be elaborated on. In fact, works which are masterpieces in a particular field do, indeed, exist; nevertheless, their number is not great, and they are countable. The number of works which cover numerous subjects but are not masterpieces is quite large. But the characteristic that a work be simultaneously a masterpiece without restricting itself to any one particular subject is an exclusive merit of *Nahjul-Balagha*. With the exception of the Holy Qur'an, which is altogether a different subject to be dealt with independently, what masterpiece is comparable to *Nahjul-Balagha's* versatility?

Speech is the spirit's envoy, and the words of a man relate to the sphere in which his spirit dwells. Naturally, a speech which pertains to multiple spheres is characteristic of a spirit which is too creative to be confined to a single sphere. Since the spirit of Ali (A.S) is not limited to a particular domain but encompasses various spheres and he, in the terminology of Islamic mystics, is *al-Insan al-Kamil* (a perfect man), *al-kawn al-jami`* (the complete microcosm) and *jami' kullal-hadarat* [32] (the possessor of all higher virtues), so his speech is not limited to any one particular sphere. Accordingly, as we should say, in terms current nowadays, that Ali's merit lies in the multi-dimensional nature of his speech, that it is different from one-dimensional works. The all-embracing nature of Ali's spirit and his speech is not a recent discovery. It is a feature which has invoked a sense of wonder since at least one thousand years. It was this quality that had attracted the attention of Sayyid al-Radhi a thousand years ago, and he fell in love with Ali's speeches and writings. He writes saying, AOf Ali's wonderful qualities, which exclusively belong to him, none sharing them with him, is that when one reflects upon his discourses regarding abstinence (*zuhd*), and his exhortations concerning spiritual awareness, for a while one totally forgets that the speaker of these words was a person of the highest social and political caliber, one who ruled over vast regions during his time, and his word was an order for all. Even for a moment, the thought does not enter the reader's mind that the speaker of these words might have been inclined to anything except piety and seclusion, anything except devotion and worship, having selected a quiet corner of his house or a cave in some mountain valley where he heard no voice except his own and knew nobody except himself, being totally oblivious of the world and its hustle and bustle. It is unbelievable that those sublime discourses on asceticism, detachment and abstinence and those spiritual exhortations came from somebody who pierced the enemy's ranks and went fighting to the very heart of their forces, with a sword in his hand, poised to sever the enemy heads, and who threw many a mighty warrior down from his steed,

causing him to roll into blood and dust. Blood drips from the edge of his sword and yet he is the most pious of saints and the most devoted of sages.

Sayyid al-Radhi adds saying, "Frequently, I discuss this matter with friends, and it equally invokes their sense of wonder.

Sheikh Muhammed `Abdo, too, was profoundly moved by this aspect of *Nahjul-Balagha*, and it made him marvel at its swiftly changing scenes which take the reader on a journey through different worlds. He makes a note of it in the Introduction to his commentary of *Nahjul-Balagha*.

Aside from his speech, in general, Ali (A.S) had a spirit that was universal, all-embracing, and multi-dimensional, and he has always been eulogized for this quality. He is a just ruler, a devotee who remains awake all night long worshipping Allah; he weeps in the niche of prayer (*mihrab*) and smiles on the battlefield. He is a tough warrior and a soft-hearted and kind guardian. He is a philosopher of profound insight and an able general. He is a teacher, a preacher, a judge, a jurist, a peasant and a writer. He is a perfect man whose great soul envelops all spheres of the human spirit.

Safi al-Din al-Hilli (1277-1349 A.D.) says the following about him:

Opposites have come together in thy attributes,

And for that thou has no rivals.

A devout, a ruler, a man of forbearance, and a courageous one,

A lethal warrior, an ascetic, a pauper yet generous to others,

Traits which never gathered in one man and the like of which none ever possessed;

A gentleness and charm to abash the morning breeze,

A valor and might to melt sturdy rocks;

Poetry cannot describe the glory of thy soul,

Your multi-faceted personality is above the comprehension of all critics.

Apart from what has been said, an interesting point is that in spite of the fact that Ali's discourses are about spiritual and moral issues, in them his literary charm and eloquence have attained their peak. Ali (A.S) has not dealt with popular poetic themes such as love, wine and vainglory, which are fertile subjects for literary expression in prose and poetry. Moreover, he did not aim at displaying his skills in the art of oratory. Speech for him was a means and not an end in itself. Neither did he intend to create an object of art nor did he wish to be known as an author of a literary masterpiece. Above all, his words have a universality which transcends the limits of time and place. His addressee is the human being within every person; accordingly, his message does not know any frontier although, generally, time and place impose limits on the outlook of a speaker and confine his personality.

The main aspect of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an is that its subjects and themes are altogether at variance with those current during the time of its revelation. It marks the beginning of a new era in literature and deals with another world and a different sphere. The beauty and charm of its style and its literary excellence are truly miraculous. In these aspects, too, as is the case with its other features, *Nahjul-Balagha* comes closer to the Qur'an. In truth, it is the offspring of the Holy Qur'an.

Themes of *Nahjul-Balagha*

The variety of topics and themes discussed in *Nahjul-Balagha* unfolds a wide spectrum of problems that give colour and hue to these heavenly discourses. The author of this dissertation has no pretension to possess the ability to do the book full justice and analyze it in depth. I just

intend to give a brief account of the variety of its themes, and it is my firm belief that others will come in the future who shall be able to do justice to this masterpiece of human power of speech.

A Glance at the Varied Problems Covered by *Nahjul-Balagha*

The various topics covered in *Nahjul-Balagha*, everyone of which is worthy of discussion, may be outlined as follows:

Theological and metaphysical issues;

Mystic path and worship;

Government and social justice;

Ahl al-Bayt (□) and the issue of caliphate;

Wisdom and admonition;

The world and worldliness;

Heroism and bravery

Prophecies, predictions, and eschatology;

Prayers and invocations;

Critiques of the contemporary society;

Social philosophy;

Islam and the Qur'an;

Morality and self-discipline;

Personalities... and a host of other topics.

Obviously, as the titles of the various chapters of the present book indicate, the writer of this Introduction does not make any claim that the topics cited above are all that can be found in *Nahjul-Balagha*. Neither does he claim that he has done an exhaustive study of these topics, nor has he any pretension to being considered competent for undertaking such a task. That which is offered in these chapters is no more than a glimpse. Perhaps, in the future, with Divine assistance, after deriving a greater benefit from this inexhaustible treasure, the writer may be able to undertake a more comprehensive study. Or perhaps others may be blessed with the opportunity to accomplish such an undertaking. Allah is wise and, indeed, His assistance and help is the best.

SECTION TWO

THEOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS OF THE NAHJ AL-BALAGHAH

One of the basic issues dealt with in *Nahjul-Balagha* relates to theological and metaphysical problems. All in all, there are about forty places where the sermons, letters, and aphorisms discuss these issues. Some of these pertain to the aphorisms, but more often the discussion is longer, covering sometimes several pages.

The passages on *Tawhid* (Divine Unity) in *Nahjul-Balagha* can perhaps be considered to be the most wonderful discussions of the book. Without any exaggeration, when we take into account the conditions in which they were delivered, they can almost be said to be miraculous.

The discussions of this theme in *Nahjul-Balagha* are of a varied nature. Some of them constitute studies of the scheme of creation bearing witness to Divine creativity and wisdom. Here, Ali (A.S) speaks about the whole system of the heavens and the earth, or occasionally discusses the wonderful features of some specific creature like the bat, the peacock or the ant, and the role of the Divine design and purpose in their creation. To give an example of this kind of discussion, we may quote a passage regarding the ant:

Have you observed the tiny creatures that He has created? How He has made them strong and perfected their constitution and shaped their organs of hearing and sight, and how He has styled

their bones and skin? Observe the ant with its tiny body and delicate form. It is so small that its features can hardly be discerned by the eye and so insignificant that it does not enter our thoughts. See how it roams about upon the ground and arduously collects its livelihood. It carries the grain to its hole and deposits it in its store. It collects during the summer for the winter and, when winter arrives, it foresees the time to reemerge. Its livelihood is guaranteed and designed according to its built. The Benefactor and the Provider does not forget or forsake it. He does not deprive it, even though it should be in hard and dry stones and rocks. You will be amazed at the delicate intricacy of its wonderful constitution if you investigate the structure of its alimentary canals, its belly, and its eyes and ears which are in its head. (*Sermon 185*)

However, most of the discussions about *Tawhid* in *Nahjul-Balagha* are rational and philosophical. The rare sublimity of *Nahjul-Balagha* becomes manifest in these discourses. In these philosophical and rational discourses of *Nahjul-Balagha* on *Tawhid*, what constitutes the focus of all arguments is the infinite, absolute and self-sufficing nature of the Divine Essence. In these passages, Ali (A.S) attains the heights of eloquence, and none, neither before him nor after him, has come close to him in this aspect.

Another issue dealt with is that of the absolute simplicity (*al-basatat al-mutlaqa*) of the Divine Essence and negation of every kind of multiplicity, divisibility in the Godhead and refutation of separability of the Divine Attributes from the Divine Essence. This theme occurs repeatedly in *Nahjul-Balagha*.

Also discussed is a series of other profound problems which had never been touched before him. They are: Allah being the First while also being the Last; His being simultaneously the Manifest and the Hidden; His precedence over time and number, i.e. His pre-eternity is not temporal and His Unity is not numerical; His Supremacy, Authority, and Self-sufficiency; His Creativeness; that attendance to one affair does not prevent Him from attending to other affairs; the identity of Divine Word and Act, the limited capacity of human reason to comprehend His reality, that gnosis (*ma'rifa*) is a kind of manifestation (*tajalli*) of Him upon the intellects, which is different from mental conception or cognition, the negation of such categories and qualities such as corporeality, motion, rest, change, place, time, similitude, antithesis, partnership, possession of organs or parts, limitation and number, and a series of other issues which we shall, by the will of Allah, mention later and give examples of every one of them. Even a thinker who is well-versed in the beliefs and views of ancient and modern philosophers would be struck with wonder upon seeing the wide range and scope of the problems propounded in this wonderful book.

An elaborate discussion of the issues raised and dealt with in *Nahjul-Balagha* would itself require a voluminous book and cannot be covered in one or two articles. Unavoidably, we shall be brief; but before we commence our brief survey, we are compelled to mention certain points as an introduction to our discussion.

BITTER REALITY

We, Shi`a Muslims, must admit that we have been unjust with regard to our duty to the man whom we, more than others, take pride in following or, at the very least, we must admit falling short in our duty towards him. In substance, any kind of failure in fulfilling our responsibility is an act of injustice on our own part. We did not want to realize the significance of Ali (A.S) , or we had been unable to do so. All our energy and labor have been devoted to proclaiming the Prophet's statements about Ali (A.S) and to denouncing those who ignored them, but we failed to pay attention to the intellectual side of Imam Ali's personality.

Sa`di, the poet, says the following:
*The reality of musk in its scent lies,
Not in the perfumer's advice.*

Applying Sa`di's words to our attitude regarding Imam Ali's personality, we did not realize that this musk, recommended by the Divine Perfumer, itself carried its own pleasant aroma and, before everything else, we should have tried to know its scent and become familiar with it. That is, we should have familiarized ourselves and others with its inner fragrance. The counsel of the Divine Perfumer was meant to acquaint the people with its pleasant redolence, not for the purpose that they may believe that it is musk and then devote all their energies to convince others by arguing with them, without bothering to acquaint themselves with its real fragrance.

Had *Nahjul-Balagha* belonged to some other people, would they have treated it the way we treated this great book? The country of Iran is the center of Shi`ism and the language of its people is Persian. You have only to examine the translations and commentaries on *Nahjul-Balagha* to make a judgment about what our accomplishments amounts to.

To take a more general case, the Shi`i sources of *hadith* (tradition) and the texts of *du`a`* (supplications) are incomparable with the texts of non-Shi`i works in the same field. This is also true of Divine teachings and other subjects. The problems and issues discussed in works like al-Kulayni's *Al-Kafi*, or Sheikh al-Saduq's *Al-Tawhid*, or *al-Ihtijaj* of al-Tibrisi are nowhere to be found among the works of non-Shi`is. It can be said that if occasionally similar issues are dealt with in non-Shi`i books, the material is unmistakably spurious, for it is not only opposed to the prophetic teachings but also contradicts the Qur'anic principles. There is a strong smell of anthropomorphism which hangs around them. Recently, Hashim Ma'ruf al-Hasani, in his book *Dirasat fi Al-Kafi lil-Kulayni wal-Sahih li Bukhari*, which is an original but a brief comparative study of the *Sahih* of *al-Bukhari* and of al-Kulayni's *Al-Kafi*, has dealt with the traditions related to the problems of theology.

Shi`i Rationalism

The discussion of theological problems and their analysis by the Shi`i Imams, of which *Nahjul-Balagha* is the earliest example, was the main cause of the emergence of rationalistic approach and philosophic outlook in the Shi`i intellectual world since Islam's earliest days. This cannot be labelled as an innovation (*bid`a*) in Islam; rather, its basis was laid down by the Qur'an itself. It was in accordance with the approach of the Qur'an and for the purpose of its interpretation that the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* (□) expounded such issues. If anybody can be reproached in this matter, it is those who did not adopt this method and abandoned the means to follow it.

History shows that from the earliest Islamic era, the Shi`a, more than any other sect, were interested in these problems. Among Ahl al-Sunna, the Mu`tazilites, who were nearer to the Shi`a, did possess similar inclinations. But, as we know, the general view predominant among Ahl al-Sunna did not welcome it and, as a result, the Mu`tazilite sect became extinct about the end of the 3rd. Hijri/9th A.D. century.

Ahmed Amin, the Egyptian writer, confirms this view in the first volume of his *Zuhur al-Islam*. Having discussed the philosophic movement in Egypt during the reign of the Fatimids, who were followers of a Shi`a sect, he writes the following: APhilosophy is more akin to Shi`ism than it is to Sunni Islam, and we witness the truth of this in the era of the Fatimid rule [in Egypt] and in that of the Buwayhids [in Iran]. Even during the later centuries Persia, a Shi`ite country, has paid more attention to philosophy than any other Islamic country. In our own times, Sayyid

Jamal al-Din al-Asadabadi, who had Shi`ite inclinations and had studied philosophy in Iran, created a philosophic movement in Egypt when he arrived here.

Curiously, Ahmed Amin, in his explanation of why the Shi`a showed more inclination towards philosophy, commits an error, willfully or otherwise. According to him, AThe reason for greater inclination on the part of the Shi`a towards rational and philosophical discussions is to be found in their esotericism and their flair for *ta`wil*. [1] They were compelled to seek the assistance of philosophy for defence of their esotericism. That is why the Fatimid Egypt and Buwayhid Iran, and Iran during the Safawid and Qajar periods, were more disposed towards philosophy than the rest of the Islamic world.

This is sheer nonsense on the part of Ahmed Amin. It was the Imams of the Shi`a School of Yought who, for the first time, introduced the philosophical approach, and it was they who introduced the most profound and intricate concepts with regard to theological problems in their arguments, polemics, sermons, *ahadith* and prayers, of which *Nahjul-Balagha* is one example. Even with regard to the prophetic traditions, the Shi`a sources are far more sublime and profound than the traditions contained in the non-Shi`i sources. This characteristic is not confined to philosophy alone but is also true of *kalam*, *fiqh*, and *usul al-fiqh*, in which the Shi`a enjoy a position of distinction. All this owes its origin to one and the same source: emphasis on rationalism.

Some others have tried to trace the origin of this difference [between the Shi`i and the Sunni mindsets] in the concept of Athe Shi`ite nation. According to them, since the Persians are Shi`ite and the Shi`a are Persian and, since the Persians are a people with a philosophical temperament, fond of the intricacies of speculation and pure thought, with the help of their rich and strong philosophical tradition, they succeeded in raising the level of Shi`a thought, giving it an Islamic hue.

Bertrand Russell, in *A History of Western Philosophy*, expresses a similar view based on the above-mentioned argument. With his habitual or inherent impoliteness, he puts forth this opinion. However, Russell lacks the capacity of vindicating his claim, since he was totally unfamiliar with Islamic philosophy and basically knew nothing about it. He was not qualified to express any informed opinion about the origins of the Shi`a thought and its sources.

Our rejoinder to the upholders of this view is: First of all, not all Shi`as were/are Persian, nor all Persians were Shi`a. Were not Muhammed ibn Ya`qub al-Kulayni, Muhammed ibn Ali ibn al-Husain ibn Babawayh al-Qummi and Muhammed ibn Abu Talib al-Mazandarani Persian?! Were not Muhammed ibn Isma`il al-Bukhari, Abu Dawud al-Sijistani and Muslim ibn Hajjaj al-Nishaburi Persian, too?! Was not Sayyid al-Radhi, the compiler of *Nahjul-Balagha*, of a Persian origin?! Were not the Fatimids of Egypt of Persian descent?

Why was philosophical thought revived in Egypt with the inception of the Fatimid rule, and why did it decline with their fall? And why was it revived later, after a long interval, only through the influence of an Iranian Shi`a?

The truth is that the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* (□) were the only real dynamic force behind this trend of thinking and this kind of approach. All scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna* admit that among the Prophet's Companions only Ali (A.S) was a man of philosophic wisdom, the man who had an altogether distinct rational approach. Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna) is quoted as having thus remarked: AAli's position among the companions of Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household), was that of the >rational' in the midst of the >corporeal'.

Obviously, the intellectual approach of the followers of an Imam such as Ali (A.S) should be expected to be radically different from that of those who followed others. Moreover, Ahmed Amin and others have been susceptible to another similar misunderstanding. They express doubts with regard to the authenticity of ascription of such philosophic statements [as exist in *Nahjul-Balagha*] to Ali (A.S) . They say that the Arabs were not familiar with such issues, arguments and elaborate analyses like the ones found in *Nahjul-Balagha* prior to becoming acquainted with the Greek philosophy, and evidently, according to them, these discourses should have been composed by some later scholars familiar with the Greek philosophy then were attributed to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S).

We also accept that the Arabs were not familiar with such ideas and notions. Not only the Arabs, the non-Arabs, too, were not acquainted with them, nor were those notions familiar to the Greeks and Greek philosophy. Ahmed Amin first brings down Ali (A.S) to the level of such Arabs like Abu Jahl and Abu Sufyan, then he postulates his minor and major premises, building his conclusion on their premises: AThe Arabs were unfamiliar with philosophical notions; Ali (A.S) was an Arab: therefore Ali (A.S) was also unfamiliar with such philosophical notions. One should ask him whether the Arabs of the Jahiliyya were familiar with the ideas and the concepts propounded in the Holy Qur'an. Had not Ali (A.S) been brought up and trained by the Messenger of Allah himself? Did not the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) introduce Ali (A.S) to his companions as the most learned and knowledgeable among them? Why should we deny the high spiritual status of someone who enriched his inner self by drawing on the bounteous wealth of Islam in order to protect the prestige of some of the Prophet's companions who could never rise above the ordinary level?

Ahmed Amin says that prior to being acquainted with the Greek philosophy, the people of Arabia were not familiar with the ideas and concepts found in *Nahjul-Balagha*. The answer to this is that the Arabs did not become acquainted with the ideas and notions propounded in *Nahjul-Balagha* even after centuries of familiarity with the Greek philosophy. Not only the Arabs, even the non-Arab Muslims, were not acquainted with these ideas for the simple reason that there is no trace of them whatsoever in the Greek philosophy itself! These ideas are exclusively specific to the Islamic philosophy. Muslim philosophers gradually picked these ideas up from the basic Islamic sources, incorporating them in their thought under the guidance of revelation.

Philosophical Notions Concerning Metaphysics

As stated above, *Nahjul-Balagha* adopts two kinds of approach to the problems of theology. The first kind of approach calls attention to the sensible world and its phenomena as a mirror reflecting the Knowledge and Perfection of the Creator. The second approach involves purely rationalistic and philosophical reflections. The latter approach accounts for the greater part of the theological discussions of *Nahjul-Balagha*. Moreover, it is the only approach adopted with regard to the discussion of the Divine Essence and Attributes.

As we know, the value of such discussions and the legitimacy of such reflections have always been questioned by those who consider them improper from the viewpoint of reason or canon, or both. In our own times, a certain group claims that this kind of analysis and inference does not agree with the spirit of Islam and that the Muslims were initiated into such kind of speculations under the influence of the Greek philosophy and not as a result of any inspiration or guidance effused from the Qur'an. They say that had the Muslims adhered closely to the Qur'anic teachings, they would not have entangled themselves with these tortuous webs. For the same

reason, they view with suspicion the authenticity of such speculations found in *Nahjul-Balagha* and their attribution to Imam Ali (A.S) .

During the second and third centuries, a group of people opposed such kind of discussions, questioning their legitimacy and raising doctrinal objections thereto. They insisted that it is obligatory on Muslims to be satisfied with the literal and commonly understood meaning of the words of the Qur'an. They regarded every kind of inquiry into the meaning of the Qur'an as an innovation (*bid'ah*) in religion. For instance, if someone inquired about the meaning of the Qur'anic verse *The all-Compassionate seated Himself upon the Throne* (Qur'an, 20:5), he was confronted by the displeasure of those who regarded such questions as not only improper but distasteful. He would be told: *The exact meaning is unknown and questioning is heresy.* [2]

During the 3rd. A.H./9th. A.D. century, this group, which later came to be called Ash`arite, overwhelmed the Mu`tazilites who considered such speculations to be within the bounds of legitimacy. This victory of the Asharites delivered a severe blow to the intellectual life of Islam. The Akhbaris, who followed a Shi`i school which flourished during the period between the 10th. A.H./16th. A.D. and the 14th. A.H./20th. A.D. centuries, particularly during the 10th. A.H./16th. A.D. and 11th. A.H./17th. A.D. centuries, followed the Asha`ris in their ideologies and convictions. They raised doctrinal objections against ratiocination. Now we shall proceed to discuss the objections raised from a rationalist point of view.

As a result of the triumph of the empirical and experimental method over the deductive approach in Europe, especially in the physical sciences, the view began to prevail that rational speculation was unreliable not only in the physical sciences but also in all scientific disciplines and that the only reliable method was that of empirical philosophy. The result was that the problems of theology were viewed with doubt and suspicion because they lay beyond the domain of experimental and empirical observation.

The past victories of the Ash`arites, on one hand, and the amazing triumphs of the empirical method, which followed one another in quick succession, on the other hand, drove some non-Shi`ite Muslim writers to the extremes of excitement. The outcome was the eclectic opinion that from the religious (*Shar`i*) as well as the rational point of view, the use of the deductive method even in problems of theology should be discarded. From the *Shar`i* viewpoint, they made the claim that according to the outlook of the Qur'an, the only valid theological approach was the empirical and experimental method and the study of the natural phenomena and the system of creation; the rest, they declared, is no more than an exercise in futility. They pointed out that in scores of its verses, the Qur'an in most unequivocal terms has invited mankind to study the phenomena of nature; it considers the keys to the secrets of the origin and the workings of the universe to be concealed within nature itself. In this way, they echoed, in their writings and speeches, the ideas expressed by the European proponents of empirical philosophy.

In Farid al-Wajdi's book *Ala atlal al-madhhab al-maddi* (On the Ruins of Materialism), and in Sayyid Abul-Hasan al-Nadawi's *Matha khasira al-`alam bi-inhitat al-Muslimin* (AWhat the World Lost Through the Decline of Muslims), as well as the writers belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimun*) such as Sayyid Qutb and others, have all supported this view, vehemently attacking the opposite viewpoint.

Al-Nadawi, in his above-mentioned book, says the following: *The prophets informed men about the existence of Allah and His Attributes and acquainted them with the origin and the beginning of life on the planet as well as the ultimate destiny of man, putting this free information at their disposal. They relieved mankind of the need to understand and discuss these*

problems the basics of which lie beyond our reach (because these problems belong to the sphere of the supra-sensible, and our knowledge and experience is limited to the physical and the sensible, the tangible). But men did not value this blessing; therefore, they entangled themselves in debates and speculations about these problems, striding into the dark regions of the hidden and the unknowable. [3]

The same author, in another chapter of the same book, where he discusses the causes of the decline of Muslims, under the heading *AThe Neglect of Useful Sciences*, criticizes the Muslim 'ulema' in these words: *AThe Muslim scholars and thinkers did not give as much importance to practical and experimental sciences as they gave to debating about metaphysics, which they had learned from the Greek philosophy. The Greek metaphysics and theology is nothing more than the Greeks' polytheistic mythology presented in a philosophical outfit and is no more than a series of meaningless conjectures expressed in an absurd jargon. Allah has exempted the Muslims from such a debate, speculation and analysis regarding these matters which are not much different from the analytic pursuits of the Alchemists. But out of ingratitude for this great blessing, the Muslims wasted their energy and genius in problems of this sort.* [4]

Without any doubt, the views of the likes of Farid al-Wajdi and of al-Nadawi should be regarded as a sort of return to Ash`arism, though dressed in contemporary style akin to the language of empirical philosophy.

Here, we cannot enter into a philosophical discussion about the value of philosophic reflection. In the chapters titled *AThe Value of Information* and *AThe Origin of Multiplicity in Perception* in the book titled *The Principles and Method of Realism*, we have discussed the matter in sufficient details. Here, we shall confine ourselves to the Qur'anic aspect of this problem and investigate whether the Holy Qur'an considers the study of nature to be the only valid method of inquiry into theological problems, or whether it allows for another approach besides the one mentioned above.

However, it is essential to point out that the disagreement between the Ash`arites and the non-Ash`arites is not about the legitimacy of the use of the Book and the Sunna as sources in the problems of theology; rather, the disagreement concerns the manner of their utilization. According to the Ash`arites, their application should not exceed mute acceptance. According to them, we assign the various Attributes like Unity, Omniscience, Omnipotence and the rest to Allah because they have been ascribed to Him by the *Shari`a* (Islamic legislative code) ; otherwise, we would not know whether or not Allah is as such because the basic principles and essentials dealing with Allah are beyond our reach. Therefore, according to them, we are forced to accept Allah as such, but we cannot know or understand that Allah is as such. The role of the religious texts is that they prescribe for us the way we ought to think and believe so that we may follow it in our ideology and convictions.

According to the contestants of this view, these issues, as is the case with any other rational concept or idea, are amenable to human understanding, that is, there exist certain principles and essentials which, if properly known, enable man to understand them. The role of the religious texts lies in their capacity to inspire, motivate, and guide the human intellect by putting understandable principles and essentials at its disposal. Basically, servitude in intellectual matters is absurd. It is like ordering one to think in a certain fashion, and asking him to derive certain prescribed conclusions. It is like ordering someone to see a thing in a certain fashion then asking him the following: *AHow do you see it? Is it big or small? Is it black or white?!* Servitude

in thinking does not mean anything other than absence of thinking and acceptance without reflection.

In short, the question is not whether it is possible for man to go beyond the teachings of the Revelation. Allah be our refuge, there is nothing that lies beyond them because that which has reached us through Revelation and through the Household of Revelation (i.e. *Ahl al-Bayt* [□]) is the utmost limit of perfection concerning the knowledge of the Divine. Here, our debate centers upon the capacity of the human thought and reason, whether or not it can, when supplied with the basic principles and essentials, undertake an intellectual journey through the world of theological problems [5].

As to the invitation of the Qur'an to study and inquire about the phenomena of creation and its emphasis on nature as a means for attaining the knowledge of Allah and the super-natural, it should be said that it is, indubitably, a basic principle of the Qur'anic teachings. It is with extraordinary insistence that the Holy Qur'an asks the human beings to inquire into the nature of the earth, the sky, the plants and animals, and man himself, urging them to study them scientifically. It is also indubitable that the Muslims did not take enough worthy strides in this direction. Perhaps the real reason behind it was the Greek philosophy, which was deductive and based on pure speculation. They used this approach even in the field of the physical sciences. Nevertheless, as the history of science bears testimony, the Muslim scientists did not altogether abandon the experimental method in their studies as did the Greeks. The Muslims, not the Europeans, as is commonly thought, were the pioneers of the experimental method. The Europeans followed on the tracks first laid by the Muslims.

The Value of Studying the Natural Phenomena

Aside from all of this, the question worthy of consideration is whether the Qur'an, besides its emphasis on the study of the creating of earth, water and air, allows other ways of approaching the issue, or if it closes all other doors. The question is whether the Qur'an, even as it invites people to study the signs of Allah (*ayat*), also welcomes other modes of intellectual endeavor. Basically, what is the value of inquiry into the works of creation (an inquiry which the Qur'an urges us, explicitly or implicitly, to undertake), from the viewpoint of initiating us into the awareness and consciousness which this heavenly Book aims to cultivate?

The truth is that the measure of assistance provided by the study of the works of the creation in understanding the problems explicitly pointed out by the Holy Qur'an is quite restricted. The Holy Qur'an has propounded certain problems of theology which are by no means understandable through the study of the created world or nature. The value of study of the system of creation is limited only to the extent to which it proves that the world is governed by a Power which knows, designs, plans, and administers it. The world is a mirror, open to empirical experiment, only to the extent that it points towards something that lies beyond nature and discloses the existence of a Mighty Hand which runs nature's cosmic wheels.

But the Holy Qur'an is not content that man should only know that a Mighty, Knowing, and Wise Power administers this universe. This may perhaps be true of other heavenly scriptures, but is by no means true of the Holy Qur'an, which is the final and ultimate heavenly message and has a great deal to say about Allah and the reality transcending nature.

Purely Rationalistic Problems

The most basic problem to which the mere study of the world of creation fails to provide an answer is the necessity of existence and uncreated nature of the Power which transcends natural phenomena. The world is a mirror in the sense that it indicates the existence of a Mighty Hand

and a Wise Power, but it does not tell us anything more about Its nature. It does not tell us whether that Power is subservient to something else or not, or if it is self-subsisting. And if it is subject to something else, what is that? The objective of the Holy Qur'an is not only that we should know that a Mighty Hand administers the world, but that we may know that that Administrator is Allah and that Allah is the indefinable: There is nothing like Him, the One whose Essence encompasses all perfection or, in other words, that Allah signifies Absolute Perfection and is the referent of His is the loftiest likeness. How can the study of nature give us an understanding of such notions and concepts?

The second problem is that of the Unity of Allah (*Tawhid*). The Holy Qur'an has stated this issue in a logical form and used a syllogistic argument to explain it. The method of argument which it has employed in this regard is called exclusive syllogism or *reductio ad impossibile* (*burhan al-tamannu*). Occasionally, it eliminates the possibility of multiplicity in the efficient cause as in the following verse: [6] *If there had been (multiple) gods in them (i.e. in the earth and the heavens) other than Allah, they would surely go to ruin* (21:22).

At other times, it argues by eliminating the possibility of multiplicity in the final cause: *Allah has not taken to Himself any son, nor is there any god besides Him, for then each god would have taken off that he created and some of them would have risen up over others* (23:91).

The Holy Qur'an never suggests that the study of the system of creation can lead us to the knowledge of the Unity of the Godhead so as to imply that the essential knowledge of the transcendental Creator be considered attainable from that source. Moreover, such a suggestion would not have been correct.

The Holy Qur'an alludes to various problems as indicated by the following examples:

Nothing is like Him (42:11).

And Allah's is the loftiest likeness. (16:60)

To Him belong the most Beautiful Names. (20:8)

And His is the loftiest likeness in the heavens and the earth. (30:27)

He is Allah, there is no god but He. He is the King, the All-holy, the All-peaceable, the All-faithful, the All-preserver, the Almighty, the All-compeller, the All-sublime. (59:23)

And to Allah belong the East and the West; whither so ever you turn, there is the Face of Allah. (2:115)

And He is Allah in the heavens and the earth; He knows your secrets, and what you publish. (6:3)

He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward; He has knowledge of everything. (57:3)

He is the Living, the Everlasting. (2:255)

Allah, is the Everlasting, [Who] has not begotten, and has not been begotten and equal to Him is not any one. (112:2-4)

Why does the Holy Qur'an raise such issues? Is it for the sake of propounding mysterious matters incomprehensible to man who, according to al-Nadawi, lacks the knowledge of its essential principles, and then asking him to accept them without comprehending their meaning? Or does the Holy Qur'an actually want him to know Allah through the attributes and descriptions that have come in it? And, if this is true, what reliable approach does it recommend? How is it possible to acquire this knowledge through the study of the natural phenomena? The study of the creation teaches us that Allah has knowledge of all things; that is, all things that He has made

were created knowingly and wisely. But the Holy Qur'an expects us not only to know this but also stresses that:

Indeed Allah has the knowledge of everything. (2:231)

And not so much as the weight of an atom in earth or heaven escapes from thy Master, neither is aught smaller than that, or greater, but in a Manifest Book. (10:61)

Say: If the sea were ink for the Words of my Master, the sea would be spent before the Words of my Master are spent, though We brought replenishment the like of it. A (18:109)

This means that Allah's knowledge is infinite and so is His power. How and wherefore is it possible through perception and observation of the world of creation to reach the conclusion that the Creator's Knowledge and Power are infinite? The Holy Qur'an, similarly, propounds numerous other problems of the kind. For instance, it mentions *al-lawh al-mahfuz* (the Protected Tablet), *lawh al-mahw wa al-ithbat* (The Tablet of Expunction and Affirmation), *jabr* and *ikhtiyar* (determinism and free will), *wahi* (revelation) and *ilham* (intuition), etc.; none of which are susceptible to inquiry through the empirical study of the world of creation.

It must be admitted that the Holy Qur'an, definitely, has raised these problems in the form of a series of lessons and has emphasized their importance through advice and exhortation. The following verses of the Holy Qur'an may be quoted in this regard:

What?! Do they not meditate on the Qur'an? Or is it that there are locks upon their hearts? (47:24)

(This is) a Scripture that We have revealed unto thee, full of blessing, that they may ponder on its revelations, and that men of understanding may reflect. (38:29)

Inevitably, we are forced to accept that the Holy Qur'an assumes the existence of a reliable method for understanding the meaning of these facts which have not been revealed as a series of obscure incomprehensible things out of the reach of the human intellect.

The scope of problems propounded by the Holy Qur'an in the sphere of metaphysics is far greater than what can be resolved or answered through the study of physical creation. This is the reason why the Muslims have pursued these problems, at times through spiritual and gnostic efforts, and at other times through speculative and rational approach.

I wonder whether those who claim that the Holy Qur'an considers the study of nature as the sole, sufficient means for the solution of metaphysical problems, can give a satisfactory answer with regard to the various problems propounded by it, a characteristic which is specifically relevant to this great heavenly Book.

Ali's sole source of inspiration in his exposition of the problems mentioned in the previous chapters is the Holy Qur'an, and the sole motive behind his discourses is exegetical. Perhaps, had it not been for Ali (A.S), the rationalistic and speculative aspects of the Holy Qur'an would have forever remained without an interpretation.

After these brief introductory remarks on the value of these issues, we shall go on to cite some relevant examples from *Nahjul-Balagha*.

The Divine Essence and Attributes

In this section, we shall cite some examples of *Nahjul-Balagha*'s treatment of the problems of theology relevant to the Divine Essence and Attributes. Later, we shall make a brief comparative study of the issue in various schools then conclude our discussion on this aspect of *Nahjul-Balagha*.

However, before proceeding further, I solicit the reader's pardon on account of the discussion in the last three sections becoming a bit technical and philosophical, something which is not very

welcome for those who are not used to it. But what is the remedy? Discussing a book such as *Nahjul-Balagha* does entail such ups and downs. For this reason, we shall limit ourselves to giving only a few examples from the book on this subject and refrain from any elaborate discussion. This is so because if we were to comment on every sentence in *Nahjul-Balagha*, the result will be, as is said,

My Mathnawi requires seventy mounds of paper.

THE DIVINE ESSENCE

Does *Nahjul-Balagha* have anything to say about the Divine Essence and how to define it? The answer is: Yes, and a lot. However, much of the discussion revolves around the point that the Divine Essence is the Absolute and Infinite Being, without a quiddity. His Essence accepts neither limits nor boundaries, as is the case with other beings, static or changeable, which are limited and finite. A changeable being is one which constantly transcends its former limits and assumes new ones. But such is not the Divine Essence. Quiddity, which may qualify and confine Him within limits of finitude, is not applicable to Him. None of the aspects of beings are devoid of His Presence, and no kind of imperfection is applicable to Him except the absence of any imperfection whatsoever: The only thing missing in Him is absence of defect or inadequacy of any kind. The sole kind of negation applicable to Him is the negation of all negations. The only kind of non-being attributable to Him is the negation of any kind of imperfection in relation to Him. He is free from all shades of non-being which characterize creatures and effects. He is free from finitude, multiplicity, divisibility and need. The only territory that He does not enter is that of nothingness and non-existence. He is *with* everything, but not *in* anything, and nothing is with Him. He is not within things, though not out of them. He is over and above every kind of condition, state, similarity and likeness. This is so because these qualities relate to limited, and they determinate beings characterized by quiddity:

He is with everything but not in the sense of [physical] nearness. He is different from everything but not in the sense of separation. (*Sermon 1*)

He is not inside things in the sense of physical [pervasion or] penetration and is not outside them in the sense of [physical] exclusion [for exclusion entails a kind of finitude]. (*Sermon 186*)

He is distinct from things because He overpowers them, and the things are distinct from Him because of their subjection to Him. (*Sermon 152*)

That is to say, His distinctness from things lies in the fact that He has authority and control over them, all of them. However, His power, authority and sovereignty, unlike those of the creatures, are not accompanied with simultaneous weakness, subjugation and subjection. His distinction and separateness from things lie in the fact that things are totally subject to His power and authority, and that which is subject and subordinate can never be like the one who subjugates and commands control over it. His separateness from things does not lie in physical separation but is on account of the distinction which lies between the Provider and the provided, the Perfect and the imperfect, the Powerful and the weak.

These kinds of ideas are replete in Ali's discourses. All the problems which shall be discussed later are based on the principle that the Divine Essence is Absolute and Infinite, and the concepts of limit, form and condition do not apply to it.

DIVINE UNITY: ONTOLOGICAL, NOT A NUMERICAL CONCEPT

Another feature of *Tawhid* (monotheism) as propounded by *Nahjul-Balagha* is that the Divine Unity is not numerical but is something else. Numerical unity means the oneness of something which has the possibility of recurrence or multiplicity. It is always possible to imagine that the

quiddity and form of an existent is realizable in another individual being. In such cases, the unity of an individual possessing that quiddity is numerical oneness and stands as the antithesis of duplicity or multiplicity.

AlIt is one means that there is unique, none, nobody, nothing is like it. Inevitably, this kind of unity entails the quality of being restricted in number, which is a defect because one is less in number as compared to two or more of its kind. But if a being is such that the assumption of a recurrence with regard to it is impossible, since it is infinite and unlimited, and if we assume another like it exists, it will follow that it is the same as the first being, or that it is something which is not similar to it and, therefore, it cannot be called a second instance of it. In such a case, unity is not numerical. That is, this kind of unity is not one opposed to duplicity or multiplicity. And when it is said, AlIt is one, it does not mean that there are no two, three or more of its kind, but it means that a second to it is inconceivable.

This notion can further be clarified through an example. We know that the astronomers and physicists are not in agreement about the dimensions of the universe, whether it is limited in size or infinite. Some scientists have favored the idea of an unlimited and infinite universe; others claim that the universe is limited in dimensions so that if we travel in any direction, we shall reach a point beyond which there is no space. The other issue is whether the universe in which we live is the only universe in existence, or if there are other universes existing besides it.

Evidently, the assumption of another physical world beyond our own is a corollary to the assumption that our universe is not infinite. Only in this case is it possible to assume the existence of, say, two physical universes each of which is limited and has finite dimensions. But if we assume that our universe is infinite, it is not possible to entertain the assumption of another universe existing beyond it. Whatever we were to assume would be identical with this universe or a part of it.

The assumption of another being similar to the Being of the One GodCsuch as the assumption of another physical universe besides an infinite material universeCamounts to assuming the impossible, for the Being of Allah is absolute: Absolute Selfhood and Absolute Reality.

The notion that the Divine Unity is not a numerical concept, and that qualifying it by a number is synonymous with imposing limits on the Divine Essence, is repeatedly discussed by *Nahjul-Balagha*:

AlHe is the One, but not in a numerical sense. (*Sermon 152*)

AlHe is not confined by limits, nor is He counted by numbers. (*Sermon 186*)

AlHe who points to Him admits for Him limitations; and he who admits limitations for Him has numbered Him. (*Sermon 1*)

AlHe who qualifies Him limits Him. He who limits Him numbers Him. He who numbers Him denies His pre-eternity. (*Sermon 152*)

AlEverything associated with unity is deficient except Him. (*Sermon 65*)

How beautiful, profound, and full of meaning is the last statement! It says that everything except the Divine Essence is limited if it is one. That is, everything for which another of its same kind is conceivable is a limited being and an addition of another individual would increase its number. But this is not true of the Unity of the Divine Essence, for Allah`s Unity lies in His greatness and infinity for which a peer, a second, an equal or a match is not conceivable.

This concept, that the Divine Unity is not a numerical notion, is exclusively an Islamic concept, original and profound, unprecedented in any other school of thought. Even the Muslim philosophers only gradually realized its profundity through contemplating on the spirit of the

original Islamic texts, in particular the discourses of Ali (A.S) , ultimately formally incorporating it in the Islamic metaphysical philosophy. There is no trace of this profound concept in the writings of the early Islamic philosophers like al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (Avicenna). Only the later philosophers ushered this concept into their philosophic thinking calling it *AReally True Unity*, in their terminology.

Allah, The First and the Last; the Manifest and the Hidden

One of many issues discussed in *Nahjul-Balagha* is that Allah is the First and the Last, the Hidden and the Manifest. Of course, like other notions, this, too, has been deduced from the Holy Qur'an, although here we are not going to quote the verses of the Holy Qur'an. Allah is the First, but His precedence is not temporal so as to be in contradiction with His being the Last. He is the Manifest, but not in the sense of being physically visible or perceptible by the senses; His Manifestness does not contradict His Hiddenness. In fact, His being the First is identical to His being the Last; similarly, His being Manifest and Hidden are identical; they are not two different things:

Praise to Allah, for whom one condition does not precede another, so that He may be the First before being the Last or may be Manifest before being Hidden. (*Sermon 65*)

Time is not His accomplice, nor does He need the assistance of tools and agents His Being transcends time. His Existence transcends nothingness and His pre-eternity transcends all beginning. (*Sermon 186*)

The Divine Essence`s transcendence over time, nothingness, beginning, and end is one of the most profound concepts of *al-hikma* philosophy. Allah`s pre-eternity does not mean that Allah has always existed. Certainly Allah has always existed but The Divine pre-eternity (*azaliyyah*) is something greater in meaning than >existence at all times`; because, >existing at all times` assumes existence in time; but Allah`s Being has not only been at all times, It precedes time itself. This is the meaning of The Divine pre-eternity. This shows that His precedence is something other than temporal precedence. Praise to Allah Whose creation bears testimony to His Existence; temporality (*huduth*) of whose creation is the evidence of His preternity the similarity and likeness among whose creation proves that He is unique. The senses do not perceive Him and nothing can conceal Him. (*Sermon 152*)

That is to say, Allah is both Hidden and Manifest. By Himself, He is Manifest but is Hidden from, undetectable by, the human senses. His Hiddenness from the senses is due to man`s own limitations, not because of Him.

It needs no proof that existence is synonymous with manifestation; the more powerful the existence of a being, the more manifest it will be. Conversely, the weaker its being is and the more intermingled with non-being, the less manifest it is to itself and to others.

For everything, there are two modes of being: its being-in-itself (*wujud fi nafsih*), and its being-for-others (*wujud fi ghayrih*). The being of everything for us depends upon the structure of our senses and on certain special conditions. Accordingly, the manifestation of a thing, a being, is also of two kinds: its manifestation-in-itself (*zuhur fi nafsih*) and its manifestation-for-others (*wujud fi ghayrih*).

Our senses, on account of their limitations, are able to perceive only a limited number of finite objects possessing the characteristics of similarity and opposition. The senses can perceive colours, shapes, sounds, etc., which are limited temporally and specifically; that is, their existence is confined within a particular time and place. Now, if there existed a uniform light,

always and everywhere, it would not be perceptible. A continuous monotonous sound heard always, constantly, and everywhere, it would not be audible.

The Being of Allah, the Absolute Being and the Absolute Reality, is not confined to any particular time or place and is hidden from our senses. But Allah in Himself is absolutely manifest; the perfection of His manifestness, which follows from the perfection of His Being, is itself the cause of His hiddenness from our senses. The two aspects of His manifestness and hiddenness are one and the same in His Essence. He is hidden because He is perfectly manifest, and this perfect manifestness conceals Him:

You art hidden on account of Your perfect brilliance; You Art the Manifest, the Hidden in Your manifestness. *The veil on Your face is also Your; so manifest You art, Your manifestness conceals Thee from the world's eyes.*

AN APPRAISAL

An appraisal, however brief, of the approach of *Nahjul-Balagha* and its comparison with that of other schools of thought is essential for discovering the true worth of its views on the problems of theology. We shall confine ourselves to the brief, though not quite sufficient, examples quoted in the foregoing pages and proceed to evaluate them.

The subject of the Divine Essence and Attributes is one which has been discussed a lot by the ancient and modern philosophers, mystics and Sufis of the East and of the West. But, in general, their method and approach is totally different from that of *Nahjul-Balagha* whose approach is highly original and unprecedented. Only in the Holy Qur'an can a precedent for *Nahjul-Balagha* be found. Apart from the Holy Qur'an, we do not find any other source that provides some ground for the discourses of *Nahjul-Balagha*.

As pointed out earlier, some scholars, because of their failure to trace back to some earlier source the notions elaborated in *Nahjul-Balagha* have questioned the authenticity of ascription of these discourses to Ali (A.S) . They have suggested that these discourses appeared in a later period, after the appearance of the Mu`tazilites and the assimilation of the Greek ideology, heedless of the following saying: *The mean earth with the sublime heaven does not compare!*

How ignorant it is to compare the Mu`tazilite and the Greek ideologies with the teachings of *Nahjul-Balagha!*

Nahjul-Balagha and the Notions of Kalam

While ascribing all the Attributes of perfection to Allah, the Exalted One, *Nahjul-Balagha* negates any separation of these Attributes from His Essence and does not consider them as an appendage of the Divine Essence. On the other hand, the Ash`arites, as we know, consider the Divine Attributes to be additional to the Essence, so the Mu`tazilites negate all Attributes.

An Ash`arite believes in the Separation [of the Attributes from the Essence]

A Mu`tazilite speaks of subservience [of the Attributes to the Essence]. This has led some people to imagine that the discourses found in *Nahjul-Balagha* on this topic are fabrications of a later period under the influence of Mu`tazilite views whereas anyone with some insight can readily perceive that the Attributes negated by *Nahjul-Balagha* with respect to the Divine Essence are qualities of imperfection and limitation: the Divine Essence, being infinite and limitless, necessitates identity of the Attributes with the Essence, not negation of the Attributes as professed by the Mu`tazilites. Had the Mu`tazilites reached such a notion, they would never have negated the Divine Attributes, considering them subservient to the Essence.

The same is true of the views on the creating or temporality (*huduth*) of the Holy Qur'an in *sermon* 184. One may imagine that these passages of *Nahjul-Balagha* relate to the latter heated controversies among the Islamic theologians (*mutakallimun*) regarding the eternity (*qidam*) or temporality (*huduth*) of the Holy Qur'an and which might have been added to *Nahjul-Balagha* during the latter centuries. However, a little reflection will reveal that the discourses of *Nahjul-Balagha* relevant to this issue have nothing to do with the debate on the Holy Qur'an being either created or uncreated, which was a meaningless controversy, but relevant to the creative command (*amr takwini*), and to the Will of the Almighty. Ali (A.S) says that Allah's Will and Command represent the Divine Acts and, therefore, so are *ahadith* posterior to the Essence, for if the Command and the Will were co-eternal and identical with His Essence, they will have, necessarily, to be considered His associates and equals. Ali (A.S) says the following:

When He decrees the creation of a thing, He says to it, ABe, and it assumes existence; but not through an audible voice which strikes the ear or a cry that can be heard. Indeed the speech of Allah, glory be to Him, is but His created Act, which did not exist before [it came into existence]. Had it (The Divine speech) been itself eternal, it would be another god besides Him. (*Sermon* 186)

In addition, there are other *musnad* traditions on this subject related from Ali (A.S) , only some of which have been collected in *Nahjul-Balagha*, and can be traced back to his time. On this basis, there is no room for doubting their genuineness. If any superficial resemblance is observed between the statements made by Ali (A.S) and some views held by the Mu`tazilites, the probability to be allowed in this connection is that some of his ideas were adopted by the Mu`tazilites.

The controversies of the Muslim theologians (*mutakallimun*), both the Shi`a and the Sunni, the Ash`arites as well as the Mu`tazilites, generally revolved around the doctrine of rational basis of ethical judgment concerning good and evil (*al-husn wa al-qubh al-`aqliyyan*). This doctrine, nothing but a practical principle operating in the human society, is considered by the *mutakallimun* to be also applicable to the Divine sphere and govern the laws of creation; but we find no trace of it in *Nahjul-Balagha*. Similarly, there is no sign of it in the Holy Qur'an. Had the ideas and beliefs of the *mutakallimun* found their way into *Nahjul-Balagha*, first of all, the traces of this doctrine should have been found in that book.

Nahjul-Balagha and Philosophical Concepts

Some others, having come across certain words such as Aexistence (*wujud*), Anon-existence (>*adam*), Atemporality (*huduth*) and Apre-eternity (*qidam*) and so on in *Nahjul-Balagha*, have been led to assume that these terms entered the Muslim intellectual world under the influence of the Greek philosophy and were inserted, intentionally or unintentionally, into the discourses of Ali (A.S) . Had those who advocate this view gone deeper into the meanings of these words, they would not have heeded such a hypothesis. The method and approach adopted in the arguments of *Nahjul-Balagha* are completely different from those of the philosophers who lived before Sayyid al- Radi or during his time, or even those born many centuries after the compilation of *Nahjul-Balagha*.

Presently, we shall not discuss the metaphysics of the Greek or of the Alexandrians (the neo-Platonic) philosophy but shall confine ourselves to the metaphysical views propounded by al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. Undoubtedly, Muslim philosophers introduced new challenges into philosophy under the influence of Islamic teachings which had not existed before, and in addition to them, introducing radically original ways of demonstration and inference to explain and argue their points with regard to some other problems. Nevertheless, what we learn from *Nahjul-Balagha* is obviously different from this approach. My teacher, `allama Tabataba`i, in the preface to his discourse on the traditions of Islamic scholarship, writes: AThese statements help resolve a number of problems of theological philosophy. Apart from the fact that Muslims were not acquainted with these notions, and they were incomprehensible to the Arabs, basically there is no trace of them in the writings and statements of pre-Islamic philosophers whose books were translated into Arabic and, similarly, they do not appear in the works of Muslim philosophers, Arab or Persian. These problems remained obscure and unintelligible, and every commentator discussed them according to his own conjecture until the eleventh century of the Hijra (17th century A.D.). Only then were they properly understood for the first time, that is, the problem of the True Unity (*al-wahda al-haqqa*) of the Necessary Being (*wajib al-wujud*) (a non-numerical unity) ; the problem that the proof of the existence of the Necessary Being is identical with the proof of His Unity (since the Necessary Being is Absolute Existence, His Being implies His Unity) ; the problem that the Necessary Existent is the One known-in-His-Essence (*ma`lum bil dhat*) ; the Necessary Being is known directly without the need of an intermediary, and that the reality of everything else is known through the Necessary Being, not *vice versa*. [7]

The arguments of early Muslim philosophers like al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, such as the discussions on the Divine Essence and Attributes like Unity, Simplicity (*basata*), Self-Sufficiency, Knowledge, Power, Will, Providence, and so on, revolve around the conception of the necessity of existence (*wujub al-wujud*), from which all of them are derived, and the necessity of existence itself is indirectly deduced. In this fashion, it is demonstrated that the existence of all possible existent beings (*mumkinat*) cannot be explained without assuming the existence of the Necessary Being. Although the argument used for proving the truth of this argument cannot be called a demonstration of the impossible (*burhan khulf*), in view of its indirect mode of inference, it resembles *burhan khulf* and, hence, it fails to provide a completely satisfactory demonstration, for it does not explain the necessity of the existence of the Necessary Being. Ibn Sina, in his *Al->Isharat*, claims that he has succeeded in discovering the AWhy? (*lima*) of it and, hence, chooses to call his argument *Aburhan al-siddiqin* (*burhan limmi*, i.e. causal proof). However, the latter philosophers considered his exposition of Athe Why? (*lima*) as insufficient.

In *Nahjul-Balagha*, the necessity of existence is never used to explain the existence of possible beings (*mumkinat*). That on which this book relies for this purpose is the real criterion of the necessity of existence, that is, the absolute reality and the pure being of the Divine Essence.

`Allama Tabataba'i, in the above-mentioned work, while explaining one *hadith* by Ali (A.S) , found in *Al-Tawhid* of Sheikh al-Saduq, says the following: AThe basis of our discussion rests upon the principle that the Divine Being is a reality that does not accept any limits or restrictions whatsoever. Because Allah, the Most Exalted, is the Absolute Reality from Whom the existence of all other beings is derived within the ontological limits and characteristics peculiar to themselves, and their existence depends on that of this Absolute Being. [8]

In *Nahjul-Balagha*, the very basis of all discussions revolving on the Divine Essence rests on the position that Allah is the Absolute and Infinite Being Who transcends all limits and finitude. No point of space time, or anything at all is devoid of Him. He is with everything, in everything, yet nothing is with Him or in Him. Since He is the Absolute and the Infinite, He transcends time, number, limit and proximity (all kinds of quiddities). That is, time and space, number and limit are applicable to a lower stage, i.e. the stage of the Divine actions and of creation. Everything is from Him and returns to Him. He is the First of the first and the Last of the last. He precedes everything and succeeds everything.

This is the idea that forms the axis of all discourses of *Nahjul-Balagha* and of which there is no trace in the works of al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, al-Ghazali, and Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi.

As pointed out by `allama Tabataba'i, these profound discussions of theology proper (*ilahiyyat bil-ma`na al->akhass*) are based on a series of inter-related problems which have been posited in metaphysics (*al->umur al->ammah*). [9] An elaborate discussion of those theological problems and their relevant issues mentioned above is outside the scope of our present discussion.

There are two reasons for rejecting the claims that the theological discussions of *Nahjul-Balagha* were inventions of later writers familiar with philosophical notions. Firstly, the kind of problems discussed in *Nahjul-Balagha* were not at all raised by any philosopher till the time of Sayyid al-Radhi, compiler of *Nahjul-Balagha*. That the Unity of the Necessary Being is not of the numerical kind and that the Divine Essence precedes number, that the existence of the Necessary Being implies Its Unity; the simple reality of the Necessary Being; His immanence and other such notions were not known to philosophy during or before Sayyid al-Radhi's times. Secondly, the axes of arguments presented in this book are altogether different from the axes of philosophical discussions which have been prevalent throughout history until the present day.

Nahjul-Balagha and Western Philosophic Yought

Nahjul-Balagha has played a great role in the history of Eastern Philosophy. Mulla Sadra, who brought a revolution in theological thought (*al-hikmat al->ilahiyya*), was under the profound influence of Ali's discourses. His method of argument with regard to the problems of *Tawhid* is the method of inferring the Essence from the Essence, and also deducing the Attributes and Acts from the Essence, and all these arguments are based on the belief that there exists the Necessary Being only. These arguments are based on radically different general principles which are elaborated in his system of metaphysics.

Eastern theological thought (*al-hikmat al->ilahiyya*) attained fruition and strength from the sources of Islamic teachings and was firmly established on inviolable foundations. However,

theological philosophy in the West remained deprived of such a source of inspiration. The widespread philosophical malaise of inclination towards materialism in the West has many causes whose discussion is outside the scope of our discourse. But we believe that the major cause of this phenomenon is the weakness and insufficiency of theological conceptions of Western religious thought. [10] Anyone interested in making a comparative study of the approaches pointed out in these chapters should first study the arguments advanced by Western philosophers such as Anselm, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant and others for proving the existence of Allah and their discussions about acceptance or rejection of various arguments, then he should compare them with the *burhan al-siddiqin* argument advanced by Mulla Sadra under the inspiration of Ali's words. He would see for himself the wide chasm that separates one from the other.

SECTION THREE

Suluk and `Ibada

`Ibada, or service, of the One God and the negation of everything else, as an object of service and worship, is one of the essential teachings of God-sent Messengers, a feature never absent from the teachings of any prophet. As we know, in the sacred religion of Islam, too, worship occupies a prominent position, with the only difference that worship in Islam is not regarded as a series of devotional rituals separate from everyday life and as pertaining solely to another world. Worship in Islam is located in the context of life and is an unalienable part of the Islamic philosophy of life.

Aside from the fact that some of the Islamic acts of worship are performed collectively, Islam has structured them in such a fashion that their performance automatically ensures the performance of other duties of life as well. For instance, *salat* is a complete expression of man's servitude and surrender to Allah. It has been specified in such a manner that even a man who desires to pray in a lonely corner is forced to observe certain things of moral and social relevance, such as cleanliness, respect for the rights of others, observance of punctuality, possession of a sense of direction, control over one's emotions, and expression of good-will and benevolence towards other righteous servants of Allah.

From the Islamic point of view, every good and beneficial action, if performed with a pure, God-seeking intention, is viewed as an act of worship. Hence, learning, acquisition of knowledge and livelihood and social services, if performed for Allah's sake, are acts of worship. Nevertheless, Islam also specifies a system of rituals and formal acts of worship such as *salat*, *sawm* (fasting) etc., each having a specific philosophy for performing it.

The Levels of Worship

Men have varying attitudes towards worship. Not all of them view it in the same light. For some, worship is a kind of deal, a barter and an exchange of labour performed for wages. Like an ordinary worker who spends his time and labour for the benefit of an employer and expects a daily wage in return, the devotee also endeavours for the sake of the Divine reward, which, however, he would receive in the next world. Like the labourer, for whom his labour bears fruit in the form of his wages and who would not work except for a wage, the benefit of the devotee's worship, according to the outlook of this particular group of devotees, lies in the wages and rewards which shall be granted to the devotees in the form of the things and the means of comfort in the other world.

However, every employer pays wages in return for the benefit which he derives from his employees, but what benefit can the Master of the heavens derive from the labours of a weak and feeble servant of His? Moreover, if we assume that the Great Employer does remunerate His servants in the form of the blessings and rewards of the Hereafter, then why does He not reward them without any effort and consumption of labour and energy? These are questions which never occur to this class of the pious. From their viewpoint, the essence of worship lies in certain visible bodily movements and oscillations of the tongue. This is one attitude towards worship. Unrefined and vulgar it may be, it is, in the words of Ibn Sina, as he puts it in the ninth chapter of his book titled *Al-Isharat*, "The attitude of the unenlightened and God-ignorant is acceptable only by the plebeians."

Another approach towards worship is that of the enlightened. Here, the aforementioned problems of worker and employer, labour and wage, have no relevance. How can they be relevant when worship is viewed by them as the ladder to attain nearness to Allah, as the means

of human sublimity, edification and upliftment of the soul and its flight to the invisible sphere of spiritual greatness, an invigorating exercise of one's spiritual faculties and a triumph of the spirit over the corporeal? It is the highest expression of the gratitude and love of the human being towards his Creator, his declaration of love for the Most Perfect and the Absolutely Beautiful One and, finally, his wayfaring towards Allah!

According to this approach, worship has a form and a soul, an appearance and an inner meaning. That which is expressed by the tongue and the movements of other parts of the body, is the form, the outer mold, and the appearance of worship. Its soul and meaning is something else. The soul of worship is inextricably connected with the significance attached to worship by the devotee, his attitude towards it, his inner motive that drives him to it, the ultimate satisfaction and benefit he derives from it, and the extent to which he covers the Divine path in his journey towards Allah.

The Approach of *Nahjul-Balagha*

What is the approach and the attitude adopted by *Nahjul-Balagha* towards worship? *Nahjul-Balagha* takes an enlightened view of worship or, rather, it is, after the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , the main source of inspiration towards the enlightened approach to worship in the Islamic tradition.

As we know, of the most sublime and imaginative themes of Islamic literature, both Arabic and Persian, is the relationship between the ardent love of the devotee for the Divine Essence expressed in delicate and elegant passages in the form of sermons, prayers, allegories, parables, both in prose and in verse. When we compare them with the pre-Islamic notions prevalent in the regions which subsequently constituted the domains of Islam, it is surprising to observe the gigantic leap that was taken by Islam in bestowing depth, scope, sweetness, and delicacy to human thought. Islam transformed a people who worshipped idols, images, fire, or degraded the Eternal God to the level of a human AFather, and whose flight of imagination prompted them to identify the AFather with the ASon, or who officially considered the Ahura Mazda to be a material form whose statues they erected in every place, into a people whose intellect could grasp and evolve the most abstract of concepts, the most sophisticated of ideas, the most elegant of thoughts and the most sublime of notions.

How was the human intellect so radically transformed? What revolutionized those people's logic, elevated their thoughts, refined their emotions and sublimated their values? How did it all happen? The *al-Mu`allaqat al-sab`a* and *Nahjul-Balagha* stand only one generation apart from each other. Both of those generations of Arabs were proverbial in eloquence and literary genius. As to the content, they stand as far apart as the earth and the sky. The former sing of the beauty of the beloved one, the pleasures of love, of gallantry, of horses, spears, the nightly assaults and compose eulogy and lampoon; the latter contains the most sublime of the ideologies of man.

In order to elucidate the approach of Ali (A.S) towards worship, we now shall proceed to cite few examples from *Nahjul-Balagha*, beginning with a statement about the differences in various approaches of people towards worship.

The Worship of Freeman

ASome people worship Allah out of their desire for rewards; this is the worship of traders. Another group worships Allah out of fear; this is the worship of slaves. Yet another group worships Allah out of gratitude; this is the worship of freemen. [1]

AEven if Allah had not warned those disobedient to Him of chastisement, it was obligatory by way of gratefulness for His favors that He should not be disobeyed. [2]

ALord! I have not worshipped Thee out of fear of Your Hell nor out of greed for Your Paradise; but I found Thee worthy of being worshipped, so I worshipped Thee. [3]

Remembering Allah

The roots of all spiritual, moral and social aspects of worship lie in one thing: the remembrance of Allah and the obliviousness towards everything else. In one of its verses, the Holy Qur'an refers to the educative and the invigorating effect of worship and says the following:

Salat protects from unseemly acts. (29:45)

Adhere to salat so that you may remain in My remembrance. (20:14)

This is a reminder of the fact that the person who prays remembers Allah and lives by the knowledge that He is always observing and watching him. He does not forget that he himself is His servant.

The remembrance of Allah, which is the aim of worship, is the burnishing of the heart and the object of its purification. It prepares the heart for the reflection of the Divine Light in it. Speaking of the remembrance of Allah and of the meaning of worship, Ali (A.S) says the following:

ACertainly Allah, the Glorified One, has made His remembrance the burnishing of the hearts which makes them hear after deafness, see after blindness and which makes them submissive after unruliness. In all periods and times when there were no prophets, there were individuals to whom He spoke in whispers through their conscience and intellect. [4]

These sentences speak of the wonderful effect of the Divine remembrance on the heart, to the extent of making it capable of receiving the Divine inspiration and bringing it in intimate communion with Allah.

The Levels of Devotion

In the same sermon are explained the various spiritual states and levels attained by the worshippers in the course of their devotional pursuit. Ali (A.S) describes such men in these words:

AThe angels have surrounded them and peace is showered upon them. The doors of heaven are opened for them and the abodes of bliss, of which He had informed them, have been prepared for them. He is pleased with their struggle and admires their station. When they call upon Him, they breathe the fragrance of His forgiveness and mercy. [5]

Nights of the Devout

From the point of view of *Nahjul-Balagha*, the world of worship is another world altogether. Its delights are not comparable with any pleasures of the three-dimensional corporeal world. The world of worship effuses movement, progress and journey, a journey which is quite unlike physical travel to new lands. It is a spiritual journey to the Anameless city. It does not distinguish night from day because it is always drenched in light. In it, there is no trace of darkness or pain, for it is purity, sincerity, and delight all over. Happy is the man, in the view of *Nahjul-Balagha*, who sets his foot into this world and is refreshed by its invigorating breeze. Such a man, then, no longer cares whether he lays his head on a silk pillow or on a stone:

ABlessed is he who carries out his duties towards his Master and endures the hardships they entail. He allows himself no sleep at night until it overwhelms him. Then he lies down with the palm of his hand under his head as his pillow. He is among those whom the thought of the Day of Judgment keeps awake at nights, whose bed remains vacant, whose lips hum in Allah's remembrance and whose sins have been erased by their prolonged earnest supplication for

forgiveness These are the AParty of Allah; A... surely [members of] Allah`s Party are the ones who prosper! [6]

*The nights of the men of Allah are like shiny days,
Gloomy nights do not exist for the enlightened.*

The Profile of the Pious

In the last section we discussed the viewpoint of *Nahjul-Balagha* with respect to worship. We found that *Nahjul-Balagha* does not regard worship as a series of cut-and-dried, lifeless rituals. The bodily movements constitute the apparent motion of worship while its soul and meaning are something else. Only when endowed with meaning and spirit is the worship worthy of its name. Real worship means the transcending of the three-dimensional world into the spiritual sphere, which is a world of perpetual delight and sublimation for the soul and the source of vigour and strength for the heart which has its own pleasures.

There are many references to the characteristics of the pious and the devout in *Nahjul-Balagha*. Often, *Nahjul-Balagha* sketches the profiles of the pious and the devout and describes their characteristic fear of Allah, their devotion and delight in worship, their constant sorrow and grief over sins. It describes their frequent recitation of the Holy Qur`an, their occasional ecstatic experiences and states which they achieve in the course of their worshipful endeavours and struggle against their corporeal self. At times, it discusses the role of worship in lifting the human soul from the pall of sins and black deeds and often points out to the effect of worship in curing moral and psychological ailments. At other times, it speaks about the unadulterated, unsurpassable and pure delights and ecstasies of the followers of the spiritual path, the sincere worshippers of Allah.

Night Vigils

ADuring the night, they are on their feet reciting the verses of the Holy Qur`an one after the other, tarrying to deliberate about their meanings and thereby instilling gnostic pathos into their souls and by means of it seek remedy for their spiritual ailments. What they hear from the Holy Qur`an seems to them as if they are witnessing it with their own eyes. If they come across a verse arousing eagerness (for Paradise), they lean towards it eagerly, their souls clinging to it avidly, as if they are approaching their ultimate goal. And when they come across a verse that instills fear, their hearts` ear is turned in attention to it as if they themselves hear the cracking sound of the flames of Hell Fire. Their backs are bent in reverence and their foreheads, palms, knees and toes rest on the ground as they beseech Allah for salvation. But when the day dawns, they are kind, patient, scholarly, pious and righteous. [7]

THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

AHe has revived his intellect and slain his self until his body became lean and its bulkiness shrunk, and stubbornness turned into tenderness (of heart). Then an effulgence, like a thunderbolt, descended upon his heart, illuminating the path before him, opening all the doors and leading him straight into the gateway of Peace. Now his feet, carrying his body, are firmly rooted in the position of safety (on the *Sirat*) and comfort because he kept his heart busy with good deeds and won the good pleasure of his God. [8]

As we observe, this passage speaks of another kind of life, *the life of intellect*. It speaks of struggle against the carnal self (*al-nafs al->ammara bil su`*) and its destruction; it speaks of exercises of the spirit and the body, about lightening which, as a result of such an exercise, illuminates the being of the follower and brightens his spiritual world; it speaks of the stages and

targets that the devotee's earnest soul reaches on its way until it attains the last and the highest stage of man's spiritual journey. The Holy Qur'an says the following:

O man! You art labouring unto thy Master laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him. (84:6)

Ali (A.S) , in the passage cited above, speaks about the inner peace, contentment and tranquility of the soul which a man's restless, disturbed and anxious heart ultimately attains:

Indeed, the hearts are at rest in Allah >s remembrance. (13:28)

In sermon 228, Ali (A.S) describes the significance attached by this class of devotees to spiritual life-the life of the heart: AThey see that the worldly people attach great importance to the death of their bodies, but they themselves attach much greater importance to the death of hearts of the living (*Sermon 230*).

Ali (A.S) describes the ecstatic eagerness of the earnest souls which impels them to move onwards on the path of spiritual perfection in these words: AThey lived in the society and participated in its affairs with their bodies, while their souls rested in the higher spiritual spheres. [10]

AHad there been no preordained time of death for each of them, their spirits would not have remained in their bodies even for the twinkling of an eye because of their eagerness for the Divine reward and their fear of chastisement. [11]

AHe did everything only for the sake of Allah, so Allah also made him His own. [12]

The esoteric knowledge and emanated insight, revealed to the heart of the follower of the spiritual path as a result of self-education and self-refinement, is described in these words:

AThe knowledge that bursts upon them and surrounds them is endowed with absolute certainty, and their soul attains the highest degree of conviction. They easily bear what the easy-going regard as harsh and unbearable. They endear what makes the ignorant recoil with horror. [13]

The Purging of Sins

From the point of view of Islamic teachings, every sin leaves a black stain and the effects of distortion in the human heart which, in turn, weakens a person's aptitude for good and righteous deeds. Consequently, it further causes him to deviate and commit other sins and foul deeds as well. On the other hand, worship, prayer and remembrance of Allah develop a human being's religious consciousness, strengthen his aptitude for virtuous deeds and diminish his proneness to sinning. This means that worship and remembrance of Allah efface the bad effects of sins, replacing them with fondness for virtue and goodness.

In *Nahjul-Balagha*, there is a sermon which deals with *salat*, *zakat* and the delivering of the trust back to its owner. Having emphasized the importance of *salat*, Ali (A.S) further says the following: ACertainly, prayer removes sins like autumn strips leaves off from trees, and it liberates you from the rope (of sins which is) tied around your neck. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) likened it to a refreshing stream at one's door in which one takes a purifying bath five times during the day and the night. Will, after so much cleansing, any dirt remain on him? [14]

Moral Remedy

In sermon 196, after making a reference to evil conduct, such as disobedience, oppression, injustice and arrogance, Ali (A.S) says the following: AIt is on account of these perils that Allah has encouraged His believing servants to perform *salat* and to pay *zakat*, to fast during the days when fast is obligatory; these acts of worship provide their limbs with peace and rest, casting

fear in their eyes, softening their spirits, cultivating a sense of humility in their hearts and purging them from pride.

Intimacy and Ecstasy

ALord! You, of all beloved ones, are the most attached to Your lovers and the most ready to trust those who place their trust in You. You see, You look into their secrets and know that which lies in their conscience and are aware of the extent of their inner vision. Consequently, their secrets are open to You and their hearts look up to You in eager apprehension. In loneliness, Your remembrance is their friend and consolation. In distress Your help is their protection. [15]

There are some people devoted to remembrance of Allah who have chosen it in place of all worldly goods. [16]

In sermon 148, Ali (A.S) alludes to the coming times of the Promised al-Mahdi (□), may Allah hasten his appearance, and at the end of his discourse describes the courage, wisdom, insight and attributes of the Imam (□) and his supporters. Then a group of people will be made ready by Allah like the swords sharpened by the blacksmith. The ir sight would be brightened by revelations the inner meaning of the Holy Qur'an would be familiar to their ears and they would be given to drink the cup of wisdom every morning and evening. [17]

SECTION FOUR

GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE

Nahjul-Balagha on State

One of the frequently discussed issues in *Nahjul-Balagha* is government and justice. To anyone who goes through the book, it is evident to what extent Ali (A.S) is sensitive to the issues related to government and justice. He considers them to be of paramount importance. For those who lack an understanding of Islam but have knowledge of the teachings of other religions, it is astonishing why a religious personality should devote himself to this sort of problem. Don't such problems relate to the world and worldly life?! Shouldn't a sage keep aloof from the matters of the world and society? They thus wonder.

On the other hand, such a thing is not at all surprising for one acquainted with the teachings of Islam and the details of Ali`s life, i.e. that Ali (A.S) was brought up from childhood by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Islam, that the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , having taken him from his father as a child, had reared him in his home under his own care, that the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had trained Ali (A.S) and instructed him in his own characteristic way, teaching him the secrets of Islam. Ali`s spirit had assimilated within itself the doctrines of Islam and the code of its laws. Therefore, it is not unusual that Ali (A.S) should have been as such; rather, it would have been astonishing if he was not as such, as we find him to be. Does not the Holy Qur'an declare: *Alndeed, We sent Our messengers with the clear signs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that men might uphold justice (57:25)* ?

In this verse, the establishment of justice has been declared as the objective of the mission of all the prophets. The sanctity of justice is so stressed that it is considered the aim of all prophetic missions. Hence, how were it possible that someone like Ali (A.S) , whose duty was to expound the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and explain the doctrines and laws of Islam, might have ignored this issue or, at least, accorded it a secondary importance?

Those who neglect these issues in their teachings or imagine that these problems are only of marginal significance, and that the central issues are those of ritual purity and impurity (*taharah* and *najasah*), it is essential that they should re-examine their own beliefs and views.

The Importance of Politics

The first thing which must be examined is the significance and value attached to the issue of government and justice by *Nahjul-Balagha*. Indeed, what is essentially the importance of these problems in Islam? A thorough discussion of this question is obviously outside the scope of this book, but by way of a casual reference, however, it seems inevitable to lightly touch upon. The Holy Qur'an, in the verse where it commands the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) to inform the people that Ali (A.S) would succeed him as the leader of the Muslims and the Prophet's *khalifah*, declares the following with extraordinary insistence: *AO Messenger! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, for if you do not do so, you will not have delivered His Message at all! (5:67).*

Is there any other issue in Islam to which this much importance is attached? What other issue is of such a significance that, if not communicated to the people, it would amount to the failure of the prophetic mission itself?

During the battle of Uhud, when the Muslims were defeated and the rumor spread that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had been killed, a group of Muslims fled from the battlefield. Referring to this incident, the Holy Qur'an says the following: *AMuhammed is naught but a Messenger; Messengers have passed away before him. Why, if he should die or is slain, will you turn about on your heels? (3:144)*

'Allama Tabataba'i, in an article titled *Wilayat wa-hakumat*, derives the following conclusion from the above verse: *AI*f the Messenger (□) is killed in battle, it should not in any way stall, even temporarily, your struggle. Immediately afterwards, you should place yourselves under the banner of the successor to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and continue your endeavor. In other words, if, supposedly, the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is killed or if he dies, the social system and military organization of the Muslims should not disintegrate.

There is one *hadith* wherein the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said, *AI*f (as few as) three persons go on a journey, they must appoint one from among themselves as their leader. From this, one may infer to what extent the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) regarded as harmful the disorder and absence of authority that could resolve social conflicts and serve as a unifying bond among individuals.

Nahjul-Balagha deals with numerous problems concerning the State and social justice, a few of which, Allah willing, we shall discuss here.

The first problem to be discussed here is that of the necessity and value of a State. Ali (A.S) has repeatedly stressed the need for a powerful government and, in his own time, battled against the views propagated by the Kharijites who, in the beginning, denied the need for a State, considering the Holy Qur'an as sufficient. The slogan of the Kharijites, as is known, was: *AI*The right of judgment (or authority to rule) belongs exclusively to Allah (*la hukm illa li-Allah*), a phrase adopted from the Holy Qur'an. Its Qur'anic meaning is that the prerogative of legislation belongs to Allah or those whom Allah has permitted to legislate. But the Kharijites interpreted it differently. According to Ali (A.S) , they had imparted a false sense to a true statement. The essence of their view was that no human being has any right to rule others; sovereignty belongs exclusively to Allah. Ali's argument was:

Yes, I also say *la hukm illa li-Allah*, in the sense that the right of legislation belongs solely to Allah. But their claim that the prerogative to govern and to lead also belongs to Allah is not reasonable. After all, the laws of Allah need to be implemented by human beings. Men cannot do without a ruler, good or evil.[1]

It is under the protection of a State that the believers strive for Allah's sake, and the unbelievers derive material benefit from their worldly endeavors, and men attain the fruits of their labor. It is through the authority of the State that taxes are collected, aggressors are repelled, the security of highways is maintained, and the weak reclaim their rights (through the courts of law) from the strong. (This process continues) until the good citizens are happy and secure from the evils of miscreants. (*Nahjul-Balagha, Khutab 40*)

Ali (A.S) , like other godly men and spiritual leaders, despises temporal power and political office for being lowly and degrading when it serves as an instrument of gratification of lust for power and political ambition. He looks down upon it with extreme contempt when it is desired as an end-in-itself and aspired as an ideal of life. He considers such kind of power to be devoid of any value, considering it to be more detestable than a pig's bone in a leper's hand. But the same power and leadership, if used as a means for the establishment and execution of social justice and service to society, is regarded by him as a thing of paramount sanctity, something for which he is willing to fight any opportunist and political adventurer seeking to grab power and illegitimate wealth. In its defense, he does not hesitate to draw his sword against plunderers and usurpers.

During the days of Ali's caliphate, Abdullah ibn `Abbas once went to see him. He found Ali (A.S) mending his old shoes with his own hand. Turning to Ibn `Abbas, Ali (A.S) asked him, AHow much do you think this shoe is worth? ANothing, replied Ibn `Abbas. Ali (A.S) said, AYet the same shoe is of more value to me than authority over you [folks] if it were not to me a means for establishing justice, recovering the rights of the deprived and wiping out evil practices (*Khutab 33*).

In sermon 216, we come across a general discussion about human rights and duties. Here, Ali (A.S) states that every right always involves two parties. Of the various Divine duties, the ones which Allah has ordained are duties of people towards people; they are framed in such a way that each right necessitates a duty towards others; each right which benefits an individual or a group holds the individual or group responsible to fulfill some duty towards others. Every duty becomes binding when the other party also fulfills his duty. He says the following further regarding this issue:

ABut the most important of the reciprocal rights that Allah has made obligatory is the right of the ruler over the subjects and the rights of the subjects over the ruler. It is a mutual and reciprocal obligation decreed by Allah for them. He has made it the basis of the strength of their society and of their religion. Consequently, the subjects cannot prosper unless the rulers are righteous. The rulers cannot be righteous unless the subjects are firm and steadfast. If the subjects fulfill their duties toward the ruler and the ruler his duty to them, righteousness prevails among them. Only then are the objectives of the religion realized, the pillars of justice become stable and wholesome traditions become established. In this way, better conditions of life and social environment emerge. People become eager to safeguard the integrity of the State and thus frustrate the plots of its enemies (*Khutab 126*).

Justice: a Supreme Value

The first outcome of the sacred teachings of Islam was the influence exercised on the minds and ideologies of its adherents. Not only did Islam introduce new teachings regarding the world, man and his society, but also changed the ways of thinking. The importance of the latter achievement is not less than the former.

Every teacher imparts new knowledge to his pupils, and every school of thought provides new information to its adherents. But the teachers and schools of thought who furnish their followers with a new logic and revolutionize their ways of thinking altogether are few.

But how do the ways of thinking change and one logic replaces another? This requires some elucidation.

Man, by virtue of being a rational creature, thinks rationally about scientific and social issues. His arguments, intentionally or unintentionally, are based on certain principles and axioms. All his conclusions are drawn from and judgments are based on them. The difference in ways of thinking originates precisely in these first principles or axioms. This is used as the ground for inferences and conclusions. Here, it is crucial what premises and axioms form the foundation for inference, and here lies the cause of all disparity in inferences and conclusions. In every age, there is a close similarity between the ways of thinking of those familiar with the intellectual spirit of the age on scientific issues. However, the difference is conspicuous between the intellectual spirits of different ages. But with regard to social problems, such a similarity and consensus is not found even among persons who are contemporaries. There is a secret behind this. To elaborate on it would take us outside the scope of the present discussion.

Man, in his confrontation with social and moral problems, is inevitably led to adopt some sort of value-orientation. In his assessments, he arrives at a certain hierarchy of values in which he arranges all issues. This order or hierarchy of values plays a significant role in the adoption of the kind of basic premises and axioms which he utilizes. It makes him think differently from others who have differently evaluated the issues and have arrived at a different hierarchy of values. This is what leads to a disparity among the ways of thinking. Take, for example, the question of feminine chastity, which is a matter of social significance. Do all people prescribe a similar system of evaluation with regard to this issue? Certainly not. There is a great amount of disparity between views. For some, its significance is near zero and it plays no part in their thinking. For some, the matter is of utmost value. The latter regard life as worthless in an environment where feminine chastity is regarded as unimportant.

When we say that Islam has revolutionized the ways of thinking, what is meant is that it has drastically altered their system and hierarchy of values. It has elevated values like *taqwa* (God-fearing), which had no value at all in the past, to a very high status and attached an unprecedented importance to it. On the other hand, it deflated the value of such factors as lineage, race and the like which in the pre-Islamic days were of predominant significance, bringing their worth to zero. Justice is one of the values revived by Islam and is given an extraordinary status. It is true that Islam has recommended justice and stressed its implementation, but what is very significant is that it elevates its value in the society. It is better to leave the elaboration of this point to Ali (A.S) himself and see what *Nahjul-Balagha* says. A man of intelligence and understanding put the following question to Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (A.S) : AWhich is superior, justice or generosity? (*Hikam* 437)

Here, the question is about two human qualities. Man has always detested oppression and injustice and has also held in high regard acts of kindness and benevolence performed without the hope of reward or a return. Apparently, the answer to the above question seems both obvious

and easy: generosity is superior to justice, for what is justice except observance of the rights of others and avoiding violating them? But a generous man willingly foregoes his own right in preference of another person over himself. The just man does not transgress the rights of others; he safeguards their rights from being violated. But the generous man sacrifices his own right for another's sake. Therefore, generosity must be superior to justice.

In truth, the above reasoning appears to be quite valid when we estimate their worth from the viewpoint of individual morality and generosity, more so than that of justice. This seems to be a sign of human perfection and the nobleness of the human soul. But Ali's reply is contrary to the above answer. Ali (A.S) gives two reasons for the superiority of justice over generosity. Firstly, he says the following: AJustice puts things in their proper place and generosity diverts them from their (natural) direction.

The meaning of justice is that the natural deservedness of everybody must be taken into consideration; everyone should be given his due worth according to his work, ability and qualifications. Society is comparable to a machine whose every part has a proper place and function.

It is true that generosity is a quality of great worth from the point of view that a generous man donates to another what legitimately belongs to him, but we must note that it is an unnatural occurrence. It may be compared to a body one of whose organs is malfunctioning while its other healthy organs and parts temporarily redirect their activity to the recovery of the suffering organ. From the social point of view, it would be far more preferable if the society did not possess such sick members at all, so that the healthy organs and members may completely devote their activities and energies to the general growth and perfection of the society, instead of being absorbed with helping and assisting a particular member.

To return to Ali's reply, the other reason he gives for preferring justice to generosity is this:

Justice is the general caretaker, whereas generosity is a particular reliever.

That is, justice is like a general law which is applicable to the management of all the affairs of the society. Its benefit is universal and all-embracing; it is the highway which serves all and everyone. But generosity is something exceptional and limited, which cannot be always relied upon. Basically, if generosity were to become a general rule, it would no longer be regarded as such. Deriving his conclusion, Ali (A.S) says the following: AConsequently, justice is the nobler of the two and possesses the greater merit. This way of thinking about man and human problems is one based on a specific value system rooted in the idea of the fundamental importance of the society. In this system of values, social principles and criteria precede the norms of individual morality. The former is a principle, whereas the latter is only a ramification. The former is a trunk, while the latter is a branch of it. The former is the foundation of the structure, whereas the latter is an embellishment.

From Ali's viewpoint, it is the principle of justice that is of crucial significance in preserving the balance of society, and winning the goodwill of the public. Its practice can ensure the health of the society and bring peace to its soul. Oppression, injustice and discrimination cannot bring peace and happiness even to the tyrant or to the one in whose interest the injustice is perpetrated. Justice is like a public highway which has room for all and through which everyone may pass without impediment. But injustice and oppression constitute a blind alley which does not lead even the oppressor to his desired destination.

As is known, during his caliphate, >Othman ibn >Affan put a portion of the public property of the Muslims at the disposal of his kinsmen and friends. After the death of >Othman, Ali (A.S)

assumed power. Ali (A.S) was advised by some people to overlook whatever injustice had occurred in the past and to do nothing about it, to confine his efforts to what would befall from then on during his own caliphate. But to this his reply was: AA long standing right does not become invalid [because of the passage of time]!

Then he exclaimed: ABy Allah! Even if I find that by such misappropriated money women have been married or bondmaids bought, I would reclaim it and have it returned to the public treasury. There is a wide scope and room in the dispensation of justice. [Justice is vast enough to include and envelop everyone;] he who [being of a diseased temperament] finds restriction and hardship in justice should know that the path of injustice and oppression is harder and even more restricted (*Khutab* 15).

Justice, according to this concept, is a barrier and a limit to be observed, respected and believed in by everyone. All should be content to remain within its limits. But if its limits are broken and violated, and if both belief in it and respect for it are lost while human greed and lust, being insatiable by nature, would not stop at any limit, the further man advances on this interminable journey of greed and lust, the greater becomes his dissatisfaction.

Indifference to Injustice

Ali (A.S) regards justice to be a duty and a the Divine trust. To him, it is a the Divine sanctity. He does not expect a Muslim who is aware and informed about the teachings of Islam to be an idle spectator at the scenes of injustice and discrimination.

In his sermon called *Aal-Shaqshaqiyya*, after relating the pathetic political episodes of the past, Ali (A.S) proceeds to advance his reasons for accepting the caliphate. He mentions how, after the assassination of Othman, the people thronged around him urging him to accept the leadership of Muslims. But Ali (A.S) , after the unfortunate events of the past and being aware of the extent of deterioration in the then prevailing situation, was not disposed to accept that grave responsibility. Nevertheless, he saw that if he should reject the caliphate, the face of truth would become still more clouded, and it might be alleged that he was not interested in this matter from the very beginning, that he gave no importance to such affairs. Moreover, in view of the fact that Islam does not consider it permissible for anyone to remain an idle spectator in a society divided into two classes of oppressed and oppressors, one suffering the pangs of hunger and the other well-fed and uneasy with the discomforts of over-eating, there was no alternative for Ali (A.S) but to shoulder this heavy responsibility. He himself explains this in the aforementioned sermon: ABy Him Who split the grain and created living things [do I swear]! Had it not been for the presence of the pressing crowd, were it not for the establishment of (Allah's) testimony upon me through the existence of supporters, and had it not been for the pledge of Allah with the learned, to the effect that they should not connive with the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed, I would have cast the reins of the caliphate on its own shoulders and would have made the last one drink from the same cup that I made the first one to drink (i.e. I would have taken the same stance towards the caliphate as at the time of the first caliph). You would have seen then that in my view the world of yours is not worth more than a goat's sneeze (*Khutab* 3).

Justice Should not be Compromised

Favoritism, nepotism, partiality and shutting up of mouths by big morsels, have always been the essential tools of politicians. Now a man had assumed power and captained the ship of the caliphate who profoundly detested these things. In fact, his main objective was to struggle and fight against this kind of politics. Naturally, with the very inception of Ali's reign, the politicians with their hopes and expectations were disappointed. Their disappointment soon grew into

subversive conspiracies against Ali's government, creating for him many a headache. Well-meaning friends, with sincere goodwill, advised Ali (A.S) to adopt a greater flexibility in his policies for the sake of higher interests. Their advice was: 'Extricate yourself from the ruses of these demagogues, as is said, 'sewing the dog's mouth with a big morsel.' These are influential persons. Some of them are from among the elite *sahaba* of the dawn of Islam. Presently, your real enemy is Mu`awiyah who is in control of a rich and fertile province, Syria. The wisdom lies in setting aside, for the time being, the matter of equality and justice. What harm is there in it?

Ali (A.S) replied to them saying, 'Do you really ask me to seek support through injustice [to my subjects and to sacrifice justice for the sake of political gain]?! By Allah! I will not do it as long as the world lasts and one star follows another in the sky [i.e. I will not do it as long as the order of the universe exists]. Even if it were my own property, I would distribute it with justice. And why not, since it is the property of Allah and I am His trustee?' (*Khutba* 126).

This is an example of how highly Ali (A.S) valued justice and what status it held in his opinion.

The Rights of the People

The needs of a human being are not confined to food, clothing and housing. It may be possible to keep an animal happy by satisfying all its physical needs. But in the case of man, spiritual and psychological factors are as important as physical ones. Different governments following a similar course in providing for the material welfare of the public might achieve differing results because one of them fulfills the psychological needs of the society while the other does not.

One of the pivotal factors which contribute to the securing of the goodwill of the masses is the way a government views them, if it regards them as its slaves, or as its masters and guardians, if it considers the people as possessing legitimate rights and itself only as their trustee, agent and representative. In the first case, whatever service a government may perform for the people is not more than a kind of the master's care of his beast. In the second case, every service performed is equivalent to the discharging of duty by a right trustee. A State's acknowledgment of the authentic rights of the people and avoidance of any kind of action that implies negation of their right of sovereignty, are the primary conditions for securing their trust and goodwill.

The Church and the Right of Sovereignty

At the dawn of the modern age, there was a movement against religion in Europe which also affected, more or less, other regions outside Christendom. This movement was inclined towards materialism. When we examine the causes and roots of this movement, we discover that one of them was the inadequacy of the teachings of the Church from the viewpoint of political rights. The Church authorities, in addition to some European philosophers, developed an artificial relationship with and an association between belief in Allah on the one hand and stripping the people of their political rights by despotic regimes on the other.

Naturally, this led to the assumption of some necessary relationship between democracy on the one hand and atheism on the other. It came to be believed that either we should choose the belief in Allah and accept the right of sovereignty bestowed by Him upon certain individuals, who have otherwise no superiority over others, or deny the existence of Allah so as to establish our right as masters of our own political destiny. From the point of view of religious psychology, one of the causes of the decline of the influence of religion was the contradiction between religion and a natural social need, contrived by religious authorities, especially at a time when that need expressed itself strongly at the level of public consciousness. Right at a time when

despotism and repression had reached their peak in European political life and the people were thirstily cherishing the ideas of liberty and people's sovereignty, the Church and its supporters made an assertion that the people had only duties and responsibilities towards the State and had no rights. This was sufficient to turn the lovers of liberty and democracy against religion, against God in general and the Church in particular.

This mode of thought, in the West as well as in the East, was deeply rooted from ancient times. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in *the Social Contract*, writes the following: AWe are told by Philo, the Emperor Caligula argued, concluding, reasonably enough on this same analogy, that kings were gods or alternately that the people were animals.

During the Middle Ages, this outlook was revived again. Since it assumed the status of religious faith, it induced a revolt against religion itself. Rousseau, in the same book, writes: AGrotius denies that all human government is established for is the benefit of the governed, and he cites the example of slavery. His characteristic method of reasoning is always to offer fact as a proof of right. It is possible to imagine a more logical method, but not one more favorable to tyrants. According to Grotius, therefore, it is doubtful whether humanity belongs to a hundred men, or whether these hundred men belong to humanity, though he seems throughout his book to lean to the first of these views, which is also that of Hobbes. These authors show us the human race as divided into herds of cattle, each with a master who presents it only in order to devour its members.[2]

Rousseau, who calls such a right Athe right of might (right equals force), replies to this logic in this fashion: AObey those in power. If this means Ayield to force, the precept is sound but superfluous; it has never, I suggest, been violated. All power comes from Allah, I agree; but so does every disease, and no one forbids us from summoning a physician. If I am held up by a robber at the edge of a forest, force compels me to hand over my purse. But if I could somehow contrive to keep the purse from him, would I still be obliged in conscience to surrender it? After all, the pistol in the robber's hand is undoubtedly a power.[3]

Although he does not incline to Allah in his totalitarian logic, the basis of the philosophic position of Hobbes, whose views have been referred to above, regarding political rights is that the sovereign represents and personifies the will of the people, and he actually translates the will of the people itself into his actions. However, when we closely examine his reasoning, we find that he has been influenced by the ideas of the Church. Hobbes claims that the individual liberty does not clash with the unlimited power of the sovereign. He writes: ANevertheless, we are not to understand that by such liberty, the sovereign power of life and death is either abolished or limited. For it has been already shown that nothing the sovereign representative can do to a subject, on whatever pretense, can properly be called injustice or injury because every subject is the author of every act the sovereign does, so that he never wants right to anything otherwise than as he himself is the subject of Allah and is bound thereby to obscene the laws of nature. And, therefore, it may and does often happen in commonwealths that a subject may be put to death by the command of the sovereign power and yet neither do the other wrong—as when Jephtha caused his daughter to be sacrificed; in which, and the like cases, he that so dies, had the liberty to do the action for which he is nevertheless without injury put to death. And the same hold also in a sovereign prince that puts to death an innocent subject. For though the action be against the law of nature as being contrary to equity, as was the killing of Uriah by David, yet it was not an injury to Uriah but to God.[4]

As can be noticed, in this philosophy, the responsibility to Allah is assumed to negate the responsibility towards the people. Acknowledgment of duty to Allah is considered sufficient in order that the people may have no rights. Justice, here, is what the sovereign does and oppression and injustice have no meaning. In other words, duty to Allah is assumed to annul the duty to man, and the right of Allah overrides the rights of men. Indubitably, Hobbes, though apparently a free thinker independent of the ideology of the Church, had ecclesiastical ideas not penetrated into his mind, would not have developed such a theory. Precisely that which is totally absent from such philosophies is the idea that faith and belief in Allah should be considered conducive to the establishment of justice and the realization of human rights. The truth is that, firstly, the belief in Allah is the foundation of the idea of justice and inalienable human rights; it is only through the acceptance of the existence of Allah that it is possible to affirm innate human rights and uphold true justice as two realities independent of any premise and convention; secondly, it is the best guarantee for their execution in practice.

The approach of *Nahjul-Balagha*

The approach of *Nahjul-Balagha* to justice and human rights rests on the above-mentioned foundations. In sermon 216, from which we have quoted before, Ali (A.S) says the following: Allah has, by entrusting me with your affairs, given me a right over you and awarded you a similar right over me. The issue of rights, as a subject of discourse, is inexhaustible but is the most restricted of things when it comes to practice. A right does not accrue in favor of any person unless it accrues against him also, and it does not accrue against him unless that it also accrues in his favor.

As can be noticed from the above passage, Allah is central to Ali's statement about justice, rights, and duties. But Ali's stand is opposed to the aforementioned view according to which Allah has bestowed rights on only a handful of individuals solely responsible to Him, and has deprived the rest of people of these rights, making them responsible not only to Him but also to those who have been granted by Him the unlimited privilege to rule others. As a result, the ideas of justice and injustice with regard to the relationship between the ruler and the ruled become meaningless.

In the same sermon, Ali (A.S) says the following: No individual, no matter how eminent and high his station in religion maybe, is not above needing cooperation of the people in discharging his obligations and the responsibilities placed upon him by Allah. Again, no man, however humble and insignificant in the eyes of others, is too low to be ignored for the purpose of his cooperation and his providing assistance.

In the same sermon, Ali (A.S) asks the people not to address him in the way despots are addressed: Do not address me in the manner despots are addressed [i.e. Do not address me by the titles used to flatter despots and tyrants]. In your attitude towards me, do not entertain the kind of considerations that are adopted in the presence of unpredictable tyrants. Do not treat me with affected and obsequious manners. Do not imagine that your candor would displease me or that I expect you to treat me with veneration. One who finds it disagreeable to face true and just criticism would find it more detestable to act upon it. Therefore, do not deny me a word of truth or a just advice.

The Rulers are the People's Trustees, Not Their Masters

In the last chapter, we said that a dangerous and misleading view became current in the thought of some modern European thinkers interlinking in an unnatural fashion the belief in Allah on the one hand and the negation of peoples' rights on the other. This correlation played a

significant role in inducing a group to incline towards materialism. Duty and responsibility to Allah was assumed to necessarily negate the duty and responsibility to the people. The Divine obligations completely displaced human obligations. The belief and faith in Allah (Who, according to the Islamic teachings, created the universe on the principles of truth and justice) was considered to be in conflict with and contradict the belief in innate and natural human rights, instead of being regarded as their basis. Naturally, belief in the right of people's sovereignty was equated with atheism.

From the Islamic point of view, the case is actually the reverse. In *Nahjul-Balagha*, which is the subject of our discussion, the main topics are: *tawhid* and *>irfan*; throughout, the talk is about Allah whose Name occurs repeatedly everywhere in its pages. Nevertheless, it not only does not neglect to discuss the rights of the people and their privileges *vis-a-vis* the ruler, in fact regarding the ruler as the trustee and protector of their rights, but also lays great emphasis on this point. According to the logic of this noble book, the imam/ruler is the protector and trustee of the rights of the people and is held accountable by them. If one is asked as to which of them exists for the other, it is the ruler who exists for the people, not *vice versa*. Sa`di has a similar idea on his mind when he says the following: AlT is not the sheep who are to serve the shepherd; it is the shepherd who is there for their service.

The word *ra`iyyah* (lit. herd), despite the fact that it gradually acquired an abominable meaning in the Persian language, has an original meaning which is essentially good and humanitarian. The word *ra`i* for the ruler and *ra`iyyah* for the masses first appears in the speech of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and is literally used thereafter by Ali (A.S) .

This word is derived from the root *ra`a*, which carries the sense of Aprotection and Asafeguarding. The word *ra`iyyah* is applied to the people for the reason that the ruler is responsible for protecting their lives, property, rights, and liberties.

A tradition related from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) throws full light on the meaning of this statement: ATruly, everyone of you is a *ra`i* responsible for his *rai`yyah*. The ruler is the *ra`i* of his people and is responsible for them; the woman is the *ra`i* of her husband's house and is responsible for it; the slave is the *ra`i* of his master's property and is responsible for it; indeed, each of you is a *ra`i* and is responsible [for those under his charge/care]. [5]

In the preceding pages, we cited some examples from *Nahjul-Balagha* which illustrate Ali's outlook regarding the rights of the people. Here we shall give sample quotes from other sources, beginning with the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

Allah commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners, and that when you judge between the people, judge with justice. (4:58)

Commenting on this verse, al-Tibrisi, in his exegesis *Majma` al-Bayan*, remarks thus: AThere are several opinions regarding the meaning of this verse. Firstly, that it is about trusts in general, including the Divine and the non-Divine, the material and the non-material trusts; secondly, that it is addressed to the rulers, and that Allah, by making the returning of the trusts [to their rightful owners] an obligation, is commanding such rulers to observe the rights of the people.

Then he further adds:

This is corroborated by the verse immediately following it: O believers, obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. (4:59)

According to this verse, people are bound to obey the commands of Allah, His Messenger and those in authority (*wulat al->amr*). While the preceding verse mentions the rights of the people, this one reiterates the complementary rights of those in authority. It has been related from the

Imams that AOne of these two verses is ours (i.e. it establishes our rights in relation to you), and the other is yours (i.e. it outlines your rights in relation to us). Imam al-Baqir (ؑ) said that the *salat*, *zakat*, *sawm*, and *hajj* are some of the trusts (mentioned in 4:58). One of the trusts (*amanat*) is that the *wulat al->amr* have been commanded to justly distribute the *ghana'im*, *sadaqat* and whatever belongs to the people.

In the exegesis *Al-Mizan*, in the part of the commentary upon this verse which deals with tradition, the author relates a tradition from *Al-Durr al-Manthur* from Ali (A.S) that he said, AIt is incumbent on the imam to rule according to the decrees revealed by Allah and to carry out the responsibilities with which he has been entrusted. When he does that, it is incumbent upon the people to pay attention to the Divine command (about obeying the *wali al->amr*), to obey him and to respond to his call.

As noted earlier, the Holy Qur'an considers the ruler, the head of the State, as a trustee and a guardian; it regards just government as a fulfillment of a trust entrusted to the ruler. The approach of the Imams (A.S), in particular that of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (A.S) , corresponds with the view which can be inferred from the Holy Qur'an.

Now that we know the Holy Qur'an's view of this matter, we may go on to examine the statements of *Nahjul-Balagha* dealing with this issue. More than anything else, we must study Ali's letters (epistles) to his governors, especially those which were meant to be official circulars. It is in these letters that we would find glimpses of the teachings of Islam regarding the functions of the ruler and his duties towards the people as well as their rights. Ali (A.S) , in his letter to the governor of Azerbaijan, reminds him of his duties towards the people in these words: ABeware lest you should consider this assignment as a bait [for acquiring personal gain]; rather, it is a trust lying on your neck. You have been charged with care-taking [of the people] by your superior [obligation towards them]. It is not for you to betray your duties with respect to the people (*ra'iyah*). (*Epistle 5*)

In another letter written as a circular to tax collectors, after a few words of advice and admonition, Ali (A.S) says the following: AFulfill the demands of justice in your relationship with the people and be patient in matters regarding their needs because you are treasurers of the people (*ra'iyah*), representatives of the community (*umma*), and envoys of your imams. (*Epistle 51*)

In the famous epistle to Malik al-Ashtar, which contains elaborate instructions about various aspects of government, he writes: AAwaken your heart to kindness and mercy for the people (*ra'iyah*) and love and tenderness for them. Never, never should you ever act with them like a predatory beast which seeks to be satiated by devouring them, for the people fall into two categories: they are either your brethren in faith or your kindred in creation. Do not ever say, >I have been given authority' or >My command should be obeyed' because it corrupts the heart, consumes one's faith, and invites calamities.

In another letter sent as a circular to his army commanders, he says the following: AIt is an obligation that an official should not behave differently with the people (*ra'iyah*) on account of distinction which he receives or material advantage that he may achieve. Instead, these favors from Allah should bring him nearer to Allah's creatures and increase his compassion towards his brethren. (*Epistle 50*)

Ali (A.S) shows an amazing sensitivity to justice, compassion towards the people and a great respect for them and their rights which, as reflected in his letters, is an exemplary and unique attitude towards this issue.

There is another epistle in *Nahjul-Balagha* which consists of instructions to the collectors of *zakat*, and is entitled: ATo the officials assigned to the job of collecting *zakat*. The title indicates that it was not addressed to any particular official but sent either as a general instruction in writing or delivered as a routine oral instruction. Sayyid al-Radhi has included it in the section of Epistles, or letters, with the clarification that he is placing this letter here to show to what extent Ali (A.S) was meticulous in matters pertaining to justice and the rights of the people, being attentive not only to main points but also to minute details. Here are Ali's instructions: ASet out with the fear of Allah, Who is One and has no partner. Do not intimidate any Muslim. Do not trespass upon his land so as to displease him. Do not take from him more than Allah's share in his property. When you approach a tribe, at first come down at their watering place, stay there instead of entering their houses. Approach them with calm dignity and salute them when you stand among them, grudge not a proper greeting to them. Then say to them, AO servants of Allah! The *Wali* and *Khalifah* of Allah has sent me to you to collect from you Allah's share in your property. Is there anything of His share in your property? If there is, return it to His *Wali*. A If someone says '>NO,' then do not repeat the demand. If someone answers in the affirmative, go with him without frightening, threatening, or compelling him. Take whatever gold and silver he gives you. If he has cattle or camels, do not approach them save with his permission, because the major part belongs to him. When you arrive (into the cattle enclosure), do not enter upon them in a bossy and rude manner. *Epistle 25*, also see 26, 27 and 46)

The passages quoted above are sufficient to throw light on Ali's attitude as a ruler toward the people under his rule.

SECTION FIVE

MORAL LECTURES AND APHORISMS

Inimitable Moral Teaching

Moral and spiritual teachings constitute the greater part of *Nahjul-Balagha*, making up almost half of the book. More than anything else, the fame of *Nahjul-Balagha* is due to the sermons, exhortations and aphorisms on ethical and moral subjects.

Aside from the moral teachings of the Holy Qur'an and a number of the sermons and sayings of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , which are to be considered the source and antecedent of *Nahjul-Balagha*, the teachings of *Nahjul-Balagha* are without a match in the Arabic and Persian languages. For more than a thousand years, these sermons have played an influential role serving as a matchless source of inspiration, yet retaining their original power to quicken the heartbeat, to sublimate emotions, and to bring tears to the eyes. It seems that as long as there remains any trace of humanity in the world, these sermons shall continue to exercise their original power and influence.

A Comparison

The literature of Arabic and Persian is replete with works containing spiritual and moral teachings of the highest sublimity and elegance, though mainly in the form of poetry. There is, for example, the famous *qasida* by Abul-Fath al-Busti (360-400/971-1010) which begins with the verse saying:

*Worldly profit and achievement is loss,
And the gain unmarked by the seal of pure goodness...*

There is also the eulogizing *qasida* by Abul-Hasan al-Tihami, which he wrote on the early death of his youthful son; it begins with these lines:

The law of fate governs the destiny of creation,

And this world is not a place to settle in.

Every one of these works is an everlasting masterpiece of its kind and shines like a star on the horizons of the Arabic literature of the Islamic era, never to lose its freshness and charm. In Persian, the Gulistan and the Bustan of Sa`di and his *qasa'id* serve as unusually attractive and effective means of moral advice and are masterpieces of their own kind. To give some examples, here are some famous verses of the Gulistan which start with:

*Every breath is a fraction of life gone,
And when I see, not much of it does remain.*

Or in another *qasida* where he says the following:

*O people! The world is not a place for leisure and repose;
To a wise man, it is not worth the effort to possess.*

Or at another place where he says the following:

*The world on water and life on wind do rest;
Salute the brave ones who to them do not tie their hearts.*

... and where he says the following:

*Time and fortune are subject to endless change;
The wise man doesn't attach his heart to the world.*

Sa`di's *Bustan* is full of profound and glowing spiritual pieces of advice and, perhaps, it is at its best in the ninth chapter on *APenitence and the Right Way*. The same is true of some portions of the *Mathnawi* of Rumi and works of all other Persian poets from whom we shall not further quote any examples.

In Islamic literature, including the Arabic and the Persian, there exist excellent examples of spiritual counsels and aphorisms. This Islamic literary genre is not confined to these two languages but is also found in Turkish, Urdu and other languages. A characteristic spirit pervades all of them. Anyone familiar with the Holy Qur'an, the sayings of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household), of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (A.S), of the other Imams, and of Muslim saints of the first rank can observe a characteristic spirit pervading all Persian literature containing spiritual counsel which represents the spirit of Islam embodied in the Persian language and embellished with its charm and sweetness.

If an expert, or a group of experts, in Arabic and Persian literature acquainted with the works in all other languages that reflect the spirit of Islam were to collect the masterpieces in the field of spiritual counsel, the extraordinary richness and maturity of the Islamic culture in this field will be revealed.

It is strange that as far as the works on spiritual counsel are concerned, the Persian genius has mostly expressed itself in poetry; there is no such work of eminence in prose. All that exists of it in prose is in the form of short sayings, like the prose writings of the Gulistan, a part of which consists of spiritual counsels and is in itself a masterpiece, or the sayings ascribed to Khawajah Abdullah al-Ansari.

Of course, my own knowledge is inadequate, but as far as I know, there does not exist in Persian prose any remarkable work, except for short sayings, not even a passage, which is long enough to be counted as a short discourse, especially a discourse which was originally delivered extempore and later collected and recorded in writing.

There are discourses which have been related from Rumi or Sa`di meant as oral moral advice to their followers; they also by no means possess the brilliance and charm of the poetic works of

those masters and definitely are not worth being compared with the discourses of *Nahjul-Balagha*.

The same can be said about the writings which have reached us in the form of a treatise or letter, such as the *Nasihah al-Muluk* by Abu Hamid Muhammed al-Ghazali, the *Taziyaneh-ye suluk* by Ahmed al-Ghazali, the latter being an elaborate epistle addressed to his follower and pupil A`Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadani.

Spiritual Counsel and Wisdom

Moral counsel, according to the Holy Qur`an, is one of the three ways of invitation towards Allah (*hikma, maw`iza, al-jidal al-hasan*, i.e. wisdom, good admonition, and honorable debate, as mentioned in 16: 125).

The difference between *hikma* (wisdom, philosophy) and *maw`iza* (spiritual and moral advice and admonition) lies in the fact that *hikma* is for instruction and imparting knowledge, while *maw`iza* is meant for reminding. *Hikma* is struggle against ignorance and *maw`iza* is struggle against negligence and indifference. *Hikma* deals with the intellect and *maw`iza* appeals to the heart. *Hikma* educates, while *maw`iza* prepares the intellect for the employment of its reserves. *Hikma* is a lamp and *maw`iza* is an eye-opener. *Hikma* is for ratiocination, while *maw`iza* is for self-awakening. *Hikma* is the language of the intellect, while *maw`iza* is the message for the spirit. Accordingly, the personality of the speaker plays an essential role in *maw`iza*, which is not the case with *hikma*. In *hikma*, two minds communicate in an impersonal manner. But in *maw`iza*, the situation is like the passage of an electric charge that flows from the speaker, who is at a higher potential, to the listener.

For this reason, it has been said of *maw`iza* that: AIf it comes forth from the soul, then it necessarily alights upon the heart. Otherwise, it does not go beyond the listener`s ears. It is about the quality of *maw`iza* that it is said: AThe speech which originates from the heart enters another heart, and the words which originate from the tongue do not go beyond the ears.

It is true that the words that come from the heart, being the message of the soul, invade other hearts; but if they do not convey the message of the soul, they are no more than empty literary devices which do not go beyond the listener`s ear-drum.

Maw`iza and Khitaba (Exhortation and Oratory)

Maw`iza also differs from *khitaba* (oratory, rhetoric). Although oratory also deals with emotions, it seeks to stir and agitate them. *Maw`iza*, on the other hand, is intended to pacify emotions, and it seeks to bring them under control. Oratory is effective when emotions are inert and stagnant; *maw`iza* is required when lusts and passions become unmanageable. Oratory stirs the passion for power and glory, the feelings of honor, heroism, chivalry, manliness, patriotism, nobility, righteousness, virtue and service; it is followed by movement and excitement. But *maw`iza* checks inappropriate passion and excitement. Rhetoric and oratory snatch control from the hands of calculating reason, handing it over to tempestuous passions. But *maw`iza* appeases the tempests of passions and prepares the ground for calculation and foresight. Oratory draws one to the outside while *maw`iza* makes him turn to his inner self.

Rhetoric and counsel are both necessary and essential, and *Nahjul-Balagha* makes use of both of them. The main thing is to judge the right time for the use of each of them. The impassioned speeches of Amir al-Mu`minin (A.S) were delivered at a time when it was necessary to stir up passions and to build up a tempest to destroy an unjust and oppressive structure, such as at the time of the Battle of Siffin when Ali (A.S) delivered a fiery speech before the engagement with Mu`awiyah`s forces. Mu`awiyah`s forces, arriving ahead of Ali`s army, had taken control of the

river bank and stopped the supply of water to Ali's camp. At first, Ali (A.S) strived to abstain from resorting to force, desiring the problem to be solved through negotiation. But Mu'awiyah, who had some other designs, considering occupation of the river bank a victory for himself, refused every offer of negotiation. When things became difficult for Ali's men, it was time when he should stir the emotions of his soldiers through a fiery speech, creating a tempest that would rout the enemy. This is how Ali (A.S) addressed his companions:

They are eager that you should make them taste the flavor of battle. So you have two alternatives before you: either submit to disgrace and ignominy, or quench your swords' thirst with their blood and quench your own thirst with water. It is death to survive through defeat, while true life is to die for the sake of victory. Mu'awiyah is leading a handful of deluded insurgents and has deceived them by keeping them in the dark about the truth, with the result that their throats are the targets of your deadly arrows. [1]

These words flared their emotions, provoked their sense of honor and made the blood surge in their veins. It was not yet sunset before Ali's companions had seized the river bank, throwing back Mu'awiyah's forces.

However, Ali's *mawa'iz* were delivered in different circumstances. During the days of the first three caliphs, particularly during >Othman's rule, immeasurable amounts of wealth and booty, won through consecutive victories, flowed into Muslim hands. Due to the absence of any careful programs for correct utilization of that wealth, particularly due to the aristocratic, or rather tribal, rule during the reign of >Othman, moral corruption, worldliness, and love of comfort and luxury found their ways into the Muslim society. Tribal rivalries were revived, and racial prejudice between Arabs and non-Arabs was added to it. In that clamor for worldliness and mounting prejudices, rivalries, and greed for greater share of the war booty, the only cry of protest charged with spiritual exhortation was that of Ali (A.S) .

God willing, we shall discuss in the coming chapters the various themes dealt with in Ali's *mawa'iz*, such as *taqwa* (piety), worldliness, *zuhd* (asceticism), desires, the dread of death, the dreads of the Day of Judgment, the need to take lesson from the history of past nations and peoples..., etc.

Nahjul-Balagha's Recurring Themes

Out of the 241 fragments collected under the title *Akhutab* by Sayyid al-Radhi (though not all of them are *Khutab* or sermons), about 86 can be classified as *mawa'iz* or at least contain a series of spiritual pieces of advice. Some of them, however, are elaborate and lengthy, like *khutba* 176 which opens with the sentence *Avail yourselves of the Divine expositions*, the *khutba* named *Aal-Qasi'a* (which is the longest sermon in *Nahjul-Balagha*), and the *khutba* 93 (called *Akhutbat al-muttaqin*, the Asermon of the pious).

Out of some seventy-nine passages that are classified as *Aepistles*, letters (which not all of them are), about twenty-five, either completely or partially, consist of spiritual and moral teachings. Some of them are quite lengthy and elaborate, such as letter 31, which constitutes of Ali's advice to his son Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (□), and the lengthiest of all, except the famous directive sent to Malik al-Ashtar. Another is letter 45, the well-known epistle of Ali (A.S) to Othman ibn Hunayf, his governor over Basra.

The Themes in Spiritual Pieces of Advice

Various themes are found in the spiritual pieces of advice of *Nahjul-Balagha*: *taqwa* (piety) ; *tawakkul* (trust in Allah) ; *sabr* (patience, ortitude) ; *zuhd*(asceticism) ; therenunciation of worldly pleasures and luxuries, the renunciation of inordinate desires and far-fetched hopes; the

condemnation of injustice and prejudice, emphasis on mercy, love, helping of the oppressed and sympathy toward the weak; emphasis on the qualities of fortitude, courage, and strength; emphasis on unity and solidarity and condemnation of disunity; the invitation to take lesson from history; the invitation to thought, meditation, remembrance, and self-criticism; the reminders about the brevity of life and the swiftness of its pace; the remembrance of death; the hardships of death-throes; experiences of the life after death; the reminders of the dreadful events of the Day of Judgment, and so on. These are some of the frequent themes of the spiritual pieces of advice of *Nahjul-Balagha*.

Ali's Logic

In order to understand this aspect of *Nahjul-Balagha*, or, in other words, to understand Ali (A.S) when he speaks as a moral and spiritual counsellor and to understand his didactic outlook, so as to draw benefit from that everflowing source, it is not enough to enumerate the various themes and topics dealt with by Ali (A.S) in his discourses. It is not sufficient merely to remark that Ali (A.S) has spoken about *taqwa*, *tawakkul* or *zuhd*; rather, we must see what significance did he attribute to these words. We must uncover his didactic philosophy regarding the development of the human character and his perception of the human aspiration for piety, purity, freedom, and deliverance from spiritual servitude and thralldom. As we know, these are words employed by all-in particular those who are wont to play the role of a moralist; but all individuals do not mean the same kind of things by these terms. Sometimes, the meanings one person attributes to these words are quite contrary to those meant by another, and naturally lead to conclusions which are quite opposite.

Consequently, it is essential to elaborate somewhat the specific meanings of these terms in Ali's vocabulary, starting with *taqwa*.

Taqwa

Taqwa is one of the most frequent motifs of *Nahjul-Balagha*. In fact it would be hard to find another book which emphasizes this spiritual term to the extent of this book. Even in *Nahjul-Balagha*, no other term or concept receives so much attention and stress as *taqwa*. What is *taqwa*?

Often it is thought that *taqwa* means piety and abstinence and so implies a negative attitude. In other words, it is maintained that the greater the amount of abstinence, withdrawal, and self-denial, the more perfect is one's *taqwa*. According to this interpretation, *taqwa* is a concept divorced from active life; secondly it is a negative attitude; thirdly, it means that the more severely this negative attitude is exercised, the greater one's *taqwa* would be. Accordingly, the sanctimonious professors of *taqwa*, in order to avoid its being tainted and to protect it from any blemish, withdraw from the bustle of life, keeping themselves away from involvement in any matter or affair of the world.

Undeniably, abstinence and caution exercised with discretion is an essential principle of wholesome living. For, in order to lead a healthy life, man is forced to negate and affirm, deny and posit, renounce and accept, avoid and welcome different things. It is through denial and negation that the positive in life can be realized. It is through renunciation and avoidance that concentration is given to action.

The principle of *tawhid* contained in the dictum *la ilaha illa Allah* is at the same time a negation as well as an affirmation. Without negation of everything other than Allah it is not possible to arrive at *tawhid*. That is why rebellion and surrender, *kufr* (unbelief) and *iman* (belief), go together; that is, every surrender requires a rebellion and every faith (*iman*) calls for a

denial and rejection (kufr), and every affirmation implies a negation. The Holy Qur'an says the following:

So whoever disbelieves in taghut and believes in Allah, has laid hold of the most firm bond. (2:256)

However, firstly, every denial, negation, rejection, and rebellion operates between the limits of two opposites; the negation of one thing implies movement towards its opposite; therejection of the one marks the beginning of the acceptance of the other. Accordingly, every healthy denial and rejection has both a direction and a goal, and is confined within certain definite limits. Therefore, a blind practice and purposeless attitude, which has neither direction nor a goal, nor is confined within any limits, is neither defensible nor of any spiritual worth.

Secondly, the meaning of *taqwa* in *Nahjul-Balagha* is not synonymous with that of 'abstinence', even in its logically accepted sense discussed above. *Taqwa*, on the other hand, according to *Nahjul-Balagha*, is a spiritual faculty which appears as a result of continued exercise and practice. The healthy and rational forms of abstinence are, firstly, the preparatory causes for the emergence of that spiritual faculty; secondly, they are also its effects and outcome.

This faculty strengthens and vitalizes the soul, giving it a kind of immunity. A person who is devoid of this faculty, if he wants to keep himself free from sins, it is unavoidable for him to keep away from the causes of sin. Since society is never without these causes, inevitably he has to go into seclusion and isolate himself. It follows from this argument that one should either remain pious by isolating himself from one's environment, or he should enter society and bid farewell to *taqwa*. Moreover, according to this logic, the more isolated and secluded a person's life is and the more he abstains from mixing with other people, the greater is his piety and *taqwa* in the eyes of the common people.

However, if the faculty of *taqwa* is cultivated inside a person's soul, it is no longer necessary for him to seclude himself from his environment. He can keep himself clean and uncorrupted without severing his relations with society.

The former kind of persons are like those who take refuge in mountains for fear of some plague or epidemic. The second kind resemble those who acquire immunity and resistance through vaccination and so do not deem it necessary to leave the city and avoid contact with their townsfolk. On the other hand, they hasten to the aid of the suffering sick in order to save them. Sa'di is alluding to the first kind of pious in his *Gulistan*, when he says the following:

*Saw I a sage in the mountains,
Happy in a cave, far from the world's tide.
Said I, AWhy not to the city return,
And lighten your heart of this burden?
He said, AThe city abounds in tempting beauties,
And even elephants slip where mud is thick.*

Nahjul-Balagha speaks of *taqwa* as a spiritual faculty acquired through exercise and assiduity, which on its emergence produces certain characteristic effects, one of which is the ability to abstain from sins with ease.

I guarantee the truth of my words and I am responsible for what I say. If similar events and experiences of the past serve as a lesson for a person, then *taqwa* prevents him from plunging recklessly into doubts. [2]

Beware that sins are like unruly horses whose reins have been taken away and which plunge with their riders into hell-fire. But *taqwa* is like a trained steed whose reins are in the hands of its rider and enters with its rider into Paradise. [3]

In this sermon *taqwa* is described as a spiritual condition which results in control and command over one's self. It explains that the result of subjugation to desires and lusts and being devoid of *taqwa* degrades one's personality making it vulnerable to the cravings of the carnal self. In such a state, man is like a helpless rider without any power and control, whom his mount takes wherever it desires. The essence of *taqwa* lies in possessing a spiritual personality endowed with will-power, and possessing mastery over the domain of one's self. A man with *taqwa* is like an expert horseman riding a well-trained horse and who with complete mastery and control drives his tractable steed in the direction of his choice.

Certainly the *taqwa* of Allah assists His awliya (friends) in abstaining from unlawful deeds and instils His fear into their hearts. As a result, their nights are passed in wakefulness and their days in thirst [on account of fasting]. [4]

Here Ali (A.S) makes it clear that *taqwa* is something which automatically leads to abstention from unlawful actions and to the fear of Allah, which are its necessary effects. Therefore, according to this view, *taqwa* is neither itself abstinence nor fear of Allah; rather, it is a sacred spiritual faculty of which these two are only consequences:

For indeed, today *taqwa* is a shield and a safeguard, and tomorrow (i.e. in the Hereafter) it shall be the path to Paradise. [5]

In *khutba* 157, *taqwa* is compared to an invincible fortress built on heights which the enemy has no power to infiltrate. Throughout, the emphasis of the Imam (ؑ) lies on the spiritual and psychological aspect of *taqwa* and its effects upon human spirit involving the emergence of a dislike for sin and corruption and an inclination towards piety, purity, and virtue.

Further illustrations of this view can be cited from *Nahjul-Balagha*, but it seems that the above quotations are sufficient.

Taqwa is Immunity not Restraint

We have already mentioned some of the various elements found in the spiritual pieces of advice (*mawa'iz*) of *Nahjul-Balagha*. We began with *taqwa* and saw that *taqwa*, from the viewpoint of *Nahjul-Balagha*, is a sublime spiritual faculty which is the cause of certain attractions and repulsions; i.e. attraction towards edifying spiritual values and repulsion towards degrading materialistic vices. *Nahjul-Balagha* considers *taqwa* as a spiritual state that gives strength to human personality and makes man the master of his own self.

Taqwa as Immunity

Nahjul-Balagha stresses that *taqwa* is for man a shield and a shelter, not a chain or a prison. There are many who do not distinguish between immunity and restraint, between security and confinement, and promptly advocate the destruction of the sanctuary of *taqwa* in the name of freedom and liberation from bonds and restraint.

That which is common between a sanctuary and a prison is the existence of a barrier. Whereas the walls of a sanctuary avert dangers, the walls of a prison hinder the inmates from realizing their inner capacities and from benefiting from the bounties of life. Ali (A.S) clarifies the difference between the two, where he says the following:

Let it be known to you, O servants of Allah, that *taqwa* is a formidable fortress, whereas impiety and corruption is a weak and indefensible enclosure that does not safeguard its people,

and does not offer any protection to those who take refuge in it. Indeed, it is only with *taqwa* that the tentacles of sins and misdeeds can be severed. [6]

Ali (A.S) , in this sublime advice, compares sins and evil deeds which are afflictions of the human soul to poisonous insects and reptiles, and suggests that the faculty of *taqwa* is an effective defence against them. In some of his discourses, he makes it clear that *taqwa* not only does not entail restraint and restriction or is an impediment to freedom, but on the other hand it is the source and fountainhead of all true freedoms. In *khutba* 230, he says the following:

Taqwa is the key to guidance, the provision for the next world, the freedom from every kind of slavery, and the deliverance from every form of destruction.

The message is clear. *Taqwa* gives man spiritual freedom and liberates him from the chains of slavery and servitude to lusts and passions. It releases him from the bonds of envy, lust, and anger, and this expurgates society from all kinds of social bondages and servitudes. Men who are not slaves of comfort, money, power, and glory, never surrender to the various forms of bondage which plague the human society.

Nahjul-Balagha deals with the theme of *taqwa* and its various effects in many of its passages; but we don't consider it necessary to discuss all of them here. Our main objective here is to discover the meaning of *taqwa* from the point of view of *Nahjul-Balagha*, so as to unearth thereason for so much emphasis that this book places on this concept.

Of the many effects of *taqwa* that have been pointed out, two are more important than therest: firstly, the development of insight and clarity of vision; secondly, the capacity to solve problems and to weather difficulties and crises. We have discussed this in detail elsewhere.[7] Moreover, a discussion of these effects of *taqwa* here will take us beyond our present aim which is to clarify the true meaning of *taqwa*. It will not be out of place to call attention to certain profound remarks of *Nahjul-Balagha* about thereciprocal relationship between the human being and *taqwa*.

A Reciprocal Commitment

In spite of the great emphasis laid by *Nahjul-Balagha* on *taqwa* as a kind of guarantee and immunity against sin and temptation, it should be noticed that one must never neglect to safeguard and protect *taqwa* itself. *Taqwa* guards man, and man must safeguard his *taqwa*. This, as we shall presently explain, is not a vicious circle.

This reciprocal guarding of the one by the other is comparable to the one between a person and his clothes. A man takes care of his clothes and protects them from being spoiled or stolen, while the clothes in turn guard him against heat or cold. In fact the Holy Qur'an speaks of *taqwa* as a garment:

And the garment of taqwa -that is better. (7:26)

Ali (A.S) , speaking about this relationship of mutual protection between a person and his *taqwa*, says the following:

Turn your sleep into wakefulness by the means of *taqwa* and spend your days in its company. Keep its consciousness alive in your hearts. With it wash away your sins and cure your ailments. Beware, guard your *taqwa* and place your self under its guard. [8]

At another place in the same sermon, Ali (A.S) says the following:

O Allah's servants, I advise you to cultivate the *taqwa* of Allah. Indeed it is a right that Allah has over you and it is through it that you can have any right over Allah. You should beseech Allah's help for guarding it and seek its aid for [fulfilling your duty to] Allah. [9]

Zuhd and Piety

Another spiritual motif conspicuous in the teachings of *Nahjul-Balagha* is *zuhd*, which after *taqwa* is the most recurring theme of the book. '>Zuhd' means renunciation of the '>world', and very often we encounter denunciation of the '>world', and invitation and exhortation to renounce it. It appears to me that it forms one of the important themes of *Nahjul-Balagha*, which needs to be elucidated and explained in the light of various aspects of Ali's approach.

We shall begin our discussion with the word '>zuhd' the words '>zuhd' and '>raghbah' (attraction, desire), if mentioned without reference to their objects, are opposite to each other. '>Zuhd' means indifference and avoidance, and '>raghbah' means attraction, inclination, and desire.

Indifference can be of two kinds: involuntary and cultivated. A person is involuntarily indifferent towards a certain thing when by nature he does not have any desire for it, as in the case of a sick person who shows no desire either for food, or fruits, or anything else. Obviously, this kind of indifference and abstinence has nothing to do with the particular sense implied in '>zuhd'.

Another kind of indifference or abstinence is spiritual or intellectual; that is, things which are natural objects of desire are not considered the goal and objective by a human being in the course of his struggle for perfection and felicity. The ultimate objective and goal may be something above mundane aims and sensual pleasures; either it may be to attain the sensual pleasures of the Hereafter, or it may not belong to this kind of things. It may be some high ethical and moral ideal, like honor, dignity, nobility, liberty, or it may belong to the spiritual sphere, like the remembrance of Allah, the love of Allah, and the desire to acquire nearness to Him.

Accordingly the *zahid* (i.e. one who practises *zuhd*) is someone whose interest transcends the sphere of material existence, and whose object of aspiration lies beyond the kind of things we have mentioned above. The indifference of a *zahid* originates in the sphere of his ideas, ideals, and hopes, not in his physiological makeup.

There are two places where we come across the definition of '>zuhd' in *Nahjul-Balagha*. Both of them confirm the above interpretation of *zuhd*. Ali (A.S) , in *khutba* 81, says the following:

O people! *zuhd* means curtailing of hopes, thanking Allah for His blessings and bounties, and abstaining from that which He has forbidden.

In *hikma* 439, he says the following:

All *zuhd* is summarized in two sentences of the Holy Qur'an: Allah, the Most Exalted, says, *So that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor rejoice in what has come to you.* [57:23] Whoever does not grieve over what he has lost and does not rejoice over what comes to him has acquired *zuhd* in both of its aspects.

Obviously when something does not occupy a significant position among one's objectives and ideals, or rather is not at all significant in the scheme of things which matter to him, its gain and loss do not make the slightest difference to him.

However, there are some points that need clarification. Is *zuhd*, or detachment from the world, on which *Nahjul-Balagha*, following the Holy Qur'anic teachings, puts so much emphasis, to be taken solely in an ethical and spiritual sense? In other words, is *zuhd* purely a spiritual state, or does it possess practical implications also? That is, is *zuhd* spiritual abstinence only or is it accompanied by an abstinence in practical life also? Assuming that *zuhd* is to be applied in practice, is it limited to abstinence from unlawful things (*muharramat*), as pointed out in *khutba* 81, or does it include something more, as exemplified by the life of Ali (A.S) and before him by the life of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ?

Proceeding on the assumption that *zuhd* is not limited to-*muharramat* only and that it covers permissible things (*mubahat*) as well, one may ask: what is its underlying rationale and philosophy? What is the use of an ascetic life that limits and confines life, rejecting its blessings and bounties? Is *zuhd* to be practised at all times or only under certain particular conditions? Is *zuhd*-in Thisense of abstinence from even permissible things-basically in agreement with other Islamic teachings?

Apart from this, the basis of *zuhd* and renunciation of the world is the pursuit of supra-material objectives and ideals. What are they from the point of view of Islam? In particular, how does *Nahjul-Balagha* describe them?

All these questions regarding *zuhd*, renunciation, and curtailing of hopes-themes which have so often been discussed in *Nahjul-Balagha*-need to be clarified. We shall discuss these questions in the following pages and try to answer them.

Islamic *Zuhd* and Christian Asceticism

In the last section we said that *zuhd*, as defined by *Nahjul-Balagha*, is a spiritual state that makes the *zahid*, on account of his spiritual and other worldly aspirations, indifferent towards the manifestations of material existence. This indifference is not confined to his heart, intellect, and feelings and is not limited to his conscience. It also manifests itself on the practical level of life in the form of simplicity, contentment, and obstention from hedonistic urges and love of luxuries. A life of *zuhd* not only implies that a man should be free from attachment to the material aspects of life, but he should also practically abstain from indulgence in pleasures. The *zuhhad* are those who in life are satisfied with the barest material necessities. Ali (A.S) was a *zahid*, who was not only emotionally detached from the world but also indifferent to its pleasures and enjoyments. In other words, he had >renounced' the >world'.

Two Questions

Here, inevitably, two questions shall arise in thereader's mind. Firstly, as we know, Islam has opposed monasticism considering it to be an innovation of Christian priests and monks.[10] the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) has stated in unequivocal terms that:

There is no monasticism (*rahbaniyyah*) in Islam.

Once when the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was informed that some of his Companions had retired into seclusion renouncing everything and devoting all their time to worship and prayer in seclusion, he became very indignant. He told them: AI, who am your prophet, am not such. In this way, the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) made them to understand that Islam is a religion of life and society, not a monastic faith. Moreover, the comprehensive and multi-faceted teachings of Islam in social, economic, political and moral spheres are based on reverence for life, not on its renunciation.

Apart from this, monasticism and renunciation of life are incompatible with the world-view of Islam and its optimistic outlook about the universe and creation. Unlike some other philosophies and creeds, Islam does not view the world and life in society with pessimism. It does not divide all creation into ugly and beautiful, black and white, good and evil, proper and improper, right and wrong. Now The second question may be stated in these words: AAside from the fact that asceticism is the same as monasticism-which are both incompatible with the Islamic spirit-what is the philosophy underlying *zuhd* ?

Moreover, why should men be urged to practise *zuhd*? Why should man, seeing the limitless bounties of Allah and good things of life around him, be called upon to pass by the side of this delightful stream indifferently and without so much as wetting his feet? Are the ascetic teachings

found in Islam, on this basis, later innovations (*bid'ah*) introduced into Islam from other creeds like Christianity and Buddhism? And if this is correct, how are we to explain and interpret the teachings of *Nahjul-Balagha*? How can we explain the indubitable details known about the Prophet's life and that of Ali (A.S) ?

The answer is that Islamic *zuhd* is different from Christian asceticism or monasticism. Asceticism is retreat from people and society and seclusion for the purpose of worship. According to it, the life and works of the world are separate from the works of the Here-after and the one is alien to the other. One should, of necessity, choose either one of the two. One should either devote oneself to worship of Allah which shall bear fruits in the Hereafter, or take up the life of the world and benefit from its immediate pleasures. Accordingly, monasticism is opposed to life and social relationships. It requires with-drawal from people and negation of responsibility and commitment towards them.

On the other hand, *zuhd* in Islam, though it requires a simple and unaffected life-style and is based on abstention from luxuries and love of comforts and pleasures, operates in the very midst of life and social relations and is sociable. It draws inspiration, and proceeds, from the goal of better fulfillment of social responsibilities and duties.

The conception of *zuhd* in Islam is not something that would lead to asceticism, because a sharp distinction between this world and the next is nowhere drawn. From the viewpoint of Islam, this world and the next are not separable, not alien to each other. The relation of this world to the other is similar to that between the inward and outward sides of a single reality. They are like the warp and woof of a single fabric. They are to each other as the soul to the body. Their relation-ship can be assumed to be something midway between unity and duality. The works of this world and those of the next are interrelated similarly. Their difference is that of quality, without being essential. Accordingly, that which is harmful for the other world is also to one's detriment in the present world, and everything which is beneficial for the summum bonum of life in this world is also beneficial for life in the next world. Therefore, if a certain work which is in accordance with the higher interests of life in this world is performed with motives that are devoid of the higher, supra-material, and transcendental elements, that work would be considered totally this-worldly and would not, as the Holy Qur'an tells us, elevate man in his ascent towards Allah. However, if a work or action is motivated by sublime aims and intentions and is executed with a higher vision that transcends the narrow limits of worldly life, the same work and action is considered >other-worldly.'

The Islamic *zuhd*, as we said, is grounded in the very context and stream of life and gives a peculiar quality to living by emphasizing certain values in life. As affirmed by the Islamic texts, *zuhd* in Islam is based on three essential principles of the Islamic world-outlook.

The Three Essential Principles

1)Enjoyments derived from the physical, material, and natural means of life are not sufficient for man's happiness and felicity. A series of spiritual needs are inbuilt in the human nature, without whose satisfaction the enjoyment provided by material means of life is not enough to make man truly happy.

2)The individual's felicity and happiness is not separable from that of society. Since man is emotionally bound to his society, and carries within him a sense of responsibility towards it, his individual happiness cannot be independent of the prosperity and peace of his fellow men.

3)The soul, despite its fusion and a kind of unity with the body, has a reality of its own. It is a principle in addition to the body which constitutes another principle in itself. The soul is an

independent source of pleasure and pain. Like the body, or rather even more than it, it stands in need of nourishment, training, growth, and development. The soul, however, cannot dispense with the health and vigour of the body. At the same time, it is undeniable that total indulgence in physical pleasures and complete immersion into the delights of sensual experiences does not leave any opportunity for realizing the soul's unlimited possibilities. Therefore, there exists a kind of incompatibility between physical enjoyment and spiritual satisfaction. This is especially true if the attention and attachment to physical needs were carried to the very extreme of total immersion and absorption.

It is not true that all sorrow and grief are related to the soul and that all pleasures are derived from the body. In fact, the spiritual pleasures are much profounder, purer, and lasting than bodily pleasures. To sum up, one-sided attention to physical pleasures and material enjoyments finally results in compromising the total human happiness. Therefore, if we want to make our lives happy, rich, pure, majestic, attractive, and beautiful, we cannot afford to ignore the spiritual aspects of our being.

With due attention to these principles, the meaning of *zuhd* in Islam becomes clear. The knowledge of these principles allows us to understand why Islam rejects monasticism but welcomes a form of asceticism which is rooted in the very heart of life and in the context of social existence. We shall explain the meaning of *zuhd* in Islamic texts on the basis of these three principles.

The Zahid and the Monk

We said that Islam encourages *zuhd* but condemns monasticism. Both the *zahid* and the ascetic monk seek abstinence from pleasures and enjoyments. But the monk evades life in society and the responsibilities and the duties it entails, regarding them as the low and mean facets of worldly existence, and takes refuge in mountains or monasteries. On the other hand, the *zahid* accepts society with its norms, ideals, duties, and commitments. Both the *zahid* and the monk are otherworldly, but the *zahid* is a social otherworldly. Also their attitudes to abstinence from pleasures are not identical; the monk disdains hygiene and cleanliness and derides married life and procreation. The *zahid*, on the contrary, considers hygiene and cleanliness, matrimony and parenthood to be a part of his duties. Both the *zahid* and the monk are ascetics, but whereas the 'world' renounced by the *zahid* is indulgence and immersion in pleasures, luxuries, and comforts (he rejects the attitude which considers them to be life's ultimate goal and objective), the 'world' renounced by the monk includes life's work and activity, and the duty and responsibility which go with social life. That is why the *zahid's zuhd* operates in the midst of social life, and is, therefore, not only compatible with social responsibility and commitment but is moreover a very effective means of discharging them.

The difference between the *zahid* and the monk arises from two different world-outlooks. From the viewpoint of the monk, this world and the next are two different spheres, separate from and unrelated to each other. To him, happiness in this world is not only independent of happiness in the next but is incompatible with it. He considers the two forms of happiness as irreconcilable contradictories. Naturally, that which leads to felicity and happiness in this world is considered different from the works and deeds which lead to success in the Hereafter. In other words, the means of acquiring happiness in this world and the next are regarded as being incompatible and contradictory. It is imagined that a single work and action cannot simultaneously be a means for acquiring happiness in both the worlds.

But in the world-view of the *zahid*, the world and the Hereafter are interconnected. The world is a preamble to the Hereafter. It is a farm of which the Hereafter is the harvest. From the *zahid*'s viewpoint, that which gives order, security, uprightness, prosperity, and flourish to life is application of other-worldly criteria to the life of this world.

The essence of felicity and happiness in the other world lies in successful accomplishment of commitments and responsibilities of this world, performed with faith, piety, purity, and *taqwa*.

In truth, the *zahid*'s concept of *zuhd* and the monk's rationale for his asceticism are incompatible and contradictory to each other. Basically, monasticism is a deviation introduced by men into the teachings of prophets, due to ignorance or vested interests. Now we shall explain the philosophy of *zuhd* in the light of the teachings of the Islamic texts.

Zuhd and Altruism

One of the ingredients of *zuhd* is altruism. *Ithar* (altruism) and *atharah* (egoism) are derived from the same root. *Atharah* means giving precedence to one's interests over those of others. In other words it implies monopolizing everything for oneself and depriving others. But *Ithar* means preferring others over oneself and bearing hardship for the comfort and good of others.

The *zahid*, by virtue of his simple, humble, and content living, is hard upon himself so that others may live in ease. He sacrifices for the sake of the needy because with his sensitive heart which feels the pains of others he can relish the world's bounties only when there does not exist a single man oppressed by need. He derives greater satisfaction by feeding and clothing others and working for their ease than if he did those things for himself. He endures deprivation, hunger, and pain, so that others may be well fed and live without hardships.

Ithar represents the most magestic and sublime manifestation of human greatness, and only very great human beings climb to its noble heights.

The Holy Qur'an refers to the episode of Theself-sacrifice of Ali (A.S) and his honored family in the glorious verses of Surat *Hal Ata*. Ali (A.S) , Fatima (S.A), and their sons once gave away whatever they had-which was no more than a few loaves of bread-to the poor for the sake of Allah, and despite their own distress. That is why this story circulated among the angels and a verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed in the praise of their act.

Once when the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) came to visit Hadrat al-Zahra' (□), observing that his daughter had put on a silver bracelet and hung a new curtain on the door, signs of unease appeared upon his face. Al-Zahra' (□) was quick to discern the cause of her father's reaction. When the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) left, without losing time, she took out her bracelet and removing the curtain from the door, sent them to be carried to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) so that he might give them to the needy. When al-Zahra's messenger brought them to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) he looked at them with amazement. He was glad that his daughter had taken the hint and foregone her simplest luxuries for the benefit of others.

>The neighbours first', was the maxim in the household of Ali (A.S) and Fatima (S.A). In *khutba* 193, which describes the qualities of the pious, Ali (A.S) says the following:

The man of [*taqwa*] subjects his own self to hardships so that the people may live in comfort.

The Holy Qur'an describes the Ansar (the Helpers), who in spite of their poverty welcomed the Muhajirun (the Emigrants) as their own brethren, giving them preference over their own selves, in these words:

They love whosoever has migrated to them, not finiding in their breasts any need for what they have been given, and prefer others above themselves, even though poverty be their lot. (59:9)

Obviously, the altruistic ingredient of *zuhd* comes into play only under certain conditions. In an affluent society, altruism is less frequently required. But in conditions where poverty and deprivation are prevalent-as in the society of al-Medina during the Prophet's time-its need is greater. This is one of Thesecrets of the apparent difference of the life-styles of Ali (A.S) and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) with therest of the Imams.

In any case, *zuhd* with its underlying altruistic motives has nothing in common with monasticism and escape from society; instead it is a product of man's gregarious instincts and a manifestation of his noblest feelings, which reinforce the social bonds between fellow human beings.

Sympathy and Kindness

The sympathy and the willingness to share the suffering of the needy and the deprived is another ingredient of *zuhd*. When the destitute witness the luxuries and comforts of the richer classes, their anguish is multiplied. To the hardships of poverty and destitution is added the stinging feeling of deprivation and backwardness in relation to others.

Man, by nature, cannot tolerate to remain a silent spectator while others, who have no merit over him, eat, drink, enjoy and relish freely at the cost of his deprivation. When society is divided into haves and have-nots, the man of Allah considers himself responsible. In the first place, as Amir al-Mu'minin (A.S) says, he should strive to change the situation which permits the gluttony of the rich oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed, in accordance with the covenant of Allah with the learned men of the *umma*. [11] In The second place, he strives to ameliorate the state of affairs through altruism and self-sacrifice by sharing whatever he possesses with the needy and the deprived. But when he sees the situation deteriorating beyond reparation and it is practically impossible to alleviate the misery of the poor through sympathy, he practically shares their deprivation and tries to soothe their wounded hearts by adopting a life-style similar to that of the poor.

Sympathy with others and sharing their suffering is of essential importance especially in the case of the leaders of the *umma* on whom all eyes are fixed. Ali (A.S) , more than at any other time, lived a severely ascetic life during the days of his caliphate. He used to say: AIndeed Allah has made it obligatory for just leaders that they should maintain themselves at the level of the poor class so that they do not despair of their distress. [12] Should I be content with being called Amir al-Mu'minin while refusing to share the adversities of the times with the people? Or should I be an example to them in the distress of life? [13]

In the same letter (to >Othman ibn Hunayf), he says the following: AIt is absolutely out of question that my desires should overpower me and my greed should lead me to relish the choicest foods while in Hijaz and Yamama there may be some people who despair of even a single loaf of bread and who do not get a full meal. Shall I lie with a satiated belly while around me are those whose stomachs are hungry and whose livers are burning? [14]

At the same time, Ali (A.S) would reproach anyone else for practicing the same kind of asceticism in life. When faced with their objection as to why he himself practiced it, he would reply, AI am not like you. The leaders have a different duty. This approach of Ali (A.S) can be observed in the conversation with >Asim ibn Ziyad al-Harith. [15]

In volume 9 of *Bihar al-Anwar*, it has been related from *Al-Kafi* that Amir al-Mu'minin (A.S) said:

Allah has appointed me as the leader of the people and made it my duty to adopt a way of living, in food and clothing, on par with the poorest classes of the society so that, on the one hand, it may soothe the distress of the poor and, on the other, restrain the rich from revolting. [16]

An incident is related from the life of the great *faqih* Wahid Behbahani, may Allah be pleased with him. One day he observed one of his daughters-in-law wearing a garment made of a fabric usually worn by women of rich families of those days. He reproached his son (the late Aqa Muhammed Isma'il, the lady's husband) in that regard. The son recited this verse of the Holy Qur'an in reply to his father's remarks: *ASay: Who has forbidden the ornament of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good things of His providing? (7:32).*

The father said: I don't say that putting on good dresses, eating good food, and making use of Allah's bounties is forbidden. Not at all. Such restrictions do not exist in Islam. However, there is one thing to be remembered. We are a family charged with the duty of the religious leadership of Muslims and have special responsibilities. When the people of poor families see the rich live luxuriously, their frustration is aggravated. Their only consolation is that at least the Aqa's family lives like they do. Now if we, too, adopt the life-styles of the rich, that will deprive them of their only consolation. However, we cannot practically change the present social condition, but let us not grudge at least this much of sympathy.

As can be clearly seen, *zuhd*, which derives motivation from sympathy and readiness to share the sufferings of others, has nothing common with monastic asceticism. It is not based on escapism from the society. The Islamic concept of *zuhd* is a means of alleviating the sufferings of the society.

Zuhd and Freedom

Another ingredient of *zuhd* is love of freedom and independence. The union between *zuhd* and freedom is as primordial as it is indissoluble.

The dictates of need and exigency are the criteria of opportunists, whereas independence from want is characteristic of free men. The deepest aspiration of the free men unattached to the world is non-encumbrance, buoyancy, absence of hindrance and freedom of movement.

As a result, they adopt *zuhd* and contentment so as to reduce their wants to a minimum, thus liberating themselves from the bondage of need for things and persons.

The life of a human being, like that of any other [rational] animal, requires a series of natural and indispensable necessities like air, shelter, food, water and clothing. Man cannot free himself entirely from attachment to such needs and other things such as light and heat so as to make himself, in philosophical terminology, a self-sustaining (*muktafi bidhatih*).

However, there are series of other wants which are not necessary and natural but are imposed upon one in the course of one's life either by oneself or by social and historical factors beyond his control, which nevertheless set limits upon his freedom. Such constraints are not very dangerous as long as they are not transformed into inner needs, such as certain political constraints and compulsions. The most dangerous of compulsions are those which emerge as inner needs from within one's own self to shackle him.

The mechanism of these needs which lead to inner weakness, impotence and defeat, operates in such a way that when one turns to luxuries and comforts in order to add charm, delight and glamour to one's life so as to feel more secure and strong in order to derive a greater gratification

from life, one is impelled to possess more and more things. In the course of time, one gets gradually accustomed to and engrossed in the means of comfort, luxury and power. These habits gradually result in a deeper attachment to and love for those things, and he is bound to them with invisible bonds, thus becoming helpless and impotent in front of them. That is, the same thing which had once added charm and delight to his life later deprives his personality of its vigor, and the same thing which once made him feel powerful against nature now turns him into a helpless slave without a will of his own.

Man's inclination towards *zuhd* is rooted in his love of freedom. By nature, he is disposed toward possession of things and their exploitation. But when he realizes that the things, to the very extent they make him outwardly powerful and successful, inwardly transform him into a weakling without a will-power and a slave, he rebels against this slavery. This rebellion of man is what we call *zuhd*.

Our poets and sages have spoken a lot about freedom and liberation. Hafiz calls himself the slave of the magnanimity of Him Who is free of everything under the blue sky that carries any taint of attachment. Among the trees, he admires the cypress which to him seems free of all woes. What those great men meant by freedom is freedom from attachment, freedom from being possessed, bewitched, and captivated by anything.

But freedom implies something greater than being devoid of attachments. The ties which make a man weak, helpless, dependent, and impotent are not only those which originate in the heart or emotional attachments; to these must be added the various bodily, physical and psychological conditionings and artificial appendages that are first acquired for adding charm and glory to life and for satisfaction of the lust for power and strength, later growing into a form of addiction or rather becoming a second nature. These, while they may not involve one's emotional attachments, or may even be regarded by one as reprehensible, should be counted as even stronger means of human servitude and which may bring greater even degradation than emotional attachments.

Take the example of an enlightened *Aarif* with a heart free of worldly attachments, for whom, nevertheless, addiction to tea, tobacco or opium has become a second nature, or for whom abstention from foods to which he is accustomed may endanger his life. Can such a man lead a free existence?

Liberty from attachments is a necessary condition of freedom, but it is not sufficient in itself. Accustoming oneself to a minimum of the niceties of life and abstention from affluent living is another condition of freedom.

The first thing to strike Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, one of the honored Companions, when describing the station of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household), is:

The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah, may peace be upon him and his Household, could manage with the minimum necessities of life.

Is it a merit to be able to do with a minimum of means? If we take only the economic aspect into view, we should say that the Prophet's level of consumption was quite low. In this respect, therefore, the answer would be: No, not at all; it is not a significant merit. But if viewed from a spiritual viewpoint, that is when examined by the criterion of freedom from worldly bondage, we have to admit that it is a great merit indeed. Because it is only by acquisition of this merit that a human being can live with any measure of unfettered freedom and unimpeded mobility, and participate in the incessant struggle of life with agility and vigor.

This matter is not restricted to habits involving the individual; binding oneself to social habits and customs, to modes and manners of dealing with people, the mesh of social connections and gatherings, adherence to styles and fashions in dress and demeanour-these and the like of these encumber life and deprive it of dynamism

Freedom of movement in the arena of life is like swimming; lesser the interference and incumbrance for the swimmer, the greater is his ability to move around in water. Too many attachments will not only deprive him of his mobility but bring the danger of drowning.

Athir al-Din Akhsikati (d. 577 or 579/1181 or 1183) says the following:

*To cross the river of life, shed your robes;
Nakedness is a condition of keeping afloat.*

Farrukhi Yazdi says the following:

*Of nakedness the sage does not complain,
A sword of good steel would not rust without a sheath.*

Baba Tahir has a *ruba'i* which though intended for some other purpose is nevertheless relevant here:

*O heart, thy path is better when covered with thorns;
Your track is better when stretched on heavens high;
Nay, if thou can strip the skin off thine flesh,
Do it, for the lighter thy burden the better it be.*

Sa`di, too, relates a relevant fable in the chapter 7 of his *Gulistan*, although it also aims at some other purpose:

I saw a rich mans son squatting by the side of his father's grave, and bragging thus before a darwish's son: AMy father's tomb is constructed of rare stones. Inside, it is paved with marble with enlaid turquois. And look at the one of your father's! An unbaked brick or two was fetched, on which a handful of earth was thrown.

The sage's son heard these remarks and replied: AYet before your father is able to budge under the pile of those stones, my father would have reached the paradise itself.

These are allegories underlining the significance of lightness and freedom from bondages, which is the essential condition for dynamism, nobility, and nimbleness. Leaps, movements, and struggles were achieved by individuals who were practically freer of bondages and attachments; that is, in some sense they were *zahids*. Gandhi, with his ascetic mode of life, brought the British imperialism to its knees. Ya'qub Layth Saffar, in his own words, Adid not set aside his diet of bread and onions until he became a terror for the caliph. In our own times, the Vietcongs were such an example. Their surprising power of resistance was drawn from what in Islamic idiom has been called Alightness of provisions. A Vietcong could sustain for days in his shelter with a handful of rice and continue his battle with the enemy.

Which leader, religious or political, living in luxury and comfort has brought about drastic upheavals in world history? Which monarch who founded a dynasty, having transferred power from another family to his own, has been a lover of luxuries and comforts?

Ali (A.S) ibn Abu Talib, may peace be upon him, was the freest of the world's free men. He was a free man in the complete sense of the word, because he was a *zahid* in the profoundest sense of the word. Ali (A.S) , in *Nahjul-Balagha*, lays great emphasis on renunciation of worldly pleasures and comforts as a means of liberation. In one of the hikam (aphorisms), he says the following:

Greed is everlasting slavery. [17]

In a sermon he describes the *zuhd* of Jesus, the son of Mary, in these words:

He was free of any abasing greed. [18]

At another place he says the following:

The world is a place of transit, not a place to abide. Its people fall into two categories: those who sell away their souls into slavery, and those who ransom their souls and liberate them. [19]

In a letter to A'othman ibn Hunayf, Ali (A.S) is more explicit than elsewhere. Towards the end of the letter, addressing the world and its pleasures, he reveals to us the philosophy of *zuhd* and Thesecrets of renunciation:

O world! Get away from me! I have thrown thy reins on thy shoulders, have freed myself from thy claws, and released myself from thy snares. Go, get thee away! By Allah, I shall not surrender to thee so that thou should abase me! I shall not follow thee tractably that thou may control me and lead me wherever thou willeth.

Yes. Ali's *zuhd* is a rebellion against abasement and indignity on account of pleasures. It is a rebellion against human weakness and impotence before the tyranny of desires. It is a defiance of servitude to the world and obsequiousness before its charms.

Zuhd And Spirituality; Zuhd, Love, and Worship

Another fountainhead of *zuhd* and renunciation of hedonism is the aspiration to avail of spiritual bounties. Presently we do not intend to undertake any argument to the effect that man and the universe possess an undeniable spiritual aspect. It is another story by itself. It is evident that from a materialistic outlook of the world, therejection of hedonism, materialism, and love of money and wealth as a prerequisite for acquisition of spiritual virtues is devoid of any meaning.

We have, here, nothing to say about the followers of materialism as a school of thought. At present, we address only those who have experienced the aroma of spirituality. For, anybody who has smelled its fragrance knows that as long as one does not liberate oneself from the bondage of desire, as long as the infant soul is not weaned away from the breasts of nature, and as long as the material aspects of life are seen as not being the ultimate end of life and are seen as means, the domain of the heart is not ready for the emergence of chaste emotions, majestic thoughts, and angelic feelings. That is why, it is said, that *zuhd* is the essential condition for exuberance of gnosis and is inalienably linked with it.

The worship of Allah, in its real sense, that is, ardour of love and zeal of devotion and service in the way of Allah, His constant presence in thoughts and His remembrance, Thesense of delight and ecstasy in His adoration and worship-it is not at all compatible with self-adoration, hedonist attitude, and being captured by the glamour and charm of material things.

The need of *zuhd* is not characteristic solely of the worship of Allah; rather, every kind of love and adoration, whether it pertains to one's country, creed, conviction, or something else, calls for some kind of *zuhd* and indifference towards material aspects of life.

It is characteristic of love and adoration, as opposed to knowledge, science or philosophy, that they have to deal with the heart and as such do not tolerate any rivals. Nothing prevents a scientist or a philosopher who is enslaved to money and wealth from devoting and concentrating his intellectual powers, when necessary, on the study of the problems of philosophy, logic, physics, or mathematics. But it is not possible, at the same time, that his heart should be full to the brim with love, especially love of a spiritual nature, such as for humanity, or his religion and creed. Certainly, it cannot burn with the light of the Divine love nor can it receive an enlightenment or inspiration of a the Divine sort. Consequently, the essential condition for reception of spiritual grace and realization of authentic humanhood is purging the temple of the

heart from every trace of materialistic attachments and exterminating from the Ka'bah of the heart all the idols of gold and silver and destroying them.

As we have said before, we should not be led to misinterpret freedom from the bondage of gold and silver, and indifference towards what these metals can be exchanged for, as monastic asceticism which is an attempt to evade responsibility and commitment. Instead, it is only in the light of such *zuhd* that responsibility and commitment reacquire their real significance and are no longer empty words without content and hollow claims. The personality of Ali (A.S) , upon whom be peace, is a glorious example of it. In him *zuhd* and commitment were combined together. While he was a *zahid* who had renounced the world, at the same time, he had a heart that was most sensitive to the demands of social responsibility. On the one hand he used to say:

What has Ali (A.S) to do with perishable niceties and short-lived pleasures. [20]

On the other hand, a small injustice or the sight of someone in distress was enough to snatch sleep from his eyes at nights. He was ready to go to bed with an empty stomach lest someone in his dominion might have remained hungry:

Shall I stuff my belly with delicious foods while in the Hijaz and Yamama there may be people who have no hope of getting a loaf of bread or a full meal? [21]

There was a direct relation between that *zuhd* of his and this sensitiveness. Since Ali (A.S) was a *zahid*, indifferent to the world and unselfish, with a heart that overflowed with the exuberance of the love of Allah, he looked at the world, from the minutest particle to the greatest star, as a unit entrusted with responsibility and duty. That is why he was so sensitive towards the matters of social rights. Had he been a hedonist devoted to his own interests, he would never have been theresponsible and committed person that he was.

The Islamic traditions are eloquent with regard to this philosophy of *zuhd* and *Nahjul-Balagha* lays particular emphasis upon it. In a *hadith*, it is related from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (□) that he said:

All hearts that harbour doubt or entertain shirk shall be inauthentic; that is why they adopted *zuhd* so that hearts may be emptied and made ready for the Hereafter. [23]

As can be seen from this tradition, every kind of hedonism and attachment to pleasures is considered shirk and contrary to the worship of the One Allah. Masterna (Rumi) describes the *zuhd* of the *Aarif* in these words:

Zuhd means taking pains while sowing; Mystic knowledge (*ma'rifah*) is (care during) its cultivation; the *Aarif* is the soul of the Law and the spirit of *taqwa*; For mystic knowledge is the fruit of the labours of *zuhd*.

Abu Ali (A.S) ibn Sina, in the ninth namat of his *al-Alsharat*, which he devotes to the description of various stations of the mystics (*maqamat al-Aarifin*), differentiates between the *zuhd* of the *Aarif* and that of the *non-Aarif*. He writes:

The *zahids* who have no knowledge of the philosophy of *zuhd*, make a certain deal in their imagination: they barter the goods of the world for the goods of the Hereafter. They forego the enjoyments of the world in order that they may enjoy the pleasures of the Hereafter. In other words, they abstain here in order to indulge there. But an aware *zahid*, acquainted with the philosophy of *zuhd*, practises it because of his unwillingness to engage his inner self with anything other than Allah. Such a man, out of his self-respect, regards anything other than Allah to be unworthy of attention and servitude.

In another section of the same book where he discusses spiritual discipline, Ibn Sina says the following:

This training has three ends in view. First, removal of impediments from the path towards Allah; second, subjugation of the carnal self (*al-nafs al-Aammarah*) to the contented self (*al-nafs al-mutma'innah*), third, refinement of the inward (*batin*).

Then he proceeds to mention the effective means of realization of these three ends. He tells us that true *zuhd* helps in achieving the first of these objectives, that is, removal of impediments, the non-Allah, from the way.

The Contradiction Between the World and the Hereafter

The problem of the conflict between the world and the Hereafter and the contradiction between them as two opposite poles, such as the north and the south, which are such that proximity to the one means remoteness from the other-is related to the world of human heart, conscience, human attachment, love and worship. Allah has not given two hearts to man:

Allah has not assigned to any man two hearts within his breast. (33:4)

With one heart one cannot choose two beloveds. That is why once when questioned about his old and worn-out clothes, Ali (A.S) replied:

These make the heart humble, subdue Theself, and induce the believers to follow it as an example. [23]

That is, those who have no new clothes to wear are not ashamed to put on old and worn-out dress. They no longer feel humiliation on their account for they see that their leader himself hasn't put on any better. Then Ali (A.S) goes on to add that the world and the Hereafter are like two irreconcilable enemies. They are two divergent paths. Anyone who loves the world and chooses its bondage is, by nature, led to loathe Hereafter and detest everything that is related to it. The world and the Hereafter are like the east and the west, the north and the south. Anyone who approaches the one gets farther from the other. They are like two wives.

In one of his epistles, he writes:

I swear by Allah that, Allah willing, I shall so discipline my own self that it would rejoice to have a single loaf of bread for eating and be content with only salt to season it. (In prayer) I shall empty my eyes of tears until they become like dried up springs. The cattle fill their stomachs on the pasture and lie down to repose. The goats graze, devour green herbs, and enter their enclosures. Should Ali (A.S) in a similar manner swallow whatever he can lay his hands on and lie down to doze'? Congratulations! For, if he does that' after long years he has chosen to follow the wild grazing animals and the cattle led out to pasture. [24]

Then he goes on to add:

Happy is the man who fulfills his duties to Allah and overcomes hardships like a mill grinding the grain, who allows himself no sleep at nights and when it overpowers him lies down on the ground with his hand for a pillow. He is accompanied by those who keep their eyes awake in fear of the Day of Judgment, whose bodies are ever away from their beds, whose lips constantly hum in the Master's remembrance, whose sins have been erased by prolonged supplications for forgiveness. They are the party of Allah; why surely Allah's party-they are the ones who prosper. (58:22) [25]

The two passages quoted above completely illustrate the relation-ship between *zuhd* and spirituality. To sum up, one has to choose one of the two paths; either to drink, eat, browse and hanker after sensual pleasures in utter indifference to Thesecrets of the spirit, to avoid the agonies of love and its tears, to speak not of enlightenment and progress, not to take a step beyond the threshold of bestiality; or to resolve on a journey into the valley of authentic

humanhood, towards the effulgence and-exuberance of the Divine grace which descends upon chaste hearts and enlightened souls.

Zuhd: Minimum of Intake for Maximum Output

Some days ago I was in Isfahan on a visit for a few days. During it, in a gathering of the learned, a discussion started about *zuhd*. The various aspects of it were scrutinized in the light of the multi-faceted teachings of Islam. Everyone wanted to find a comprehensive and articulate definition of *zuhd*. Among them a learned high school teacher, [27] who (I later came to know, that he was writing a treatise on the subject, the manuscript of which he showed me later) suggested a wonderfully eloquent definition of *zuhd*. He said:

Islamic *zuhd* is minimizing the intake and maximizing the output.

This definition fascinated me and I saw that it was in conformity with my own earlier understanding and the conclusions that I have drawn in the foregoing chapters. Here I, with the permission of that learned man, making a little amendment in his definition, would say:

Zuhd in Islam means drawing a minimum of intake for the sake of maximizing the output.

That is, there exists a relation between drawing as little as possible of material benefits of life on the one hand and aiming at maximizing one's output on the other. Human Aoutputs, whether in the sphere of the actualization of one's potentialities, whether on the level of emotion and morality, or from the point of view of individuals role in social co-operation and mutual help, or from the aspect of realizing spiritual edification and refinement, all in all have a converse relationship to his intake of material benefits.

It is a human characteristic that the greater one's enjoyment of material benefits and indulgence in such things as pleasures, luxuries, and affluence, the greater is one's weakness, indignity, impotence, sterility, and impoverishment. Conversely, abstinence from indulgent and extravagant enjoyment of nature-of course, within definite limits-refines and purifies human nature and invigorates and strengthens two of the highest of all human powers: thought and will.

It is true only of animals that greater benefit from the possibilities provided by nature contributes to their animal development and perfection. Even in animals it is not applicable when we consider what is called the Amerit' desirable in a beast. For example, sheep and cattle which are reared for obtaining greater amount of meat, milk, or fleece should be given greater attention and care and fed well. However, this is not true of a race horse. It is impossible for a common stable horse to show any good performance in a race. The horse which has to run and win races is given days or rather months of training with a controlled diet until its body becomes lean and nimble, shedding all its excessive fat so that it can acquire the desirable agility and speed or the Aexcellence of which it is capable.

Zuhd is also an exercise and discipline for man. But it is the exercise of the soul. Through *zuhd* the soul is disciplined; shedding all excessive appendages, and becoming, as a result, light, agile, and nimble, it takes an easy flight into the skies of spiritual merits.

Incidentally, Ali (A.S) also describes *taqwa* and *zuhd* as Aexercise and practice. The word *riyadah* originally meant exercising horses intended for racing. Physical exercise is also called *riyadah*. Ali (A.S) says the following:

Indeed, as to my self, I shall exercise it and discipline it through *taqwa*. [27]

What about plant life? Like animals that which may be, loosely speaking, called the merit of a tree or shrub is its capacity to thrive with a minimum amount of nourishment from nature. Ali (A.S) , also, makes an allusion to this point in one of his letters to his governors. In that letter,

after describing his own ascetic life-style, characterized by a minimum of consumption, Ali (A.S) encourages him to emulate it. He says the following:

I can already anticipate your criticism. Someone might say that if this is what the son of Abu Talib eats then weakness should have made him unfit for an encounter with the enemy's warriors. Remember the untended tree that thrives in the harsh conditions of the desert-its wood is firm and tough; even the fire lit from it is more enduring and fierce.

This law, which applies to all living things, is more effective in the case of man because of the various characteristics special to him which are summed up under the term Ahuman personality. [28]

The word *Azuhd'*, despite its sublime human meaning, has suffered an evil fate, and is fiercely denounced particularly in our own times. Sometimes, the term is advertently or otherwise misinterpreted; some-times it is equated with sanctimoniousness and show of piety; at other times, it is considered equivalent to monasticism and ascetic seclusion. Everybody is free to coin terms of his own with any meaning of his own choice. But no one has the right to condemn any concept or term by imparting to it a wrong and misconceived meaning and sense. In its system of ethics and education, Islam has used a certain term, *zuhd*. *Nahjul-Balagha* and the Islamic tradition are replete with it. Before we make any judgment about *zuhd* in Islam, first, before everything, we must understand its Islamic connotation. The meaning of *zuhd* in Islam is what we have tried to explain, and the philosophy behind it is what we have discussed in the light of Islamic texts. If anyone finds any fault with this meaning and philosophy, let him inform me so that I too might be benefited.

What school of thought and what kind of logic can justify monasticism? What school of thought can recommend and justify the worship of money, consumerism, love of goods, lust for position, or-to use an expression which includes them all-worldliness? Is it possible for man to be the slave and prisoner of material things-or in the words of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (A.S) , 'Athe slave of the world and the slave of him who exercises control over it'-and yet speak of Ahuman personality?

Here, it would not be out of place to cite the views of a Marxist writer about the relation between love of money and human personality. In a useful and concise book regarding capitalist and Marxist economies, he points out the moral consequences of the power of money for society. He writes:

The extraordinary power of Agold over our contemporary society is something deeply detested by men of sensitive nature. Men in search of truth have always expressed their strong aversion towards this filthy metal, and consider it to be the main cause of corruption in contemporary society. However, those little round pieces of a shining yellow metal called Agold are really not to be blamed. The power and domination of money as a general manifestation of power and authority of things over man is the essential characteristic of a disorderly economy based on barter and exchange. In the same way as the uncivilized man of ancient times adored and worshipped idols made by his own hands, the contemporary man also worships the product of his own labour, and his life is overwhelmed by the power of things he has made with his own hands. In order that the worship of consumer goods and the worship of money, which is the filthiest form evolved of idolatry, may be completely eradicated, the social causes which brought them into existence should be eliminated and the society should be so organized that the power and authority of the little coins of this yellow brilliant metal would be thoroughly obliterated. In such an organization of society, things will no more wield their present power over human

beings. On the other hand, man's power and predominance over things shall be absolute and according to a preconceived scheme. Then worship of money and things shall give their place to honor and reverence for the human personality.

We agree with the author that the power of things over man, and in particular the authority of money, is opposed to the demands of human dignity and nobility, and is as condemnable as idolatry. However, we do not agree with his suggested exclusive prescription for solution of this problem.

Here we are not concerned with the question whether collective ownership is preferable from a social or economic point of view. Nevertheless, morally speaking, this suggestion, instead of redeeming society's spirit of honesty, eliminates right away the very object of honesty!

Man can reclaim his identity only by liberating himself from the power of money and by bringing money under his own control. True human personality can emerge when the danger of money and goods remains possible without overcoming man, who is not ruled by them but rules them. This kind of personality is what Islam calls *zuhd*.

In the educational system of Islam, man regains his personality without the need to obliterate the right of property. Those who are trained in the school of Islamic teachings are equipped with the power of *zuhd*. They strip money and goods of their power and subjugate them to their own authority.

SECTIONS SIX & SEVEN

THE WORLD AND WORLDLINESS

Renunciation in *Nahjul-Balagha*

Of the frequent themes of *Nahjul-Balagha* is strong warning against the dangers of worldliness. Our preceding discussion about *zuhd* (asceticism) and its aims also serves here to shed a light on the meaning of worldliness because *zuhd*, which is strongly enjoined, is the very opposite of the worldliness which is severely condemned. To define and explain any one of them is to define and explain the other. However, in view of the tremendous emphasis laid in Ali's moral *sermons* upon the warning against the dangers of worldliness, we considered it appropriate to devote a separate chapter to this topic with a view to further explaining this concept so that all ambiguities in this matter are removed.

The first point to be investigated is: Why so much attention has been given to the concept of *zuhd* in the sayings and *sermons* of Amir al-Mu'minin to the extent that no other issue has been so much underscored by him, and neither the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) nor any of the other Imams has spoken as repeatedly about the deceptions of worldly life, its ephemeral and temporal nature, the disloyalty of its slippery comforts and the dangers of wealth, affluence and immersion in and complete surrender to worldly pleasures and comforts.

The Danger Created by War Booty

This was not a matter of accident. Rather, it was something related to the conditions that came into existence during Ali's times, that is, during the days of the past caliphs, especially during the caliphate of A'Uthman. A series of serious dangers visited the world of Islam in the wake of the influx of huge amounts of wealth and riches. Ali (A.S) sensed its dangerous consequences and struggled against them. This struggle is reflected in his practices and policies during the period of his caliphate, in the course of which he ultimately gave up his life. This struggle, at the ideological level, is also reflected in his *sermons*, letters, and sayings.

The Muslims were blessed with great victories in battles that diverted huge amounts of property and wealth into the Muslim world. However, instead of being utilized for public benefit

or distributed justly among the people, the wealth fell into the hands of a few individuals and an elite Aclass. Especially during the days of AOthman, this imbalance became greatly pronounced. Persons who possessed nothing only a few years ago appropriated for their personal use fabulous amounts of wealth. This was the time when worldly tendencies gained momentum in the Muslim society and the Muslim *umma* started on a course of moral decline and degeneration.

It was following the awareness of this great danger to society that Ali (A.S) raised his cry of protest to warn the *umma* of Islam. Al-Mas'udi, writing about the days of AOthman, says the following: AOthman was a man of extraordinary generosity (of course, it was exercised at the cost of the public treasury). The government officials and the people followed his example. He was the first among the caliphs to build a mansion of stone and mortar with wooden doors made of teak and juniper. He amassed other properties, such as gardens, orchards and springs in Medina. When he died, there were 150,000 dinars and a thousand thousand (million) dirhams in cash with his treasurer. His property in Wadi al-Qura, Hunain, and elsewhere was valued above 100,000 dinars. His legacy consisted of a large number of horses and camels.

Then he writes he following: ADuring his reign, a group of his associates also hoarded similar amounts of wealth. Al-Zubayr ibn al-AAwwam built a mansion in Basra which still stands intact in the year 332 H. [al-Mas'udi's own time]. It is also well known that he built similar mansions in Egypt, Kufa, and Alexandria. When al-Zubayr [ibn al-`Awwam] died, he left 50,000 dinars in cash, a thousand horses and thousands of other things. The brick, mortar and teak mansion which Talhah ibn AAbdullah built in Kufa still exists and is known as *Dar al-Talhatayn*. Talhah's *daily* income from his properties in Iraq was one thousand dinars. He had one thousand horses in his stables. A one-thirty-second (1/32) part of the wealth that he left at his death was estimated at 84,000 dinars.

Al-Mas'udi mentions similar amounts of wealth in the possession of Zayd ibn Thabit, Ya`li ibn Umayyah and others. Evidently, such huge amounts of wealth do not emerge from under the ground nor fall from the sky. Such immense riches are never amassed except by the side of extreme and horrifying poverty. This is why Ali (A.S) , in *sermon* 129, after warning the people of the dangers of worldliness, says the following: AYou live in a period when virtues recede and evils advance step by step, and Satan becomes greedier in his eagerness to ruin human beings. Today, his equipment have been reinforced, his traps are set in every place, and his prey comes easily. Look around; you will see either a poor man hardly able to breathe in extreme poverty and penury, or a rich man who has transformed Allah's blessings into his own infidelity, or you will see a miser who makes stinginess in discharging the obligations imposed by Allah a means of increasing his own wealth, or you will find the rebellious whose unruly hearts are deaf to moral admonition. Where are the virtuous, the righteous among you? Where are the free men and the magnanimous? Where are those who avoid every trace of deceit in their dealings and pursue piety and honesty in their ways?

The Intoxication of Affluence

Amir al-Mu'minin (A.S), in his utterances, has used the phrase *sakarati al-ni'mah*, meaning 'Aintoxication induced by comfort and affluence', which is inevitably followed by a vengeful disaster. In *sermon* 151, he warns them thus: AYou, O people of Arabia, would be victims of calamities which are drawing near. Beware of the intoxication induced by affluence and fear the vengeful disaster which will follow it.

Then he describes the misfortunes caused by such immoderation. In *sermon* 187, he foretells the future calamities that were to befall the Muslim society. He says the following: AThis would happen when you would be intoxicated, not by drinking wine, but with wealth and affluence.

Yes, the flow of immense amounts of wealth into the coffers of the Islamic domain and the unjust distribution of this wealth, together with nepotism and partiality, infected the Islamic society with the disease of worldliness and the race for affluence.

Ali (A.S) struggled to save the Islamic world from this grave danger. He was severely critical of those who were responsible for the infection to set in. He set an example of an altogether different life style in his own personal living and, on attaining caliphate, he gave the top priority to the campaign against these dangers in his revolutionary program.

The General Aspect of Ali's Warnings

This prologue was intended to cast light at the particular aspect of the warnings of Amir al-Mu'minin (A.S) against worldliness as a specific reaction to a particular social phenomenon of his time. Yet, aside from this particular feature, there is a general aspect to Ali's words that is not confined to his own time and applies to all times and all people as an essential part of Islamic teachings. This specific logic emanates from the teaching of the Holy Qur'an which is followed up in the sayings of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Amir al-Mu'minin (A.S) and the rest of Imams (A.S), as well as in the writings of great Muslim sages. However, it is a logic which needs a detailed analysis. In the present discussion, our concern will be more with the general aspect of the discourses of Amir al-Mu'minin (A.S) in the sense that in them, Ali (A.S) addresses himself to all human beings of all times.

The Terminology of Every School

Every school of thought has a terminology which is specific to it. In order to understand the concepts and issues of a certain school, it is essential to be familiar with its terms. On the other hand, in order to understand its particular terminology, it is necessary, in the first place, to understand its general view of the universe, life and man: that is, its *Weltanschauung*.

Islam has a clear view of being and creation. It has a particular way of looking at man and his life. One of the fundamental principles of the Islamic world outlook is the notion that there is no duality of any kind whatsoever in being; that is, the world of creation is not divisible into two domains of A good and Aevil. That is, it is not true that some existent beings are good and beautiful and should have been created, whereas some are evil and ugly and should not have been created but nevertheless exist. Such a view is regarded as kufr in the Islamic world outlook and is considered contrary to the principle of tawhid. According to Islam, the creation of all things is based on goodness, wisdom and beauty: AYou see no imperfection [whatsoever] in the creation of the All-merciful One (67:3).

AHe knows the unseen and the seen, [He is] the Almighty, the all-Compassionate Who made everything He created good. (32:6-7)

Accordingly, Islam's condemnation of Athe world does not apply to the world of creation. The Islamic world outlook rests on the foundation of pure *Tawhid* and lays great emphasis on the Unity of the Acting Principle; it does not admit the existence of any partner who would share Allah's sovereignty. Such a world outlook can never be pessimistic. The idea of an evil world abounding in crookedness and wickedness is not an Islamic notion. Then why does it denounce Athe world?

The Condemned AWorld

Commonly, it is said that attachment to the world is condemned and disapproved by Islam. This is both true and false. If what is implied is an emotional attachment, it cannot be true because man, in relation to the total system of creation, has been created with a series of congenital emotional attachments and inclinations. In addition, he does not acquire these inclinations, nor are they superfluous or incongruous. Even as in the human body there is no superfluous organ-not even a single nerve ending-so also there are no redundant congenital tendencies of attachment in his nature. All innate human tendencies, and aptitudes have a purpose which is wise and sagacious. The Holy Qur'an regards such tendencies as the signs of the Divine Wisdom and the Creator's consummate design:

And of His signs is that He created for you, of yourselves, spouses, that you might repose in them, and He has set between you love and mercy. (30:21)

These attachments and sentiments form a series of channels of communication between man and his world. Without them man would not be able to pursue the course of his development. Consequently, it should be said that the Islamic world outlook, even as it does not permit us to denounce and reject the world, it also does allow us to regard the natural attachments and the channels of communication as superfluous, useless, and breakable, because such sentiments and tendencies are a part of the general pattern of creation. In fact, the prophets and the *awliya'* were endowed with these sentiments and emotions to a high degree of exuberance.

The truth is that what is implied by 'attachment to the world' are not these natural and innate inclinations; instead, what is meant is bondage to material and worldly affairs and total surrender to them, which leads to spiritual stagnation and inertia, deprives the human spirit of its freedom of movement and buoyancy, and makes it immobile and dead. That is what Islam calls worldliness and has severely campaigned against it as something contrary to the evolutionary system of creation. Not only this, Islam considers this struggle as being in tune with the laws of the evolutionary processes of creation. The expressions employed by the Holy Qur'an in this regard are miraculous, as we shall explain in the following sections.

The Relation Between Man and the World

As made explicit in the last chapter, that which is regarded as disapprovable by the Holy Qur'an and the *Nahj al-balaighah* is neither the world-in-itself, nor the natural and innate human urges and attachments. In the view of Islam, neither has the world been created without a purpose, nor has man strayed into it aimlessly.

There have been, and are, some schools of thought which view the world with pessimism. In their view, the existing order of the universe is far from being perfect. There have existed other schools which considered man's entry into the world of existence to be the result of some cosmic error, as if man had strayed into it. According to them, man is a total stranger in this world with which he has no ties of consanguinity, and is a prisoner of existence. Like Joseph, he has been thrown into the black-hole of being by his evil brethren where he is confined and his every endeavour should be aimed at finding an exit from this abyss.

Obviously, when the relation of man to the world and nature is regarded as the one between a prison and its prisoner, and an abyss and one entrapped in it, his ultimate aim cannot be anything but seeking 'deliverance'.

The Logic of Islam

But from the viewpoint of Islam, the relation of man to the world is not that of a prisoner with his prison; or that of one entrapped in a well with the well; rather it is the kind of relation that exists between a peasant and his farm [1], or a horse and the racecourse [2], or a merchant and

the marketplace [3] , or a devotee and his temple [4]. The world, from the Islamic point of view, is a school for man, his training ground, and the place where he can acquire perfection.

There is an anecdote related in *Nahjul-Balagha* of a man who condemned the world in Amir al-Mu'minin's presence. Ali (A.S) rebuked him for his confusing the world which is condemned by Islam with the actual physical world and informed him about his error [5]. Sheikh Farid al-Din Attar has rendered this incident into verse in his *Musibat nameh*:

*In the presence of the Tiger of Providence,
A man denounced the world with vehemence.
The world, he exclaimed Hayder, is not to be blamed.
Wretched are you, being far from wisdom.
The world, son, is a farm to be attended to day and night.
Whatsoever is of the honor and riches of faith,
An in all it is to be acquired from this world.
Tomorrow's fruit is the blooming of today's seed;
And one who is idle here, shall taste the bitter fruit of regret.
The world is the best place for you,
Where in you can prepare provision for the Hereafter.
Go into the world, but don't get immersed in the ego.
And prepare yourself for the other world.
If you act thus, the world will suit you,
Hence befriend the world just for this aim.*

Nasir Khusrow Alawi, justifiably considered a philosopher among the poets (*Hakim al-shu'ara'*), is one of the most profound and truly religious among Persian poets. He has composed a eulogy about the world, simultaneously highlighting both the good and evil qualities of it, which is as much in conformity with the Islamic outlook as it is extraordinarily beautiful from artistic viewpoint. This eulogy appears in his collected poetical works (*diwan*), and is included in his book *Jami' al-hitmatayn*. He says the following:

*O world, how apt and essential you are,
Even though you haven't been loyal to any.
Sick and wretched you appear to the afflicted eye,
Yet fine and healthy if one looks at your inside.
If sometimes you have broken a robust man or two,
Many a broken one you have joined and restored.
You are filthy to the unclean,
To the pure unstained.
If any one should blame you, say,
You know me not.
You have grown out of me.
If you are wise,
Why blame the tree of which you are a branch?
The Master made me a path for your ascending journey,
And you have settled down on this lowly road.
Allah planted a tree from whose trunk you have grown;
If you grow out straight, you will be saved,
And if crooked, confined to the flames.*

*Yes, everyone burns crooked branches,
And asks not Als it teak or walnut?
You are the arrow of Allah aimed at His enemy,
Why have you hurt yourself with this weapon?*

Now it is evident that man's relation to the world is similar to the one that exists between the farmer and his field of cultivation, between the merchant and the marketplace, between the devotee and the temple. It is not possible for man to alienate himself from the world or sever his ties with it or to develop a kind of relationship which is wholly negative. There exists a design and intelligent planning behind every natural urge. Man has neither come to this world by cheating or fraud, nor should he go from here as an accused.

There is a general force of attraction and gravitation that encompasses the whole universe. All the particles in it attract each other according to a set pattern. This pattern of mutual attraction and absorption is determined by a judicious design. Moreover, the force of attraction and love is not confined to man alone. No particle in the universe is devoid of this power. The difference, however, is that man, contrary to other things, is aware of his own leanings and inclinations.

Wahshi Kirmani says the following:

*Every dancing particle is permeated with the same force of attraction
That draws it towards a certain specific goal.
It carries one Rower to the side of another,
And urges one spark to pursue the company of its likes,
From fire to wind, from water to dust,
From underneath the moon to the top of the heavens,
From flock to flock and from horde to horde,
You will observe this attraction in every moving thing
From heavenly spheres to the terrestrial bodies.*

Accordingly, from the viewpoint of Islam the world is neither without a purpose nor is human being created by any error, nor are man's innate tendencies undesirable and evil. Then what is meant by Athe world that the Holy Qur'an and *Nahjul-Balagha* regard as undesirable and condemnable?

Before embarking on the issue, a few preliminary principles need to be clarified. It is characteristic of man that he is inherently an idealist and a lover of perfection. He is in Thesearch of something with which he wants to develop a relationship closer than an ordinary attachment. In other words, he is by nature a devotee and a worshipper in search of something which is the ultimate object of his desire and the end of his entire being.

However, if he is not rightly guided, or not on his guard, his relation with things and inclination towards them is transformed into a relation of reliance and attachment, changing means into end and an association into bondage. As a result his spirit of mobility, freedom and capacity to quest are transformed into inertia, complacence and captivity.

This is what is undesirable and contrary to the perfection-seeking order of the world. It is a defect and a kind of non-being, not a merit or a positive mode of being. It is a dangerous malady and a disaster for man, and this is against which the Holy Qur'an and *Nahjul-Balagha* warn.

Without any doubt, Islam does not regard the material world and life in it-even if it involves the greatest material achievements-as a fitting goal of man's highest aspirations. This is because, firstly, in the Islamic world outlook, this world is followed by the eternal and everlasting world of the Hereafter where conditions of life would be determined by the deeds, good or evil, of a

person in this world. Secondly, the worth of a human being is too great to warrant his surrender to the slavery of and servitude to the material aspects of life.

That is why Ali (A.S) so often points out that the world is a good place, but only for him who knows that it is not a permanent abode, but only a road or a caravanserai.

What a good abode it is for him who would not want to make it a home. [6]

This world indeed is a transit camp, whereas the Hereafter is a place of permanent abode. So take from the transit what you need for your destination. [7]

From the viewpoint of humanistic philosophies there is no doubt that everything which binds man to itself and immerses him completely within itself violates his human identity by making it inert and frozen. The process of human perfection knows no limit or end, and every halt, delay and bondage is injurious to it. As we find no reason to controvert this view, we accept it without any argument. However, there are two other points that need to be discussed here.

Firstly, does the Holy Qur'an and following it *Nahjul-Balagha* confirm such a relation between man and his world? Is it true that what the Holy Qur'an condemns is attachment and bondage to the world when taken as the ultimate end of life, an attitude which retards man's movement towards perfection and represents inertness, stagnation, and non-being? Does the Holy Qur'an abstain from absolutely condemning worldly ties and sentiments so long as they do not become man's ultimate goal of life and stall his progress?

Secondly, if it is admitted that human attachment to beings other than himself causes bondage and servitude, and retards the development of human personality, does it make any difference if that being is Allah or something else?

The Holy Qur'an negates every form of bondage and servitude and calls man to welcome every kind of spiritual and human freedom. It does not, however, condemn servitude to Allah; it does not invite man to liberate himself from Allah in order to acquire absolute freedom. Instead, the invitation of the Holy Qur'an is based on liberation from everything besides Allah and complete surrender to Him. It is based on therejection of obedience to anything except Him and the acceptance of submission to Him.

The expression *ALa ilaha illa Allah*' (There is no god except Allah) is the foundation of the Islamic faith. It implies simultaneously a negation and an affirmation, a rejection and an acceptance, and *kufr* and *iman*. It signifies the negation, therejection, therenunciation, and the *kufr* in relation to the non-Allah, and the affirmation, the acceptance, the submission, and the *iman* in relation to Allah. The essential testimony required by Islam is neither just a *AYes*' nor merely a *ANO*; it is a combination of both a *AYes* and a *ANO*.

If the needs of the growth of the human personality demand that man should liberate himself from every kind of bondage, servitude, and submissiveness to anything whatsoever, that he should revolt against everything that compromises his absolute freedom, that he ought to say *ANO* to everything-as the Existentialists say-what difference does it make whether that thing is Allah or something else? And if it is to be decided that man should renounce his freedom and adopt slavery, servitude and submission to something, what difference does it make, after all, whether it is Allah or something else?

Is there a difference between accepting Allah as the supreme ideal and accepting some other thing as the *Summum Bonum*? Does it mean that only Allah is such that servitude to Him is freedom in itself, and that losing oneself in Him is identical with therealization of one's self and therecovery of one's true identity and personality? And if this is true, what is the basis of this claim? How can it be justified?

In our opinion, here we arrive at one of the subtlest, most profound, and progressive teachings of Islam and one of the most glorious of human ideas. It is here that the sublimity of the logic of Islam and the insignificance and pettiness of other ideologies becomes evident. We shall answer these queries in the following sections.

AThe World' in the Holy Qur'an and *Nahjul-Balagha*

In the last chapter we said that that which is execrable from the viewpoint of Islam with regard to man's relation with the world is that it should grow to the extent of becoming a malady and an affliction of the human soul. It is the bondage and the enslaving attachment to the world against which Islam has waged an unrelenting struggle considering it as undesirable, not the mere relation and attachment with it. It is the life of captivity that is condemnable, not the life of freedom. The world is rejected as a goal and objective and not as a way or a means.

If the relation of man to the world develops into his servitude and subjugation, it leads to the negation and obliteration of all higher human values; man's worth lies in the greatness of his pursued ends and objectives. Obviously, if, for instance, his ultimate objectives do not go beyond filling his belly to satisfaction, and if all his efforts and aspirations were to revolve around his stomach, his worth will not surpass that of his stomach. That is why Ali (A.S) says the following: AThe worth of a man whose only aim is to stuff his belly is equal to that which is excreted from it.

The question is what kind of relation is appropriate between the human being and the world and what form should it have. In one kind of relation, his personality is effaced and sacrificed to things, and since the worth of anyone in pursuit of an objective is lower than the objective itself, he is, to use a Holy Qur'anic expression, bound to sink to the level of Athe lowest of the low' (*asfal al-safilin*), becoming thereby the most abject, degenerate and the most contemptible creature in the world. He, then, loses not only his higher values but also his human identity. In the other kind of relation the world and worldly things are sacrificed at the altar of his humanity and are used to serve man while he reclaims his higher ideals. That is why it has been said in a *hadith-e qudsi*:

*O son of Adam! I have created everything for thy sake,
but I have created thee for My Own Self.*

We have already cited two passages from *Nahjul-Balagha* indicating its position in denouncing the degenerate and distorted kind of relationship between man and the world of nature that leads to man's servitude and bondage. Here we shall quote a few verses from the Holy Qur'an to endorse this viewpoint, and return to *Nahjul-Balagha* for further relevant references.

The Holy Qur'anic verses relating to man and the world are of two kinds: the first group of verses is of an introductory nature; that is, it lays the ground for The second group of verses. In truth, the first group can be regarded as representing the major and the minor premises of a syllogism of which The second group constitutes the conclusion.

The first set of verses consists of those which emphasize the changeability, the inconstancy and the ephemeral nature of this world. In these verses the reality of material objects is depicted as being changeable, fleeting, and transitory. For instance, the world is compared to the vegetation that sprouts from the ground. In the beginning it is green and flourishing but little by little turns yellow, shrivels, and ultimately dries up. Then the elements break it into bits and scatter it into the wind. Such is life in the present world.

Obviously, whether man should like it or not his physical life is not much more durable than that of thereed, and is subject to a similar fate. If man must base his outlook on reality and not on fancy and if it is only through the discovery of truth and not by flight of imagination and hallucinations that he can hope to attain felicity and true happiness, then he should not forget this truth.

This set of verses constitutes a kind of a background argument for denying the importance of material things as ultimate ideals worthy of man's adoration. These verses are followed immediately by thereminder that man should know that there exists another world which is eternal and everlasting. Don't imagine that the present life is everything that there is; and since it is not worthy of man, do not conclude that life is futile and meaningless, they remind.

The second set of verses illuminates the solution to the problem of man's relation to the world. It can be clearly seen from these verses that the execrable form of relation is one that grows to the extent of becoming a bondage, requiring man's submission, willing surrender and servitude to the transitory things of the world. It is in these verses that the crux of the Holy Qur'an's logic comes to light:

1)Wealth and sons are the adornment of the worldly life; but the abiding things, the deeds of righteousness (which survive one's death and continue to benefit other people), are better with Allah in reward and better in hope. (18:46)

This verse, as can be seen, speaks of the ultimate aspiration of man. His ultimate aspiration is the thing for which he lives and without which life has no meaning in his eyes.

2)Surely those who look not to encounter Us and are well-pleased with the present life and are at rest in it, and those who are heedless of Our signs, those-their refuge is the Fire, for that they have been earning. (10:7-8)

In this verse, that which is considered execrable is the absence of hope in the next life and the satisfaction and contentment with material things.

3)So turn thou from him who turns away from Our remembrance, and desires only the present life. That is their attainment of knowledge. (53:29-30)

4)And they rejoice in this world's life; and this world's life is nothing compared with the Hereafter but a temporary enjoyment. (13:26)

5)They know an outward part of the present life, but of the Hereafter they are heedless. (30:7)

There are many other verses which have a similar meaning. In all of them the same theme recurs, that is the negation of the world as the goal and ideal of man's highest aspirations and the ultimate object of his desire, and the only source of his happiness and delight. It is held that this form of relation between man and the world, instead of putting the world at man's disposal, sacrifices man to it and dispossesses him of his humanity.

In *Nahjul-Balagha* as in the Holy Qur'an we encounter a similar twofold argument. In the first set of statements the transitory nature of the world is depicted in profound, forceful metaphors, allegories and parables put in precise and elegant phrases which follow one another in an absorbing rhythm. In The second category, conclusions are drawn which are exactly the same as those derived by the Holy Qur'an.

In *Khutbah* 32, people are at first divided into two categories: the worldly and the otherworldly. The worldly people are again divided into four groups.

In the first group are put those who are meek and tractable like sheep. They are the most innocuous of creatures, never seen to commit any overt injustice or aggression, or covert deceit

or subversion. Not that they detest such things but because they lack the power and daring to carry them out.

To The second category belong those who possess both the power and the daring to carry out such ambitions. They muster their will to amass money and wealth, to acquire power and authority, or to occupy important posts and offices and do not stop short of any degree of perverseness.

Those belonging to the third group are wolves in the skins of sheep. They are slaves of the world in the garb of the otherworldly and the pious. They, sanctimoniously, hang their heads in affected humility, walk with the slow steps of a sage and dress like the devout. Through their hypocrisy they win the confidence of the people and become their most confident trustees.

To the fourth group belong those whose hearts burn regretfully with the fire of ambition but their feeling of inferiority has forced them to retire to seclusion. They put on the dress of piety and *zuhd* in order to conceal their deep sense of inferiority and dejection.

All the four kinds of people, regardless of the diverse degrees of their success and failure, are regarded by Ali (A.S) (A) to constitute, spiritually, a single class on account of their commonly shared attitude: worldliness. Why? Because all of them have one common characteristic: they are like the unfortunate birds whom the world has made its prey one way or another. Captured, they enjoy no longer the freedom of flight. They are slaves and prisoners of the world.

In the same *sermon*, Ali (A.S) describes the qualities of the other-worldly, the opposite group, and says the following:

Evil is the barter of those who purchase this world at the cost of their souls.

In the eyes of Ali (A.S) the whole world with everything in it is too inferior to be the price of a man's humanity; hence it ends in the great loss of one who exchanges it for his human identity. Nasir Khusrow has the same theme in mind, when he says the following:

*Never shall I fall an easy prey to the world,
For no more do its woes burden my heart.
In fact, I am the hunter and the world my prey,
Yough once it did pursue me on its hunt.
Yough many a man has fallen pierced by its arrows,
The world could not make me a target.
My soul flies over the world's tides,
And no more do I worry about its waves and tides.*

This theme that one should never sacrifice one's humanity for anything in the world is a theme that recurs a lot in the sayings of the leaders of the Islamic faith. Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (A.S) in his famous will to al-Imam al-Hasan (□) which is included in This section of *Epistle* (letters) in *Nahjul-Balagha*, says the following:

Keep your self above every contemptible thing, because, whatever it should be, it is not worth the compromise of your self.

In the account of his life given in the *Bihar al-Aanwar*, al-Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (□) is reported to have said:

The price of my soul is (the good-pleasure of) its Master the whole of creation doesn't equal its worth.

In the *Tuhaf al-Auqul*, the following tradition is recorded:

Al-Imam al-Sajjad (□) was asked, "Who is the most important among people?" He replied, "The one who does not regard the whole world to be equal to his worth."

There are many traditions which deal with a similar theme, but we shall abstain from quoting more for the sake of brevity.

A close study of the Holy Qur'an, *Nahjul-Balagha*, and the sayings of other religious leaders, will reveal that Islam has not depreciated the world; rather it has elevated the station and worth of the human being as compared to it. For Islam, the world is for the sake of man and not the other way round. It aims to revive human values, not to disparage the world.

Freedom and Bondage

Our discussion about the meaning of Aworldliness in *Nahjul-Balagha* has become somewhat drawn out. However, one issue, which cannot be omitted, remains unanswered. We raised it earlier in the form of a question which we had promised to answer later. The question was this: If attachment and bondage to anything is a kind of unhealthy condition that leads to abandonment of human values and cause stagnation, inertness, and inertia of the human personality, what difference does it make whether that thing is something material or spiritual, this worldly or otherworldly, or, as goes the saying, Athe Master or the apple? It may be said that if the aim of Islam by prohibiting attachment and warning against bondage to temporal things is to safeguard the human being's identity and to rescue him from servitude and to protect him from stagnating and vegetating in life, it should have encouraged man to acquire absolute freedom and to consider everything that compromises and confines it as *kufri*; for such is the standpoint of some modern schools of philosophy which consider freedom to be the essence of man's human identity. These schools of thought equate man's human identity with his capacity to rebel and disobey every form of servitude and to assert his absolute freedom. Accordingly, every manner of bondage, confinement, and submission is, according to them, inconsistent with man's real identity and leads to self alienation.

They say that man realizes his true humanity only by refusing to submit and surrender. It is characteristic of attachment that the object of love absorbs man's attention and compromises his self-awareness. This results in his forgetting his own self and, subsequently, this aware and free being called man, whose identity is summarized in his awareness and freedom, becomes a slavish creature devoid of freedom and self-awareness. In forgetting his own identity, man also becomes oblivious of his human values. In this state of bondage and servitude he ceases to progress and edify his self and becomes stagnant and frozen at some point. If Islam's philosophy of struggle against worldliness aims at theresurrection of human identity and personality, it should oppose every form of servitude and liberate man from every form of bondage. This, however, is not the case, for Islam, undeniably, advocates liberation from material for the sake of spiritual servitude. Freedom from the world is acquired for the sake of the fetters of the Hereafter and the apple is renounced for the sake of the Master.

The *Aurafa* who advise absolute freedom from attachments, however, do allow an exception. Hafiz says the following:

*I am the slave of the magnanimity of him
Who is free of the taint of attachment to anything under the blue sky
Except the love of the moon-cheeked one,
The joy of whose love redeems all sorrows and woes.
Openly do I declare, and am delighted to proclaim,
I am the slave of Love and free from both the worlds.
Except for the Beloved As Name inscribed on the slate of my heart,
The teacher did not teach me another word.*

From the viewpoint of *Airfan*, one must be free of both the worlds but should surrender totally to love. As Hafiz says, the tablet of the heart must be clean of every name except that of the Beloved. The heart should be cleansed of every attachment except the love of 'Athe moon-cheeked one', that is Allah, whose love brings redemption from all sorrows and woes.

However, from the viewpoint of the so-called humanistic philosophy freedom of the *Aarif*, being only relative, does not take us anywhere, because it is freedom from everything for total surrender and servitude to one being, whatever that may be. Servitude is after all servitude and bondage is bondage, regardless of the agent towards which it is directed.

This is the objection raised by the followers of modern humanistic philosophies. In order that the issues involved may be further illuminated, we are compelled to refer to certain philosophical issues.

First of all, one may point out that to assume that there exists a kind of human selfhood and identity and to insist that this identity should be safeguarded, in itself amounts to the negation of movement, progress and development of this selfhood, because, motion and change necessarily result in alienation from this selfhood. This is because movement means becoming: that is, becoming something one is not; it implies continuous transcendence of selfhood and embracing of otherness. Obviously, if we accept this view, it is only by the means of immobility and stagnation that one can preserve his identity; for development necessitates self-alienation. For this reason, some ancient philosophers defined motion in terms of otherness and self-estrangement. Accordingly, to assume that there exists a certain kind of human Aself and to insist that this self should be safeguarded and protected from becoming Anon-self, and to speak of movement, progress, and evolution in the same breath, involves an unresolvable contradiction

Some, in order to free themselves from this contradiction, have said that man's identity lies in being devoid of any kind of Aself whatsoever. Man, they say, is a creature absolutely undefined in his essence and free from any kind of limit, form, or essence. His essence lies in his being without any defined essence. Man is a creature devoid of a fixed nature and essential necessity. Any attempt to define, limit and confine him amounts to depriving him of his real self and identity.

Such a view may be aptly considered poetry and flight of imagination rather than a philosophy. The absolute absence of a fixed form and essence is possible in one of the two cases: Firstly, such a being should possess infinite perfection and pure and unlimited actuality; that is, it should be a being unlimited and unconfined, encompassing all times and places and predominant over all existents, such as the Being of the Creator. For such a being, movement and growth are impossible; because motion and development involve overcoming of defects and imperfections, whereas such a being cannot possibly be supposed to possess any imperfection. Secondly, it may apply to a being devoid of every kind of actuality and merit. That is, it should be pure possibility and sheer potentiality, a neighbour of nothingness, existing only on the remotest frontiers of existence. It should be devoid of any innate reality and essence though capable of assuming any form or essence. Such a being, which itself absolutely undefined, is always associated with a definite being; though shapeless and colourless in itself, it exists in the protective shadow of a being possessing form, shape and colour. Such a being is what the philosophers call 'Athe primal matter'. It occupies the lowest status in the hierarchy of existence and stands on the extremity of being, even as the Divine Essence, being absolute perfection, stands on the other extremity of existence-with the difference that the extremity occupied by the Divine Essence circumscribes all the contents of being. Man, like all other creatures, is situated somewhere between these two

extremes and so cannot possibly lack any defined essence. Admittedly, he is different from other creatures, but, unlike them, there is no limit to his movement towards perfection. Whereas other creatures remain confined to certain definite limits which they cannot transcend, there is no end to the possibilities of human development.

Man possesses a special kind of being. But contrary to the view of the philosophers who believe in the precedence of essence and reduce the being of everything to its quiddity, and who deny the possibility of transcendence and essential change as being self-contradictory, and consider all changes to occur at the level of accidents, the existential nature of man, like that of any other material thing, is fluid, with the difference that its movement and fluidity know no final limits.

Some commentators of the Holy Qur'an, in their explanations of the verse: *AO people of Yathrib, there is no abiding here for you* (33:13), have generalized it to cover all humanity. They hold that man is a creature which does not move to a certain and definite stage or halt; the further he moves the greater are the possibilities open to him. Here we do not wish to indulge in discussing the legitimacy of imposing such interpretations on Holy Qur'anic verses; we only intend to show that Muslim scholars have thought about man in such terms.

In the *hadith* about the Prophet's Ascension (*al-mi'raj*), Gabriel who accompanies the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , at a certain point, gives up his journey declaring: *AI will get burnt if I move an inch further, while the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) leaves him behind and moves further.* This is an allusion to the truth mentioned above.

Also, as we know, there is a debate among Muslim scholars about the *salawat* (Benedictions) upon the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and *Ahl al-Bayt*, which we make as a prayer to Allah to shower greater blessings upon them. Now the debate is whether the *salawat* is of any benefit to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , who is the most perfect man. In other words, is there any possibility of ascension in the Prophet's station? Or does the *salawat* benefit only the person who pronounces it and beseeches Allah to bless the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , a favor that has already been granted?

The late Sayyid Ali (A.S) Khan opened this debate in his commentary on *al-Sahifat Al-Kamilah*. A group of theologians believe that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is always ascending and climbing higher in his station, and this movement is never halted.

Yes, such is the station of man. That which makes man such is not the absolute absence of a defined essence but a certain kind of essence which is ordinarily referred to as Ahuman nature and other similar expressions.

Man does not have any ultimate limits but he has a path. The Holy Qur'an lays great emphasis on what it calls the Straight Path, which is an unambiguous path before man. Man is not constrained by stages so as to be forced to stop at every stage in his journey. Instead there is an orbit in which he should move. This is the orbit of human perfection which is different from those of the animals. This means the movement in a specified orbit, a movement which is orderly not haphazard.

The Existentialist Viewpoint

Existentialism has been rightly criticized for its refusal to acknowledge any kind of determination or definition of the human nature, for its considering every determination (even in the form of path or orbit) as contrary to his humanity, and for its emphasis on his absolute freedom and capacity for rebellion; for this philosophy necessarily leads to the breakdown of social morality and the negation of the individual's commitments and responsibilities.

Does Evolution Involve Self-Alienation?

Now returning to what we said earlier, does movement and evolution necessitate alienation from one's self? Should every being, in order to remain itself, abstain from change and evolution? Does it mean that either man should retain his human identity or, if he chooses an evolutionary course, become something alien to his essence?

The answer is that the true evolution of anything is a movement towards the perfect state which conforms to its nature. In other words, the transformations during movement on the straight path of nature by no means necessitate any loss of specific identity.

That which constitutes the real self of a being is its existence, not its essence. Accordingly, any change in essence does not imply mutation of the 'self' into a 'non-self'. Mulla Sadra, who is the champion of this philosophy, holds that man does not have any definite essence; rather every developing being passing through the stages of its evolution is not a single species but a plurality of species. The relation of an imperfect being with its ultimate stage of perfection is not a relation of otherness; rather it is a relation of the thing to itself. It is the relation of an imperfect self to the perfect self. A thing while evolving toward its perfect state is in movement from its self to its self. In a sense, it can be said to be in movement from the non-self towards its true self. A seed that breaks the ground and sprouts leaves, and sends out branches and flowers, does not move from 'self' to the non-self. If it were aware of itself and aware of its ultimate evolution, it would not feel self alienated.

That is why the love of true perfection is the love of a higher self, and a praiseworthy love is in itself a desirable and praiseworthy egotism or self-love. Sheikh al-Ishraq Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi has an elegant ruba'i on this subject:

*Beware lest you lose the wisdom As thread,
And lose your self for the sake of water and bread.
You are the traveller, the way, the destination,
Beware lest you lose the path from 'self' to 'self'.*

On the basis of what has been said it can be surmised that there is a great difference between desiring Allah, the movement towards Allah, the love of Allah, the attachment and the servitude to Allah and submission to Him, and the love, the submission, and the servitude to other things. The servitude to Allah is freedom itself. It is the only relation and tie which does not stagnate the human personality or make it inert and immobile. It is the only kind of worship which does not imply self-forgetfulness and self-alienation. Why? Because He is the Absolute Perfection and the Ultimate Goal and the Destination of all existents: *And unto thy Master will be the end of all things* (53:42).

Now we have reached a point from where we can proceed to explain the position of the Holy Qur'an that forgetting Allah is forgetting one's own self and the separation from Allah is absolute annihilation.

Forgetting and Losing 'self'

I remember that about eighteen years ago while discussing the exegesis of certain verses of the Holy Qur'an in a private gathering, for the first time the point struck me that the Holy Qur'an very often employs typical expressions about a certain group of human beings, such as those who lose, forget, or sell their selves. For instance, it says the following:

They have indeed lost their selves, and that which they were forging has gone astray from them. (7:53) Say: Surely the losers are they who lose their selves and their families on the Day

of Resurrection (39:15) Be not as those who forgot Allah, and so He caused them to forget their selves; those-they are the ungodly. (59:19)

The question might occur to a mind with a philosophic bent. Is it possible for a man to lose his self? the loss of anything necessitates two things: the loser and the thing lost. Now how is it possible for a human being to lose its self? Is it not self-contradictory?

Likewise, is it possible for a man to forget himself? A living human being is always immersed in itself and perceives everything as something other and additional to its own self; its attention is, before everything else, focussed on itself. Then what is meant by forgetting one's self?

Later I realized that this matter occupies a significant place in Islamic teachings, especially in the prayers and some traditions as well as in the writings of Muslim *Aurafa*. It shows that often man mistakes Anon-self' as his self, regards that non-self as his real self. Then imagining the non-self to be his self, he treats the non-self and takes care of it as he would have treated and cared for his true self. The true self, as a result, falls into neglect and oblivion, and occasionally under goes a metamorphosis. For instance, when man imagines his body to represent his total entity, all his endeavour revolves about his body, it means that he has forgotten his self conceiving the non-self to be his real self. Such a man, in the words of Rumi, is like the one who owns a piece of land somewhere; he carries building materials and hires masons and workers to build a house for him; after much toil, the house is made ready for living; the doors and windows are painted, the floor is carpeted, curtains are hung and the house is furnished beautifully in every way; however, one day when he prepares to move into the new house, all of a sudden he realizes his mistake; to his dismay, he notes that instead of erecting the house on his own land, he has constructed it on a land that belongs to somebody else, while his own plot lies abandoned elsewhere:

*Don't build your house on the land of another,
Work for your own self and toil not for the stranger.
Who is the stranger except your own earthen frame?
On whose account are all your sorrows and woes?
So long as you nurse and pamper your body,
The soul would not prosper, nor would it become sturdy.*

At another place Rumi says the following:

*You, who have lost your self in a losing encounter,
Distinguishing not the other from your own true self;
At every shadow you are quick to exclaim,
AAh! This is me! By Allah it is not you!
Isolate yourself for a while from the crowd,
And immerse yourself to the neck in thought.
Indeed you shall find that you are one with the One,
Beautiful, serene, and blessed is your self.*

Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (A.S) has a saying in this regard which is as profound as it is elegant:

I wonder at the man who searches for his lost things but doesn't care to recover his lost self.
[8]

Losing oneself and forgetting oneself is not confined to man's error in recognizing his true identity and essence-such as the ordinary man's self-identification with the body, or the *Aarif's* occasional identification of himself with his *barzakhi* body. We have said in the last chapter that actually every being in the natural course of its development moves from Theself to Theself; that

is, it moves from a lower, weaker self to a self which is powerful and higher. Accordingly, the deviation of every existent from the path of its perfection and development is deviation from Theself towards the non-self. Man, more than any other creature, being endowed with a free will and freedom of choice, is subject to this deviation. By choosing a deviant objective as ultimate for himself, in reality he replaces his true self with the non-self, mistaking the non-self to be Theself. It is on this basis that the human being's total immersion in material aspects of life has been regarded as condemnable.

Therefore, the adoption of devious goals and ends is one of the factors of self-alienation that leads man to forget his true self and finally to lose it.

Devious goals and objectives not only result in the disease of self loss; they lead ultimately to the metamorphosis of man's human essence, a metamorphosis that is determined by that particular devious goal. A significant part of Islamic teachings is devoted to drive home the point that on the Day of Resurrection every human being shall be raised with the object of his love. Our traditions declare unequivocally:

Everyone, on the Day of Judgment shall be raised in the company of his object of love, whatever that should be, even if it is a stone. [9]

With attention to the indubitable and unequivocal Islamic teaching that on the Day of Judgment man would be raised in the form of what he acquired in this world, it becomes clear that thereason for a person's resurrection together with the objects of his love is that the love and attachment for that object make it the ultimate goal of the path of his becoming. However devious that objective may be, it causes the soul and the inner reality of a person to transform into that object.

This subject has been given great attention by Muslim sages and philosophers, who have made great many interesting observations in this regard. For brevity's sake, we shall quote only one ruba'i on this topic: Theseeker of a mine of diamonds is himself a mine; Theseeker of the spirit is himself the spirit; I will divulge Thesecret of this matter: You are whatever you seek, you are the object of your quest.

The Discovery of Theself and of Allah

Therediscovery of Theself, in addition to the above two, requires to fulfill one more condition, and that is therealization and knowledge of the Cause of one's creation and existence. That is, it is impossible for man to recognize himself and know himself by viewing himself in separation from the Cause of his creation. The real Cause of every existent is prior to it and nearer to it than it is to itself:

And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein. (50:16) And know that Allah stands between a man and his heart. (8:24)

The Muslim mystics have laid great emphasis on the point that the knowledge of Theself (*ma'rifat al-nafs*) and the knowledge of Allah (*ma'rifat Allah*) are not separate from one another. To experience the spirit, which according to the Holy Qur'an is Allah's Abreath', is, to experience the Divine Essence. The Muslim mystics have raised severe objections against the statements of Muslim philosophers regarding the problem of self-knowledge and consider them to be inadequate.

Sheikh Mahmud al-Shabistari was sent a series of versified questions by someone from Khurasan. His poem *Gulshan-e raz* is thereply he gave to the questions. In one of the questions, the enquirer asks:

Who am I?

Inform me about my self.

What is meant by A Journey within thy self?

The Sheikh's reply is elaborate. There he says the following:

Forms and spirits, from the same light are derived,

Reflected of mirror or beaming from the lamp.

I' the word is everywhere in all your speech.

*It refers to the soul, the spirit. AI' and AYou A,
are greater than the body and the spirit,*

Which are together parts of The self.

Go then, my good man, first know well your self,

And remember: edema is different from robustness. [10]

Leave one of them to soar over the undulations of space and time,

Abandon the world to become a world in yourself.

A further elaboration of this theme will take us outside the scope of our present discussion. To be brief, it should be said that the gnosis of The self is inseparable from that of Allah. This is exactly the meaning of the famous saying of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , and the same theme recurs in therecorded statements of Imam Ali (A.S) : AHe who knows his own self knows his Master.

In *Nahjul-Balagha* it is reported that Imam Ali (A.S) was asked by somebody: AHave you seen your Allah? Ali (A.S) replied: AWould I worship what I have not seen? Then he elaborated his answer thus:

He is not visible to the eyes but the hearts perceive Him through (the factual experience of) faith (*iman*). [11]

An interesting point that is implicit in the statements of the Holy Qur'an is that man is in possession of himself as long as he Apossesses' Allah. Only through the remembrance of Allah does he remember his self and become fully aware of it, and to forget Allah is to neglect one's own self. Forgetting Allah is accompanied by self-forgetfulness:

Be not as those who forgot Allah, and so He caused them to forget their selves. (59:19)

Rumi, following his verses quoted above, says the following:

Even if the body should lie amidst fragrance and musk,

On death it will petrify and give out its stink.

So scent not the body, but perfume the soul with musk,

What is that musk except the Name of the Glorious Master ?

Hafiz says the following:

Hafiz, if you desire presence,

Do not be absent from Him.

If you desire His rendezvous,

abandon the world and forget it.

This shows why the remembrance of Allah is essential for the life of the heart; it awakens and illumines the heart and gives peace to the soul; it revives, purifies, refines, and humbles the human conscience and fills it with delight. How profound and beautiful are Ali's words in *Nahjul-Balagha* where he says the following:

Certainly Allah Almighty has made His remembrance a means for cleaning and polishing the hearts. It makes them hear after deafness, see after blindness, and makes them submissive to guidance after being stubborn and resisting. In all periods and times when there were no

prophets, there were individuals to whom He whispered through their thoughts and spoke to them through their intellects. As a result they were enlightened with a light awakening their hearts, their vision and their hearing. [12]

Worship and the rediscovery of The self

There is so much that can be said about worship that if we were to elaborate we would have to devote scores of chapters to this subject. Here we shall make a brief reference to the value of worship in the rediscovery of The self.

As much as the bondage to material matters and immersion in them severs man from his true self and induces self-alienation, worship helps him in recovering his own self. Worship awakens and arouses man from his spiritual slumber. It rescues him from drowning in the sea of self-neglect and forgetfulness and saves his identity from being lapsed in the world of material things. It is in the mirror of worship and Allah's remembrance that man can observe himself as he really is and become aware of his failings and faults. It is in worship that he acquires the true perspective of being, life, space and time, like watching a city from a high mountain, and perceives the insignificance, pettiness and abjectness of his materialistic hopes, desires, and ambitions. It is in worship that a yearning is awakened in his heart to attain to the very core of being.

I have always marvelled at the following words of the famous scientist of our age, Albert Einstein. What adds to my amazement is that he was a physicist and a mathematician, not a psychologist, theologian or philosopher. After dividing religion into three stages, he calls the third stage of religious experience as the one arising from a cosmic religious feeling. He describes this religious experience in these words:

The individual feels the futility of human desires and aims, and the sublimity and marvellous order which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world of thought. Individual existence impresses him as a sort of prison and he wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole. [13]

William James, writing about prayer, says the following:

The impulse to pray is a necessary consequence of the fact that whilst the innermost of the empirical selves of a man is a self of the social sort it yet can find its only adequate socius (its great companion) in an ideal world. Most men, either continually or occasionally, carry a reference to it in their breasts. The humblest outcast on this earth can feel himself to be real and valid by means of this higher recognition. [14]

Iqbal also has something profound to say about worship and prayer and their value for the rediscovery of The self. He writes:

Prayer as a means of spiritual illumination is a normal vital act by which the island of our personality suddenly discovers its situation in a larger whole of life. [15]

We conclude our discussion of this extensive subject right here.

Some Relevant Issues

Now that our discussion about the concept of the world in *Nahjul-Balagha* is nearing its conclusion, I want to clarify some issues with attention to the principles discussed above.

Life in this World versus the Hereafter

Some Islamic traditions seem to imply that there exists a kind of conflict between the world and the Hereafter. For instance, it is stated that they are like two rival wives' who can never be reconciled, or it is said that they are like the East and the West: one cannot approach any one of

them without moving farther from the other. How should one interpret these statements in order to reconcile them with what has been said above?

The answer is that, firstly, as has been expressly stated in most Islamic traditions, a reconciliation between winning the world and the Hereafter is not only possible but is a necessity of the Islamic creed. That which is impossible is their reconciliation as ultimate ends and goals.

The enjoyment of the good things of the world does not necessarily require deprivation from the blessings of the next world. That which deprives one of therewards of the next life is a series of mortal sins, not the enjoyment of a wholesome, comfortable life and the availing of pure and lawful bounties provided by Allah. Similarly, that which leads to deprivation in the world is not *taqwa* or righteous deeds or the endeavour for the Hereafter; a number of other factors are responsible for it.

Many prophets, Imams, and pious believers, whose virtuousness and piety are indubitable, have been among those who benefited greatly from the legitimate bounties of the world. Accordingly, even if it be assumed that thereligious texts do imply irreconcilability between the enjoyment of the world and that of the Hereafter, they would not be acceptable because of the incontrovertible evidence to the contrary.

Secondly, if we scrutinize such traditions closely, an interesting point comes to the surface in whose light we observe no contradiction between them and the incontrovertible principles of Islam. But before that this point may be explained, we should examine three possible relationships between the world and the Hereafter:

Therelation between enjoyment of the good things of the world and enjoyment of therewards of the Hereafter.

Therelation between the world as the ultimate goal and the Hereafter as such.

Therelation between adoption of one of these as the ultimate goal with the enjoyment of the other.

There is no conflict whatsoever involved in the first case. Accordingly a reconciliation between the two is quite possible. The second case, however, involves a contradiction; for there is no possibility of reconciling these two opposite goals.

As to the third, it involves in turn two cases: first, the adoption of the world as the ultimate end and the enjoyment of the Hereafter; second, the adoption of the Hereafter as the ultimate goal and the enjoyment of the world. The first case involves a contradiction, whereas The second doesn't.

The Primary and The secondary

The conflict between the adoption of either the world or the Hereafter as ultimate ends and the enjoyment of the other is the kind that exists between a perfect and an imperfect end. If the imperfect is made the ultimate goal, the perfect is necessarily missed; whereas if the perfect were one's end and goal, it would not necessarily preclude the imperfect. The same is true of anything primary in relation to its secondaries. If something secondary were made the aim, it would result in deprivation from the primary. But if the primary is made the aim and goal, The secondary, being a corollary of the primary, is automatically included. This is most eloquently explained in *Hikma* 269 of *Nahjul-Balagha*:

There are two types of workers among the people of the world: (One type is represented by) the man who works in this world for this world and his involvement in the world makes him forget the Hereafter. He is worried about those whom he shall leave behind (on death) lest poverty should strike them as if he were himself secure of it (in the Hereafter). So he spends his

life for the (worldly) benefit of others. The other type of man works in the world for the sake of the Hereafter and secures his share of the world effortlessly. Thus he derives benefit from the both and comes to possess both the worlds. As a result he acquires honor before Allah, Who grants him whatever he asks of Him.

Rumi offers an interesting allegory. He compares the Hereafter and the world to a train of camels and the trail of dung that it leaves behind. If one's aim were to own the train of camels he would also have the camels' dung and wool. But if one wants only the dung and the wool, he will never come to acquire the train of camels and will always be collecting dung and wool of camels which belong to others.

*Hanker you after faith for its pursuit yields
Beauty, wealth, honor, and good fortune.
Consider the Hereafter as a camel train;
The world is a trail of wool and dung in its rear.
If you want only the wool, you will never the camels own;
Yet if you own a camel train, isn't its wool your own ?*

That the relation of the world to the Hereafter is like that of a secondary thing to its primary; that worldliness, being a pursuit of the secondary, leads to deprivation from the benefits of the Hereafter; and that other worldliness by itself ensures the benefits of the world, is a teaching that originates in the Holy Qur'an. Verses 145-148 of the Surat *al-Imran* expressly, and verses 18 and 19 of the Surat *al-Isra'* together with verse 20 of the Surat *al-Shura* implicitly present this view.

A Tradition

There is a well-known tradition found in the texts of *hadith* as well as other books and is also mentioned in the last will of al-Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (□). This is the text of the tradition:

In regard to the world be as if you were going to live for ever. With respect to the Hereafter be as if you were going to die tomorrow. [16]

This tradition has been highly controversial in that it has led to contradictory interpretations. Some interpret it as implying that one should deal with worldly matters with relaxed inattention and without hurry. Whenever one is faced with an affair of worldly life, one should say to himself 'There is still a lot of time, why hurry?' But when performing good deeds for the Hereafter, one should imagine as if he were not going to be alive after tomorrow and say to himself: 'There isn't much time left; it is already too late.'

Others with the conviction that Islam would never recommend negligence and carelessness, which certainly has not been the practice of the leaders of the faith, have said that what is implied is that one should always approach the worldly affairs as if he were immortal, attend to them with attention and care, and not perform them in a perfunctory manner with the pretext that life is fleeting. Rather, they say, the works of the world should be done with firmness and great foresight and attention, as if one were going to live till the end of the world. The rationale for this is that if one were to die, others will derive benefit from one's works. The affairs of the Hereafter, however, are in Allah's hand; so think of them as if you were going to die tomorrow and there is not much time left for anything.

As can be noticed, the first one of these two interpretations recommends negligence and lack of commitment towards the affairs of the world, whereas The second one advises a similar attitude towards the Hereafter. Obviously, none of these two interpretations can be regarded as acceptable.

In our opinion, this, one of the most subtle of traditions, consists of an invitation to action, care, and attention and avoidance of negligence and indifference, whether with respect to the worldly activities or those which relate to the Hereafter.

Suppose a person living in a house knows that sooner or later he will have to move to another house where he will stay permanently. However, he does not know the day, the month or the year when he shall have to make the shift. Such a man is in a state of dilemma with regard to matters relating to his present home and his plans about his future house. If he knows that he will move tomorrow, he would not pay any attention to therepairs and upkeep of his present house, and attend only to matters concerning the planned Shift. But if he knows that he would not be shifting his residence for several years, he will act in an opposite manner; presently he will devote all his attention to the present house, knowing that there is much time left to deal with those relating to his future residence.

Now this person, in a state of doubt about the exact date of the shift, not knowing whether he will have to shift in near future or remain in his present house for years, meets a friend who wisely advises him to attend to the affairs of his present house as if he were to continue living there for a long time and not to neglect its upkeep. As to the other house, the wise friend advises him to get it ready as if he were going to move tomorrow and have it furnished as soon as possible. This advice will have the consequence that it will make him adopt a serious and active attitude towards both his houses.

Suppose someone wants to start a work, like writing a book or founding an institution or taking up a project which requires years of pursuit. If such a person thinks that he will not live long enough to finish his work, he might desist from starting it. That is why it is said that one must think that he will live for long. But the same person, from the point of view of repenting for his sins and compensating for the past excesses with regard to religious duties or the rights of the people he has transgressed-all of which require little time for their accomplishment given the will to do so-may keep on postponing them every day so that the promised tomorrow may never come. In such cases, contrary to the first kind of attitude, to assume that one has still enough time and there is no reason to hasten, would result in negligence and delay in fulfillment of one's duties. Therefore, here one should assume that there isn't much time left.

Therefore, we see that in one case to assume that one has enough time encourages action and endeavour and the assumption that there is no time left would lead one to abstain from action and endeavour. In the other case, the result is quite the opposite. Here, the assumption that one has still a lot of time leads to negligence and procrastination, and the assumption that there isn't much time left leads to quick accomplishment of duties.

In the light of this, the *hadith* means to say that with regard to one kind of duties one should assume that he is going to live on and with respect to another kind suppose that not much remains of his life.

This interpretation is not baseless. There are several traditions which confirm the above interpretation. The reason that this tradition gave rise to controversy is that attention was not paid to such traditions.

Safinat al-bihar, under *rifq*, relates a tradition of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) addressed to Jabir:

Indeed this (i.e. Islam) is a firm religion. So (do not make it hard on yourself but) act in it with mildness. Cultivate like him who thinks he will never die and work (for the hereafter) like him who is afraid he will die tomorrow.

In volume XV of *Bihar al-Aanwar* (The section on *akhlaq*, Bab 29), it is related from *Al-Kafi* that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) addressed Ali (A.S) , saying:

This (Islam) is a firm religion. So work like him who hopes to live for long and be cautious like him who is afraid that he would die tomorrow. That is, when commencing a useful project that requires a long time for its completion, assume that you will live long enough to complete it. However, with regard to matters which you might postpone thinking that you have enough time to handle them, assume that you shall die tomorrow, so that time is not wasted and delay is avoided.

In *Nahjul-Balagha*, it is related from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) that he said:

Attend to the affairs of the world; but with respect to the Hereafter be such as if you were going to die tomorrow.

In the same book, the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is related as saying:

Work like the man who imagines that he will never die; and be cautious like him who knows he is going to die tomorrow.

In another tradition the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is reported to have said:

The mu'min is the most vexed of men, for he must attend to the affairs of the world as well as those of the Hereafter.

In *Safinat al-bihar*, under *nafs*, a *hadith* of al-Imam Musa al-Kazim (□) is related from *Tuhaf al-Auqul* to the effect that:

He who abandons the world for his Hereafter or abandons his Hereafter for his world is not from us.

The above discussion on the whole confirms our interpretation of the *hadith* and also shows that this approach finds recurring echo in the teachings of the leaders of the Islamic faith.

Concluded; walhamdu lillah.

NOTES/ REFERENCES

Notes B Section One

This is the first part of Martyrs Mutahhari's book *Sayri dar Nahjul-Balagha*, and consists of the introduction and the first section of the book. The introduction, which the author, presumably wrote before giving the book to the publishers is dated Muharram 3, 1995 (January 15, 1975).

[1] This is a reference to the following words of Ali (A.S) , taken from *Nahjul-Balagha*, (ed. Subhi al-Salih, Beirut 1387), *Hikam*, No 147 AO Kumayl! the mankind consists of three kinds of people: the sage adept in the knowledge of the Divine (*alim rabbani*), the novice of the path of deliverance (*muta'allim Aala sabili najat*) and the vulgar populace'.

[2] *Faqih* means an expert in Islamic Law, the Shariah, whose study is called *fiqh*. Equivalent terms are *mufti*, *mujtahid*, and *ayatullah*. (Tr.)

[3] *Nahjul-Balagha, Khutab*, No. 193

[4] *Minbar* is a raised platform with steps, the Islamic pulpit. Traditionally as a rule, the function at speaking at mourning gatherings, the *majalis*, has been performed in Iran by the Mullahs, or *ruhaniyyun*, as they are called in Iran. (Tr.)

[5] *Husainiyyeh Irshad* is a building in Tehran founded by the late Dr. Ali (A.S) Shariati. (Tr.)

[6] This is in reference to an Arabic maxim: *That which cannot be attained in entirety is not to be abandoned completely.*

[7] Here it is not clear whether al-Mas'udi means that Ali's sermons were recorded in writing, in books, or if he implies that people preserved them by memorizing them, or if he means both.

[8] al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-Thahab*, (Beirut, 1983), Vol. II, p. 431

[9] al-Tha'alibi quoted by Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Abdo, *Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Introduction, p. 9

[10] *Nahj* means open way, road, course, method or manner; *balaghah* means eloquence, art of good style and communication, rhetoric etc

[11] Here the author adds that Atill now four volumes of this have been published'.

[12] the arabic is: *fawq kamil makhluq wa duna kalam ul khaliq*

[13] al-Jahiz, *al-Bayan wa al-tabyin*, Vol. I p. 230

[14] *Nahjul-Balagha, Khutab*, No. 3

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Ibid., Rasa'il*, No. 22

[17] *Ibid., Rasa'il*, No. 83

[18] According to my own counting, if I have not made a mistake

[19] *Nahjul-Balagha, Khutab*, No. 193

[20] Abdul-Hamid was a scribe (*katib*) at the court of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan ibn Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Of Persian origin, he was the teacher of the famous ibn al-Muqaffa. It was said of him, Athe art of writing began with AAbdul-Hamid and ended with ibn al-Amid'. Ibn al-Amid was a minister to the Buyids.

[21] *Asla* means someone whose frontal position, portion of the head is bald. Abdul-Hamid while confessing the greatness of Imam Ali (A.S) , mentions him in a detracting manner due to his attachment to the Umayyad court

[22] the other three being: *Adab al-kitab* of ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Kamil*, of al-Mubarrad, and *al-Nawadir* of Abu Ali (A.S) al-Qali: quoted from the introduction to *Al-Bayan wal-Tabyin* by ibn Khaldun in his *Muqaddamah*.

[23] *al-Bayan wa al-tabyin*, Vol. I p. 202

[24] *Ibid.*, Vol. I p. 83

[25] *Nahjul-Balagha, Hikam*, No. 81. See also Sayyid al-Radhi's comment on this aphorism.

[26] Sasa'ah ibn Suhan al-AAbdi was of the eminent companions of Imam Ali (A.S) . When after the death of the third Caliph, Ali (A.S) became the Caliph, it was Sa'sa'ah who said to him: *You [by assuming the caliphate] have given it beauty, while caliphate has not added lustre to your personality. You have raised its worth, and it has not raised your station. It stands in greater need of you than you need it.*

[27] *Nahjul-Balagha, Rasa'il*, No. 35

[28] This anecdote was related by Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Jawad Mughniyyah, a contemporary Lebanese scholar, at the occasion of a reception party given in his honor in the holy city of Mashad.

[29] *Nahjul-Balagha, Khutab*, No. 230

[30] al-Jahiz, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 99

[31] A poetic form much popular in classical Arabic and Persian poetry. *Ghazal* is also another poetic form.

[32] Umru al-Qays (500-540 AD) the famous poet of the pre-Islamic era (*Jahiliyyah*), the author of the first *Mu'allaqat*. AAl-Malik al-Dillili is his nickname.

Notes B Section Two

[1] the term *ta'wil* has been defined variously, but generally when used in the opposition to *tafsir* (which is applied to the explanation of the literal and explicit meanings of the Holy Qur'anic texts) it is applied to interpretation of the Holy Qur'anic verses which goes beyond their literal meaning. According to Imamiyyah Shi'a, no one except the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and the twelve Imams is entitled to draw *tawil* of the Holy Qur'anic verses. To illustrate what is meant by *ta'wil* consider these examples: (1) According to Shi'a hadith, the verse 2:158, 'Where ever you maybe, Allah will bring you all together', pertains to the 313 companions of Imam al-Mahdi (□) whom Allah will gather in a certain place from various parts of the earth in a single night. (2) According to another hadith the verse 67:30, 'Say: What think you? If your water (in wells) should have vanished into the earth, then who would bring you running water?' pertains to the *ghaybah* (occultation) of Imam al-Mahdi (□). Such interpretations, which obviously go beyond the apparent meaning of the Holy Qur'anic verses, are called *ta'wil*.

[2] Aallama S.M.H Tabatabai, *Usul e falsafah wa rawish e riyalism* (The Principles and Method of Philosophy of Realism), Introduction to Vol. I

[3] Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Sulayman Nadawi, *Madha khasara al-alam bi inhitat al-Muslimin*, Vol. IV, p. 97

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 135

[5] Aallama Tabatabai, *op. Cit*

[6] *Ibid.*, Vol. V

[7] *Maktab e tashayyu*, No. 2 p. 120

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 126

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 157

[10] See Murtada Mutahhari, *Ilal e garayesh beh maddigari* (The causes of inclination towards Materialism), under the chapter: *Naresa iha ye mafahi me falsafii* (The inadequacies of [Western] Philosophical Ideas)

Notes - Section Three

- [1] *Nahjul-Balagha, Hikam*, No. 237
- [2] *Ibid.*, *Hikam*, No. 290
- [3] Source of reference not indicated (Tr.)
- [4] *Ibid.*, *Khutab*, No. 222
- [5] *Ibid.*, p. 343
- [6] *Ibid.*, *Rasa'il*, No. 45
- [7] *Ibid.*, *Khutab*, No. 193
- [8] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* No. 220
- [9] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* No. 230
- [10] *Ibid.*, *Hikam*, No. 147
- [11] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* No. 193
- [12] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* No. 87
- [13] *Ibid.*, *Hikam*, No. 147
- [14] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* No.199
- [15] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* No.227
- [16] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* No.222
- [17] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* No.150

Notes - Section Four

[1] That is, in the absence of a righteous government, an unjust government, at least preserves law and order in society, which is, of course, better than chaos and rule of jungle.

[2] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *the Social Contract* (trns. by Maurice Granston Penguin Books, 1978, p. 51

[3] (*Ibid.* p. 53)

[4] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, the Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1958, p. 173

[5] Bukhari, *Kitab al-Nikah*, Vol. VIII

Notes - Section Five

[1] *Nahjul-Balagha, Khutab*, No. 51 pp. 88-89

[2] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* 16

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* 114

[5] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* 191

[6] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* 157

[7] See *Guftar e mah*, Vol. I, The second speech

[8] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* 191

[9] *Ibid.*,

[10] *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. XV *Bab al-nahy an al-rahbaniyyah wa al-siyahah*. Rumi in the sixth part of his *Mathnawi*, refers to this tradition in the story of the bird and the hunter.

[11] This is a reference to to *Khutab* No. 3 p. 50

[12] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* 209

[13] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* 45

[14] *Ibid.*,

[15] *Ibid.*, *Khutab* 209

[16] *Bihar al-anwar* (Tabriz) (Vol. IX. p. 758)

[17] *Nahjul-Balagha, Hikam*, No. 103

- [18] *Ibid.*, *Khutab*, No. 160
[19] *Ibid.*, *Khutab*, No. 133
[20] *Ibid.*, *Khutab*, No. 224
[21] *Ibid.*, *Epistle*, No. 45
[22] al-Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, Vol. 2I p 194-5
[23] *Nahjul-Balagha, Hikam*, No. 103
[24] *Ibid.*, *Epistle*, No. 45
[25] *Ibid.*, 420
[26] the person referred here is Akbar Parwarish
[27] *Ibid.*, *Epistle* 45
[28] *Usul e Iqtisad e Nuhsin, AShakil e arzish e pul.*

Notes - Section Six & Seven

- [1] This is a tradition of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .
[2] This is in reference to a sentence from *Nahjul-Balagha, Khutab*, No. 28
[3] This is in reference to a sentence from *Nahjul-Balagha, Hikam*, No. 131
[4] This is in reference to a sentence from *Nahjul-Balagha, Hikam*, No. 131
[5] *Nahjul-Balagha, Hikam*, No. 131
[6] *Ibid.*, *Khutab*, No. 223
[7] *Ibid.*, *Khutab*, No. 203
[8] al-Amudi, *al-Shurar wa al-durar*, Vol. 4 p. 340
[9] *Safinat ul Bihar*, under *hubb*
[10] This reference to the famous words of ibn al-Arabi about one who imagines to have known the mysteries of Theself through the statement of the philosophers.
[11] *Nahjul-Balagha, Khutab*, No. 179
[12] *Ibid.*, *Khutab*, No. 222
[13] A. Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions* (London 1973) based on *Mein Weltbild*; ed by Carl Seeling, p. 38
[14] Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Iqbal, *thereconstruction of Religious Yought in Islam*, Lahore 1971, p. 89
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 90
[16] *Wasail al- Shi'a*, Vol. 2 p. 535 (*Bab* No. 82, hadith No. 2)

NAHJUL-BALAGHA

WHAT IS SHI'ISM

1 - Shi'ism in the contemporary world

Today, according to the latest statistics there are more than one hundred and thirty million Shi'ites in different parts of the world. They are concentrated mostly in Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Syria, Jordan, the Yemen, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Turkey, Caucasia, Egypt and other Muslim countries of North and Central Africa.

From the quantitative point of view Shi'ism comprises about one fourth of the total Islamic community throughout the world. From the point of view of intellectual and scholarly activity a notable portion of the intellectual treasures of the Islamic world has been created by Shi'ite scholars.

Yet, unfortunately still there are many people everywhere who are not acquainted with the principles of Shi'ite thoughts. Even our Sunni brothers who comprise three fourths of the Islamic

community and in many countries live along side us are not completely informed of our method of thought and beliefs.

For those who live in the East this situation should not cause much surprise for Agents of colonialism who see the preservation of their interests in causing internal conflicts in this region, have explored every avenue possible to cause hatred and division between these two groups of Muslims. In order to achieve this end they have even inverted the truth itself.

As a consequence of this pessimism there have been occasional fights between the two groups of Muslims, fights which have incurred nothing but loss upon the Islamic community.

Yet, for those who had fixed their covetous eye on the extensive and vital resources of this vast region, such disputes were considered as a great victory.

Fortunately as a result of the awakening of the East and the spread of means of communication as well as the disappearance of unworthy prejudices this situation has changed completely today.

This change is indicated by the fact that about 20 years ago on behalf of the professors and directors of al-Azhar University in Cairo, one of the leading centers of learning of the Sunni world, there was established a center called The center for rapprochement between Islamic schools with the collaboration of Shi'ite scholars.

The aim of this center as certified by its name is to bring about familiarity and proximity between the Muslims of the world.

Its members are comprised of well-known Shi'ite and Sunni scholars and by chance the general secretary is an Persian Shi'ite.

This Center publishes a learned journal called *Risalat al-Islam* in which scholars of both schools write articles based on sound proofs in order to illuminate the minds of the general Muslim public throughout the world.

The late rector of al-Azhar University and the Grand Mufti of the Sunnis, Sheikh Mahmud Shaltut, for the first time declared openly the official recognition of the religious teaching of the Shi'ite school.

He permitted all Sunnis to perform their religious duties according to Shi'ite beliefs if they wish to do so. (Of course the background of this declaration had been prepared before by other scholars such as Sheikh Abdal Masjid Salim.). This declaration had a very good effect on the great Muslim public opinion and was very effective in creating mutual understanding between the two groups.

Only a few fanatically minded people were disturbed by it.

2 - Centers of Shi'ite learning

Shi'ism possesses several universities in different parts of the world where Islamic sciences can be studied. The most important among them are the centers of Najaf, Qum and Meshed. Most of the outstanding leaders of Shi'ism come from these three centers and all of them are professors who teach in these universities. In these and other centers of learning there are numerous scholars, writers, propagators of the faith and preachers.

A relatively large number of students are studying in Qum, Meshed and Najaf. These students after terminating their studies are sent to different regions as directors of religious affairs or religious preachers. Or if necessary they are called upon to become teachers and lecturers in the centers of learning.

An important segment of the scholarly and intellectual treasures of Islam has been written by Shi'ite scholars.

Also according to reliable and trustworthy documents at hand all or most of the Islamic sciences have been founded by Shi'ite scholars, that is, they have been the first to create and establish those sciences. Shi'ite preachers are trained in such a way that contrary to other speakers they can deliver from memory and without any notes instructive scientific and social lectures as well as warm and pleasing sermons, each exceeding one or two hours.

The late great leader and guide of the world of Shi'ism Ayatullah Buruiridi, showed much interest in making Shi'ism known to the whole world.

He was certain that if the beliefs of Shi'ite Muslims were to be made known to the world in a correct way they would be rapidly accepted and people would find in them a shelter within which they could find solutions for the social and moral difficulties facing the modern world. Islam can provide an answer for the needs of the humanity of our age. For this reason he endeavored to send propagators of Shi'ism to Europe and America, and sent competent preachers of the faith to these regions.

Unfortunately the possibilities did not permit any more than this. In West Germany in Hamburg (on the bank of the beautiful Alster lake) plans were made for a majestic mosque called Athe mosque of Persians.

This mosque which was the first Shi'ite religious building in the Western world has been constructed on a four thousand square meter lot and with heavy expenses. A large number of Muslims - Shi'ite and Sunni alike - perform their religious rites in this mosque.

Tourists visiting Hamburg come to see this beautiful and interesting mosque in which are combined Oriental and Occidental schools of art and architecture and where the Oriental and Islamic aspects is very obvious.

In Shi'ite universities especially those of Najaf, Qum, Meshed and Tehran there are large libraries most of whose books consist of works of Islamic scholars. It is also of interest of note that the great al-Azhar University of Cairo and the Islamic Qarawiyyin University in Morocco which are among the eldest universities in the world were founded by Shi'ites, the first by the Fatimid caliphs and The second by the Idrisid sultans.

3 - the origin of Shi'ism

Occasionally certain people, because of mis-information or ill-intention, make it appear as if Shi'ism is something other than thereligion promulgated by Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Household) upon whom be blessings and peace, the great leader of the Islamic world, and that Shi'ism came into being in later centuries.

The truth is that Shi'ism is nothing but Islam and Shi'ites consider as unworthy and without authority anything that has the least conflict with thereligion of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Islam - upon whom be blessings and peace - and the Holy Qur'an.

Altogether it must be remembered that Shi'ism is not a special religion visa-vis Islam about whose origin one could debate. Shi'ism from its own point of view is none other than the sacred religion of Islam itself as founded by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Muhammed ibn AAbdullah, upon whom be peace. Only Shi'ism believes that the best means to know Islam and the teachings of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is through his family who were the closest to him and were brought up in the atmosphere of revelation. Therefore the date of origin of Shi'ism is same as Islam itself.

The Holy Qur'an, according to Shi'ism, is the most important untouched source of Islam which has reached us without any change from the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . For this reason the Holy Qur'an is made the criterion and means of judgment of the authenticity or

falsehood of sayings which have reached us from the great leaders of religions, the means to judge between authentic sayings and those that are forged. Any saying that has been handed down, if it accords with the Holy Qur'an is acceptable and if not, rejected.

Taking these truths into view, there is no need to remind people that Shi'ism begins with the first instance when therevelation descended upon the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Islam.

4 - Shi'ites and other Muslims

What distinguishes the Shi'ites from other Muslims? the answer to this question is clear. The first point that distinguishes the Shi'ites from Sunnis is the question of succession to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Shi'ism believes that the position of succession and vicegerency (caliphate) of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is a sacred and responsible function which like that of prophecy itself must be designated by Allah. A person who occupies this position is called the Imam. The first Imam who was chosen by Allah through the prophet was Ali (A.S) upon whom be peace. After him eleven other members of the family of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) were chosen for this position.

AThe first of them is Ali (A.S) ibn Abu Talib upon whom be peace. Ali (A.S) was the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and according to the confession of the scholars of Islam the most learned, self-sacrificing and courageous of the companions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . He was the first man to accept the faith and never separated from the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) throughout his life.

During the last year of his life the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , while returning from pilgrimage to Medina in a place called Ghadir Khumm, officially designated Ali (A.S) as his successor before a large gathering of Muslims.

Before this event also he had referred several times to this matter. Furthermore, the intellectual, spiritual and religious distinctions of Ali (A.S) were such that there was no one more worthy of becoming the successor of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) than he. However, after the death of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) political and tribal competition prevented him from becoming officially the caliph and leader of Muslims.

At the same time many of the outstanding personalities among the well-known companions and aides of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) remained faithful to him and were proud to follow him. But in order not to create any dissension or breach in the ranks of Muslims, they did not oppose openly the caliph of the time.

But after 25 years and the caliphate of three other men, Muslims turned to him again and selected him as their leader.

Without doubt the period of rule and caliphate of Ali (A.S) which was unfortunately short, having lasted about five years, and which terminated with his martyrdom, was the most perfect and exalted example of just and truthful government and fight against all unjust inequalities. This is a matter which no historian can deny. Today his meaningful and wise sayings have survived and make known his school. The Shi'ites of the world boast in having such a leader. Even the word Shi'a which etymologically means Apartisan or Afollower has come into being through the fact that the members of this group are the partisans of such a leader.

Shi'ites believe that after Ali (A.S) , eleven of his descendants became consecutively the successors and vicegerents of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and with Ali (A.S) himself comprise the ATwelve Imams.

Their names are as follows:

- 1 - Ali ibn abi Talib (A.S).
- 2 - Hasan ibn Ali (A.S) .
- 3 - Hussein ibn Ali (A.S) .
- 4 - Ali ibn al-Hussein (□).
- 5 - Muhammed ibn Ali (A.S) .
- 6 - Ja'far ibn Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .
- 7 - Musa ibn Ja'fer (□).
- 8 - Ali ibn Musa (□).
- 9 - Muhammed ibn Ali (A.S) .
- 10 - Ali ibn Muhammed (□).
- 11 - Hasan ibn Ali (A.S) .
- 12 - Muhammed ibn Hasan (□).

From these excellent leaders we have today available and abundant traces of Islamic sciences.

Shi'ism believes that the earth can never be without the special representative of Allah (the prophet and their vicegerents). They have been ordered to guide, lead and train the people of the world and continue to do so. Shi'ism believes that the Twelfth Imam is right now alive and endowed with a long life.

This matter is neither beyond the power of Allah which all religious people believe in nor against the principles of modern biology.

Shi'ites, like all Muslims, believe that finally a day will come when mankind will reach an impasse because of injustice, struggles, wars and bloodshed. Then with a sacred spiritual revolution guided by one of the descendants. Peace, justice and faith in Allah will dominate everywhere and all peoples and nations will live in a lasting peace and tranquillity. Only, Shi'ism believes that the leader of this revolution will be none other than the Twelfth Imam.

5 - Shi'ite beliefs

Shi'ism believes that Islam is not only a series of commands or ceremonial regulations which man performs at particular hours or days of the week. Rather, it believes religion is comprised of a series of exalted instructions and beliefs and a group of life-giving regulations and laws which are intertwined with man's individual and social life.

The aim of religion is to provide felicity for man in all aspects of life.

The basis of Shi'ite beliefs like those of other Muslims, is threefold.

1. Unity of God (Tawhid)

Shi'ism believes Allah to be one without any associate or like or progeny. Shi'ism is violently opposed to every form of polytheism, idol worshipping and deviation from unity and also to all kinds of taking human being as masters beside Allah and addressing prayers to them. It believes that Allah is the creator of the whole universe, and therefore holds that throughout the universe nothing is created but for a benefit and purpose.

Shi'ism believes that Allah is neither body nor matter. Rather, He is above all that is material and therefore has no specific place or location. He is omnipresent and omniscient. He is closer to us than ourselves. He sees everything and hears every sound but His vision and hearing are not in our case with eyes and ears.

The near and remote past and future are alike for him and all things indifferently known and evident in His knowledge. He has even knowledge of thoughts that pass through our minds. He is one in every way and does not consist of parts. Even His Qualities, such as His power and knowledge, are identical with His Pure Essence. His Being has no beginning nor end. It is pre-

eternal and past-eternal (He exists from eternity to eternity). He is in every way Absolute Being. His Qualities do not resemble the qualities of the creatures for these are in all aspects limited whereas, He is in every way unlimited. Forgiving the sins of his servants is solely at his own absolute discretion, and nobody even the prophet of Islam or the Imams can do anything for remission of the sins.

2. The sending of Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s (Nubuwwa)

Shi'ism believes that Allah, in order to guide His creatures and lead them from the darkness of ignorance and misery to the light of knowledge and happiness, has sent a number of prophets. For Allah has created man for felicity and happiness and has created the means for the attainment of this end in the existence of the universe itself.

Sending prophets is also with the purpose of perfecting this goal. That is why the teachings of the prophets and the Divine laws are always the supplement for creation organization of human being. Any law which is opposed to the primordial nature and creation of man is surely not revealed by Allah.

Shi'ism believes that the aim of the prophets has never been to propagate unintelligible matters such as the endurance of every kind of disagreeable situation and torture or sacrifice for the sins of others. Rather, their aim has been that same correct instruction and training, the strengthening of moral principles and the relation between men, and the establishment of the principles of justice among mankind.

The Holy Qur'an in many verses has clearly reminded man of this truth.

Shi'ism respects all prophets of Allah without exception but believes that as a result of the passage of time their holy books have become mixed with kinds of superstitions and have suffered various forms of deviation. A living witness to this fact is the unjust and childish qualities mentioned in these books about Allah and His prophets.

According to Shi'ism all the prophets of Allah, even Muhammed, Moses and Jesus Christ are recognized as the servants of Allah, but they were qualified as obedient servants to whom Allah inspired. That is, the conviction is that all of the prophets and Imams have neither committed any sin nor any omission or error during their life time.

3. Belief in the Day of Resurrection

Shi'ism, like all Islam believes that in a determined time all men will be resurrected and in another world which is everlasting and eternal and will receive their reward or punishment of their good or evil works. The least good or evil action is accounted for and its account is preserved by Allah. No one will be treated with injustice or oppression.

Those who have performed good works shall go to eternal paradise in which is found every kind of spiritual and corporeal blessing and evil doers will be sent to the inferno unless they repent in this world. Repentance means that one would seriously and cordially repent from his or her past sins, and decide definitely not to adhere to such sins in the future, as well as indemnify and make good what would be deemed repayable and where he or she has infringed and violated the rights of other individuals, to restore and repair them to the rightful party.

6 - Distinctions of Shi'ism

Shi'ism shares the three above-mentioned principles with other Muslims but there are two points which are its distinguishing marks:

1 - Belief in the Twelve Imams who are the vicegerents of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and whose account has already been given.

2 - Belief in the Divine justice. By this it means that Shi'ism believes Allah never deals with injustice or oppression toward others which is a sign of either ignorance or lack of power, whereas Allah is omniscient and omnipotent. As a consequence of this principle Shi'ism also believes that all human beings possess the freedom of will. No one is forced to obey or rebel. The destiny of each person is in his own hands. No one bears the weight of the sins of others nor is anyone punished for the wrong doings of others.

7 - Sources of Shi'ite religious instructions

Shi'ism has received its religious instructions which concern all aspects of private and social life from the closest source of knowledge to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , that is, the household of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) (the Twelve Imams) who have received their knowledge either directly or through intermediaries from the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) himself. In its method the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) which all Muslims remember from him: AI am departing from you but I have among you two precious things: the Holy Qur'an, the book of Allah, and my household who will never separate from each other.

In order to discern and distinguish religious obligations Shi'ism follows, in addition to the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and the Imams, that which meets the consensus of the Aulama' (learned men) and also that which reason can judge with certainty. These four principles (the Holy Qur'an, traditions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Imams, consensus of the Aulama' and reason) are called the fourfold proofs.

Shi'ism believes that it is a duty of religious scholars to investigate these sources and deduce thereligious obligations and instructions of Islam from them. Or one could say that the gate of ijtihad (giving judgment and opinion on religious matters) is open to all the Aulama'.

In the principles of Islamic injunctions and laws there is no difference of opinion between Shi'ite and Sunni scholars.

The only difference of view is in certain aspects of the details of problems.

Shi'ism holds that Islam is an everlasting religion which is at the same time easy to accept and can be followed by one at all places. Shi'ite scholars have collected the individual and social duties and instructions of Islam in detail in books called the Abooks in jurisprudence (fiqh) and have created numerous sciences for therefinement and examination of these injunctions.

Shi'ism like all of Muslims believes that each Muslim must pray five times a day, fast one month a year during Ramadan and in case he or she possesses the financial and physical ability and means to participate once during his or her lifetime in the great Islamic congress, the Hajj, in Mecca and to perform special ceremonies that are full of majesty and spirituality with other Muslim brothers. Also each Muslim is obliged to pay to the public treasury to Islam a certain amount of his wealth (of course under special conditions) as Zakat in order to help the needy, perform charitable acts and defend the borders of Muslim countries.

Shi'ism also believes that in addition to this Islamic tax there is another tax described as Khums for individuals having financial ability according to special regulations.

Shi'ism also believes that in case Muslim countries are invaded by an enemy all who have the ability must take up arms and as a religious duty in the path of Adefending their homeland to fight with the enemy unto death. Martyrdom in such a path is considered as a great honor.

Moreover, all Muslims have the duty to act in a correct and logical manner to guide and instruct individuals who have perverted the right way toward the good and to combat individual

and social corruption. This A great national supervision, following the inspiration of the Holy Qur'an, is called Aamr be ma'ruf and nahy az munkar.

8 - Social and moral duties

Shi'ism believes that a true and conscientious Muslim is one who does not forget Allah under any condition, who is truthful, trustworthy, upright and friendly, who is aware of the condition of his brother Muslims and does not refuse any kind of help to them. (One must remember that Muslims address each other as brothers and this is the closest relation that exists between two human beings on the basis of mutual respect and equality. In this matter they have been inspired by the Holy Qur'an that has said, AAll Muslims are brethren). No racial, class or family distinction can cause one person to become superior to another. The only distinction is what pertains to piety and chastity. Therefore, from our point of view every form of racial discrimination is rejected.

Shi'ism possesses extensive teachings concerning rights which it has received from the Imams. Even the animals have rights. To molest them without reason is condemned. On the contrary they should be protected.

Shi'ism asserts that no one should stop striving and trying in order to earn a livelihood and that no one should become a burden to society. At the same time striving to have a better life should not disregard moral principles and virtue.

Shi'ism prohibits alcoholic beverages, narcotics, pork, gambling, sexual promiscuity and usury and its like.

It considers the principle of cooperation as the most important basis of social life and the first duty of a Muslim toward others. Like other Muslims, Shi'ites consider human life as particularly significant so that for murder, blood-shed and injury upon others heavy penalties have been foreseen in Islamic penal codes.

Also special rights and much importance are held for the family, the upbringing of children, kindness towards relatives, even distant ones, and neighbors.

Shi'ism like therest of Islam respects the rights of women as a basic principle of the family and in contrast to many other religions gives complete economic independence to women.

Like other Muslims, Shi'ites are permitted to have more than one wife but not only is this matter non-obligatory but has heavy conditions imposed upon it. Taking these conditions into considerations, only in case one's wife cannot bear children or perform the material act or if a woman does not have someone to look after her and is in need of such care or in similar cases does marriage to more than one wife take place.

Contrary to what many westerners think the number of men in Islamic countries having more than one wife does not exceed one percent. It is obvious that this polygamy under stringent conditions is quite virtuous and cannot in any way be compared with the illicit and unconditional sexual relations of non-Muslim men with a large number of women.

Shi'ism believes that all Muslims should participate in all social and political problems that pertain to them and should pursue these problems with awareness. It is opposed to solitary life, retirement from the world and monasticism.

Shi'ism believes that Islamic societies should base their rule upon the teachings and laws of Islam, and consider the welfare of the individuals with inspiration drawn from the teachings of Islam and according to the needs and requirements of the moment. They should try their utmost to advance in all spiritual and material domains.

NAHJUL BALAGHA

One cannot help liking young Ali (A.S) . A noble-minded person, as he shows himself, now and always afterwards; full of affection, a fiery darling. Something chivalrous in him: brave as lion; yet with a grace, a truth and affection worthy of Christian knighthood.

- Thomas Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, page 77 Edition 1968)

THIS BOOK

This book is a translation of the sermons, letters, orders and some of the sayings of Imam Ali (A.S) as compiled by Sayyid al-Razi and called ANahjul-Balagha, the path to eloquence.

These sermons and preachings of Imam Ali (A.S) were so highly valued and venerated in the Islamic world that within a century of his death they were taught and read as the last word on the philosophy of monotheism, as the best lectures for character building, as exalted sources of inspiration, as very persuasive sermons towards piety, as guiding beacons towards truth and justice, as marvelous eulogies of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and the Holy Qur'an, as convincing discourses on the spiritual values of Islam, as awe inspiring discussions about the attributes of Allah. As an historic masterpiece in literature alone *Nahjul-Balagha* is the original and undisputed model in the Art of Rhetoric.

IN THE 1ST CENTURY A.H.

According to the famous book of biographies *Rijal al-Kabir*, the first person to collect these sermons in a book form was Zaid ibn Wahab al-Juhni, who died in 90 A.H. and who was regarded as a narrator of *ahadith*. Thus, within thirty years of Imam Ali's death and during the first century of Hijra, his sermons, letters, *ahadith* etc., were collected quoted and preserved.

IN THE 2ND CENTURY

With the dawn of 2nd century, Ibn Wahab's example was followed by (1) the famous calligraphist of the early Abbaside regime, Abdul Hamid ibn Yahya (132 A.H.), (2) and then ibn al-Muqaffa' (142 A.H.) took up this work of compilation. Jahiz al-AOthmani says ibn al-Muqaffa' had very carefully studied these sermons and used to say that he had saturated himself from the Fountains head of knowledge and wisdom and was daily getting fresh inspirations from these sermons (3) ibn Nadim in his biographies book titled *the Fahirst* says that Hisham ibn al-Sa'ib al-Kalbi (146 A.H.) had also collected these sermons (Fahrist: ibn Nadim, section VII page 251).

Thence onward century after century Muslim scholars, theologians, historians and traditionists were citing these sermons, quoting them, discussing the meanings of the words and phrases used by Imam Ali (A.S) , and referring them when they needed an authority on theology, ethics, the teaching of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and the Holy Qur'an or on literature and rhetoric.

IN THE 3RD CENTURY

During the third century five famous men took up this work.

1. Abu AOthman AOmer ibn Bahr al-Jahiz, who died in 255 A.H. (868 A.D.), quoted many sermons in his book *Al-Bayan wal Tabyin*.

2. Ibn Qutaybah al-Daynuri, who died in 276 A.H., in his books *AUyun al-Akhbar* and *Gharib al-Hadith* quoted many sermons and discussed meanings of many words and phrases used by Imam Ali (A.S) .

3. Ibn Wazih al-Ya'qubi, who died in 278 A.H., cited many sermons and sayings of Imam Ali (A.S) in his *History*.

4. Abu Hanifah al-Daynuri (280 A.H.) in his history *Akhbar al-Tiwal* quoted many sermons and sayings.

5. Abul-Abbas al-Mubarrad (286 A.H.) in his book *Kitab al-Mubarrad* collected many sermons and letters.

IN THE 4TH CENTURY

1. The famous historian ibn Jarir al-Tabari, who died in 310 A.H., quoted some of these sermons in his *Tarikh al-Kabir*.

2. Abu Muhammed Hasan ibn Ali ibn Shu'bah al-Halabi (320 A.H.) had collected some sermons in his book *Tuhaf al-AUqul*. This book was later printed in Iran.

The following writers have also extensively quoted the sermons and sayings of Imam Ali (A.S) in their respective books.

3. Ibn Warid (321 A.H.) in his book ALMOOJTHABNEE.

4. Ibn Abd Rabbih (328 A.H.) in *Al-Aiqd al-Farid*.

5. Thiqtatul-Islam al-Kulayni (329 A.H.) in his book titled *Al-Kafi*.

6. Ali ibn Muhammed ibn Abdullah al-Madani (335 A.H.) collected sermons, letters and sayings of the Imam (□) in his book. Yaqut al-Hamawi mentions of this book in *Mu'jam al-Udaba'* page 313 Vol. 5.

7. The historian al-Mas'udi (346 A.H.), in *Muruj al-Thahab*, has quoted some of the letters and sermons of the Imam (□).

8. Abul-Faraj al-Isbahani (356 A.H.) in his book titled *Al-Aghani*,

9. Abu Ali QUALI (356 A.H.) in his *Nawadir*, and

10. Sheikh al-Saduq (381 A.H.) in *Kitab al-Tawhid*, has extensively quoted these sermons, letters and sayings.

IN THE 5TH CENTURY

1. Sheikh al-Mufid (413 A.H.) in *Al-Irshad* has quoted many sermons, *ahadith* sayings and letters of the Imam (□).

2. Sayyid al-Razi (420 A.H.) compiled the book titled *Nahjul-Balagha*.

3. Sheikhul Ta'ifa Abu Ja'fer Muhammed ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi (460 A.H.) was a contemporary of Sayyid al-Razi and had collected some of these sermons etc., long before Sayyid took up his work.

What Sayyid al-Razi could compile in *Nahjul-Balagha* does not contain all the sermons letters and sayings of Imam Ali (A.S) . Mas'udi (346 A.H.) in his famous history *Muruj al-Thahab* (Vol. 2, p. 33 printed at Cairo) says that only sermons of Imam Ali (A.S) , which have been preserved by various people, number more than four hundred and eighty. These were spontaneous orations, people have copied them one from another and have compiled them in book forms; they have cited them and have quoted passages from them in their books.

Apparently out of these four hundred and eighty sermons some were lost and Sayyid al-Razi could lay hand on only about 245 sermons, in addition he collected about 75 letters and more than 200 sayings. Almost everyone of the sermons, letters and sayings collected in *Nahjul-Balagha* is to be found in books of Authors who died long before Sayyid al-Razi was born, while some are found in works of such authors who, though his contemporaries, yet were older to him and had written their books before *Nahjul-Balagha* was compiled. In the Index No. 2:A,B and C, I have given a list of the names of these authors, books and the number of sermons, etc. found in those books.

If I quote all of what has been said by the Muslim and the Christian Arab scholars, theologians, philosophers and historians in praises of these sermons, sayings and letters, it will cover a volume as big as this book, therefore I shall briefly quote only a few of them:

1. Abu Sa'adah Mub arak ibn al-Athir al-Jazri (606 A.H.) is recognized unto this day not only as a narrator of *ahadith* but also as a lexicologist of great eminence. His book *Al-Nih aya*, is a study of the history and meanings of the difficult words of Holy Qur'an and the traditions. In this

book he has at great length discussed many words, phrases and the sentences of the Imam Ali's sermons from the book *Nahjul-Balagha*. He says that so far as comprehensiveness is concerned Ali's words come next only to the Holy Qur'an.

2. *Aallama* Sheikh Kamalludin ibn Muhammed ibn Talhah, the Shafi'ite, (who died in 652 A.H.) in his famous book *Matalib al-Su'l*, writes the following: AThe fourth attribute of Imam Ali (A.S) was his eloquence and rhetoric. He was such an Imam in these arts that none can aspire to rise up to the level of the dust of his shoes. One who has studied *Nahjul- Balagha* can form some idea of his supreme eminence in this sphere.

3. *Aallama* Abu Hamid Abdul Hamid ibn Hibathullah, known as ibn Abil Hadid, the Mu'tazilite, who died in 655 A.H., and who has written a really great commentary on these sermons says the following:

i AHis speeches, letters and sayings are so supremely eminent that they are above the sayings of man and below only the words of Allah. None can surpass it but the Holy Qur'an.

ii In another place, he says, AHis sayings are (the actualized) miracle of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . His prophecies show that his knowledge was super-human.

4. *Aallama* Sa'ddud-Din al-Taftazani (791 A.H.), in *Sharh al-Maqasid*, says, Ali had a supreme command over the language, over ethics, and over the tenets of thereligion. At the same time, he was a great orator. His sermons, compiled in *Nahjul-Balagha*, bear witness to these facts.

5. *Aallama* Ala'ud-Din al-Qawshaji (875 A.H.), in *Sharah al-Tajrid*, says, AThe book *Nahjul-Balagha*, that is, the sermons and sayings contained therein, prove that none can surpass it on these lines but the Holy Qur'an.

6. The *mufthi* of Egypt, Sheikh Muhammed Abdoh (1323 A.H.), has written a commentary on the book, *Nahjul-Balagha*. He was among those modern thinkers, who made the modern world realize the beauties of the teaching of Islam. His introduction on his own commentary of *Nahjul-Balagha* deserves careful study.

In this introduction he says that everyone who fully understands Arabic language must agree that the sermons and sayings of the Imam (□) are next only to the words of Allah and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Ali's words are so full of meanings and they convey such great ideas that this book *Nahjul-Balagha* should be very carefully studied, referred and quoted by students as well as teachers. This professor of Arabic literature and philosophy persuaded the universities of Cairo and Beirut to include the book *Nahjul-Balagha* in their courses for advance studies of literature and philosophy.

7. The famous author and orator Sheikh Mustafa Ghalaini of Beirut, who is considered as an authority on commentaries (*tafsir*) of the Holy Qur'an and also on Arabic literature in his book, *Arij al-Zahr* and from the chapter titled AThe Style of Language is written: AWho can write better than Ali except the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Allah. Those who want to study eminent standards of literature should study the book *Nahjul-Balagha*. It contains such depth of knowledge and such wonderful advises on the subjects of ethics and religion that its constant study will make a man wise, pious and noble-minded and will train him to be an orator of great standing.

8. Muhammed Mohiuddin, a professor of Arabic at Al-Azhar University of Cairo, says that *Nahjul-Balagha* is a collection of the works of Imam Ali (A.S) . It is compiled by Sayyid al-Razi. It contains such examples of chaste language, noble eloquence and superior wisdom that none but Ali can produce such a work because next to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His

Household) , he was the greatest orator, the greatest authority on language and literature and the greatest source of wisdom of the religion (Islam). He was such a philosopher that from his words flow streams of knowledge and wisdom.

9. Abdul Wahhab Hammudah, an authority on Arabic literature and on traditions and also a professor at the Fu'ad I University of Cairo, wrote the following in 1951: AThe Book *Nahjul-Balagha* contains all that great scholars, professor of ethics, philosophers, scientists, authorities on religions and politicians can say or write. The wonderful force of advises and the superfine way of presenting arguments and the depth of vision prove that it is the work of a super mind like that of Ali (A.S) .

10. Abdul Maseeh al-Antaki, the Christian editor of the Egyptian magazine AAlamran, in his famous book titled *Sharh al-Quasa'id al-AAlawiyya* writes: AIt cannot be denied that Ali (A.S) was the Imam of speakers and orators, and he was the teacher and leader of writers and philosophers. There is truth in this assertion that his sayings are superior to that of any man and are inferior only to the sayings of Allah the Almighty. He undoubtedly was the man from writers, speakers, philosophers, theologians and poets have drawn inspirations, have improved their styles and have mastered their arts. The compilation of his work is named *Nahjul-Balagha*, which should be read often.

11. Fu'ad Afram al-Bust ani, a professor of Arabic literature, in the Qiddis Yousuf [Saint Joseph] College of Beirut, is a Roman Catholic. He has compiled a book containing selections from the works of philosophers, scientists, theologians and essayists. He starts this book with the following words, AI want to start this work of mine with Theselections from the book *Nahjul-Balagha*. It is a work of the greatest thinker of the world Imam Ali-Ibn Abu-Talib.

12. The famous Christian moralist, author and poet, Paulis Salamah, in his famous book *Awwal Malhama al-Arabiyya* (printed at al-Ans ari Press of Beirut) says, AThe famous book *Nahjul-Balagha* is the work which makes one realizes the great mind of Ali ibn Abu Talib. No book can surpass it but the Holy Qur'an. In it, you will find pearls of knowledge strung in beautiful chains, flowers of language making ones mind fragrant with sweet and pleasing smell of heroism and nobility, and streams of chaste language sweeter and cooler than the famous stream of the Kawthar flowing constantly and refreshing minds of readers.

THE AUTHOR: Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S)

1. His Genealogy:

Imam Ali (A.S) the master of the faithful was the first cousin of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . His father, Abu Talib, and the father of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Abdullah, were sons of Abdul-Muttalib, and children of the same mother, Fatima (S.A), the daughter of Asad son of the famous Banu Hashim. Thus, his (Imam Ali's) parents were cousins. His genealogical table is as follows., etc. (Refer to Index 1)

2. His Birth:

Hazrat Ali (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was born on the 13th of Rajab 30 A.H. (in the Year of Elephant) (about 610 A.D.), i.e. 23 years before the Hijra of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Historians say that he was born in the precincts of Ka'ba. In this connection please refer the following books: 1. Imam Hakim, in his *Mustadrak*, 2. Al-Mas'udi, in his *Muruj al-Thahab*, p. 125, 3. *Izalatul-Khafa*, 2nd subject, p. 251, and 4. *Aallama* al-Alusi in *Sharh al-Ainiyya*.

3. His Name:

At the time of his birth his father and his cousin, Muhammed, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , were out of Mecca, his mother gave him the names of AAsad and AHayder; when his father returned he called him AZaid. But when the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) came back to the city, he took his young cousin in his charge and gave him the name Ali, saying that it was the name decreed for him by Allah.

- (1) Imam Noodi, the commentator of Bukhari
- (2) Ibn al-ARabi in his book *Yawaqit*
- (3) Sibt ibn al-Jawzi, in his book *Tathkirat Khawas al-A'imma*.

Hazrat Ali (A.S) has called himself Ali and AHayder.

4. His Kunya

Among various kunyas, the most famous were AAbdul-Hasan, AAbul-Sibtain, and AAbu Turab. (Refer to the note below).

5. His Titles:

His titles were: Aal-Murtada (the pleased one), AAmir al-Mu'minin (the Commander of the Faithful), AImamul-Muttaqin (the leader of the pious).

His Physique:

The famous historian and biographist *Aallama* Ali ibn Muhammed, in his book titled *Usd al-Ghaba fi Tamyiz al-Sahaba* (Vol. IV, page 398), says that he was a man of middle height with very black and very big and piercing eyes, very handsome cast of face, very clear and fair complexion, broad shoulders, powerful arms, vast chest, strong and roughened hands, a long muscular neck, a broad forehead and he had few hairs on the top of his head.

Note: Names derived on account of some relation or some connection. It is an Arab system that respectable people are addressed with their *kunya* and not with their names. Imam Hakim, in his *Mustadrak* (Vol. 3), Kamil ibn Athir in his *Tarikh al-Khamis*, Ibn Abdul Birr, in his *Isti'ab* (Vol. 2, p. 486) and *Aallama* Tabrani, in his *Riyaz al-Nazira* (Vol. 2 pp. 202 and 218) agree with the above description. Tabrani further says that he used to walk with very light tread and was very agile in his movements, had a very smiling face, very pleasing manner, a jovial temperament, very kind disposition and very courteous behavior. He would never lose his temper.

7. His Upbringing:

He was born three years before the marriage of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) with Hazrat Khadeeja (S.A). Soon after his birth the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) took him under his holy care and Ali was like a son unto him. He used to live with the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , used to sleep with him, was fed by him, washed and dressed by him, and even carried by him on a sling whenever he would go out. The historian al-Mas'udi, in *Ithbathal-Wasiyya* (p. 119) says that when the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) married Khadija, she adopted this child as her son. Hazrat Ali himself has described his childhood in Akhutbat al-qasi'a saying, AI was still a new born baby when the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) took me from my parents. I used to cling to him; he would make me sleep in his bed, pressing my body against his and making me smell his fragrance and feel its warmth; he used to feed me, and (when I grew a little older) he never found me uttering a lie or feigning a deceit. To me he was like a guiding star and I used to carefully follow his actions and deeds. I was attached to him like a young camel attached to its mother. He used to place before me high values of morality, and used to advise me to follow them; every year he would spend

some days at the grotto of the Hera mountain. And I used to be with him, I was his only companion then and none else could meet him at Hera, there I used to see the light of revelation, and used to smell the fragrance of Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) hood. Once the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said to me, Ali! You have attained a very eminent place. You see what I see and you hear what I hear.

Both *hafiz* Abu Na'im in his book *Hilyat al-Awliya'*, (Vol. 1, p. 67) and *imam* al-Sayyuti in his *Tafsir al-Durr al-Manthur* say that once Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said to Hazrat Ali (A.S) , AO Ali! Allah has ordered me to keep you near me. You are to me like an ear that retain everything, because you are theretaining ears that the Holy book (Holy Qur'an) has praised.

8. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Hazrat Ali (A.S) : How they loved each other

(i) Ibn Abil Hadid, the Mu'tazilite scholar and commentator of *Nahjul-Balagha*, cites Abdullah ibn Abbas saying, AOnce I asked my father: ASir, my cousin, Muhammed, has many sons. They all died while still infants. Which of them did he love the most? He replied: Ali ibn Abu Talib'. I said, ASir, I was inquiring about his sons. He replied, AThe Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) loved Ali (A.S) more than all of his sons. When Ali was a child I never saw him separated from Muhammed for half an hour, unless Muhammed went out of the house for some work. I never saw a father love his son so much as the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) loved Ali, and I never saw a son so obedient, so attached and so loving to his father as Ali was to Muhammed.

(ii) The same author cites the companion of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Joobair-Ibn Mut'imm ibn AAdiyy ibn Nawfil, saying that once his father addressed him and some young men of his family Ahave you noticed the child Ali loving, venerating and obeying that young man, Muhammed, instead of his own father, what an intensity of love and veneration. I swear by our gods, the Laat and the Uzza, that instead of having so many offspring of Naufil around me I had a son like Ali.

(iii) *Aallama* Tirmithi (Jama al-Tirmithi - Vol. I, p. 38, Mishkauth Vol. 2, p. 8 and *Musnad* of Imam Ahmed, Vol. I, p. 146), quotes the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) saying, AO Ali, I wish to achieve every such thing for you that I desire to acquire myself and I want to keep you away from all those things whose contact I abhor.

(iv) *'allama* Tabrani (in his *Oasuth*) and Imam Hakim (in his *Sahih*) say that whenever the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was angry, nobody dared to speak to him but Ali.

(v) Ibn Abil Hadid (commentary of *Nahjul-Balagha* Vol. 2I p. 251) once again quotes the uncle of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Abbas saying that they (Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Ali) loved each other intensely. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was so fond of Ali that once when Ali was a young boy he sent him out on some errand and the child took a long time to return, he started getting worried and anxious and in the end he prayed to Allah APlease Master do not let me die unless I behold Ali once again. (This incident is also quoted by Tirmithi).

(vi) Ali started acting as the bodyguard of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) even when he was just a boy of 13 or 14 years. The young men of Quraish under instigation of their parents used to stone the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Ali took up the work of acting as his defender. He fell upon those young men, broke the nose of one, teeth of the other, pulled the ears of the third and threw down the fourth. He often fought against those who

were older than himself, was often himself hurt, but he never forsook These self imposed duty. After some days he got the nickname of AQazeem (one who breaks or throws away) and nobody dared to throw anything at the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) when Ali (A.S) was with him, and he would not let the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) go out of the house alone (A'yan Vol. 3, p. 280).

Offering himself as a sacrifice at the night of Hijra (migration) and his subsequent behavior in all the battles are enough proofs of the intensity of Ali's love to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

9. His Character:

I. Jurjy Zaidan (George Gordan) who died recently was a famous Christian historian, linguist, philosopher and poet of modern Egypt. Arabic was his mother tongue, but he was so well-versed in English, French, Germany, Persian and Latin that he used to contribute to historical and philosophical magazines of France, Germany and England. About Hazrat Ali he says the following:

None can praise to the extent that he (Ali) deserves. So many instances of his piety and fear of Allah are cited that one starts loving and venerating him. He was a true, strict and scrupulous follower of Islam. His words and deeds bore stamps of nobility, sagacity and courage of conviction. He was a great man having his own independent views about life and its problems. He never deceived, misled, or betrayed anybody. In various phases and periods of his life he exhibited marvelous strength of body and mind which were due to his true faith in religion and in his sincere belief in truth and justice. He never had servants and never allowed his slaves to work hard. Often he would carry his household goods himself and if anybody offered to relieve him of the weight he would refuse.

II. The famous Egyptian philosopher and Professor of Islamics of Alazhar University, *Aallama* Muhammed Mustafa Beck Najeeb in his equally famous book *AHima'ethul Islam* says the following: *A*What can be said about this Imam? It is very difficult to fully explain his attributes and qualities. It is enough to realize that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had named him the gateway of knowledge and wisdom. He was the most learned person, the most brave man and the most eloquent speaker and orator. His piety, his love of Allah, his sincerity and fortitude in following religion were of such high order that none could aspire to reach him. He was the greatest politician because he hated diplomacy in the way of injustice and loved truth and justice, his was the policy as taught by Allah. On account of his sagacity and thorough knowledge of human mind he always arrived at correct conclusion and never changed his opinions. His was of the best judgment, and had he no fear of Allah he would have been the greatest diplomat among the Arabs. He is loved by all, and everyone has a place for him in his heart. He was a man of such surpassing and pre-eminent attributes and such transcending and peerless qualities that many learned men accepted perplexed about him and imagined him to be an incarnation of Allah. Several men among the Jews and Christians love him and such philosophers who came to know of his teachings bow down before his incomparable vast knowledge. Roman kings would have his pictures in their palaces and great warriors would engrave his name on their swords. (*Hima'ethul Islam*, part I, p. 98)

III. Another philosopher and historian of Egypt, namely Prof. Muhammed Kamil Hatha, pays his tributes in the following words: His life is a agglomeration of pleasing incidents, bloody encounters and sad episodes. His personality is very prominent on account of his transcending and high qualities. Each aspect of his life is so lofty and glorious that a study of one phase would

make you feel that it was the best phase of his character and the most beautiful picture of his personality, while contemplation of any other phase will enchant you more and you will come to the conclusion that no human being can attain that height, and a third aspect will fascinate you equally and you will realize that before you is a personality of such great eminence that you cannot fully appreciate its greatness and you will feel that Ali was an Imam (Leader) in battlefield, was an Imam (Leader) in politics, was an Imam in religion, and also an Imam in ethics, in philosophy, in literature, in learning and wisdom. It is not difficult for Allah to create such a person (a review on the character of Ali by Ustad (Professor) Muhammed Kamil Hatha, P. 40)

IV. The historian John J. Pool (author of *the Life of H.M. Queen Victoria*) in his book *Studies in Muhammedanism* makes the following points:

(i) This prince was a man of mild and forbearing character, wise in counsel and bold in war. Muhammed had given him the surname of *Athe Lion of Allah*.

(ii) Ali (A.S) and his sons Hasan (□) and Husain (□) were truly noble men; men of righteousness, men of a brave, a humble and a forgiving spirit. Their lives deserve to be commemorated for there was a peculiar pathos about them (their lives) which were not spent selfishly or in vain. As Mathew Arnold (*Essays in Criticism*) says *Athe sufferers of Kerbala' had aloft to the eyes of millions the lessons so loved by the sufferer of Cavalry (Representation of Crucifixion) :- ALearn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and Ye shall find rest unto your souls. He further says that Ali (A.S) was the first Caliph to protect and encourage national literature. This prince was a scholar himself and many of his wise sayings and proverbs are published in a book. It is a remarkable work and deserves to be more widely read in the West.*

V. Ibn Abul-Hadid, the Mu'tazilite commentator of *Nahjul-Balagha*, says the following: Hazrat Ali had a personality in which opposite characteristics had so gathered that it was difficult to believe a human mind could manifest such a combination. He was the bravest man that history could cite and such brave persons are always hard hearted, cruel, and eager for bloodshed. On the contrary Ali was kind, sympathetic, responsive and a warm-hearted person, qualities quite contradictory to the other phase of his character and more suited to pious and Allah fearing persons.

He was an extremely pious and God-fearing person and often pious and religious persons avoid society and do not care to mix with men of sins and men of wrath. Similarly, warriors, kings, and dictators are usually arrogant and haughty. They consider it below themselves to mix with poor, lowly and humble persons. But Ali (A.S) was different. He was a friend to all. As a matter of historical fact it is known that he had a tender spot in his heart for the poor and humble, and for the orphans and the cripples. To them he was always a kind friend, a sympathetic guide and a fellow sufferer; he was meek unto them but haughty and arrogant against famous warriors and generals, so many of whom he had killed in hand to hand combat. He was always kind but strict with wayward persons, sympathetically teaching them the ways of Allah. He always smiled and passed happy and witty rejoinders, it was difficult to overcome him in any debate or repartee, his rejoinders and retorts always bore high marks of culture, education and knowledge.

He was a scion of a very illustrious, rich and noble clan, as well as son-in-law and great favorite of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . At the same time he was the greatest warrior and marshal of his time, yet in spite of his riches he ate, dressed and lived like a poor person. To him wealth was for the use of other needy persons, not for himself and his family. Change of times and change of circumstances did not bring any change in his bearing,

mien, or character. Even when he ascended the throne of Arabia and was acclaimed as the Caliph, he was the same Ali (A.S) as they had found him to be during the previous regimes. Once in the society of Abdullah, son of Imam Malik ibn Hanbal, a discussion took place about Ali and his caliphate. Abdullah brought the discussion to an end saying that the caliphate did not bring any honor or glory to Ali, but it was itself honored and glorified by Ali and it received the status actually due to it.

Ibn Abul-Hadid also says that, in this world, an example cannot be found of any person other than Ali who was a first class warrior and a marshal, a philosopher, a moralist and a great teacher of religious principles and theology. A study of his life shows that his sword was the only help that Islam received during its early days of struggle and its wars of self-defense. For Islam he was the first line of defense, The second line of defense and the last line of defense. Who was with him in the battles of Badr, Uhud, Khundak, Khayber and Hunain? This is one aspect of his life. Yet the other phase of his character is portrayed by his sermons, orders, letters and sayings. What high values of morality they teach, what ethics they preach, what intricate problems of Unitarianism they elucidate, how rich they are in philosophy. How they try to train us to be kind, good, benevolent and Allah fearing rulers, and faithful, sincere and law abiding subjects. How they persuade us to be warriors who can fight only for Allah, truth and justice, and not mercenaries murdering and plundering for wealth and riches; and how they instruct us to be teachers who can teach nothing injurious and harmful to mankind. Was there any such combination before and will there ever be?

VI. To M. Oelsner, the famous French Orientalist and author of *Les Effets de La Religion de Mohammed*, Ali (A.S) was the beau ideal of chivalry: and personification of gallantry, bravery and generosity.

He says the following: APure, gentle and learned without fear and without reproach, he set for the world the noblest example of chivalrous grandeur of character. His spirit was a pure reflection of that of Muhammed, it overshadowed the Islamic world and formed the animating genius of succeeding ages.

VII. Robert Durie Osborn, in *Islam under the Arabs*, says that Ali (A.S) had been advised by several of his counselors to defer the dismissal of the corrupt governors previously appointed until he himself was sure against all enemies. The standard of Islam, the hero without fear and without reproach, refused to be guilty of any duplicity or compromise with injustice. This uncompromisingly noble attitude cost him his state and his life; but such was Ali, he never valued anything above justice and truth.

VIII. Edward Gibbon, in Vol. 5 of *the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* says, A. The zeal and virtues of Ali were never out-stripped by any recent proselyte. He united the qualification of a poet, a soldier and a saint. His wisdom still breathes in a collection of moral and religious sayings; and every antagonist in the combats of tongue or of sword was subdued by his eloquence and valor. From the first hour of mission to the last rites of his funeral, the Messenger was never forsaken by this generous friend, whom he delighted to name his brother, his vicegerent and the faithful Aaron of a second Moses.

IX. Al-Mas'udi, the famous historian of Islam, says, AIf the glorious name of being the first Muslim, a comrade of the prophet in exile, his faithful companion in the struggle for the faith, his intimate associate in life, and his kinsman, if a true knowledge of the spirit of his teachings and of the Book, if self-abnegation and practice of justice, if honesty, purity, and love of truth and if knowledge of law and science constitute a claim to pre-eminence, then all must regard Ali as the

foremost Muslim. We shall search in vain to find, either among his predecessor (save the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)), or among his successor, those virtues with which Allah had endowed him.

10. His Faith

As has been declared by all the historians of Islam, since his childhood, Ali (A.S) was adopted and looked after by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . It was only natural that his religious tendencies from his childhood were those of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . The question as to when he embraced Islam is out of consideration. He was Muslim from the very beginning. His religion was the religion of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . At the age of 5th, 7th, 10th, 12th, and 14th year he was following the religion which the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had at his 35th, 37th, 40th, 42nd, and 44th year of his life. The difference between the respective ages of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Ali was about 30 years. If the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) at any period of his life was a non-Muslim, then Ali at that period was also a non-Muslim. This is the logic of facts. Imam Nur ad-Din Ali ibn Ibrahim, the Shafi'ite, in his book *Al-Sira al-Halabiyya* says "Ali was like a son unto the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) therefore his religion from the very beginning was the religion followed by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . the famous historian Mas'udi says "The general consensus of opinion among the Muslim historians and theologians is that Ali was never a non-Muslim and never prayed before idols. Therefore the question of his embracing Islam does not and cannot arise.

11. His Wife, Children and Life at Home

Hazrat Ali was married to Hazrat Fatima (S.A), the only daughter of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) from Hazrat Khadija. He had been betrothed to her several days before the expedition of Badr. But the marriage was celebrated three months later, Hazrat Ali, being 21 years old, and Hazrat Fatima (S.A), being 15, (as stated in *the Spirit of Islam*), was very happy in his blessed marriage. The transcendental distinctiveness of their respective characters blended with each other so well, so much so that they never quarreled nor complained about each other, leading a happy and contented life. Each one of them was rich in his own rights. Fatima (S.A) was the only heir of one of the richest women of Arabia, Khadija, and had inherited many orchards and gardens in Mecca and Medina. Besides, that she was the daughter of the head of a rich clan and a king of a fast growing kingdom. Ali was a marshal who had very handsome shares from the spoils of wars. Yet all that they owned went to the poor, crippled and orphans, and they themselves often starved. Their only luxury in life was prayer, and the company of each other and their children. They willingly shared the sorrows and suffering of the poor. They were given a slave girl, Fizza, but the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had made arrangements that every alternate day was the off day of Fizza and her mistress would do all the household work. Even when Hazrat Fatima (S.A) was ill on Fizza's off day, Fizza would not be allowed to attend to the duties, but Hazrat Ali would work; and the hero of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq, Khayber and Hunain was seen grinding oats, lighting the oven, preparing the bread and looking after the children. Salman says "What a household, the only daughter of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and wife of his vicegerent leading the life of a poor laborer. If they had spent one-tenth of what they were distributing daily they would have led a life of ease and comfort. From Hazrat Ali the Lady of Light (Fatima [S.A]) had four children and the fifth (Mohsin) was a still birth. The causes of this mishap and also that of her death are very

sad and pathetic incidents of their lives. The names of these four children were Hasan, Husain, Zainab (wife of Abdullah ibn Jafar) and Umm al-Kulsoom (wife of Obaydullah ibn Ja'fer). During the lifetime of Hazrat Fatima (S.A) Hazrat Ali did not marry another woman. After her death he married Yamama. After the latter's death, married another lady, having the name of AHanafiyya by whom he had a son, Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya. After her death, he married again, thus he had many children some of whom had unparalleled places in the history of mankind, e.g. Hasan, Husain (□) (the hero of Kerbala'), Zainab (the defender of true Islam in Kufa and Damascus), Abbas (commander of Husain's army in Kerbala') and Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya, the hero of Nahrawan.

12. Ali Among his Friends and Foes and Among the Rich and the Poor

I have cited below a few cases which typically exemplify the characteristics of Ali ibn Abu-Talib'. He was, as Pool says, ATruly a noble man, a man of righteousness, and a man of brave, humble and forgiving spirit, and as Oelsner says APure, gentle and learned without fear and without reproach, setting the noblest example of character to the world. Out of hundreds and hundreds of cases to select I find it rather difficult which to choose and which not to choose. I have selected a few according to the standard of my knowledge and visualization.

I. Ali's behavior with his foes

(1) Talhah ibn Abu Talhah was not only a bitter enemy of Islam, but was a personal enemy of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Ali (A.S) . His exertions to harm these two and their mission is historically verifiable. In the battle of Uhud he was the flag-bearer of the army of Quraish. Ali (A.S) faced him and in a hand to hand encounter dealt him such a severe blow that he reeled and fell down. Ali (A.S) left him like that and walked away from him. Many Muslim warriors ran up to Ali (A.S) and advised him to finish Talhah, saying that he was Ali's worst enemy. Ali (A.S) replied AEnemy or no enemy, he cannot defend himself now, and I cannot strike a man who is not in a position to defend himself. If he survives, he is welcome to live as long as his life-span lasts.

(2) In the Battle of Jamal, in the thick of the encounter, his slave Qambar brought some sweet syrup saying AMy master the sun is very hot and you have been constantly fighting, have a glass of this cold drink to refresh yourself. Ali (A.S) looked around himself and replied AShall I refresh myself when hundreds of people around me are lying wounded and dying of thirst and wounds? Instead of bringing sweet syrup for me take a few men with you and give each of these wounded persons a cool drink. Qambar replied AMy master, they are all our enemies. Ali (A.S) said AThey may be but they are human beings and attend to them.

(3) In the battle of Siffin Mu'awiyah reached the river Euphrates before the army of the Imam (□), and took position of the river. When Hazrat's army reached there he was informed that they would not be allowed a drop of water from the river. The Imam (□) sent a messenger to Mu'awiyah saying that this action was against the canons of humanity and orders of Islam. Mu'awiyah replied saying that Aa war is a war and therein one cannot accept principles of humanity and doctrines of Islam. My sole aim is to kill Ali (A.S) and to demoralize his army and this stop. of water will bring about these results easily and quickly. the Imam (□) ordered Imam Husain to attack and get back the river. The attack took place and river side position was captured. It was then Mu'awiyah's turn to beseech permission to get water from the river. His messengers arrived and Ali (A.S) told them to take as much water as they like and as often as they require. When his officers told him that those were the very people who had refused water

to them, should they be allowed a free run of the river? He replied They are human beings and even though they have acted inhumanely, I cannot follow their example and cannot refuse a man food and drink because he happens to be my worst enemy.

(4) It was the battle of Nahrawan and he himself was fighting like any other ordinary soldier. During this battle a man came to face him and in the encounter lost his sword. He realized his hopeless plight of standing before Ali (A.S) without any weapon in hand. Ali's hand was raised for a blow when he saw the antagonist trembling with fear he lowered his hand slowly and said Run away friend. You are not in a position to defend yourself. This attitude made the man bold and he said Ali (A.S) why do not you kill me it would have made one enemy less for you. Ali (A.S) replied I cannot strike a man, who cannot defend himself. You are begging for your life and it was spared. the opponent got bolder and said, I am told that you have never refused a beggar. Now I beg you of your sword, will you grant it to me? Ali (A.S) handed him over the sword. Taking possession of the sword he said Now Ali (A.S) who is going to defend you against me and save you from my killing blow. He replied Of course Allah, He will defend me if He so wills. He has appointed my death to be my guarding angel none can harm before it is due and none can save me when it arrives. Nobility of thought and action effected the foe and he kissed the bridle of Ali's horse and said O master, you are a great man indeed. You cannot only forsake the life of your enemy in a battlefield but also you can grant him your sword. May I have the honor to act as your bodyguard and to fight for you? He replied Friend fight for truth and justice and do not fight for persons.

(5) During 39 and 40 A.H., Mu'awiyah organized bands of murderers and brigands to enter border towns and to carry on loot, plunder, arson and rape. Kumail was at that time the governor of Hayeth. He asked Hazrat's permission to organize similar bands and carry plunder in the province of Circiea which was under the control of Mu'awiyah. Hazrat Ali (A.S) replied to him I never expected such a suggestion from a man like you. It is more noble and more moral to guard your people and province than to plunder others. They might be our enemies but they are human beings. They consist of civil population compromising of women and children. How can one kill, loot and plunder them? No, never even dream of such a venture.

(6) It was the month of Ramadan, the month of fasting. It was the time of the morning prayers. The mosque was full of Muslims. Ali (A.S) was kneeling before Allah and when he raised his head a terrible blow fell upon it giving a very deep cut. There was a great disturbance and commotion in the mosque. The murderer started running. The Muslims followed, caught and bound him in ropes and brought him before Ali (A.S) who was on the prayer carpet drenched in blood and was reclining upon his sons. He knew the blow was fatal and he could not survive it but when the murderer was brought before him, he saw that the rope which had bound him was so tightly bound that it was cutting into his flesh. He turned towards those Muslims and said, You should not be so cruel with your fellow being. Slacken his ropes. Do you not see that they are cutting into his flesh and he is in agony?

So was Ali (A.S) . Islamic history repeatedly notes well the incidents of his chivalrous and merciful treatment towards his enemies.

II. Let us see what the history says about his behavior with his friends and relatives.

1. Abdullah, a son of his brother Ja'fer, was his favorite nephew, whom he had brought up since the death of Ja'fer and to whom he had given his most favorite daughter, Zainab, into marriage. This Abdullah came to him, requesting an advance installment of his share from Baitul

Mal. Ali (A.S) refused and when the young man persisted, he said, ANo my son, not a day before all the others, and a pie more!

2. Aqil, his elder brother, was financially in a very unhappy condition, he asked for something more than his share and before the time was due. The Imam (□) refused, saying that he could not resort to dishonesty. Aqil must wait till the time of distribution, and must bear the sufferings patiently. He had cited this incident in one of his sermons.

3. Ibn Hanif was his trusted disciple and a faithful follower. He was governor of a province and was once invited to a function which was followed by sumptuous dinner. When Hazrat heard of this he wrote him a severe letter, criticizing his action and said, AYou went to a dinner where only rich people were invited and the poor were scornfully excluded. This letter can be seen in *Nahjul-Balagha*.

III. Ali (A.S) among his servants and slaves

He had two slaves, Qambar and Sa'id: After his death Qambar related that he very seldom had the occasion to serve his master. The Imam (□) used to do his work for himself; washing his own clothes, and patching them when patching was needed. He also drew water from the well for his own daily use. He would give them good food and decent dresses, and would himself eat and dress like a very poor man. Let alone whipping or beating he never even got angry with us. He never used a cane even on his horse, camel or mule. These animals apparently understood his mood and desire and would trot and walk as he wished them to do. His often used phrase with them was Ago easy child' Continuing, Qambar said AOnce and only once he got annoyed with me. It was the occasion when I showed him the money that I had hoarded. It was from my share of income given to me like others from the Muslim treasury and the gifts I had received from the members of his family. I had no immediate use of it and had collected the amount. It was not much, being barely 100 dirhams. When I showed him the amount he looked annoyed and what pained me more he looked very sad. I inquired as to why he was so sad, he said AQambar, if you had no use of this money, were there not people around you who were in need of it? Some of them might have been starving and some ill and infirm, could you not have helped them? I never thought that you could be so heartless and cruel, and could love wealth for the sake of wealth. Qambar I am afraid you are not trying to acquire much from Islam, try more seriously and sincerely. Take these coins out of my house. I took them out and distributed them among the beggars in the Kufa mosque.

Sa'id says, AIt was a very hot day. The Imam (□) was writing some letters. He wanted to send me to call some of his officers. He called me once, twice and the third time. Each time I purposely remained silent and did not reply. He got up to go himself and saw me sitting not very far from him. He asked me why I did not respond to his call. I replied, ASir, I want to find out when and how you get angry. A smile played on his lips and he replied: AYou cannot rouse my anger with such childlike tricks. Then he set me free and kept on supporting me till his death.

IV. Ali (A.S) among his subjects

(i) Once AUbaydullah ibn Abbas, as governor, ill-treated Banu Tamim clan. They complained to the Imam (□). He wrote to ibn Abbas, AYou should not behave like a beast with your subjects. They are respectable people and should be treated respectfully. You are representing me and your treatment is considered as that of mine. Your first consideration should be the welfare of those over whom you rule and then to treat them with due respect and consideration.

(ii) Once a group of non-Muslim subjects waited on the Imam (□), complaining that Abdullah ibn Abbas always treated them with contempt and scorn. They were farm tillers and agricultural laborers. It had then become a practice that non-Muslims were usually treated scornfully. The Imam (□) wrote to Abdullah, AThe agricultural population of your province complains about your harsh, contemptuous and cruel treatment. Their complaints require careful considerations. I feel they deserve a better treatment than what was met out to them. Give them a chance to approach you, and meet them kindly and politely. They may be heathens and polytheists, but being your subjects and human beings, they do not deserve to be driven from us and to be treated harshly and contemptuously.

(iii) Hazrat Ali (A.S) was passing through AAmbaz with his army. The rich men of the province, as was the custom of those times, came out to greet him. They offered the best Persian horses as presents, and requested his permission to act as hosts to his army. He met them very courteously, but very politely refused to accept the gifts and the invitation, saying, AYou have paid your taxes. To receive anything more from you, even when you offer it voluntarily and willingly, is a crime against the state. But when they persisted and pressed their request, he ordered that the horses could be accepted against their taxes, and so far as the feast was concerned it must be paid out of the war expenses.

(iv) In the Magazine *Al-Hukam*, Vol. 2, No. 47 of 1906, there appeared an article saying that the Russians in 1905 found an order of Hazrat Ali (A.S) , in his own handwriting which was in Kufic script. This was found in a monastery of Ardabil, chief town of Azerbaijan. This letter was an amnesty deed to the monastery and the Christians of Ardabil. A translation of this deed appeared in the Russian newspapers and thence it was translated in the Turkish papers and in the Arabic magazines of Cairo and Beirut, and lots of commentating articles on the spirit of toleration and the treatment of conquered by Islam were written by the Russians and Arab Christians. Apparently from the Magazine *Al Habl al-Mateen*, it was translated by *Al-Hukam*.

In this deed, the Imam (□) says that as the caliph and ruler, he promises safety and security of life, property, honor, social status and religious freedom of Armenian Christians. This order should be obeyed by his officers and his successors. The Christians should not be maltreated or looked down upon because they are non-Muslims. So long as they do not try to betray and injure the cause of the state of Islam. They should not be molested and should be allowed to practice their religion and trades freely and openly. Islam teaches us to carry a message of peace with us and improve the status of society wherever we go and the best way to achieve this is to create amity, friendliness and concord between human beings. Therefore, Muslims should try to develop friendship of these people and should never resort to the wrong use of power, force and arrogance. They should not be over-taxed, humiliated and forced out of their homes, lands and trades. Their priests should be treated with due respect, their monasteries should be protected; they should be allowed to carry on their lectures, teachings and preaching as usual and their religious ceremonies should not be prohibited. If they want to build their places of worship, then fallow and ownerless lands should be allotted to them. One who disobeys this order, is going against the orders of Allah and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and will deserve His wrath.

(v) Harith ibn Shuhail, one of the governors of the provinces was in Kufa, and while riding through the city he saw Imam Ali (A.S) also riding. He got down from his horse to accompany the Imam (□) on foot. The Imam (□) stopped his horse and said, AIt ill becomes a man to lower himself before anybody but his Allah. Please get back upon your horse. Even had you not been

an officer of the State, still I would not allow you to lower yourself like this. The sight of such humiliation of man before another man never pleases me. It is the worst form of tyranny which can be practiced.

(vi) There is a letter of the Imam (□) which is actually a system of rules and regulations for the administration of benign government and a code for higher values of morality. It is included in *Nahjul-Balagha* and it is referred to so very often by historians of Europe and philosophers of Arabia. Even Justice Kayani refers to it in his presidential address in Karachi on April 16, 1960, that it now needs no further introduction. In it, there are orders which show that he wanted his officers to remember that the people over whom they ruled are exclusively entrusted to them by Allah and should be treated as such.

V. Ali (A.S) Among the Poor

He had a very soft corner in his heart for old, weak, infirm, disabled and poor, and children were always his favorites.

(i) It was the hottest day of The season, he had finished his noon-prayers in the mosque and was passing through the bazaar when he saw a young slave-girl piteously weeping on the road. He asked her thereason. She said that her master had given her some money to get dates from the bazaar. The dates which she brought were not liked by her master and he wanted them to be returned and his money refunded. The fruit seller refused to take them back, her master was beating her for the money and seller had also caned her for going to him over and over again. She did not know what to do and whom to approach for help. The Imam (□) accompanied her to Theseller and advised him to take back the dates. He was a new comer to Kufa and did not recognize the Imam (□) and was rude to him. A passerby intervened and told him who the Imam (□) was. He jumped from his shop and begged of the Imam (□) to excuse him and said that he would give back the money immediately to her. The Imam (□) replied that it was really mean of him to treat an honest suggestion disdainfully and haughtily and to cower before power and might so abjectly and humiliatingly. The owner of the slave-girl had also heard the news of this incident and ran to meet the Imam (□) to apologize for the trouble caused by the slave-girl. The Imam (□) told him, AYou have no mercy for a person who is under your power and cannot forgive her mistake. Have you then a right to expect mercy and forgiveness from our Master? You people have acquired nothing from Islam but its name.

(ii) One day, he saw an old woman carrying a heavy load of firewood which she could ill-afford to lift. She was tottering under the weight. The Imam (□) relieved her of her weight and carried it to her hamlet, and on her request, lit her oven for her and gave her some money. She did not know who the Imam (□) was and was thanking him for his kindness when a neighbor entered the hamlet, recognized the Imam (□) and told her who he was. Only then she realized that who had served her like an obedient servant was the caliph and the king.

(iii) Only after his death the world came to know that he had provided a shelter outside of the town for a leper in an advanced stage of the disease. He used to go there daily, dress his wounds, feed him with his own hands (because the leper had lost his hands), wash him, put his bed in order and carry him out of the shelter for a little time so that he could get fresh air. Accidentally, relatives and friends of the Imam (□) came across this shelter, found the leper in it, learned his history and told him the Imam (□) was murdered and they had just then buried him. The news so effected the poor cripple that he died on the spot.

13. Ali's Diet

Imam Ali (A.S) always ate the kind of food and dressed in such a way that even the poorest could afford better. It was not because he was poor but because he wanted to lead the life of the poorest person and spend all that could be spared on the poor. I have noted below certain cases quoted by the historians. These incidents are of the time when he was the ruler and king of the entire Muslim Empire except Syria.

(i) Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, in his *Musnad*, cited Suwayda ibn Ghafalah saying, AOne day I went to see Ali (A.S) at the government house (Darul Imara). It was the time of breakfast and before him there was a cup of milk and some barley bread. The bread was dry, stale, hard and did not contain any butter or oil. It could not be easily broken into pieces. The Imam (□) was exerting himself to break and soften it. I turned towards his slave, Fizza and said AFizza! have you no pity upon your old master and why cannot you give him softer bread and add some butter or oil to it? She replied AWhy should I pity him when he never pities himself. He has given strict orders that nothing is to be added to his bread and even chaff and husks are not to be separated from the flour. We, ourselves, eat much better food than this, though we are his slaves. Hearing this, I said to him, AO Master! Have pity on yourself! Look at your age, your responsibilities, your hard work and your food. He replied: AO Suwayda! You have no idea what the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) used to eat. He never ate to satiety for three consecutive days.

(ii) *Aallama* Kamalud-Din Muhammed ibn Talhah al-Shafi'i, in his book titled *Matalib al-Su'l*, quotes Abdullah ibn Zurarah saying, AI went to see Imam Ali (A.S) on an Eid day. He asked me to join in his breakfast. I agreed. A very poor kind of food was served before us. I told him, O Master, you are such a rich man, a caliph and a king. I was expecting that game would be served before us but what do I see? the Imam (□) replied, AO Ibn Zurara! You have heard of mighty kings who have lead life of luxury. Let me be a ruler leading the life of a poor and humble person - a humble laborer.

(iii) Al-Milani, in his book titled *Sira*, and Imam Ahmed, in his *Musnad*, quote the famous *tabi'i* Ibn Abu Rafi' saying that he went to the Imam (□) on an Eid day and while he was sitting there a bag was brought before the Imam (□) which he thought might contain jewels. The Imam (□) opened the bag but it only contained dried pieces of bread, which he softened with water. Ibn ee Abee Rafay asked him as to thereason of sealing such a kind of food which even a beggar would not care to steal. The Imam (□) smiled and said AI keep it sealed because my children try to substitute softer bread, containing oil or butter in it. ibn Abee Rafay said, AHas Allah prohibited you to eat better kind of food? He replied ANo, but I want to eat the kind of food which the poorest of his realm can afford at least once a day. I shall improve it after I have improved their standards of life. I want to live, feel and suffer like them.

14. His Clothing

(i) Imam Ahmed, in his book *Al-Manaqib*, and Ibn Athir in his history book, quote Harun ibn Anzah saying that he accompanied his father (Anzah) to the Khawarnaq castle to meet Imam Ali (A.S) . Those were winter days and the winter was very severe. He found the Imam (□) in a very thin cotton garment, and the cold wind was making him shiver. Anzah asked him, AO Commander of faithful! Allah has reserved a share for you and your family from Baitul-Mal (treasury). Why do you not make use of it? He replied, AO Anzah! I do not want anything from your treasury, this is the dress I have brought with me from Medina.

(ii) Imam Ahmed quotes Zaid ibn Wahab saying that once the Imam (□) came out of his house and there were patches sewn to his dress. Ibn Na'jah, a Kharijite and an enemy, was allowed by the Imam (□) to lead a peaceful and comfortable life at Kufa taunted the Imam (□) on the very poor and coarse kind of dress put on by him. He replied ALet go, what have you to find objection in my dress? It is the kind which our masses can afford. Why can you not think of their lives and dresses? I shall improve my standard after I have succeeded in improving theirs. I shall continue to live like them. Such kind of dress makes one feel humble and meek, and is helpful as a reminder and an encouragement to give up vanity, haughtiness and arrogance.

(iii) Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, in his books titled *Kanzul-AUmmal*, and al-Tabari in *Al-Riyaz al-Nazira*, quote AOmer ibn Quais saying that once he asked the Imam (□) as to thereason of his having patches in his dress. He replied, AO Omer! Such type of dress makes you soft-hearted; it vanishes vanity from your mind, and it is the kind which poor Muslims can conveniently afford.

(iv) Shaikul-Islam Imam AAbu AOmer, Youuf ibn Abdul-Birr, in his book *Al-Isti'ab* quotes Hussan ibn Jermoze saying that his father once saw the Imam (□) coming out of the Kufa mosque in a shirt made of jute cloth. Around him were people so well dressed that compared to him they looked like princes. He was instructing them as to how they might better understand their own submission to the Will of Allah (Islam).

(v) Imam Ahmed quotes Abu Noziah, theready-made cloth merchant of Kufa, saying that the Imam (□) purchased two shirts from his shop, one was of superior quality, which he handed over to his slave Qambar to put on. The other was of a rough cloth, very coarse and cheap which he reserved for himself.

15. His services to Islam and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

(i) the first occasion on which Ali (A.S) offered his services to the cause of Islam was when the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was first ordered by Allah to preach Islam openly.

For three years the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was preaching Islam under absolute secrecy. At the end of the third year (i.e. The fourth year after ABaysuth', in 45 AAmul-Fil) he received orders to preach his near relations and to admonish them. AThe Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) directed Ali (A.S) to prepare an entertainment and to invite the sons and grandsons of Abdul-Muttalib. This was done and about forty of them came, but Abu Lahab, made the company break up before Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) had an opportunity to speak. The next day a second invitation was issued. When they came and the frugal meal was served the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) rose and declared his sacred character and offered the treasures of time and of eternity to whomsoever should become his disciples. He then concluded by demanding, AWho among you will aid me to bear this burden, who will be my Lieutenant and Vizier, just as Aaron was to Moses? the assembly remained mute with astonishment, not one venturing to accept the offered perilous office, until Ali (A.S) , Muhammed's cousin, stood up and exclaimed AO Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ! I will, though I am indeed the youngest of these present, the most rheum of them as to the eyes and the slenderest of them as to the legs; I, O Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , will be thy Vazir over them. On which throwing his arms around the generous and courageous youth, and pressing him to his bosom, Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) declared; ABehold my brother and my Vizier and obey him. (John Davenport, *An apology for Muhammed and Holy Qur'an*)

Many historians are of the opinion that it was a monumental declaration and indeed a momentous occasion, and that Ali's declaration was the first and greatest service done in behalf of the Islamic cause. Had the appeal of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) been left unanswered, the propagation of Islam would have been nipped in the bud. To them the whole idea was the actualization of an adult person preaching Monotheism and Submission, and a young courageous youth offering his services vehemently appeared completely foreign to the gatherings' traditional sensibilities. They laughed at both of them and dispersed, advising Ali's father to obey his youngest son from that day onward. These two, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Imam Ali (A.S) proved to the world that there was nothing laughable in their declaration. They proved to the world that their wisdom and courage was enough for Allah to make their mission a success. Carlyle says that in his opinion, young Ali (A.S) had the kind of personality as could be liked, loved and venerated by everybody. He was a man of such excellent character, so loving and lovable and so intensely brave that if anything stood against his bravery it was consumed as if by fire, yet he was so gentle and kind that he represented the model of a Christian knight.

As was said this was really the first and the greatest service to the cause of Allah; Monotheism and Submission to His Will alone (Islam). From this day to the last day of his life, Imam Ali (A.S) sincerely, bravely and nobly acted as the defender of the faith.

(ii) The second great occasion was when the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was forced to leave Mecca, making somebody stay in his place in such a way that his enemies would believe that he was still in his house and thus he might safely go away in the darkness of the night. This departure to Medina is called the Hijra and the Muslim era is named after this event. It took place during the month of September, 662 A.D. Thursday the 26th Safar (thirteen years after the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , A.S., started preaching Islam). The people of Medina were favorably inclined towards Islam and some had embraced this religion and had promised every kind of support to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Many Muslims had left for Medina and were handsomely treated by the Ansars of Medina. The Quraish, realizing that Islam was gaining a good support and a firm hold at Medina and those who had fled from Mecca were being happily settled there, decided to strike at the root cause. Their hatred of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was so intense that nothing would satisfy them but his death. They gathered at Noodva and decided that a few people from each clan of Quraish would jointly attack the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and strike him with their swords at one and the same time. Thus no individual of any single clan would be responsible of his death. Banu Hashim would not be able to kill any person in return or to fight against any single clan and as they were not strong enough to fight against all the clans of Quraish at the same time they would be forced to be satisfied with blood-money (*diyya*). They further decided to surround the house of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) during the night so that he could not get away and then to kill him the next morning. Thus forty men got ready and surrounded his house. Allah revealed to His Messenger of the intrigue planned against him and ordered him to leave Mecca the very same night. It was a serious and dangerous occasion. He was ordered by Allah to go and to go in such a way that none of his enemies might suspect his departure and, if possible, none of his friends might know of it. The walls of his house were barely seven feet high and anyone placing a stone and standing upon it could easily peep into the house. He knew the house was surrounded. Whenever he asked someone to sleep in his bed, he would cover him with the Prophet's coverlet. Such a person was expected not to

expose his identity till dawn (by which time the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) would be safe and out of danger). This person was also to be unarmed so that he might not rouse the suspicion of the peeping enemies. He should thus be willing to bear the brunt of the enemies' anger in the morning, and be ready to be killed. To whom but Ali (A.S) could be Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) turn at this most dangerous moment? In detail he informed Ali (A.S) of the whole plan and of the positive danger of taking his place in details saying that the least that could be expected of those enemies would be death and torture. Ali (A.S) asked, 'If I take your place and leave you alone to go through the gathered enemies, will your life be safe?' 'Yes, replied the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . 'Allah has promised me a safe passage through them. Ali (A.S) bowed his head before Allah as a sign of thanksgiving. He lied down on the bed of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and covered himself with the Prophet's coverlet. During the night, many stones and arrows were aimed at him. Stones hit him in the back and on the head and arrows embedded in his legs but he did not even turn in his bed. In the morning he was found out by the enemies only when one of them pulled back the coverlet. When they wanted to attack him, knowing that he was Ali (A.S) not Muhammed, only then did he unsheathe his sword.

In Medina, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was forced to defend himself and his followers, and was thus forced to fight many battles. At each and every battle Ali (A.S) was the hero. And it was he who fought single-handedly with the famous warriors of Arabia, defeated the enemies and brought a victory to Islam.

Records of these battles carry with them chronicles of his bravery, courage and chivalry. Even the enemies sang songs of his valor and gallantry.

Every one of these battles was an outcome of very grave circumstances and conditions, and a complex combination of intricately serious events initiated by quite real and extremely harmful forces launched against the peace and well being of Muslims and Islam. There were many such encounters but I have briefly mentioned only five of those instances where the events had far reaching effects. In each of them Ali (A.S) alone broke through evil combinations and carried the Muslims and Islam to a position of safety, eminence and power.

(iii) the first of these battles was Badr. It took place in the month of Ramazan of the 2nd year of Hijra. Muslims were not prepared for a battle and could ill-afford to fight against superior forces. But Medina was being invaded and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was necessarily forced to defend himself and his followers. He decided to leave Medina and fight out the battle in an open field. He had only 313 Muslims who were not adequately armed for a battle, many of them were nervous of an encounter and were suffering from inferiority complex. The Quraish had come with an army of about 1000 warriors which had frightened the Muslims even more. The battle took place and about 36 Quraish were killed by Ali (A.S) ; some of them were very important persons and famous warriors of the Quraish.

Ali (A.S) killed every one of those 36 antagonists in hand to hand combat, and most of them were the persons who had surrounded the house of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) on the night of the Hijra. During this encounter he was wounded, but by his bravery and courage he brought home to Muslims that he would act as the first line of defense for Islam, that they had no cause to suffer from inferiority pangs and that Allah would defend them against heavy odds. Among the Quraish were two of the worst enemies of Islam, Abu Jahl and Abu Sufyan; and in this battle Abu Jahl was killed. Ali (A.S) was the hero of this battle and brought the first victory in Islam in armed encounters with its enemies.

(iv) The second most important battle was that of Uhud. The Quraish and their leader Abu Sufyan were smarting under the defeat of Badr and had sworn to retaliate. The idolaters were burning for revenge. They made formidable preparations for another encounter and succeeded in obtaining the assistance of Tihama and Kinana tribes. Abu Sufyan's wife, Hind, mother of Mu'awiyah, took a keen interest in all arrangements and preparations. She had written poems to entice Quraish against Islam and had organized a band of women minstrels who accompanied the army of Quraish to the battlefield. Thus they had mobilized an army of 3000 infantry and 2000 cavalry. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) could muster only 700 Muslims to face this horde. They faced each other in the battlefield of Uhud. The battle took place on the 11th Shawal 3 A.H. (a year after the battle of Badr). The command of the Muslim army was divided between Ali (A.S) and Hamza and Abu Sufyan had appointed Khalid ibn al-Walid, Akram ibn Abu Jahl and A Omer ibn al-As as the three commanders to command the right wing, left wing and the center respectively.

The first encounter took place between Ali (A.S) and Talhah ibn Talhah. This encounter carries with it an incident of marvelous chivalry by Ali (A.S) , which I have narrated elsewhere. Talhah suffered defeat at the hands of Ali (A.S) and died. He was the flag bearer of Quraish's army. His death brought his four sons and one grandson to face Ali (A.S) , and each one of them was killed by him. As other flag bearers followed them, they were in turn killed by Ali (A.S) . Then a general encounter took place in which Ali (A.S) and Hamza carried the day and the Muslims were victorious. A But eagerness of spoils threw the ranks of the Muslim army into disorder, Ali (A.S) however tried to keep them in order, but it was not to be. Khalid ibn al-Walid immediately attacked them from therear and the flank. He wounded the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) with a javelin and had also stoned him. The face of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was also wounded and he had fallen down from the horse. Khalid ibn al-Walid started shouting with a loud voice: A The lying Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is slain! Without stopping to verify this claim, the followers of Islam fled, panic-stricken (Davenport). The wounded Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was left in the battlefield with only Ali (A.S) , Hamzah, Abu Dujanah and Thakwan to defend him. These brave warriors fought fiercely and during this encounter, Hamzah was killed, Zakwan and Abu Dajana lay seriously wounded and Ali (A.S) was left alone in the battlefield. He had received 16 wounds but he searched and found the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) lying wounded and surrounded by enemies under command of Khalid who were trying to kill him. He fought against these six men, killed two of them and scattered therest. He bodily lifted the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and carried him to a mount while he kept on attacking the rallying armies of the enemy and shouted that A the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is alive! and calling Muslims to A come back! Those Muslims who had not fled very far came back and saw the wounded Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) with his daughter, Fatima (S.A) (who had come out of Medina upon hearing the rumor of her father's death) to look after him. They took heart and gathered again under the command of Ali (A.S) , and starting to fight again, victory was gained. The most peculiar aspect of this battle was that the greed of the Muslim warriors had converted a hard-earned victory into a ignominious defeat and Ali (A.S) had reconverted this defeat into a glorious victory. He thus once again saved the day by saving the face of the fleeing Muslims. Most important of all, he saved was the life of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , for without Ali (A.S) the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) would have been killed.

Twenty eight famous warriors of Arabia were killed by Ali (A.S) in this battle of whom seventeen were flag bearers of the Quraish. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) declared that the Angel Gabriel was loud in the praise of Ali (A.S) and had said Athere is no braver youth than Ali (A.S) and no better sword than his Zulfiqar. A detailed account of this battle may be read in

1. Al-Waqidi's *History of Prophets*
2. Shah Isma'il al-Hamawini's *History*
3. Tabari's *Tarikh*

(v) the third momentous armed encounter of the Muslims with the Quraish is called the battle of the clans (Ahzab) or battle of the moat or ditch (Khandaq). It is so called because many clans of Arabs were persuaded by Abu Sufyan to help him to annihilate Islam and the Muslims. Because these forces invaded Medina, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was obliged to dig a moat or ditch around his army. This battle also proves that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was forced to take up arms in defense of his followers and his mission. It took place on the 23rd of Thil-Qi'da in the year 5 A.H.

The defeat at Uhud was a crushing blow to the Quraish and their leader Abu Sufyan. While retreating from Uhud, he promised that he would come back again to avenge the defeat. He instigated the clans of Banu al-Nazir, Banu Ghatfan, Banu Sleem and Banu Kinanah and also succeeded in persuading Banu Qurayzah who, till then, had not sided with any party, to join their forces against Islam. Abu Sufyan was very sure of his success. He especially relied upon the fame of AOmer ibn Abd Wudd, who was as famous in Arabia as Rustam was in Iran. He had gathered an army of about 9 to 10 thousand soldiers under command of this famous warrior.

They marched upon Medina, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) could barely muster 2000 Muslims to face this army. For nearly a month the armies stood facing each other and one day AOmer jumped the moat and faced the Muslim army, challenging them for an encounter. He was accompanied by AKrimah ibn Abu Jahl, Abdullah ibn al-Mugheerah, Zurarah ibn al-Khattab, Nawfal ibn Abdullah and others. His bravery, valor and courage were so well known in Arabia that none of the Muslims except Ali (A.S) dared face him. The assemblage of famous warrior tribes and the presence of AOmer ibn Abdul-Woodh as their commander had made the Muslims so nervous that even the Holy Qur'an says that ATheir eyes were petrified and their hearts were beating violently and they were thinking of running away. Thrice AOmer ibn Abdul-Woodth challenged them and every time none but Ali (A.S) stood up and asked the permission of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) to face him. Twice the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) refused him the permission, but in the end he allowed him, saying that AToday faith in embodiment is facing embodied infidelity then he raised his hands in prayers and beseeched Allah, saying AMaster! I am sending Ali (A.S) alone in the battlefield, do not allow me to be left alone, you are the best Companion and the best Guardian. Muslims were so certain of Ali (A.S) being killed by AOmer that some of them came forward to have a last look at his face. The encounter ended in Ali's success and Omer's death. After AOmer he faced Abdullah ibn Mughirah and Nawfal ibn Abdullah and killed them both. Thus, a victory was won without any Muslims, except Ali (A.S) , coming out of the ranks. In the encounter with AOmer and the defeat and death of this great warrior, Ali (A.S) again exhibited such a chivalrous attitude that the sister of AOmer composed a poem in praise of the man who faced the brother, fought bravely against him and paid such a noble and chivalrous tribute to his

vanquished enemy. In it she said Aif anyone else than Ali (A.S) had killed her brother, she would have wept over the infamy her life long, but not now. the death of AOmer had completely demoralized the various clans gathered and they started leaving the army and going back to their countries. The Quraish went back to Mecca sad and dejected.

Thus Ali (A.S) brought an end to the hostilities of Quraish in three encounters of Badr, Uhud and Khandaq. Their best warriors were killed, their unity against Islam was crushed, their pride was humiliated and their prestige before the Arab clans was lowered by him and by him alone.

He further raised the status of Muslims among the haughty, merciless and warring tribes of Arabia. In all of these three battles not more than sixty Muslims were killed. He alone had killed more than seventy enemies of Islam, every one of whom was the head of some clan or a sub-clan, a warrior famous for his bravery or a deadly enemy of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Islam.

For a detailed account of this battle following books may be consulted:

1. Shah Waliyyullah Dehlawi's *Ithbatul-Ghafa'*
2. Kamil ibn al-Athir'r *History*, Vol. 2
3. Al-Sayyuti's *Al-Durr al-Manthur*
4. Tabari's *Tarikh*

(vi) In their struggle for existence Muslims had to face a very serious opposition from the Jews. In the beginning they tried to help the Quraish against Islam surreptitiously and then openly. But when Ali (A.S) broke through the enmity of the Quraish and when the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was forced to banish the Jews from Medina, they decided to try their fate against Islam with the help of Banu Asad, Banu Kinana and Banu Ghatfan. Khayber was the province which they had occupied since the times of their banishment from Palestine. It contained a few fortresses, the biggest of them was called Qumoose, which was on a steep hill. In these fortresses they started gathering in large numbers. After raising an army of 10 to 12 thousand warriors their misguided venture was to include a march on Medina. Hearing this serious news the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) decided to face them at Khayber only. He marched at the head of an army of 3000 soldiers. This battle took place in Muharram of the year 7 A.H.

Ali (A.S) then was suffering from an eye problem and was left at Medina. The Muslim army succeeded in defeating the Jews in minor skirmishes but when they tried to capture the main fort of Qumoose they had to face a set back. They could not succeed though they tried for days at a stretch. The defeats sustained sadly demoralizing the Muslim army. Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had allowed every important person to command the Muslim forces day by day. Yet each day theresult was fresh defeat, fresh demoralization, fresh boldness of Jews and daily increasing danger of some more clans, emboldened by the weakness and defeats of Muslims, joining hands with the Jews. There were still many such tribes who were deadly against Islam and wanted to harm it, but Muslims victories at Badr, Uhud and Khandaq had made them nervous. The news of the defeats at Khayber were making them bold. AThe Jews of Khayber united by an ancient alliance with a Beduin horde of Banu Ghatafan were incessantly working for the formation of a powerful coalition against the Muslims. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) knew fully well the power possessed by the desert races to injure the Muslims. (Spirit of Islam). There was further danger of the Munafiqueen (hypocrites and double dealers) staging a revolt in Medina. Prompt measures were needed to avert these evils. Only a victory could have saved the situation which was getting more and more critical day by day. The Prophet

(P.B.U.H. and His Household) was himself ill and sadly felt the need of Ali (A.S) at his side. He knew that although he himself was ill, Ali (A.S) had not left him alone and had followed him. Therefore ill or not ill Ali (A.S) had to come to the succor of Muslims, Islam and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . When the news of the last disastrous repulses of the Muslims were brought to him, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said, ATomorrow I shall give the command (the flag, an insignia of the command) of this army to a man who is brave, who will keep on attacking, who will not run away from the battlefield, who loves Allah and His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and is beloved by Allah and His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . He will not come back to me without success. the next day Ali (A.S) was called from his bed and was handed over the command. He took the fort by storm; killed Marhab, Antar, Murrah, Al-Harith and four other tribal chieftains of the Jews in hand to hand combat. He broke the door of the fort single-handedly, carried his army inside the fort and within four hours he flew the flag of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) on the biggest fortress of Arabia. He once again moved the cause of Allah ever closer towards an ultimate Islamic Victory at the hands of Muslims, and on that day saved Islam from disastrous ends.

The news of success pleased the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) so much that he, though ill, came out to greet the victor, embraced him said Ali (A.S) had I not been afraid that Muslims will start regarding you as Christians regard the Christ, I would have said things about you which would have made the Muslims venerate you and to consider the dust of your feet as something worth venerating. But it will suffice to say that you are from me and I am from you; you will inherit me and I will inherit you; you are unto me what Aaron was unto Moses. You will fight for my cause, you will be nearest to me on the day of Judgment and you will be next to me on the fountain of Kawthar. Enmity against you is enmity against me; a war against you is a war against me; your friendship is my friendship. To be at peace with you is to be at peace with me; your flesh is my flesh; your blood is my blood; who will obey you will obey me. Truth is on your tongue, in your heart and in your mind. You have as much faith in Allah as I have. You are a door to me. As per orders of Allah I give you these tidings that your friends will be rewarded in the Heaven and your enemies will be punished in the Hell.

For further details of the above Hadith and the battle of Khayber, following books may be consulted:

1. *Ma'arij al-Nubuwwa*, Vol. 4, p. 216.
2. *The Manaqib* of Akthab al-Kharzami
3. Mullah Ali Hamdani's *Yanabi' al-Mawadda*
4. Ibn Hisham's *Sira*, p. 187
5. Tabari's *Tarikh*.

(vii) the victory which Ali (A.S) brought to Islam in Khayber proved of great consequence to its mission and its followers. It gave such an importance and prestige over the infidels of the Quraish that they, who till then had complete control and sway over Mecca and did not even allow the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and his followers to come for *hajj* and *Aumra* and had forced them for the treaty of Hudaibiya, were now obliged to surrender the city to him. Mecca fell before the superior forces of Islam.

The causes of the invasion and fall of Mecca are not to be discussed here. Suffice it to say that Abu Sufyan who had brought it all upon the heads of Quraish, later leaving the country and countrymen to the devil, started running after every important person to secure his own and his

family's freedom of life and property from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Through the mediation of Abbas (uncle of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) he received the pardon that he sought. The behavior of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) against these murderers of Muslims and the enemies of Islam was so merciful, benign and humane that he pardoned every one of them, a clemency and kindness which was and shall ever remain unparalleled in the history of mankind. When Mecca was taken over by the Muslims, the precincts of Ka'ba were cleared of all idols by the person of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Ali (A.S) , and it ceased to exist as the center of infidelity and polytheism in Arabia.

The fall of Mecca which took place in the Ramadan of 8 A.H. (January 630 A.D.) was accompanied with serious repercussions. The success of Islam since the Hijra had brought many followers to its fold. These were of three types. Some had seen the truth in its preaching and had accepted it sincerely and faithfully. Some were such that they wanted to bask in the glory of a religion which was fast becoming a mighty temporal power and they wished to make their worldly positions good through its influence and had accepted it with those ulterior motives. While there were some whose conversion was under false impression that unless they had accepted Islam their lives and properties were not safe. The fall of Mecca had a very sad effect upon those two latter groups. They were not expecting that Abu Sufyan and the Quraish would succumb so easily to the pressure of Muslim invasion. The clearing of idols from the precincts of Ka'ba and closing its doors to the infidels was a heavy blow. It became more poignant when they found out their age-long enemy, the man whose valor and whose sword brought all these victories to Islam as well as disastrous defeats to their side, Ali (A.S) was the flag bearer a (commander) of the Holy Prophet's (ﷺ) forces on the occasion of the fall of Mecca. Along with the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) he was the man who cleared the Ka'ba of its idols. There still were many polytheist clans in Arabia. To them Mecca was the center of worship. Among them there were two powerful bedouin tribes; Banu Hawazin and Banu Thaqif. They now were joined by Banu Nusair, Banu Sa'd, Banu Hashim and Banu Hilal. Those tribes decided to stage a comeback and were quietly promised help by the hypocrites.

(viii) the whole thing was arranged so quickly and so stealthily that by the time the Muslims could come out of the sweet pleasure of success at Mecca there was an army of 20,000 warriors at Tayef ready to face them. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) marched to Ta'if at the head of an army of 15,000 Muslims. Some of them were freed slaves of the Muslim's conquest of Mecca and many more were the hypocrites of the types mentioned above. There were a few thousand of those Muslims who had accompanied him from Medina.

The hostile tribes decided to attack the Muslim army at a point of vantage at Hunain and selected two prominent locations where they concealed their archers. The Muslims were very proud of their strength and were very sure of their success, but their behavior during the encounter was shamelessly timorous and cowardly. The Almighty Master discussing their attitude in this battle says AAllah came to your help on so many occasions. Yet, on the day of Hunain, your vanity in the number of your soldiers and your arrogance did not prove of any avail to you, you were badly defeated and could not find any place of shelter. You started running away without shame (section 9, Tauba).

This encounter took place in the month of Shawwal 8, A.H. (January/February 630 AD). When the Muslim army marched towards the place where the archers were concealed the enemy opened the campaign with such a severe onslaught of their archery that the Muslim army could

not stand it. The assault was fierce and the confusion in the Muslim ranks made the archers bolder and they came nearer and attacked from both flanks and from the front. The Muslims could not stand the attack any longer. They started running without putting up any resistance and had lost their senses and touch with reality so much that they even left the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) unprotected beyond their cares (Bukhari's *Sahih*).

The first battalion to run in trouble was the one commanded by Khalid ibn al-Walid (*Rawzat al-Safa*, Vol. 2, p. 137, *Tarikh al-Anbiya'*, Vol. 2 p. 388). He was accompanied by Banu Saleem and therecently converted Quraish of Mecca. This was followed by such a disorderly and tumultuous flight of Muslims that only ten persons out of an army of 15,000 were left with the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Eight of them were Banu Hashim (Abbas and his two sons, Ali (A.S) , Aqil and three other cousins of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .

Abbas was shouting at the Muslims to return, reminding them of oaths of allegiance taken and promises made, but it was of no avail. Those who had accepted Islam for wealth and power or under false fears were not willing to risk their lives. They ran as fast as they could. Many of them who had carefully hidden their enmity of the rising power were happy at the defeat. They gathered around Abu Sufyan, started congratulating him and saying that AThe magical spell of the lying prophet is broken! They were praying for the comeback of polytheism (Abul-Fida', p. 349, *Rawzat al-Safa*, p. 136 Vol. 2, *Tarikh al-Anbiya'*, p. 389 Vol. 2).

Once again it fell to the lot of Ali (A.S) to save the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Islam. Armies of Banu Hawazin and Banu Thaqif under the cover of their archers were rushing down the hillock, and were getting ready for a fierce onslaught. Ali (A.S) divided the small band of faithful Muslims in three divisions; to Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, AAbbas ibn Abdul-Muttalib and his nephew Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith, he assigned the duty of guarding the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . To three others he gave orders to guard therear while he faced the onslaught with only three warriors along with him. He fought and fought, was wounded, but faced the commander of the hostile army, Abu Jerdal in a hand to hand combat and killed him with one stroke of sword. He attacked the enemy's rank once again, bringing the number of those whom he had slain on that day to forty. His aides had a glorious example before them. Rhey also fought bravely and killed thirty more men.

The day was saved, the commander of the enemy's army was killed, their ranks were broken, they had no courage to face Ali (A.S) and started retreating. The sight of a powerful enemy under retreat made the fleeing Muslims bold and they came back afterwards as victory was won for them.

A detailed account of this encounter is to be found in

1. *Rawzat al-Safa*, Vol. 2, p. 136.
2. *Tarikh al-Anbiya'*, Vol. 2, p. 388
3. *Sirat ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 621
4. *Kunzul-Ummal*, Vol. 5, p. 307

(ix) During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Imam Ali (A.S) was sent on many occasions for the propagation of Islam and on many missions of mercy and peace. He carried out these duties to the satisfaction of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Allah. For instance in the words of AThe Spirit of Islam', AThe men of Khalid ibn al-Walid, under the order of this newly converted warrior killed Banu Khazimah's bedouins. The news of this wanton bloodshed deeply grieved the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

and he prayed AO Master! I am innocent of what Khalid has done. He immediately dispatched Imam Ali (A.S) to make every possible preparation for the outrage committed. Such a mission was congenial to Ali's nature and he executed it faithfully. After making a careful enquiry as to the number of persons killed, their status, and the losses incurred by their families, and paid the *diyya* strictly. When every loss was made good he distributed theremainder of the money he had brought among the kinsman of the victims of other members of the tribe. This gladdened every heart by his gentleness and benevolence and while carrying with him the blessings of the whole people, he returned to the prophet who overwhelmed him with praises and thanks.

Similarly in 8 A.H. when other missions failed to bring the powerful Yemeni tribe of Banu Hamdan to the folds of Islam, Ali (A.S) was sent there. Ibn Khaldun says that on the first occasion he gathered the tribesmen some of whom were very learned and spoke before them of the truths which Islam preached. This sermon was so effective that some of those learned persons immediately embraced Islam. This was followed by long discussions with others. He made them realize the rationality of the doctrines of Islam. The discussions ended in the whole-hearted conversion of Banu Hamdan, who followed their learned leaders. This news pleased the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) to the extent that he bowed down before Allah in thanks and thrice said APeace be to Banu Hamdan and to Ali (A.S) . Again in 10 A.H. his sermons and preaching proved so effective that the whole province embraced Islam as one entity.

16. Designation of Ali (A.S) as Vicegerent

It is generally supposed that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had not expressly designated anyone as his successor in the spiritual and temporal government. Yet this notion is framed on an incorrect apprehension of fact, for there is abundant evidence that many times the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had openly indicated Ali (A.S) as his successor. (*The Spirit of Islam*, p. 292)

(i) the first occasion was when he was ordered by Allah to openly and unreservedly invite his kith and kin to Islam. This occasion is called Ada'wat al-Asheera (inviting therelatives to Islam). In the words of Rev. Sale, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said, AAllah has commanded me to call you unto Him; who therefore, among you will be assisting to me herein and become my brother and my vicegerent? All of them hesitating and declining the matter, Ali (A.S) at length rose up, and declared that he would be his assistant and threatened those who should oppose him. Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household), upon this, embraced Ali (A.S) with great demonstration of affection and desired all those present to listen to and to obey him as his Deputy.

Thus, at this occasion of the introduction of Islam as a religion Imam Ali (A.S) was declared by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) as his Deputy. The value of Ali's support to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and his designation as a vicegerent at this stage is fairly well assessed by theologians, historians and thinkers of the West and the East.

Refer to:

1. Al-Tabari's *Tafsir*, Vol. 19, p. 68
2. *Tafsir Ma'alim al-Tanzil*, p. 663
3. Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal Vol. I p. 163
4. Mustadrak Imam Hakim Vol. 2I p. 133
5. *Tarikh* of Tabari Vol. 2 p. 216
6. *Al-Tarikh al-Kamil*, Vol. 2 p. 26
7. *Tarikh* of Abul-Fida', Vol. I p. 116

(ii) The second occasion was at the time of Ali's conquest of Khayber. The words of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) quite clearly, positively and expressively give his opinion about Imam Ali (A.S) and his desire to leave Imam Ali (A.S) as the guardian and the propagator of his mission. He said AYou are from me and I am from you, you will inherit me. You are unto me what Aaron was unto Moses. you will be nearest to me on the day of Judgment and next to me on the fountain of Kawthar, enmity against you is enmity against me, a war against you is a war against me. you have as much faith in Allah as I have. You are a door to me. (Refer to p. 26 the Battle of Khayber) What more can one say? Can there be anything more forceful, more eloquent, more pregnant with clear indications and more categorical than the words which the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) has used? Do they leave any shadow of doubt? Has the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ever used such words for anybody else?

(iii) the third instance was the occasion of the invasion of Thabook. To understand the occasion and the cause of remarks of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) it is necessary to know the historical background of the incident. It was the summer of 9 A.H. and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had received the information that the Roman King was mobilizing his forces to invade the Islamic State and many Arab tribes were gathering round him. He decided to face them in their own land and not to allow them the run of the Muslim state so that they may not lay waste to the lands through which they would pass. The situation had become very serious because there was famine in Hijaz, Ta'if and Yemen. The Hypocrites (the Munafeqeen) were carrying on an intensive propaganda campaign to try to make the people believe that the famine was the sign that Allah was angry with Muslims and wants to exterminate them with the worst form of death (cannibalism). And in case of a defeat against the Roman armies there was eminent danger of revolt. It was imperative that the state should be left in the hands of a faithful and powerful guardian otherwise there was every possibility of being sandwiched between the two enemies. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) therefore decided that Imam Ali (A.S) should act as a regent in his place so the world might realize that in the opinion of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , none could look after the temporal as well as spiritual welfare of the Muslims during his absence but Ali (A.S) . He called Ali (A.S) and told him that he would have to act as the last line of defense for him and Islam, saying AO Ali (A.S) ; nobody could look after the center of the Muslim state but you or I. (Imam Hakim in *Mustadrak*, Aallama ibn AAbdul-Birr in *Isti'ab*, Shah Waliyyullah in *Izalatul-Khafa'*, Sibt ibn al-Jawzi in *Tathkiratul-Khawass* and Aallama al-Muttaqi al-Hindi in *Kanzul-AUmmal*). Imam (□) Ali's stay at Medina disappointed the Amunafiqun (hypocrites) as they constituted the majority of those left behind by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . They claimed that the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had lost faith in Imam Ali (A.S) and had therefore left him behind and that it was positively certain that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was going to suffer a defeat. Imam Ali (A.S) naturally felt anxious for the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and annoyed at aspersions against him. He left Medina immediately, met the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) at the place of Jerf and told him all that was said at his back. Thereupon the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said Ali (A.S) ! they are lying against you as they have lied against me. They have called me an epileptic, a magician, a sorcerer and a necromantic and have always portrayed me as a liar. I have appointed you as my vicegerent and my caliph over all which I have left behind.

Are you not satisfied to realize that you are unto me what Aaron was unto Moses (Bukhari's *Sahih*, Ch. 145, p. 387 and Ch. 18, p. 89).

(IV) the fourth time was (in the wording of the *Spirit of Islam*) : ANotably the occasion of the return journey from the performance of AThe Farewell Pilgrimage', during a halt at a place called Khumm, he had convoked an assembly of the people accompanying him, and used the words which could leave little doubt as to his intention regarding a successor. Ali (A.S) , said he, is to me what Aaron was to Moses. The Almighty Allah be a friend to his friends and a foe to his foes; help those who help him and frustrate those who betray him (*The Spirit of Islam*, p. 292).

I would be doing a great disservice to the cause of truth and to the history of Islam if I do not sketch at least a bare outline of this incident. More than fifty thousand people had gathered on that occasion and many of them narrated all that took place there. Among those narrators we find such luminaries as Abu Bakr, AOmer, AOthman, al-Zubair ibn al-AAwwam, Abdullah ibn AOmer, Abdullah ibn AAbbas, Mother of the Faithful AA'isha, Mother of the Faithful Umm Salamah, Abdullah ibn Mas'ud and Hassan ibn Thabit (The book *Arjahul-Matalib* cites 100 names of the companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Among these, there are among about 153 historians and collectors of the Holy Prophet's traditions and authors of ASihah books, *mu'jams* and *musnads* from the 1st Century A.H. right up to 1300 A.H. These have all narrated the entire incident in detail and have drawn practically the same inference as the author of *the Spirit of Islam*. The book *Arjahul-Matalib* again gives a list of them in chronological order of 13 centuries, from which I have quoted a few names at the end of this section.

The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was returning from the AFarewell Pilgrimage and had reached the place Khumm, (which in the words of the famous historian and geographer Ibn Khallikan is a valley lying between Mecca and Medina and in the neighborhood of Juhfa). It contains a pond, a Aghadir, near which the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) pronounced his invocation. This took place on the 18th of Thul-Hijja and the 18th of this month is the anniversary of the Feast of Ghadir (Eilul-Ghadir).

There, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) suddenly made his camel stop and said that just then a message of Allah was revealed unto him which must be immediately conveyed to the Muslims. He dispatched messengers towards those who had gone ahead and those who were following him leisurely to come back or to hurry up and join him at once. When all of them were gathered he performed the noon-prayers in that blazing hot summer sun. A pulpit was erected for him and from this eminence he preached a sermon which is rightly considered as a masterpiece of Arabic literature and a brief survey of what the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had taught and achieved for the Muslims. Then he said that he had just then received therevelation which said, AO Messenger! proclaim the whole of what which hath been sent down to thee from Your Master, for if thou dost it not, it will be as if thou hast not all performed the duty of His prophethood. And Allah will protect thee (thy mission) from evil men, verily Allah guides not the unbelievers, and he was standing there to convey that message to the Muslims and to perform the duty he was ordered to perform. Continuing Thisermon he said AO people! Shortly I shall be called (to the Heaven), and if I go back I shall have to give an account as to how I have conveyed His Message to you and you (in your turn) will also be asked as to how you have accepted and carried out my teachings. Now tell me what you will say. Thereupon all the gathering as one man declared AO Messenger of Allah! we testify and declare that you have conveyed the message of Allah in full details, you have striven

your utmost to guide us to the right path, and taught us to follow it. You were most kind to us and you never wished for us but our good, may Allah repay you for all that. Thereupon he asked the gathering ADo you not testify that there is no god but Allah, that Muhammed is His creature, His servant and His Messenger, that there is the Heaven and the Hell? Do testify that death will overtake every one of you, that you will be brought back from your graves, that the day of resurrection will surely dawn and human beings will be resurrected from their graves to account for their deeds? the gathering declared AWe believe and testify to all of this. Hearing this declaration he said AI am leaving among you two of the most important things worthy of obedience, the Holy Qur'an and my progeny (descendants). Take care how you treat them, they will not separate from each other till they reach me on the Fountain of Kawthar. Then said he AThe Almighty Allah is my Master (*mawla*) and I am the Master of all Muslims and have more right and power on their lives than they themselves; do you believe in this assertion of mine? In one voice, they all replied AYes O Messenger of Allah. Thrice he asked the same question and thrice he received the same reply. On this solemn affirmation he said AHear and remember that to whomever I am Master of *mawla* Ali (A.S) is the Master and *mawla* to him. He is to me what Aaron was unto Moses. The Almighty Allah be a friend to his friends and a foe to his foes. The Almighty will help whoever helps him and frustrate those who betray him. While saying this he raised Imam Ali (A.S) so that the gathering could have a look at the man, who would be Master and *mawla* of those who believe the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) to be their Master and *mawla*. Thereupon the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) received therevelation, AThis day I have perfected your religion for you and have filled up the measure of my bounties upon you and I am pleased with Submission to His Will alone (Islam) to be your religion.

After performing this ceremony and receiving the above revelation the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) came down from the pulpit, prostrated before Allah in prayers and ordered a tent to be fixed. In this tent Imam Ali (A.S) was made to take his seat and people were ordered to pay homage to him and to address him as Amir al-Mu'minin (Master of the faithful). The first person to congratulate and address him as such was the Imam (□) AOmer ibn al-Khattab, saying AI congratulate you, O Ali (A.S) . Today you have become my *mawla* (Master) and Master of every Muslim man and woman.

Refer to:

1. The *Musnad* of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal (Vol. 5, p. 281)
2. Imam al-Ghazali in *Siyar al-AAAlamin*.

The remarks of Imam al-Ghazali about this event and the inferences he has drawn are instructive readings. If I have space at my disposal I shall add them as a separate index otherwise *Sirul-Aalemeen* may be referred.

List of some out of the famous 153 authors and books which contain the above event:

1. Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri (125 A.H.)
2. Muhammed ibn Ishaq (152 A.H.)
3. Ibn Rahooya(238 A.H.)
4. Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, Vol. 5, p. 281 (243 A.H.)
5. Jarir al-Tabari (310 A.H.)
6. Al-Tirmithi (320 A.H.)
7. Imam Hakim (*Mustadrak*) (400 A.H.)
8. Imam al-Ghazali (*Siyar al-AAAlamin*) (505 A.H.)

9. Sibt ibn al-Jawzi (654 A.H.)
10. Ibn Subbaq al-Malekee(855 A.H.)
11. Soyoothee (1011 A.H.)
12. Sheikh Abdul Huq Mohaddis Dahlavi (1052 A.H.)
13. Shah Waliyyullah Mohaddis Dahlavi (1176 A.H.)
14. *Aallama* Muhammed Mu'in (1280 A.H.)
15. A brief survey of the Imam Ali's life from the Hijra to the death of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) (1 A.H. to 40 A.H.)

When the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) left his house at Mecca in the night and Ali (A.S) was found in his bed, the Quraish at first thought of killing him, but when they found him ready to defend himself they gave up idea and dispersed in search of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .

Ali (A.S) as per orders of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) stayed three days at Mecca and handed back all the articles which were entrusted to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) for sole custody, mostly by his enemies, secured their receipts and left the city in broad daylight.

He was entrusted by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) for the safe transport of the Holy Prophet's daughter, Fatima (S.A), the daughter of Hamzah, another Fatima, his own mother, a third Fatima, and his aunt, the daughter of Abdul-Muttalib, a fourth Fatima (S.A). The Quraish wanted to prevent the departure of these four ladies. Eight prominent people came out to fight. Ali (A.S) fought single handed with them. He killed Junah with a stroke of his sword and scattered therest and continued the journey. On account of scarcity of mounts he had to travel on foot and thus he reached Medina with bleeding feet. Awaiting the arrival of Imam Ali (A.S) the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was staying at Quba', two miles away from Medina, when he reached Quba', on the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal (probably the end of June) the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) embraced him, dressed his bleeding feet and entered Medina along with him.

Before his migration to Medina the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had created a bond of brotherhood between the Muslims. He had fraternized Abu Bakr to the Imam (□) AOmer, AOthman to Abdul Rehman ibn Oaf, the Imam (□) Hamza to Zaid ibn Haresa and Talhah to al-Zubair. On that occasion he had fraternized Imam Ali (A.S) to himself, saying, AO Ali (A.S) , you are my brother in this world as well as in the next, (Tharikh al-Khamees Vol. I p. 398).

1st A.H.

Five months after his arrival at Medina, he created a fraternity between the Muhajirun (the immigrants) with the Ansars (the supporting citizens of Medina). On that occasion, he again called Ali (A.S) and said AO Ali (A.S) you are my brother in this world and hereafter. the historian ibn Hisham says AThe Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) caught the hand of Imam Ali (A.S) and said Ahe alone is my brother. Thus the Messenger of Allah, who was actually the leader of all the prophets as well as of all the pious men of the world and who had no parallel among human beings by fraternizing with Imam Ali (A.S) , showed that Ali (A.S) also had no parallel among mankind except the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . (Seerath al ibn Hisham Vol. 2, Abul-Fida' Vol. I p. 127, *Mustadrak* of Imam Hakim Vol. 2I and *Fath al-Bari*, commentary of Sahih Bukhari Vol. VII p. 211).

2nd A.H.

During the 2nd year of Hijra Imam Ali's marriage took place with the Holy Prophet's daughter Fatima (S.A). The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was receiving many offers for his daughter from very rich people of Medina, from some of the Muhajirun and from chiefs of mighty clans of Arabia. He had refused even to consider these offers and sometime felt annoyed at them. At the end he closed the door by saying that he was awaiting the orders of Allah. The book *Usd al-Ghaba fi Tamyeez al-Sahaba*, gives a detailed account of these offers and the way of refusal by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Some of the Ansars suggested to Imam Ali (A.S) to place a proposal for himself before the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Imam Ali (A.S) went before him feeling shy and modest. This was the first time in his life that he talked reservedly to a man who was like a father unto him and to whom he was like a dear son. When the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) heard the proposal he was so pleased that he smiled and said (it is a welcome and happy proposal) Tarikh al-Khamees Vol. I p. 407, Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 8, pp. 11, 12, and *Usd al-Ghaba*).

The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) took the consent of Fatima (S.A) for this proposal. The marriage ceremony was very simple and without pomp and ostentation. There was a sermon from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) in which he praised Allah mentioning some of His attributes and citing verses of the Holy Qur'an and concluding with theremarks that he was ordered by Allah to give Fatima (S.A) into marriage with Imam Ali (A.S) . This was followed by a *khutba* from Imam Ali (A.S) , praising Allah and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and desiring the gathering to witness his marriage with Fatima (S.A), the daughter of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . After this happy ceremony somebody reminded the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of his late companion in life the mother of Fatima (S.A), Khadija, and he said AKhadija! Where is Khadija? Who can be like Khadija? She testified for me when the world was falsely accusing me as a liar. She relieved me of much of my weight, she was my partner in my work and she helped me when others were creating obstruction in my mission.

After reaching Medina, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) stayed in the house of Kulthum ibn Hadam for seven months and Imam Ali (A.S) was staying with him. When the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) finished the construction of mosque he built houses for his wives around it and in the center of them he built a house for Imam Ali (A.S) (Bukhari's *Sira*, Ch. 14 p. 387). Following his example, many of his companions except Abu Bakr built their houses around the mosque. Abu Bakr was staying in the locality of Banu AAbd AAwf where the marriages of both of his daughters took place and later on he shifted to Sukh (Bukhari, Vol. 1). The doors of all the houses built around the mosque opened in the mosque. One day the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ordered that except the doors of his houses and that of Ali (A.S) all the other doors should be closed. Some of the companions requested him to allow them to keep a small window open. He replied, ANo, not a pin hole, Allah so willed it. (Imam Ahmed's *Musnad*, the *Mustadrak* of Imam Hakim, the *Khasa'is* of al-Nisa'i)

In the year 2 A.H., the Battle of Badr took place (refer to Section 15, p. 22).

3rd A.H.

In the year 3 A.H., the first child to Imam Ali (A.S) and Fatima (S.A) was born and he was named Hasan (□) by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .

In the same year (3 A.H.), the Battle of Uhud took place (Refer to Section 15, p. 22) which was followed by the dispatch of an expeditionary force to Hamra'ul-Asad under Imam Ali (A.S)

4th A.H.

In the year 4 A.H., Imam Ali (A.S) and Fatima (S.A) had The second child Husain (Imam Husain [□]) who was also named by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . In the same year a battle took place with Banu Nazir and Imam Ali (A.S) brought it to a successful end and Banu Nazir were forced to vacate their fortress.

5th A.H.

In the year 5 A.H., three battles took place, the Battle with Banu Mostaliq, the Battle of Khandaq (the moat) and the Battle with Banu AAnzah. In all of them, Ali (A.S) was the Commander of the army. The most important of them was the Battle of Khundaq (which I have narrated in Section 15 p. 23).

6th A.H.

In the year 6 A.H., an expedition to Fadak was sent under the command of Imam Ali (A.S) and without a battle or skirmish he brought the whole province under control of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .

In Thul-Qi'da of this year, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , along with fourteen hundred Muslims left for Mecca with the intention of *hajj* (pilgrimage). He had no desire to fight anybody and had left all the armaments at Medina. When the Quraish came to know about this intending pilgrimage they refused to allow the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) to enter Mecca. Khalid ibn al-Walid came out with a force of two hundred well-equipped cavalry men to obstruct the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and if necessary to fight over the issue. At an oasis called Hudaibiya the opponents faced each other. A chieftain named *Aurwa* from Quraish came out to discuss the situation with the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and instead of a battle, a treaty was arranged, and it was written by Imam Ali (A.S) . The last clause of the treaty was that the present intention of the pilgrimage would be given up until the following year although the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Muslims could come for Umra.

7th A.H.

In the year 7 A.H., two battles took place, the Khayber and the Wadi al-Qura. The more important of them was Khayber which I have accounted in section 15 p. 25.

In the same year the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) along with Muslims went to perform *Aumra*, it was very peaceful mission. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and many of the Muslims had their wives and children with them. The *Aumra* was performed without incident.

8th A.H.

In Islamic History, the year 8 A.H. held some important events in its unfolding.

The first of them was the Liberation of Mecca. The terms of the treaty of Hudaibiya were dishonored by the Quraish. Within two years of the treaty, they killed twenty persons from Banu Khuza'a's clan without any justifiable reason. Representatives of the clan came to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , asking for his promised support. He was annoyed at this flagrant dishonoring of the treaty and said, Al am not helped if I do not help them.

The arrangement for the invasion of Mecca was being carried on by the Muslims. In the meanwhile, Hatib, a companion of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) who was with him in the battle of Badr, wrote a letter to his family, informing them of the intention of Muslims. This espionage, under the orders of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was detected by Imam Ali (A.S) and he brought this letter to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and

His Household) . It was being sent through an Abyssinian slave girl. Hatib confessed his crime and was mercifully pardoned by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) (Bukhari).

When all the arrangements were ready, the army of invasion, numbering ten thousand, marched towards Mecca. The command of the army this time was given to Sa'd ibn A'badah Ansari, with orders to enter Mecca as the advancing party. Sa'd entering Mecca, saying 'Today is going to be a big day, a day of retaliation, a day when Mecca will be looted. Abbas, the uncle of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , hearing this came to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Sa'd has very serious intentions against Quraish. He may carry on a massacre. the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) called Imam Ali (A.S) and said 'O Ali (A.S) ! you go and take the command from Sa'd and do what's needed. He would not be unhappy in handing over the command to you and to you alone. Imam Ali (A.S) took over the command of the expedition and entered the city, declared perfect amity and peace and waited for the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . When the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) entered Mecca he went straight to the Ka'ba and started removing the idols placed there. Some of them were placed on a very high platform where his hands would not reach, he asked Ali (A.S) to mount on his back and remove the idols. Ali (A.S) obeyed the order, mounted on his back and was removing the idols when the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) asked 'O Ali (A.S) ! how do you find yourself? Imam Ali (A.S) replied, 'O Messenger of Allah! I find myself on such an eminent place that I feel as if my head is resting on the Emphyrean of Allah the Almighty. Thereupon the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) replied 'O Ali (A.S) , how fortunate you are, doing the work of Allah and how fortunate I am that I am bearing your burden. (Imam Ahmed's *Musnad*, Vol. I p. 151).

At the occasion, a poet presented a eulogy in praise of Imam Ali (A.S) .

I am asked to praise Ali (A.S) in verses,

Because recital of his praises will

Release a man from Hell.

I replied to them, how can I praise

A man whose attributes are so sublime

That men got confused over these attributes

And started apotheosizing him.

He has placed his foot at such an eminent

Place, that according to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ,

It is the place on which, on the night of

Meraj, Allah has placed His hand of

Grace and Mercy.

Hearing this eulogy, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) rewarded the poet handsomely.

The second important event was the massacre of Banu Jazima by Khalid ibn al-Walid and reparations carried by Imam Ali (A.S) under orders of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) (Refer to section 15 p. 28).

During the month of Shawwal of that year, the Muslims faced certain powerful tribes of Arabs on the battlefield of Hunain. Ali (A.S) again secured a victory for them (Refer to section 15 p. 28). Hunain was followed by an expedition to Thaeef under the command of Imam Ali (A.S) . Those who had run away from Hunain had gathered there and wanted to measure their strength

once again. The commander of their army who was the chiefs of Banu Zaigham clan was killed by Imam Ali (A.S) , which broke the back of resistance and various parties of hostile clans started dispersing. Seeing the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) raised the siege and brought the expedition to an end.

In the same year Imam Ali (A.S) was sent to Yemen on a missionary service. He carried on this work so successfully and his speeches there proved so effective that the tribe of Banu Hamdan embraced Islam as one entity. (Refer Section 15 p. 29)

9th A.H.

The 9th year of the Hijra relates four important incidents of Imam Ali's life.

The first was the expedition to Thatul-Salasil. Ali (A.S) brought it to a successful end, defeated the clans gathered there to invade Medina and brought the happy news to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . The Messenger of Allah came out of Medina to welcome the warrior. Ali (A.S) was riding a horse at the head of his army, saw the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) walking towards him and jumped from his horse. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) told him Akeep on riding, do not dismount, Allah and His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) are really pleased with your services. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) made him remount his horse and he walked along with the horse (Refer to Hamra'ul-Ashira and *Ma'arijul-Nubuwwa*).

The second event was the Holy Prophet's expedition in person to Thabook, which I have narrated in Section 16 p. 30.

The third important event in the life of Ali (A.S) and in the history of Islam was thereading of the Chapter (Sura) Bara'at before the infidels of Mecca. This Sura declares that Allah and his Messenger in the future will have nothing to do with the infidels and polytheists. All the treaties which existed till then were now annulled and cancelled. No polytheist or infidel would, in the future, be allowed to enter the city of Mecca or the precincts of Ka'ba. Imam Hakim in his *Mustadrak* Vol. 2I, p. 32, *Al-Riazul-Nazira*, Vol. 2, p. 203, the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Vol. I p. 331, *Al-Isab fi Ma'rifatil-Sahaba*, Vol. IV, p. 270 and *Izalatul-Khafa'*, Section 2, p. 261 say that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) first ordered Abu Bakr to carry this Sura to Mecca and to read it at the Ka'ba. But immediately after him he sent Imam Ali (A.S) to replace Abu Bakr on the mission. When Abu Bakr complained about this change, the Messenger of Allah replied AI have done it under orders of Allah which came explicitly that either I should perform this duty or somebody who is like me.

The fourth event took place in Najran, a city in the province of Yemen. It was center of the Christian Missionary activities in Southern Arabia. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had written to the Chief priest of the city to realize the blessings of Islam. In reply he wrote that he would like to personally discuss the teachings of this new religion. His name was Harith. He was invited and came with a retinue of fourteen priests. The priests stayed at Medina as guests of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Long discussions about monotheism versus trinity took place and it was realized that these priests were not open minded. Oon the contrary, they were prejudiced against Islam. The Almighty Master ordered the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) to explain to them that AVerily Jesus is as Adam in the sight of Allah. He created him out of dust. He then said unto him ABe' and he was. AThis is the truth from Your Master; be not therefore one of those who doubt; and whoever shall dispute with thee after the knowledge which hath been given thee, say unto them, come let us call together

our sons and your sons, our women and your women and ourselves and yourselves. Then let us make imprecations and lay the curse of Allah upon those who lie. (Surat Ali Imran, Chap. III).

According to AAmir ibn Sa'd and Ummul-Mu'minin AA'isha, when the above verses were revealed to the Messenger of Allah he called Ali (A.S) , Fatima (S.A), Hasan and Husain (□) and said AMaster! This is my family and progeny (Ahl al-Bayt). (Bukhari's *Sira*, Parts VII p. 77, Saree Muslim, Vol. 2 p. 278, al-Tirmithi, P. 421, Misquath Vol. 8, p. 129).

Imam Fukhrud-Din al-Razi (in *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, Vol. 2, p. 701, printed in Egypt) says that when the above verses were revealed the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah covered himself with a black coverlet, took in it Ali (A.S) , Fatima (S.A), Hasan and Husain (□) and said AMaster! This is my progeny, my household and my family (Ahl al-Bayt). Thereupon the Messenger of the Master received therevelation AVerily Allah desireth to remove from you every abomination of sin and evil, and you are the household of the prophet, and to purify you by a perfect purification. *Tafsir Khshshaf*, Vol. I, p. 308 agrees with Imam Fakhru-Din al-Razi.

Hearing the glad news of the Divine Purification, Sanctification and Consecration, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) decided to take only these four persons along with him for the ceremony of trial by imprecations as ordered by Allah. That is, Ali (A.S) representing the ASelves as mentioned in the above verses, Fatima (S.A) representing women, Hasan and Husain (□) representing ASons.

The Christian priests were then informed of these orders of Allah and said AThey agreed next morning to abide by the trial as a quick way of deciding which of them were in the wrong. Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) met them accordingly accompanied by his daughter Fatima (S.A), his son-in-law Ali (A.S) and his two grandsons Hasan and Husain (□) and desired them (the Christian priests) to wait till he had said his prayers. But when they saw him kneel down their resolution failed them and they dared not venture to curse him and his party, but agreed to sign a treaty and pay tribute to him. (Rev. George Sale)

AAhl al-Bayt (□), people of the household (of Muhammed [□]), is the designation usually given to Fatima (S.A), Ali (A.S) and their children and descendants. This is the name by which ibn Khaldun invariably designates them, and followers and disciples, Shi'as or adherents of the APeople of the House. Sanai (the famous Sufi poet whom Rumi praises) represents the general feeling with which the descendants of Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) were regarded in the following verses of poetry:

AExcepting the book of Allah and his family (Descendants)

Nothing has been left by Ahmed the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ,

Memorial such as these can never be obtained till the day of
Judgment

See *the Spirit of Islam* , p. 313; note, *Kanzul-AUmmal* Vol. VI , p. 159, *Tafsir al-Kushshaf*, Vol. 1, p. 308, al-Hamadani in *Mawaddat al-Qurba*, and Aallama Ibn Hajar al-Makki in *Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa*, while discussing this event and the verses referred above, have given their opinion that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , by translating the word ASelves as himself and Ali (A.S) , the word AWomen as Fatima (S.A) and the word ASons as Hasan and Husain (□) have shown to the Muslim the estimation in which these four persons are held by Allah and by himself. They and they alone are his Ahl al-Bayt (□) who deserve the Divine purification, sanctification and consecration.

10th A.H.

During this year, Ali (A.S) was sent once again on a propagation mission to Yemen and then on an expedition against AAmr ibn M'adi Karb. He performed both the duties successfully. Imam Ahmed ibn e-Hanbal in his *Musnad* Vol. V , p. 356, Imam Nisa'i in *Khasa'is* and *Aallama* ibn Hajr al-Makki in *Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa*, p. 2, say that from the later expedition Khalid ibn al-Walid sent a letter containing complaints of Imam Ali (A.S) to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . This letter was carried by Buraydah, a companion of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . On receipt of this letter, the Messenger of Allah was annoyed and got angry and said, Ayou are fabricating lies and fictitious complaints against Ali (A.S) , he is from me and I am from him, he is your master (*wali*) after me. Whoever annoys him actually annoys me and whoever forsakes him forsakes me. He is made of the same material that I am made of and I am made of the same material that Abraham is made of and my status before Allah is superior to that of Abraham.

The end of the 10th A.H. saw the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) performing the AFarewell Pilgrimage and while returning from there, for the last time he designated Imam Ali (A.S) as his Vicegerent. I have narrated this incident in Section 16 , p. 30).

11th A.H.

The year 11th A.H. was the saddest year of Imam Ali's life. He lost two of his best friends. One of whom he loved and venerated like a father, like a master and like the dearest friend, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) who died during the early months of the year. His death was followed by the death of Imam Ali's dearest companion, his wife, Fatima (S.A), the lady of the Light.

The last year of Holy Prophet's life was spent at Medina. An envoy of his was killed by the Syrians and he had ordered an expedition against the Byzantines under Usamah ibn Zaid and he had ordered all his companions except Imam Ali (A.S) join this expedition, and had ordered the troops to be encamped outside the city (Al-Tabari's *Tarikh*, *Tarikh al-Kamil* ibn Athir. *Tabaqat* al ibn Sa'd and *Al-Sira al-Halabiyya*, *Madarij al-Nubuwwah*, Vol. 2 , p. 766). Yough he was ill yet in spite of his weakness he came out, arranged the flag (the Insignia of the command) with his own hands and handed it over to Usamah. He felt that people were not willing to join this expedition, because of the young age of Usamah. He got annoyed and said AMay the curse of Allah be on those who forsake the army of Usamah. (Millal-o-Nahal of *Aallama* Shahrastani and *Sharah Mawahib al-Laduniyya*).

The cause of this illness was the poison which had been given to him and which had slowly penetrated into his system and had now begun to show its effect. It became evident that he had not long to live. The news of his approaching end led to the stopp. of the expedition (*The Spirit of Islam*). At the last stage of illness the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was staying at the house of Ummul Mu'minin AA'isha. From there he came out for the last time to lead the prayers. He was so weak that he was actually carried there by the sons of Abbas ibn Abdul-Muttalib. He, himself, led the prayers (*Fath al-Bari*, *Sharah Sirat al-Bukhari*, Ch. 3 , p. 372).

This exertion proved too much for the Messenger of the Master and when he returned home from the mosque he fainted. His condition was very serious at that time and the fainting fit was of long duration. His children and members of family, and his companions started weeping and lamenting. He came out of the swoon and looked at those tear sprinkled faces around him and said, ABring a pen, some ink and paper so that I may write a will for you that will keep you on the straight path. Some of his companions wanted to offer him the pen and paper while AOmer

was of opinion that he was talking insanelly on account of the intensity of illness. He argued that they had the Holy Qur'an with them which would suffice them. This discussion took a serious turn and people started arguing in loud voices. The Messenger of Allah got annoyed at this and asked them to go away and to leave him alone. (Saree-Bukhari Ch. 12 , p. 126, Ch. 8 , p. 100, Ch. 23 , p. 384, *Minhaj al-Sunna* of *Aallama* Ibn Taymiyyah, *Shah Sahih Muslim* of *Aallama* Noodi, gives a detailed account of this event).

This was Sunday the 27th Safar. After the above incident the Messenger of Allah called Ali (A.S) and said Ali! You will be first to meet me on the fountain of Kawthar. After me when hardship and reverses face you then do not lose patience and when you find people running after worldly gains then you busy yourself in the way of truth and Allah. (*Rawzat al-Ahbab*, Vol. I , p. 559, *Madarij al-Nubuwwah*, Vol. 2 , p. 551). On the next day, Monday the 28th of Safar, the Messenger of Allah passed away to therealm of His Grace, Blessings and Majesty.

Last Moment and the Last Rights of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

Aallama Muhammed ibn Sa'd, in his famous book *Tabaqat* (Vol. 2, Section 2, pp. 51, 61) relates that during the caliphate of the Imam (□) AOmer once the famous Jew, Ka'b al-Ahbar (who later embraced Islam), asked of the caliph: ASir, please tell me what were the last words of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . AThe Caliph told him to ask Imam Ali (A.S) about it. Ka'b came to him and asked him the same question. The Imam (□) replied, ADuring the last moments of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) his head was resting on my shoulder and his words were Salat! Salat! AUphold prayers, prayers!). Ka'b declared, AVerily, the last moments of all of the prophets have always been thus, they are ordained for it and they carry the message even with their last breath. Then Ka'b went to AOmer and asked him. AWho performed the ablutions of the body of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) after his death? the caliph told him to ask Imam Ali (A.S) about that also. He again came to Imam Ali (A.S) and repeated the question. Imam Ali (A.S) replied. AThe Messenger of Allah had willed that none but I should perform those ablutions because if any other person looked at his naked body he would get blind. A curtain was hung and from the other side of the curtain Fazl ibn Abbes and Osaama, blind-folded, were handing water to me and I was performing the ablutions.

These facts, that Imam Ali (A.S) was the only person to be with the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) at his last moments and to have performed the last rights, are also acknowledged by the books Thazkeray Khasul A'imma Cha, p. II , p. 16, *Kanzul AUmmal*, Vol. 4, p. 55, *Mustadrak* of Imam Hakim, Vol. 3, p. 139, *Riaz al-Nazira*, printed in Egypt, p. 80 and *Mu'jam al-Kabir* of al-Tabrani.

After the last ablutions and after shrouding the august of the Messenger of Allah as per his will, first Imam Ali (A.S) performed the Adeath prayers' alone. Then the parties of the Muslims came and offered the death prayers without any leader (Imam). *Aallama* ibn Abdul Birr in Isthee'ab says that after Imam Ali (A.S) offered his ADeath prayers' alone then Banu Hashim offered the prayers, then the Muhajirun and then the Ansars.

Burial of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

After the death prayers were said. Imam Ali (A.S) , Abbas, Fazl ibn Abbas and Osaama ibn Zaid got busy with the arrangements of the burial of the Messenger of Allah. At therequest of the Ansars, Aos ibn Kholee Ansari, who was also a Badri (a participant in the Badr campaign), was allowed to join them. Osaama dug the grave in the house of Ummul Mu'minin AA'isha. Aos got into the grave and Imam Ali (A.S) lifted the august body in his hands and lowered it into the

grave. He stayed in the grave for some time while weeping bitterly. Usamah says AI have never seen Ali (A.S) weeping like that before or after this occasion. Then he came out of the grave and lifting his hands said, AMaster! he was Your first creation, his apparent death is not a sign of his mortality, he lifted the gloom prevailing before the creation started, he was a proof of Your Glory and Benevolence, he had come to us from therealm of Your Love and Glory, and was our guide towards that Realm. His soul was the Emblem of Your Supreme Might, his body was the masterpiece of Your Creation and his mind was Your Treasure house. Then he covered the grave (*Irshad* Sheikh Mufid).

When Ali (A.S) and Banu Hashim were busy with the last rites of the burial of the Messenger of Allah, some Muhajirun and some Ansars gathered at the *saqifa* and decided that Abu Bakr should be the first caliph. Imam Ali (A.S) was asked to accede to this decision. He refused. Abu Sufyan came to Medina and went to Abbas (uncle of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and said to him, AThese people have taken away the caliphate from Banu Hashim. You are uncle of the Messenger of Allah and oldest among the Quraish, you have been kind to them also, they will accept your lead. Let you and I swear allegiance to Ali (A.S) . If anybody opposes us we shall kill him. They both came to Ali (A.S) and Abu Sufyan told him Ali (A.S) , if you like I shall overflow Medina with infantry and cavalry, accept our proposal. Put out your hand and let us swear the oath of allegiance. Hearing this Ali (A.S) replied AAbu Sufyan, I swear by Allah the Almighty that you, through this proposal, want to create serious dissension among the Muslims. You have always tried to harm Islam, I do not need your sympathies or your help.

A detail account of this event may be found in

1. Tabari, Vol. 2I , pp. 202, 303
2. *Tarikh al-Khulafa'*, p. 45
3. *Kanzul-AUmmal* Vol. 2I , p. 140.

Imam Ali (A.S) realized that any serious dissension at this stage would harm the cause of Islam considerably. He had before him the example of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and treaty of Hudaibiya and had been foretold by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of all that would happen. *Aallama* Ali ibn Muhammed (630 A.H.) in *Usd al-Ghaba fi Thamyiz al-Sahaba* (Vol. IV , p. 31) says AThe Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had said to Imam Ali (A.S) , AYour status is like that of Ka'ba. People (Muslims) approach the Ka'ba, but this holy house never approaches anybody. Therefore after my death if people come to you and swear the oath of allegiance you accept it and if they do not come to you then you do not go to them.

Aallama Sheikh AAbdul Haqq, the traditionist al-Dehlawi, in *Madarij al-Nubuwwa* (Vol. 2 , p. 511) says that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had advised Imam Ali (A.S) . AAfter me you will have to face the extremes of suffering. Do not get disheartened and do not lose patience; and when you find people craving for and trying their utmost to secure worldly power and wealth you mould your life for the hereafter.

Imam Ali (A.S) loved Islam as intensely as the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had loved it. He could not, therefore, for the sake of worldly kingdom endanger Islam. He knew that a civil war at that stage would give chances to the Jewish clans of Banu Nazir and Banu Quraiza on one side and the Christian tribes of Najran and Syria by the Byzantine armies on the other. The *munafiqun* (hypocrites) and fresh converts on the third would simply take advantage of the situation. When they found the Muslims busy killing each other, they would literally cut

them into pieces, and Islam would totally disappear as a message of peace. He wanted the Arabs to remain in the fold of Islam even with the desires of making their worldly position good, and wanted the enemies of Islam to realize that Islam was powerful enough to defend itself even after the sad demise of the Messenger of the Master. Therefore, he was willing to accept every wrong for the Islam and to retire to Theseclusion of his house. The advice he gave to his uncle Abbas is to be found in *Nahjul-Balagha* wherein he told him not to join the turmoil.

According to the famous Arab philosopher, mathematician and physician Ave Sena (Bu Ali (A.S) Sena) Imam Ali (A.S) and Holy Qur'an were the two miracles of Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household), the Messenger of Allah. The life of Imam Ali (A.S) at every stage was a mirror like thereflection of the life of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . The days of Badr, Uhud, Khayber, and Hunain were not long passed and their hero still had the same courage, valor, bravery and strength with him. He could have jumped at the proposal of Abu Sufyan, but had he done so he would not have been Ali ibn Abu Talib, the man Awho loved Allah and His Messenger and was loved by Allah and His Messenger (*Mi'raj al-Nubuwwa*).

Death of Fatima (S.A)

Unfortunately, his feelings were not reciprocated. The following books give an account of very serious events which happened at Imam Ali's refusal to accede to the decision of *saqifa*:

1. Tabari, Vol. 21 , p. 198
2. *Al-AIqd al-Farid* of Ibn Abd Rabbih, Vol. 2 , p. 179, printed in Egypt.
3. *History* of Abul-Fida' Vol. I , p. 156 printed in Egypt.
4. *Kitab Imama wal Siyasa* of *Aallama* Ibn Qutaybah, Vol. I , p. 20, printed in Egypt (this book gives a very detailed account)
5. *Muruj al-Thahab* by al-Mas'udi, p. 159
6. *Al-Milal wal-Nihal* of al-Shahristani, Vol. I , p. 25 printed in Bombay, India
7. *Al-Faruq* of al-Shibli al-Nu'mani, printed in India
8. Ibn Abil Hadid in commentary of *Nahjul-Balagha*.

What one could gather, from various accounts which these books have given, is a sad and pathetic episode. It appears that though Imam Ali (A.S) decided to retire to Theseclusion of his house and not to take any part in power politics, his house was burned down on his family and him. And either the burning door or a hard hit from the hilt of a sword or a heavy push or all together broke the ribs and hand of Fatima (S.A) (daughter of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . This caused her such a serious injury that the baby she was carrying was a still-birth. *Aallama* Shahristani in *Al-Milal wal-Nihal* (Vol. I , p. 25) says that there was nobody in the house but Ali (A.S) , Fatima (S.A) and their children (who were between the ages of 4 to 8). Apparently the assault was sudden and unexpected, nobody was ready for it. The resulting confusion could be better imagined than narrated. The lady of the house was seriously hurt, and had fainted, the house was full of smoke, the children were frightened. As Ali (A.S) was attending to his wounded wife and suffocating children he was overpowered and dragged from the house. Later Fatima (S.A) was refused her heritage. The physical injury and the mental shock laid her low and after a short illness she passed away on the 14th of Jamadiul-Awwal, 11 A.H. She was buried in the dead of the night. Besides Banu Hashim only the following companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) attended her funeral: Salman, Abu Tharr, AAmmar and Miqdad. Before the death she had expressed her sufferings in a poem, a verse of which has come down in the Arabic language as a proverb. She says ASo many sufferings have

descended upon me that if they had descended upon bright days they would have been turned into dark nights.

The account of the last day of her life clearly shows what kind of a lady was this daughter of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . She told the household that she was feeling better, the pain in her ribs and in her hand was not so severe and that her fever had come down. Then she started bathing the children. Immediately Ali (A.S) and Fizza came to her assistance. She got the children bathed, dressed and fed, then sent them away to her cousin. Then she called Imam Ali (A.S) to her side and said Ali (A.S) , my dear husband, you know very well why I did all that. Please excuse my fussiness, they have suffered so much with me and during my illness that I want to see them happy on the last day of my life. Yes, Ali (A.S) , you know also that this is the last day of my life, I am happy and also I am sad. Happy I am that my troubles will shortly be over and I shall meet my father and sorry that I am to part with you. Please, Ali (A.S) , make a note of what I say and do as I wish you to do. After me you may marry anybody you like but you must marry my cousin Yamama, she loves my children and Husain is very much attached to her. Let Fizza remain with you even after her marriage, if she so desires, she was more than a mere servant to me. I loved her like my daughter. Ali (A.S) , bury me in the night and do not let those who have been so cruel to me attend my burial. Let not my death dishearten you. You have to serve Islam and humanity for a long time to come. Let not my sufferings embitter your life, promise me Ali (A.S) . Imam Ali (A.S) said, AYes Fatima (S.A), I promise. Ali (A.S) , she continued, AI know how you love my children but be very careful of Husain (□). He loves me dearly and will miss me sadly, be a mother unto him. Till my recent illness he used to sleep on my chest, he is already missing it. Ali (A.S) was caressing the broken hand, his hot and big tears dropped on her hand. She looked up and said ADo not weep Ali (A.S) , I know with a rough outward appearance what a tender heart you possess. You have already borne too much and will have to bear more. Farewell my master, farewell my dear husband, farewell Ali (A.S) . Say Good-bye Fatima (S.A). Hearing this she said AMay the Merciful Master help you to bear these sorrows and sufferings patiently. Now let me be alone with my Allah. Saying this she turned towards her prayers carpet and prostrated before Allah. When after a little time Imam Ali (A.S) entered the room he found her still in prostration but the soul had departed to join her Holy father in therealm of His Grace, Mercy and Might. She died very young as Imam Ali (A.S) says AA flower nipped in the bud, it was from Junnath (the Heaven) and it went to Junnath, but has left its fragrance in my mind.

From 12th A.H. to 24th A.H.

From that time onward till 35 A.H., Imam Ali (A.S) led a retired life. In the beginning, he spent his days in compiling the Holy Qur'an in the chronological order of chapters and verses as they were revealed to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . He presented this to the Muslims, but when its acceptance was refused, he advised his companions to accept the Holy Book as compiled officially, saying that his compilation would not be seen by anybody, so that there might not come into existence more than one version of the Holy Qur'an and might not create doubts about the authenticity of this august book.

When Abu Sufyan found that Imam Ali (A.S) was not paying attention to him, he tried to get in the good books of the government and his eldest son Yazid was appointed as the governor of Syria and on Yazid's death, his brother Mu'awiyah was appointed on the same post.

During the caliphate of Abu Bakr and more often during the time of the Imam (□) AOmer, whenever Ali's advice was asked for, he, like a true Muslim, offered his sincere advice.

Although the people of Banu Hashim were never given any place of honor within the government, Ali (A.S) did not mind this indifference and whenever a serious problem arose and his counsel was sought, he cooperated whole-heartedly.

The Spirit of Islam says, "From the commencement of the Islamic preaching, Imam Ali (A.S) had extended the utmost consideration and friendship to the conquered. After the battle of Qadesia, Ali (A.S) used to devote his share of prize money to redemption of captives, and repeatedly with his counsel and persuasive interference, he induced the Imam (□) AOmer to lighten the burden of subjects and captives.

Imam Hakim in Mustadrak and Kamil ibn Athir in his history say that until the year 17 A.H., no era was fixed by the Muslims to designate their years. Sometimes Aamul-Feel (year of Abyssinian invasion of Mecca) was considered as the beginning of an era. At other times, the battle of Fijjar (a pre-Islamic encounter between Arab clans) was chosen. Still, others considered a time when repairs on the Ka'ba were done as the year to mark the era. When this confusion was brought to the attention of the Imam (□) AOmer, he asked the advice of Imam Ali (A.S) , who told him to begin the Muslim era from the year of the Hijra (emigration of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , A.S.) to Medina.

On another occasion, the people went to the Imam (□) AOmer saying that a lot of jewels and valuable articles and attachments in the Ka'ba could be converted into currency and be used for arming the armies, proving to be a very useful asset. When Imam Ali's advice was sought he said, "These articles were there during the times of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) but he did not touch them. Yough Muslims were poorer then than now, and though they were more in need of arms and mounts then you are in need of, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) still did not make use of these ornaments for such purposes. It shows that the Messenger of Allah did not appreciate such appreciation. You also do not do it. Hearing this the Imam (□) AOmer said, "O Ali (A.S) ! Had you not been here, we would have suffered a disgrace. (Rabiul-Abrar of Aallama Zamakhshari)

On the occasion of the invasion of Rome, when the Imam (□) AOmer sought his counsel as to the advisability of heading the army as the Commander-in-Chief, he advised him to be at the helm and to send some experienced general as a commander. This advice is narrated in a sermon in *Nahjul-Balagha*. Similarly, at the time of invasion of Iran, he counselled AOmer not to leave the capital and to send somebody else.

The books *Izalatul Khafa'* (subject II , p. 268 and 269), *Al-Riaz al-Nazira* Vol. 2 , pp. 194 to 197), *Musnad* Imam Ahmed Vol. 2 , p. 231 (Margin), *Mustadrak Imam al-Hakim* Vol. I , pp. 438 to 460, *Ishtheab'allama* Abdul Birr Vol. 2 474) and *Ihya'ul-AUlum* of Imam Ghazali, cite several such cases where the Imam's counsel was asked for and he sincerely gave his advice.

Only one case I want to relate shows in what high esteem Ali (A.S) held the value of the knowledge acquired, collected and preserved by man in the fields of philosophy, science, history, geography and ethics.

The following authors give a detailed account of the famous library of Iskunderia (Alexandria) in Egypt:

1. Judge "Abul-Qasim" Sa'd ibn Ahmed al-Andalusi (462 A.H.) in *Tabaqat al-Umam*.
2. Haji Khalifa Chulpee in *Khashf al-Zunun*, Vol. I, Preface, p. 24, printed in Egypt.
3. The famous biographer Ibn Nadim in *Al-Fahrist* , p. 334, printed in Egypt.

4. The historian Jamal ud-Din, known as Ibn al-Qifti, in *Akhbarul-Ulema' wa Akhba al-Hukama'*, pp. 232, 233, printed in Egypt and at Liepzig, Germany.

5. Imam Hafizud-Din Muhammed ibn Muhammed ibn Shahal, known as ibnul-Bazzaz al-Kurmi (827 A.H.) in *Kitab Imam al-A'zam*, Vol. I, p. 37, printed at Hyderabad, India.

6. *Aallama* Ahmed ibn Mustafa, known as Tashul-Kubra Zada (962 A.H.) in *Miftahul-Sa'ada* and *Misbahul-Siyada*, Vol. 1, p. 241, printed in Hyderabad, India.

They are unanimous in saying that there was a fairly large library at Alexandria, Egypt. It contained between five to seven thousand books on papyri, pal, leaves and parchments, a very large library indeed when compared with the standard of literacy and education of those days.

It contained books on chemistry, astronomy, irrigation, engineering, physics, philosophy and various religions etc.

When AAmr ibn al-AAs conquered Egypt, he inquired about what to do with those books. Orders were issued from the Center that Aif these books are according to the Holy Qur'an (i.e. They say the same things which this Holy book has said) then we do not need them and if they say anything contrary to the Holy Qur'an then we do not want them. Therefore, in any case they ought to be burnt. (*Akhbarul-AUlema' wa Akhbar al-Hukama'* of Ibn al-Qufti, pp. 232 and 233) printed at Cairo and Leipzig)

The history of Muhammed ibn Abdo edited by *Aallama* Rashid Rida, Editor, Al-Manar, Cairo, Egypt, Vol. 1, p. 535, *Tabaqat al-Umam* of Judge Sa'id al-Andalusi, as well as Ayath al-Biayuth of *Muhsinul-Mulk* say that when Imam Ali (A.S) heard the news of this, he tried to persuade them to refrain from issuing such an order. He said, AThose books are treasures of knowledge and they cannot say anything against the Holy Qur'an. On the contrary, the knowledge contained therein would act as commentaries of this Holy Book and would assist and help in further explanations of the knowledge as presented by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Knowledge is an asset for human beings and a birthright of a man. It should not be destroyed. *Akhbarul-AUlema'* further states that his suggestion was not accepted and those books were distributed among one thousand hot water bath houses of Alexandria to be burnt as fire wood.

From 11 A.H. to 33 A.H.

Upon his death, Abu Bakr nominated AOmer as his successor to the caliphate and, AOmer, upon his death, appointed a board of six members to select his successor; the board considered (1) Abdul Rshman ibn e Oaf, (2) Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas (3), AOthman ibn AAffan (4), Talhah ibn Abdullah (5), al-Zubair ibn al-Awwam and (6) Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S). The terms of reference for this council were as follows:

1. If they unanimously selected a person, he would be designated as the caliph.
2. If there was no unanimity, then that person would be caliph for whom Abdul-Rahman ibn AAwf and his party voted.
3. If any five of them agreed on one man and the sixth disagreed, then the dissenter should immediately be killed.
4. If any four of them agreed on one man and then two disagreed, then those two should be killed.
5. If there was a tie, then the casting vote would be that of Abdullah ibn AOmer (his son). Abdul-Rahman ibn AAwf was a cousin of AOthman and husband of the aunt of Sa'd ibn Abi-Vaqqas and al-Zubair was son-in-law of Abu Bakr. Abdul Rahman ibn Oaf withdrew his candidacy to the caliphate.

(Refer to *Kitabul-Imama walSiyasa* of Muhammed ibn Qutaybah al-Daynuri (270 A.H.), p. 26, *History of Ibn Khaldun*, second part , pp. 134 to 136, printed in Egypt).

In the council, the opinions were equally divided in favor of Imam Ali (A.S) and A'Othman. Abdul Rahman ibn Oaf asked Imam Ali (A.S) , A'If you are selected as a caliph, do you promise that you will act according to the Holy Qur'an and the traditions and orders of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and according to the rulings and decisions of the previous two caliphs? Imam Ali (A.S) replied, A'So far as the Holy Qur'an and the orders and traditions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) are concerned, I agree to abide by them and follow them faithfully and sincerely, but so far as the rulings and decisions of the previous two caliphs are concerned, if these are according to the Holy Book and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) who could dare refuse them. If they are against the orders of Allah or the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , who would dare accept and follow them? I refuse to bind myself with those rulings and decisions. I shall act according to my knowledge and my discretion.

Then Abdul Rahman asked the same question of A'Othman. He agreed not only to act according to the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) but also to implicitly follow the rulings and the decisions of the previous two caliphs. Then Abdul Rahman declared A'Othman as a caliph. (Refer to 1. Tabari, Vol. 5 , pp. 35 to 38, Vol. 16 , p. 590) 2. Ibn Khaldun, p. 134 to 136, 3. Abul-Fida', p. 34, 4. *Rawzatul-Safa*, Vol. 2, p. 98)

Muharrum 1, 24 A.H.

Justice Sayyid Amir Ali, in his book titled *A Short History of the Saracens*, p. 46, says, A'The choice of electorate fell upon A'Othman, a member of the Ummayad family (Muharram, 1, 24 A.H., November 7, 644 A.D.). In the end, his election proved to be the ruin of Islam. He fell at once under the influence of his clan. He was guided entirely by his secretary and son-in-law Marwan, who had once been expelled by the prophet for a breach of trust. With Ali's usual patriotism and devotion to the faith, he gave his adhesion to A'Othman as soon as he was elected. A'Othman displaced most of the lieutenants employed by A'Omer and appointed in their stead incompetent and worthless members of his own family. The weakness of the center and the wickedness of the unworthy favorites was creating a great agitation among the people. Loud complaints of exaction and oppression by the governors began pouring into the capital. Ali (A.S) pleaded and tried to reason several times with the caliph concerning the manner in which he allowed the government to fall into the hands of the unworthy favorites, but A'Othman, under the influence of his evil genius Marwan, paid no heed to the Imam's advice. Twice, Imam Ali (A.S) was asked to leave Medina and to go to a village near it and twice he was called back to intervene between the ruler and the ruled. A few sermons in *Nahjul-Balagha* has related these facts. To continue the version of the short History of the Saracen, A'At last, a deputation from the provinces arrived in Medina to demand redress. They were sent back with promises. On their way home, they intercepted a letter by Marwan, purporting to bear Theseal of the caliph. This letter contained directions to the local governors to behead the leaders of the deputation upon arrival of their destinations. Furious at this treachery, therepresentatives returned to Medina and demanded the surrender of Marwan. This demand was requested even by members of the house of Ummayya (Mas'udi in *Moravejul-Zahab*). The ill-fated A'Othman met this demand with a stern refusal. Enraged at what they believed to be the complicity of the caliph, they besieged him at his home. (A Short History of the Saracen, pp. 47 and 48)

Narrating the details of the siege and the murder, Tarikh al-Khamis (Vol. 2 , pp. 61, 262), Tarikh al-Khulafa' by al-Sayyuti, p. 108, *Muruj al-Thahab* of al-Mas'udi and *Riaz al-Nazira*, Vol. 2 , p. 125, say that at this hour of peril, the Ummayyad deserted the old chief and some fled towards Syria. Mu'awiyah, though ordered by the caliph, did not come to his help. On the contrary, the contingent which he sent to Medina was ordered to stop and stay at a place thirty miles away from Medina and wait for further orders. These orders never arrived until the caliph was killed, and the contingent was called back. But Imam Ali (A.S) sent water and food to the caliph during the siege and later, as per the Imam's orders, A'Othman was bravely defended by his sons and dependents. The insurgents had great difficulty in making any impression on the defenders; therefore, on the 18th of Thul-Hijja 34 A.H., some of these besiegers scaled a wall of a neighbor's house, entered the house of the caliph and killed him inside his house.

The people who were furious against the caliph were:

1. Talhah: He played an important role in the siege and the stopp. of water. He was commanding the group of the people who were bent upon killing A'Othman. On that account, Marwan killed him in the Battle of Jamal, Tabari, Vol. 6, p. 154, *Kamil ibn al-Athir*, Vol. 4, p. 70, Ibn Khaldun, Vol. 2 , p. 397). This very Talhah later came out as the avenger of murder of the caliph and carried out the propaganda that Imam Ali (A.S) was responsible for A'Othman's murder. He was one of the chief instigators of the Battle of Jamal. He had instigated the people to kill A'Othman with the hope of succeeding the caliphate. When he was frustrated with it, he launched a revolt against Imam Ali (A.S) (Refer to sermon 179 of *Nahjul-Balagha*).

2. Az-Zubair ibn al-AAwwam was considered the number one enemy of the caliph (*Mustadrak* of Imam Hakim, Vol. 2I , p. 118, *Kitabul-Imama wal-Siyasa*, Vol. VI , p. 58, *Muruj al-Thahab* of Mas'udi, Vol. 2 , p. 11). Later, al-Zubair, with motives like those of Talhah, staged a revolt against Ali (A.S) and was the prime initiator for the Battle of Jamal. On the battlefield of Jamal, Imam Ali (A.S) reminded him of the orders given to him by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) about Imam Ali (A.S) . Al-Zubair left the battlefield and was riding to Medina when he was killed by AOmer ibn Jerneoze, who was neither in Imam Ali's army nor his own companion. Imam Ali (A.S) felt sad at Zubair's death, and said, AYough he later turned into a bitter enemy of mine, in the early days of Islam, he was a good defender of the cause of religion. (Refer to sermon 12).

3. AAmr ibn al-AAs was the third bitter enemy of A'Othman. Tabari gives a detailed account of the way he insulted the caliph in the mosque, and says, ANobody was more pleased at the murder of A'Othman than AAmr ibn al-AAs. thereason was that he had been deposed from the governorship of Egypt by the third caliph. Later, this AOmer joined Mu'awiyah as a claimant for retribution of the murder of A'Othman.

When the events from year 11 A.H. to 34 A.H. were unfolding, Imam Ali (A.S) took no part in the affairs of the state. In the words of the History of Saracen, AHe was endeavoring in Medina to give an intellectual turn to the newly developed energy of the Saracenic race. In the public mosque at Medina he delivered weekly lectures on philosophy, logic, history, explanation of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and the verses of the Holy Qur'an, as well as Muslim law and rhetoric. Thus, he formed the nucleus of the intellectual movement which displayed itself in such great force in the later days. Those lectures and sermons were compiled within forty years of his death by Zaid ibn Wahab al-Jehny (Rijalul-Kabeer). Many of them were lost, but some of them are preserved in *Nahjul-Balagha* (Mas'udi).

34 to 40 A.H.

Five days after the death of Caliph A'Othman, by a unanimous election in which representatives from Basra, Kufa, Egypt and Hijaz took part, Imam Ali (A.S) was elected as a caliph. This took place on the 24th Thul-Hijja 34 A.H. (July 5, 655 A.D. according to the Julian calendar).

Eric Schroeder, in *Muhammed's People*, printed in England in 1955, says, A'Five days after the murder of Caliph A'Othman, the people gathered together and decided: A'We know no fitter man to be Imam than Ali (A.S) , but will he take the burden of Imamate? Some answered, A'Press him at home till he consents. They all gathered at Ali's house with such eagerness that they were pushing and crushing each other. They called to Ali (A.S) and said, A'If we go to our homes again without an Imam and caliph, such a strife will stir as will never again be stilled. You will have to consent to be our Imam and Caliph of Allah. Ali (A.S) replied, A'Small longings have I for this authority, yet the believers must have a chief, and gladly will I accept temporal authority of another of Talhah. A'Nay, thou hast more right than I, said Talhah. One who stood nearby forced open Ali's palm and Talhah swore the oath of allegiance to Ali (A.S) . Al-Zubair did likewise and from Ali's house, they brought him to the mosque. Everybody thronged around him to swear the oath of allegiance to him as their imam and caliph.

The Spirit of Islam says, A'It might have been thought that all would submit themselves before his glory; so fine and so grand. But it was not to be. Al-Zubair and Talhah, who had hoped that the choice of people might fall on either of them for caliphate, balked in their ambitious design. Smarting under therefusal of the new caliph to bestow on them the Governorship of Basra and Kufa, they were the first to raise the standard of revolt. They were assisted by Ummul Mu'minin AA'isha, who had taken a decisive part in the former elections. She was the life and soul of the insurrection and she, herself, accompanied the insurgent troops to the field riding a camel. Ali (A.S) , with his characteristic aversion to bloodshed, sent his cousin Abdullah ibn Abbas to adjure the insurgents by every obligation of the faith and abandon the arbitrament of war. It was to no avail. Al-Zubair and Talhah initiated a battle at a place called Khurayba and were defeated and killed. The battle is called the Battle of Jamal (camel) from AA'isha's presence in a litter on a camel. AA'isha was taken prisoner, treated with courtesy and consideration and escorted with every marks of respect to Medina. She was sent escorted by her brother Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr. Refer to Asam al-Kufi, p. 147. Tabari, Vol. 4 , pp. 548-565, *Rawzat al-Safa*, Vol. 2, Tarikh al-Thahbi , pp. 1-21. Abul-Fida' , pp. 518-520.

After the battle, Ummul Mu'minin AA'isha felt that even though she had brought about this insurgence, she saw that Imam Ali (A.S) was treating her with utmost courtesy and kindness. She requested that her nephew, Abdullah ibn al-Zubair, who had been commander-in-chief of therebel forces and was taken prisoner, to be forgiven and freed. Imam Ali (A.S) granted therequest. Marwan got nervous thinking that as the two worst enemies of Imam Ali (A.S) (Talhah and al-Zubair) were killed and (Abdullah ibn al-Zubair) was excused and pardoned, the burden of vengeance might fall upon him. He requested Imam Hasan and Imam Husain to plead for his cause. They requested his pardon and he was also pardoned. (Years afterward, the very same Marwan made his archers shoot arrows on the dead body and bier of Imam Hasan and later he persuaded the governor of Medina, though unsuccessfully, to immediately kill Imam Husain on his refusal to accept Yazid as the Caliph). Then an order of general amnesty, peace and forgiveness was issued. Every opponent was forgiven and every prisoner was released (al-Mas'ud al-Zahbi , p. 28).

Ali's officers and commanders in this battle, besides his sons Imam Hasan, Imam Husain and Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya, were the following companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) : 1) Abdullah ibn the Imam (□) Abbas, 2) AAmmar al-Yasir, 3) Abu Ayoob al-Ansari, 4) Hazima ibn e-Sabith (for whom the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had said that his sole testimony would be equal to the testimony of two witnesses), 5) Quais ibn Sa'd ibn AAbadah, 6) Obaydullah ibn Abbas, 7) Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr , 8) Hajr ibn Addi al-Kundi, 9) Addi ibn Hatim Thaaee.

The victory gave Ali (A.S) time to consolidate his sovereignty in Hijaz, Iraq and Egypt. According to Mas'udi, with the honesty of purpose which always distinguished him, he disregarded all advises for temporizing. Several of his advisers counseled him to defer the dismissal of the corrupt officers previously appointed until he was, himself, sure concerning who were the enemies, but this hero, without fear and reproach, refused to be guilty of any duplicity or compromise with injustice and inequity. Therefore, immediately after his accession, he gave orders for the dismissal of the corrupt and tyrannical governors, for the return of fields and states which had been previously bestowed with public revenues among the favorites of the rulers, and for the equal distribution of the public revenues among the Arabs and non-Arabs, black and whites, masters and slaves, rich and poor.

These orders gave great offence to those who had enriched themselves under former administrations, and his endeavors to remedy the evils which had crept into administrations, raised a host of enemies against him. No sooner was there rebellion of Talhah and al-Zubair suppressed, Mu'awiyah, an Ummayyide by descent and who had held the governorship of Syria from the time of AOmer, raised the standard of revolt.

Abu Sufyan, his son Mu'awiyah and his clan Banu Umayyah had little sympathy and no faith in Islam. Mas'udi, in *Muruj al-Thahab*, Vol. VI, says that when Abu Sufyan had grown old and blind, he was sitting in the mosque and there were Imam Ali (A.S) , Abdullah ibn Abbas and many other Muslims besides them. The *mu'aththin* (the caller to prayers) started the *athan*. He reached the part, AI testify that Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) is the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah. Abu Sufyan said, ALook at my cousin, (meaning the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)), where he has placed his name! Imam Ali (A.S) became annoyed, saying that it was done by the order of Allah. *Tarikh al-Khamis*, Vol. 2 , p. 97, printed in Egypt says that Abu Sufyan advised Banu Umayyah to treat the caliphate like a ball and to pass it on from one to another of their clan and never let the ball out of their possession, saying, AI swear that there is neither punishment nor judgment, neither the Heaven nor the Hell, and neither the resurrection nor the day of Reckoning. His son and his clan accepted his teachings, followed his faith, adopted his advice and obeyed his orders.

In the very beginning, Mu'awiyah had made fools of Talhah and al-Zubair. According to Ibn Abil Hadid, when Mu'awiyah learned that people had sworn the oath of allegiance to Imam Ali (A.S) , he wrote to al-Zubair that he had taken the oath of allegiance for him and for Talhah as his successor. The whole of Syria was ready to back them, and they should try to overthrow Imam Ali's regime and accept the caliphate which was awaiting them in Damascus (Refer to Sermon 12 of *Nahjul-Balagha*). Thus, exciting these two old men, Mu'awiyah kept Imam Ali (A.S) busy with their rebellion and secured time to make his government more powerful in Syria.

Talhah and al-Zubair, with their rebellion, had done a great service to Mu'awiyah's cause but now, they were no longer living to serve his purpose. Therefore, he approached Mughirah ibn

Shoaba (who had originally tried to converge with Imam Ali (A.S) but was repulsed by him), Marwan ibn al-Hakam, Walid ibn AUqbah, Abdullah ibn AOmer, Abu Huraya and AAmr ibn al- AAs. His best friend was AAmr ibn al- AAs. Yough Mu'awiyah had to pay a heavy price (governorship of Egypt and more than 10 Laes of dinars) to purchase the fidelity and faith of AOmer, the later events proved that it was the best investment that Mu'awiyah had made in his life. He also collected proofs that Ziyad ibn Abih was actually the son of Abu Sufyan (born in sin) and not the son of a slave AOmaid. This change of fatherhood was officially (though shamelessly) proclaimed and Ziyad Aproudly became the natural brother of Mu'awiyah. Zaid proved himself to be a man without conscience, without remorse, without faith in Islam and without any consideration of human rights, but a very useful ally to Mu'awiyah. He was Mu'awiyah's second best friend. Histories of Tabari, *Rawzatul-Safa*, AAsim al-Kufi, *Muruj al-Thahab*, Abul-Fida', the *Kamil* of Ibn Athir may be referred to for details of the above mentioned facts. With these henchmen beside him, Mu'awiyah staged a revolt against Imam Ali (A.S) .

After settling Chaldea and Mesopotamia, Imam Ali (A.S) was forced to march towards Syria to face Mu'awiyah's forces at a place called Siffin. The previously noted books and Simon D. Aucklay in the *History of the Saracens*, give a detailed account of this battle which was an extensive one.

Tabari, Vol. VI , p. 577, *Rawzatul-Safa*, Vol. 2 , p. 425, Abul-Fida' , p. 425 narrate in details the orders issued by Imam Ali (A.S) to his officers and soldiers before the battle. As these orders give a clear indication of the principles and methods laid down by Imam Ali (A.S) as to how *jihad* (Holy War) should be carried on, I have briefly copied them here:

1. Never begin a war yourself, Allah does not like bloodshed, fight only in defense.
2. Never be the first to attack your enemy, repulse his attacks, but do it boldly, bravely and courageously.
3. While declaring yourself and your deeds (via the medim of ajaz [martial] poetry, a custom in hand to hand combatants), never waste your time. Instead of speaking about yourself, speak about Allah and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .
4. Never follow and kill those who run away from the battle or an encounter as life is dear to them. Let them live as long as death permits them to live.
5. Never kill wounded persons who cannot defend themselves.
6. Never strip naked a dead man for his coat of arms or dress.
7. Never cut noses or ears of dead men to humiliate them.
8. Never submit to looting and arson.
9. Never molest or outrage the modesty of a woman.
10. Never hurt a woman even if she swears at you or hurts you.
11. Never hurt a child.
12. Never hurt an old or an enfeebled person.

This battle started on the 1st of Safar 38 A.H. and lasted for more than two months. During this period about 18 encounters took place.

Aln the beginning with his usual humanity, Imam Ali (A.S) endeavored to bring about a peaceful settlement. But Mu'awiyah was inflated with pride and wanted impossible conditions. To avoid unnecessary shedding of blood, Imam Ali (A.S) offered to end the quarrel by personal combat, but Mu'awiyah, realizing who and what Imam Ali (A.S) was, declined the challenge. In spite of every exasperation, Imam Ali (A.S) commanded the troops to await the enemy's attack, to spare the fugitives and to respect the captives. Once, during the encounters, AAmr ibn al- AAs

and at another time Busr ibn Arath, faced Imam Ali (A.S) in the battlefield. They did not realize until the encounter started that the warrior facing them was Imam Ali (A.S) . One blow was sufficient to send them down from their horses. When they found no way of escaping his sword, each one of them, in his turn, immediately stripped naked and fell down turning their faces towards the earth and backs towards the sky. Both armies laughed at those life-saving antics and someone suggested that Imam Ali (A.S) kill them. In the case of AAmr ibn al-AAAs he replied, AI cannot kill timid dogs. He has begged for his life in a shameless and humiliating manner. I cannot dirty my arms with the blood of such a cowardly and shameless person.

These rebels were defeated in three successive battles. Mu'awiyah was ready to fly from the field when a trick of his accomplice, AAmr ibn al-AAAs, saved them from destruction. He made his mercenaries tear the Holy Qur'an into many , pp. and to tie those , pp. to their lances and flags and shout for quarters. Even whe the Holy , pp. were not available, mere rags were tied to the lances. There were some persons in the army of Imam Ali (A.S) who were bribed by Mu'awiyah, for instance Ashas ibn Quais. As per orders of AAmr ibn al-AAAs, they and their soldiers desisted from the battle and forced other soldiers to desist also. They gathered around Imam Ali (A.S) and called upon him to refer the dispute to arbitration. Imam Ali (A.S) saw through the ploy practiced by therebels and tried to make his soldiers realize it, but the clamor of the army led him to consent to the course granted. He then wanted Abdullah ibn Abbas to represent his side in the arbitration. Again, a part of the army, under instigation of al-Ash'ath, demanded that Aa weak and old man, named Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, who was also secretly hostile to Imam Ali (A.S) , (*History of the Saracens*) be nominated as an arbitrator from this side. There was immediate danger of serious factions arising in his own army, which might have developed in bloodshed. Therefore, Imam Ali (A.S) acceded to the demand and Abu Musa was appointed as an arbitrator. Mu'awiyah was represented by the astute and cunning AOmer ibn al-al-AAAs. They both decided against Imam Ali (A.S) , who, deprived of the fruits of victory by a section of his soldiers and faithless officers, retired in disgust with a part of his army and faithful followers to Kufa.

In the battle of Siffin, one of the famous companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) AAmmar ibn Yasir and another great favorite of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Owais al-Qurni, fought for Imam Ali (A.S) and were killed in the battle.

The men who had been, with ulterior motives, most clamorous at Siffin for arbitration felt that their hopes could not be realized. They repudiated the arbitration and denounced it as sinful. They openly mutinied against Imam Ali (A.S) ; therefore, they were called Kharijites. From Kufa, they withdrew to a place called Nahrawan, which was on the border of the desert. There, they assumed a threatening attitude, killing some officers of the government and many respectable men, women and children. They refused to listen to reasonable advice, to join duty or to return home. Their conduct at last became so serious that Imam Ali (A.S) was forced to attack them at Nahrawan. That encounter is called the battle of Nahrawan. The majority fought, but a few escaped to Bahrain and Ahsa [in today's Saudi Arabia] where they formed the nucleus of a fanatical horde which later assumed various names and adopted various guises.

Abu Musa had also retired to Medina where he subsequently received a handsome yearly pension from the court of Mu'awiyah. (Refer to Tabari, Abul-Fida', AAsim al-Kufi, Rawzat al-Safa, *Muruj al-Thahab*, the *Kamil* of Ibn Athir and the *Short History of the Saracens*).

From the day of ascension as caliph to the last day of his life, Imam Ali (A.S) did not get a day's rest and peace. It is a wonder, that facing the heavy odds that he had to encounter, how and

when he could get time to introduce reforms in the government; to lay out fundamentals of grammar for Arabic language; to deliver sermons on theology, rhetoric, philosophy of religion, wonders of creation and nature, and duties of man to Allah and man; to advise people in the most persuasive style; to suppress the tendencies for innovation and schism, which had crept in the minds of Muslims or to introduce and bring into effect principles of a benign government.

After dealing with the revolt of the Kharijites, Imam Ali (A.S) had to face the problem of consolidating his control over Egypt. He had sent Qais ibn Sa'd as a governor there, but had to call him back and send Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr in his place. Unfortunately, Muhammed, though brave and sincere, was no match to Mu'awiyah and Amr ibn al-As. He was forced by Mu'awiyah into a battle. Muhammed wrote to Imam Ali (A.S) who sent Malik ibn Ashter for help. But Malik could not reach Egypt. He was poisoned on the way by a henchman of Mu'awiyah and died (Tabari, Vol. IV, p. 521). Muhammed was informed of this fact. That young man faced Amr ibn al-As alone, was defeated in the encounter, killed and by the orders of Mu'awiyah, his dead body was burnt and his ashes were strewn (Tabari, Vol. IV, p. 592). Imam Ali's words at the news of the death of Muhammed show he loved the young man and how the youth loved him. After Muhammed, Imam Ali (A.S) had to send some experienced officer to Egypt. He was busy with that problem when Mu'awiyah organized bands of guerillas with orders to loot, murder, arson and rape. These bands were to attack in waves against the provinces of Hijaz, Basra, Rayy, Mosul and Harath. Imam Ali (ؑ) organized defenses of these provinces, defeated these bands and freed the country from earlier harassment.

It would have been very easy for Imam Ali (A.S) to divert the minds of masses towards foreign invasion and thus make them busy in murder and plunder. It had always been done by rulers and is even today considered as the best form of employing energies of a rising nation as well as the easiest way to form an empire to propagate religion. But Imam Ali (A.S) hated bloodshed, did not believe in imperialism and had no faith in propagation of religion with a sword in one hand and the Holy Qur'an in the other. He believed Islam to be a message of peace and love and wanted mankind to be ruled on the basis of equity and justice. Therefore, after strengthening one province after another and fortifying their defenses, he introduced reforms to create a benign temporal state and never considered expanding his domain.

By the time he got complete control over those problems and could organize an army to liberate Syria and Egypt from their reign of terror which had held them in its sway, the fateful month of Ramzan 40 A.H. arrived.

40th A.H.

It was the 19th of Ramadan, the month of fasting of that eventful year. It was the time of morning prayers. The place was the mosque in Kufa. Imam Ali (A.S) had arrived in the mosque long before the time of the prayers, had roused those who were sleeping in the mosque. Among them was Abdul Rahman ibn Muljim al-Muradi. He was lying on his face and had hidden under his garment a sword, the blade of which had been poisoned. Imam Ali (A.S) roused him and told him that it was an unhealthy way of sleeping as it hinders free breathing. He also told him that he had hidden a sword in his garment and an evil intention in his mind. Imam Ali (A.S) then called the Muslims to morning prayers and led the service. It was the first part of the prayers and he was rising from the kneeling posture when the sword of Abdul Rahman ibn Muljim descended on his head, giving him a very deep cut. It was the same sword that Imam Ali (A.S) had pointed out only half an hour earlier. The prayers were disturbed. Abdul Rahman started running and people went after him. Nobody was attending the prayers. There was confusion everywhere. But

Imam Ali (A.S) finished his two prostrations and then reeled into the hands of his sons Hasan and Husain. The wound which was bleeding profusely was attended to. His blood-drenched lips parted into thanks-giving prayers as he said, AMaster! I thank You for rewarding me with martyrdom; how kind are You and how Gracious. May Your Mercy further lead me to therealm of Your Grace and Benevolence. Abdul Rahman was caught by Sasa ibn Sohan and was brought before Imam Ali (A.S) . The hands of the murderer where tied behind his back. The Imam (□) saw that the ropes were cutting into the flesh of the murderer. He forgot the wound of his head, the blow which was to end his life and to cut his career in its prime. He forgot that Abdul Rahman was a murderer. All that he saw was a human being subjected to inhuman torture. He ordered the Muslims to loosen the ropes on Abdul Rahman's hands and treat the man humanly. This kindness touched the murderer and he started weeping. A smile played on those lips and in faint voice Imam Ali (A.S) said, AIt is too late to repent now, you have done your deed. Was I a bad Imam or a unkind ruler?

The people carried the Imam to his house and when he saw the bright day he said,

AO day! you can bear testimony to the fact that during the life time of Ali (A.S) you have never, not even once, dawned and found him sleeping.

He lived two days after this event and in that interval, whenever he found time, he delivered a few sermons (sermon No. 152 is one of them). In those sermons and with his dying breath, he expressly ordered that no harshness should be used towards his murderer, who should be executed if the heirs of Imam Ali (A.S) so desired, with one blow. He should not be tortured before death, his dead body should not be mutilated, members of his family should not suffer on account of his crime and his property should not be confiscated. He designated his son Imam Hasan (□) as his vicegerent.

Thus, the last chapter closed on the history of a life which from beginning to end was filled with noble deeds, pious thoughts and sublime words and every filled hour of a glorious life. AHad Ali (A.S) been allowed to reign in peace, says Oeslner, AHis virtues, his firmness, and his ascendancy of character would have perpetuated the basic principles of a good government and its simple manners. the dagger of an assassin destroyed the hope of Islam. AWith him, says Osborn, Aperished the truest-hearted and the best Muslim of whom the Mohammedan history has preserved the remembrance. ASeven centuries before, says Justice Amir Ali, Athis wonderful man would have been apotheosized, and thirteen centuries later, his genius, talents, virtues and valor would have exerted the admiration of the civilized world. Chivalrous, humane and forbearing to the verge of weakness, as a ruler he came before his time. He was almost no match by his uncompromising love of truth, his gentleness and his merciful nature to cope with Umayyads' treachery and falsehood (*The Spirit of Islam*). Justice Amir Ali further says, ATo quote the language of the modern French historian, ABut for his assassination, the Muslim world might have witnessed therealization of the prophet's teaching, in actual amalgamation of the first principles of true philosophy into positive action. The same passionate devotion to knowledge and learning which distinguished Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) breathed in every word of Ali (A.S) . With a liberality of mind, far beyond the age in which he lived, was joined a sincere devotion of spirit and earnestness of faith. His sermons, his psalms, his litanies portray a devout outlook towards the source of all good, and an unbounded faith in humanity.

According to his will, he was buried at Najaf, a place about two miles from Kufa.

About Ali (A.S) , his character, his wisdom, his teaching, his services to Islam, his love of mankind, his respect to duty, his adherence to piety, truth and justice, more than eight thousands

books have already been written. They are in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, English, Spanish, Italian, German, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Telugu and Tamil, a sincere homage to the sincerity of his faith in the greatness and nobility of character inherent in man and in the possibility of human beings developing these traits by good thoughts and good deeds.

Imam Ali (A.S) as a Ruler and Statesman

Before Imam Ali (A.S) took charge of the state, the condition of the country was in hopeless turmoil. All of the most important people and the companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had lost sympathy with the government and were openly hostile to it. Rank, favoritism and the short-sighted greed of Marwan and his clan were responsible for this chaos. People were emboldened to rise in arms against the mismanaged and malevolent rule. Their uprising had succeeded. They had lost all respect for authority, and had no desire to see the ruling junta back in power again. On the other hand, the members of the overthrown regime had sinister designs to gain back the control which had benefitted them for so long, while some influential persons were hoping to gain the caliphate for themselves.

For three days after the murder of the caliph, there was anarchy in the capital and on the fifth day, Imam Ali (A.S) was unanimously elected. He neither claimed nor contested for the temporal kingdom. It was forced upon him. But when he accepted it, in his first speech, he openly declared they had elected him as their temporal ruler and he would remain so as long as they kept on obeying him. He had grave doubts about the sincerity of their desire as twice, he had refused to accept their request to act as their ruler. Yet, seeing their hopeless plight and their repeated solicitations moved him to assent to their entreaties; yet he was under no obligation to them for their election, on the contrary, he had done them a service by agreeing to rule over them. He knew well, the reasons of their persistent supplications for his rulership. They had been badly treated by the malevolent, cruel and oppressive regime and the ruling class had insulted them and had always refused to listen to their grievances or come to their relief. The masses had been kept under complete ignorance of the true teaching of Islam and were made to feel that such ignorance was the best thing for them. They had been made to concentrate on worldly benefits at the cost of religion and piety, the result being a rule of brutal force of which they were tired and wanted the kind of benign government which had been introduced by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . That desire had made them look for somebody who could reintroduce that type of government. They realized that Imam Ali (A.S) was the man in whom the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had confided and intrusted more than in anybody else, and that he had been the trustee to every secret of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Therefore, they unanimously elected him as their ruler.

Ironically, they had not realized their responsibilities and obligations under which they had brought themselves by making him their Amir (ruler). He knew their weaknesses and also knew that they would lose their confidence in him when they would find that he attached more importance to general welfare than to personal good, when he would make them follow the path laid down by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , when, with the introduction of equality and equity he would make them accept the principles of brotherhood of man and general amity towards their fellow beings, and when he would try to lead them toward selfless discharge of duties as laid down by Allah and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , thus making them a model subject of the kingdom of Allah, a model to be adopted by those who desire peace and prosperity under a benign rule. He was afraid that with the introduction of such a revolutionary (Islamic) system of government and society, the uninitiated would revolt against

him, continuing to clamour for unwarranted and unreasonable personal benefits as usual, and crave vicious pleasures that would no longer be possible in a fairness-to-all and a godly system of government which he had envisioned in Islam. Those who would revolt did not realize that the previous, traditionally exploitive secular regimes, by allowing them cheap and simple pleasure, granting them limited power and keeping them in the darkness of ignorance their rulers, had actually turned them into automata to work for them as kinds of slaves deprived of vision and foresight without hope for a good prospect of a future life. On the other hand, Imam Ali (A.S) would try to make them follow the true part of religion at the behest of their own free will, make them develop the habit of simple living and high thinking and teach them to give up the desire of seeking undue favors and unjustifiable pleasures. That was the kind of men that Allah wanted them to be and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had tried to model them into. The task had not been easy then and the lapse of a quarter century had made it even more difficult, but Imam Ali (A.S) would try to achieve it. (*Al-Karrar* of *mawlana* Riaz Ali)

Whatever shadow of hope was lurking in the minds of persons expecting wealth, prosperity and governorship disappeared with this very first speech of Imam Ali (A.S) . They knew that they could not expect unholy and ungodly concessions from Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S). Their unreasonable claims on public wealth, their fiefs and their unjustifiable holdings of public property would not remain with them. The result was three rebellions against Imam Ali (A.S) and a restless period of rulership for about four years.

His Reforms

But Ali (A.S) , with the sincerity of purpose, tried to do what he had promised and raise the mental uplift of the masses. The first thing was the consolidation of the state which he successfully carried out against very heavy odds. The second thing was to create a central bureau where he distributed the work of training the crude Arabs into educated and civilized people. To Abul-Aswad al-DuAli, he dictated basic principles and rules of grammar for the Arabic language with special instruction to concentrate on the syntax of that language. Abdul Rahman al-Sulmi was made to look after the art of reading the Holy Qur'an correctly. Kumail ibn Ziyad was made responsible for mathematics, engineering and astronomy, A'Omer ibn Sulma for the Arabic language and literature (prose), Abadah ibn al-Samit for poetry and logic, Abdullah ibn Abbas for principles of administration and rhetoric, and he himself, for philosophy of religion, ethics, commentary of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Actually, he was hub of the whole activity. Yough every hour of his glorious life was filled, he still found time to teach his assistants, what to say, when and how to say it, what to teach, and when and how to teach it. Long after his death, every one of his above pupils proved a shining star in the sky of Muslim civilization and have been considered as Imams.

Introduction of New System of Government

The next subject which engaged his immediate attention was the improvement of administration. To make due arrangements for security of the state from external attacks, to preserve law and order, to control corruption and bribery, to provide equality of opportunities and equal distribution of public wealth among his subjects, to appoint honest and pious officers, to chastise and remove from service dishonest ones, to maintain a powerful army, to avoid enrollment of mere mercenaries in it, to take care of traders and traders and treat non-Muslims with deserving leniency and respect, were apparently the items of his program which he successfully carried out.

Division of Public Service Departments: He divided the state services into following sections:

1. Public finance
2. Army
3. Central administrative bureau
4. Judiciary,
5. Provincial offices

the department of Public Finance was divided into two sections:

- a. Collection section and
- b. Distribution sections.

The collection section was subdivided into three heads and only three kinds of taxes were allowed to be collected by Imam Ali (A.S) :

(i) Land Revenue: It was usually collected in coins of silver and gold or in bullion. Officers to collect this revenue were sometimes appointed by the center, but the Imam (□) had also authorized the governors to appoint such officers themselves.

(ii) *Zakat* (poor rate) and *sadaqa* (poor fund) : These were usually collected in kind or in live-stock. Officers to collect this revenue were always appointed directly by the Imam (□) and he took great care to appoint honest and pious persons on these posts and to keep a sharp look out on their activities and behavior.

(iii) *Jizya*: This was a tax from non-Muslims in lieu of *zakat*, etc. and in return for Thesecurity and amenities provided to them. Collection of no other kind of tax, from non Muslims, was allowed by him.

Land surveys were carried out by him wherever necessary. Every taxpayer had the right to appeal and an appellate jurisdiction was brought into force. Officers for this court of appeal were directly appointed by the Imam (□).

He was the first man to introduce a budgetary system for the collection of revenues and expenditure. Every province had to present its budget direct to him for approval. The incomes were divided into two heads; provincial and central. *Zakat* and *sadaqa* were items of the central revenues, land revenue and *jiziya* were provincial incomes.

The schedule of rate for land revenue was fixed by him as follows:

1. 1st Class (most fertile) land 1.5 dirham per Jareeb
2. 2nd class fertile land 1 dirham per Jareeb
3. 3rd Grade land .5 dirham per Jareeb
4. Vineyards, and orchards 10 dirhams per Jareeb
and date palm groves

(Note: 1 Jareeb = 2268 3/4 sq. yd.)

Sadaqa and *zakat* were the taxes which only Muslims had to pay. It was a tax levied on personal income, landed property, hoarded bullion and currency and on livestock. Its rate was that which was fixed by tenets of the Muslim law.

Jizya was an annual, personal tax, collected per head of a person irrespective of his income or property. But such persons were divided into classes. The division of classes follows:

- 1st class: very rich persons and landlords 48 dirhams per head
- 2nd class: middle class people 42 dirhams per head
- 3rd class: businessmen 42 dirhams per head
- 4th class: general public 12 dirhams per head

There were positive orders that no *jizya* was to be collected from beggars or persons falling in following categories:

1. Those who were above 50 years of age
2. Those who were below 20 years of age
3. All women
4. All paralyzed persons
5. All disabled persons
6. All blind persons
7. All mentally disabled persons

Income from the source of *zakat* and Sadaqa was reserved for the following heads:

- A. Administration of the departments of collection and distribution.
- B. Grants, donations and aids to poor, have-nots, orphans, aged widows and disabled persons.
- C. Honorarium to volunteers who fought for the state.
- D. Pensions to widows and orphans of soldiers and officers of the army.
- E. To acquire and set free slaves from the bondage of slavery.
- F. Reparation of government loans.
- G. To help pilgrims whenever and wherever they were found stranded.

Items C to F were, for the first time, introduced by Imam Ali (A.S) and as far as F was concerned, no king had ever thought his kingdom to be morally obliged to pay back a loan taken from somebody.

Imam Ali (A.S) was the first man who declared that a ruler's share of income from the state was equal to that of any commoner.

Income from *jizya* was earmarked for the following items of expenditures:

- (i) Maintenance of the army.
- (ii) Construction and maintenance of forts
- (iii) Construction and maintenance of roads and bridges
- (iv) Well sinking
- (v) Construction of rest houses

Land revenue was the provincial income to be spent on maintenance of courts, offices, and other necessary items as per orders of the center. Before I bring an end to the narration of his system of revenue collection, I must mention a remark passed by him in this respect to one of his governors. He said, "So far as collection of land revenue is concerned, you must always keep in view the welfare of the taxpayer which is primarily of more importance than the taxes themselves. And, the actual taxable capacity of the people rests on the fertility quotient of the land. More attention should therefore be paid to land fertility and the prosperity of the taxpayer than to the collection of revenues."

Distribution of public wealth was a subject on which Imam Ali (A.S) spent much time and thought and, in return, caused him to lose many adherents and followers.

The first reform that Imam Ali (A.S) introduced was to reorganize the treasury and the accounts department. Dishonest officers were removed from the service. A system of accounting was introduced. Amr ibn Hanif was appointed as the chief treasury officer. A principle of equal distribution of public money was introduced. For the first time, a system of weekly distribution was adopted. Every Thursday was the distribution day or pay day so that Muslims could spend their Friday holiday happily. Every Thursday the accounts were closed and every Saturday started with fresh books of accounts.

Impartiality and equity were the keynotes of Imam Ali's policy of distribution of wealth. At the Center (Kufa), he often supervised the distribution himself and after the work was over and

the accounts cleared, he would say prayers in the treasury and thank his Master that he had performed his duty faithfully.

Imam Sha'bi says that as a young boy, once he passed the treasury at the time when Imam Ali (A.S) was supervising the distribution. He saw African slaves standing in line with the Arab sheikhs and getting equal shares, and within a short time the heaps of silver and gold coins disappeared, the treasury was cleared, Imam Ali (A.S) said the prayers and left the office empty-handed. That day he had given his share to an old woman who complained that her share was not sufficing her (AKitab al-Gharath).

Once one of his most favorite and trustworthy companions, A Othman ibn Hanif told him that by introduction of the principle of equal distribution of wealth and bringing important persons down to the level of commoners, by raising the status of Blacks and Persians to that of Arabs, by allotting shares to slaves equal to their masters, by depriving the rich persons of their worldly attachments and by stopping special grants apportioned to them according to their status, he had done more harm to himself and his cause than good. Continuing he said, A Look my Master, these are the reasons why influential and rich Arabs are deserting you and are gathering around Mu'awiyah. Of what use are these poor persons, disabled people, aged widows and Black slaves to you. How can they help and serve you? the Imam (□) replied, AI cannot allow rich and influential persons to exploit the society of this Muslim state and to run an inequitable and unjust system of distribution of wealth and opportunities. I cannot for a moment tolerate this. This is public wealth, it comes from the masses it must go back to them. The rich and powerful persons have not created any wealth, they have merely sucked it from the masses and after paying the taxes, etc., what is left to them is many times more than what they pay to the state and they are welcome to retain it. Had all this been private property I would have gladly distributed it in the same manner. As far as their desertion is concerned, I am glad they have deserted me. As far as the usefulness or services of these disabled persons and have-nots is concerned, remember that I am not helping them to secure their services, I fully well know they are unable to serve me. I help them because they cannot help themselves and they are as much human beings as you and I. May Allah help me to do my duty as He wishes me to do. (Kitab al-Gharath)

The Army

Imam Ali (A.S) was a born soldier and had started his military career at the age of fourteen when he acted as a bodyguard to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . From that time onward, he was the only military talent on whom the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) would rely and all arrangements for organization of defenses and maintenance of an army of volunteers or soldiers were totally entrusted to him by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . It was his ability and valor which brought such success to Islam in its early stage against such enormous odds. Even AOmer was taking his advice on military problems (*Al-Sirajul-Mubin, Al-Murtaza* and *Kitab al-Gharath*).

Time had not dimmed his valor or his ability to organize such an important section of the state. At the age of sixty, in the battlefields of Jamal, Siffin and Nahrawan, he was as brave a soldier, as good a leader and as keen a marshal as he was in the prime of his life in the battlefields of Badr, Uhud, Khundaq, Khaiber and Hunain.

During his short period of rulership of about four years, he organized this department very carefully.

The first liability on the state exchequer was the army department. Every governor of the province, besides being chief finance officer of the province, was the commander of the army

placed under him. When officers could not be found to look after the military as well as civil administration, then the functions were divided.

Imam Ali (A.S) did not tolerate mere mercenaries but did not let services of volunteers go unpaid. He hated murder and bloodshed and desired his soldiers to be soldiers in The service of Allah and religion. His strict orders to the army were, AAlways keep fear of Allah in your mind, remember that you cannot afford to do without His Grace. Remember that Islam is a mission of peace and love. Keep the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) before you as a model of bravery, valor and piety. Do not kill anybody unless in self-defense. Take care of your mounts and your arms, they are your best guards. Work hard while you are at it and then devote some time to rest and relaxation. Rest and relaxation are as necessary for you as hard work. Do not let one overstep the time limit of the other. Do not pursue those who run away from an encounter and do not kill fleeing persons. Do not kill those who beg for life and mercy. Do not kill civilians. Do not outrage the modesty of women. Do not harm old people and children. Do not accept any gifts from the civil population of any place. Do not lodge your soldiers or officers in the houses of civilians. Do not forget to say your daily prayers. Fear Allah. Remember that death will inevitably come to every one of you some time or other, even if you are thousand of miles away from a battlefield, therefore, be always ready to face death. He did not appreciate heavily armed and clad soldiers. He liked lighter swords, lighter bows and arrows, lighter coats of arms and lighter chains of armor. He preferred to have an agile and a noble army. I wish I had space at my disposal to translate parts from the books *Al-Gharath*, *Al-Siraj al-Mubin*, *Al-Murtaza* and *Kitab al-Siffin* (as quoted by ibn Abil Hadid). They have discussed and narrated at some length his system of reorganizing the army, his principles of strategy and his tactics of war: how he divided the army into six units, beginning from the vanguard and ending it at the rear guards (*Rawdah* and *Saqqah*) ; how he arranged to cover every possibility of a retreat with the help of these units; how he sub-divided the cavalry into horse and camel units; and infantry into archers, swordsmen and A'Mata'een' (soldiers armed with short lances which they threw with precision, skill and force) ; how he made the vanguard responsible for scouting, pioneering and performing duties of army engineers and miners; how he used to arrange the army in a battlefield; how he never suffered a defeat in his life; how bold he was; how he used to fight without protecting his body with armor or shield; how he never delivered more than one blow (mostly his one blow was sufficient to kill his opponent, if not he would give the opponent a chance to get up and run away) and how nobody ever dared stand before him for his second blow. To him war was a pious duty to be performed only for the purpose of defence. He often declared, AA Muslim's life is a battlefield, where he is seldom required to defend his self or his cause and country at the point of sword, which is *Jihad al-Asghar* (holy war on a minor scale), however formidable be the forces he is to face, while in every day of his life he is to fight against evil desires, vicious cravings and inordinate wishes, which is *al-jhad al-akbar* (A holy war on a major scale), take care and do not suffer a defeat in this battle; remember it is life-long struggle; a success here will be honored with martyrdom, even if one dies in his bed surrounded by his relatives.

Judicial Procedure

The principle of keeping independent of, and over and above the executive, administrative and military sections of the state was the main factor of the reforms introduced by Imam Ali (A.S) . He was very particular about this, so much so that historians narrate that once he appeared before his Chief Justice (Judge Sharaih) as a complainant and the Chief Justice wanted to give him a place of honor in the court and to treat him like a king or caliph. He reproached the

judge for such a behavior, saying that he was there as plaintiff and not as a king or a caliph, and then he cheerfully accepted the decision of the court against him. The effect of upholding the prestige of the court of justice, and his adherence to the principles of equality and equity were so impressive that the person, against whom he had filed the case and had lost it, ran after him, kissed the hem of his garment and said, AMy Master, teach me Islam, I am a Christian and I want to convert. AWhy, inquired Imam Ali (A.S) , ADid anyone force you to do that? ANo, my Master, the Christian said, ABut your behavior of treating even a non-Muslim subject as your equal, the prestige you have granted to justice and fair play and your abstention from use of power and authority made me feel that Islam is a great religion. You are a ruler and a caliph, you could have easily ordered me to be killed and my property looted, and nobody dare ask reasons of your actions, but you took the case against me to the court and cheerfully accepted the decision against you; I have never heard of such a ruler before you. What is more, what you claimed as yours is actually yours and not mine, but I know the persons who could provide proof of this are out of Kufa, therefore, I boldly said that it was mine and not yours. That was a lie, and now I am ashamed to feel that I lied against such an honorable person. You have heard me. Will you not allow me to enter the fold of Islam? the Imam (□) inquired, AAre you of your free-will entering our fold? AYes, the Christian replied. Under your regime, I have nothing to lose by remaining in my religion and no worldly benefit to gain by embracing Islam and by confessing my guilt and sin.

The code which he laid down for selection and enrollment of judges shows he took care of even minute requirements of the post and position. It says,

1. Only such persons should be selected who are well versed in Muslim law and know enough of the Holy Book and traditions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) to decide according to the principles laid down therein. Besides, they must have knowledge of personal laws of other religions followed in their provinces.

2. They must be men of some standing and status.

3. They must not lose their tempers or patience and treat litigants harshly and insultingly. The litigants must feel that their interests are well-guarded and well looked after, and that the doors of justice are always open to them.

4. If they feel that they have made a mistake, they should not obstinately stick to it, but try to undo the injustice done by them.

5. They should be able to probe deeply before them and to reach the truth.

6. They must be able to reach decisions quickly and must not unnecessarily prolong a case.

7. They must not accept recommendations and must not be influenced.

8. Their salaries should be fixed so that they are not tempted by bribes and gifts.

9. In audiences and levees of the governors they should be given seats of honor.

10. Greedy and various persons, and those who are open to flattery and cajolery should also be avoided.

11. The door of appeal to the public should not be closed. The caliph should always hear appeals against the decisions of the courts and should decide as per orders of Allah and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .

Central and Provincial Secretariat and Subordinate Offices

The Imam (□) has laid down a code for the officers of the State which covers every aspect of their duties and obligations. It is embodied in the form of a letter (Letter No. 53, *Nahjul-Balagha*) written to one of his governors. Abdul-Masih al-Antaki, the famous Christian jurist,

poet and philosopher of Beirut who died in the beginning of the 20th century says, AlIt is by far a superior and better code than the ones handed down by Moses and Hammurabi. It explains what a humane administration should be like and how it is to be carried on and it justifies the claims of Muslims that Islam wants to introduce a godly administration of the people, by the people and for the people. It decrees that a ruler should not rule to please himself but to bring happiness to the ruled. No religion before Islam tried to achieve this end. Ali (A.S) must be congratulated for having introduced these principles in his government and for having written them down for posterity.

I quote here just a few points to illustrate what Abdul-Masih meant by saying that it was a better code than the codes handed down by Moses or Hammurabi.

(1) You must create in your mind kindness and love for your subjects. Do not behave with them as though you are a voracious and ravenous beast and that your success lies in tearing them up and devouring them.

(2) Muslims and non-Muslims should be treated alike. Muslims are your brothers and non-Muslims are human beings just like you.

(3) Do not feel ashamed to forgive. Do not hurry over punishments. Do not quickly lose your temper over mistakes and failures of those over whom you rule. Anger and desire of vengeance are not going to be much use to you in your administration.

(4) Do not allow the (evil) force of favoritism and nepotism to violate your duties to Allah and to man, and drive you towards tyranny and oppression.

(5) While selecting officers take care that you do not select such people who have served tyrannous and oppressive rulers and have been responsible for atrocities and savage cruelties committed by the state.

(6) Select honest and kind persons and, from among them, prefer those who speak out the bitter truth to you unreservedly without fear or favor.

(7) Appointments in the first place must be on probation.

(8) Keep your officers well paid so that they may not be tempted to corruption or misappropriation.

(9) Appoint confidential officers to secretly watch the activities of your officers and staff and report to you about their behaviors.

(10) These secretaries of your civil, judicial or military services should be of personage naturally richer in character than the average. Choose the best amongst them irrespective of age or period of service.

(11) All letters or applications should be dealt with by the officers and replies or orders about them should be drafted by them only, no subordinate must be allowed to work as the eyes and minds of these officers.

(12) Take your subjects into your confidence and make them feel that you are their wellwisher and friend.

(13) Never break a promise or go against the terms of a treaty. It is a sin against Allah.

(14) You must take care of your traders but should never allow them to resort to hoarding, black-marketing and profiteering.

(15) Promote and encourage local arts and crafts, it reduces poverty and raises the standard of life.

(16) Farm tillers are assets to the state and should be protected as an asset.

(17) Remember that your sacred duty is to look after the poor, disabled and orphans. Let not your officers humiliate them, ill-treat them or oppress them. Help them, protect them and let them approach you whenever they are in need of your help.

(18) Avoid bloodshed. Do not kill anybody unless he deserves to be killed according to the canons of Islam.

HAZRATH ALI (A.S) and the Philosophy of Religions

A man enters a garden laid out into beautiful flower beds, artistically and aesthetically arranged. The flowers have been grown by those persons who know the art and science of it. The beauty of their colors and the delicacy of their forms and shades are pleasing to the eyes, and their fragrance enchants the minds. The man knows that he has not the knowledge and capability to cultivate and grow flowers like that and the public has no time to go through the garden and enjoy the sights and fragrance of these beds at leisure. He picks up a few flowers from each of these beds and arranges them in a bouquet as a humble homage to the grandness and beauty of the garden.

With this view in mind, these chapters were written. I have drawn freely from the following books AAl-Murtaza, al-Kurrar, *Al-Sirajul-Mubin*, *Thazeedul-Matin*, *Nufs al-Rasul*, *the Spirit of the Islam*, *Islam Under the Arabs*, *the preaching of Islam*, *Khasa'is al-Nisa'i*, al-Tabrisi's *Ihtijaj*, *Bihar al-Anwar*, *Al-Manaqib*, *Sharh of Ibn Maisum*, *Sharh of Mirza Fathallah*, the *Sharh of Ibn Abil-Hadid* and *Irshad*.

I am sure Theselection is not the best, but it is the best that I can do and I am sure it will provoke minds superior to mine for better efforts.

In this last chapter, I shall try to discuss the teachings of the Imam (□) in the field of philosophy of religion.

With Imam Ali (A.S) and the Imams of his descent, religion was a vital and positive force of life. Their philosophy never sinks to a war of words without life and without earnestness which is the main feature of the schools under Ptolemies or the vicious circles created by the philosophers of the West and East. Their ardent love of knowledge, devotion in the evolution of the human mind, their sincere faith in Allah and His Mercy, Love and Kindness, and their looking upwards for the literalness of common interpretations of law, show the spirituality and expansiveness of their philosophy of religion. The Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (□) defines knowledge by saying, AEnlightenment of the heart is its essence, Truth is its principal object, Inspiration is its guide, Reason is its acceptor, Allah is its Inspirer, and the words of man are its utterers. To him, the evolution of the mind was the essence of life and religion was the essence of the evolution of the mind.

How correctly Imam Ali (A.S) taught us that a man without a mind is not a man, and a mind without religion is worse even than the instinctual nature of a beast, more harmful, more dangerous and more carnivorous. Devotion without understanding will not bring the Blessing of Allah, it is useless.

He attaches so much value to the mind and its correct ways of grasping the truth that he says your first leader and guide is your mind. At other places he says that nothing is more useful to man than his intelligence, there is nothing wealthier than wisdom, there is no greater bounty of the Master than the intellect granted to you, you can dispense with everything but your mind and intelligence, there is no better guide towards truth than wisdom, one hour of deep and sober meditation is better than a life of prayers without understanding, and a wise man thinks first and speaks or acts afterwards.

Next to intelligence and wisdom, he taught us to attach importance to the sincerity of purpose in life. Once explaining a certain verse to Abdullah ibn Abbas, he said, A Ibn Abbas, if you sincerely and intelligently go in search of truth or religion and if you wander out of the right path, even then there is a reward for you. There is a sermon in *Nahjul-Balagha* in which he says,

ADo not kill Kharijites after me because to go in search of truth and to lose the true path is better than to spend the entire span of ones life in pursuit of vicious pleasure and wickedness.

The natural and logical sequence of the above two attributes is to take account of yourself, your knowledge, your thoughts, your intentions, your desires and your deeds. He therefore advises us ATo weigh your own souls before the time of weighing of your actions arrives. Take account of yourself before you are called upon to account for your conduct in this existence.

To obtain favorable results of such weighing and taking account of oneself, one must have done good deeds. And as far as actions and reactions are concerned, he wants us to understand that human conduct is not fortuitous, one act is the result of another; life, destiny and character means a series of incidents, events and actions which are related to each other, as cause and effect by an ordained Law. Therefore, apply yourself to good and pure actions, adhere to truth, follow the true path to salvation, before death makes you leave this abode. If you do not warn and guide yourself none other can direct you. The Master has pointed out to you the path of salvation and has warned you of the temptations of this world. Abstain from foulness though it may be fair to your sight. Avoid evil, however pleasant, for you know not how far it can take you away from him.

His discourses in *Nahjul-Balagha* about noble deeds are supreme reading. His warnings against sinful life are very persuasive teachings. He says, AO Ye servants of the Master! Fulfill the duties that are imposed on you for in their neglect there is abasement, your good work alone will render easy the road to death and to the Heaven. Remember each sin increases the debt and makes the chain heavier. The message of mercy has come, the path of truth (*haqq*) is clear; obey the command that has been laid on you; live in purity and work with nobility of purpose and ask Allah to help you in your endeavors and to forgive your past transgressions. Cultivate humility and forbearance, comfort yourself with sincere truth.

Next to sincere faith in the Unity of Allah and the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) hood of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , he lays great stress on piety. He wants us to realize that piety is not a juicy morsel to be swallowed easily nor is it dip in the river to clean all dirt and filth from the body. Piety means those actions, which at the beginning may be sour, harsh and painful to perform. Piety means to free oneself from vicious desires and wicked deeds. This freedom cannot be obtained but by constant effort and endeavor. Such efforts are a continuous struggle and a long drawn war against the vicious cravings of the mind. Nobody can be free from vices and sins unless he or she develops the capacity to abhor and hate them. When once this capacity develops, to adopt a pious and sober life becomes a habit, a second nature. Few things are forbidden to you and so many things are lawful that no one is barred from normal relaxation, ease and comfort from sober and harmless pleasures and pursuits.

To him, asceticism was a sin against The self. History cites many instances where he admonished the persons who had given up their homes and families, had severed every connection with society, had taken to a mosque, and had been praying, fasting and reciting the Holy Book morning, noon and night. He sent them back to their homes and told them that their duties lie among their fellow beings, and what they had done was not piety but fanatic asceticism which is not allowed in Islam. He strongly reprobated observance of asceticism and condemned the abandonment of the affairs of this life in fanatic pursuits of rituals.

He says that he who acts with piety gives rest to his soul; he who takes warning understands the truth and he who understands it attains the perfect knowledge.

His teachings do not convey any impression of predestination; on the contrary they portray a soul animated with a living faith in Allah and yet full of trust in human development founded on individual exertion springing from human volition. One day, someone asked him the meaning of Quaza and Quader. He replied, A*Qaza*’ means obedience to the commandments of Allah and avoidance of sin, and *qadar* means the ability to live a pious and holy life, to do that which brings one nearer to Allah and to shun that which throws him away from His Perfection. Say not that man is compelled, for that attribution is tyranny against Allah, nor say that man has the absolute discretion to decide what is right and what is wrong, we are furthered by His Help and Grace in our endeavors, to act righteously and we transgress because of our neglect of His Commandments.

Explaining the meaning of the verse, AThere is no power nor help but from Allah, he said, AI means that I am not afraid of Allah’s Wrath, but I am afraid of His Purity; nor have I power to observe His Commandments, but my strength is in His assistance. Allah has placed us on earth to try each of us according to his endowments. Explaining the verse saying, AWe will try you to see who are strivers (after truth and purity) and who are forbearing and patient, and we will test your actions and we will help you by degrees to attain what you know not! he says, Athese verses prove the liberty of human volition. Explaining the verse AAllah directs him whom He chooses, and leads him astray whom He chooses he says, AThis does not means that He compels men to evil or good deeds, or that He either gives direction or refuses it according to His caprice, for this would do away all responsibility for human action; on the contrary it means that Allah points out the road to truth, and lets men choose as they will.

In a sermon in *Nahjul-Balagha* Imam Ali (A.S) says, AThe theory of compulsion, predestination or predetermination of fate is a satanic insinuation and a doctrine of faith among the enemies of Allah. On the contrary, Allah has ordained man to obey His Commands and has given him freedom of will and action, he is at full liberty to obey His Commands or to disobey. There is no compulsion in accepting the religions preached by His Messengers and no compulsion to obey His Commands. Even His Commands (like daily prayers, fasting, *zakat*, etc.) are not hard, harsh and unbearable and every leniency and ease on account of age and health is granted to man.

The freedom of human will, based on the doctrine that man would be judged by the use he had made of his reason, was inculcated in the teachings of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , along with an earnest belief in the Supreme Power ruling the universe. Imam Ali (A.S) gave this idea a more definite form and it grew into a philosophy. In reply to a question he says, APerhaps you consider predestination to be necessary and the particular decree to be irreversible; if it were so then reward and punishment would be in vain, and the promise and the threat would be of no account; and surely blame would not have come from Allah for the sinner nor praise for the righteous, nor would the righteous be more worthy of the reward of his good deeds, nor the wicked be more deserving of the punishment of his sin than the righteous. Allah hath ordained the giving of choice to man and the putting of them in fear and He hath not laid duties upon men by force nor sent his prophets as farce. When asked, AWhat is predestination and the particular decree which drove us? he answered, AThe command of Allah, and therein His purpose. Then he repeated the verse, AThe Master hath ordained (predestined) that you worship none but Him and kindness to your parents.

Morality of life is another point which Imam Ali (A.S) wanted men to realize fully, sincerely and rationally. He wants us to understand that death is a biological incident of all forms of life

and it is unavoidable, inevitable and sudden. No one knows when and how he or she is going to cross this barrier. Therefore it is foolish to imagine that it can be avoided, sinful self deception to forget it, and idiotically timid to be afraid of it. He says, AI am as fond of death as a baby is fond of his mother's breast. the natural sequence of the mortality of life is that everything connected with it and with this world is mundane and has no lasting value. Therefore, why concentrate on pleasure and take to vicious ways to acquire them, why not try to improve your lot in the hereafter.

Imam Ali's teachings are a true gospel of the work ethic. He wants man to work, to work honestly, sincerely and diligently and to work for thereward reserved in the Heaven. He says, AWork, work, and do good work while you still have life, health and opportunities. Allah ordains you to work while there is still time to work. Be thankful for the time and opportunities allotted to you and work for the good of mankind and for your own good. A life without work is a life without worth. A mind without sober thoughts and a life without a program of honest work is the most fertile soil for Theseeds of wickedness and vice. Work, with the nobility of purpose is one of the forms of prayer. His advice to his son was, AExert yourself to earn an honest living. The worst form of folly is the wasting of opportunities. Opportunities do not repeat themselves so make use of each of them when it presents itself, but let piety guide in all of your actions.

Thus Imam Ali (A.S) guides us through the problems of men with respect to ourselves individually as he leads us towards solving problems encountered with one another. In a letter to Imam Hasan (□). he says, AMy dear son, as far as your behavior with other human beings is concerned let yourself act as scales to help you judge its goodness or wickedness. Do unto others as you wish others to do unto you. Whatever you dislike to happen to you, spare others from such happenings. At another place, he advises, ADo not make yourself a slave of anything. Allah has created you a free man. Do not sell away this freedom in return for anything. There is no real value or benefit that you derive by selling your honor, conscience and self respect. Do not run after him who tries to avoid you. Remember that to oppress a weak or helpless person is the worst form of tyranny. Do good to your brother when he is bent upon doing harm to you. Befriend him when he ignores you. Be generous to him if he is miserly to you. Be kind to him if he is harsh and cruel to you. But be very careful that you do not behave with undeserving, mean and wicked persons.

Imam Ali (A.S) had a very soft corner in his noble heart for the poor, the disabled, the aged and the orphans. To Malik he says, AI want to caution you about the poor. Fear Allah about your attitude towards them. Let it be remembered that their welfare is the first charge to a state and on the well-to-do-people.

As far as the question of man and Allah is concerned, Imam Ali (A.S) teaches us to believe in Allah Who has created us, Who loves us, nourishes us, helps us and is our well-wisher. He should be loved, adored and venerated.

Through many of his prayers Imam Ali (A.S) has implanted in the minds of those who have faith in Allah the highest devotional spirit. He teaches us to love and adore Him and to think of Him as AThe Master, the Adorable, the Eternal, the Ever Existing, the Cherisher, the True Sovereign, Whose Mercy and Grace over-

shadows the universe. Who is the Master, the Loving and Forgiving, Who bestows power and might on whom He pleases. None can lower him whom He exalted. Whose beneficence is all persuading. Whose Forgiveness and Mercy is all embracing. Who is the Helper of the afflicted, thereliever of all distressed, the Consoler of the broken hearts. Who is present everywhere to

help His Creatures. Who fulfillls all needs, bestows all blessings. Who is a friend of the poor and the bereaved. At another place he beseeches the Master thus, AYou art my Fortress; a Castle for all who seek Your Protection and Help. The Helper of the pure and true, therefugee of the weak. The Helper of those seeking Your Help. Thanks be to You O Master, Whose Mercy extends to every sinner, and who provides for even those who deny Him.

This is how he wants us to have faith in Allah, a Creator, a Nourisher, a Helper, a Refuge, a Protection. One who loves you and One to be loved, adored, venerated and worshipped.

The other aspect of his teaching is that he has clearly and emphatically condemned all anthropomorphic (to attribute human forms, qualities or personality to Allah) and anthropathic (ascription of human passion and affections to Allah) conceptions. He says, AAllah is not like any object that the human mind can conceive. No attribute can be ascribed to Him which bears the least resemblance to any qualities which human beings have perceived of from their knowledge of material objects. The perfection of piety consists in knowing Allah; the perfection of knowledge is the affirmation of His Verity; and the perfection of verity is the acknowledgment of His Unity in all sincerity; and the perfection of sincerity is to deny all attributes to the Deity. He, who refers an attribute to Allah believes the attributes to be Allah, and he who so believes an attribute to be Allah, regards Allah as two or part of one. He who asks where Allah is assimilates him with some object. Allah is the Creator, not because He Himself is created. Allah is Existent not because he was non-existent. He is with every object, not from resemblance or nearness. He is outside everything not from separation or indifference towards His creatures. He works and creates not in the meaning of motions or actions. He sees and hears but not with help of bodily organs or outside agencies. He was seeing when there was nothing created to see. He has no relation to matter, time and space, Allah is Omniscient because knowledge is His Essence, Loving because Love is His Essence, Mighty because Power is His Essence, Forgiving because Forgiveness is His Essence, and not because these are attributes apart from His Essence.

At another place he says, AO my Master! You art the Creator, I am the created; You art the Sovereign, I am only Your servant; I am the one who beseeches, You, my Master art therefuge. You art the Forgiver, I am the sinner, You my Master, art the Merciful, All knowing, All loving; I am groping in the dark; I seek Your knowledge and Love. Bestow my Master all Your Knowledge, Love and Mercy and let me approach You, my Master. You live in every heart and every soul. Your Knowledge is ingrained in every mind.

COMPILER and Some Commentators

The last compiler of the sermons, letters, orders and sayings of Imam Ali (A.S) was Sayyid al-Razi. His was the compilation which came down to us in its entire form through ten centuries. He named this compilation *Nahjul-Balagha*.

Sayyid al-Razi's name was Abul-Hasan Sayyid Muhammed al-Razi. Al-Razi was his nicknamed ALaqub. He was born in Baghdad (in 359 A.H.) in a family famous all over the country for their connections with the state, for their patronage of art and literature, and for their interest in history, philosophy and religion. It was a time when Baghdad was vying with Cairo and Cordoba for superiority over arts, science, philosophy and languages.

His father, Abu Ahmed Sayyid Husain, was appointed five times as Anaqeebs or chiefs of the Family of Imam Ali (A.S) . His family was held in the highest regards by Abbaside caliphs and Alawide kings.

Sayyid al-Razi's father was a descendant of the Imam Moosi al-Kazim (□) being the great grandson of the Imam. His mother was the great granddaughter of the Imam Zainul-Abideen (□). She was a woman famous for her piety and her literary talents.

His elder brother, Sayyid Murtaza, was a great theologian and poet. Sayyid Murtaza's work (poems) are still being published in Cairo and Beirut and form part of the course of Arabic literature in the universities of those two cities. Sayyid Murtaza has a great place among the Shi'a theologians and is nicknamed Aa'lamul-huda (standards of the true path of religion).

His mother took keen interest in educating her two sons, Sayyid Murtaza and Sayyid al-Razi. She personally took them both to the Shi'a theologian and *mujtahid*, Abu Abdullah Sheikh Mufid and requested him to educate these children under his personal supervision and care.

Sayyid al-Razi, under the instructions of Sheikh Mufid, received an early education in Arabic grammar, literature and lexicology from Hussan ibn Abdullah Sairfee. At the early stage of ten he was considered a finished product of that institution and a good poet. He joined the educational institutions of Aby Ishaq-Ahmed ibn Muhammed-Tabari, Ali ibn Eesa Rubace, A'Othman ibn Jinny and Abu Bakr Muhammed ibn Musa Khawrzami, and with them he studied the Holy Qur'an, the Traditions, theology, history of religions, philosophy and literature. From early childhood, his keen desire of acquiring knowledge and concentrating on studies was noted and appreciated by every one of those great scholars under whom he received his training. As a matter of fact, he was considered as a prodigy by many of them.

At the age of twenty, his merit was recognized and respected by all of them and even Sheikh Mufid regarded this young man as his equal.

Sayyid al-Razi died young at the age of forty-five or forty-seven years, but during this short period he had written many books. His commentary of the Holy Qur'an is considered by the historian ibn Khalakan to be peerless, and his explanation of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is still respected as a great resource of the meaning of the words used by the Holy Messenger of Allah.

At the age of twenty-one he was elected in place of his father as Naqeeb of the family of Abu Talib and was appointed by the State as the Amir of Pilgrimage to Mecca.

He was a man of strong character, free will and independent views. During his time the Abbasites caliphate of Baghdad was at war with the Fatemite caliphate of Egypt, and had persuaded Sunni and Shi'a men of importance to sign a *mahzar* (public attestation) depicting non-Muslims tendencies and activities of the Fatemite caliphs. Even the elder brother of Sayyid al-Razi and his father were forced to sign it, but Sayyid al-Razi refused to sign such a decree. This brought him onto a blacklist of the government, but he cheerfully accepted the loss of political privilege and status. Four times during his life he refused to accept financial aid from the government.

In his early age he had come across sayings, sermons and letters of Imam Ali (A.S) . He had found them scattered in various books of philosophy, religion, history, biography, literature and commentaries of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . He had also found that the collections of Imam Ali's work as carried on by great scholars of the first four centuries, because of the unsettled political condition of the centers of learning in the peninsula, were lost. He therefore decided to re-collect them once again. The desire became a passion with him. He toured all over the peninsula to collect these sermons, sayings and letters, gathering all the various books containing them and classified them into sermons, letters and sayings. The letters also included orders of Imam Ali (A.S) to his officers

and two of his wills. In fact, the classification was on the basis of what Imam Ali (A.S) preached, what he wrote and what he said. Some biographers say that for years he devoted eighteen hours a day for this work. It was a labor of love for him. His health was failing yet he continued the work without an abatement of intensity.

To him this compilation was a sacred duty and he carried it out with the devotion and diligence that it deserved. He was particularly and sincerely careful not to add and not to subtract a word from the texts which he found. If he found a sermon divided into many parts he did not join them into a continuous whole but let them remain as two, three or four disjointed parts. This system of compilation annoyed the later commentators of *Nahjul-Balagha*, like ibn Abil Hadid and ibn Maisum, and they have complained about it. Sometimes when Sayyid al-Razi found the middle part of a sermon missing, he left the two remaining parts as two separate sermons.

He collected from a pile of books and manuscripts on various subjects and had come across those books at various periods of his work. Naturally, there was not any chronological order in his collection. The sermons which are supposed to be delivered in Medina or in the early period of Imam Ali's temporal rulership are found in the later part of the book and sermons on the events of Siffin and Nahrawan in early part. Similarly, the sermon, which is considered as the last sermon of Imam Ali (A.S) , preceeds many discourses which, by their test, may rightly be considered to be delivered in Medina during the periods of the first and second caliphates. At places, we find that the Sayyid had copied the same sermon in different places as quoted by different authors. All these discrepancies jar upon the minds of thereaders. But they stand as iron clad irrefutable proof to the honest and sincere desire of Sayyid al-Razi to present the work as he found it and not to interfere with it in any way however essential it might be.

Some historians and biographists are of the opinion that Sayyid al-Razi was helped in this work by his elder brother Sayyid Murtaza. But, had this been a fact, the noble-minded Sayyid would have willingly mentioned it in his preface, because he has tried to mention all the sources from which he found these sermons etc.

Sayyid al-Razi died in the month of Muharram 404 A.H. at the age of 45 years. Some biographists are of the opinion that the year of his death was 406 A.H. and his age at the time of death was 47 years. His elder brother Sayyid Murtaza and his teacher Sheikh Mufid were so grievously stricken that they could not lead the funeral service of that great man and Theservice was led by the Prime Minister Abu Ghalib Fakhrul Mulk.

Sayyid al-Razi has left about 40 books as his memorial, some of them are great works, they consist of commentaries of the Holy Qur'an on religion and philosophy, yet his masterpiece was the collection of the sermons, letters and sayings of Imam Ali (A.S) .

As soon as the noble Sayyid compiled this book (*Nahjul-Balagha*) his contemporaries started writing commentaries on it. The work of commenting on the text and explanation of meanings of the words used by Imam Ali (A.S) , and the historical events mentioned therein is still continued today. I am citing herein the names of some of the famous commentators of *Nahjul-Balagha*.

Sunni Commentators:

1. Imam Ahmed ibn Muhammed al-Wayri (about 470 A.H.)
2. Abul-Hasan Ali ibn Abul-Qasim al-Bayhaqi (565 A.H.). His commentary is quoted by *Mu'jam al-Udaba'* of Yaqut al-Hamawi, Vol. 13, p. 225, printed in Egypt.
3. Imam Fakhruddin al-Razi (606 A.H.). His commentary is quoted by:
 - (i) Akhbarul-Hukama' of ibn al-Qufti, p. 192 printed in Egypt.
 - (ii) AUyun al-Anbiya' of Ibn Abu Sabe'e , p. 25, printed in Egypt.

4. Abdul-Hamid Hibathullah Muhammed ibn Muhammed ibn Abil Hadid, the Mu'tazilite scholar (known as Ibn Abil Hadid, 655 A.H.). His commentary is a world-famous classic covering 17 volumes, printed half a dozen times in Cairo, Beirut, Tehran and Isfahan.

5. Sheikh Kamalud-Din Abdul Rehman Shaybani (about 705 A.H.)

6. 'Allama Sa'dud-Din al-Taftazani (797 A.H.)

7. Judge of Baghdad Sheikh Qa'imud-Din.

8. 'Aallama Sheikh Muhammed Abdoh (1323 A.H.)

His commentary has been printed very often and forms a part of the university course in Cairo and Beirut.

9. Professor Muhammed Hasan al-Nayer al-Mursafi of Egypt. His commentary is printed in Darul-Epistle Press Cairo, Egypt.

10. Professor Muhammed Mohiuddin Abdul Hamid, Professor of Lexicology of Alazhur University.

His book was printed at Istiqamatul-Misr Press, Cairo.

11. Professor Sheikh Abdullah al-Bayruni of Cairo, Egypt.

Shi'a Commentators:

1. 'Allama Sayyid Ali ibn Nasir (about 450 A.H.). He was a contemporary of Sayyid al-Razi.

2. The famous Shi'a *mujtahid*, theologian and philosopher *Aallama* Qutubud-Din al-Rawandi. His Commentary is titled *Minhajul-Bara'a*.

3. Fazil al-Jalil, *Aallama* Sayyid Ibn Tawus.

4. 'Allama ibn Maisum al-Bahrani (about 660 A.H.). He was a contemporary of ibn Abil-Hadid. His commentary is famous and is considered of immense value on problems of the philosophy of Islam. He has not devoted as much time towards the literary and historical aspects of *Nahjul-Balagha* as ibn Abil-Hadid. His book is greatly valued by Shi'a theologians and philosophers.

5. 'Allama Qutubud-Din Muhammed ibn Husain al-Iskandari. His commentary is named *Al-Islah*.

6. Sheikh Husain ibn Sheikh Shihabud-Din Hayder Ali al-AAmili al-Karki. He died in Hyderabad, India, in the year 1076 A.H.

7. Sheikh Nizamud-Din Ali ibn al-Husain ibn Nizamud-Din al-Jilani. He named his commentary as *Anwarul-Fasaha* and *Asrarul-Balagha*.

8. 'Allama Sayyid Sanad Mirza Allaudin Muhammed ibn Abu Turab, known as Fazil al-Gulistanah (1110 A.H.). His commentary covers 20 volumes.

9. Agha Sheikh Muhammed Raza. His commentary is called *Ba'dra al-Najafia*. It has been printed often and very well received throughout Iran.

10. 'Allama Sayyid Ma'jid ibn Muhammed Bahrani. He was a contemporary of Sheikh Bahayee and died in 1028 A.H. His commentary is greatly valued by Shi'a theologians.

11. Mullah Fadlallah Kashani. He died in 997 A.H. He was a lexicographer, grammarian, mathematician, physicist, engineer and theologian. He had been to the court of Akbar also. He was a contemporary of the famous historian of Akbar's court,

12. Mullah AAbdul-Qadir Badayuni. The Mullah speaks very highly of him in his book *Muntakhabul-Tawarikh*. He says AAdil Khan, governor of Deccan, Khan al-Khanan and Hakeem Abul-Fath of the court of Akbar paid great respects to him and Akbar also had great regards for him. His commentary is printed very often, and so far as the translation of words used by Imam Ali (A.S) in Persian is concerned, it is the best book ever published.

PREFACE

By the compiler of Nahjul-Balagha, 'Allama ash-Sharif ar-Radhi

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Praise is due to Allah who has held praise as the price of His bounties, protection against His retribution, pathway to His paradise and means for multiplication of His good treatment. May blessings be on His Messenger, the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of mercy, the torch of the people, the chosen one from the origin of greatness and family of longstanding honors, the plantation of all-engrossing glory and the branch of sublimity full of fruits and foliage. And, may blessing be upon the members of his family who are lanterns against darkness, protection of the people, brilliant minarets of religion and high standards of greatness. May Allah shower upon them all the blessings befitting their distinction as rewards 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 in the beginning of the book. Therein, I completed the portion relating to the account of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (A.S) 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 compromise whatever had been related to Ali's short utterances such as his counsel, maxims and proverbs but not his 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 that I complete a book which should cover all the forms of the utterances of Amir al-Mu'minin, including diverse materials such as lectures, letters, counsels, ethics, etc. They were convinced that because Amir al-Mu'minin was the fountain of eloquence and the source of rhetoric, the entire proceedings would comprise wonders and surprises of eloquence and rhetoric, brilliant jewels of the Arabic language and shining expressions about faith that were not collected nor found together in any other book. Through the Imam, the hidden delicacies of eloquence and rhetoric came to light, and from him, its principles and rules were learned. 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 thereflection of the Divine knowledge and savor the Prophet's utterance. Accordingly, I acceded to their requests because I knew that it meant great reward, handsome reputation and a treasure of recompense.

The object of this compilation is to bring forth Amir al-Mu'minin's greatness and superiority in the art of rhetoric, in addition to his countless qualities and innumerable distinctions, and to show that he had risen to the highest pinnacle of this attainment. He 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 its treasure of delicacies cannot be matched. Since I proudly trace my descent from him, I have a pleasure of quoting a couplet of al-Farazdaq:

AThese are my forefathers O Jarir.

AWhen we get together, can you claim forth their equals?

In my view, Amir al-Mu'minin's utterances were divisible in three categories: firstly sermons and decrees, secondly letters and communications and thirdly maxims and counsels. Allah willing, I have decided to compile the sermons first, then the letters, and finally the maxims and counsels. I then propose 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. If my utterance which is routine or in reply to some question or has some other aim does not fit in with any of my divisions, it should be included in the category for which is most suitable or to which its subject matter is most similar. In this compilation, some sections and sentences have crept in whose arrangement show disarray and disorderliness. This is because I am only collecting the most representative brilliant utterances and do not wish to arrange or array them.

The characteristic of Amir al-Mu'minin in which he is unparalleled and is shared by no one, is that his utterances on seclusion, piety, remembrance of Allah and admonition are such that when a person pursues 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 these are the utterances of a man who has no interest other than seclusion and no activity save worshipping; who is confined to the interior of some house or the valley some mountain where he hears nothing save his own murmur and sees no one except himself. Would one believe that these are the utterances of one who plunges in battles with his sword drawn, severing heads and vanquishing the heroes while returning with his sword dripping with blood and the heart's fluid? And despite all of this, he is supreme among therecluse and chief among the saints. This distinction is one of those astonishing characteristics of Amir al-Mu'minin with which he collected within himself contradictory qualities and patched together diverse greatness. I often mention this subject to my brethren-in-faith and cause them to ponder over it.

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. Thereafter, 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 the 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, *Nahjul-Balagha*, the pathway of rhetoric would be the appropriate title of the book, in that it would open the doors of eloquence for thereader and shorten its approach for him or her, the scholar and the student would meet their needs from it and the rhetoricians as well as therecluse would find their objectives in it. In this book will be found a wonderful discussion on Allah's Oneness, Justness and His being free from body and form, that will quench every thirst (for learning), provide a cure for every malady (of unbelief) and remove every doubt. I seek from

Allah succor, 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:

1. Al-Farazdaq, whose name was Hammam ibn Ghalib, belonged to the tribe of Banu Darim and was a notable poet. He was generally at odds with another Arab poet named Jarir ibn AAtiyyah 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, AMy 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 Sayyid ar-Razi 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 Aname their like remains unresponsive like the Holy Qur'anic challenge Athen bring forth its Like.

Sayyid al-Razi 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 minds have 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 hearts and minds were already inclined, Sayyid al-Razi's eloquence-conscious eyes turned the sight towards himself as he was the ray of the sun whose abundant light dazzled 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 bloodshed 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 Hatim nor generosity from Rustam. But the personality of Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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, a

major portion of whatever he earned as the wage of his day's toil was distributed among the poor and the starving. He would never allow a beggar to return disappointed from his door, so much so that even when in the battlefield the enemy asked him for his sword, he threw it before him being confident of the prowess of his naked arm.

An Urdu couplet says the following:

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'arif, "Whoever he encountered was prostrated. The heartless nature of the brave is not prone to thinking or pondering nor do they have anything to do with foresight or forecasting. Ali (A.S) had the quality of thinking of the highest degree. Thus, al-Shafi'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 judgment that after the death of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) when 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, the farsighted mind of Ali (A.S) saw at once that if a battle was waged at that moment, the voice of Islam would be submerged under the clatter of swords. Even then, if success was achieved it would be said that the position was gained by the power of the sword, and 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 forgiveness, and, despite authority and power, to pardon and overlook. But Ali's metal used to shine on such occasions when his forgiving nature would accommodate even his bloodthirsty foes. Thus, at the end of the Battle of Jamal he made a general proclamation that no one who left the field or sought out protection would be molested and he let go without any punishment, even such enemies as Marwan ibn al-Hakam and Abdullah ibn Zubayr. And the treatment that he meted out to A'isha was a matchless manifestation of his nobility and high character and, 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. In these conditions such a delicate situation arises that man fails to distinguish and separate his personal malice from a fundamental difference but easily mixes them together and 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 after bringing down his opponent and placing himself on his bosom the vanquished opponent then spat on his face. As a mortal man, the Imam's rage should have risen and his hand should have moved quicker. 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 seclusion and God-fearing because one shows valor and courage while the other supplication and submission. But Amir al-Mu'minin was a unique combination of both of these qualities as his hands that were bound in devotion were equally active in the battlefield, 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. Upon finishing, he again cast his hand on the sword's handle and the fierce battle that then followed is 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 takbir recorded their number as five hundred and twenty-three.

The taste for learning and acquiring knowledge of Allah 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).

When there is perfection of learning, then even if there is not a 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 al-Shafi'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 the following:

AO 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 an appearance that his light temper and brightness of face was apparent from his looks and his lips always bore a playful smile. He never showed frowns on his forehead like the dry recluse, so much so that when people could not find any defect in him, this very lightness of his temper was taken to be his fault, while a hard temper and a bitter face were held to be virtues.

If a man possesses a cheerful heart and a 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, AAllah bless Ali. He was a man of cheerful taste. Then Qays ibn Sa'd retorted, ABy Allah, despite a cheerful disposition and an 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 , p.antry nor allowed a show of external grandiosity. Once

he was passing on a horseback when Harb ibn Shurahbil started walking with him and began talking. Then Amir al-Mu'minin said to him, AGet 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 self 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 following:

The figure of my beloved is so beautiful that when I cast my glance on the body from head to toe,

Every spot thereof calls my attention claiming to be the most enchanting.

**NAHJUL BALAGHA (Selected Sermons, Letters and Sayings) of
Amir al-Mu'minin Ali ibn Abu Talib**

SERMONS

SERMON 1

In this sermon, he recalls the creation of the 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 depths 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 acknowledgment of Him. The perfection of acknowledging Him is to testify Him. The perfection of testifying Him is to believe in His Oneness. The perfection of believing in His Oneness is to regard Him Pure. 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. Who recognizes His like regards Him as two. Who regards Him as two recognizes parts for Him; and who recognizes parts for Him mistakes Him; and who mistakes Him points at Him; and who points at Him admits limitations for Him; and who admits limitations for Him numbers 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 of 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.

Creation of the Universe

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

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

Then, the Almighty created forth wind and made its movement sterile, perpetuated its position, intensified its motion and spread it far and wide. Then He ordered the wind to raise deep waters and to intensify the waves of the oceans. So the wind churned the water like the churning of curd and pushed it fiercely into the firmament, throwing its front position on therear while the stationary position flowed till its level was raised and the surface was full of foam. Then Almighty raised the foam to the open wind and vast firmament and made therefrom Theseven skies. He made the lower one as a stationary surge and the upper one as protective ceiling and 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 therevolving sky, moving the ceiling and rotating firmament.

Creation of the Angels

Then He created the openings between the high skies and filled them with all classes of His angels. Some of them are in prostration and do not rise. Others are in kneeling positions and do not stand u, p. 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 effect of forgetfulness does not effect them.

Among them are those who work as trusted bearers of His message, those who serve, speaking tongues for His prophets and those who carry 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 whose steps are fixed on earth but their necks protrude into the skies. Their limbs are out on all sides, their shoulders are in accord with the columns of the Divine Throne, their eyes are cast down before it, they have spread their wings down under it and they have rendered between themselves and all else curtains of honor and screens of power. They do not think of their Creator through image, do not impute created attributes to Him, do not confine Him within abodes and do not point at Him through illustrations.

Creation of Adam

Allah collected clay from hard, soft, sweet and sour earth, which He moistened with water till it became 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 a mind that governed him, intelligence which he made use of, limbs that served him, organs that changed his position, sagacity that differentiated between truth and untruth, tastes and smells, colors and species. He was a mixture of clays of different colors, cohesive materials, divergent contradictories and differing properties like heat, cold, softness and hardness.

Then Allah asked the angels to fulfill 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 honored position. So Allah said: AProstrate to Adam, so they prostrated except Iblis (Satan). (Holy 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 the creation of clay contemptuously. So Allah allowed him time in order to let him fully deserve His wrath, and to complete (man's) test and to fulfill the promise (He had made to Satan). Thus, He said: AVerily you have been allowed time till the known Day(Holy Qur'an, 15:38, 38:81).

Thereafter, Allah placed Adam (□) in a house where He made his life and his stay safe, and He cautioned him of Iblis and his enmity. Then his enemy (Iblis) envied Adam's 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 (□) 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 Adam's progeny, Allah chose prophets and took their pledge for His revelation and for carrying His message as their trust. Throughout the course of time many people perverted Allah's trust with them and ignored His position and took associates along with Him. Satan

turned them away from knowing Allah and kept them aloof from His worship. Then Allah sent His Messengers and a series of His prophets toward people to get them to fulfill the pledges of His creation, to recall His bounties to them, to exhort them by preaching, to unveil before them the hidden virtues of wisdom and to show them the signs of His Omnipotence. Of these signs He showed the sky which is raised over them, the earth that is placed beneath them, a means of livelihood to sustain, death that makes them die, ailments that turn them old and incidents that successively betake them.

Allah never allowed His creation to remain without a Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 the 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 Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household)

In this way, ages passed by and times rolled on. Fathers passed away while sons took their places till Allah deputed Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) as His Prophet, in fulfillment of His promise and in completion of His Prophethood. Muhammed's pledge had been taken from the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household), his traits of character were well reputed and his birth was honorable. The people of the earth at this time were divided in different parties, their aims were separate and ways were diverse. They either loved Allah and His creation or twisted His Names or turned to those other than Him. Through Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household), Allah guided them out of wrong and with his efforts took them out of ignorance.

Then Allah chose Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) 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 honor. Allah may shower His blessing on him and his progeny.

The Holy Qur'an and the Sunna

But the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) left among you the same that other Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s left among their people, as Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s do not leave their people intentionally (in the dark) without a clear path and a standing ensign. He left the Book of your Creator clarifying its permission and prohibitions, its obligations and discretion, its repealing injunctions and therepealed 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 knowledge¹ is obligatory and others whose ignorance by the people is permissible. It also contains what appears to be obligatory according to the Book² but its repeal is signified by the Prophet's action (Sunna) 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 ones for which there exists the threat of fire (Hell), and others are minor ones 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 acknowledgment of His Dignity. He selected from among His creation those, who on listening to His call, responded to it and testified to His word. They stood in the position of His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s 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:

.Allah (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 independent of the Worlds (Holy Qur'an, 3:96).

1. AThe foremost in religion (*din*) is His knowledge. the literal meaning of *din* is obedience, and its popular sense is a code. Whether the 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 acknowledgment of His Being.

After pointing out the essentials of the Divine knowledge Amir, al-Mu'minin has described its important constituents and conditions. He holds 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 the creation of such an image and the image fails to get testified. In this case they remain deprived of the Divine knowledge. Since access 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 the Divine knowledge, namely to search for the Creator through diversification of the creation and species of creatures. This is because every picture is a solid and inflexible 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 theregulated system of the

entire creation no one can help but conclude 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: *A. 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 favor 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 Oneness. 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 difference 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 he is incapable and in need of others while the other case means that there 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 it among themselves, all the creation would not bear the same relationship towards the creator. This is because 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 to believe in numerous creators allows 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 expressed his argument in the following words:

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

The fourth stage is that Allah should be regarded free of all defects and deficiencies, devoid of body, form, illustration, similarity, position of place or time, motion, stillness, incapability and ignorance. This is 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 begets not, nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him. (Holy Qur'an, 112:1-4).

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

So coin ye not any similitudes to Allah; verily Allah knows (everything) and ye know not. (Holy Qur'an, 16:74).

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

The fifth stage of completing His Knowledge is that attributes should not be put on Him from outside lest there be duality in His Oneness. Deviating from its proper connotation, Unity may

fall into 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 the smell of the flowers or brightness in the stars. Rather, He is the fountainhead 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. If the power to listen or to see is attributed to him, 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 in the same way as in the creation. 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 in 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. 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 and 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 Imam Abu 'Abdillah Ja'far ibn Muhammed as-Sadiq (ؑ) 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 the following:

Our Lord, the Glorified, the Magnificent One, has knowledge of Himself even though there was nothing to know, sight of Himself even though there is nothing to behold, hearing of Himself even though there is nothing to hear, and Potency of Himself even though there is nothing under His Potency. 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 Theseen, and potency related to its object. (at-Tawhid by ash-Sheikh 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 , p. 42 of his book *Kitab al-Milal wal-Nihal*:

According to Abul-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 or they must have occurred later. In the first case we have to recognize as many eternal objects as the attributes which all will share with Him in being eternal, but Allah is above that which 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 scient, nor powerful, nor hearer nor beholder and this runs counter to the basic tenet of Islam.

.Allah has decreed trade lawful and has forbidden interest. (Holy 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. (Holy 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. (Holy 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 Allah, therefore whosoever desireth to meet his Master, let him do good deeds, and associate none in the worship of his Master. (Holy 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 not understand? (Holy Qur'an, 2:44)

2. About the Holy Qur'an Amir al-Mu'minin says that it contains description of the permitted and 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, remember Allah rising, sitting or lying and when you feel safe (from the enemy) then say the prayers (as usual). (4:104)

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 the husband's death four months and ten days or therepealed 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 willfully wrongful or a transgressor, commits no sins.

It has positive injunctions such as 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 Banu Isra'il.

Here, the meaning of worlds is confined to that particular time, although the word is general in its literal meaning. The general injunction is one which is extensive in meaning such as Allah has knowledge of everything. It has lessons and illustrations such as Allah caught him in the punishment of this world and the next and there is a lesson in it.

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

Verily in this there is a lesson unto him who feareth (Allah). (Holy 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. (Holy Qur'an, 2:263)

And remember when We made a covenant with you and raised the Tur' (the Mountain) above you (saying), Hold ye fast to 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. (Holy 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. (Holy 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. (Holy Qur'an, 3:5)

Obedience and a fair word; but when the affair is determined, then if they are true to Allah, it would certainly be better for them. (Holy 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 has placed in it abundant good. (Holy Qur'an, 4:19)

ASay thou (unto the people of the Book), ADispute ye with us about Allah; whereas He is our Master and your Master, and for us are our deeds and for you are your deeds; to Him (Alone) we are (exclusively) loyal? (Holy Qur'an, 2:139)

*A*There is a lesson in it for him who fears Allah, and illustrations such as *A*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 *A*Recall when Moses told his people *A*Allah commands you to sacrifice a cow. *A*

Specific is one where denotation is limited as Allah says that *A*the cow should be such that it has neither been used for ploughing nor for irrigation fields. There is clarity and obscurity in it. The clarity is that which has no intricacy such as *A*Verily Allah has sway over everything, while the obscurity is whose meaning has complication such as *A*the Merciful (Allah) occupies the throne, whose apparent meaning gives the impressions 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 *A*establish prayer and those of deep meanings such as the verses about which says the following:

*A*That the sense if 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 some things in it which are necessary to know, such as *A*So know that there is no god but Allah and there are others which are not necessary to know such as *A*aleef laam meem etc. It has also injunctions which have been repealed by the Prophet's actions such as *A*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 actions such as *A*Turn your face towards Masjid al-haram 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 *A*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 *C*light such as *A*Tel the believers to lower their eye and serious ones such as *A*whoever kills a believer willfully 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 *A*Read the Holy Qur'an as much as you easily can.

Verily your Master, certainly is He the All-mighty, the All-merciful. (Holy Qur'an, 26:9)

Say thou (O Our Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household)) 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. (Holy Qur'an, 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 has raised the strivers with their wealth and selves (lives), in rank above those sitting (holding back) ; Unto all (in faith) Allah has promised good: but those who strive, He has distinguished above those who sit (holding [by]) a great recompense. (Holy Qur'an, 4:95)

Verily, thy Master 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 Holy Qur'an; Knoweth He that there may be among you sick, and others traveling 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. (Holy Qur'an, 73:20)

SERMON 2

Delivered on return from Siffin 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 shall store it facing the tribulations that overtake us because it is the foundation stone of Belief (iman) and the first step toward good actions and the Divine pleasure. It is the means to keep Satan away.

I also stand witness that Muhammed is the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Allah sent him with the illustrious religion, effective emblem, written Book,¹ effulgent light, sparkling gleam and decisive in junctions 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 desecrated, 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 flew 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 neighbors. Instead of sleep they had wakefulness and for antinomy they had tears in the eyes. They were a land where the learned were in bridle (keeping their mouths shut) while the ignorant were honored.

In the same sermon, Amir al-Mu'minin referred to Ahl al-Bayt (□) (the Household of the Holy Prophet (□)) as follows:

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

In the same sermon, he spoke about the hypocrites thus:

They sowed vices, watered them with deception and harvested destruction. Non in the Islamic community can be taken at par with the Progeny³ of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) (Ale Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household)). One who was under their obligation cannot be matched with them. They are the foundation of religion and the 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 favor exists the will and succession (of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)). This is the time when right has returned to its owner and diverted to its center of return.

1. The Preserved Record.

2. Good House means AMecca' while the bad neighbors mean the Aunbelievers of Quraish.

3. About the Progeny of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Amir al-Mu'minin has said that no person in the world can be brought at par with them, nor can anyone be deemed their equal in sublimity, because the world is over laden 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 toward 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 *umma* enjoys the right of patronage and guardianship. That is why the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) declared them his vicegerents and successors. About will and succession the commentator ibn Abul-Hadid, the Mu'tazilite scholar, 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) does not devolve on any other person. When it is agreed that learning is the most essential requirement of khalifah (caliphate) because the most important of 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 the Prophet's knowledge to suit that position.

The interpretation of ibn Abul-Hadid could be acceptable if Amir al-Mu'minin had uttered this sentence alone, but observing that it was uttered soon after Ali's (□) recognition as Caliph and just after it the sentence "The 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.

SERMON 3

Known as the ash-Shaqshaqiyya¹ sermon

Beware! By Allah, the son of Abu Quhafah (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 up to 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 this 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 a verse by al-A'sha). My days are now passed on the camel's back (in difficulty) while there were days (of ease) when I enjoyed the company of Ja bir'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 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 a length of period and stiffness of trial, until when he went his way (of death) he put the matter (of Caliphate) in a group⁴ and regarded me to be one of them. But good Heavens! What had I to do with his Aconsultation? 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 the grand-father (Umayyah) also stood up, swallowing up Allah's wealth⁵ 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 toward me from every side like the mane of the hyena so much so that Hasan and Husain 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 therein 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 if 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. (Holy 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 1st one the same treatment

as to the first one. Then you would have seen that in my view this world of yours is not 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 a writing. Amir al-Mu'minin began looking at it, where ibn AAbbas said, AO Amir al-Mu'minin, I wish you resumed your sermon from where you broke it. Thereupon he replied, AO ibn AAbbas, it was like the foam of a camel which gushed out but subsided. ibn AAbbas 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-Radhi says the following: the words in this sermon Alike the rider of a camel mean to convey that when a camel rider is stiff in drawing up therein then in this scuffle the nostril gets bruised, but if he lets it loose in spite of the camel's unruliness, it would thrown him somewhere and would get out of control. AAshnaqshaqah is used when the rider hold up therein and raises the camel's head upwards. In the same sense the word Ashanaqa an-naqah is use. Ibn as-Sikkit has mentioned this in *Islah al-Mantiq*. Amir al-Mu'minin has said Aashnaqa laha instead of Aaslaha laha and harmony could be retained only by using both in the same form. Thus, Amir al-Mu'minin has used Aashanaq laha as though in place of Ain rafa'a laha ra saha, that is, Aif he stops it by holding up thereins.

1. This sermon is known as Thesermon as ash-Shaqshaqiyya and is counted among the most famous sermons of Amir' al-Mu'minin. It was delivered at ar-Rahbah. Although some people have denied it to be Amir al-Mu'minin's utterance, and, by attributing it to Sayyid ar-Radhi (or ash-Sharif ar-Radhi), have laid blame on the integrity of his acknowledge, yet truth-loving scholars have denied its veracity. Nor can there be any ground for this denial because Ali's (□) 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 testify to 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 circumstance faced by him soon after the death of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 Thesermon to be Amir al-Mu'minin's utterance, unless the true events are analyzed 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 other historians have related similar criticism as well. Thus (Abu Othman) AAmr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz has recorded the following words of a sermon of Amir al-Mu'minin and thy are not less weighty than the criticism in the ASermon of ash-Shaqshaqiyya.

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 Sayyid ar-Radhi is far from the truth and a result of partisanship and partiality. Or else if it is theresult of some research, it should be bought 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 to be Amir al-Mu'minin's production, so that its historical importance should become known. Among these scholars, some are those before Sayyid ar-Radhi'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 Abil-Hadid al-Mu'tazili writes that his master, Abul-Khayr Masaddiq ibn Shabib al-Sasiti (d. 605 A.H) states that he heard this sermon from ash-Sheikh Abu Muhammed AAbdullah ibn Amad al-Baghdadi (d. 567 A.H.), known as Ibn al-Khashshab, and when he reached where Ibn AAbbas expressed sorrow for this sermon having remained incomplete, Ibn al-Khashshab said to him that if he had heard the expression of sorrow from ibn AAbbas, he would have certainly asked him if there had remained with his cousin any further unsatisfied desire because excepting the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , he had already spared neither the predecessors nor followers and had uttered all that he wished to utter. Therefore, why should there be any sorrow that he could not say what he wished? Musaddiq says that ibn al-Khashshab was a man of folly heart and decent taste. I inquired from him whether he also regarded this sermon to be a fabrication when he replied, ABy Allah, I believe it to be Amir al-Mu'minin's word as I believe you to Musaddiq ibn Shabib. I said that some people regard it to be Sayyid ar-Radhi's production when he replied, AWho can ar-Radhi have such guts or such style of writing. I have seen Sayyid ar-Radhi'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 Sayyid ar-Radhi, 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-Radhi, but even his father Abu Ahmed an-Naqib had not been born.

2) Thereafter ibn Abil-Hadid writes that he saw this sermon in the compilations of his master abu-l-Qasim (AAbdullah ibn Ahmed) al-Balkhi (d. 317 A.H). He was the Imam of the Mu'tazilites in the reign of al-Muqtadir-Billah while al-Muqtadir's period was far earlier than the birth of Sayyid ar-Radhi.

3) He further writes that he saw this sermon in Abu Ja'fer (Muhammed ibn Aabd ar-Rahman), Ibn Qibah's book *Al-Insaf*. He was the pupil of Abul-Qasim al-Balkhi and a theologian of the Imamiyya (Shi'ite) sect. *Sharh* of Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 1, pp. 205-206.

4) Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani (d. 679 A.H.) writes in his commentary that he had seen one such copy of this sermon which bore the writing of al-Muqtadir Billah's minister Abul BHasan Ali ibn Muhammed ibn al-Furat (d. 312 A.H.). *Sharh al-Balagha*, Vol. 11, pp. 252-253

5) Al-Aallama Muhammed Baqir al-Majlisi has related the following chain of authority about this sermon from Sheikh Qutbud-Din ar-Rawandi's compilation of *Minhaj al-Bard'ah fi Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*:

6) In the context, Aallama al-Majlisi has written that his sermon is also continued in the compilations of Abu Ali (Muhammed ibn AAbdul-Wahhab) al-Juba'i (d. 303 A.H.)

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

Al-Qadi (Judge) AAbdul-Jabbar ibn Ahmed al-Asad-Abadi (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'fer Muhammed ibn Ali, Ibn Babawayh (d. 381 A.H.) writes:

Muhammed ibn Ibrahim ibn Ishaq at-Talaqani told us that AAbdul-AAziz ibn Yahya al-Jalludi (d. 332 A.H.) told him that Abu AAbdillah Ahmed ibn AAmmar ibn Khalid told him that Yahya ibn AAbdul-Hamid al-Himmani (d. 228 A.H) told him that AIsa ibn Rashid related this sermon

from Ali (A.S) ibn Huthayfah and he from Alkrimah and he from Ibn AAbbas. (Allal ash-Shara'i', Vol. 1, pp. 122, p. 144; Ma'ani al-Akhbr, cha, p. 22, pp.360-361)

9) Then Ibn Babawayh records the following chain of authorities:

Muhammed ibn Ali Majilawayh related this sermon to us and he took it from his uncle Muhammed ibn Abul-Qasim and he form Ahmed ibn Abu AAbdillah (Muhammed ibn Khalid) al-Barqi and he from his father and he from (Muhammed) ibn Abu AUmayr and he from Aban ibn AOthman and he from Aban ibn Taghlib and he from Alkrimah and he from Ibn AAbbas. (Allal al-Shara'i', Vol. 1, cha, p. 122, p. 146; Ma'ani al-Akhbar, pp. 22, 361).

10) Abu Ahmed al-Hasan ibn AAbdillah ibnSa'id al-AAaskari (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 Allal ash-shara'i' and Ma'ani al-akhbar.

11) As-Sayyid Ni'matullah al-Jaza'iri writes:

The author of *Kitab al-Gharz*, namely AAbu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammed al-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 Shawwal 255 A.H. and in the same year, Murtada al-Musawi was born. He was older in age than his brother Sayyid ar-Radhi (*Al-Anwar an-Nu'maniyya*, p.37).

12) Sayyid Radi ad-Din AAbul-Qasim Ali ibn Musa, Ibn Tawus al-Husaini al-Hilli (d. 664 A.H.) has related this sermon from *Kitab al-Gharz* with the following chain of authorities:

This sermon was related to us by Muhammed ibn Yusuf who related it from al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn AAbdul-Karim az-Za'far Sa'id, and he form Muhammed ibn Zakariyyah al-Ghallabi and he from Ya'qub ibn Ja'fer ibn Sulayman, and he from his father and he from his grandfather and he from ibn AAbbas. (Translation of *Al-Tara'if*, p. 202)

13) Sheikh al-Ta'ifa, Muhammed ibn al-Hasan at-Tusi (d. 460 A.H.) writes:

(Abul-Fath Hilal ibn Muhammed ibn Ja'fer) al-Haffar related this sermon to us. He related it from Abul-Qasim (Isma'il ibn Ali ibn Ali (Du'bul and he from his father and he from his brother Du'bul (ibn Ali al-Khuza'i) and he from Muhammed ibn Salamah al-Shami and he from Zurarah ibn A'yan and he from AAbu Ja'fer Muhammed ibn Ali (Sheikh al-Saduq) and he from Ibn AAbbas (*Al-Amali*, p. 237).

14) Sheikh al-Mufid (Muhammed ibn Muhammed ibn an-Nu'man, (d. 413 A.H.) who was the teacher of Sayyid ar-Radhi writes about he chain of authorities of this sermon;

A number of relaters of traditions have related this sermon form ibn AAbbas through numerous chains. (*al-Irshad*, p. 135)

15) A*Alam al-Huda* (flag-posts of guidance) Sayyid al-Murtada, who was the elder brother of Sayyid ar-Radhi, has recorded it on pp. 203-204 of his book *Al-Shafi*.

16) Abu Mansur at-Tibrisi writes the following:

A number of relaters have given an account of this wermon from ibn AAbbas through various chains. Ibn AAbbas said that he was in the audience of Amir al-Mu'minin at ar-Rahba (a place in Kufa) when conversation turned to caliphate and those who had preceded him as Caliphs when Amir al-Mu'minin berated a sign and delivered this sermon. (*Al-Ihtijaj*, p. 101)

17) Abul-Muzaffar Yusuf ibn AAbdillah and Sibt ibn al-Jawzi al-Hanafii (d. 654 A.H.) write the following:

Our Sheikh Abul Qasim an-Nafis al-Anbari related this sermon to us through his chain of authorities that ends with ibn AAbbas, 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 inquired why he had remained quiet still then, whereupon Amir al-Mu'minin delivered this sermon ex-tempore. (*Tathkirat Khawass al-Umma*, p. 73)

18) Judge Ahmed ibn Muhammed, ash-Shihab al-Khafaji (d. 1069 A.H.) writes the following with regard to its authenticity:

It is stated in the utterances of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (A.S) that It is strange during his lifetime he (Abu Bakr) wanted to give up the Caliphate, but he strengthened its foundation for the other one after his death.) (*Sharh Durrat al-Ghawwas*, p. 17)

19) Sheikh Ala ad-Dawla as-Simnani writes:

The Commander of the Faithful and the Master of people of knowledge Ali (A.S) has stated in one of his brilliant sermons This is the Shaqshaqah that burst forth. (Al-Urway li ahl al-khalwa wal-jalwa, p. 3, manuscript at the Nasiriyya Library, Lucknow, India)

20) Abul-Fadl Ahmed ibn Muhammed al-Maydani (d. 518 A.H.) has written in connection with the word Shaqshaqah:

One sermon of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali is known as Khutbat ash-Shaqshaqiyya (This sermon of the camel's foam). (*Majma' al-Amthal*, Vol. 1, p 369)

21) In fifteen places in *Al-Nihaya*, while explaining the words of this sermon, Abus-Sa'ada, namely Mubarak ibn Muahmmed ibn al-Athir al-Jazri (d. 606 A.H) has acknowledged it to be Amir al-Mu'minin's utterance.

22) Sheikh Muhammed Tahir Patni, while explaining the same words in *Majma' Bihar al-Anwar*, testifies that this sermon belongs to Amir al-Mu'minin, saying, Ali (A.S) says so.

23) Abul-Fadl ibn Manzur (d. 711 A.H.) has acknowledged it as Amir al-Mu'minin's utterance in his lexicon titled *Lisan 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) Mujaddid al-Din, namely al-Firuz Abadi (d. 816/817) A.H.) has recorded under the words Shaqshaqah in his lexicon (*Al-Qamus*, Vol. 3, p. 251)

The Shaqshaqiyya sermon is by Ali (A.S) ; it is named so because when Ibn Abbas asked him to resume it where he had left it, he said, O Ibn Abbas! It was the foam of a camel that burst forth then subsided.

25) the compiler of *Muntaha al-Adab* writes the following:

The Shaqshaqiyya of Ali is attributed to Ali (Allah may honor his face).

26) ash-Sheikh Muhammed Abdoh, the *mufti* of Egypt, recognizing it as Amir al-Mu'minin's utterance, has written its explanations.

27) Muhammed Muhyi'd-Din Abdul-Hamid, professor of Arabic at Al-Azhar University, has written annotations on *Nahjul-Balagha*, 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 Sayyid ar-Radhi prepared it himself?

2. Amir al-Mu'minin has referred to Abu Bakr's accession to the caliphate metaphorically as having dressed himself with it. This was a common metaphor. Thus, when Othman 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 with the Caliphate. He knew that this dress had been stitched for this 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 AI 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 became a tumbling stone for me and I had to confine myself to seclusion. Blinding darkness prevailed all around and there was intense gloom everywhere. 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) that the assemblage in *saqifa* of Banu Sa'idah should have been considered more important than the burial of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household). If the need is recognized, the question is whether or not the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household), too, realized 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 warning about them. If it is said that he did realize it but had to leave 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 Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) hood. If there was some impediment, it should be disclosed; otherwise we should agree that just as the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 that 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 example 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 even B need on which converges the future of Islam and the good of the Muslims. Therefore, the mind is not prepared to accept this criterion. Nor is tradition in harmony with it, as judge AAdud ad-Din al-AIji has written in *Sharh al-Mawaqif*:

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. Also, in such a case, it often happens that the force of fair and foul would 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 forwards. When capabilities remain so cubed and personal ends stand in the way as hurdles, how can there be expectation for the election of the correct person. Even if it is assumed that all voters have independent, unbiased views, that no one 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 circumstance, 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) could not be free of mutual quarrel and strife, how can other 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 could 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 become 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 in which this way was adopted. If there is some other standard, then instead of judging the capabilities of the voter 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 the future. Al-Qadi Adud ad-Din al-Ajji 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 A'Omer and of A'Othman by A'Abd ar-Rahman. (*Sharh al-Mawaqif*, p. 351)

This is the account of the Aunanimous election in the Hall of Banu Sa'idah and the activity of the consultative assembly; that is, one man's action has been given the name of unanimous election and individual's deed given the name of consultative assembly. Abu Bakr had well understood this reality that election means the vote of the 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 A'Omer by nomination. A'A'isha 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 A'Omer 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 is was given up and only Amight is right became the criteria Bnamely whoever subdues others and binds them under his sway and control is accepted as the Caliph of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and his true successor. These are those self-adopted principles in the face of which all the Prophet's saying uttered in the AFeast of therelatives, on the night of hijra, at the battle Tabuk, on the occasion of conveying the Holy Qur'anic chapter ABara'a (Tawaba, Ch. 9) and at Ghadir (the swamp 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) himself, particularly when this was the only way to end all the dissensions, namely that the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) should have himself settled it and saved the community from future disturbances and spared it from leaving this decision I the hands of people who were themselves involved in personal aims and objects. This is the correct procedure which stands to reason and which also has the support of the Prophet's definite sayings.

3. Hayyan ibn as-Samin al-Hanafī of Yamama was the chief of the tribe Banu Hanifah and the master of fort and army. Jabir is the name of his younger brother while al-Asha whose real name was Maymun ibn Qays ibn Jandal enjoyed the position of being his bosom friend and led a 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 raomed 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) when he was free from all sorts of troubles and enjoyed mental peace. But taking into account he 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 AOmer 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 Ali (A.S) ibn Abu Talib, AOthman ibn AAffan, AAbd ar-Rahman ibn AAwf, az-Zubayr ibn al-AAwwam, Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas and Talhah ibn AUBaydillah. The n, he 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. Omer therefore disclosed his own view about each individual. He said that ASa'd as harsh-tempered and hot-headed; AAd ar-Rahman was the Pharaoh of the community; as-Zubayr was, if pleased, a true believer, but if displeased, an un-believer; Talhah was the embodiment of pride and haughtiness and if he was made caliph, he would put the ring of the caliphate on his wife's finger while AOthman did not see beyond his kinsmen. As regards Ali (A.S) , he is enamored of the Caliphate although I know that he alone can run it on the 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 AOthman's success were present therein. If we look at its members, we see that one of the them, namely AAbd ar-Raman ibn AAwf is the husband of AOthman's sister, next Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas besides bearing malice towards Ali (A.S) is a relative and kinsman of AAbd ar-Rahman. Neither of them can be taken to go against AUtham. The third, Talhah ibn AUbaydullah about who Professor Muhammed AAbdo writes in this annotation on Nahjul-Balagha:

Talhah was inclined towards AOthman and thereason for it was no less than that he was against Ali, because he himself was an Aat-Taymi' and Abu Bakr's accession to the caliphate had created bad blood between Banu Taym and Banu Hashim.

As regards az-Zubayr, even if he had voted for Ali what could his single vote achieve. According to al-Tabari's statement, Talhah was not present in Medina at that time, but his absence did not stand in the way of AOthman's success. Rather, even if he were present, was reached at the meeting (of the Committee), and he was taken to be Ali's supporter, still there could be no doubt in AOthman's success because AOmer's sagacious mind had set the working procedure that:

If two agree about one and the other two about another then AAbdullah bin AOmer should act as the arbitrator. The group whom he orders should choose the Caliph from among themselves. If they do not accept AAbdullah ibn AOmer's verdict, support should be given to the group which includes AAbd ar-Rahman ibn AAwf, but if the others do not agree they should be beheaded for opposing this verdict. (al-Tabari, Vol. 1 pp. 2779-2780; Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 3, p. 67).

Here, the disagreement with the verdict of AAbdullah ibn AOmer has no meaning since he was directed to support the group which included AAbd ar-Rahman ibn AAwf. He had ordered his son AAbdullah 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 AAbd ar-Rahman ibn AAwf. (al-Tabari, Vol. 1, pp. 2725, 2789; Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 3, pp. 51, 67.)

In this instruction, the agreement with the majority also means support of AAbd ar-Rahman 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 AAbd ar-Rahman's behest. Amir al-Mu'minin's eye had foreseen it at that very moment that the caliphate was going to AOthman as appears from his following words which he spoke to AAbbas ibn AAbdul-Muttalib:

AThe Caliphate has been turned away from us. Al-AAbbas asked how could he know it. Then he replied, AOthman 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 AAbd ar-Rahman ibn AAwf. Now Sa'd will support his cousin AAbd ar-Rahman who is of course, the husband of AOthman's sister (*Ibid.*).

However, after AOmer's death, this meeting took place in the room of AA'isha and on its door stood Abu Talhah al-Ansari with fifty men having drawn swords in their hands. Talhad started the proceedings and inviting all others to be witness said hat he gave his right of vote to AOthman. This touched az-Zubayr's sense of honor as his mother, Safiyya daughter of AAbdul-Muttalib, was the sister of the Prophet's father. So, he gave his right of vote to Ali. Thereafter,

Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas made his right of vote to AAbd ar-Rahman. This left three members of the consultative committee out of whom AAbd ar-Rahman said that he was willing to give up his own right of vote if Ali (A.S) and AOthman gave him the right to choose one of them or one of these two should acquire this right by withdrawing. 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 AAbd ar-Rahman to do as he wished. The first case was not possible for him; that is, to give up his own right and elect AOthman or AAbd ar-Rahman. So, he clung to his right, while AAbd ar-Rahman, separating himself from it, assumed this power and said to Amir al-Mu'minin, AI pay you allegiance on your following the Book of Allah, the *Sunna* (teachings) of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and the conduct of the two Sheikhs (Abu Bakr and AOmer). Ali (A.S) replied, ARather on following the book of Allah, the *Sunna* of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and my own findings. When AAbd ar-Rahman got the same reply even after repeating the question thrice, he turned to AOthman saying, ADo you accept these conditions? AOthman 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 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 AOthman caliph but in hope that he would give back the caliphate to you.

After recording the events of the *shura* (consultative committee), Ibn Abul-Hadid has written that when allegiance had been paid to AOthman, Ali (A.S) addressed AOthman and AAbd ar-Rahman saying, AMay Allah sow Theseed of dissension among you, and so it happened that each turned a bitter enemy of the other and AAbd ar-Rahman did not ever after speak to AOthman till death. Even on his deathbed, he turned his face on him.

On seeing these events, the question arises whether *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 Sheikhs [Abu Bakr and AOmer] for caliphate was put by AOmer or it was just a hurdle put by AAbd ar-Rahman between Ali (A.S) 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 favor and that he, himself, evaded the consultative committee and did not give them an opportunity of selecting him.

5. About thereign of the third caliph [AOthman ibn AAffan], Amir al-Mu'minin says that soon on AOthman'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 a drought trampled it away, they recklessly feel 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 the sword and made him vomit all that he had swallowed.

The mal-administration 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 proverty and surrounded by bankruptcy while control over *bayt al-mal* (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 *zakat* (poor-rate) 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 Abul-*AA*s who had been exiled from Medina by the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , was allowed back in the city, not only against the Prophet's *Sunna* (teachings) but also against the conduct of the first two Caliphs. He was paid three hundred thousand dirhams from the public fund. (*Ansab al-Ashraf*, Vol. 5, pp. 27, 28, 125)

2) Al-Walid ibn *AU*qbah, who has been named hypocrite in the Holy Qur'an, was paid one hundred thousand Dirhams from the Muslims' public fund. (al-*Aqd al-farid*, Vol. 3, p. 94)

3) the caliph married his own daughter, Umm Aban, to Marwan ibn al-Hakam and paid him one hundred thousand dirhams for the public fund. (*Sharh* of Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 1, pp. 198-199).

4) He married his daughter *AA*'isha to Harith ibn al-Hakam and granted him one hundred thousand dirhams for the public fund (*Ibid.*).

5) *AA*Abdullah ibn Khalid was paid four hundred dirhams. (*Al-Ma'arif* of Ibn Qutaybah, p. 84)

6) He allowed the *khums* (one-fifth religious tax) from Africa (amounting) to five hundred thousand dinars to Marwan ibn al-Hakam. (*Ibid.*).

7) Fadak, which was withheld from the angelic daughter of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) on the ground of being general charity, was given as a royal favor to Marwan ibn al-Hakam. (*ibid.*).

8) Mahzur, a place in the commercial area of Medina which had been declared a public trust by the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , was gifted to Harith ibn al-Hakam. (*Ibid.*).

9) In the meadows around Medina, no camel except those of Banu Umayyah were allowed to graze. (*Sharh* of Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 1, p. 199)

10) After his Othman's death, 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 land estate he owned in Wadi al-Qura and Hunain was one hundred thousand dinars. There were countless camels and horses. (*Muruj al-Thahab*, Vol. 1, p.435)

11) the Caliph's relatives ruled all the principal cities. Thus, at Kufa, al-Walid ibn *AU*qbah was the governor, but when in the state of intoxication of wine, he led the morning prayer in four instead of two rak'ah. People were agitated and demanded his removal, but the Caliph put in his place a hypocrite like Sa'id ibn al-*As*. In Egypt, *AA*Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Abu Sarh, in Syria Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan and in Basra, *AA*Abdullah ibn *AA*mir were the governors appointed by him (*ibid.*).

SERMON 4

Amir Al-mu'minin's Far-Sightedness and Staunch Conviction

Through us you got guidance in the darkness and secured a 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 Holy Qur'an and the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) 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 the 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 were 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 musing, 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 was 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 falsehood. The one who is sure of getting water feels no thirst.

1. The reference refers to 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 Holy 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 meaning that the people should not be caught in the trap of these (Talhah, az-Zubayr, etc.) and fall into misguidance by getting astray from the true faith. Otherwise, he himself never feared for his own life.

SERMON 5

Delivered when the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) died and AAbbas ibn AAbdul-Muttalib and Abu Sufyan ibn Harb offered to swear allegiance to Amir al-Mu'minin as the Caliph

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 gowns 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 Allah, the son of Abu Talib ² is more familiar with death than an infant with the breast of its mother. I have hidden knowledge; if I disclose it you will start trembling like ropes in deep wells.

1. When the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) died, Abu Sufyan 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 the 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 AAbbas ibn AAbdul-Muttalib with a proposal. He said to him, ALook, these people have by contrivance made over the Caliphate to the Taym and deprived Banu Hashim of it for good. And, after himself, this man would place over our heads a haughty man of Banu AAdi. Let us go to Ali bin Abu Talib (A.S) and ask him to get out of his house and take arms to secure his right. So, taking AAbbas with him, he came to Ali and said: AGive me your hand. I pay allegiance to you and if anyone rises in opposition, I will 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) while a man with the backing of his tribe and part 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 judgment saved the Muslims from civil war as his piercing eyes perceived that this man wanted to start a civil war by rousing the passions of tribal partisanship and distinction of birth so that Islam would be struck with a convulsion that would shake it to its roots. Amir al-Mu'minin therefore rejected his counsel and admonished him several and spoke forth the words, whereby he had stopped people from mischief mongering and undue conceit. He declared his stand to be, for him, there were only two courses either to take up arms or to sit quietly at home. If he rose for war, there were no supporters so that he could suppress these rising insurgences. The only course left was to quietly wait for the opportunity until circumstances were favorable.

Amir al-Mu'minin's quietness at this stage was indicative of his high policy and far-sightedness, because if in those circumstances Medina had become the center of war, its fire would have engulfed the whole of Arabia in its flames. The discord and scuffle that had already begun among the *muhajirun* and the *ansar* would have increased to maximum, the wire-pulling 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) suffered all sorts of troubles but he was not prepared to clash or struggle by abandoning patience and endurance because he realized 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 al-Mu'minin, treating the life of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) as a torch for his guidance, refrained from exhibiting the power of his arm because he was realizing that rising against the enemy without helpers and supporter would become a source of revolt and defeat instead of success and victory. Therefore, on this occasion, Amir al-Mu'minin 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 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; Alif 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 the 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 a battlefield for my 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 sort 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 axiom says the following: *A Silence has meaning which cannot be couched in words.*

2. About the 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 to even 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 toward this goal, their love for death increases to such an extent that its rigors 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 Muljim's fatal attack, he said, Alif 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) also said that there is no pleasure for a believer other than union with Allah.

SERMON 6

Delivered on being advised not to chase Talhah ibn AUbaydillah and az-Zubayr ibn al-AAwwam for fighting.¹

By Allah, I shall not be like the badger, which feigns sleep on the 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 toward it, and the sinner 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) died until today.

1. When Amir al-Mu'minin showed intention to chase Talhah 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: AHow long can I be mere spectator to my right being snatched and keep quiet. Now, so long as I have the breath of life, I shall fight them and make them suffer the consequences of their conduct. They should not think that I can be easy over-powered like the badger.

Its nickname is Umm AAmir and Umm Tarrayq. It is also called Athe glutton, because it swallows everything and eats up whatever it gets as if several bellies were contained in one and it does not have its fill. It is also called Na'thal. It is a very simply 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, ABow your head Umm Turrayq, conceal yourself Umm AAmir. On repeating this sentence and patting the ground, ti conceals itself in a corner of the den. The n, the hunter says, AUmm AAmir 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.

SERMON 7

About the hypocrites

They¹ have made Stan 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 the 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 restrain on them, nor restriction of any kind. He has permeated their blood and mingled their spirit so that both have become completely unified. Now, the eyes are theirs but the sight is his, the tongue is theirs but he words are his and the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) has said, AVerily, Stan permeates the progeny of Adam like blood. That is, just as the circulation of blood does not stop, the same way , the quick succession of Satan's evil ideas knows no break and he draws man toward evil in sleep in 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 after the advancement of heresy.

SERMON 8

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. In regards to his claiming it with his heart he should come forward with a clear argument for it. Otherwise, he should return to wherefrom he has gone out²

1. After swearing allegiance on the hand of Amir al-Mu'minin, az-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam 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 to 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. If az-Zubayr suspected that A'Uthman was slain at Amir al-mu'min's insistence, this suspicion should have existed when he was taking the 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.

2. Amir al-Mu'minin has rejected his claim in short form. Thus, 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.

SERMON 9

Cowardice of the people of the Battle of the Jamal (Camel)

They¹ 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 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 that and now they showed such cowardice as to flee from the battlefield. About himself, Amir al-Mu'minin says, AWe do not threaten the enemy before battle, nor utter boasts, nor terrorize 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, ABeware of excessive talk as it is cowardice.

SERMON 10

About Talhah and az-Zubayr

Beware! Satan has collected his group and assembled his horsemen 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 Basra in the company of AA'isha, Amir al-Mu'minin spoke in these words which are part of the long speech.

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

SERMON 11

Delivered during the Battle of Jamal when Amir al-Mu'minin gave the standard to his son Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya¹

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 theremotest foe and close your eyes (to their numerical majority). And be sure that succor is but from Allah, the Glorified.

1. Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya was Amir al-Mu'minin's son but called Ibn Hanafiyya after his mother. His mother's name was Khawla daughter of Ja'fer. She was known as Hanafiyya after her tribe Banu Hanifah. When people of Yamama were declared apostates for refusing to pay *zakat* (religious tax) and were killed and the women 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 honor and prestige. Consequently, Amir al-Mu'minin purchased her, set her free and married her where after, Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) was born.

Most historians have written his surname as Abul-Qasim. Thus, the author of al-Isti'ab (Vol. 3. pp. 1366-1368, 1370-1372) has narrated the opinion of Abu Rashid ibn Hafs az-Zuhri that from among the sons of the companions (of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) he came across four individuals everyone of whom was named Muhammed and surnamed Abul-Qasim, namely (1) Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya, (2) Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr (3) Muhammed ibn Talhah and (4) Muhammed ibn Sa'd. After this he writes that Muhammed ibn Talhah's name and surname were given by the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Al-Waqidi writes that the name of surname of Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr was suggested by AA'isha. Apparently the Holy Prophet's giving the name of Muhammed ibn Talhah seems incorrect since from some traditions it appears that the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had reserved it for a son of Amir al-Mu'minin and he was Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya.

As regards his surname it is said that the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had particularized 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had given this very name and surname to anyone else since particularization means that no one else would share it. Moreover, some people have recorded the surname of ibn Talhah as Abu Sulayman instead of Abul-Qasim and this further confirms our viewpoint. Similarly, if the surname of Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr was on the ground that his son's name was Qasim, who was among the theologians of Medians, then what is Thesense in AA'isha having suggested it. If she had suggested it along with the name, how could Muhammed 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 AAbd ar-Rahman, which weakens the view of Abu Rashid.

Let alone these people's surname being Abul-Qasim, even for ibn al-Hanafiyya this surname is not proved. Although ibn Khallikan (in *Wafiyyat al-A'yan*, Vol. 4, p. 170) has taken that some of Amir al-Mu'minin for whom the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had particularized this surname to be Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya, yet'allama al-Mamaqani (in *Tanqih al-Maqal*, Vol. 3, Part 1, p. 112) writes:

In applying this tradition to Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya, Ibn Khallikan 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , and which is not permissible to be given to any one else, is to the awaited last Imam (may our lives be his ransom), and not to Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya, nor is the surname Abul-Qasim established for him, rather some of the Sunnis being ignorant of the real intention of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , have taken to mean Ibn al-Hanafiyya.

However, Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya 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 Battle of Jamal and Siffin had created such impression among the Arabs that even warriors of consequence trembled at this name. Amir al-Mu'minin too was proud of his courage and valor and always placed him forward in encounters. Sheikh al-Baha'i has written in al-Kashkul that Ali ibn Abu Talib kept him abreast in the battles and did not allow Hasan and Husain to go ahead and used to say, AHe is my son while these two are sons of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah. When a Kharijite said to ibn al-Hanafiyya that Ali thrust him into the flames of war but saved away Hasan and Husain (□), he replied that he himself was like the right hand and Hasan and Husain (□) like Ali's two eyes and that Ali protected his eyes with his right hand. But Aallama al-Mamaqani has written in *Tanqih al-Maqal* that his was not there reply of Ibn al-Hanafiyya, but of Amir al-Mu'minin himself. When during the battle of Siffin Muhammed mentioned this matter to Amir al-Mu'minin in a complaining tone, he replied, AYou 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 Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya and he must have repeated the same reply as there could not be a 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 Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) al-Hanafiyya. 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 AAbdul-Malik ibn Marwan 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 Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya to the battle field, he told him that he should fix himself before the enemy like the mountain of determination and resolution so that the onslaught of the army should not be able to displace him and he should charge the enemy with closed teeth because by pressing the 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, APress together your teeth. It sends amiss the edge of the sword.

Then he says, AMy 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, otherwise also if your mind clings to life, you will hesitate to advance toward deathly encounters and that would fall 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 valor and courage would suffer. This sentence can also mean that one should open the eyes wide to be dazzled by the shining of weapons and the enemy may make an attack by taking advantage of the situation. Also, always bear in mind that victory is from Allah. AIf Allah helps you no one can overpower you. Therefore, instead of relying on material means, seek His support and succor.

Remember O ye Believers!) If Allah helps you, none shall overcome youY. (Holy Qur'an, 3:159)

SERMON 12

When Allah gave him (Amir al-Mu'minin) victory over the enemy at the Battle of Jamal one of his comrades aid on that occasion, AI wish my brother so and so had been present and he too would have seen what success and victory Allah had given you, A

whereupon Amir al-Mu'minin said:

ADid you brother hold me as a friend? The comrade said, AYes. 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 Allah would not deprive him of thereward 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 the 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 to in this sermon, namely that AIf you brother loved me he would share thereward with those who secured martyrdom for our support.

SERMON 13

Condemning the people of Basra¹

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 everyone 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 the 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 the mosque appearing like the bosom of a bird in the 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 Basra. After finished it he 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 Basra and they slyness, namely that they got inflamed at others' instigation without anyone 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 being double-faced. In this sermon, the woman implies AA'isha and the quadruped implies the camel (Jamal) after which this battle has been named the ABattle of the Jamal. This battle originated in this way. During the lifetime of Othman, AA'isha 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 toward Medina, she heard from Abdullah ibn Salamah that AOthman's allegiance had been paid to Ali (as Caliph) she suddenly exclaimed, AIf 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, ABy Allah, AOthman has been helplessly killed. I shall certainly avenge his blood. On seeing this wide change in the state of affairs, Abu Salamah said, AWhat are you saying as you yourself used to say AKill this Na'thal; he had turned unbeliever. Thereupon, she replied, ANot only I but everyone used to say so; but leave these things and listen to 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 thereal killer is the one who ordered it. Nevertheless, neither the sky fell over us nor did the sun and moon fall 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, subdues his 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 AOthman's blood by circulating stories of his having been victimized. The first to respond to this call was AAbdullah ibn AAmir al-Hadrami, who had been the governor of Mecca in AOthman's reign and with him Marwan ibn al-Hakam, Sa'id ibn al-As and other

Umayyads rose to support her. On the other side, Talhah ibn A'Ubaydillah and az-Zubayr ibn al-AAwwam also reached Mecca from Medina. From Yemen Ya'la ibn Munabbih who had been governor there during AOthman's caliphate and the former governor of Basra, A'Abdullah ibn A'Amir ibn Kurayz also reached there and joining together began preparing their plans. The battle had been decided upon but the discussion was about the venue of confrontation. AA'isha'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 Basra as there was no dearth of men to support the cause. Consequently on the strength of A'Abdullah ibn A'Amir's countless wealth and the offer of six hundred thousand Dirhams and six hundred camels by Ya'la ibn Munabbih they prepared an army of three thousand and set off to Basra. There was a small incident on the way of account of which AA'isha 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, AI wish I could know at which of you the dogs of Haw'ab would bark. So when she realized that she herself was the 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. A'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 of the people were on one side, what could a single woman do by opposing. Eventually they were successful and AA'isha resumed her forward march with the same enthusiasm.

When this army reached Basra, people were first amazed to see the riding animal of AA'isha. Jariyah ibn Qudamah came forward and said, AO, Mother of the faithful, the assassination of AOthman was one tragedy but the greater tragedy is that you have come out on this cursed camel and ruined your honor and esteem. It is better that you should get back. But since neither the incident at Haw'ab could deter her nor could the Holy Qur'anic injunction: A'Keep sitting in your houses (33:33) stop her, what effect could these voices produce. Consequently, she disregarded all of this.

When the army tried to enter the city, the governor of Basra AOthman 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, AA'isha intervened on the basis of her influence and the two groups agreed that until the arrival of Amir al-Mu'minin, the existing administration should continue and AOthman ibn Hunayf should continue on his post. But only two days had elapsed when they made a nightly attack on AOthman ibn Hunayf, killed forty innocent persons, beat AOthman ibn Hunayf, plucked every hair of his beard, took him in their custody and shut him up. Then they attacked the 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 Basra, Hukaym ibn Jabalah, could not control himself and reaching there with his men said to A'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr, ASpare 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 around and put AOthman ibn Hunayf in confinement. For Allah's sake, keep off these ruining activities and release AOthman ibn Hunayf. Is there no fear of Allah in your hearts? ibn az-Zubayr said, A'This is vengeance of AOthman's life. Hukaym ibn Jabalah retorted, AWere those who have been killed assassins of

Uthman? By Allah, 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 Uthman 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 the Hukaym ibn Jabalah, his son al-Ashraf ibn Hukaym ibn Jabalah, his brother al-Ri' l ibn Jabalah and seventy persons of his tribe were killed. In short, killing and looting prevailed all around. Neither anyone's life was secure nor was there any way to save one's honor or property.

When Amir al-Mu'minin was informed of the march to Basra, 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 honor of being present at the Allegiance of Ridwan (The Divine Pleasure). When he stopped at the stage of Khaqar, he sent his son Hasan (ؓ) and al-'Ammar ibn Yasir to Kufa to invite its people to fighting. Consequently, despite interference of Abu Musa 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 his force reached near Basra first of all a contingent of Ansar appeared foremost. Its standard was held by Abu Ayyub al-Ansari. After it appeared, another contingent of 1000 whose commander was Khuzaymah ibn Thabit al-Ansari. Then another contingent came in sight. Its standard was borne by Abu Qatadah ibn ar-Rabi'. Then a crowd of a thousand old and young persons was seen. They had signs of prostration on their foreheads and veils of fear of Allah on their face. It seemed as if they were standing before the Divine Glory of the Day of Judgment. Their commander rode a dark horse, was dressed in white, had a black turban on his head and was reciting the Holy Qur'an loudly. This was al-'Ammar ibn Yasir. Then another contingent appeared. Its standard was in the hand of Qays ibn Sa'd ibn al-'Abadah. 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 centered around him. This was al-'Abdullah ibn al-'Abbas. Then followed a contingent of the companions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household). Their standard bearer was Uthman 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 colors were flying. Among them, a big and lofty standard was seen with a distinctive position. Behind it was seen a rider guarded by sublimity and greatness. His sinews were well-developed and his eyes were cast downwards. His awe and dignity was such that no one could look at him. This was the ever victorious Lion of Allah namely Ali, Ibn Abu Talib (A.S). On his right and left were Hasan and Husain (peace be upon them). In front of him Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya walked in slow steps carrying the banner of victory and glory and on the back were young men of Banu Hashim, the people of Badr and al-'Abdullah ibn Ja'fer ibn Abu Talib. When this army reached the place az-Zawiyah, Amir al-Mu'minin alighted from the horse. After performing a four *rak'at* prayer, he put his cheeks on the ground. When he lifted his head, the ground was drenched with tears and his tongue was uttering these words:

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

Then proceeding forward he got down in the battlefield 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 al-'A'isha by swearing in the name of Allah and His Prophet

(P.B.U.H. and His Household) whether I am not free from the blame of A'Othman's blood and whether I used the same words for him which you used to say and whether I pressed you for allegiance or you swore it of your own free will. Talhah got exasperated at these words but az-Zubayr relented. Amir al-Mu'minin turned back after it and giving the Holy Qur'an to Muslim (a young man from the tribe of A'Abd Qays sent him toward them to pronounce to them the verdict of the Holy Qur'an. But people took both of them within aim and covered this godly man with their arrows. Then A'Ammar ibn Yasir went to canvass and convince them and caution them with the consequences of war but his words were also replied by arrows. Until 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, AO 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 armor or any arm and shouted, AWhere is az-Zubayr? At first az-Zubayr hesitated to come forward but he noticed that Amir al-Mu'minin had no arms so he came out. Amir al-Mu'minin said to him AO az-Zubayr, you must remember that one day the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 AWhy 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, AWell now you have recollected it and he replied, AYes. Saying this he went straight to AA'isha and told her that he was leaving. She asked him thereason and he replied, AAli has reminded me a forgotten matter. I had gone astray, but now I have come on the right path and would not fight Ali ibn Abu Talib at any cost. AA'isha said AYou have caught the fear of the swords of the sons of A'Abdul-Muttalib. He said, ANo and saying this he turned thereins 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 a transient effect was taken of it. On returning after this conversation, Amir al-Mu'minin observed that they had attacked the right and left flanks of his army. Noticing this, Amir al-Mu'minin said, ANow the plea has been exhausted. Call my son Muhammed. When he came Amir al-Mu'minin said, AMy son, attack them now. Muhammed bowed his head and taking the standard proceeded to the battlefield. But arrows were falling in such exuberance that he had to sto, p. When Amir al-Mu'minin saw this, he called out at him, Muhammed, why don't you advance? He said, AFather, in this shower of arrows there is not way to proceed. Wait till the violence of arrows subsides. He said, ANo, thrust yourself in the arrows and spears and attack. Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya 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 said, AThis is the affect of your mother's veins. Saying this he took the standard from his hands and folded up his sleeves and made such an attack that a tumult was created in the enemy' ranks from one end to the other. To which ever 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 and said to Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya, ALook, my son, battle is fought like this. Saying this, he gave the

standard to him and ordered him to proceed. Muhammed advanced toward 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 made the battlefield glory and left heaps of dead bodies.

From the other side, there was a full demonstration of the 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 therein of the camel and bosoms were being pierced yet they had the following battle song on their tongues:

To us, death is sweeter than honey. We are Banu Dabbah, camel rearers. We are sons of death when death comes. We announce the death of A Othman with the edges of spears. Give us back our chief and there is an end to it.

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

Our mother pushed us into the deep waters of death and did not get back till we had thoroughly drunk.

By misfortune, we obeyed. Banu Taym are none but slave men and slave girls.

AI told him it was not the time to recite verses; he should rather recall Allah and recite the *kalima (shahada)* (verse of testimony). On my saying this he gave me an angry look and uttering a sever abuse said, AYou are asking me to recite the *kalima*, 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 returned he said, AWait, for your sake I am prepared to recite, but teach me. I drew close to teach him the *kalima* 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 to 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 AUmayr ibn al-Ahlab ad-Dabbi who had been deceived by a woman aspiring to become the commander of the faithful (head of state).

However, when the dazzling lightning of swords finished the lives of thousand of persons and hundreds of Banu Azd and Banu Dabbah were killed for holding therein of the camel. Amir al-Mu'minin ordered, AKill the camel for it is Satan. Saying this he made such a severe attack that the cries of APeace' and AProtection' rose from all around. When he reached near the camel he ordered Bujayr ibn Buljah to kill the camel at once. Consequently, Bujayr hit him with such 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 AA'isha was left lonely and unguarded. The companions of Amir la-Mu'minin took control of the carrier and under orders of Amir al-Mu'minin, Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr escorted AA'isha to the house of Safiyya daughter of al-Harith.

This encounter commenced on the 10th of Jumada ath-thaniyah, 36 A.H. in the afternoon and came to and 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 AA'isha's army of thirty thousand, seventeen thousand persons were killed and the Prophet's saying, AThat people who assigned their affairs (of state) to a woman would never prosper was fully corroborated. (*Al-Imama wal-Siyasa; Muruj al-Thahab; al-AIqd al-Farid; al-Tabari's Tarikh*).

2. Ibn Abul-Hadid has written that as prophesied by Amir al-Mu'minin, Basra got under the floods twiceConce in the days of al-Qadir Billah and once in thereign of al-Qa'im bi Amri'l-lah and the state of flooding was such that the whole city was under water but the top ends of the mosque were seen about in the surface of the water and looked like a bird witting on the side of its bosom.

SERMON 14

This also is in condemnation of the people of Basra

Your earth is close to Thesea 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.

SERMON 15

After resuming the land grants made my AOthman ibn AAffan, 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 a wide scope in dispensation of justice and he who find it hard to act justly should find it harder to deal with injustice.

SERMON 16

Delivered when allegiance was sworn to him at Medina

Theresponsibility 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 people) is prevented by piety from falling into doubts. You should know that the same troubles have returned to you which existed when the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was first sent.

By Allah Who sent the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) with faith and truth, you will be severely subverted, bitterly shaken s 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 thereins in the 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-Radhi says the following: In the small speech there is more beauty than can be appreciated and the quantity of amazement aroused by it is more than the appreciate accorded to it. Despite what we have stated, it has so many aspects of eloquence that cannot be expressed not can anyone reach its depth. And, no one can understand what I am saying unless one has attained this art and known its details.

Y.No one appreciates it except those who know (Holy 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 Theseeker who is slow may also entertain hope. And he who falls short of actions faces destruction in Hell. On the right and left there are misleading paths, only the middle way if the (right) path which is the Everlasting book and the traditions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . From it, the Sunna has spread out and toward it is the eventual return. He who claims (otherwise) is ruined and he who concocts falsehood is disappointed. He who opposes¹ the 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 the people based on piety never remains without water. Hide yourselves in your houses and reform yourselves. Repentance is at your back. One should praise only Allah and condemn only his own self.

1. In some versions after the words Aman abda safhatahu lilhaqqi halaka the words Ainda jahalatu'n-nas also occur. In tat case, the meaning of this sentence would be that he who stands in the 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 Gory, as an effect of which the spirit of man becomes full of the fear of Allah and its inevitable result is that engrossment in worship and prayers increases. It is impossible that the heart may be full of the 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 Holy Qur'an, Ataqwa (piety) has been applied sometimes to fear, in the verse, Aittaqu'l-laha haqqa tuqatihi (worship Allah as he ought to be worshipped (3:102). Taqwa implies worship and devotion and in the verse Awa yakhsha'l-laha wa yattaqhi faullaika humu'l faizun (24:52) taqwa implies purity of spirit and cleanliness of heart.

In the traditions, taqwa 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 recommended 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 permissible as well. The first degree is for the common men, The second for the nobles and the third for the high dignitaries. Allah has referred to these three degrees in the following verse:

On those who believe and do good, is not 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 loves the doers of good. (Holy 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 the following:

Is he therefore better who has laid his foundation on fear of Allah and (His) goodwill or he who layeth his foundation on the brink of a crumbling bank so it broke down with him into the fire of helly(Holy 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.

SERMON 17

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

Among¹ 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 toward the wrong path. He is therefore a nuisance for those who are enamored of him, is himself misled from the guidance of those enamored 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 a shabby argument about it of his own accord and passes judgment 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 erres, 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 does not try to find thereality 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 he fit of the position assigned to him. Whatever he does not know he does not regard it worth knowing. He does not realize that what is beyond his reach is within thereach 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 Holy Qur'an if it is recited as it should be recited, nor anything more valuable than the Holy Qur'an if its verses are removed from their places, nor anything more vicious than virtue nor more virtuous than vice.

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 Holy Qur'an and *Sunna* and pronounce injunctions through their imagination. They create a circle of their devotees and popularize thereligious code of law concocted by themselves. The misguidance and wrongfulness of such persons does not remain confined to their own selves but Theseed of misguidance sown by them bears fruit and, growing into the form of a big tree, provides an asylum to the misguided. This misguidance goes on multiplying. And since these very people are thereal originators, the weight of other's sins is also on their shoulders as the Holy Qur'an says the following:

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

SERMON 18

Amir al-Mu'minin said in disparagement of the differences of views among the theologians.

When¹ a problem is put before anyone of them he passes judgment 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is one (and the same), their Book (the Holy 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 (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 as to agree? Or is it that Allah the Glorified sent a perfect faith but the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) fell short of conveying it and handing it over (to the people) ? the fact is that Allah the Glorified says the following:

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

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

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

Certainly, the outside of the Holy Qur'an is wonderful and its inside is deep (in meaning). Its wonders will never disappear, its amazing things 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 Abul-Hasan al-Ash'ari and his master Abu Ali al-Jubba'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 is prohibited, its use would be prohibited while for the other its use would be permissible. About this (theory of) correctness, Muhammed ibn Abdi'l-Karim al-Shahristani writes:

A group of theorists hold that in matters where *ijtihad* (research) is applied there is no settled view about permissibility or otherwise and lawfulness and prohibition thereof, but whatever the *mujtahid* (the researcher scholar) hold 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 Nihal*, 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 not 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 Imamiyyah sect, however, has a 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 a difference of views has He ordained numerous real orders. Of course, if the *mujtahid* cannot

arrive at a real order than whatever view he takes after research and probing is enough for him and his followers to act by. Such an order is the apparent order which is a substitute for thereal order. In this case, he is excused for missing thereal 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 go only Theseashell. He dos not say that observers should except it as a pearl or it should see as such. It is a different matter that Allah, who watches the endeavors, may price it at half so that the endeavor does not go to 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 Maybudhi has written in *fatwa*:

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 mistakes of decision by the mujtahid cannot be imagined at all. If the theory of correctness is right, the action of Mu'awiyah and AA'isha should be deemed right; but if their actions can be deemed to be wrong then we should agree that ijihad 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 AA'isha 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 nor 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 orders represent the 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, the Book (Holy Qur'an) is one and the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is one, then thereligion (that is followed) should also be one. And when thereligion 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 willfully desires entanglement in these labyrinths while Allah and the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 favor, where is that order and at what place? As for forbidding, the Holy Qur'an says the following:

Y.Say thou! AHath Allah permitted you or ye forge a lie against Allah? (Holy Qur'an 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 the following:

And utter ye not whatever lie describes your tongues (saying) : This is lawful and this is forbidden, to forge a lie against Allah; verily, those who forge a lie against Allah do not succeed. (Holy 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 completely 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and a bad slur of the selection of Allah.

4) Allah has said in the Holy 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 Holy Qur'an it would be outside the religious code and its basis would not be on knowledge and perception, or the Holy Qur'an and Sunna, but it would be a personal opinion and one's personal judgment which cannot be deemed to have accord with religion and faith.

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

SERMON 19

Amir al-Mu'minin delivering a lecture from the pulpit of (the mosque of) Kufa when al-Ash'ath ibn Qays¹ objected and said, O Amir al-Mu'minin, this thing is not in your favor 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 other 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-Radhi says the following: This man was arrested once when an unbeliever and once in the days of Islam. AS for Amir al-Mu'minin's words that the man contrived for his own people to be put to the sword, the reference herein is to the incident which occurred to al-Ash'ath ibn Qays in confrontation with Khalid ibn al-Walid at Yamama, where he deceived his people and contrived a trick until Khalid attacked them. After this incident his people nicknamed him A Urfan-Nar which in the parlance, stood for traitor.

AL-ASH'ATH IBN QAYS AL-KINDI

1. His original name was Ma'di Karb and surname Abu Muhammed, but because of his disheveled hair, he is better known as al-Ash'ath (one having disheveled hair). When after the proclamation (of Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) hood), he came to Mecca along with his tribe, the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) invited him and his tribe to accept Islam. When after the hijra (immigration of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) 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'ab* writes that after the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , this man again turned unbeliever but when the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, he was brought to Medina as a prisoner, he

again accepted Islam, though this time too, his Islam was a show. Thus, Sheikh Muhammed AAbdo writes in his annotations on *Nahj al-Balagha*:

Just as AAbdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Sallul was a companion of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , al-Ash'ath was a companion of Ali and both were high-ranking hypocrites.

He lost 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 ibn Abu Quhafah, who was once the wife of an al-Azdi and then of Tamim ad-Darimi, was on the third occasion married to this al-Ash'ath. Three sons were born of her viz. Muhammed, Isma'il and Ishaq. Books on biography show that she was blind. Ibn Abul-Hadid has quoted the following statement of Abul-Faraj wherefrom it appears that this man was equally involved in the assassination of Ali (A.S) :

On the night of the assassination, Ibn Muljim came to al-Ash'ath ibn Qays and both retired to a corner of the mosque and sat there when Hijr ibn AAdi passed by that side and he heard al-Ash'ath saying to ibn Muljim, ABe quick now of else dawn's light would disgrace you. On hearing this, Hijr said to al-al-Ash'ath, AO one-eyed man! You are getting ready to kill Ali and hastened toward Ali ibn Abu Talib. But, Ibn Muljim had preceded him and struck Ali with a sword. When Hijr turned back, people were crying, Ali (A.S) has been killed.

It was his daughter who killed Imam Hasan (□) by poisoning him. Mas'udi has written that:

His (Hasan's) wife Ja'dah daughter of 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. (*Muraj al-Thahab*, Vol. 2, p. 650)

His son Muhammed ibn al-Ash'ath was active in playing fraud with Hadrath Muslim bin AAqil in Kufa and in shedding Imam Husain's blood in Kerbala'. But despite all these points, he is among those from whom al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, al-Tirmithi, al-Nisa'i and ibn Majah have related traditions.

2. After the battle of Nahrawan, Amir al-Mu'minin was delivering a sermon in the mosque of Kufa about the ill effects of AArbitration when a man stood up and said, AO Amir alO-mu'min, 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, AThis is thereward of one who gives up a firm view that is, this is the outcome of your own actions as you had abandoned firmness and caution and insisted on Aarbitration, but al-Ash'ath mistook it to mean as though Amir al-Mu'minin implied that Amy worry was due to having accepted arbitration, so he spoke out, AO Amir al-Mu'minin, this bring 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. The 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 as been called a Aweaver. Yemanese had other occupations also but mostly this profession was followed among them. Describing their occupations, Khalid ibn Safwan 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-Bayan wa't-tabyin, Vol. 1, p. 130)

The second reason is that Ahiyakah 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 this body, he has been called Ahayik.

The third reason isCand it is more conspicuous and clearCthat 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 it is meant the person who conspired against Allah and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and prepared webs of which is the peculiarity of hypocrites. Thus, in Wasa'il ash-Shi'a (Vol. 12, p. 101) it is stated:

It was mentioned before Imam Ja'fer as-Sadiq (ؑ) that the weaver is accursed when he explained that the weaver implies the person who concocts against Allah and the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household).

After the word weaver, Amir al-Mu'minin has used the word hypocrite and there is no conjunction in between them in order to emphasize the nearness of meaning thereof. The n, 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 the following:

Verily, those that conceal what we have sent of (Our) manifest evidences and guidance, after what we have (so) clearly shown for mankind in the Book, are those that Allah curses and are (also) cursed by all those who curse (Holy Qur'an, 2:159).

After this, Amir al-Mu'minin said AYou could not avoid the degradation 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 Murad killed his father Qays, he (al-Ash'ath) collected the warriors of Banu Kindah and divided them into three groups. He himself took the command over one group and on the others, he placed Kab ibn Hani' and al-Qash'am ibn Yazid al-Arqam as chiefs. They 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 Kab ibn Hani' and al-Qash'am ibn Yazid al-Arqam were killed and this man was taken prisoner alive. Eventually, he got a release by paying three thousand camels a ransom. In Amir al-Mu'minin's words, AYour wealth or birth could not save you from either, the reference is not to real Afidyah' (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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 Ziyad ibn Labid went to the tribe of Banu AAmr ibn Mu'awiyah for collection of *zakat* he took a keen fancy for a she-camel of Shaytan ibn Hijr which was very handsome had a huge body. He jumped over it and took possession of it. Shaytan ibn Hijr 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. Shaytan sent for his brother al-AAdda' ibn Hijr for his support. On coming he too had a talk but Ziyad insisted on this 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 Satan. On this, Ziyad was infuriated and collecting his men became ready to fight. On the other side, Banu Wali'ah also assembled to face the 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 solemnized. 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 Abu 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-Zurqan. In the end al-Ash'ath fled from the battle-field and taking his remaining men closed himself in the fort of an-Najjar. 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 the 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, but acting on his traditional wisdom forgot to write his own name in that list. After settling this, he told his people that he had secured protection for them and the gate of the fort should be opened. When the gate was opened Ziyad's 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 the hands of several women were hopped off, while according to the settlement, nine men were left, but the case of al-Ash'ath became complicated. Eventually, it was decided that he should be sent to Abu Bakr and he should decide 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 the one who got his own people put to sword. Who else can be a great traitor? However, when he reached Medina, Abu Bakr released him and on that occasion, he was married to Umm Farwah.

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 the message from Allah. (So what I am conveying is from Allah).

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 preceded).

As-Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: If this utterance of Ali (A.S) is weighed with any other utterance except the words of Allah or of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , it would prove heavier and superior in every respect. For example, Ali's saying Akeep light and overtake is the shortest expression every heard with the greatest sense conveyed by it. How wide is its meaning and how clear is its spring of wisdom! We have pointed out the greatness and meaningfulness of this phrase in our book *Al-Khasa'is*.

SERMON 22

About those who accused him of AOthman'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 consequences. 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 thereasoning 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 of a cure of wrong and supporter of right.

It is strange that 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 as 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 AOthman's assassination, he delivered this sermon to refute that allegation, wherein he says about those who blamed him that: AThese 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 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 (AOthman'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-AAwwam and AA'isha are at the top of the list since on both occasions their efforts come to sigh with conspiracy. Thus ibn Abul-Hadid writes that:

Those who have written the account of the assassination of A'Othman state that one 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 A'Othman's house.

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

Historians have also stated that az-Zubayr used to say AKill A'Othman. He has altered your faith. People said, AYour son is standing at his door and guarding him and he replied, AEven my son may be lost, but A'Othman must be killed. A'Othman will be lying like a carcass on Sirat tomorrow. (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 9, pp. 35-36)

About AA'isha, Ibn A'Abd Rabbih writes:

Mughirah ibn Shu'bah came to AA'isha when she said, AO Abu A'Abdullah, I wish you have 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, AI wish one of them should have killed you. She said, AAllah may have pity on you; why so? He replied, ASo that it would have been some atonement for what you had done against A'Othman. (*Al-Alqd al-Farid*, Vol. 4, p. 294)

SERMON 23

About keeping aloof from envy and good behavior toward kith and kin

Now then, verily the 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 a cal 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 deeds are 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 be 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 there 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 same 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-Radhi says the following: In this sermon Aal-ghafirah means plenty or abundance and this is derived from the Arab saying, Aal-jamma al-ghafir or Aal-jamma' al-ghafir meaning thick crowd. In some versions for AAAl-Ghafirah Aafwatan appears. Aafwah means the

good and selected part of anything. It is said Aakaltu Aafwata't-ta'am, to mean AI ate a select meal. About Awa man yaqbid yadahu Aan'ashiratihi 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 succor of so many of their extending hands and marching feet.

SERMON 25

When Amir al-Mu'minin received successive news that Mu'awiyah's men were occupying cities,¹ and his own officers in Yemen namely AUBaydullah ibn AAbbas andSa'id ibn Nimran came to him retreating after being overpowered by Busr ibn Abu Artat, he was much disturbed by the slackness of his own men in jihad and their difference with his opinion. Proceeding on the pulpit, he said:

Nothing (is left to me) but Kufa which I can hold and extend (which is in my hand to play with). (O Kufa) 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 AAmr! By your good father's life. I have received only a small bit of fat from this pot 9fat 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 fulfillment of the trust in favor of their master and your betrayal, their god 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 a 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 Firas 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): Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: In this verse the word Aarmiyah is plural of Aramiyy which means cloud and Ahamin here means summer. The poet has particularized 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 Aif you call them, they will reach you.

1. When after arbitration Mu'awiyah's position was stabilized, he began thinking of taking possession of Amir al-Mu'minin's cities to 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 Abu Artat to Hijaz and he shed blood of thousands of innocent persons from Hijaz up to Yemen, burned alive tribe after tribe in fire and killed even children so much so that he butchered two young boys of AUBaydullah ibn AAbbas, the governor of Yemen before their mother Juwayriyya daughter of Khalid ibn Qarz al-Kinaniyya.

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 the 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 jihad by describing the enemy's wrongfulness and their own short-comings. At last Jariyah ibn Qudamah 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.

SERMON 26

Arabia Before the Proclamation of Prophethood

Allah sent Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) 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 the blood of each other and cared not for relationships. Idols were fixed among you and sins were clinging to you.

Part of the same sermon on the attentiveness of the people after the death of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

I looked and found that there was 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 a choking of the throat. I exercised patience despite trouble in breathing and despite having to take sour colocynth as food.

Part of the same sermon on Thesettlement between Mu'awiyah and AAmr ibn al-AAs

He did not swear allegiance till he got him to agree that he would pay him its price. The hand of this purchaser (of allegiance) may not be successful and the contract of Theseller 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 Nahrawan. These are three parts from it. In the first part he has described the condition of Arabia before the Proclamation (of Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) hood) ; 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'awiyah and AAmr ibn al-AAs. The position of this mutual settlement was that when Amir al-Mu'minin sent Jarir ibn AAbdillah al-Bajali to Mu'awiyah to secure his allegiance, he detained Jarir under the excuse of giving a reply. 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 AOthman's blood, he consulted with his brother AUtbah ibn Abu Sufyan. He suggested, AIf in this matter AAmr ibn AAs was associated he would solve most of the difficulties through his sagacity, but he would not be easily prepared to stabilize 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'awiyah liked this suggestion, sent for AAmr ibn AAs and discussed with him, and eventually it was settled that he would avenge AOthman'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'awiyah's authority in Syria suffer. Consequently, both of them fulfilled the agreement and kept their words.

SERMON 27

Exhorting people for Jihad

Now then, surely Jihad is one of the doors to Paradise, which Allah has opened for His chief friends. It is the dress of piety and the protective armor 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 (insistently) 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 for others and forsook it till destruction befell you and your cities were occupied. The horsemen of Banu Ghamid 1 have reached al-Anbar and killed Hasan ibn Hasan 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 the protection of Islam and took away their ornaments from their legs, arms, necks and ears. No woman could resist it except by pronouncing the verse, AWe are from Allah and to Him we shall return. (Holy Qur'an, 2:156) Then they returned, 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 in their wrong-doings and your dispersion from the right. May 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 the summer you say it is hot weather, spare us until the heat subsides from us. When I order you to march in winter you say it is severely cold; give us time until the cold clears from us. These are just excuses of 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 the sword (war).

O you semblance 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 after mouthful of grief. You shattered my counsel by disobeying and leaving me so much so that Quraish started saying that the son of Abu Talib 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 my twenties, and here I am, have crossed 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 around and started encroachments on cities within Amir al-Mu'minin's domain. In this connection he duped Sufyan ibn AAwf al-Ghamidi with a force of six thousand to attack Hit, al-Anbar 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 faced them as stoutly as they could. But, collecting together, the enemy's force made such a severe attack that they too could no more resist and the chief of the contingent, Hasan ibn Hasan

al-Bakri was killed along with thirty others. When the battlefield was clear the enemy ransacked al-Anbar with total 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 *jihad*. Yet, 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-Nukhayla. People then surrounded him and insisted that he return as they had enough to face the enemy. When their insistence increased beyond reckoning, Amir al-Mu'minin consented to return and Sa'id ibn Qays al-Hamdani proceeded forward with a force of eight thousand. But Sufyan ibn AAwf al-Ghamidi had gone, so Sa'id came back without any encounter. When Sa'id reached Kufa then - according to the version of ibn Abu' Hadid - Amir al-Mu'minin was so deeply grieved and indisposed during those days to an extent of not wishing to enter the mosque. He instead sat in the corridor of his residence (that connects the entrance of the mosque) and wrote this sermon for the people but gave it to his slave Sa'd to read for them. But al-Mubarrad (*Al-Kamil*, Vol. 1, pp. 104-107) has related from AUbaydullah ibn Hafs al-Taymi, Ibn AA'isha, that Amir al-Mu'minin delivered this sermon on a high place in an-Nukhayla. Ibn Maytham has held this as a preferable view.

SERMON 28

About the transient nature of this world and the 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 proclaimed 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 perform 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 the 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 will harm him. Beware, and act during a period of attraction just as you act during a period of dread. Beware, surely I have not seen one who covets Paradise asleep nor dreads Hell to be asleep, p. 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 insistently to march and have been guided as 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 Judgment).

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: If there could be an utterance which would drag the neck towards renunciation in this world and force action for the next world, it is this sermon. It is enough to cut one 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 AToday 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. Besides the sublimity of these words, the greatness of their meaning, the true similes and factual illustrations, there are wonderful secrets and delicate implications therein.

It is his saying that his 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 *Athe 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 *Ato be proceeded to* Amir al-Mu'minin employed the word *Adoom* 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 Aal-masir or Aal-ma'al*, that is, the last resort. Holy Qur'anic verse is *Asay thou AEnjoy ye (your pleasures yet a while) for your last resorts unto the (hell) fire (14:30)*. Here to say *Asabqatakum* that is, *Athe place for you to proceed to* in place of the word *Amasirakum'* 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 *Asabqah* is shown as *Asubqah* which is applied to a reward fixed for the winner in a race. However, both the meanings are near to each other, because a reward is not for an undesirable action but for a good and commendable performance.

SERMON 29

About those who found pretexts at the time of *jihad*

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), *Aturn thou away'* (i.e. flee away). If one calls you (for help) the call receives no heed. And he who deals harshly with you his heart has no solace. The excuses are amiss like that of a 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 Nahrawan, Mu'awiyah sent ad-Dahhak ibn Qays al-Fihri with a force of four thousand towards Kufa with the purpose that he should create disorder in the area, killing whomever he found and keeping them busy with bloodshed and destruction 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 around reached the way up to the place of *ath-Tha'labiyya*. He attacked a caravan of pilgrims (to Mecca) and looted all their wealth and belongings. Then at al-Qutqutana, he killed the nephew of *AAbdullah ibn Mas'ud*, the Holy Prophet's companion, namely *AAmr ibn AUways ibn Mas'ud* together with his followers. In this manner he created havoc and bloodshed all around. 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. He roused the men to feel shame and not to try and avoid war but to rise for the protection of their country like brave men without employing wrong and lame excuses. At last Hijr ibn AAadi al-Kindi rose with a force of four thousand for crushing the enemy and overtook them at Tadmur. Only a small encounter has taken place between the parties when night came on and they fled with only nineteen killed on their side. In Amir al-Mu'minin's army, two persons fell as martyrs.

SERMON 30

Disclosing real facts about the assassination of AOthman ibn AAffan 1 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 thereal verdict between the appropriator and the protester.

1. AOthman is the first Umayyad Caliph of Islam who ascended the Caliphate on the 1st of Muharram, 24 A.H. at the age of seventy. After having wielded full control and authority over the affairs of the Muslims for twelve years, he 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 AOthman's killing was theresult 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 the high-ranking companions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 Tharr's disgrace, dishonor and the externment of Banu Ghifar and their associate tribes, due to AAbdullah ibn Mas'ud's merciless beating of Banu Hudhayl and their associates, due to the breaking of the ribs of AAmmar ibn Yasir Banu Makhzum and their associates Banu Zuhrah, and due to the plot for the killing of Muhammed ibn Abu 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 the 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 center 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) were also sick of him as they saw that peace was destroyed, the 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 Kufa, Basra and Egypt had collected in Medina. Observing this behavior of the people of Medina, AOthman 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 al-Tabari 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) since he was aware of their unanimity.

In view of these circumstances to regard the killing of AOthman 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 an occasion for this bloodshed would not have arisen. What happened was that when, having been disgusted with the oppression and excesses of AAbdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Abu Sahr who was foster brother of AOthman, the people of Egypt proceeded towards Medina and camped in the valley of Dhakhushub near the city. They sent a man with a letter to AOthman and demanded that oppression should stop, the existing ways should be changed and repentance should be offered for the future. But instead of giving a reply, AOthman turned these men out of the house and did not consider their demands worthy of any attention.

The people entered the city to raise their voice against this pride and haughtiness, and complained to the people of this behavior besides other excesses. On the other side many people from Kufa and Basra had also arrived with their complaints. After joining with these, together they proceeded forward with the additional backing of the people of Medina and confined AOthman 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, he lost control and fell from the pulpit. After a few days, his coming and going to the Mosque was also banned.

When AOthman 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, AOn what terms can I ask them to leave when their demands are justified? AOthman said, AI authorize 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 return on the condition that all the tyrannies should be wiped out and Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr made governor by removing ibn Abu Sahr. Amir al-Mu'minin came back and put their demand before AOthman 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. AOthman insisted that three days were also needed for Medina. 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 Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr while some went to the valley of

Dhakhushub and stayed there until this whole matter ended. On The second day of this event, Marwan ibn al-Hakam said to AOthman, AI t 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, but sit quiet at their places. That statement should be that A some people collected in Medina after hearing some irresponsible talk but when they came to know that whatever they heard was wrong they were satisfied and have gone back. Othman did not want to speak such a clear lie but Marwan canvassed him so that he agreed, and speaking in the Holy Prophet's Mosque, he said:

A 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 had he said this when there was great hue and cry in the Mosque, and people began to shout to AOthman, AOffer repentance, fear Allah; what is this lie you are uttering? AOthman was confused in this commotion and had to offer repentance. Consequently, he turned to the Ka'ba, moaned in the audience of Allah and returned to his house.

Probably after this very event Amir al-Mu'minin advised'Othman saying, AYou 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, Othman 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 there, Marwan sought permission to say something but AOthman's wife Na'ila daughter of Qarafisah intervened. Turning to Marwan, she said, AFor Allah's sake, you keep quiet. You would say only such a thing as would bring but death to him. Marwan took offense and retorted, AYou 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. Na'ila replied with fury, AYou 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 AOthman saw the conversation getting prolonged he stopped them and asked Marwan to tell him what he wished. Marwan said, AWhat is it you have said in the Mosque, and what repentance have you 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 fulfill their demands. AOthman then said, AWell, 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, AWhy have you assembled here? Do you intend to attack or to ransack? Remember, you cannot easily snatch away power from our hands, take that idea out 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 dishonor you.

When people noticed this changed countenance and altered picture, they rose from there full of anger and rage and went straight to Amir al-Mu'minin and related to him the whole story. On

hearing it Amir al-Mu'minin was infuriated and immediately went to A'Othman and said to him. A'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 Marwan'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 the future I shall never intervene in your affairs nor tell people anything. Now you should manage your own affairs.

Saying all this Amir al-Mu'minin got back and when Na'ila got the chance, she said to A'Othman, A'Did I not tell you to get rid of Marwan 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. A'Othman was impressed by this and sent a man after Amir al-Mu'minin but he refused to meet with him. There was no siege around A'Othman 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, A'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 grounds can I trust any word of yours in the 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 whatever track you choose. After this talk A'Othman 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 Hijaz, Muhammed ibn Abu 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 inquired as to who he was. He said he was the slave of A'Othman. They inquired as to where he was bound. He said Egypt. They inquired 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 Abu Sahr. 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. Kinanah ibn Bishr ar-Tujibi said, A'See his water-skin. People said, A'Leave him, how can there be a letter in water! Kinanah said, A'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 A'When Muhammed ibn Abu 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. As a Persian axiom says, AMind was just burst in astonishment as to what wonder it was!

Those proceeding forward were 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Whoever heard this incident remained stunned with astonishment, and there was no one who was not abusing AOthman. Afterwards a few companions went to AOthman 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, AGood Heavens. Everything is yours but you do not know who had sent it. If you are so helpless, you leave this Caliphate and get away from it so that such a man can come who can administer the affairs of the Muslims. He replied, AIt 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, AWhy should you speak of repentance which has already been flouted on the day when Marwan was representing you on your door, and whatever was wanting 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 and enable us to inquire from him on whose strength and support he wanted to play with the precious lives of Muslims by writing this letter. But Othman 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 therequired time everything 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 Dhakhushub to watch theresult of repentance again advanced like a 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Niyar ibn AIyad, desired to talk to AOthman, went to his house and called him. When he peeped out from the above he said, AO AOthman, for Allah's sake give up this Caliphate and save the Muslims from this bloodshed. While he was just conversing, one of AOthman's men aimed at him with an arrow and killed him, whereupon people were infuriated and shouted that Niyar's killer should be handed over to them. AOthman said it was not possible that he would hand over his own support to them. This stubbornness worked like a fan on fire and in the height of fury people set fire to his door and began advancing. When Marwan ibn al-Hakam, Sa'id ibn al-AAs and Mughirah ibn al-Akhnas together with their contingents pounced upon the besiegers, killing and bloodshed started at his door. People wanted to enter the house but they were being pushed back. In the meanwhile, AAmr ibn Hazm al-Ansari whose house was adjacent to that of AOthman opened his door and shouted for advancing from that side. Thus through this house the besiegers climbed on the roof of AOthman's house and descended down from there, drawing their swords. Only a few scuffles had taken place when all except the people of AOthman'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 Habiba daughter of Abu Sufyan, sister of Mu'awiyah. The rest

were killed with AOthman as the latter kept defending himself to the last. (Al-Tabaqat, Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 3, Part 1, pp. 50-58; Tabari, Vol. 1, pp. 2998-3025; Al-Kamil, Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 3, pp. 167-180; ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 2, pp. 144-161).

At his killing several poets wrote elegies. A couplet from the elegy by Abu Hurayra is presented:

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

After observing these events, the position of Amir al-Mu'minin becomes clear. Namely that he was neither supporting the group that was instigating Othman's killing nor can be included in those who stood for his support and defense. Rather, when he saw that what was said was not acted upon he kept aloof.

When both the parties are looked at among the people who had raised their hands from AOthman's support, AA'isha is seen. And according to the popular versions (which are not right), the then living persons out of the ten pre-informed ones (who had been pre-informed in this world by the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) for their being admitted to Paradise), out of those who took part in the consultative committee (formed for AOthman's selection for caliphate) Ansar, original Muhajirun, people who took part in the battle of Badr and other conspicuous and dignified individuals, while on the side (of AOthman) are seen only a few slaves of the Caliph and a few individuals from Banu Umayyah. If people like Marwan and Sa'id ibn al-AAs cannot be given precedence over the original Muhajirun their actions too cannot be given precedence over the actions of the latter. Again, if *ijma'* (consensus of opinion) is not meant for particular occasions only then it would be difficult to question this overwhelming unanimity of the companions.

SERMON 31

Before the commencement of the Battle of Jamal

Amir al-Mu'minin sent AAbdullah ibn AAbbas to az-Zubayr ibn al-AAwwam with the purpose that he should advise him to obey, he said to him on that occasion:

Do not meet Talhah (ibn AUbaydillah). If you meet him you will find him like an unruly bull whose horns are turned towards its ears. He rides a ferocious riding beast and says it has been tamed. Instead, meet with az-Zubayr because he is soft-tempered. Tell him that your maternal cousin says that, A(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)?

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: the last sentence of this sermon AFama Aada minna bada has been heard only from Amir al-Mu'minin.

SERMON 32

About the disparagement of the world and categories of its people

O people! We have been born in such a wrongful and thankless period wherein the virtuous is deemed vicious and the oppressor goes on advancing in his excess. 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) the 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 himself with the robe of renunciation although he has never had any connection with these qualities.

Then there remain a few people in whose case the remembrance of their return (to Allah on the Last Day) 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 (Thesea 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 the 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 realizing its evil because it cuts off even from those who were more attached to it than you.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: 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 skillful guide and the expert critic AAmr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz as he has mentioned this sermon in his book, *Al-Bayan wal-Tbyin* (Vol. 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 categorizing people and information about their oppression, disgrace, apprehension and fear. (On the other hand) we never found Mu'awiyah speaking on the lives of those who renounce this world or worshippers.

SERMON 33

Abdullah ibn AAbbas says when Amir al-Mu'minin set out for war with the people of Basra he came to his audience at Thi-Qar and saw that Abdullah was stitching his shoe. AThen Amir al-Mu'minin said to me, AWhat is the price of this shoe? I said: AIt has no value now. He then said, ABy Allah, it should have been more dear to me than ruling over you but for the fact that I have established right and warded off wrong. Then he came out and spoke:

Verily, Allah sent Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) 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, and their spears (ie. 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 the Quraish and me? 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 Quraish only take revenge against us because Allah has given us (i.e. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and his progeny) preference over them. So, we have allowed them into our domain, whereupon they have become as the former poet says the following:

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 colored 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 had 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 Quraish as Fatima (S.A) the holy daughter of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said in her speech on Fadak:

(O People). You were on the brink of the pit of Hill Fire (Holy Qur'an, 3:103). You were as worthless as the mouthful of water. You were of a minority like the handful of greedy and a spark of the hasty. You were as down-trodden as the dust under your feet. You drank dirty water. You ate untanned skin. You were abased and condemned. But Allah has rescued you through my father Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household).

SERMON 34

To prepare the people for fighting with the people of Syria (ash-Sham), Amir al-Mu'minin said:

Woe unto 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 understand. You have lost my confidence for good. Neither are you a support for me to lean upon nor a means to honor 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 Abu Talib like the severing of head from the trunk. ¹

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 that 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-Mushrafiyyah which would cut under the bones of the head and cause arms and feet to fly. 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 your dues fully, to teach you that you may not remain ignorant and instruct you in acceptable behavior that you may act upon. As for my right over you, it is fulfillment of (the obligation of) allegiance, well-wishing in presence or in absence, response when I call you and obedience when I order you.

1. The word Aash-Sham was a name used for a vast geographical area occupied by Muslim countries in those days. This area included 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 *Al-Durra al-Najafiyya* has quoted several views in its explanation:

i. Ibn Durayd's view is that it means that, AJust 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 Ayou went as *ar-ra's* had gone.

iii. One meaning of it is that AJust 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 away from me.

iv. It has also been said that this sentence is in Thesense of separating completely. After copying this meaning from the *Sharh* of Sheikh Qutbud-Din ar-Rawandi, the commentator Ibn Abul-Hadid has written that this meaning is not correct because when the word *Aar-ra's* is used in this sense of whole it is not preceded by Aalif and Alam.

v. It is also taken to mean that AYou 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 Sayfi while teaching unity and concord to his children. He says the following:

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

SERMON 35

Amir al-Mu'minin said after Arbitration¹

All praise is due to Allah even though time has brought (to 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 Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) is His slave and Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) (May Allah's blessing and greeting be upon him and his progeny).

So now, certainly the disobedience of a sympathetic counselor who has knowledge as well as experience brings about disappointment and that results in repentance. I had given you my orders about this arbitration and put before you my hidden view that 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, my position and yours became as the poet of Hawazin says the following:

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

1. When the Syrians' spirit was broken by the bloody swords of Theiraqis, and the incessant attacks of the night of al-Harir lowered their morale and ended their aspirations, AAmr ibn al-AAs suggested to Mu'awiyah the trick that the Holy 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 Holy 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 Holy Qur'an over war.

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

AO' 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 Holy Qur'an nor have they any connection with the faith or religion. The very purpose of our fighting has been that they should follow the Holy 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 Husain at-Ta'i each with twenty thousand men came forward and said to Amir al-Mu'minin AO Ali, if you do not respond to the call of the Holy Qur'an we will deal with you in the same manner as we did with AOthman. You end the battle at once and bow before the verdict of the Holy Qur'an. Amir al-Mu'minin tried his best to make them understand but Satan was standing before them in the garb of the Holy 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-Harith al-Ashtar from the battlefield. Being obliged, Amir al-Mu'minin sent Yazid ibn Hanu to call Malik back. When Malik heard this order he was bewildered and said, APlease 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. Hanu 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 Hanu and sent word that rebellion had occurred, he should return in whatever condition he was. So Hanu went and told Malik AYou hold victory dear or the life of Amir al-Mu'minin. If his life is dear you should raise your hands from 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 they could not be corrected.

It was then settled that either party should nominate an arbitrator so that they should settle the Caliphate matter according to the Holy Qur'an. From Mu'awiyah's side AAmr ibn al-AAs 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, ASince 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 listen to him and stuck to his name (Abu Musa). 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, the name of Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was also written. Amr ibn al-As said, This should be rubbed off. If we regard 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-Hudaybiya when the unbelievers stuck on the point that the words Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah' with the name of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) should be removed and the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) did remove it. On this Amr ibn al-As got angry and said, Do you treat us as unbelievers. Amir al-Mu'minin asked, 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 Dawmatul-Jandal, a place between Iraq and Syria, and then the two arbitrators also reached there to announce the judgment 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 Abu 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 Musa has removed Amr ibn Abu 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 than he said this there were cries all around. Abu Musa cried hoarse that it was a trick, a deceit and told Amr ibn al-As, 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 gas, p. Amr ibn al-As said, Your example is like the ass on whom books are loaded. However, Amr ibn al-As trick was effective and Mu'awiyah's shaking feet were again stabilized.

This was the short sketch of the Arbitration whose basis was laid in the Holy Qur'an and Sunna. But was it a verdict of the Holy 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 Holy Qur'an and Sunna not be 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 savors his grief and sorrow and at the same time it throws light on soundness of his thinking, correctness of his opinion and foresighted sagacity.

2. This is a proverb which is used on an occasion where the advice of a counselor is rejected and afterwards it is repented. The fact is the ruler of Hira namely Jazimah al-Abrash killed the

ruler of Jazira named AAmr ibn Zarib whereafter his daughter Zabba was made the ruler of Jazira. Soon after accession to the throne she thought out a plan to avenge her father's blood. Then she sent a message to Jazimah 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. Jazimah was more than puffed up at this proposal, and prepared himself to set off for Jazira 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 Zabba should select the murderer of her father for her life companion. He then set off and reached the border of Jazira. Although Zabba's army was present for his reception. she neither gave any special reception nor offered him a warm welcome. Seeing this state Qasir was again suspicious and he advised Jazimah to get back, but nearness to the goal had further fanned his passion. He paid no heed and stepping further entered the city. Soon after his arrival there he was killed. When Qasir saw this he said, AHad the advice of Qasir been followed. From that time this proverb gained currency.

3. The poet of Hawazin implies Durayd ibn as-Simmah. He wrote this couplet after the death of his brother AAbdullah ibn as-Simmah. Its facts are that AAbdullah, along with his brother, led an attack of two groups of Banu Jusham and Banu Nasr who were both from Hawazin, and drove away many camels. On return when they intended to rest at Mun Aarajil-Liwa, Durayd said it was not advisable to stay there lest the enemy attacks from behind, but AAbdullah did not agree and stayed there. The result was that as soon as dawn appeared the enemy attacked and killed AAbdullah 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 Nahrawan¹ 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 nor any open authority with you. You have come out of your houses and then the Divine decree entangled 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 Nahrawan started after arbitration when Amir al-Mu'minin was returning to Kufa. 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 had become a heretic. Consequently, by distorting the meaning of AThere is no authority save with Allah they made simple Muslims share their view and separated from Amir al-Mu'minin encamped at Hanira' near Kufa. When Amir al-Mu'minin learned of this plot, he sent Sa'sa'ah ibn Suhan al-AAbdi and Ziyad ibn an-Nadr al-Harithi in the company of ibn AAbbas toward them and afterwards he went to the place of their stay and dispersed them after discussion.

When these people reached Kufa they began to spread the news that Amir al-Mu'minin had broken the agreement of arbitration and that he was 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 lowlands area of the canal called Nahrawan.

On the other side, after hearing the verdict of arbitration Amir al-Mu'minin prepared to fight the army of Syria. He wrote to the Kharijites that the verdict passed by the two arbitrators in pursuance of their heart's wishes instead of the Holy Qur'an and Sunna was not acceptable to him and he therefore decided to fight with them and they should support him in crushing the enemy. But the Kharijites gave him this reply, AWhen 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 Nahrawan 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 Nahrawan 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 therebellion of Kharijites began to reach them. Then it was learned that they had butchered the governor of Nahrawan, 'Abdullah ibn Khabbab ibn al-Aratt and his slave maid with the child in her womb, and had killed three women of Banu Tay and Umm Sinan al-Saydawi. Amir al-Mu'minin sent al-Harith ibn Murrah al-Abdi to investigate 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 Nahrawan. On reaching there Amir al-Mu'minin sent them word that those who had killed 'Abdullah ibn Khabbab 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, AWhoever comes under this banner or separates from that party and goes to Kufa or al-Mada'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 al-Tabari's account they numbered two thousand eight hundred. Yet, 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 from taking 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 brimming with enthusiasm so much that they leapt on Amir al-Mu'minin's force all of a sudden. This onslaught was so severe that the footmen lost ground but they soon fixed themselves so firmly that the attack of arrows and spears could not dislodge them from their position. They soon cleared away the Kharijites that except for nine persons who fled 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.

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 struck with the 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 honor till I secure (his) right for him while the strong is in my view weak till I take their (assumed) right from them. We are happy with the destiny ordained by Allah and have submitted to the command of Allah. Do you think I would speak lies about the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah? By Allah, I am surely the first to testify of 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 to him is a burden on my neck.

SERMON 38

About the 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 one who fears for eternal life secure it.

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 father¹ (Woe to you!) What are you waiting for to rise in 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 circumstances show their bad consequences. No blood can be avenged through you and no purpose can be achieved with you. I called you to help your brethren but (instead) you made noises like the camel having pain in the stomach, and became loose like the camel with a thin back. Then a wavering weak contingent came to me from among you: Aas if they are being led to death and they are only watching.¹ (Holy Qur'an, 8:6)

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: Amir al-Mu'minin's word Amutadha'ib means Amudtarib (i.e. moved or troubled), as they say Atadha' abat ar-rih (i.e. The winds blow in troubled manner). Similarly the wolf is called Adhi'b because of its troubled movement.

1. Mu'awiyah sent a contingent of two thousand soldiers under an-Nu'man ibn Bashir to assault AAynu't-Tamr. This place was a defence base of Amir al-Mu'minin near Kufa in which Malik ibn Ka'b al-Arhabi was in charge. Although there were a thousand combatants under him, at that moment, only a hundred men were present. 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 Amir

al-Mu'minin was much disgusted and delivered this sermon in their admonition. When Amir al-Mu'minin reached his house after delivering this sermon, A'Adi ibn Hatim at-Ta'i came and said, AO 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, AIt does not look good that people of only one tribe should meet the enemy. You prepare your force in the Valley of an-Nukhayla. Accordingly, he went there and called people to jihad, where, besides Banu Tay, 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 for this was that Malik had hastily sent A'Abdullah ibn Hawalah al-Azdi off to Qarazah ibn Ka'b al-Ansari and Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym al-Azdi, so that if there was delay in the arrival of support from Kufa he could get help from here in time. A'Abdullah went to both, but got no help from Qarazah. However, Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym had gotten fifty persons ready under A'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Mikhnaf and they arrived near evening. Until that time, the two thousand men (of the enemy) had not been able to subdue the hundred men of Malik. When an-Nu'man saw these fifty men he thought that their forces had started coming in so he fled from the battlefield. Even in their retreat, Malik attacked them from rear and killed three of their men.

SERMON 40

When Amir al-Mu'minin heard the cry of Kharijites that A'Verdict is only that of Allah he said:

This 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 rulers--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, the enemy is fought, roadways are protected and the right of the weak is taken from the strong till the virtuous enjoy peace and allowed protection from (the oppression of) the wicked.

Another version:

When Amir al-Mu'minin heard the cry of the Kharijites on the aforementioned 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.

SERMON 41

In condemnation of treason

O people! Surely the fulfillment of a pledge is the twin of truth. I do not know a better shield (against the assaults of sin) than it. One who realizes the reality of return (to the next world) refuses (submission to the dynamic of) betrayal. 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 the thick and thin of life finds the excuses to be preventing him from acquiescing to the orders and prohibitions of Allah. Yet he disregards them despite the 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).

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 the extending of hopes. Acting according to (personal) desires prevents (the experiential admission of) truth; regarding extensive hope, it makes one forget the next world. You should know this world is moving rapidly and nothing has remained out of it except the 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 Judgment 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 wherein there would be no (opportunity for) action.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: Aal-hadhadha' means rapid but some people have read it Ajadhdha'. According to this version the meaning would be that the cycle of worldly enjoyments would end soon.

SERMON 43

After Amir al-Mu'minin had sent Jarir ibn AAbdillah 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 while Jarir ibn AAbdillah al-Bajali is still there would be closing the door on Syria and thereby preventing its people from a good action (i.e. allegiance) if that indeed was their intention. However, I have fixed a time limit of Jarir after which he would not stay without either deception or in disobedience. My opinion is in favor of patience, so wait a while. (In the meantime) I do not dislike your preparation.

I have observed this matter thoroughly from all sides but I do not find any way except war or heresy. Certainly, there was a ruler over the people (before me) who brought about new (un-Islamic) things and compelled the people to speak out. So they did speak, then rose and changed the whole system.

SERMON

44

Masqalah¹ ibn Hubayrah ash-Shaybani fled to Mu'awiyah because he had purchased some prisoners of Banu Najiyah from an executive of Amir al-Mu'minin, but when he demanded the price, the latter avoided and ran to Syria. Amir al-Mu'minin said:

Allah may be bad to Masqalah. He acted like the noble but fled 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 Kharijites rose, a man of Banu Najiyah from among them named al-Khirrit ibn Rashid an-Naji began instigating people and set off towards al-Mada'in with a group killing and marauding. Amir al-Mu'minin sent Ziyad ibn Khasafah with three hundred men to check him. When the two forces met at al-Mada'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 Kharijites were lying and they themselves had cleared off the battlefield. Seeing this Ziyad set off for Basra along with his men. There he came to know that the Kharijites 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-Riyahi with two thousand

experienced combatants towards Ahwaz and wrote to the governor of Basra AAbdullah ibn AAbbas to send two thousand swordsmen of Basra for the help of Ma'qil. Consequently, the contingent from Basra also joined them at Ahwaz and after proper organization, they got ready to attack the enemy. But al-Khirrit marched on along with his men to the hills of Ramhurmuz. 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 that three hundred and seventy Kharijites were killed in the battlefield while therest ran away. Ma'qil informed Amir al-Mu'minin of his performance and of the enemy's defeat when Amir al-Mu'minin directed him to chase them and to disintegrate their power so that they should not be able to raise heads again. On receipt of this order, Ma'qil moved on and overtook him on the coast of the Persian Gulf, where al-Khirrit 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 flee. They would not be molested. The effect of this announcement was that save for al-Khirrit's own community all others deserted him. He organized those very men and commenced the battle but valorous combatants of Basra and Kufa displayed such excellent use of swords that in a short time one hundred and seventy men of the insurgents were killed while an-Nu'man ibn suhban ar-Rasibi encountered al-Khirrit (ibn Rashid an-Naji) and eventually attacked and killed him. Soon after his fall the enemy lost ground and they fled 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 allegiance. Those who had turned heretics were called upon to re-embrace their Submission to the Will of Allah (Islam). Consequently all except one old Christian secured their release by accepting Islam but the old man was killed. The n, Ma'qil took with him those Christians of Banu Najiyah who had taken part in this revolt together with their families. When Ma'qil reached Ardashir Khurrah (a city of Iran) these prisoners wailed and cried before its governor Masqalah ibn Hubayrah ash-Shaybani and beseeched in all humility to do something for their release. Masqalah 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 installment at once and theremaining installments 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 Masqalah observed such deep silence as if nothing was due from him. At last Amir al-Mu'minin sent a messenger to him with word to either send the price or to come himself. On Amir al-Mu'minin's order he came to Kufa and on demand of the price paid two hundred thousand Dirhams. But, to evade the balance he went 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, AIf he had stayed, we would have been considerate to him in demanding the price and would have waited for an improvement of his financial condition. But he fled like slaves after displaying a showy act. Talk about his high perseverance had just started when people began to discuss his baseless and lowliness.

SERMON 45

About Allah's greatness and the 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 departure, for its inhabitants, 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.

SERMON 46

When Amir al-Mu'minin decided to march towards Syria, he spoke thus:

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

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: the earlier part of his sermon is related from the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) but Amir al-Mu'minin has completed it very aptly by adding most eloquent sentences at the end. This addition is from ANone except You can join up to the end.

SERMON 47

About calamities befalling Kufa

O Kufa, it is as though¹ I see you being drawn like the tanned leather of AUkazil 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 AUkaz where mostly hides were traded and as a result, leather was attributed to it. Besides the sales and purchases, literary meetings were also arranged and Arabs used to attract admiration by reciting their works. After Islam, because of the better congregation in the form of Hajj, this market diminished.

2. This prophecy of Amir al-Mu'minin was fulfilled word for word and the world saw how the people who had committed tyranny and oppression on the strength of their masterly power had to face the tragic end. The ways of their own destruction were engendered by their bloodshedding and homicidal activities. Consequently, the end of Ziyad ibn Abih (son of an 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. The end of the bloodshed perpetrated by AUbaydullah ibn Ziyad was when he fell prey to leprosy and eventually blood thirsty swords put him to death. The ferocity of al-Hajjaj 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. AOmer ibn Hubayrah al-Fizari died of leucoderma. Khalid ibn AAbdillah al-Qasri suffered the hardships of prison and was killed in a very bad way. Mis'ab ibn az-Zubayr and Yazid ibn al-Muhallab ibn Abu 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 favors cannot be repaid.

Well, I have sent forward my vanguard¹ and have ordered them to remain in the 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 an auxiliary force for you.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: Here by *Amitat* Amir al-Mu'minin has meant the direction wherein he had ordered the men to camp and that was the bank of the Euphrates. *Amitat* is used for the bank of a river although its literal meaning is a level ground whereas by *Anutfa* 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 here means the twelve thousand persons whom he had sent towards Siffin under the command of Ziyad ibn an-Nadr and Shurayh ibn Hani. The small force of al-Mada'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 to Allah Who lies inside all hidden things, and towards Whom all open things are guided. He cannot be seen by the eye of an onlooker, but the eye which does not see Him cannot 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 any essential knowledge of Him. 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.

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 admixture of wrong those who bear hatred towards it would have been silenced. However, what is 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.

SERMON 51

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

They¹ are asking you for morsels of battle. So either you remain 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 the 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 Siffin 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 for one possibility. If it existed, it was difficult to reach due to crossing high hillocks. Amir al-Mu'minin sent Sa'sa'ah ibn Suhan al-AAbdi to Mu'awiyah with the request to release control over the water. Mu'awiyah refused. On this side Amir al-Mu'minin's army was troubled by thirst. When Amir al-Mu'minin noticed this position he said, AGet up and secure water by dint of the sword. Consequently, these thirsty persons drew their swords out of sheaths, put arrows in their bows and dispersing Mu'awiyah's men, went down toward the river, forcing his guards away. They then took control of the watering place themselves.

Now, Amir al-Mu'minin's men also desired that just as Mu'awiyah had put restrictions on the water by occupation, 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, ADo 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 use it.

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 neighbors 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 shall not be quenched.

O creatures of Allah get ready to go out of this world for whose inhabitants decay is ordained. (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 or call out like the cooing of pigeons or 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 thoroughly melt and your eyes shed tears of blood either in hopes for Him or for fear of Him and, if 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 portion of the same sermon: on the description of the Day of Sacrifice (AId al-Adha) and the qualities of the animal for sacrifice.

For an animal to be fully fit for sacrifice it is necessary that both its ears 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.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: Here place of sacrifice means place of slaughter.

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 whatever has been brought by Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household). I found that to face war was easier for me than to face theretribution, and the hardships of this world were easier than the hardships of the next world.

SERMON 54

When Amir al-Mu'minin's showed impatience on his delay in giving them permission to fight in Siffin he said:

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, 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 this misguidance although they would be bearing their own sins.

SERMON 55

About steadiness in the battle field

In the company of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah we used to fight our parents, sons, brothers and uncles. This continued us in our faith, in submission, in our following the right path, in endurance 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; sometimes our man gets over his adversary and sometimes the enemy's man gets over ours.

When Allah had observed our truth He sent ignominy to our foe and sent His succor to us till Islam was established (like the camel) with its 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. After Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr had been killed, Mu'awiyah sent AAbdullah ibn AAmir al-Hadrami to Basra to exhort the people of Basra to avenge AOthman's blood because the natural inclination of most of the inhabitants of Basra and particularly Banu Tamim was towards AOthman. Consequently, he stayed with Banu Tamim. This was the time when AAbdullah ibn AAbbas, the governor of Basra had gone to Kufa for condolence about Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr, leaving Ziyad ibn AUbayd (Abih) as his substitute. When the atmosphere in Basra began to

deteriorate, Ziyad informed Amir al-Mu'minin of all the facts. Amir al-Mu'minin tried to get Banu Tamim of Kufa ready but they kept complete silence and gave no reply. When Amir al-Mu'minin saw this weakness and shamelessness on their part he said, ADuring the days of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 Dabi'ah al-Mujashi'i prepared himself but on reaching Basra he was killed by the swords of the enemy. Thereafter, Amir al-Mu'minin sent off Jariyah ibn Qudamah as-Sa`di with fifty men of Banu Tamim. First he tried his best to canvass his own tribe but instead of following the right path they stooped to abusing and fighting. Then Jariyah called Ziyad and the tribe of Azd for his help. Soon upon their arrival (AAbdullah) ibn al-Hadrami also came out with his men. Swords were used from both sides for some time but eventually ibn al-Hadrami fled with seventy persons and took refuge in the house of Sabil as-Sa`di. When Jariyah saw no other way he set the house on fire. When the flames arose, 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.

SERMON 56

Amir al-Mu'minin said to his companions about Mu'awiyah

Soon after me a man will be placed over you with a broad mouth and a big belly. He will swallow whatever he gets and crave what he doesn't get. You should kill him but (I know) you will not. He will command you to abuse me and to renounce me. As for abusing me, you will 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 Hijra (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 Mughirah ibn Shu'bah. But most of the commentators have held him to mean Mu'awiyah and that is correct because the qualities that Amir al-Mu'minin has described prove true on him alone. Thus, Ibn Abul-Hadid has written about the gluttonous quality of Mu'awiyah that once the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said, AMay Allah never satisfy his belly. the effect of this curse was that when he felt tired of eating he would say ATake the food 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 accepted facts of history which cannot be denied. In this connection such words were used on the pulpit that even Allah and the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) were hit by them. Thus, Umm al-Mu'minin Umm Salamah wrote to Mu'awiyah, ACertainly you people abuse Allah and the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) as you hurl abuses on Ali and those who love him, while I do stand witness that Allah and Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) did love him. (*Al-Aiqd al-Farid*, Vol. 3, p. 131)

Thanks to AOmer ibn AAbdi'l-Aziz who put a stop to it and introduced the following verse in place of the abuse in the sermons:

Verily Allah enjoins justice and benevolence (to others) by giving to the kindred, and forbids lewdness, evil and rebellion; He exhorts you that ye may take heed. (Holy Qur'an, 16:90)

In this sermon Amir al-Mu'minin has ordered his killing on the basis of the Prophet's order that AWhen you (O Muslims) see Mu'awiyah on my pulpit, kill him. (Kitab *Siffin*, pp.243, 248; *Sharh* of ibn Abul Hadid, Vol. 1, p.348; *Tarikh Baghdad*, Vol. 12, p.181; *Mizan al-I'tidal*, Vol. 2, p. 128; *Tahthib al-Tahthib*, Vol. 2, p. 428; Vol. 5, p. 110; Vol. 7, p.324)

SERMON 57

Addressing the Kharijites Amir al-Mu'minin said:

A storm may overtake you while there may be none to awaken you (for reforms). Shall I be a witness to my becoming heretic after the acceptance of faith and fighting in the company of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ?! AIn that case I shall be misguided and I shall not be on the right path. (Holy Qur'an, 6:56). So you should return to your evil places, and get back on the traces of your heels. Beware! Certainly, after me, you will meet overwhelming disgrace, sharp swords and traditions that will be adopted by the oppressors as a norm towards you.¹

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: In the words Awala baqiyah minkum abirun used by Amir al-Mu'minin the Aabir has been related with Aba' and ARa' and it has been taken from the Arab saying Arajulun abirun which means the man who prunes the date-palm trees improves them. In one version the word is Aathir and its meaning is Arelater 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 Aabiz with Aza' which means one who leaps. One who dies is also called Aabiz.

1. History corroborates that after Amir al-Mu'minin, the Kharijites had to face all kinds of ignominy and disgrace and wherever they raised their heads to create trouble they were met with swords and spears. Thus Ziyad ibn Abih, AUbaydullah ibn Ziyad, al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, Mis'ab ibn az-Zubayr and al-Muhallab ibn Abu Sufrah left no stone unturned in annihilating them from the surface of the globe. In particular, al-Muhallab had chased them and routed them thoroughly for nineteen years, resting only after completing their destruction.

At-Tabari writes that when ten thousand Kharijites collected in Silla wa sillibra (the name of a mountain in Ahwaz) then al-Muhallab faced them so steadfastly that he killed seven thousand Kharijites, while theremaining three thousand fled for their lives towards Kirman. But when the Governor of Iran noticed their rebellious activities he surrounded them in Sabur and killed a good number of them. Those who remained fled to Isfahan and Kirman. From there they again formed a contingent and advanced towards Kufa via Basra. Al-Harith ibn Abu Rabi'ah al-Makhzumi and AAbd 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. (*Tarikh*, Vol. 2, pp. 580-591; ibn al-Athir, Vol. 4, pp. 196-206).

SERMON 58

When Amir al-Mu'minin showed his intention to fight the Kharijites he was told they had crossed the bridge of Nahrawan and gone over to the other side. Amir al-Mu'minin 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

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: In this sermon Anutfa 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. Far-sighted eyes may forecast victory or defeat and preconceive the outcome of war but to tell about the actual 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 , p. of the future with the help of the light of knowledge possessed by him as Imam. Consequently, events occurred according to what this inheritor of Prophet's knowledge had said, and from among the Kharijites all except nine persons were killed. Two of them fled to AUman, two to Sajistan, two to Kirman and two to Jazira while one escaped to Tall Mawzan. Of Amir al-Mu'minin's party only eight men fell as martyrs.

SERMON 59

When Amir al-Mu'minin was told that the Kharijites had all been 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 prophecy of Amir al-Mu'minin also proved true word for word. Every chief of the Kharijites who rose was put to the sword. A few of their chiefs who were put to death are mentioned here:

1) Nafi' ibn Azraq al-Hanafi: the largest group of the Kharijites namely al-Azariqah is named after him. He was killed by Salamah al-Bahili during encounter with the army of Muslim ibn AUbays.

2) Najdah ibn AAmir: the an-Najadat al-AAdhirriyyah sect of Kharijites is named after him. Abu Fdayk, the Kharijite, killed him.

3) AAbdullah ibn Ibad at-Tamimi: Thesect Ibadite (Ibadiyyah) is named after him. He was killed during an encounter with AAbdullah ibn Muhammed ibn AAtiyyah.

4) Abu Bayhas Haysam ibn Jabir ad-Duba'i: Thesect of al-Bayhasiyyah is named after him. AOthman ibn Hayyan al-Murri, governor of Medina, severed his hands and feet then killed him.

5) AUrwah ibn Udayyah at-Tamimi: Ziyad ibn Abih killed him during thereign of Mu'awiyah.

6) Qatari ibn al-Fuja'h al-Mazini at-Tamimi: When he encountered the army of Sufyan ibn al-Abrad al-Kalbi in Tabarastan, then Sawrah, Ibn al-Hurr ad-Darimi killed him.

7) Abu Milal Mirdas ibn Udayyah at-Tamimi: He was killed in an encounter with AAbbas ibn Akhdar al-Mazini.

8) Shawdhab al-Khariji al-Yashkuri: He was killed during an encounter with Sa'id ibn AAmr al-Harashi.

9) Hawtharah ibn Wada' al-Asadi: He was killed at the hands of a man of Banu Tayy.

10) Al-Mustawrid ibn AUllafah at-Taymi: He was killed by Ma'qil ibn Qays ar-Riyahi in thereign of Mu'awiyah.

11) Shabib ibn Yazid ash-Shaybani: He died by being drowned in the river.

12) AlImran ibn al-Harith ar-Rasibi: He was killed in the battle of Dulab.

13, 14) Zahhaf at-Ta'i and Qurayb ibn Murrah al-Azdi: They were killed in an encounter with Banu Taliyah.

15) az-Zubayr ibn Ali as-Saliti at-Tamimi: He was killed in an encounter with AAttab ibn Warqa' ar-Riyahi.

16) Ali ibn Bashir ibn al-Mahuz al-Yarbu'i: Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafi killed him.

17) ABaydullah ibn Bashir: He was killed in an encounter with al-Muhallab ibn Abu Sufrah in the battle of Dulab.

18) Abul-Wazi' ar-Rasibi: A man in the graveyard of Banu Yashkur pushed a wall on him and killed him.

19) AAbd Rabbih as-Saghir: He was killed in an encounter with al-Muhallab ibn Abu Sufrah.

20) al-Walid ibn Tarif ash-Shaybani: He was killed in an encounter with Yazid ibn Mazyad ash-Shabani.

(21-24) AAbdullah ibn Yahya al-Kindi, al-Mukhtar ibn AAwf al-Azdi (Abu Hamzah ash-Shari), Abrahah ibn as-Sabah and Balj ibn AUqbah al-Asadi: They were killed by 'Abdul-Malik ibn AAtiyah as-Sa'di in thereign of Marwan ibn Muhammed (the last of Umayyads caliph).

SERMON 60

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) also said:

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

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) means Mu'awiyah and his men.

1. The reason for stopping people from fighting the Kharijites was that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was clearly perceiving that after him authority and power would devolve on people who would be ignorant of the proper occasion of jihad, making use of the sword only to maintain their sway. And there were those who excelled, even the Kharijites, in holding and calling Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) wrong. So those who are themselves in the wrong have no right to fight others in the wrong. Again, those who are willfully in the wrong can be allowed to fight those who are in the wrong by mistake. Thus, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's words make this fact clear that the misguidance of Kharijites was not willful 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 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 judgment. They openly transgressed the limits of religion and paid no heed to the Prophet's injunctions in comparison with their own view. Thus, Ibn Abul-Hadid has written (Vol. 5, p.130) that when the Prophet's companion Abud-Darda' saw utensils of gold and silver being used by Mu'awiyah he said he had heard the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) saying, AOne who drinks in vessels of gold and silver will feel flames of the fire of Hell in his stomach. Whereupon Mu'awiyah said, AAs 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) over the pulpit, transgressing the limits of shari'ah, shedding blood of innocent persons and placing over Muslims (as so-called caliph) a vicious individual and thus opening the way to disbelief and atheism are events that to attribute them to any misunderstanding is like willfully closing one's eyes to historic fact and common sense.

SERMON 61

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 to death. At that time neither an arrow would go amiss nor a wound would heal u, p.

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 yourselves 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 changed it (with the next).

Certainly, Allah has not created you aimlessly nor left you 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 phenomena which are day and night is certainly quick to approach. The traveler 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 Judgment). So everyone should fear Allah, admonish himself, send forward his repentance and overpower his desire, because his death is hidden from him, his desires deceive him and Satan is posted on him. He beautifies sin for him 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 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 honor 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 a 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 leave him. Every on-looker other than Him is blind to hidden colors 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 it. But His verdict is certain, His knowledge is definite, His governance is overwhelming. He is wished for at times of distress and He is feared even in bounty.

SERMON 65

During some of the days of Siffin battle, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 armor 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 (the cause of awarding you) fire on the Day of Judgment. 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 entirety as Satan is hiding in its corner. He has extended his hand for assault and has kept back his foot for running away. Keep on 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. (Holy Qur'an, 47:35)

SERMON 66

When after the death of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) news reached Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) about the happening in *saqifa* of Banu Sa'idah,¹ he inquired what the Ansar said. People said that they were asking for one chief from among them and one from the others, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

Why did you not argue against them (Ansar) that the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had left his will that whoever is good among the Ansar should be treated well and whoever is bad should be forgiven.

People said: AWhat is there against them in it?

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

Alf the Government was for them there should have been no will in their favor.

Then he said:

AWhat did the Quraish plead?

People said: AThey argued that they belong to the lineal tree of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

AThey argued with the tree but spoiled the fruits.

1. From what happened in the *saqifa* of Banu Sa'idah, it appears that the greatest argument of the Muhajirun against the Ansar and the basis of the former's success was this very point that since they were the kith and kin of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) no one else could deserve the Caliphate. On this very ground the big crowd of Ansar 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 *saqifa* al-Tabari writes that when the Ansar assembled in the *saqifa* (shed) of Banu Sa'idah to swear allegiance on the hand of Sa'd ibn A'Abadah, somehow Abu Bakr, AOmer and Abu A'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah also got the hint and reached there. AOmer had thought out something for this occasion and he rose to speak but Abu Bakr stopped him, and he himself stood u, p. 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. Therefore, these alone deserve the Caliphate the most. Whoever clashes with them commits excess.

When Abu Bakr finished his speech al-Hubab ibn Munthir stood up and, turning to the Ansar said: AO group of Ansar! Do not give your reins in the hand of others. The populace is under your care. You are men of honor, wealth, 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 the 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 had al-Hubab sat down after saying this then AOmer 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was not from among you. Certainly, the Arabs will not have the least objection in that the caliphate is allowed to one in whose house the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) hood 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 Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) he is leaning towards wrong, is a sinner and is falling into destruction.

After AOmer, al-Hubab again stood up and said to the Ansar, ALook, stick to your point and do not pay heed to the views of this man or his supporters. They want to trample your rights. If they do not consent turn him and them out of your cities and appropriate the Caliphate. Who other than you can deserve it more?

When al-Hubab finished AOmer scolded him. There was a use of bad words from that side also, and the position began to worsen. On seeing this Abu A'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah spoke with the intention of cooling down the Ansar and to win them over to his side and said:

AO Ansar! 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 behavior. But the Ansar 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 AAmr al-Khazraji stood up and said:

ANo doubt we came forward for *jihad*, and gave support to thereligion, but our aim in doing thus was to please Allah and to obey His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . It does not behoove us to claim superiority and create trouble in the matter of the caliphate. Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) was from Quraish 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 Ansar, and this was his aim, because he could not see a man of his own tribe rising so high. The Muhajirun took advantage of this division among the Ansar, and AOmer and Abu AUBaydah decided to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr. They had just come forward when Bashir first of all put his hand on that of Abu Bakr and after that AOmer and Abu AUBaydah swore the allegiance. Then the people of Bashir's tribe came and swore allegiance, and trampled Sa'd ibn AAbadah under their feet.

During this time Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was occupied in the funeral bath and burial of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . When afterwards he heard about the assembly at the *saqifa* and came to know that the Muhajirun had won the score over the Ansar by pleading themselves to be from the tribe of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , he uttered the fine sentence that those who argued on the lineal tree spoiled its fruits. That is, if the Muhajirun's claim was acceded for being from the lineal tree of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , how can those who are the fruits of this tree be ignored? It is strange that Abu Bakr who connects with the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) in Theseventh generation above and AOmer who connects with him in the ninth generation above may be held of the tribe and family of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and he who was his first cousin is refused the status of a brother.

SERMON 67

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) appointed Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr¹ Governor of Egypt and he was overpowered and killed, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

I had intended to send Hashim ibn AUtbah to Egypt and had I done so he would have neither made a way for the opponents nor given them time (to get hold of him). This is without reproach to Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr as I loved him and had raised him.

1. Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr's mother was Asma' daughter of AUmays whom Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) married after Abu Bakr's death. Consequently, Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) lived and was brought up under the care of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) and he imbibed his ways and manners. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) loved him and regarded him as his son, saying AMuhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) is my son from Abu Bakr. He was born in the journey during the last Hajj (of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) and died as a martyr in 38 A.H. at the age of twenty eight years.

On accession to the Caliphate Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had selected Qays ibn Sa'd ibn AAbadah as the Governor of Egypt but circumstances developed so that he had to be removed. Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr was then sent there as Governor. The policy of Qays there was that he did not want to take any serious step against the AOthman group but Muhammed'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 wire pulling, but became conspicuous soon. After arbitration they

started creating trouble with the slogan of vengeance. This polluted the atmosphere of Egypt. When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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. Yet, 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 Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr.

On this side, the performance of AAmr 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 Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr knew of the advancing force of the enemy he wrote to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) for help. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) replied that he would be soon collecting help for him but in the meantime he should mobilize his own forces. Muhammed mobilized four thousand men under his banner and divided them into two formations. He kept one part with himself and on the other he placed Kinanah ibn Bishr at-Tujibi in command and ordered him to go forward to check the enemy's advance. When they settled down to camp before the enemy, various parties of the enemy began attacking them. Yet, they faced them with courage and valour. At last, Mu'awiyah ibn Hudayj as-Sikuni 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 Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr's men got frightened and deserted him. Finding himself alone, Muhammed fled and sought refuge in a deserted place. The enemy however got news about him through someone and traced him out when he was dying with thirst. Muhammed 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-Arhabi had already left Kufa with two thousand men, but before he could reach Egypt it had been occupied by the enemy.

SERMON 68

Admonishing his companions about careless behavior: Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

How long shall I accord you consideration that is accorded to camels with hollow humps, or to worn clothes which when stitched on one side give way on the other. Whenever a vanguard force of Syria 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.

SERMON 69

Spoken on the morning of the day when Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was fatally struck with sword.

I was sitting when sleep overtook me. I saw the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah appear before me, and I said, O Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah! what crookedness and animosity I had to face from the people. the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah said: AInvoke (Allah) evil upon them, but I said, AAllah may change them for me with better ones and change me for them with a worse one.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: Aal-awad means crookedness and Aal-ladad means animosity, and this is the most eloquent expression.

SERMON 70

In condemnation of the people of Iraq

Now then. O people! 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 lies. May Allah fight you! Against whom do I speak lies? Against Allah? But I am the first to have believed in Him. Against His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ? 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 unto 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. (Holy Qur'an, 38:88)

1. When after arbitration Theiraqis displayed lethargy and heartlessness in retaliating against the continuous attacks of Mu'awiyah, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) delivered this sermon scorning 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 has approached near the final goal of Victory.

iii) Thirdly, she willfully 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.

SERMON 71

Herein Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) tells people how to pronounce Aas-salat (to invoke the Divine blessing) on the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .

My Allah, the Spreader of the surfaces (of earth) and Keeper (intact) of all skies, Creator of hearts on good and evil nature, send Your choicest blessings and growing favors on Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) Your servant and Your Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 Your commands, advancing towards Your will, without shrinking of steps of weakness of determination, listening to Your revelation, preserving Your testament, proceeding forward in the spreading of Your commands till he lit fire for its seeker and lit the path for the proper in the dark.

Hearts achieved guidance through him after being ridden with troubles. He introduced clear guiding signs and shining injunctions. He is Your trusted trustee, the treasurer of Your treasured knowledge, Your witness on the Day of Judgment, Your envoy of truth and Your Messenger

towards the people. My Allah prepare a large place for him under Your shade and award him multiplying good by Your bounty.

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

SERMON 72

When Marwan ibn al-Hakam was taken on the day of Jamal at Basra, he asked Hasan and Husain (peace be upon them) to intercede on his behalf before Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S). So they spoke to Imam Ali ibn e Abu Talib about him and he released him. Then they said, AO Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), Marwan desires to swear his allegiance to you. Whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

Did he not swear me allegiance after the killing of AOthman? 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 AOthman. Due to a thin body and tall stature he was known with the nickname AKhayt Batil (the thread of the wrong). When AAbdul-Malik ibn Marwan killed AAmr ibn Sa'id al-Ashdaq, his brother Yahya ibn Sa'id said:

O sons of Khayt Batil (the thread of wrongdoing) you have played deceit on AAmr and people like you build their houses (of authority) on deceit and treachery.

Even though his father al-Hakam ibn Abul-As had accepted Islam at the time of the fall of Mecca, his behavior and activities were very painful to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Consequently, the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) cursed him and his descendants and said, AWoe will befall my people from the progeny of this man. At last in view of his increasing intrigues, the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) exiled him from Medina towards the valley of Hajj (in Ta'if) and Marwan also went with him. Thereafter, the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) did not allow them to enter Medina as long as he was alive. Abu Bakr and AOmer did likewise, but AOthman sent for both of them during his reign, and raised Marwan to such a height as though therein of caliphate rested in his hands. Thereafter his circumstances became so favorable that on the death of Mu'awiyah ibn Yazid he became the Caliph of the Muslims. He had only ruled nine months and eighteen days before death overtook him in such a way that his wife sat with the pillow on his face and did not leave until he breathed his last.

The four sons to whom Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has referred were the four sons of AAbdul-Malik ibn Marwan namely al-Walid, Sulayman, Yazid and Hisham, who ascended the Caliphate one after the other and colored the , pp. of history with their stories. Some commentators have regarded this reference to Marwan's own sons whose names are AAbdul-Malik, AAbdul-AAziz, Bishr and Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household). Out of these

Abdul-Malik did become Caliph of Islam but Abdul-Aziz became governor of Egypt, Bishr of Iraq and Muhammed of Jazira.

SERMON 73

When the Consultative Committee (or *shura*) decided to swear allegiance to Othman, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 be keeping aloof from its attractions and allurements for which you aspire.

SERMON 74

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) learned that the Umayyads blamed him for killing Othman, he said:

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

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 waistband) and finds salvation, keeps Allah before his eyes and fears his sins. He performs actions sincerely and acts virtuously, earns treasure of heavenly rewards, avoids vice, aims at (good) objective and reaps recompense. He faces his desires and rejects (fake) hopes, makes endurance the means to his salvation and piety the provision for his death. He rides on the path of honor and sticks to the highway of truth. He makes good use of his time and hastens towards the end and takes with him the provision of (good) actions.

SERMON 76

About the Umayyads

Banu Umayyah (Umayyads) are allowing me the inheritance of Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) bit by bit. By Allah, if I live I would throw them away as the butcher removes the dust from the dust-covered piece of flesh.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: In one version for Aal-widhamu'ttaribah (dust covered piece of flesh) the words Aat-turabu'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. As for the word Alayufawwiqunani Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) implies that they allow him bit by bit just as 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 Aal-widham is the plural of Awadhamah which means the piece of stomach or of liver which falls on the ground and then the dust is removed from it.

SERMON 77

Supplications of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S)

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

SERMON 78

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) decided to set out for the battle with the Kharijites¹ someone said, AIf you set out at this moment then according to astrology I fear you will not be successful in your aim. Whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

Do you think you can tell the hour when a man goes out and no evil will befall him or can warn of the time at which if one goes out harm will accrue? Whoever testifies to this, falsifies the Holy 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.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 the 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 Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) decided to march towards Nahrawan to suppress the risings of the Kharijites, A Afif ibn Qays al-Kindi said to him, AThis hour is not good. If you set out at this time, then instead of victory and success you will face defeat and be vanquished. But Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) paid no heed to his view and ordered the army to march that very moment. As a result, the Kharijites 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.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has argued about astrology being wrong or incorrect in three ways. Firstly, if the view of an astrologer is accepted as correct it would mean falsification of the Holy Qur'an. An astrologer claims to ascertain hidden things of failure by seeing the stars while the Holy Qur'an says the following:

Say: ANone (either) in the heavens or in the earth knows the unseen save Allah. (27:65)

Secondly, under his misconception, the astrologer believes that he can know his benefit or harm through knowing the future. In that case it would be useless to turn to Allah and seek 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, if he succeeds in any objective, he would regard this success to be the result of his knowledge of astrology, the results from which he would praise himself rather than Allah, and will expect that whomever he guides (in this manner) would necessarily 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 in this very ground that they did not regard its findings as final.

SERMON 79

After the Battle of Jamal,¹ Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said the following about physical defects of women

O ye people! 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. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 Iman (belief) is heart-felt testification 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 Musa ar Rida (ؑ) that:

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

The second weakness is that their natural propensities do not admit the 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 household 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 the following:

.then call to witnesses two witness from among your men and if there not be two men then (take) a man for 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. (Holy Qur'an, 2:282)

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

Allah enjoins 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 caretaker the status of the weaker sex who is in need of maintenance and care-taking is evident.

After describing their natural weakness as Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) points out the mischief of blindly following them and wrongly obeying them. He says that not to say of bad things but even if they say with 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. Rather it should be done 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-Sheikh Muhammed AAbdo writes about this view of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) as under:

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has said a thing which is corroborated by experiences of centuries.

SERMON 80

About the way of preaching and counseling

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

SERMON 81

About the world and its people

How 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 one 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.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: If a thinker thinks over this phrase of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) *Awaman absara biha bassarat'hu* (Alf one sees through it, it would bestow him sight) he would find therein a very amazing meaning and far-reaching sense whose purpose cannot be appreciated and whose aim cannot be understood particularly when he joins it with Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's phrase *Awaman absara ilayha a Amat'hu* (Alf one has his eye on it, then it would blind him) he would find the difference between *Aabsara biha* and *Aabsara laha*, clear, bright, wonderful and shining.

1. AThe beginning of the world is grief and its end is destruction. This sentence contains the same truth which the Holy Qur'an has presented in the verse saying, *AlIndeed We have created man (to dwell) amid hardship.* (90:4)

It is true that right from the narrow womb of the mother and unto 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 innumerable troubles. In the beginning he can neither speak with the tongue so as to describe his difficulty or pain nor does he possess 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 laps 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, sometimes collision with enemies, sometimes confrontation with vicissitudes of time, sometimes attack of ailments and sometimes the shock of children. Then 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 Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) says about this world, that within 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. For he who hankers after this world there is no limit to his desires. If one wish is fulfilled the desire for fulfillment of another wish crops up. This world is like a 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 (pleasure 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 changes 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 colorfulness of the world and its decorations, loses himself in the darkness of the world. This 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 splendor of the life of this world, so that We may try them in it; for the provision of thy Master is better and more abiding. (Holy Qur'an, 20:131)

SERMON 82

This sermon is called the al-Gharra' and it is one of the most wonderful sermons of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S)

Praise to Allah who is High above all else, and is Near (the creation) through His bounty. He is the Giver of all rewards 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 succor as He is Mighty and the Subduer. I depend upon Him as He is the Sufficer and Supporter. And I stand witness that Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) (blessing of Allah be on him and his progeny) is His slave and His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . 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 the covering of dress¹ and He has scattered for you 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.

Cautioning against this world

You are tested in this world and have to render an accounting. 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 delible 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 praises and puts down its feet (in joy). It 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 therecompense 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 sins.

Death and Resurrection

They are emulating each other and proceeding in groups towards the final objective and therendezvous of death, till when matters come to a close, the world dies and resurrection draws near. Allah² will take them out from the corners of the graves, the nests of birds, the dens of beasts and the centers of death. They will 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 He will hear every one whom He calls.

They will be wearing the dress of helplessness and the covering of submission and indignity. (At this time) contrivances will disappear, desires will be cut, hearts will quietly sink, voices will be curbed, sweat will choke the throat, fear will increase and ears will resound with the thundering voice of the announcer calling them towards final judgment, awarding recompense, striking with punishment and paying rewards.

The Limitation of Life

People have been created as a proof of (His) power. They have been brought up with authority, they are made to die through pangs, and placed in graves where they turn into crumbs. Then they will be resurrected one by one, awarded their recompense and will 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 favors. The darkness of doubts had been removed. 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 Judgment, 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 admonitions provided they are received by pure hearts, open ears, firm views and sharp wits. Fear Allah like him who listened (from 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 learned. 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 provision for the day of his departure, keeping in view his journey, his requirement and the position of his need. He sent ahead for the abode of his stay (in the next world). O creatures of Allah, fear Allah keeping in view thereason 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 Judgment.

A portion 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. He has also given you bodies that sustain themselves and hearts that are busy in search of their food, besides other big bounties, obliging bestowings and a fortress 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 the health of their bodies nor take lessons during the stages of youth.

Are these people who are in youth waiting for the backbendings of old age, those enjoying fresh health waiting for ailments and these living persons looking for the hour of death? When the hour of departure comes closer, the journey is at hand with pangs of grief and trouble. When the suffering of sorrows, 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 tribulations. 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 will you not 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 the correct way is to amass worldly gains.

Preparation for the Day of Judgment

And know that you have to pass over the pathway (of Sirat) where steps waver, feet slip and there are fearful dangers at every step. O creatures of Allah, fear Allah, like the fearing of a wise man whom the thought (of next world) has turned away from other matters. The 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 favor 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 a praiseworthy manner. He reaches the next world with virtues. He hastens (towards virtue) out of fear (for vice). He moves 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 Holy 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 and from what was overflowing semen, then a shapeless clot, then embryo, then a suckling infant, then a

child and then a fully grown young man. Then He gave him heart with a memory, a tongue to talk and eyes to see with in order that he may take lesson (from whatever is around him), understand, 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 became perplexed. He drew buckets of desires, became immersed in fulfilling his wishes for pleasures of the world and his (sordid) aims. He did not fear any evil nor became 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 fulfill any obligation. Fatal illness overtook him while he was still in his enjoyments and perplexed him. He passed the night in the wakefulness of the hardships of grief and the pricking of pains and ailments. He suffered in the presence of real brother, loving father, wailing mother and crying sister, while he himself was under a 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 young men 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. He was made to sit in his grave for a terrifying questioning and a 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 punishment. We seek refuge with Allah.

The lesson to be learned 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 learned. They were given time and they passed it in vain. They were kept healthy and they forgot (their duty). They were allowed a 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 the 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, Ahow are you then turned away (Holy Qur'an, 6:95; 10:34; 35:3; 40:62) and whither 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 owns 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, therest 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.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: It is related that when Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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-Khutbatu'l-Gharra')

1. Allah has furnished every creature with a 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 the 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 when Adam was made to give up his dress he began to cover his body with leaves. The Holy Qur'an says the following:

So when they tasted (of) the tree their shameful things got displayed unto them and they began covering themselves with leaves of the Garden.(Holy 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 favor, 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 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 the 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, it would be impossible to resurrect either of them with his own constituent parts. This would involve creating a deficiency of parts in he who had eaten the other.

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.

SERMON 83

About AAmr ibn al-As

I am surprised at the son of an-Nabighah that he says among the people of Syria that I am a jester and that I am engaged in frolic 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 naked¹ 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 to agree that he would have to pay its price, and gave him an award for forsaking religion.

1. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) here refers to the incident when the Conqueror of Egypt AAmr ibn al-As exhibited the feat of his courage by displaying his private parts. What happened was that when in the battlefield of Siffin he and Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had an encounter, he rendered himself naked in order to ward off the blow of the sword. At this Imam

Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 AAmr ibn al-
AAs by display of his private parts.

Even in this ignoble act AAmr ibn al-
AAs 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 Abu Talhah who had saved his life in the battle of Uhud by becoming naked before Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), and so he showed this way to the others. Thus, besides AAmr ibn al-
AAs trick was played by Busr ibn Abu Artat also to save himself from the sword of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S). When after the performance of this notable deed Busr went to Mu'awiyah the latter recalled AAmr ibn al-
AAs act as precedent in order to remove this man's shameful act and said, AO Busr, no matter. There is nothing to feel shameful about it in view of AAmr ibn al-
AAs's precedent before you.

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 no 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 compare Him.

A portion 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, Awith every person there is a driver and a witness (Holy Qur'an, 50:21). The driver drives him towards resurrection while the witness furnishes evidence about his deeds.

A portion 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.

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 the approach of death. In its leisure before his occupation, and during the breathing of his breath before it is overtaken by suffocation, he should provide for himself and his journey and should collect provisions 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 and sent down AThe Book (Holy Qur'an)

explaining everything (Holy Qur'an, 16:89). He has made His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) live among you for a long time till He completed for him and for you a message sent through the Holy Qur'an--namely the religion liked and clarified through him His good 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 yourselves 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 advise 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 lessons from others, while unfortunate is he who falls victim to his desires. You should know that even the smallest hypocrisy is like believing in more than one Allah, 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 a scraper (of virtues). And know that desires make one 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 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 outside 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 dark 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 taken off the clothes of desires and has rid himself of worries except one worry peculiar to him. He is safe from misguidance and the 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 takes 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 himself understood) whereas when he remains silent then it is safe to do so. He does everything only for Allah and so Allah also makes him His own. Consequently, he is like the mines of His faith, and a stump in His earth. He has enjoined upon himself (to follow) justice.

The first step of his justice is therejection 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

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

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 Holy Qur'an according to his own views and right after his passions. He makes people feel safe from big sins and takes light These serious crimes. He says that he is waiting for (clarification) of 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 the living-dead bodies.

About the Descendants (*Aitra*) of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

ASo wither are you going to (Holy Qur'an, 81:26) and Ahow are you then turned away? (Holy 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ? They are therein of Right, ensigns of Faith and tongues of truth. Accord to them the same good position as you accord to the Holy 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s 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 Holy Qur'an) and did I not retain among you smaller *thaqal* (ath-thaqal al-asghar, i.e. The descendants of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) ?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 words and deeds.

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

A portion of the same sermon:, about Banu Umayyah.

Till people begin thinking that the world is attached to the Umayyads, would be showering its benefits to 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 which they would suck for a while and then vomit out the whole of it.

1. This saying of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is a definite proof of the view that the life of any one from among Ahlu'l-Bayt (Household of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) does not come to an end. It is apparent that death makes no difference in their sense of living, although the human intelligence is unable to comprehend the conditions and happenings of that life. There are many truths beyond the world of senses which the human mind cannot yet understand. Who can say how, in the narrow corner of the grave where it is not possible even to breath, 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? Although to us they appear to be dead, yet the Holy 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 He (Allah) - or - he (the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) says about their life:

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

When restriction has been placed on the minds and tongues 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 swords and plates of poison be living for all times to come?

About their bodies, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has said that by the 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said:

Shroud them even with their wounds and flowing blood because when they would rise on the Day of Judgment blood would be pushing out of their throats.

2. *Athaqal al-akbar* implies the Holy Qur'an and *Aath-thaqal al-asghar* means Ahl al-Bayt (□) (the Household of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) 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 Holy Qur'an and Ahl al-Bayt (□). There are several reasons for using this word. Firstly, Athaqal 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 Holy Qur'an and the actions of Ahl al-Bayt (□). So they have been called 'precious things'. Since Allah has made arrangements for the protection of the Holy Qur'an and Ahl al-Bayt (□) through the Last Day, they have been called Athaqalayn. So the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 Athaqalayn (precious things) in view of their purity and high value. Thus ibn Hajar al-Haytami writes:*

The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) has called the Holy Qur'an and his Descendants as Athaqalayn (two precious things) because Athaqal means a pure, chaste and preserved thing, and either of these two were really so, each of them is the treasure of the Divine knowledge and a source of scholarly secrets and religious commandments. For that reason the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) namely Ali ibn Abu Talib (may Allah honor his face) because of his great insight and copiousness of knowledge which we have already described. *Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa*, p.90)

Since the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) has, with regard to apparent implication, attributed the Holy Qur'an to Allah and the descendants to himself, in keeping with the natural status the Holy 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 (Ahl al-Bayt (□)) being higher than the silent one (the Holy Qur'an).

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 (*umma*) 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 distress is on themselves. Their confidence with 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 to have been taken from reliable sources and strong factors.

SERMON 88

About the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

Allah sent the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) when the mission of other Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s had stopped and the peoples were in slumber 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. Water had gone underground. 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 the 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 deprived of 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.

SERMON 89

Allah's attributes and some advice

Praise to Allah who is well-known without being seen, Who creates without pondering, Who has even 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 Allah 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 the enemies is harsh despite the extent of His Mercy, and His compassion toward 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 hostility toward Him. He is sufficient for one who relies on Him. He gives to one who asks of 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.

SERMON 90

This sermon is known as Thesermon of Skeletons¹ (Khutbatu'l-Ashbah) and it holds one of the highest positions among the sermons of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S). Mas'adah ibn Sadaqah has related from Imam Ja'fer ibn Muhammed as-Sadiq (□) saying: AImam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) delivered this sermon from the pulpit of (the mosque of) Kufa when someone asked him, AO Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) ! 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. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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. Imam Ali (A.S) ibn Abu Talib ascended the pulpit while he was still in a state of anger and his color was changed. After he had praised Allah and extolled Him and sought His blessings on the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) he said:

Description of Allah?!

Praise to Allah whom refusal to give away and stinginess do not reach 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 Abefore' so that there could not be anything before Him. He is the Last for whom there is no Aafter' so that there could not be anything after 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 of 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 those who beseech make miser.

Attributes of Allah as described in the Holy Qur'an

Then look on the questioner, be confined to those of His attributes which the Holy Qur'an had 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 Holy Qur'an enjoins you to seek nor is there any trace of it in the actions or sayings of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 acknowledgment of ignorance about the details of the hidden unknown prevents them from further probing. 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 the imagination shoots its arrows to comprehend the extremity of His power, the mind, making itself free of the dangers of evil thoughts tries to find Him in the depth of His realm, the hearts long to grasp realities of His attributes and the 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 thereality of His knowledge cannot be comprehended by such random efforts, nor can an iota of the sublimity of His Honor 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 therealm 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 realize 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 favor 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 You with Theseparateness of the limbs or with the joining of the extremities of his body did not acquaint his inner self with knowledge about You, and his heart did not secure conviction to the effect that there is no partner for You. It is as though he has not heard the (wrongful) followers declaiming their false gods by sayings ABy Allah, we are certainly in manifest error when we equaled you with the Master of the worlds (Holy Qur'an, 26:97-98). They are wrong who liken You to their idols, and dress You with apparel of the creatures by their imagination, attribute to You parts of body by their own thinking and consider You after the creatures of various types, through the working of their intelligence. I stand witness that whoever equated You with anything out of Your creation took a match for You, and whoever takes a match for You is an unbeliever, according to what is stated in thy unambiguous verses and indicated by the evidence of Your clear arguments. (I also stand witness that) You 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 portion of the same sermon: About the greatest perfection in Allah's creation

He has fixed limits for everything He has created and has made the limits firm, and He has fixed its working and has 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. How could it do so when all matters are governed by His will. He is the Producer of a variety 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 portion 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) vapor. At once the links of its joints joined u, p. Then Allah opened up its closed door and put Thesentinels of meteors at its holes, and held them with His hands (i.e. power) from falling into the 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 its 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 thereckoning 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 portion of the same sermon:, containing a description of Angels

Then Allah, the Glorified, created for inhabiting of His skies and populating the higher strata of his realm new (a variety of) creatures namely the angels. With them He filled the openings of its cavities and populated them with 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 Honor. 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. ABut they

are rather honored creatures who do not take precedence over Him in uttering anything, and they act according to His command. (Holy Qur'an, 21:26-27) He has made them the trustees of His revelation and sent them to Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s as holders of His injunctions and prohibitions. He has immunized 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 succor 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 blows the light wind which retains them until its last end.

Occupation in His worship has made them carefree, and realities of Faith have served as a link between them and His knowledge. Their belief in Him has made them concentrate on Him. They long for Him not for 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 betake 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. Rancor 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 honor of their Sustainer increases in their hearts.

A portion of the same sermon describing the 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 of 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 its 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 the vastness between the earth and firmament, and provided the blowing wind for its inhabitants. Then He directed its inhabitants to spread all over its convenient places. Thereafter He did not leave the barren tracts of the earth alone 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 heavily raining. 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 Thesending of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

When He has spread out the earth and enforced His commands He chose Adam (□) 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 without 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 Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) - 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 the misfortune 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, ending them with death. He had made death capable of pulling up the ropes of ages and cutting them asunder.

He⁴ knows Thesecrets of those who conceal them, Thesecret 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 the 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 for 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 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 Lord! thou deserves handsome description and the highest esteem. If wish is directed towards You, You art the best to be wished for. If hope is reposed in You, You art the Most Honored to be hoped for. O Lord! You hast bestowed on me such power that I do not praise any one other than You, and I do not eulogize any one save You. I do not direct my praise towards others who are sources of disappointment and centers of misgivings. You hast kept away my tongue from the praises of human beings and eulogies of the created and the sustained. O Lord! every praiser has on whom he praises the right of reward and recompense. Certainly, I have turned to You with my eye at the treasures of Your Mercy and stores of forgiveness.

O Lord! here stands one who has singled You with Oneness that is Your due and has not regarded any one deserving of these praises and eulogies except You. My want towards You is

such that nothing except Your generosity can cure its destitution, nor provide for its need except Your obligation and Your generosity. So do grant us in this place Your will and make us free from stretching hands to anyone other than You. ACertainly, You art powerful over everything. (Holy Qur'an, 66:8)

1. The name of this sermon is Thesermon of Aal-Ashbah. AAshbah 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 grounds for being angry with the questioner was that his request was unconnected with the obligations of shari'ah and beyond the limits of human capacity.

2. Allah is the Guarantor of sustenance and Provider of livelihood as He says the following:

No creature is there crawling on the earth, but its provision rests on Allah. (Holy 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 the following:

All We do aid, these and (also) those out of the bounty of thy Master; and the bounty of thy Master is not confined. (Holy Qur'an, 17:20)

If some one does not secure these things through languor or ease 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 Thesea 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 the following:

. Traverse ye then its broad sides, and eat ye of His provision. (Holy 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 Theseeker. 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 the following:

And that man shall have nothing but what he striveth for. (Holy Qur'an, 53:39)

The order of universe hinges on the maxim ASow and rea, p. 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 addressed Mary and says the following:

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. (Holy Qur'an, 19:25-26)

Allah provided the means for Mary's livelihood. He did not however pluck the dates from the tree and put them in her la, p. 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. 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 forbidden 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 give bearing on human actions, so that it could be questioned whether it was secured in lawful or unlawful actions and manners. 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 Thesequence 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 Afree 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 the Divine ordainment of human effort. And this is somewhere less and somewhere more depending on the proportion of human effort and the aim of the 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.

The Holy Qur'an says the following:

.amplifieth He their sustenance unto whomsoever He willeth and straiteneth; Verily He knoweth all things. (Holy Qur'an, 42:12)

In sermon 23 Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 there is a fixed process and manner for the benevolence of rain namely that vapors rise from Thesea 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 the following:

And there is not a thing but with Us are its treasures, and We do not send it down but in a known measure. (Holy Qur'an, 15:21)

If man's greed and avarice exceeds its bounds, then just as an excess of rain ruins crops instead of growing and bringing them up, so the abundance of the articles of livelihood and the necessities of life would make man oblivious of Allah and rouse him to revolt and unruliness. Consequently, Allah says the following:

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. (Holy Qur'an, 42:27)

If He lessens the food then just as a stopp. of rain makes the land arid and kills the animals, 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 the following:

Or who is that who can provide you with sustenance should He withhold His sustenance?.(Holy 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. Sometimes, 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 the 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 thanksgiving 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 for as 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 vices of Awine, women and song. In such cases 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 Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 Abul-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, colorfulness, 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 offshoot of the same tree (of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Ibrahim who set up the Unity of Allah), a distributory of the same river and a reflection of the same light. (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol7, pp. 23-24)

Those who regard Allah to possess only overall 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 so strikingly obvious before Him there is no reason that with the changes in the objects of knowledge that He too should be regarded as changeable, although really this change is confined to the object of knowledge and does not affect knowing in itself.

SERMON 91

When people decided to swear allegiance¹ to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's hand after the murder of A'Othman, he said:

Leave me and seek someone else. We are facing a matter which has (several) faces and colors, 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 in charge of your affairs. I am better for you as a counselor than as chief.

1. With the murder of A'Othman, the Caliphate became vacant and Muslims began to look at A'Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) whose peaceful conduct, adherence to principles, and political acumen had been witnessed by them to a great extent during this long period. Consequently they rushed to swear allegiance on his righteousness in much the same way a traveler who had lost his way, then finding it again rushes towards his destination, as the historian al-Tabari (in *Tarikh*, Vol1, pp. 3066, 3067, 3076) records:

People thronged to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) and said, A'We want to swear allegiance to you and as you can see what troubles have befallen Islam and how we are being tried about the near ones of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .

But Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) declined to accede to their request whereupon these people raised hue and cry and began to shout loudly, A'O Abul-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 Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) showed no readiness to consent because he was noticing that the effects of the atmosphere that had come into being after the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had overcome hearts and minds of the people. Selfishness and lust for power had become rooted in them, their thinking had become 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 their direction of temperaments. In addition to these ideas he had also seen the end in sight, that these people should have further time to think on it

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 (rational) thought had not been given to it, just as A'Omer'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. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 8, pp.210, 211; *Al-Musnad*, Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Vol1, p.55; al-Tabari, Vol1, p.1822; ibn al-Athir, Vol2, p.327; ibn Hisham, Vol4, pp.308-309; Ibn Kathir, Vol5, p.246)

In short, when their insistence increased beyond limits Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) delivered this sermon wherein he clarified that Alif 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 fulfill your ends. You have seen my past life that I am not prepared to follow anything except the Holy Qur'an and Sunna and would not give up this principle for securing power. If you select someone 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 put 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 heart's 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 Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 they broke away and rose against his government with baseless allegations.

SERMON 92

1

About the annihilation of the Kharijites, the mischief mongering of Umayyads and the vastness of his 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 Judgment 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 therear, 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 questions would remain silent with eyes cast down 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 mischief comes 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, after me you will find Banu Ummayyah the very worst 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 Theseeking 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 nor any sign (of salvation) to be seen. We Ahl al-Bayt (□) (the Household of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) are free from this mischief and we are not among those who would engender it. Thereafter, Allah would dispel it from you like theremoval of the skin (from flesh) through him who would humble them, drag them by their necks, make them drink full cups (of hardships), not extend to them anything but sword and not clothe them except with fear. At that time Quraish 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. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) delivered this sermon after the battle of Nahrawan. In it mischiefs imply the battles fought in Basra, Siffin and Nahrawan because their nature was different from the battles of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . There the opposite party was 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 Siffin till the falling of AAmmar ibn Yasir as martyr did not prove the opposite party was rebellious. Similarly the presence of companions like Talhah and az-Zubayr who were included in the AForetold Ten on the side of AA'isha in Basra, and the prayer signs on foreheads of the Kharijites in Nahrawan 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 Thesecrets of their hearts and thereality of their faith. It was the peculiar perception of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) and his spiritual courage that he rose to oppose them and testified to the saying of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) :

You will fight after me with the breakers of allegiance (people of Jamal), oppressors (people of Syria) and deviators (the Kharijites). (*Al-Mustadrak Aala as-Sahihayn*, al-Hakim, Vol3, p.139, 140; *Al-Durr al-Manthur*, Vol6, p.18; *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 3 , p.1117; *Usd al-Ghaba*, Vol. 4 pp.32, 33; *Tarikh Baghdad*, Vol. 8, p.340; Vol. 13, p. 186, 187; *Tarikh, Ibn AAsakir*, Vol. 5, p.41; *Tarikh, Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 7, pp.304,305,306; *Majma' az-Zawa'id*, Vol. 7, p.238; Vol. 9, , p.235; *Sharh al-Mawahib*, Vol. 3, pp.316-317; *Kanz al-AUmmal*, Vol. 6, pp.72,82,88,155,319,391,392; Vol8, p.215)

2. After the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) no one except Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) could utter the challenge AAsk whatever you want to. ibn AAbdul-Barr in

Jami'Bayan al-Ailm wa fadlihi, Vol. 1 , p.58 and in *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 3, p.1103; ibn al-Athir in *Usd al-Ghaba*, Vol. 4, p.22; ibn Abul-Hadid in *Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol7, p. 46; as-Sayyuti in *Tarikh al-Khulafa'*, p.171 and ibn Hajar al-Haytami in *Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa*, p.76 have written that ANone among the companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ever said AAsk me whatever you want tO except Ali ibn Abu Talib. 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, Muqatil ibn Sulayman, Qaradah ibn Di'amah, AAbd ar-Rahman (Ibn al-Jawzi) and Muhammed ibn Idris ash-Shafi'i etc. but everyone of them faced disgrace and was forced to take back his challenge. This challenge can be urged only by him who knew therealities of the universe and is aware of the happenings of the future. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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. This was so much so that even AOmer had to say that AI seek Allah's protection from the difficulty for the solution of whichAli would not be available. Similarly, the prophesies of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) made about the future proved true word-for-word and served as an index to his vast knowledge, whether they be about the devastation of Banu Umayyah, of the risings of the Kharijites, the wars and destruction by the Tatars, of the attacks of the English, the floods of Basra and the ruination of Kufa. In short when these events are historical realities there is no reason why this challenge of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) should be wondered at.

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 (being Existent).

A portion of the same sermon about the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

Allah kept the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s 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 forefathers to chaste wombs. Whenever a predecessor from among them died the follower stood up for the cause of thereligion of Allah.

About the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and his Descendants (Aitra)

Until this distinction of Allah, the Glorified, reached Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) - 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 honorable places of planting, namely from the same (lineal) tree from which He brought forth other Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s and from which He selected His trustees. Muhammed'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 behavior is guiding, his speech is decisive and his decision is just. Allah sent him after an interval from the previous Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s 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 favor, 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.

SERMON 94

About the condition of the people at the time of the Prophet's proclamation and about his actions having to do with the dissemination of his message

Allah sent the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) - 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.

SERMON 95

In eulogy of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

Praise 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 portion of the same sermon: about the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

His place of stay is the best of all places and his origin the noblest of all origins in the minds of honor and the cradles of safety. Hearts of virtuous persons have been inclined towards him and thereins of eyes have been turned towards him. Through him Allah buried mutual rancor and put off the flames of revolt. Through him He gave them affection like brothers and separated those who were together (through unbelief). His speaking is clear and his silence is (indicative of) the tongue.

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 forward 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 counsel. I straighten you in the morning but you are back to me in the evening as curved as the back of a bow. The one who straightens 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, and their rulers are on trial. Your leader obeys Allah but you disobeyed him while the leader of the people of Syria disobeys Allah but they obey him. By Allah, I wish Mu'awiyah would exchange with me Dinars for Dirhams, so that he gives from me ten of you and give me one from them.

O people of Kufa, 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 Abu Talib like the woman who becomes naked in the front. I am certainly on clear guidance from my Master (Allah) and on the path of my Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and I am on the right path which I adhere to regularly.

About the Household of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

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 them as you would thereby be ruined.

I have seen the companions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 their recollection of their resurrection it seemed as though they stood on live coals. 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 drenched. 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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Ahl al-Bayt (□) (members of his family) had no course except to remain secluded resulting in the world's continued ignorance of their real qualities and being acquainted with their teachings and attainments. To belittle them and keep them away from authority has been considered as the greatest service to Islam. If A'othman'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 Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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'awiyah was sitting in his capital away from the center. In these circumstances there was none except Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 (The Divine Leader) to obey as 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. Furthermore, just as among those who fought in jihad with the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , there were some seekers of this world and others of the next world. Now, in the same way, there was no dearth of worldly men who were, in appearance, with Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) but actually they had connections with Mu'awiyah who has promised some of them positions and had extended to others temptation of wealth. To hold them as Shi'as of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) fourth in Theseries. Ibn Abul-Hadid throws light on the beliefs of these persons in clear words:

Whoever observes minutely the events during the period of Caliphate of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) would know that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had been brought to bay because those who knew his real position were very few. 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. In this matter, those coming later followed theredeceessors and argued that if the predecessors had not the knowledge that the previous Caliphs had precedence over Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) they would not have preferred them to him. Rather, these people knew and took Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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 Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol7, p. 72)

2. The progeny of Saba'ibn Yashjub ibn Ya'rub ibn Qathan is known as the tribe of Saba'. When these people began to falsify prophets, to shake them, Allah sent a 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.

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 unlawful and no pledge but they would break it, and till there would remain no house of bricks or of woolen 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.

SERMON 98

About abstinence of the world and vicissitudes of time

We praise Allah for what has happened and seek His succor 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 will (shortly) 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 travelers 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 honor and its pride, and do not feel happy over its beauties and bounties nor wail over its damages and misfortune because its honor 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 there not for you a warning in the relics of the predecessors and an eye opener and lesson in your forefathers, 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, someone is being condoled, someone is prostrate in distress, someone is inquiring about the sick, someone is passing his last breath, someone 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 fulfillment of His obligatory rights, and for (thanking Him) for His countless bounties and obligations.

SERMON 99

About the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and his Descendants

Praise 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 fulfillment of His rights. We stand witness that there is no god except He and that Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) is His slave and Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . 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 expectation in one who does not¹ 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 descendant (A'l) of Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) - 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 once wished 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.

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, both openly as well as secretly, with heart as well as with tongue, that there is no god but Allah.

O people, do not commit the crime of opposing me, do not be seduced into disobeying me and do not wink at each other with eyes when you hear me. By Allah, Who germinates Theseed and blows the wind, whatever I convey to you is from the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Neither the conveyor (of Allah's message, i.e. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) lied nor the hearer misunderstood.

Well, it is as though I see a misguided man¹ who is shouting in Syria and has put his banners in the outskirts of Kufa. When his mouth would be fully opened, his recalcitrance would become intense and his steps on earth would become heavy (and tyrannical) 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 crops grow and stand 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 Kufa and gales would sweep over it? 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 AAbdul-Malik ibn Marwan.

SERMON 101

On the same subject - Day of Judgment

That day would be such that Allah would collect on it the interiors and the posteriors, to stand in obedience for exaction of accounts and for award of recompense for deeds. Sweat would flow to their mouths like rains while the 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 portion 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 Basra, when an army of Allah's infliction would face you without (raising) their dust of cries. Your inhabitants would then face bloody death and dire hunger.

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 (perceived) 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 everything that is to come up should be taken as just near.

A portion 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 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 portion 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 keeps 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). (Holy Qur'an, 23:30)

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: As regards Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's words Akullu Mu'minin nuwamah (every sleeping believer), he implies thereby one who is talked of little and causes no evil. And the word Aal-masayth is the plural of Amisyah. He is one who spreads trouble among people through evils and calumny. And the word Aal-madhayi is the plural of Amidhya. He is one who upon hearing of an evil about some one spreads it and shouts about it. And Aal-budhur is the plural of Abadur. 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 Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) as the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) while no one among the Arabs read the Book nor claimed prophethood or revelation. He had to fight those who disobeyed him in the company with those who followed him, leading them towards their salvation and hastening with them lest death overtake them. When any weary person sighed or a distressed one stopped, he stood with

him till he got him his desire, except the worst in whom there was no virtue at all. Eventually he showed them their goal and carried them to their places (of deliverance). Consequently their affairs moved on and their handmill began to rotate (i.e. a 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.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: 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.

SERMON 104

In eulogy of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

Then Allah deputed Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) as a witness, giver of good tidings and warner, the best in the universe as a child and the most chaste as a grown man, the purest of the purified in conduct, and the most generous of those who are approached for generosity.

About the Ummayyads

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 unlawful items were far away, not available. By Allah, you would find liken a long shade until 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 Banu 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 accepts 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 and following his opinion which he changes (one after the other). He wants to 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 Sunna, to enforce penalties on those liable to them and to issue shares to the deserving. So hasten toward 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).

SERMON 105

About Islam

Praise 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 a shield for him who endures.

It is the brightest of all paths and the clearest of all passages. It has dignified minarets, bright highways, burning lamps, prestigious fields of activity, and high objectives. It has a collection of race horses. It is approached eagerly. Its riders are honorable. A testimony (to Allah, Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , etc.) is its way, good deeds are its minarets, death is in extremity, this world is its race-course. The Day of Judgment is its horses and Paradise is its point of approach.

A portion of the same sermon: about the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) lit flames for Theseeker and put bright signs for the impeded. So he is Your trustworthy trustee, Your witness on the Day of Judgment, Your deputy as a blessing and Your messenger of truth as mercy. May Allah distribute to him a share from Your Justice and award him multiples of good by Your bounty. May Allah heighten his construction over the construction of others, honor him when he comes to You, dignify his position before You, give him honorable position, and award him glory and distinction, and bring us out (on Day of Judgment) among his party, neither ashamed, nor repentant, nor deviators, nor pledge-breakers, nor strayers, nor misleaders, nor seduced.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: This sermon had already appeared earlier but we have repeated it here because of the difference between the two versions.

A portion of the same sermon: addressed to his followers

By the bounty of Allah over you, you have acquired a position where even your slave maids are honored, your neighbors are treated well. Even he over whom you enjoy no distinction or obligation honors 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 back to you; but you have given your place to wrongdoers and thrown your responsibilities toward them. You have placed Allah's affairs in their hands. They act in doubts and tread in (fulfillment 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 Siffin

I have seen your flight and your dispersal from the lines. You were surrounded by rude and low people and bedouins of Syria , although you are the chiefs of Arabs and the summit of

distinction, and you possess dignity as that of the high nose and the big hump of a 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 therear ones just like the thirsty camels who have been turned away from their place of drink and removed from their water-points.

SERMON 107

It is one of the sermons about the vicissitudes of time

Praise 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 portion of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

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-Bat'ha', from the lamps for darkness, and from the sources of wisdom.

A portion of the same sermon:

The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was like a roaming physician who has readied 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.

Remonstrating with the Muslims

They (people) did not take light from the lights of his wisdom nor did 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 that you are 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 deaf and speaking but dumb.

I notice that misguidance has stood on its center and spread (all around) 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 Thesediment 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, gloom 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. Wrong has pounced in

time like a devouring carnivore and shouts like a camel after remaining silent. People have become brothers over ill-doings, have forsaken the essential unity of the religion but have instead, united in speaking lies and bear mutual hatreds 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 unturned like (dead) skin.

SERMON 108

About the Might of Allah

Everything submits to Him and everything exists by Him. He is the satisfaction of the poor, the dignity of the low, the energy for the weak and shelter for the oppressed. Whoever speaks, He hears his speaking, and whoever keeps quiet, He knows his secret. On Him is the livelihood of everyone who lives, and whoever dies returns to Him.

(O Allah!) the eyes have not seen You so as to be aware of You, but You were before the describers of Your creation. You did not create the creation on account of loneliness, nor did You make them work for gain. He whom You catches cannot go farther than You, and he whom You holds cannot escape You. He who disobeys You does not decrease Your authority, and he who obeys You does not add to Your Might. He who disagrees with Your judgment cannot turn it, and he who turns away from Your command cannot do without You. Every secret before You is open and for You every absent is present.

You art everlasting, there is no end to You. You art the highest aim, there is no escape from You, You art the promised (point of return) from which there is no deliverance except towards You. In Your hand is the forelock of every creature and to You is the return of every living being. Glory to You! How great is Your creation that we see, but how small is this greatness by the side of Your Might. How awe-striking is Your realm that we notice, but how humble is this against what is hidden from us out of Your authority. How extensive are Your bounties in this world, but how small are they against the bounties of the next world.

A portion of the same sermon about the Angels:

You (O Allah) made angels reside in Your skies and placed them high above from Your earth. They have the most knowledge about You and Your whole creation, the most fearing from You, and the nearest to You. They never stayed in loins nor were retained in wombs. They were not created from mean water (semen) (Holy Qur'an, 32:8; 77:20). They were not dispersed by vicissitudes of time. They are on their places (distinct) from You and in their positions near You. Their desires are concentrated in You. Their worship for You is much. Their neglect from Your command is little. If they witness what remains hidden about You they would regard their deeds as very little, they would criticize themselves and would realize that they did not worship You according to Your right for being worshipped and did not obey You as You has the right for being obeyed.

About the bounties and guidance of Allah, and those who are ungrateful

Glorified art You, the Creator, the Worshipped, on account of Your good trials of Your creatures. You created a house (the Paradise) and provided in it for feasting, drinks, foods, spouses, servants, places, streams, plantations and fruits. Then You sent a messenger to invite

towards it. But the people did not respond to the caller, and did not feel persuaded to what You persuaded them nor showed eagerness towards what You desired them to eagerly feel. They jumped on the carcass (of this world), earned shame by eating it and became united in 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 disaster from Allah, nor takes admonition from any preacher. He sees those who have been caught in neglect whence there is neither rescission nor reversion (repentance).

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 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 his 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 he 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 or 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 him, 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 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 would abandon visiting him.

About the Day of Judgment

Until whatever is written as ordained approaches its and 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 forever 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, the 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, nor period for its life that might pass away.

A portion of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

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), counseled his people as a warner (against the Divine chastisement) and he called (people) towards Paradise as a conveyor of good tidings.

About the Descendants of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

We are the tree of prophethood, staying place of (The 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.

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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household), fighting in His cause, for it is the high pinnacle of Islam, and (to believe) in the kalimatu'l-Aikhlas (the expression of the Divine purification). It is a just nature and the establishment of prayer for it is (the basis of) community. The 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 *hajj* to the House of Allah (i.e. Ha'bah) and its Aumrah (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. 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 Sunna

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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) for it is the most distinguished course. Follow the Sunna of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) for it is the most right of all behaviors. Learn the Holy 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.

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 rejoicing does not last and its afflictions cannot be avoided. It is deceitful, harmful, changing, perishable, exhaustible, liable to destruction, gnawing 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 Holy 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
has 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 therear. No one receives the light rain of ease in it but the heavy rain of distress pours upon him. It is 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 therein 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 made them tumble; 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 are exposed to death; the healthy in it are exposed to disease. Its realm is (liable to be) snatched away. The strong in it are (liable to be) defeated and the rich are (liable to be) afflicted with misfortune. The neighbor 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 departed 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 anything other than repentance? Is this what you ask for so much or remain satisfied with, or towards which you feel greedy? How bad is this abode for him that 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 Awho proclaimed Awho is more powerful than we' (Holy 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 neighbor. They are neighbors who do not answer a caller nor ward off trouble, nor pay heed to a 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 cause its return. (It is) a promise binding Us, verily We were doing it. (Holy Qur'an, 21:104)

SERMON 111

About the Angel of Death and the spirit taking leave

Do you feel when the Angel of Death enters a house, or do you see him when he calls the life out from someone? 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 does the spirit respond 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?

SERMON 112

About the 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 of a house which falls down like fallen construction or what (Existent) good is there in an age which expires as the provision exhausts, or of time which passes like walking?

Include whatever Allah has made obligatory on you in your demands. Ask from Him fulfillment 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 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 caused separation (disunity) among you. As a consequence you do not bear one another's burdens, nor do you advise each other, nor spend on each other, nor do you love one another.

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 been deceived 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.

SERMON 113

About abstemiousness, fear of Allah 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 for His bounties as for His trials. 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 Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) is His slave and His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household), Allah may bless him and his descendants. These two testifications 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 toward 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 days 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 enviable 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 one who desires is 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 tomorrow, 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 Afear Allah as He ought to be feared and do not die until you are (true) Muslim. (Holy Qur'an, 3:102)

SERMON 114

Praying for rain

O Lord! 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 Lord! have mercy on the groan of the groaning and yearn of the yearning. O Lord! have mercy on their bewilderment and their passages and their groaning in their yards.

O Lord! we have come out to You when the years of drought have crowded over us like (a herd of) thin camels and rain clouds have abandoned us. You art the hope for the afflicted and succor for Theseeker. We call You when the people have lost hope, when cloud have been denied and cattle have died; do not seize us for our deeds and do not catch us for our sins. Spread Your mercy over us through raining clouds, rain fed blossoming, amazing vegetation, and heavy downpours with which all that was dead regains life and all that was lost returns.

O Lord! give rain from You which should be life giving, satisfying, thorough, widely scattered, pure, blissful, plentiful and invigorating. Its vegetation should be exuberant and its branches full of fruits and its green leaves. With it You invigorates the weak among Your creatures and brings back to life the dead among Your cities.

O Lord! give rain from You with which our highlands get covered with green herbage, streams get flowing, our slopes grow green, our fruits thrive, our cattle prosper, our far flung areas get watered and our dry areas get its benefit, with Your vast blessing and immeasurable grant on Your distressed universe and Your 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, You pours down rain after the people lose hopes and spreads Your mercy, since You art the Guardian, the praiseworthy.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: the wonderful expressions of this sermon: Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's words Ainsahat jibaluna means the mountains cracked on account of drought. It is said Ainsaha ththawbu when it is torn. It is also said Ainsaha'n-nabtu or Asaba or Asawwaha when vegetation withers and dries up.

His phrase Awa hamat dawabbuna means "became thirsty", as Ahuyam means thirst.

His words Ahadabiru's-sinin: This is plural of Ahidbar. It means the camel whom trading has made thin. So Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) likened with such or camel the year in which drought had occurred. The Arab poet Dhu ar-Rumma has said:

These thin camels remain in their places, facing hardships and move only when we take them to some dry area.

His words Awa la qaza'in rababuha. Here Aal-qaza means small pieces of cloud scattered all around.

His words Awa la shaffanin dhihabuha. It stands for Awa la dhata shAffanin dhihabuha. AAsh-shAffan means the cold wind and Aadh-dhihab means light rain. He omitted the world Adhata from here because of the listener's knowledge of it.

SERMON 115

About troubles which would arise and the Day of Judgment

Allah deputed him (the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) as a caller towards Truth and a witness over the creatures. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 portion 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. You would have abandoned your properties without any guard for it or 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 you and me and given 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 honors.

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 Wadhahah, is that all?

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: Aal-Wadhahah means Aal-khunfusa (dung-beetle). In this sentence Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has referred to al-Hajjai ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafi and he had an incident with Aal-Khunfusa', which need not be related here.1

The detail of this incident is that one day al-Hajjaj stood up for saying prayers when al-khunfusa' advanced towards him. Al-Hajjaj held out his hand to stop him but he bit him whereby his hand got swollen and eventually he died of it.

Ibn Abul-Hadid has written that Aal-Wadhahah means the dung that remains sticking to the tail of an animal, and this surname is intended to disgrace him.

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 honor through Allah among His creatures, but you do not honor Allah among His creatures. You should derive lessons from occupying the places of those who were before you and from the departure of your nearest brothers.

SERMON 117

In praise of his faithful companions

You are supporters of Truth and brethren in faith. You are the shield on the day of tribulation, and (my) trustees among therest 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.

SERMON 118

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) collected the people and exhorted them¹ to jihad but they observed a hlong silence. Then he said: AWhat is the matter with you. Have you become dumb? A group of them replied: AO Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) if you go forth we shall be with you. Whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) 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, the center of its rotation would be disturbed and its lower stone would also be disturbed. By

Allah, this is very bad advice. By Allah, if I had not been hoping for martyrdom by my meeting with the enemy - and my meeting with them has been ordained, I would have secured my carrier and went away from you and would not have sought you so long as the North and South differed.

There is no benefit in the majority of your numbers because of a 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 Siffin, Mu'awiyah's forces began to attack various places in Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's area, he asked Theiraqis 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 against politics to keep the center unguarded. But what could be hoped from those who changed the victory at Siffin into defeat and opened the door for these attacks.

SERMON 119

About the greatness of Ahl al-Bayt (□) and the importance of the laws of Islam

By Allah, I have knowledge of the conveyance of messages, fulfillment of promises and of entire expressions. We the people of the house (Ahl al-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! The¹ 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 therecipient 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 the following:

Happy is he who is remembered well after himself, for nothing, save the name, remains after the man is dead.

SERMON 120

A man from among the companions of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib stood up and said, AO Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), you first stopped us from Arbitration and thereafter gave order for it. We do not know which of these two was more appropriate. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) struck one hand over the other and said:

This is thereward of one who breaks a 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 through whom? I wanted my treatment from you but you proved to be my disease, like the one who extracts a thorn with another thorn when he knows that the thorn bends toward itself.

My Allah, the physicians have despaired of this fatal ailment and water-drawers have become tired with the rope of this well. Where¹ are those who were invited to Islam and they accepted it? They read the Holy Qur'an and decided according to it. They were exhorted to fight and they leapt (toward it) as she-camels leap towards their young. 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 color 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 Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) were called Shi'as of Ali, yet only those who had tears in their eyes, paleness on their faces, the Holy 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'as of Ali. These were the people in whose separation Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib'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 the following:

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 (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of the Shi'a 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 Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) saw a group of men at his door and enquired from Qanbar who they were and he answered they were his Shi'as. On hearing this Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had a frown on his forehead and said, AWhy are they called Shi'as? They have no sign of Shi'as. Thereupon, Qanbar enquired as to what the signs of Shi'as were, and of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) replied thus:

Their bellies are thin through hunger, their lips dry through thirst and their eyes bleared through weeping.

SERMON 121

When the Kharijites persisted in their rejecting the Arbitration, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) went to their camp and addressed them thus:

Were all of you' with us in Siffin? They replied that some of them were but some of them were not. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

Then you divide yourself into two groups. Some were in Siffin and others were not, so 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 Holy Qur'an by way of deceit, craft, artifice and cheat, did you not say AThey 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, AIn 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 *jihad* and should not pay heed to the shouts of the shouter.² If he is answered he would mislead, but if he is left (answered) he would be disgraced.

But when this thing (Arbitration) was done I found that you agreed 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, not that I have accepted it, I alone am the rightful person who should be followed, for certainly the Holy Qur'an is with me. I have never forsaken it since I adopted its company. We have been with the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) 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 (the 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 Abul-Hadid writes that this sermon comprises three parts which do not fit together, because Sayyid ar-Radhi selected some parts of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib'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 Aif he is left unanswered he would be disgraced, the other at Aand endurance at the pain of wound and the third runs till the end of Thesermon.

2. This reference is to Mu'awiyah or AAmr ibn al-As.

SERMON 122

Address of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) to his followers on the battlefield of Siffin

About supporting the weak and the low-spirited during the fighting

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

A portion of the same sermon:

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

SERMON 123

To exhort his followers to fight¹

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

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

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

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

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

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: Aad-da'q means trampling, e.g., Ataduququ'l-khuyulu bihawafiriha ardahum (the horses trample the ground with their hoofs). Anawahini ardihim means lands opposite each other, it is said, Amanazilu bani fulanin tatanaharu meaning the Ahouses of so-and-so are opposite each other.

1. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) delivered this sermon on the occasion of the battle of Siffin. This battle was fought in the year 37 A.H. between Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) and the governor of Syria , Mu'awiyah, for the so-called avenging for the killing of Caliph AOthman. But in reality it was nothing more than Mu'awiyah who had been the autonomous governor of Syria from Caliph AOmer's days. He, not wanting to lose that position by swearing allegiance to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) but wanting to keep his authority intact by exploiting the killing of Caliph AOthman, for later events, proved, that after securing the government, he did not take

any practical step to avenge A'Othman's blood. And he never spoke, not even through omission, about the killers of A'Othman.

Although from the first day Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) realized that was inevitable, it was still necessary to exhaust all pleas. Therefore Monday the 12th Rajab, 36 A.H. he returned to Kufa after the Battle of Jamal. He sent Jarir ibn A'Abdillah al-Bajali with a letter to Mu'awiyah at Damascus wherein he wrote that the Muhajirun and the Ansar had sworn allegiance to him and that he too should first swear him allegiance and thereafter place the case of A'Othman's killing before him so that he could pass verdict thereon according to the Holy Qur'an and Sunna. But Mu'awiyah detained Jarir on several pretexts and after consulting A'Amr ibn al-AAAs, staged a revolt on the excuse of A'Othman's killing. And with the help of important persons of Syria, he convinced the ignorant people that the liability for A'Othman's life lay on Ali (A.S) and that he, with his conduct, had encouraged the besiegers and had given them protection. Meanwhile he hung the blood-stained shirt of A'Othman and the amputated fingers of his wife Na'ila daughter of al-Farafisah on the pulpit in the Central Mosque of Damascus around which seventy thousand Syrians cried and swore the pledge to avenge A'Othman's blood. When Mu'awiyah had roused the feelings of the Syrians to such an extent that they were determined to lay down their lives and be killed, he secured their allegiance on the cause of avenging A'Othman's blood and busied himself in equipping for the battle. Thereafter, he showed all this to Jarir and then sent him back mortified.

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) learned of these matters through Jarir ibn A'Abdillah al-Bajali, he was forced to rise against Mu'awiyah, and ordered Malik ibn Habib al-Yarbu'i to mobilize the forces in the valley of An-Nukhayla. Consequently, people from the suburbs of Kufa began arriving there in large numbers, till they exceeded eighty thousand. First of all, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) sent a vanguard contingent, eight thousand strong, under Ziyad ibn an-Nadr al-Harithi and another of four thousand strong under Shurayh ibn Hani al-Harithi towards Syria. After the departure of this vanguard contingent he himself set out for Syria at the head of the remaining army on Wednesday the 5th of Shawwal. When he was out of the boundary of Kufa he offered *zuhr* (noon) prayer and after staying at Dayr Abu Musa, Nahr (river) Nars, Quba't Qubbin, Babil, Dayr Ka'b, Kerbala', Sabat, Bahurasini, al-Anbar and Jazira arrived at ar-Riqqah. The people of this place were in favor of A'Othman, and at this very place Simak ibn Makhtamah al-Asadi was putting up eight hundred men. These people had left Kufa to join Mu'awiyah after deserting Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S). When they had seen Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's force, they had dismantled the bridge over the River Euphrates so that the Imam's army should not cross over to the other side of the river. But at the threatening of Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar an-Nakh'i they were frightened. After consultations among themselves they put the bridge together again and Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) passed over it with his army. When he alighted on the other side of the river he saw that Ziyad and Shurayh were also camped there along with their men since both of them had adopted the land route. When, on reaching here, they found that Mu'awiyah was advancing with his armies towards the Euphrates and thinking that they would not be able to face him, they stopped there waiting for Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S). When they had given thereason for their stopping there, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) accepted their plea and sent them forward. When they reached Surat ar-Rum they found that Abul-A'war al-Salami was camping there with his army. Both of them informed Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) of this. Whereupon he despatched Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar an-Nakh'in in their wake as the Officer in Command and cautioned him not to initiate the fighting but to try to

counsel them and apprise them of the correct position as far as possible. In this way, on reaching there Malik al-Ashtar encamped a little distance away. Fighting could have commenced any moment, but he did not interfere with the other side nor did he take any step by which fighting could have been commenced. But Abul-A'war suddenly attacked them at night, whereupon they took their swords out of the sheaths and prepared to repulse them. Clashes between the two sides went on for sometime but in the end, taking benefit of the darkness of night Abul-A'war fled away. Since fighting had already commenced, soon after the appearance of dawn an Iraqi commander, Hashim ibn AUtbah al-Mirqal az-Zuhri, took his position in the battlefield. From the other side also a contingent came to face him, and the flames of fighting rose. At last Malik al-Ashtar challenged Abul-AAwar to fight him, but he did not dare to face him, and towards the evening Malik al-Ashtar went onward with his men. The next day Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) reached there with his force and set off for Siffin with the vanguard contingent and other forces. Mu'awiyah had already reached there and had set up his bases. He had also placed a guard on the Euphrates and had occupied it. On reaching there Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) sent him word to remove the guard from Euphrates, but he refused, whereupon Theiraqis took out their swords and in a courageous attack captured the Euphrates. When this stage was over Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) sent Bashir ibn AAmr al-Ansari, Sa'id ibn Qays al-Hamdani and Shabath ibn Rib'i at-Tamimi to Mu'awiyah to apprise him of the consequences of war and to make him agree to settlement and allegiance. But his relay was that they could not by any means let AOthman's blood remain neglected, and that now the sword alone would arbitrate between them. Consequently in the month of Dhi'l-hijjah 36 A.H. both the parties decided on war and warriors from each side came out into the field to face their adversary. Those who entered the battlefield from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's side were: Hijr ibn AAdi al-Kindi, Shabath ibn Rib'i at-Tamimi, Khalid ibn al-Mu'ammam, Ziyad ibn an-Nadr al-Harithi, Ziyad ibn Khasafah at-Taymi, Sa'id ibn Qays al-Hamdani, Qays ibn Sa'd al-Ansari and Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar an-Nakh'i while from the Syrians there were, AAbd ar-Rahman ibn Khalid ibn al-Walid al-Makhzumi, Abul-A'war al-Salami, Habib ibn Maslamah al-Fihri, AAbdullah ibn Dhi'l-Kala'al-Himyari, AUbaydullah ibn AOmer ibn al-Khattab, Shurahbil ibn Simt al-Kindi, and Hamzah ibn Malik al-Hamdani. When the month of Thil-Hijja came to end the fighting had to be stopped for Muharram, but from the 1st of Safar fighting was resumed and both parties arrayed themselves opposite each other, equipped with swords, spears and other weapons. On Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's side Malik al-Ashtar was in command of the horsemen and AAmmar ibn Yasir of the foot soldiers of Kufa while Sahl ibn Hanayf al-Ansari was in command of the horsemen and Qays ibn Sa'd of the foot soldiers of Basra. The banner of the army was given to Hashim ibn AUtbah. In the army of the Syrians on the right hand contingent ibn Dhi'l-Kala' was in command, while on the left hand contingent Habib ibn Maslamh, on horsemen AAmr ibn al-As and on foot soldiers ad-Dahhak ibn Qays al-Fihri were in command.

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

The next day, Hashim ibn AUtbah came out with Ali's army and from the other side Abul-A'war with his footmen came to face him. When the two armies approached each other, horsemen fell upon horsemen and footmen upon footmen and continued attacking each other, and they endured with great patience and steadfastness.

On the third day, Ammar ibn Yasir and Ziyad ibn an-Nadr came out with horsemen and foot soldiers and from the other side Amr ibn al-As came forward with a big force. Ziyad attacked the horsemen of the opposite side and Malik al-Ashtar attacked the foot soldiers so furiously that the enemy's men lost ground and, failing to offer resistance, returned to their camps.

On the fourth day Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya appeared on the battlefield with his men. From the other side Ubaydullah ibn Omer came forward with the Syrian army and both the armies had a serious encounter.

On the fifth day Abdullah ibn Abbas came forward and from the other side al-Walid ibn Uqba ibn Abu Mu'ayt came to face him. Abdullah ibn Abbas carried the assaults with great steadfastness and courage and gave such a brave fight that the enemy left the field in retreat.

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

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

On the eighth day Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) himself came out with the army and made such an assault that the entire battlefield quaked, and piercing through the ranks and warding off shots of arrows and spears he came and stood between both the lines. Then he challenged Mu'awiyah, whereupon the latter, along with Amr ibn al-As, came a bit closer. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said to him: Come out and face me. Let whoever kills the other be the ruler. Whereupon Amr ibn al-As said to Mu'awiyah: Ali (A.S) is right. Gather up a little courage and face him. Mu'awiyah replied, I am not prepared to waste my life at your taunting. Saying this he went back. When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) saw him retreating he smiled and himself too returned. The daring with which Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) led the attacks in Siffin can only be called a miraculous feat. Thus, whenever he came out challenging in the battlefield, the enemy lines were dispersed into utter disarray and confusion, and even courageous combatants hesitated to appear against him. That is why on a few occasions he came onto the battlefield in changed dress so that the enemy should not recognize him and someone should be prepared to engage with him personally. Once Arar ibn Ad'ham came from the other side to engage in duel with Abbas ibn Rabi'ah al-Harith ibn Abdul-Muttalib. They remained engaged but neither could defeat the other, until Abbas chanced to see that a link of his adversary's armour was loose. With a swift stroke he entangled the point of his sword in it, and then with a quick jerk he cut through a few more links. Then with true aim he gave such a blow that his sword went straight into his bosom. Seeing this, people raised the call of takbir. Mu'awiyah was startled at this noise and on coming to know that Arar ibn Ad'ham had been slain he was much disturbed and shouted if there was anyone to take revenge for Arar ibn Adham and kill Abbas. Abbas came to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) to seek permission. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) detained him, put on Abbas dress, and riding on Abbas's horse entered the battlefield. Taking him to be Abbas, the Lakhams said: So you have got your chief's permission. In reply Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) recited the following verse:

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

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

On the ninth day, the right wing was under the command of ʿAbdullah ibn Budayl and the left wing under that of ʿAbdullah ibn ʿAbbas. In the center was Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) himself. On the other side Habib ibn Maslamah commanded the Syrian army. When both the lines had come face to face with each other, the valiant soldiers drew out their swords and pounced upon one another like ferocious lions, and fighting raged on all sides. The banner of the right wing of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's army was revolving in the hands of Banu Hamdan. Whenever anyone of them fell, martyred, someone else would pick up the banner. First of all Kurayb ibn Shurayh raised the banner, on his fall Shurahbil ibn Shurayh took it up, then Marthad ibn Shurayh, then Hubayrah ibn Shurayh then Yarim ibn Shurayh, then Sumayr ibn Shurayh and after the killing of all these six brothers the banner was taken up by Sufyan, then ʿAbd, then Kurayb, the three sons of Zayd, who all fell martyred. After that the banner was lifted by two brothers (sons) of Bashir namely ʿUmayr and al-Harithi and when they too fell martyred, Wahab ibn Kurayb took up the banner. On this day the enemy's greater attention was on the right wing and its assaults were so fierce that the men lost ground and began to retreat from the battlefield. Only three hundred men remained with the Officer in Command ʿAbdullah ibn Budayl. On seeing this Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) asked Malik al-Ashtar to call them back and challenge them as to where they were fleeing. If the days of life are over they cannot avoid death by running away. Now the defeat of the right wing could not be without effect on the left wing, so Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) turned to the left wing and advanced forward, forcing through the enemy lines, whereupon a slave of Banu Umayyah named Ahmar said to him, Allah may make me die if I fail to slay you today. On hearing this Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's slave Kaysan leapt over him but was killed by him. When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) saw this he caught him by the skirt of his armour and, picking him up, threw him down so forcefully that all his joints were smashed, whereupon Imam Hasan (ؑ) and Muhammed ibn al-Hanafiyya came forward and dispatched him to Hell. Meanwhile, after having been called to Malik al-Ashtar and his having made them feel ashamed, those who retreated came back and again assaulted so steadfastly that pushing back the enemy they reached the place where ʿAbdullah ibn Budayl was surrounded by the enemy. When he saw his own men he picked up courage and leapt towards Mu'awiyah's tent with drawn sword. Malik al-Ashtar tried to stop him but he couldn't, and, killing seven Syrians, he reached the tent of Mu'awiyah. When Mu'awiyah noticed him close by he ordered him to be stoned, as a result of which he was overpowered and the Syrians crowded over him and killed him. When Malik al-Ashtar saw this he proceeded forward with the combatants of Banu Hamdan and Banu Madh'hij for an attack on Mu'awiyah, and began dispersing the contingent on guard around him. When, out of the five circles of his guards only one remained to be dispersed, Mu'awiyah put his foot in the stirrup of his horse in order to run away, but on someone's encouragement again stopped. On another side of the battlefield a tumult was raging from one end to the other by the swords of ʿAmmar ibn Yasir and Hashim ibn ʿUtbah. From whatever

side AAmmar passed, the companions (of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) flocked around him and then made such a joint assault that destruction spread throughout the enemy lines. When Mu'awiyah saw them advancing he threw his fresh forces towards them. But he continued displaying the excellence of his bravery under the storm of swords and spears. At last Abul-AAAdiah al-Juhani hit him with a spear from which he could not balance himself and then ibn Hawiy (Jawn as-Saksiki) came forward and slew him. AAmmar ibn Yasir's death caused tumult in Mu'awiyah's ranks because about him they had heard the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) having said: AAmmar will be killed at the hands of a rebellious party. Thus before he fell as martyr Dhu'l-Kala' had said to AAmr ibn al-Aas, AI see AAmmar on Ali's side; are we that rebellious party? AAmr ibn al-AAAs had assured him that eventually AAmar would join them, but when he was killed fighting on Ali's side therebellious party stood exposed and no scope was left for any other interpretation. Nevertheless Mu'awiyah started telling the Syrians, AWe did not kill AAmmar, but Ali did it because he brought him to the battlefield. When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) heard this cunning sentence he remarked, AIn that case the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) killed Hamzah as he had brought him to the battlefield of Uhud. Hashim ibn AUtbah also fell in this conflict. He was killed by al-Harith ibn Munthir at-Tanukhi. After him the banner of the contingent was taken over by his son AAbdullah.

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

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

In this battle forty-five thousand Syrians were killed while twenty-five thousand Iraqis fell as martyrs. (*Kitab Siffin* by Nasr ibn Muzahim al-Minqari [d. 212 A.H.] and *Tarikh al-Tabari*, Vol. 1, p.3256-3349).

SERMON 124

About the Kharijites and their opinion on Arbitration

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

*.And then if ye quarrel about anything refer it to Allah
and the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . (Holy Qur'an, 4:59)*

Reference to Allah means that we decide according to the Holy Qur'an while reference to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) means that we follow his Sunna. Now therefore, if arbitration were truly done through the Book of Allah (Holy Qur'an), we would be the most rightful of all people for the Caliphate; or if it were done by the Sunna of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , we would be the most preferable of them.

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

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

SERMON 125

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was spoken ill of for showing equality in the distribution (of shares from *bayt al-mal* or the Muslim Public Treasury) he said:

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

SERMON 126

About the Kharijites

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

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

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

SERMON 127

About important events in Basra

O Ahnaf! It is as though I see him advancing with an army which has neither dust nor noise, nor rustling of reins, nor neighing of horses. They are trampling the ground with their feet as if they are the feet of ostriches.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) pointed to the Chief of the Blackes, (Sahibu'z-Zanj).¹ Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said,

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

A portion of the same sermon:

Referring to the Turks (Mongols)

I² can see a people whose faces are like shields covered with roughly-scraped skins. They dress themselves in silken and woolen clothes and hold dear excellent horses. Their killing and bloodshed shall take place freely till the wounded shall walk over the dead and the number of runners-away shall be less than those taken prisoner.

One of his companions said to him, AO Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), you have been given knowledge of hidden things. Whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) laughed and said to the man who belonged to the tribe of Banu Kalb,

AO brother of Kalb! This is not knowledge of hidden things (Ailmul-ghayb),³ these matters have been acquired from him (namely in Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) who knew them. As regard knowledge of hidden things, that means knowledge of the Day of Judgment, and the things covered by Allah in the verse;

Verily, Allah is He with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour. (Holy Qur'an, 31:34)

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

1. Ali ibn Muhammed was born in the village of Warzanin in the suburbs of Ray, and belonged to the Azariqah sect of the Kharijites. He claimed to be a Sayyid (descendant of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) by showing himself the son of Muhammed ibn Ahmed al-Mukhtafi ibn AIsa ibn Zayd ibn Ali ibn al-Husain ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib, but the experts on genealogy, as well as biographers, have all rejected his claim to being a Sayyid and have given his father's name as Muhammed ibn AAbd ar-Rahim instead of Muhammed ibn Ahmed. The former was from the tribe of AAbdul-Qays and had been born of a Sindi maid-slave.

Ali ibn Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) rose as an insurgent in 255 A.H. in thereign of al-Muhtadi Billah and associated with him the people from the suburbs of Basra on promise of money, wealth and freedom. He entered Basra on the 17th Shawwal, 255 A.H. killing and looting, and in only two days he put to death thirty thousand individuals, men, women and children, and displayed extreme opposition, bloodshed, savageness and ferocity. He dismantled houses, burnt mosques, and after continuous killing and devastation for fourteen years, was killed in the month of Safar, 270 A.H. in thereign of Muwaffaq Billah. Then people got rid of his devastating deeds.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's prophecy is one of those prophecies which throw light on his knowledge of the unknown. The details of his army given by Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) namely that there would be neither the neighing of horses nor the rustling of weapons therein is a historical fact. The historian al-Tabari has written that when this man reached near al-Karkh (a sector of Baghdad) with the intention of instruction, the people of that place welcomed him, and a man presented him a horse for which no rein could be found despite a search. At last he rode it using a rope for therein. Similarly there were at that time only three swords in his force-one with himself, one with Ali ibn Aban al-Muhallabi, and one with Muhammed ibn Salm but later they collected some more weapons by marauding.

2. This prophecy of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) is about the attack of the Tartars (Mongols) who were inhabitants of the Mongolian desert in the north west of Turkey. These

semi-savage tribes lived by marauding, killing and devastating. They used to fight among themselves and attack neighboring areas. Each tribe had a separate chief who was deemed responsible for their protection. Chingiz Khan (Temujin) who was one of the ruling chiefs of these tribes and was very brave and courageous had risen to organize all their divided tribes into one, and, despite their opposition he succeeded in overpowering them through his might and sagacity. Collecting a large number under his banner he rose in 606 A.H. like a torrent and went on dominating cities and ruining populations till he conquered the area up to North China.

When his authority was established he offered his terms of settlement to AAla'ud-Din Khwarazm Shah, ruler of the neighboring country of Turkey, and through a deputation concluded an agreement with him that Tartar traders would be allowed to visit his country for trade and their life and property would not be subject to any harm. For some time they traded freely without fear but on one occasion AAla'ud-Din accused them of spying, seized their goods and had them killed by the Chief of Atrar. When Chingiz Khan learned of the breach of the agreement and the killing of Tartar merchants his eyes cast forth flames and he began trembling with rage. He sent word to AAla'ud-Din to return the goods of the Tartar merchants and to hand over to him the ruler of Atrar. AAla'd-Din, who was mad with power and authority, did not pay any heed, and acting short-sightedly killed even the plenipotentiary of Jenkiz Khan. Now Chingiz Khan lost all patience and his eyes filled with blood. He rose with his sword in hand, and the Tartar warriors leapt towards Bukhara on their speedy stallions. AAla'ud-Din came out with four hundred thousand combatants to face him but could not resist the incessant assaults of the Tartars, and having been vanquished only after a few attacks ran away to Nishapur across the river Jaxartes (Sihun). The Tartars smashed Bukhara and razed it to the ground. They pulled down schools and mosques, burning the houses to ashes and killing men and women without distinction. The next year they assaulted Samarqand and devastated it completely. After the fight of AAla'ud-Din, his son Jalalu'd-Din Khwarazm Shah had assumed therein of government. The Tartars chased him also, and for ten years he fled from one place to the other but did not fall in their hands. At last he crossed over the river out of the boundaries of his realm. During this time the Tartars did their utmost to ruin populated lands and to annihilate humanity. No city escaped their ruining and no populace could avoid their trampling. Wherever they went they upset the kingdom, overthrown governments, and in a short time established their authority over the northern portion of Asia.

When Chingiz Khan died in 622 A.H. his own son Ogedei Khan succeeded him. He searched out Jalalu'd-Din in 628 A.H. and killed him. After him Mongka Khan, the son of the other son of Chingiz Khan, occupied the throne. After Mongka Khan, Qubilai Khan succeeded to a part of the country and the control of Asia fell to the share of his brother Hulagu Khan. On the division of the whole realm among the grandsons of Chingiz Khan, Hulagu Khan was thinking of conquering Muslims area when the Hanafite of Khurasan in enmity with the Shafi'ite invited him to attack Khurasan. He therefore led an assault on Khurasan, and the Hanafite, thinking themselves to be safe from the Tartars, opened the city gates for them. But the Tartars did not make any distinction between Hanafite and Shafi'ite and killed whoever fell to their hands. After killing most of its population they took it in occupation. These very differences between the Hanafite and the Shafi'ite opened for him the door of conquest up to Iraq. Consequently, after conquering Khurasan his courage increased and in 656 A.H. he marched on Baghdad with two hundred thousand Tartars, al-Musta'sim Billah's army and the people of Baghdad jointly faced them, but it was not in their power to stop this torrent of calamity. The result was that the Tartars

entered Baghdad on the day of AAshura' carrying with them bloodshed and ruin. They remained busy in killing for forty days. Rivers of blood flowed in the streets and all the alleys were filled with dead bodies. Hundred of thousands of people were put to the sword while al-Musta'sim Billah was trampled to death under foot. Only those people who hid themselves in wells or underground places and hid from their sight could survive. This was the devastation of Baghdad which shook of AAbbasid Kingdom to its foundation, so that its flag could never fly thereafter.

Some historians have laid the blame of this ruin on ibn al-AAIqami (Abu Talib, Muhammed ibn Ahmed al-Baghdadi), the minister of al-Musta'sim Billah, by holding that, moved by the general masses of the Shi'as and the ruin of al-Karkh sector (of Baghdad), he invited Hulagu Khan through the latter's minister, the great scholar Nasir'd-Din Muhammed ibn Muhammed at-Tusi, to march on Baghdad. Even if it be so, it is not possible to ignore the historical fact that before this the AAbbasid Caliph an-Nasir Lidini'llah had initiated the move for the attack on the Muslim areas. When the Khwarazm Shahs declined to acknowledge the authority of the Caliphate he had sent word to Chingiz Khan to march on Khwarazm, from which the Tartars had understood that there was no unity and cooperation among the Muslims. Thereafter the Hanafite had sent for Hulagu Khan to crush the Shafi'ite as a consequence of which the Tartars secured control over Khurasan, and prepared the way to march towards Baghdad. In these circumstances to hold only ibn al-AAIqami responsible for the ruination of Baghdad and to ignore the move of an-Nasir Lidini'llah and the dispute between the Hanafite and the Shafi'ite would be covering up the facts, when in fact the cause for the ruin of Baghdad was this very conquest of Khurasan, whose real movers were the Hanafite inhabitants of the place. It was by this conquest that Hulagu Khan had the courage to march on the center of Islam. Otherwise it cannot have been the result of a single individual's message that he assaulted an old capital like Baghdad, the awe of whose power and grandeur was seated in the hearts of a large part of the world.

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

(He alone is) the AKnower of the unseen, neither doth He reveal His secrets unto any (one else) save unto that one of the Messengers whom He chooses. (Holy Qur'an, 72:26-27)

In this way Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) also received knowledge of the future through the instructions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) or inspiration from Allah, for which these words of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) stand evidence. Of course, sometimes it is not proper or expedient to disclose certain matters and they are allowed to remain under a veil. Then no one can be acquainted with them as Allah says,

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

SERMON 128

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

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

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

.Verily we are Allah's and verily unto Him shall we return.

(Holy Qur'an, 2:156)

Mischief has appeared and there is no one to oppose and change it, nor anyone to dissuade from it or desist from it. Do you, with these qualities, hope to secure abode in the purified neighborhood of Allah and to be regarded His staunch lovers? Alas! Allah cannot be deceived about His paradise and His will cannot be secured save by His obedience. Allah may curse those who advise good but they themselves avoid it, and those who desist others from evil but they themselves act upon it.

SERMON 129

Delivered when Abu Tharr¹ was exiled towards Rabatha

O Abu Tharr! You showed anger in the name of Allah therefore have hope in Him for whom you became angry. The people were afraid of you in the matter of their (pleasure of this) world while you feared them for your faith. Then leave to them that for which they are afraid of you and get away from them taking away what you fear them about. How needy are they for what you dissuade them from and how heedless are you towards what they are denying you. You will shortly know who is the gainer tomorrow (on the Day of Judgment) and who is more enviable. Even if these skies and earth were closed to some individual and he feared Allah, then Allah would open them for him. Only rightfulness should attract you while wrongfulness should detract you. If you had accepted their worldly attractions they would have loved you and if you had shared in it they would have given you asylum.

1. Abu Tharr al-Ghifari's name was Jundab ibn Junadah. He was an inhabitant of ar-Rabatha which was a small village on the east side of Medina. When he heard about the proclamation of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , he came to Mecca and after making inquiries saw the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and accepted Islam whereupon the unbelievers of Quraish gave him all sorts of troubles and inflicted pain after pain, but he remained steadfast. Among the acceptors of Islam he is the third, fourth or fifth. Along with this precedence in Islam his renunciation and piety was so high that the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said,

"Among my people Abu Tharr is the like of AIsa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary) in renunciation and piety."

In thereign of AOmer, Abu Tharr left for Syria and during AOthman's reign also remained there. He spent his days in counseling, preaching, acquainting people with the greatness of the members of the Prophet's family and guiding the people to the rightful path. The traces of Shi'ism now found in Syria and Jabal AAmil (north of Lebanon) are theresult of his preaching and activity and the fruit of seeds sown by him. The Governor of Syria, Mu'awiyah, did not like the conduct of Abu Tharr and was much disgusted with his open criticism and mention of the money-making and other wrongful activities of AOthman. But he could do nothing. At last he wrote to AOthman that if he remained there any longer he would rouse the people against the Caliph. They should therefore be some remedy against this. On this, AOthman wrote to him that Abu Tharr should be seated on an unsaddled camel and dispatched to Medina. The order was obeyed and Abu Tharr was sent to Medina. On reaching Medina he resumed his preaching of righteousness and truth. He would recall to the people the days of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and refrain them from displays of kingly , p.antry, whereupon AOthman was much perturbed and tried to restrict his speaking. One day he sent for him and said, AI have come to know that you go about propagating that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said,

AWhen Banu Umayyah will become thirty in number they will regard the cities of Allah as their property, His creatures their slaves and His religion the tool of their treachery.

Abu Tharr replied that he had heard the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) say so. AOthman said that he was speaking a lie and inquired from those beside him if any one had heard this tradition and all replied in the negative. Abu Tharr then said that enquiry should be made from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S). He was sent for and asked about it. He said it was correct and Abu Tharr was telling the truth. AOthman inquired on what basis he gave evidence for the correctness of this tradition. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) replied that he had heard the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) say,

There is no speaker under the sky or over the earth more truthful than Abu Tharr.

Now AOthman could do nothing. If he still held him to be liar it would mean falsification of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . He therefore kept quiet despite much perturbation, since he could not refute him. On the other side Abu Tharr began speaking against the usurping of Muslims' property quite openly and whenever he saw AOthman he would recite this verse:

And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in Allah's way; announce thou unto them a painful chastisement. On the Day (of Judgment) when it shall be heated in the fire of hell, then shall be branded with it their foreheads and their sides and their backs; (saying unto them) AThis is what ye hoarded up for yourselves, taste ye then what ye did hoard u, p. (Holy Qur'an, 9:34-35)

AOthman promised him money but could not entrap this free man in his golden net, then resorted to repression but could not stop his truth-speaking tongue. At last he ordered him to leave and go to ar-Rabatha and deputed Marwan, son of the man (al-Hakam) exiled by the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , to turn him out of Medina. At the same time he issued the inhumane order that no one should speak to him nor see him off. But Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), Imam Hasan, Imam Husain (□), AAqil ibn Abu Talib, AAbdullah ibn Ja'far and AAmmar ibn Yasir did not pay any heed to this order and accompanied him to see him off, and Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) uttered these sentences (i.e., the above sermon) on that occasion.

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

When the daughter saw this condition she was perplexed and said, AFather, if you die in this vast wilderness, how shall I manage for your burial quite alone. He replied, ADo not get upset. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) told me that I shall die in helplessness and some Iraqis would arrange for my burial. After my death you put a sheet over me and then sit by the roadway and when some caravan passes that way tell them that the Prophet's companion Abu Tharr has died. Consequently, after his death she went and sat by the roadside. After some time a caravan passed that way. It included Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar an-Nakh'i, Hijr ibn AAbdi at-Ta'i, AAlqamah ibn Qays an-Nakh'i, Sa'sa'ah ibn Suhhan al-AAbdi, al-Aswad ibn Yazid an-Nakh'i etc. who were all fourteen persons in number. When they heard about the passing away of Abu Tharr they were shocked at his helpless death. They stopped their riding beasts and postponed the onward journey for his burial. Malik al-Ashtar gave a sheet of cloth for his shroud. It was valued at four thousand Dirhams. After his funeral rites and burial they departed. This happened in the month of Dhi'l-hijjah, 32 A.H.

SERMON 130

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

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

O Lord! You knows that what we did was not to seek power nor to acquire anything from the vanities of the world. We rather wanted to restore the signs of Your religion and to usher prosperity into Your cities so that the oppressed among thy creatures might be safe and Your forsaken commands might be established. O Lord! I am the first who leaned (towards You) and who heard and responded (to the call of Islam). No one preceded me in prayer (*salat*) except the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .

You certainly know that he who is in charge of honor, life, booty (enforcement of), legal commandments and the leadership of the Muslims should not be a miser as his greed would aim at their wealth. Nor should he be ignorant as he would then mislead them with his ignorance, nor be of rude behavior who would estrange them with his rudeness. Nor should he deal unjustly with wealth thus preferring one group over another, nor should he accept a bribe while taking decisions, as he would forfeit (others) rights and hold them up without finality, nor should he ignore Sunna as he would ruin the people.

SERMON 131

Warning about death and counseling

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

A portion of the same sermon:

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

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

SERMON 132

On the Glory of Allah

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

A portion of the same sermon: about the Holy Qur'an

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

A portion of the same sermon: about the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

Allah deputed the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) after a gap from the previous prophets when there was much talk (among the people). With him Allah exhausted The series of prophets and ended therevelation. He then fought for Him those who were turning away from Him and were equating others with Him.

A portion of the same sermon: about this world

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

A portion of the same sermon: - A caution

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

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

SERMON 133

Delivered when A'Omer ibn al-Khattab consulted¹ Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) about himself, taking part in the march towards Rome (Byzantine Empire)

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

1. About Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), the strange position is adopted that on the one hand, it is said that he was ignorant of practical politics and unacquainted with ways of administration from which it is intended that therevolts created by the Umayyad's lust for power should be shown to be the outcome of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's weak administration. On the other hand, much is made of the various occasion when the then Caliphs consulted Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) in important affairs of State in the matter of wars with unbelievers. The aim in this is not to exhibit his correctness of thinking and judgment of deep sagacity but to show that there was unity and concord between him and the Caliphs so that attention should not be paid to the fact that in some matters they also differed and that mutual clashes had also occurred. History shows that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) did have differences of principles with the Caliphs and did not approve every step of theirs. In Thesermon of ash-Shaqshaqiyya he has expressed in loud words his difference of opinion and anger about each regime. Nevertheless, this difference does not mean that correct guidance should be withheld in collective Islamic problems. Again, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's character was so high that no one could imagine that he would ever evade giving counsel which concerned the common wealth, or would give such counsel which would damage public interests. That is why, despite differences of principles, he was consulted. This throws light on the greatness of his character and the correctness of his thinking and judgment. Similarly, it is a prominent trait of the Holy Prophet's character that despite rejecting his claim to prophethood the unbelievers acknowledged him the best trustee and could never doubt his trustworthiness. Rather, even during clashes of mutual opposition they entrusted to him their property without fear and never suspected that their property would be misappropriated. Similarly, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was held to occupy so high a position of trust and

confidence that friend and foe both trusted in the correctness of his counsel. So, just as the Prophet's conduct shows his height of trustworthiness, and just as it cannot be inferred from it that there was mutual accord between him and the unbelievers, because trust has its own place while the clash of Islam and unbelief has another, in the same way, despite having differences with the Caliphs, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was regarded as the protector of national and community interests and as the guardian of Islam's well-being and prosperity. Thus when national interests were involved he was consulted and he tendered his unbiased advice raising himself above personal ends and keeping in view the Prophet's tradition to the effect that AHe who is consulted is a trustee never allowed any dishonesty or duplicity or interfere. When on the occasion of the battle of Palestine, the AOmer consulted him about his taking part in it himself, then, irrespective of whether or not his opinion would accord with AOmer's feelings, he kept in view Islam's prestige and existence and counseled him to stay in his place and to send to the battle-front such a man who should be experienced and well-versed in the art of fighting, because the going of an inexperienced man would have damaged the established prestige of Islam and the awe in which the Muslims were held which had existed from the Prophet's days would have vanished. In fact, in the AOmer's going there Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) saw signs of defeat and vanquishment. He therefore found Islam's interest to lie in detaining him and indicated his view in the words that:

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

This is that counsel which is put forth as a proof of mutual accord, although this advice was tendered in view of Islam's prestige and life which was dearer to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) than any other interest. No particular individual's life was dear to him for which he might have advised against participation in the battle.

SERMON 134

There was some exchange of words between AOthman ibn AAffan and Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) when al-Mughirah ibn al-Akhnas1 said to AOthman that he would deal with Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) on his behalf whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said to al-Mughirah:

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

1. Al-Mughirah ibn al-Akhnas ath-Thaqafi was among the well-wishers of AOthman ibn AAffan and the son of his paternal aunt. His brother Abul-Hakam ibn al-Akhnas was killed at the hands of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) in the battle of Uhud, because of which he bore malice against Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S). His father was one of those people who accepted Islam at the time of fall of Mecca but retained heresy and hypocrisy in his heart. That is why Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) called him accursed, and he called him issueless because he who has a son like al-Mughira deserves to be called issueless.

SERMON 135

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

Your allegiance to me was not without thinking,¹ nor is my and your position the same. I seek you for Allah's sake but you seek me for your own benefits. O people! support me despite your heart's desires. By Allah, I will take revenge for the oppressed from the oppressor and will put a string in the nose of the oppressor and drag him to the spring of truthfulness even though he may grudge it.

1. Here Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) points to the view of A'Omer bin al-Khattab which he had on the allegiance of Abu Bakr on the day of *saqifa* when he said: A.let me clarify this to you that the allegiance with Abu Bakr was a mistake and without thinking (*falta*) but Allah saved us from its evil. Therefore, whoever (intends to) act like this you must kill him. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 8, p.211; as-Sira an-Nabawiyyah, Ibn Hisham, Vol. 4, pp. 308-309; *Tarikh al-Tabari*, Vol. 1, p.1822; *Al-Kamil*, Ibn Al-Athir, Vol. 2, p.327; *Tarikh ibn Kathir*, Vol5, pp.245-246; *Al-Musnad* of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Vol. 1, p. 255; *Al-Sira al-Halabiyya*, Vol. 3, pp. 388, 392; *Al-Ansab* by al-Balathiri, Vol. 5, p. 15; *Al-Tamhid* by al-Baqillani, p. 196; *Sharh ibn Abul-Hadid*, Vol. 2, p. 23)

SERMON 136

About Talhah and az-Zubayr

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

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

A portion of the same sermon:

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

SERMON 137

Referring to events in the future

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

A portion of the same sermon:

(Before this Enjoiner of Allah,¹ matters will deteriorate) till war will rage among you with full force, showing forth its teeth, with udders full of sweet milk but with a sour tip. Beware, it will be tomorrow and the morrow will come soon with things which you do not know. The Man in power, not from this crowd, will take to task all those were formerly appointed for their ill deeds and the earth will pour forth its internal treasures and fling before him easily her keys. He will show you the just way of behavior and revive the Holy Qur'an and Sunna which have become lifeless (among people).

A portion of the same sermon:

As if I see (him), he (the Enjoiner of Evil)² is shouting in Syria and is extending his banners to the outskirts of Kufa. He is bent towards it like the biting of the she-camel. He has covered the ground with heads. His mouth is wide open and (the trampling of) his footsteps on the ground have become heavy. His advance is broad and his attacks are severe.

By Allah, he will disperse you throughout the earth till only a few of you remain, like kohl in the eye. You will continue like this till the Arabs return to their sense. You should therefore stick to established ways, clear signs and the early period which has the lasting virtues of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) hood. You should know that Satan makes his ways easy so that you may follow him on his heels.

1. This prophecy of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) is with regard to the appearance of the Twelfth Imam, Abul-Qasim Muhammed ibn al-Hasan, al-Mahdi (□).

2. This refers to AAbdul-Malik ibn Marwan who came to power in Syria after his father Marwan ibn al-Hakam and then after the killing of al-Mukhtar ibn Abu AUbayd ath-Thaqafi in his encounter with Mis'ab ibn az-Zubayr he proceeded towards Iraq. He clashed with Mis'ab's force at Maskin near Dayru'l-jathaliq in the outskirts of Kufa. After defeating him he made a victorious entry into Kufa and took allegiance from its inhabitants. Then he sent al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafi to Mecca to fight with AAbdullah ibn az-Zubayr. Consequently this man besieged Mecca and stoned it, and shed the blood of thousands of innocent persons like water. He killed ibn az-Zubayr and hung his body on the gallows. He perpetrated such atrocities on the people that one shudders at the thought of them.

SERMON 138

On the occasion of the Consultative Committee (after the death of AOmer ibn al-Khattab)

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

SERMON 139

About backbiting and speaking ill of others'¹

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

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

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

Backbiting is defined as the exposure of the fault of a brother-in-faith with the intent to vilify him in such a way as to irritate him, whether it be by speaking, acting, implication or suggestion. Some people take backbiting to cover only that which is false or contrary to fact. According to them to relate what was seen or heard, exactly as it was, is not backbiting, and they say that they are not backbiting but only relating exactly what they saw or heard. But in fact backbiting is the name of this very relating of the facts, because if it is not factually correct it would be false accusation and wrong blame. It is related about the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) that he said:

ADo you know what backbiting is? People said, AAllah and His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) know better. Then he said, ABackbiting means that you say about your brother a thing which pains him. Someone said, ABut what if I say what is actually true about him? the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) replied, AIt is backbiting only when it is factually true, otherwise you would be accusing him falsely.

There are many causes for indulging in backbiting, and because of this a man commits it sometimes knowingly and sometimes unknowingly. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali has recounted these causes in detail in his book *Ihya' Aulumud-Din*. A few of the important ones are:

- 1) To make fun of anyone or to make him appear abased.
- 2) To make people laugh and to display one's own jolliness and high spirits.
- 3) Expressing one's feelings under the influence of rage and anger.
- 4) To establish one's feelings under the influence of rage and anger.
- 5) To disprove one's connection or involvement in a matter; namely that a particular evil was not committed by oneself but by someone else.

6) To associate oneself with some group when in their company in order to avoid strangeness with them.

7) To belittle a person from whom it is feared that he will expose some fault of one's.

8) To defeat a competitor in the same calling.

9) To seek position in the audience of someone in power.

10) To express sorrow by saying it is sad and so-and-so has fallen in such and such a sin.

11) To express astonishment, for example, to say it is wonderful that so and so has done this.

12) To name the committer of an act when expressing anger over it. However, in some cases fault finding or criticizing does not fall under backbiting

1) If the oppressed complains of the oppressor in order to seek redress, it is not backbiting. Allah says about it:

Loveth not Allah open utterance of evil in speech except by one who has been wronged.(Holy Qur'an, 4:148)

2) To relate anyone's fault while giving advice is not backbiting because dishonesty and duplicity is not permissible in counseling.

3) If in connection with seeking therequirements of a religious commandment the naming of a particular individual cannot be avoided, then to state the fault of such person to the extent necessary would not be backbiting.

4) To relate the misappropriation or dishonesty committed by someone with a view to saving a Muslim brother from harm would not be backbiting.

5) To relate the fault of someone before one who can prevent him from committing it is not backbiting.

6) Criticism and expression of opinion about a relater of traditions is not backbiting.

7) If a person is well acquainted with someone's shortcoming, then to relate such a fault in order to define his personality, for example, describing a deaf, dumb, lame or handless person as thus, is not backbiting.

8) To describe any fault of a patient before a physician for purposes of treatment is not backbiting.

9) If someone claims wrong lineage then to expose his correct lineage is not backbiting.

10) If the life, property or honor of someone can be protected only by informing him of some fault, it would not be backbiting.

11) If two persons discuss a fault of another which is already known to both it would not be backbiting, although to avoid discussing it is better, since it is possible one of the two might have forgotten it.

12) To expose the evils of one who openly commits evils is not backbiting as the tradition runs:

AThere is no backbiting in the case of he who has torn away the veil of shamefulfulness.

SERMON 140

Again reliance on hearsay

O people! If a person knows his brother to be steadfast in faith and of correct ways he should not lend ear to what people may say about him. Sometimes the bowman shoots arrows but the arrow goes astray; similarly talk can be off the point. Its wrong perishes, while Allah is the Hearer and the Witness. There is nothing between truth and falsehood except four fingers.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was asked the meaning of this whereupon he closed his fingers together and put them between his ear and eye and said: It is falsehood when you say, AI have heard so, while it is truth when you say, AI have seen.

SERMON 141

Against misplaced generosity

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

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

SERMON 142

Praying for rain

Beware; the earth which bears you and the sky which overshadows you are obedient to their Sustainer (Allah). They have not been bestowing their blessings on you for any feeling of pity on you or inclination towards you, nor for any good which they expect from you. But they were commanded to bestow benefits on you and they are obeying, and were asked to maintain your good and so they are maintaining it.

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

Seek the forgiveness, all of you, of your Lord! Verily, He is the Most forgiving, He will send (down) upon you the cloud raining in torrents, and help you with wealth and sons (children). (Holy Qur'an, 17:10-12)

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

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

O Lord! we have come out to You to complain to You what is (already) not hidden from You, when Theseven troubles have forced us, droughty famines have driven us, distressing wants have made us helpless and troublesome mischief has incessantly befallen us. O Lord! we beseech You not to send us back disappointed, nor to return us with down-cast eyes, nor to address us (harshly) for our sins, nor deal with us according to our deeds.

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

SERMON 143

Deputation of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

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

The position of Ahl al-Bayt (□) (the Household of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) :

Where are those who falsely and unjustly claimed that they are deeply versed in knowledge, as against us, although Allah raised us in position and kept them down, bestowed upon us knowledge but deprived them, and entered us (in the fortress of knowledge) but kept them out. With us guidance is to be sought and blindness (of misguidance) is to be changed into brightness. Surely Imams (the Divine leaders) will be from the Quraish. They have been planted in this line through Hashim. It would not suit others nor would others be suitable as heads of affairs.

A portion of the same sermon: about those who are against Ahl al-Bayt (□) :

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

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

1. Here the reference is to AAbdul-Malik ibn Marwan who committed extreme atrocities through his officer al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafi.

SERMON 144

About this world

O people, you are, in this world, the target for the arrows of death. With every drinking there is choking and with every eating there is suffocation. You do not get any benefit in it except by foregoing another (benefit) and no one among you advances in age by a day except by the taking

away of a day from his life. Nothing more is added to his eating unless it reduces what was there before. No mark appears for him unless a mark disappears. Nothing new comes into being unless the new becomes old. No new crop comes up unless a crop has been reaped. Those roots are gone whose off-shoots we are. How can an off-shoot live after the departure of its root?

A portion of the same sermon: on innovation (*bid'a*)

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

SERMON 145

Delivered when AOmer ibn al-Khattab consulted Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) about taking part in the battle of then Persia.¹

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

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

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

1. When some people advised AOmer to partake in the battle of judgesiyyah or Nahawand, he finding it against his personal inclination, thought it necessary to consult Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), so that if he advised against it he would plead before others that he had stayed back on Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's advice, but also if he advised partaking in the battle some other excuse would be found. However, unlike others, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) advised him to stay back. The other people had advised him to join in fighting, because the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) did not send only others to fight but took part in it himself as well, keeping his close relations also with him. What Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had in view was that AOmer's presence in the battle could not be beneficial to Islam, but rather his staying back would save the Muslims from dispersion.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's view that Athe position of the head of government is that of the axis around which the system of the government rotates is a point of principle: It does not concern any particular personality. Whether the ruler is a Muslim or an unbeliever, just or despotic, virtuous or vicious, for the administration of the state his presence is a necessity, as Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has explained elsewhere at greater length:

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

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

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) pointed out to AOmer that on his reaching there the Persians would aim at him, and that if he fell into their hands they would not spare him without killing, although such words would have touched the brave to the quick and would have heightened their spirits, AOmer liked the advice to stay back and thought it better to keep himself away from the flames of battle. If this advice had not been in accord with his personal inclination he would not have received it so heartily and would have tried to argue that the administration of the country could be maintained by leaving a deputy. Again when other people had already advised him to go out, what was the need for consulting Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) except to get an excuse to stay back.

SERMON 146

The purpose of the deputation of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and the condition of the time when people would go against the Holy Qur'an

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

On the future

Certainly, a time will come upon you after me when nothing will be more concealed than rightfulness, nothing more apparent than wrongfulness - and nothing more current than untruth against Allah and His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . For the people of this period nothing will be more valueless than the Holy Qur'an being recited as it ought to be recited, nor anything more valuable than the Holy Qur'an being misplaced from its position. And in the towns nothing will be more hated than virtue, nor anything more acceptable than vice.

The holders of the book will throw it away and those who memorize it would forget it. In these days the Holy Qur'an and its people will be exiled and expelled. They will be companions keeping together on one path, but no one will offer them asylum. Consequently at this time the Holy Qur'an and its people will be among the people but not among them, will be with them but not with them, because misguidance cannot accord with guidance even though they may be together. The people will have united on division and will therefore have cut away from the community, as though they were the leaders of the Holy Qur'an and not the Holy Qur'an their leader. Nothing of it will be left with them except its name, and they will know nothing save its writing and its words. Before that, they will inflict hardships on the virtuous, naming the latter's truthful views about Allah false allegations, and enforcing for virtues the punishment of the vice.

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

About Ahl al-Bayt (□)

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

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

SERMON 147

About Talhah and az-Zubayr and the people of Basra

Both of these two (Talhah and az-Zubayr) wish the Caliphate for himself, and is drawing towards himself as against the other fellow. They do not employ any connection for getting access to Allah nor proceed towards Him through any means. Both of them bear malice against the other. Shortly his veil over it will be uncovered. But Allah, if they achieve what they aim at, one of them will kill the other, and one will finish the other. The rebellious party has stood up, p. Where are Theseekers of virtue; for the paths have already been determined and they have been given the news. For every misguidance there is a cause and for every break of pledge there is a

misrepresentation. By Allah, I shall not be like him who listens to the voice of mourning, hears the man who brings news of death and also visits the mourner yet does not take lesson.

SERMON 148

Before his passing away (last will)

O people, every one has to meet what he wishes to avoid by running away.¹ Death is the place to which life is driving. To run away from it means to catch it. How many days did I spent in searching for Thesecret of this matter, but Allah did not allow save its concealment. Alas! It is a treasured knowledge. As for my last will, it is that concerning Allah, do not believe in a partner for Him, and concerning Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household), do not disregard his Sunna. Keep these two pillars and burn these two lamps. Till you are not divided, no evil will come to you.² Every one of you has to bear his own burden. It has been kept light for the ignorant. Allah is Merciful. Faith is straight. The leader (Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) is the holder of knowledge. Yesterday I was with you; today I have become the object of a lesson for you; and tomorrow I shall leave you. Allah may forgive me and you.

If the foot remains firm in this slippery place, well and good. But if the foot slips, this is because we are under the shade of branches, the passing of the winds and the canopy of the clouds whose layers are dispersed in the sky, and whose traces disappeared³ in the earth. I was your neighbor. My body kept you company for some days and shortly you will find just an empty body of mine which would be stationary after (all its) movement and silent after speech so that my calmness, the closing of my eyes, and the stillness of my limbs may provide you counsel, because it is more of a counsel for those who take a lesson (from it) than eloquent speech and a ready word. I am departing from you like one who is eager to meet (someone). Tomorrow you will look at my days, then my inner side will be disclosed to you and you will understand me after the vacation of my place and its occupation by someone else.

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

2. AWa khalakum dhammun (No evil will come to you). This sentence is used as a proverb. It was first employed by Qasir, slave of Khazimah ibn Malik al-Abrash.

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

SERMON 149

About future events and some activities of the hypocrites

They took to the right and the left piercing through to the ways of evil and leaving the paths of guidance. Do not make haste for a matter which is to happen and is awaited, and do not wish for delay in what the morrow is to bring for you. For, how many people make haste for a matter, but when they get it they begin to wish they had not got it. How near is today to the dawning of tomorrow. O my people, this is the time for the occurrence of every promised event and the approach of things which you do not know. Whoever from among us will be during these days will move through them with a burning lamp and will tread on the footsteps of the virtuous, in

order to unfasten knots, to free slates, to divide the united and to unite the divided. He will be in concealment from people. The stalker will not find his footprints even though he pursues with his eye. Then a group of people will be sharpened like the sharpening of swords by the blacksmith. Their sight will be brightened by revelation, the (delicacies of) commentary will be put in their ears and they will be given drinks of wisdom, morning and evening.

A portion of the same sermon:

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

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

SERMON 150

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

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

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

Oppressors inherit it by (mutual) agreement. The first of them serves as a leader for the latter one and the latter one follows the first one. They vie with each other in (the matter of) this lowly world, and leap over this stinking carcass. Shortly the follower will denounce his connection with the leader, and the leader with the follower. They will disunite on account of mutual and curse one another when they meet. Then after this there will appear another arouser of mischief

who will destroy ruined things. The heart will become wavering after being normal, men will be misled after safety, desires will multiply and become diversified and views will become confused.

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

A portion of the same sermon:

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

SERMON 151

About the greatness and the attributes of Allah¹

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

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

He who describes Him limits Him. He who limits Him numbers Him. He who numbers Him rejects His eternity. He who said Ahow sought a description for Him. He who said Awhere bounded him. He is the Knower even though there be nothing to be known. He is the Sustainer even though there be nothing to be sustained. He is the Powerful even though there be nothing to be overpowered.

A portion of the same sermon about the Divine leaders (Imams) :

The riser has risen, the sparkler has sparkled, the appearer has appeared and the curved has been straightened. Allah has replaced one people with another and one day with another. We

awaited these changes as the famine-stricken await the rain. Certainly the Imams are the vicegerents of Allah over His creatures and they make the creatures know Allah. No one will enter Paradise except he who knows them and knows Him, and no one will enter Hell except he who denies them and denies Him.

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

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

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

SERMON 152

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

He has been allowed time by Allah. He is falling into error along with negligent persons and goes early in the morning with sinners, without any road to lead or any Imam to guide.

A portion of the same sermon:

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

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

O my listener! be cured from your intoxication, wake up from your slumber, decrease your hasty activity and ponder over what has come to you through the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , the Ummi1 which is inevitable and inescapable. You should turn away from him who opposes him and leave him and leave whatever he has adopted for himself. Put off your vanity, drop your haughtiness and recall your grave because your way passes over it. You will be dealt with as you deal with others, you will reap what you sow, and what you send today will meet you tomorrow. So provide for your future and send (some good acts) for your day (of reckoning). Fear, fear, O listener! Act, act, O careless! No one will warn you like him who knows.

One of the firm decisions of Allah in the Wise Reminder (Holy Qur'an) upon which He bestows reward or gives punishment, and through which He likes or dislikes is that it will not benefit a man, even though he exerts himself and acts sincerely if he leaves this world to meet Allah with one of these acts without repenting, namely that he believed in a partner with Allah during his obligatory worship, or appeased his own anger by killing an individual, or spoke about acts committed by others, or sought fulfillment of his needs from people by introducing an innovation in his religion, or met people with a double face, or moved among them with a double tongue. Understand this because an illustration is a guide for its like.

Beasts are concerned with their bellies. Carnivores are concerned with assaulting others. Women are concerned with the adornments of this ignoble life and the creation of mischief herein.² (On the other hand) believers are humble, believers are admonishers and believers are afraid (of Allah).

1. The word *Aummi* has been used in the Holy Qur'an with reference to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) in cha, p. 7:157-158. For better understanding of the word refer to the books of commentary on the Holy Qur'an.

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

Ibn Abul-Hadid has written that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) delivered this sermon at the time of marching towards Basra, and since the trouble of Basra was the result of a woman's instigation. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has, after mentioning beasts and carnivore, held a woman also to possess such qualities. Thus the battle of Basra was the result of these qualities, whereby thousands of persons were involved in death and destruction.

SERMON 153

About Ahl al-Bayt (□) and their Opponents

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

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

A portion of the same sermon:

The delicacies of the Holy Qur'an are about them (Ahl al-Bayt (□), the descendants of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) and they are the treasurers of Allah. When they speak

they speak the truth, but when they keep quiet no one can speak unless they speak. The forerunner should report correctly to his people, should retain his wits and should be one of the children (a man) of the next world, because he has come from there and would return to it.

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

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

SERMON 154

About the wonderful creation of the bat

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

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

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

He has given them wings of flesh with which, at the time of need, they rise upwards for flying. They look like the ends of ears without feathers or bones. Of course, you can see the veins quite distinctly. They have two wings which are neither too thin so that get turned in

flying, nor too thick so that they prove heavy. When they fly their young ones hold on to them and seek refuge with them, getting down when they get down and rising up when they rise. The young does not leave them till its limbs become strong, its wings can support it for rising, and it begins to recognize its places of living and its interest. Glorified is He who creates everything without any previous sample by someone else.

SERMON 155

About the malice borne by AA'isha; and warning the people of Basra about what was to occur
Whoever can at this time keep himself clinging to Allah should do so. If you follow me I shall certainly carry you, if Allah so wills, on the path of Paradise, even though it may be full of severe hardship and of bitter taste.

As regards a certain woman,¹ she is in the grip of womanly views, and malice is boiling in her bosom like the furnace of the blacksmith. If she were called upon to deal with others as she is dealing with me she would not have done it. (As for me), even hereafter she will be allowed her original respect, while thereckoning (of her misdeeds) is an obligation of Allah.

A portion of the same sermon:

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

A portion of the same sermon:

They have got up from theresting places in their graves and have set off for the final objectives. Every house has its own people. They are not changed nor shifted from there. Commanding for good and refraining from evil are two characteristics of Allah, the Glorified. They can neither bring death near nor lessen sustenance.

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

A man stood up and said: O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) tell us about this disturbance and whether you enquired about it from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Thereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

When Allah, the Glorified sent down the verse:

Aleef laam meem (A.L.M.) What?! Do people imagine that they will be left alone on saying: AWe believe and they will not be tried?! (Holy Qur'an, 29:1-2)

I came to know that the disturbance would not befall us so long as the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny - is among us. So I said, AO Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah, what is this disturbance of which Allah, the Sublime, has informed you? and he replied, AO Ali, my people will create trouble after me. I said, AO Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah on the day of Uhud, when people had fallen martyrs and I was not among them, and this had been very annoying to me, did

you not say tome, Acheer up, as martyrdom is for you hereafter? the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) replied, AYes it is so, but what about you enduring the present? I said, AO Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah, this is not an occasion for endurance, but rather an occasion for cheering up and gratefulness. Then he said:

AO Ali (A.S) , people will fall into mischief through their wealth, will show obligation to Allah on account of their faith, will expect His mercy, will feel safe from His anger and regard His unlawful matters as lawful by raising false doubts and by their misguiding desires. They will then hold lawful (the use of) wine by calling it barley water, a bribe by calling it a gift, and taking of usurious interest by calling it sale. I said, AO Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah, how should I deal with them at the time, whether to hold them to have gone back in heresy or just in revolt. He said, Ain revolt.

1. There is no denying the fact that AA'isha's behavior towards Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was throughout inimical, and very often her heart's turbidity expressed itself on her face, and her hatred and dislike became quite apparent, so much so that if in connection with some affair Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's name came up a frown appeared on her forehead and she did not relish pronouncing it with her tongue. For example, when AUBaydullah ibn AAbdillah ibn AUTbah mentioned to AAbdullah ibn AAbbas the narration by AA'isha namely that Ain his death-illness the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , taking support on al-Fadl ibn AAbbas and another person, came to her (AA'isha's) house, AAbdullah ibn AAbbas said:

ADo you know who this Aother man' was? He said, ANo. Then he said, Ali (A.S) ibn Abu Talib, but she is averse to name him in a good context. (Ahmed ibn Hanbal *Al-Musnad*, Vol. 6, pp. 34, 228; ibn Sa'd, *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, Vol. 2, part 2, p. 29 al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, Vol. 1, pp. 1800-1801. Al-Balathiri, *Ansab al-Ashraf*, Vol. 1, pp. 544-545; al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, Vol. 3, p. 396).

One cause for this hatred and malice was the presence of Hadrat Fatima (S.A) whose wholesome dignity and esteem pricked her heart like a thorn. Her jealousy towards the other wives (of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) did not allow her to let the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) love the daughter of his other wife to such a degree that he should stand on her approach, seat her in his own place, declare her most honorable of all the women of the world and bear such love towards her children as to call them his own sons. All these things caused her a lot of pain; naturally, her feelings on such an occasion were that if she had given birth to children, they would have been the Prophet's sons and they would have been the pivot of the Prophet's affection instead of Imam Hasan and Imam Husain. But she was not gifted with any issue, and she was satisfied with being a mother by adopting the surname of Umm AAbdillah (mother of the slave of Allah), after her sister's son. In short all these things created the passion of hatred in her heart, as a result of which she off and on complained to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) against Fatima (S.A) but could not succeed in diverting the Prophet's attention from her. News about this mortification and estrangement also reached the ears of Abu Bakr. That would only perturb him as he too could do nothing, except that his verbal sympathies were with his daughter. At last the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) left this world and thereins of Government fell into Abu Bakr's hands. Now was the opportunity for him to avenge as best as he could and to perpetrate whatever violence he had in mind. Consequently, the first step he took was that, in order to deprive Fatima (S.A) of inheritance, he denied the principle of inheritance in the case of the prophets and held that neither do the prophets inherit nor are they inherited from, but the property left by them escheats to the state.

Fatima (S.A) was so affected that she gave up speaking to him and passed away from this world with these very feelings. AA'isha did not even take the trouble to express any sorrow at her tragic death. Thus ibn Abul-Hadid has written.

When Fatima (S.A) expired all the wives of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) came to Banu Hashim in condolence except AA'isha. She did not come and showed herself sick and words from her reached Ali which displayed her joy. (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, p. 198, Vol. 9)

As long as she bore so much malice against Fatima (S.A), how could Fatima's spouse be spared similar enmity and malice? Particularly when such events also occurred which worked like a fan and roused her feeling of hatred, such as the incident of *Aifk* when Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) : AShe is no better than the buckles of your shoe, leave her and divorce her. On hearing this AA'isha must have felt miserable in her bed, and must have developed Theseverest feeling of hatred against him. There were also moments when distinction was conferred on Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) in preference to Abu Bakr. For instance, in connection with the dispatch of the Holy Qur'anic verses on Bara'ah (innocence), the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) removed Abu Bakr from the job, recalled him and assigned it to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) saying that he had been commanded by Allah to take it himself or send it through a member of his family. Similarly the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) closed all the doors opening into the mosque including that of Abu Bakr but allowed the door of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's house to continue to open.

AA'isha could not relish Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's distinction over her father, and whenever there was any occasion for such distinction she did her best to undo it. When in his last days the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ordered the contingent under Usamah ibn Zayd to march, and ordered Abu Bakr and AOmer also to go under his command, they received a message from the wives of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) that his condition was serious and therefore the contingent should come back instead of proceeding further. This was because their far-reaching sight had realized that their only purpose in getting Medina vacated by the Muhajirun and the Ansar could be that after the death of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) no one should stand in Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's way and that he should get the caliphate without any trouble. On receipt of this message the contingent under Usamah came back. When the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) learned this he again ordered Usamah to march with the contingent and even said, AAllah may curse him who keeps away from the contingent, whereupon they again set off, but they were again called back till the Prophet's illness assumed serious proportions, but Usamah's contingent did not go out as it did not want to. After this Abu Bakr was sent word through Bilal that he should deputize the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) in leading the prayers in order to pave the way for his Caliphate. Accordingly keeping this in view he was first shown as the Prophet's caliph (deputy) in prayers and eventually was accepted as his caliph for all purposes. Thereafter matters were so contrived that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) could not get the Caliphate. However, after thereign of the third caliph circumstances took such a turn that people were obliged to swear allegiance to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's hand. On this occasion AA'isha was present in Mecca. When she learned about Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's caliphate her eyes began emitting flames, and rage and anger perturbed her mind, and her hatred for Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) assumed such seriousness that she rose against him on the excuse of avenging blood of the same man (AOthman) whom she had herself proclaimed fit to be killed, and openly declared war as a result of which so much

bloodshed occurred that the whole land of Basra was smeared with the blood of those killed, and the door of disunity was opened for good. (*Sharh*, Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 9, pp. 190-200)

SERMON 156

Urging people towards piety (*taqwa*)

Praise to Allah Who made praise the key for His remembrance, a means for an increase of His bounty and a guide for His Attributes and Dignity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SERMON 157

About the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and the Holy Qur'an

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

A portion of the same sermon: About the autocracy of the Umayyads:

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

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

SERMON 158

Good behavior with people and ignoring their faults

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

SERMON 159

Praising Allah

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

O Lord! Praise be to You for what You takes and gives and for that from which You cures or with which You afflicts. Praise which is the most acceptable to You, the most like by You and the most dignified before You; praise which fills all Your creation and reaches where You desires; praise which is not veiled from You and does not end, and whose continuity does not cease.

Greatness of Allah

We do not know thereality of Your greatness except that we know that thou art Ever-living and Self-subsisting by Whom all things subsist. Drowsiness or sleep do not overtake You, vision does not reach You and sight does not grasp You. You sees the eyes and counts the ages. You holds (people as slaves) by foreheads and feet. We see Your creation and wonder over it because of Your might, and describe it as (a result of) Your great authority. Whereas what is hidden from

us, of which our sight has fallen short, which our intelligence has not attained, and between which and ourselves curtains of the unknown have been cast, is far greater.

He who frees his heart (from all other engagements) and exerts his thinking in order to know how You established Your throne, how You created Your creatures, how You suspended the air in Your skies and how You spread Your earth on the waves of water, his eyes would return tired, his intelligence defeated, his ears eager and his thinking wandering.

A portion of the same sermon: about hope and fear in Allah

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

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

The example of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

Certainly, in the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny - was a sufficient example for you and a proof concerning the vices of the world, its defects, the multitude of its disgraces and its evils. Because its sides had been constricted for him, while its flanks had been spread for others; he was deprived of its milk and turned away from its adornments.

The example of Musa (Moses)

If you want, I will, as a second example, relate to you concerning Musa, the Interlocutor of Allah (□) when he said, AO Allah! I need whatever good You may grant me. (Holy Qur'an, 28:24) By Allah, he asked Him only for bread to eat because he was used to eating the herbs of the earth, and the greenness of the herbs could be seen from the delicate skin of his belly due to his thinness and paucity of his flesh.

The example of Dawud (David)

If you desire I can give you a third example of Dawud (□). He is the holder of the Psalms and thereciter among the people of Paradise. He used to prepare baskets of date palm leaves with his own hands and would say to his companions: AWhich of you will help me by purchasing it? He used to eat barley bread (bought) out of its prices.

The example of AIsa (Jesus)

If you desire I will tell you about AIsa (□) son of Maryam (Mary). He used a stone for his pillow, put on coarse clothes and ate rough food. His condiment was hunger. His lamp at night was the moon. His shade during the winter was just the expanse of earth eastward and westward. His fruits and flowers were only what grows from the earth for the cattle. He had no wife to

allure him, nor any son to give grief, nor wealth to deviate (his attention), nor greed to disgrace him. His two feet were his conveyance and his two hands his servant.

Following the example of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

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

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

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

Therefore, one should follow His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , tread in his footsteps and enter through his entrance. Otherwise he will not be safe from ruin. Certainly, Allah made Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) - the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - a sign for the Day of Judgment, a conveyor of tidings for Paradise and a warner of retribution. He left this world hungry but entered upon the next world safe. He did not lay one stone upon another (to make a house) till he departed and responded to the call of Allah. How great is Allah's blessing in that He blessed us with the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) as a predecessor whom we follow and a leader behind whom we tread.

The example of himself

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

SERMON 160

Deputation of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

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

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

Drawing lessons from this world

I trust in Allah, the trust of bending towards Him, and I seek His guidance for the way that leads to His Paradise and takes to the place of His pleasure. I advise you, O creatures of Allah, to exercise fear of Allah and to obey Him because it is salvation tomorrow and deliverance forever. He warned (you of chastisement) and did so thoroughly. He persuaded (you towards virtues) and did so fully. He described this world, its cutting away from you, its decay and its shifting. Therefore keep aloof from its attractions, because very little of it will accompany you. This house is the closest to the displeasure of Allah and theremotest from the pleasure of Allah.

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

SERMON 161

One of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's companions (from Banu Asad) asked him: AHow was it that your tribe (Quraish) deprived you of this position (Caliphate) although you deserved it most? Then in reply he said:

O brother of Banu Asad! Your girth is loose and you have put it on the wrong way. Nevertheless you enjoy in-law kinship and also the right to ask, and since you have asked, listen. As regards the oppression against us in this matter although we were the highest as regards descent and the strongest in relationship with the Messenger of Allah. It was a selfish act over which the hearts of people became greedy, although some people did not care for it. The Arbiter is Allah and to Him is thereturn on the Day of Judgment.

ANow¹ leave this story of devastation about which there is hue and cry all around.

Come and look at the son of Abu Sufyan (Mu'awiyah). Time has made me laugh after weeping. No wonder, by Allah; what is this affair which surpasses all wonder and which has increased wrongfulness. These people have tried to put out the flame of Allah's light from His lamp and to close His fountain from its source. They mixed epidemic-producing water between

themselves and me. If the trying hardships were removed from among us, I would take them on the course of truthfulness otherwise:

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

1. This is a hemistich from the couplet of the famous Arab poet Imri'ul-Qays al-Kindi. The second hemistich is:

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

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

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's intention in quoting this verse as an illustration is that ANow that Mu'awiyah is at war, we should talk about and should leave the discussion about the devastation engendered by those who had usurped my rights. That time has gone away. Now is the time for grappling with the mischief of the hour. So discuss the event of the moment and do not start untimely strain. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said this because the man had put the question to him at the time of the battle of Siffin, when the battle was raging and bloodshed was in full swing.

SERMON 162

Attributes of Allah

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

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

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

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

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

Allah, the Originator from naught

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

A portion of the same sermon:: Man's creation, and pointing towards therequirements of life:

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

Then you where taken out from your place of stay to a place you had not seen, and you were not acquainted with the means of awaiting its benefits, or with who guided you to eke out your sustenance from the udder of your mother. And, who, when you were in need, appraised you of the location of what you required or aimed at. Alas! Certainly he who is unable to understand the qualities of a being with shape and limbs is the more unable to understand the qualities of the Creator and the more remote from appreciating Him through the limitations of creatures.

SERMON 163

When people went to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) in a deputation and complained to him through what they had to say against AOthman, and requested him to speak to him on their behalf and to admonish him for their sake, he went to see him and said:¹

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

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

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

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

Then AOthman said to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) :

Speak to the people to give me time until I redress their grievances. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said: So far as Medina is concerned here is no question of time. As for remoter areas you can have the time needed for your order to reach there.

1. During the Caliphate of AOthman when the Muslims were weary of the oppression of the Government. Its officials collected in Medina to complain to Thesenior companions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . They came to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) in a peaceful manner and requested him to see AOthman and advise him not to trample on the Muslims' rights and to put an end to the troubles which were proving the cause of the people's ruin. Whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) went to him and uttered these words.

In order to make the bitterness of the admonition palatable Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) adopted that way of speech in the beginning which would create a sense of responsibility in the addressee and direct him towards his obligations. Thus, by mentioning his companionship of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , his personal position, and his kinship to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) as against the two previous Caliphs, his intention was to make him realize his duties. In any case, this was obviously not an occasion for eulogizing him, so that its later portion can be disregarded and the whole speech be regarded as an eulogy of his attainments, because from its very beginning it is evident that whatever AOthman did, he did it wilfully, that nothing was done without his knowledge or his being informed, and that he could not be held unaccountable for it because of his being unaware of it. If the adoption of a line of action which made the whole Islamic world raise hue and cry in spite of his having being a companion of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , having heard his instructions, having seen his behavior and having been acquainted with the commandments of Islam can be regarded as a distinction, then this taunt may also be regarded as praise. If that is not a distinction then this too cannot be called an eulogy. In fact, the words about which it is argued that they are in praise are enough to prove Theseriousness of his crime, because a crime in ignorance and unawareness is not so serious as the weight given to Theseriousness of the commission of a crime despite knowledge and awareness. Consequently a person who is unaware of the rise and fall of a road and stumbles in the dark night is excusable but a person who is aware of the rise and fall of the road and stumbled in broad day light is liable to be blamed. If on this occasion he is told that he

has eyes and is also aware of the rise and fall of the way, it would not mean that his vastness of knowledge or the brightness of his eye-sight is being praised, but the intention would be that he did not notice the pitfalls despite his eyes, and did not walk properly, and that therefore for him, having or not having eyes is the same, and knowing or not knowing is equal.

In this connection great stress is laid on his being a son-in-law, namely that the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) married his two daughters Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum to him one after the other. Before taking this to be a distinction, the real nature of A'othman's son-in-lawship should be seen. History shows that in this matter A'othman did not enjoy the distinction of being the first, but before him Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum had been married to two sons of Abu Lahab namely A'Utbah and A'Utaybah, but despite their being sons-in-law, they have not been included among people of position of pre-prophethood period. How then can this be regarded as a source of position without any personal merit, when there is no authority about the importance of this relationship, nor was any importance attached to this matter in such a way that there might have been some competition between A'othman and some other important personality in this regard and that his selection for it might have given him prominence, or that these two girls might have been shown to possess an important position in history, tradition or biography as a result of which this relationship could be given special importance and regarded as a distinction for him? If the marriage of these two daughters with A'Utbah and A'Utaybah in the pre-prophethood period is held as lawful on the ground that marriage with unbelievers had not till then been made unlawful, then in A'othman's case also the condition for lawfulness was his acceptance of Islam, there is no doubt that he had pronounced the kalimah ash-shahadatayn (there is no god but Allah and Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) is His Messenger) and had accepted Islam outwardly. As such this marriage can be held a proof of his outward Islam, but no other honor can be proved through it. Again, it is also not agreed that these two were the real daughters of the Messenger of Allah, because there is one group which denies them to be his real daughters, and regards them as being the daughters of Khadijah's sister Halah, or the daughters of her own previous husband. Thus, Abul-Qasim al-Kufi (d. 352 A.H.) writes:

When the Messenger of Allah married Khadijah, then some time thereafter Halah died leaving two daughters, one named Zainab and the other named Ruqayyah and both of them were brought up by the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Khadijah and they maintained them, and it was the custom before Islam that a child was assigned to whoever brought him u, p. (al-Istighasah, p.69)

Ibn Hisham has written about the issues of Hadrat Khadijah as follows:

Before marriage with the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) she was married to Abu Halah ibn Malik. She delivered for him Hind ibn Abu Halah and Zainab daughter of Abu Halah. Before marriage with Abu Halah she was married to A'Utayyiq ibn A'Abid ibn A'Abdillah ibn A'Amr ibn Makhzum and she delivered for him A'Abdullah and a daughter. (as-Sira an-nabawiyyah, Vol. 4, p. 293)

This shows that Hadrat Khadijah had two daughters before being married to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and according to all appearances they would be called his daughters and those to whom they were married would be called his sons-in-law, but the position of this relationship would be the same as if those girls were his daughters. Therefore, before putting it forth as a matter for pride the real status of the daughters should be noted and a glance

should be cast at A'Othman's conduct. In this connection, al-Bukhari and other narrators (of traditions) and historians record this tradition as follows:

Anas ibn Malik relates that: A'Ve were present on the occasion of the burial of the Prophet's daughter Umm Kulthum, while the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was sitting beside her grave. I saw his eyes shedding tears. Then he said, A'Is there any one among you who has not committed a sin last night? Abu Talhah (Zayd ibn Sahl al-Ansari) said, A'I', then the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said, A'Then you get into the grave, consequently he got down into the grave.

The commentators said about A'committed sin' that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) meant to say A'one who had not had sexual intercourse. On this occasion the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) unveiled the private life of A'Othman and prevented him from getting down into the grave, although it was a prominent merit of the Prophet's character that he did not disgrace or belittle any one by making public his private life, and despite of knowledge of other's shortcomings, ignored them; but in this case the filth was such that it was deemed necessary to disgrace him before the whole crowd.

Since A'Othman did not show any regard for the demise of his wife (Umm Kulthum) nor was he moved or felt sorry (for this event), and paid no heed to the cutting off his relationship with the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) (for being his son-in-law), he (A'Othman) had sexual intercourse on the same night, therefore the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) deprived him of this right and honor. (al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Vol. 2, pp. 100-101, 114; Ahmed ibn Hanbal, *Al-Musnad*, Vol. 3, pp. 126, 228, 229, 270; al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, Vol. 4, p. 47; al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, Vol. 4, p. 53; ibn Sa'd, *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, Vol. 8, p. 26; as-Suhayli, *Al-Rawd al-AAanif*, Vol. 2, p. 107; Ibn Hajar, *Al-Isaba*, Vol. 4, p. 489; *Fath al-Bari*, Vol. 3, p. 122; al-AAayni, *AUmdat al-Qari*, Vol. 4, p. 85; ibn al-Athir, *Al-Nihaya*, Vol. 3, p. 276; Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-AAArab*, Vol. 9, pp. 280-281; az-Zabidi, *Taj al-AAarus*, Vol. 6, p. 220).

SERMON 164

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

Allah has provided wonderful creations including the living, the lifeless, the stationary, and the moving. He has established such clear proofs for His delicate creative power and great might that minds bend down to Him in acknowledgment thereof and in submission to Him, and arguments about His oneness strike our ears. He has created birds of various shapes which live in the burrows of the earth, in the openings of high passes and on the peaks of mountains.

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

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

About the Peacock

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

I am telling you all this from observation, unlike he who narrates on the basis of weak authority. For example, the belief of some people that it fecundates the female by a tear which flows from its eyes and when it stops on the edges of the eyelids the female swallows and lays its eggs thereby and not through fecundation by a male other than by means of this flowing tear. Even if they say this, it would be no more amazing than (what they say about) the mutual feeding of the crows (for fecundation). You would imagine its feathers to be sticks made of silvers and the wonderful circles and sun-shaped feathers growing thereon to be of pure gold and pieces of green emerald. If you likened them to anything growing on land, you would say that it is a bouquet of flowers collected during every spring. If you likened them to cloths, they would be like printed apparels or amazing variegated cloths of Yemen. If you likened them to ornaments then they would be like gems of different color with studded silvers.

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

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

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

The magnificence of the Creator in great and small creation

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

A portion of the same sermon: describing paradise

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

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

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

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: In Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's words Aya'urru bimalaqihihi, Aal-arr implies A copulation, e.g. When it is said Aarra'r-rajulu al-mar'ata ya'urruha, it means AHe copulated with the woman.

In his words Aka'annahu qal'u dariyyin Aanajahu nutiyyuhu, Aal-qal'means the sail of a boat. Adari means belonging to Darin which is a small town on the coast from where scents are bought. And Aanajahu means Aturned it. It is said Aanajtun'n-naqata - like nasartu - a'najuha Aanjan. AWhen you turn the she-camel. And Aan-nuti means sailor. His words Adaffatay jufunihi means edges of the eyelids, since Aad-daffatan means the two edges. His words Awa filadhu'z-zabarjadi: Aal-filadh is the plural of Aal-fildhah it means piece. His words Aka ba'isi'l-lu'lu'i'r-ratibi. Aal-kibasah means bunch of dates. Aal-Aasalij means twigs. Its singular is Ausluj.

SERMON 165

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

The young among you should follow the elders while the elders should be kind to the young. Do not be like those rude people of the pre-Islamic (al-jahiliyyah) period who did not exert themselves in religion nor use their intellects in the matter of Allah. The y¹ are like the breaking of eggs in the nest of a dangerous bird, because their breaking looks bad, but keeping them intact would mean the production of dangerous young ones.

A portion of the same sermon: about the autocracy and oppression of the Umayyads and their fate

They will divide after their unity and scatter away from their center. Some of them will stick to the branches, and bending down as the branches bend, until Allah, the Sublime, will collect them together for the day that will be worst for the Umayyads just as the scattered bits of clouds

collect together in the autumn. Allah will create affection among them. Then He will make them into a strong mass like the mass of clouds. Then he will open doors for them to flow out from their starting place like the flood of the two gardens (of Saba') from which neither high rocks remained safe nor small hillocks, and its flow could be repulsed either by strong mountains nor by high lands. Allah will scatter them in the low lands of valleys and then He will make them flow like streams throughout the earth, and through them He will arrange the taking of rights of one people by another people and make one people to stay in the houses of another people. By Allah, all their position and esteem will dissolve as fat dissolves on the fire.

The cause of tyranny

O people! If you had not evaded support of the truth and had not felt weakness from crushing wrong then he who was not your match would not have aimed at you and he who overpowered you would not have overpowered you. But you roamed about the deserts (of disobedience) like Banu Isra'il (Children of Israel). I swear by my life that after me your tribulations will increase several times, because you will have abandoned the truth behind the backs, severed your connection with your near ones and established relations with remote ones. Know that if you had followed him who was calling you (to guidance) he would have made you tread the ways of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , then you would have been spared the difficulties of misguidance, and you would have thrown away the crushing burden from your necks.

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

SERMON 166

At the beginning of his Caliphate

Fulfillment of rights and obligations and advice to fear Allah in all matters.

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

Hasten towards the most common matter which is peculiar to every one; and that is death. Certainly, people (who have already gone) are ahead of you while the hour (Day of Judgment) is driving you from behind. Remain light, in order that you may overtake them. Your backs are being awaited for the sake of the fronts. Fear Allah in the matter of His creatures and His cities because you will be questioned even about lands and beasts. Obey Allah and do not disobey Him. When you see virtue adopt it, and when you see vice avoid it.

SERMON 167

After swearing of allegiance to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), some people from among the companions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said to him. AYou should punish the people who assaulted AOthman, whereupon he said:

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

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

SERMON 168

When the people of Jamal set off for Basra Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

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

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

SERMON 169

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) approached Basra an Arab met him and spoke to him, as he had been sent to him by a group of people of Basra to inquire from him on their behalf his position vis-a-vis the people of Jamal. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) explained to him his position with respect to them, from which he was convinced that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was in the right. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) asked him to swear allegiance, but he replied I am just a message carrier of a people and shall not do anything until I get back to them. Upon this Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said to him:

If those at your back send you as a forerunner to search out a rain-fed area for them, and you return to them and apprise them of greenery and water but they disagree with you and go towards dry and barren land, what would you do then? He said: I would leave them and go towards greenery and water. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) then said: "So, then, stretch your hand."

This man related that: By Allah, by such a clear argument I could not refrain from swearing allegiance to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S).

This man was known as Kulayb al-Jarmi.

SERMON 170

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) decided to fight the enemy face to face at Siffin he said:

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

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

SERMON 171

About the Consultative Committee and the Battle of Jamal

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

A portion of the same sermon: about the Consultative Committee after the death of AOmer ibn al-Khattab

Someone¹ said to me, AO son of Abu Talib, you are eager for the caliphate. Then I told him,

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

O Lord! I seek Your succor against the Quraish and those who are assisting them, because they are denying me (the rights of) kinship, have lowered my high position, and are united in opposing me in the matter (of the caliphate) which is my right, and then they said, AKnow that the rightful thing is that you have it and also that you may leave it.²

A portion of the same sermon: describing the people of Jamal

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

Here in Basra they approached my governor and treasurers of the public treasury and its other inhabitants. They killed some of them in captivity and others by treachery. By Allah, even if they had willfully killed only one individual from among the Muslims without any fault, it would have been lawful for me to kill the whole of this army because they were present in it but did not

disagree with it nor prevented it by tongue or hand, not to say that they killed from among the Muslims a number equal to that with which they had marched on them.

1. On the occasion of the Consultative Committee Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas repeated to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) what A'Omer had said in his last hours namely that A'O Ali, you are very greedy for the position of Caliphate, and Ali replied that, A'He who demands his own right cannot be called greedy; rather greedy is he who prevents These curing of the right and tries to grab it despite being unfit for it.

There is no doubt that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) considered the Caliphate to be his right, and demanded his right. The demand for a right does not dispel a right so that it may be put forth as an excuse for not assigning him the caliphate, and the demand may be held as a mark of greed. Even if it was greed, who was not involved in this greed? Was not the pull between the Muhajirun and the Ansar, the mutual struggle between the members of the Consultative Committee and the mischief mongering of Talhah and az-Zubayr the product of this very greed. If Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had been greedy for this position, he would have stood for it, closing his eyes to the consequences and results. When A'Abbas (uncle of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) and Abu Sufyan pressed him for (accepting) allegiance, and when, after the third Caliph people thronged to him for (swearing) allegiance, he should have accepted their offer without paying any attention to the deteriorated conditions. But at no time did Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) take any step which could prove that he wanted the Caliphate for the sake of caliphate. But rather his demand for the caliphate was only with the object that it features should not be altered and the religion should not become the victim of others' desires, not that he should enjoy the pleasures of life which could be attributed to greed.

2. Explaining the meaning, Ibn Abul-Hadid writes that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's intention was to say:

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

Furthermore, the intention (of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S)) is that:

If they had not said that it is right to keep away from the caliphate, it would have been easy to endure it because this would have, at least, showed their admitting my right although they were not prepared to concede it. (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 9, p. 306)

SERMON 172

On eligibility for the Caliphate

The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is the trustee of Allah's revelation, the Last of His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s, the giver of tidings of His mercy and the warner of His chastisement.

O people, the most rightful of all persons for this matter (namely the caliphate) is he who is most competent among them to maintain it, and he who knows best Allah's commands about it. If any mischief is created by a mischief-monger, he will be called upon to repent. If he refuses, he will be fought. By my life,¹ if the question of Imamatus was not to be decided unless all the people were present, then there would be no such case. But those who agreed about it imposed the decision on those who were absent, so much so that he who was present could not dissent and

the one who was absent could not choose (any one else). Know that I shall fight two persons - one who claims what is not his and the other who ignores what is obligatory upon him.

The need for sagacity in fighting against Muslims

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

The behavior of this world with its adherents

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

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

1. When the people collected in the *saqifa* of Banu Sa'idah in connection with the election, even those who were not present there were made to follow the decision taken there. And the principle was adopted that those present at the election had no right to reconsider the matter or to break the allegiance and those not present could do nothing but acquiesce in the agreed decision. But when the people of Medina swore allegiance at the hands of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), the Governor of Syria (Mu'awiyah) refused to follow suit on the ground that since he was not present on the occasion he was not bound to abide by it, whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) gave a reply in this sermon on the basis of these accepted and agreed principles and conditions which had been established among these people and had become unable to convert. AWhen the people of Medina and the Ansar and the Muhajirun have sworn allegiance on my hand, Mu'awiyah had no right to keep aloof from it on the ground that he was not present on the occasion, nor were Talhah and az-Zubayr entitled to break the pledge after swearing allegiance.

On this occasion, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) did not argue on the strength of any saying of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) which would serve as his final say about the caliphate, because the grounds for refusal in his case was in respect of the modus operandi of the principle of election. Therefore, in keeping with therequirements of the situation a reply based on the agreed principles of the adversary could alone quiet him. Even if he had argued on the strength of the Prophet's command it would have been subjected to various interpretations and the matter would have been prolonged instead of being settled. Again Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib

(A.S) had seen that soon after the death of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) all his sayings and commands had been set aside. Therefore, how after the lapse of a long time, could one be expected to accept it when habit had been established to follow one's free will against the Prophet's sayings.

SERMON 173

About Talhah ibn A'Ubaydillah

Delivered when he received the news that Talhah and az-Zubayr had already left for Basra to fight against him

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

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

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

SERMON 174

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

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

By Allah, if I wish, I can tell every one of you from where he has come, where he has to go and all his affairs, but I fear lest you abandon the Messenger of Allah - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny - in my favor. I shall certainly convey these things to Theselected ones who will remain safe from that fear. By Allah, Who deputed the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) with Right and distinguished him over creation. I do not speak save the truth. He (the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) informed me of all this and also about the death of every one who dies, the salvation of every one who is granted salvation, and

the consequences of this matter (the caliphate). He left nothing (that could) pass into my head without putting it in my ear and telling me about it.¹

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

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

Say: ANone (either) in the heavens or in the earth knoweth the unseen save Allah. (Holy Qur'an, 27:65)

because this verse contains the negation of personal knowledge of the unknown, but not the negation of knowledge which is required by the prophets and holy persons through the Divine inspiration, by virtue of which they make prophesies about the future and unveil many events and happenings. Several verses of the Holy Qur'an support this view such as:

When the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) confided unto one of his wives a matter, she divulged it (unto others) and Allah apprised him thereof. He made known a part of it and avoided a part; so when he informed her of it, said she: *AWho informed thee of this?* He said: *AInformed me, the All-knowing, the All-aware.* (Holy Qur'an, 66:3)

These are of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal unto thee (O Our Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household)).(Holy Qur'an, 11:49)

Therefore, it is incorrect to argue in support of the view that if it is said that the prophets and holy persons possess knowledge of the unknown it would imply duality in the Divine attributes. It would have implied duality if it were said that someone other than Allah has personal knowledge of the unknown. When it is not so and the knowledge possessed by the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s and Imams is that given by Allah it has no connection with duality. If duality should mean what is alleged, what would be the position of AIsa's (Jesus's) assertion related in the Holy Qur'an namely:

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

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

No one can deny the fact that some people either see in dreams certain things which have yet to occur in the future, or that things can be read through interpretation of the dream, while during a dream neither do Thesenses function nor do the powers of understanding and comprehension cooperate. Therefore, if some events become known to some people in wakefulness why should there be amazement over it and what are the grounds for rejecting it, when it stands to reason that things possible in dreams are also possible in wakefulness. Thus, Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani has written that it is possible to achieve all this, because in a dream the spirit becomes free from looking after the body and is removed from bodily connections. As a result of this it perceives such hidden realities which could not be seen because of the obstruction of the body. In the same

way those perfect beings who pay no heed to bodily matters, and turn with all the attention of spirit and heart towards the center of knowledge can see those realities and secrets which the ordinary eyes are unable to discern. Therefore, keeping in view the spiritual greatness of Ahl al-Bayt (□) (members of the Prophet's family) it should not appear strange that they were aware of events which were going to occur in future. Ibn Khaldun has written:

When thaumaturgic feats are performed by others what do you think about those who were distinguished in knowledge and honesty and were a mirror of the Prophet's traits, while the consideration Allah had for their noble root (namely the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) is a proof of the high performances of his chaste offshoots (Ahl al-Bayt (□)). Consequently many events about knowledge of the unknown are related about Ahl al-Bayt (□) which are not related about others. (al-Muqaddamah, p. 23).

In this way there is no cause for wonder over Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's claim since he was brought up by the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and was a pupil of Allah's school. Of course, those whose knowledge does not extend beyond the limits of physical objectivity and whose means of learning are confined to the bodily senses refuse to believe in the knowledge about the paths of the Divine cognizance and reality. If this kind of claim were unique and were heard only from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) then minds could have wavered and temperaments could have hesitated in accepting it. But if the Holy Qur'an records even such a claim of Alsa (Jesus) that - AI can tell you what you eat or drink or store in your houses, then why should there be hesitation over Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's claim, when it is agreed that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had succeeded to all the attainments and distinctions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and it cannot be contended that the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) did not know what Alsa (Jesus) knew. Thus, if the successor of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) advances such a claim, why should it be rejected, particularly as this vastness of knowledge of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) is the best evidence and proof for the Prophet's knowledge and perfection and a living miracle of his truthfulness.

In this connection, it is amazing that even having knowledge of events Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) did not, through any of his words or deeds, indicate that he knew them. Thus, commenting of the extraordinary importance of this claim, Sayyid Ibn Tawus writes:

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

At this stage, the question arises as to why Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) did not act upon the dictates of his secret knowledge. The reply to this is that the commands of the shari'ah are based on apparent conditions. Otherwise secret knowledge is a kind of miracle and power which Allah grants to His prophets and Imams. Although the prophets and Imams possess this power always, they cannot make use of it at any time unless and until by the permission of Allah and on the proper occasion. For example, the verse quoted above about Alsa (Jesus) which tells that he had the power to give life, to heal the blind and declare what one ate and stored in his house, etc., he

(Jesus) did not used to practice this power on everything or every corpse or everyone who met him. He used to practice this power only by the permission of Allah and on the proper occasion.

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

Now, there can be no scope for the objection that if Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) knew secret matters then why did he not act according to them because it has been shown that he was not obliged to act according to therequirements of his secret knowledge. Of course, where conditions so required he did disclose some matters for the purposes of preaching, admonishing, giving good tidings (of reward) or warning (against punishment), so that future events could be fore-closed. For example, Imam Ja'fer as-Sadiq (□) informed Yahya ibn Zayd that if he went out he would be killed. Ibn Khaldun writes in this connection:

It has been authentically related from Imam Ja'fer as-Sadiq that he used to apprise some of his relations of the events to befall them. For example, he warned his cousin Yahya ibn Zayd of being killed but he disobeyed him and went out and was killed in Juzajan. (*Al-Muqaddamah*, p. 233).

Nevertheless, where there was apprehension that minds would get worried it was not at all disclosed. That is why in this sermon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) avoided more details, in view of the fear that people would begin to regard him higher than the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Despite all this people did go astray about Alsa (Jesus), and in the same way about Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) also they began to say all sorts of things and were misled into resorting to exaggeration.

SERMON 175

Preaching

(O creatures!) Seek benefit from the sayings of Allah, be admonished of Allah and accept the advice of Allah because Allah has left no excuse for you by providing clear guidance, has put before you the plea and clarified for you what acts He likes and what acts He hates, so that you may follow the one and avoid the other. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah used to say, AParadise is surrounded by unpleasant things while Hell is surrounded by desires.

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

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

The greatness of the Holy Qur'an

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

Know that it is an interceder and its intercession will be accepted. It is a speaker who is testified. For whoever the Holy Qur'an intercedes on the Day of Judgment, its intercession for him would be accepted. He about whom the Holy Qur'an speaks ill on the Day of Judgment shall testify to it. On the Day of Judgment an announcer will announce, *Beware*, every sower of a crop is in distress except the sowers of the Holy Qur'an. Therefore, you should be among the sowers of the Holy Qur'an and its followers. Make it your guide towards Allah. Seek its advice for yourselves, do not trust your views against it, and regard your desires in the matter of the Holy Qur'an as deceitful.

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

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

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

Allah the Sublime, has said:

Verily, those who say: Our Master is Allah! And persevere aright, the angels descend upon them (saying) : AFear ye not, nor be grieved, and receive the glad tidings of the Garden which ye were promised. (Holy Qur'an, 41:30)

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

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

The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - said: *The belief of a person cannot be firm unless his heart is firm, and his heart cannot be firm unless his tongue is firm. So whoever of you can manage to meet*

Allah, the Sublime, in such a position that his hands are not smeared with the blood of Muslims and their property and his tongue is safe from exposing them, he would do so.

Following the Sunna and refraining from innovation

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

One whom Allah does not allow to benefit from trials and experience cannot benefit from preaching. He will be faced with losses from in front, so that he will approve what is bad and disapprove what is good. People are of two categories - the follower of the Shari'ah (religious laws), and the follower of the innovations to whom Allah has not given any testimony by way of Sunna or the light of any plea.

Guidance from the Holy Qur'an

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

Categories of oppression

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

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

SERMON 176

About the two arbiters (after the battle of Siffin)

Your party had decided to select two persons, and so we took their pledge that they would act according to the Holy Qur'an and would not commit excess, that their tongues should be with it

and that their hearts should follow it. But they deviated from it, abandoned what was right although they had it before their eyes. Wrong-doing was their desire, and going astray was their behavior, although we had settled with them to decide with justice, to act according to the light and without the interference of their evil views and wrong judgment. Now that they have abandoned the course of right and have come out with just the opposite of what was settled, we have strong ground (to reject their verdict).

SERMON 177

Praise of Allah, transience of this world, and causes of the decline of Allah's blessings (Delivered at the beginning of his caliphate after the killing of A'Othman)

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

I stand witness that there is no god but Allah, Who has no parallel, Who is not doubted, Whose religion is not denied and Whose creativeness is not questioned. My witnessing is like that of a man whose intention is free, whose conscience is clear, whose belief is pure and whose loads (of good actions) are heavy. I also stand witness that Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) - the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny - is His slave and His Messenger, chosen from His creations, selected for detailing His realities, picked for His selected honors and chosen for His esteemed messages. Through him the signs of guidance have been lighted and the gloom of blindness (misguidance) has been dispelled.

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

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

SERMON 178

Dhi'lib al-Yemeni asked Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) whether he had seen Allah, when I replied, ADo I worship one whom I have not seen? Then he enquired, AHow have you seen Him? Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) replied:

Eyes do not see Him face to face, but hearts perceive Him through therealities of belief. He is near to things but not (physically) contiguous. He is far from them but not (physically) separate. He is a speaker, but not with reflection. He intends, but not with preparation. He moulds, but not with (the assistance of) limbs. He is subtle but cannot be attributed with being concealed. He is great but cannot be attributed with haughtiness. He sees but cannot be attributed with Thesense

(of sight). He is Merciful but cannot be attributed with weakness of heart. Faces feel low before His greatness and hearts tremble out of fear of Him.

SERMON 179

Condemning his disobedient men

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

May Allah deal with you! Is there no religion which may unite you nor sense of shamefulness that may sharpen you? Is it not strange that Mu'awiyah calls out to some rude low people and they follow him without any support or grant, but when I call you, although you are the successors of Islam and the (worthy) survivors of the people, with support and distributed grants you scatter away from me and oppose me? Truly, there is nothing between me to you which I like and you also like it, or with which I am angry and you may also unite against it. What I love most is death. I have taught you the Holy Qur'an, clarified to you arguments, apprised you of what you were ignorant and made you swallow what you were spitting out. Even a blind man would have been able to see, and he who was sleeping would have been awakened. How ignorant of Allah is their leader Mu'awiyah and their instructor ibn an-Nabighah.¹

1. AAn-Nabighah (the genius) is the surname of Layla daughter of Harmalah al-AAraziyyah, mother of AAmr ibn al-AAAs. The reason for attributing him to his mother is her common reputation in the matter. When Arwa daughter of al-Harith ibn AAbdul-Muttalib went to Mu'awiyah, during the conversation, when AAmr ibn al-AAAs intervened, she said to him: AO son of an-Nabighah, you too dare speak, although your mother was known publicly and was a singer of Mecca. That is why five persons claimed you (as a son), and when she was asked she admitted that five people had visited her and that you should be regarded as the son of him resembled most. You must have resembled al-AAAs ibn Wa'il and therefore you came to be known as his son.

These five persons were (1) al-AAasi ibn Wa'il, (2) Abu Lahab, (3) Umayyah ibn Khalaf, (4) Hisham ibn al-Mughirah, and (5) Abu Sufyan ibn Harb. (Ibn AAbd Rabbih, *Al-Alqd al-Farid*, Vol. 2, p. 120; Ibn Tayfur, *Balaghat an-Nisa'*, p. 27; Ibn Hijjah, *Thamarat al-Awraq*, Vol. 1, p. 132; Safwat, *Jamharat khutab al-AAArab*, Vol. 2, p. 363; ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 6, pp. 283-285, 291; al-Halabi, *Al-Sira*, Vol. 1, p. 46).

SERMON 180

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) sent one of his men to bring him news about a group of the army of Kufa who had decided to join the Kharijites but were afraid of him.¹ When the man came back Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said to him: AAre they satisfied and staying or feeling weak and going astray?

The man replied, AThey have gone away, O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

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

1. A man of the tribe Banu Najiyah named al-Khirrit ibn Rashid an-Naji was on Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's side in the battle of Siffin, but after Arbitration he became rebellious, and, coming to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) with thirty persons, said: ABy Allah, I will no more obey your command, nor offer prayers behind you, and shall leave you tomorrow. Whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said: AYou should first take into account the grounds underlying this Arbitration and discuss it with me. If you are satisfied, you do as you will. He said he would come the next day to discuss the matter. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) then cautioned him, ALook, on going from here do not get mislead by others and do not adopt any other course. If you have the will to understand, I will get out of this wrong path and put you on the course of guidance. After this conversation he went away, but his countenance indicated he was bent on revolt, and would not see reason by any means. And so it happened. He stuck to his point and on reaching his place he said to his tribesmen, AWhen we are determined to abandon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) there is no use going to him. We should do what we have decided to do. On this occasion AAbdullah ibn Qu'ayn al-Azdi also went to them to enquire, but when he came to know the position he asked Mudrik ibn ar-Rayyan an-Naji to speak to him and to apprise him of the ruinous consequence of this rebellion, whereupon Mudrik assured him that this man would not be allowed to take any ste, p. Consequently, AAbdullah came back satisfied and related the whole matter before Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) on returning the next day. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said, ALet us see what happens when he comes. But when the appointed hour passed and he did not turn up Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) asked AAbdullah to go and see what the matter was and what was the cause for the delay. On reaching there AAbdullah found that all of them had left. When he returned to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) he spoke as in this sermon.

The fate that befell al-Khirrit ibn Rashid an-Naji has been stated under Sermon 44.

SERMON 181

It has been related by Nawf al-Bikali that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) delivered this sermon at Kufa standing on a stone which Ja'dah ibn Hubayrah al-Makhzumi had placed for him. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had a woollen apparel on his body, the belt of his sword was made of leaves, and the sandals on his feet too were of palm leaves. His forehead had a hardened spot like that a camel (on its knee, due to many and long prostrations). About Allah's attributes, His creatures and His being above physical limitations.

Praise to Allah to Whom is thereturn of all creation and the end of all matters. We render Him praise for the greatness of His generosity, the charity of His proofs, the increase of His bounty and His favors, - praise which may fulfill His right, repay His thanks, take (us) near His reward and be productive of increase in His kindness. We seek His help like one who is hopeful of His bounty, desirous of His benefit, and confident of His warding off (calamities), who acknowledges His gifts and is obedient to Him in word and deed. We believe in Him like him

who reposes hope in Him with conviction, inclines to Him as a believer, humbles himself before Him obediently, believes in His oneness exclusively, regards Him great, acknowledging His dignity, and seeks refuge with Him with inclination and exertion.

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

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

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

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

An account of past peoples and about learning from them

I advise you, creatures of Allah, to practice fear of Allah Who gave you good clothing and bestowed an abundance of sustenance on you. If there was anyone who could secure a ladder to everlasting life or a way to avoid death it was Sulayman ibn Dawud (□) who was given control over the domain of the jinn and men along with prophethood and great position (before Allah). But when he finished what was his due in food (of this world) and exhausted his (fixed) time the bow of destruction shot him with arrow of death. His houses became vacant and his habitations

became empty. Another group of people inherited them. Certainly, the by-gone centuries have a lesson for you.

Where are the Amalekites¹ and the sons of Amalekites? Where are the Pharaohs?² Where are the people of the cities of ar-Rass³ who killed the prophets, destroyed the traditions of the holy messengers and revived the traditions of the despots? Where are those who advanced with armies, defeated thousands, mobilized forces and populated cities?

A portion of the same sermon: about the Imam al-Mahdi

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

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) continued:

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

O people! I have divulged to you advice which the prophets used to preach before their peoples, and I have conveyed to you what the vicegerents (of the prophets) conveyed to those coming after them. I tried to train you with my whip but you could not be straightened. I drove you with admonition but you did not acquire proper behavior. May Allah deal with you! Do you want an Imam other than me to take you on the (right) path, and show you the correct way?

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

Where are my brethren who took the (right) path and trod in righteousness. Where is Ammar?⁴ Where is ibn at-Tayyihan?⁵ Where is Thul-Shahadatayn?⁶ And where are others like them⁷ from among their comrades who had pledged themselves to death and whose (severed) heads were taken to the wicked enemy.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) wiped his hand over his auspicious, honored beard and wept for a long time, then he continued:

O! my brothers, who recited the Holy Qur'an and strengthened it, thought over their obligation and fulfilled it, revived the Sunna and destroyed innovation. When they were called to jihad they responded and trusted in their leader then followed him.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) shouted at the top of his voice:

Al-jihad, al-jihad! O servants of Allah! By Allah, I am mobilizing the army today. He who desires to proceed towards Allah should come forward.

Nawf says the following: Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) put Husain (□) over (a force of) ten thousand, Qays ibn Sa'd (mercy of Allah be upon him) over ten thousand, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari over ten thousand, and others over different numbers, intending to return to Siffin, but Friday did not appear again and the accursed ibn Muljim (may Allah curse him) killed him. Consequently,

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

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

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

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

Among the Pharaohs was the Pharaoh of the days of Prophet Musa (□). His pride, egotism, insolence and haughtiness were such that by making the claim AI am your sublime Allah he deemed himself to be holding sway over all other powers of the world, and was under the misunderstanding that no power could wrest therealm and government from his hands. The Holy Qur'an has narrated his claim of AI and no one else in the following words:

And proclaimed Pharaoh unto his people, AO my people! is not the kingdom of Egypt mine? And these rivers flow below me; What?! Behold ye not? (Holy Qur'an 43:51)

But when his empire came near the end it was destroyed in a few moments. Neither his position and servants could come in the way of its destruction nor could the vastness of his realm prevent it. Rather, the waves of the very streams which he was extremely proud to possess,

wrapped him in and dispatched his spirit to Hell throwing the body on the bank to serve as a lesson for the whole of creation.

e. The people of the cities of ar-Rass: In the same way the people of ar-Rass were killed and destroyed for disregarding the preaching and call of a prophet, and for revolt and disobedience. About them the Holy Qur'an says the following:

And the (tribes of) AAd and Thamud and the inhabitants of ar-Rass, and generations between them, in great number: Unto each of them We did give examples and every one (of them) We did destroy with utter extermination. (Holy Qur'an 25:38,39)

Belied (also) those before them the people of Noah and the dwellers of ar-Ras and Thamud; And AAd and Pharaoh, and the brethren of Lot; And the dwellers of the Wood and the people of Tubba'; all belied the Messengers, so was proved true My promise (of the doom) (Holy Qur'an 50:12-14)

4. AAmmar ibn Yasir ibn AAmir al-Mathhaji al-Makhzumi (a confederate of Banu Makhzum) was one of the earliest converts to Islam, and the first Muslim to build a mosque in his own house in which he used to worship Allah (*Al-Tabaqat*, Vol. 3, Part 1, p. 178; *Usd al-Ghabah*, Vol. 4, p. 46; Ibn Kathir, *Tarikh*, Vol. 7, p.311).

AAmmar accepted Islam along with his father Yasir and his mother Sumayya. They suffered great tortures by the Quraish, due to their conversion to Islam, to such an extent that AAmmar lost his parents; and they were the first martyrs - man and woman in Islam.

AAmmar was among those who immigrated to Abyssinia, and the earliest immigrants (Muhajirun) to Medina. He was present in the battle of Badr and all other battles as well as places of assembly by the Muslims during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ; and he showed his might and favor in all Islamic struggles in the best way.

Many traditions are narrated from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) about AAmmar regarding his virtues, outstanding traits and his glorious deeds, such as the tradition which AAishah and others have narrated that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) himself had said that AAmmar was filled with faith from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. (Ibn Majah, *Sunan*, Vol. 1, p. 65; Abu Nu'aym, *Hilyat al-Awliya'*, Vol. 1, p. 139; al-Haytami, *Majma' az-Zawa'id*, Vol. 9, p.295; *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 3, p. 1137; *Al-Isaba*, Vol. 2, p. 512)

In another tradition the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said about AAmmar:

AAmmar is with the truth and the truth is with AAmmar. He turns wherever the truth turns. AAmmar is as near to me as an eye is near to the nose. Alas! a rebellious group will kill him. (*Al-Tabaqat*, Vol. 3, part 1, p. 187; *Al-Mustadrak*, Vol. 3, p. 392; Ibn Hisham, *Sira*, Vol. 2, p. 143; Ibn Kathir, *Tarikh*, Vol. 7, pp. 268-270).

Also in the decisive and widely known tradition which al-Bukhari (in *Sahih*, Vol. 8, pp. 185-186), at Tirmithi (in al-Jami' *Sahih*, Vol. 5, p. 669) ; Ahmed ibn Hanbal (in *Al-Musnad*, Vol. 2, pp. 161, 164, 206; Vol. 3, pp. 5, 22, 28, 91; Vol. 4, pp. 197, 199; Vol. 5, pp. 215, 306, 307; Vol. 6, pp. 289, 300, 311, 315), and all the narrators of Islamic traditions and historians transmitted through twenty-five Companions that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said about AAmmar:

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

Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (in *Tahthib al-Tahthib*, Vol. 7, p. 409; *Al-Isaba*, Vol. 2, p.512) and al-Sayyuti (in *Al-Khasa'is al-Kubra*, Vol. 2, p. 140) say: The narration of this (above mentioned) tradition is *mutawatir* (i.e. narrated successively by so many people that no doubt can be entertained about its authenticity).

Ibn Abdul-Barr (in *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 3, p. 1140) says the following:

The narration followed uninterrupted succession from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , that he said: A rebellious group will murder Ammar, and this is a prophecy of the Prophet's secret knowledge and the sign of his prophethood. This tradition is among the most authentic and the most rightly ascribed traditions.

After the death of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Ammar was one of the closest adherents and best supporters of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) during thereign of the first three Caliphs. During the caliphate of Othman when the Muslim protested (to Othman) against his policy on the distribution of the Public Treasury (*baytul-mal*) Othman said in a public assembly that, the money which was in the treasury was sacred and belonged to Allah, and that he (as being the successor of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) had the right to dispose of them as he thought fit. He (Othman) threatened and cursed all who presumed to censure or murmur at what he said. Upon this, Ammar ibn Yasir boldly declared his disapprobation and began to charge him with his inveterate propensity to ignore the interests of the general public; accused him with reviving the heathenish customs abolished by the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Whereupon Othman commanded him to be beaten and immediately some of the Umayyads, the kindred of the Caliph fell upon the venerable Ammar, and the Caliph himself kicking him with his shoes (on his feet) on Ammar's testicles, and afflicted him with a hernia. Ammar became unconscious for three days, and he was taken care of by Umm al-Mu'minin Umm Salamah in her own house. (al-Balathiri, *Ansab al-Ashraf*, Vol. 5, pp. 48, 54, 88; Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 3, pp. 47-52; *Al-Imamah wal-Siyasa*, Vol. 1, pp. 35-36; *Al-Aiqd al-Farid*, Vol. 4, p. 307; *Al-Tabaqat*, Vol. 3, Part 1, p. 185; *Tarikh al-Khamis*, Vol. 2, p. 271)

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) became Caliph, Ammar was one of his most sincere supporters. He participated fully in all social, political and military activities during this period, especially in the first battle (the Battle of Jamal) and The second one (the battle of Siffin).

However, Ammar was martyred on 9th Safar 37 A.H. in the battle of Siffin when he was over ninety years of age. On the day Ammar ibn Yasir achieved martyrdom, he turned his face to the sky and said:

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

Abu Abd ar-Rahman al-Salami narrates:

We were present with Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) at Siffin where I saw Ammar ibn Yasir was not turning his face towards any side, nor valleys (wadis [of the land]) of Siffin but the companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) were following him as if he was

a sign for them. Then I heard AAmmar say to Hashim ibn AUtbah (al-Mirqal) : AO Hashim! Rush into enemy's ranks, paradise is under sword!

Today I meet beloved one, Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) and his party.

AThen he said: ABy Allah, if they put us to fight (and pursue us) to the date-palms of Hajar (a town in Bahrain, Persian Gulf [i.e., if they pursue us along all the Arabian desert] nevertheless) we know surely that we are right and they are wrong.

AThen he (AAmmar) continued (addressing the enemies) :

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

The narrator says the following: AI did not see the Holy Prophet's companions killed at any time as many as they were killed on this day.

Then AAmmar spurred his horse, entered the battlefield and began fighting. He persistently chased the enemy, made attack after attack, and raised challenging slogans till at last a group of mean-spirited Syrians surrounded him on all sides, and a man named Abul-Ghadiyah al-Juhari (al-Fazari) inflicted such a wound upon him that he could not bear it, and returned to his cam, p. He asked for water. A tumbler of milk was brought to him. When AAmmar looked at the tumbler he said: AThe Messenger of Allah had said the right thing. People asked him what he meant by these words. He said, AThe Messenger of Allah informed me that the last sustenance for me in this world would be milk. Then he took that tumbler of milk in his hands, drank the milk and surrendered his life to Allah, the Almighty. When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) came to know of his death, he came to AAmmar's side, put his (AAmmar's) head on his own lap, and recited the following elegy to mourn his death:

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

May Allah show His mercy to AAmmar the day he embraced Islam, may Allah show His mercy to AAmmar the day he was killed, and may Allah show His mercy to AAmmar the day he is raised to life.

Certainly, I found AAmmar (on such level) that three companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) could not be named unless he was the fourth, and four of them could not be mentioned unless he was the fifth.

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

Certainly, it was said (by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) ASurely, AAmmar is with the truth and the truth is with AAmmar. He turns wherever the truth turns. His killer will be in hell.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) stepped forward and offered funeral prayers for him, and then with his own hands, he buried him with his clothes.

AAmmar's death caused a good deal of commotion in the ranks of Mu'awiyah too, because there were a large number of prominent people fighting from his side under the impression created in their minds that he was fighting Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) for a right cause. These people were aware of the saying of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) that AAmmar would be killed by a group who would be on the wrong side. When they observed that

AAmmar had been killed by Mu'awiyah's army, they became convinced that they were on the wrong side and that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was definitely on the right. This agitation thus caused among the leaders as well as the rank and file of Mu'awiyah's army, was quelled by him with the argument that it was Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) who brought AAmmar to the battlefield and therefore it was he who was responsible for his death. When Mu'awiyah's argument was mentioned before Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) he said it was as though the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was responsible for killing Hamzah as he brought him to the battle of Uhud. (al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, Vol. 1, pp. 3316-3322; Vol. 3, pp. 2314-2319; ibn Sa'd, *Al-Tabaqat*, Vol. 3, Part 1, pp. 176-189; ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kamil*, Vol. 3, pp. 308-312; ibn Kathir, *Tarikh*, Vol. 7, pp. 267-272; al-Minqari, *Siffin*, pp. 320-345; ibn AAbdul-Barr, *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 3, pp. 1135-1140; Vol. 4, p. 1725; ibn al-Athir, *Usd al-Ghaba*, Vol. 4, pp. 43-47; Vol. 5, p. 267; ibn Abul-Hadid, *Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 5, pp. 252-258; Vol. 8, pp. 10-28; Vol. 10, pp. 102-107, al-Hakim, al-Mustadrak, Vol. 3, pp. 384-394; ibn AAbk Rabbih, *Al-AIqd al-Farid*, Vol. 4, pp. 340-343; al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-Thahab*, Vol. 2, pp. 381-382, al-Haytami, *Majama' az-Zawa'id*, Vol. 7, pp. 238-244; Vol. 9, pp. 291-298; al-Balathiri, *Ansab al-Ashraf (Biography of Amir al-Mu'minin)*, pp. 310-319.

5. Abul-Haytham (Malik) ibn at-Tayyihan al-Ansari was one of the twelve chiefs (*naqib* [of Ansar] who attended the fair and met at al-AAqabah - in the first AAqabah and among those who attended in The second AAqabah - where he gave the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) the Apledge of Islam'. He was present in the battle of Badr and all other battles as well as places of assembly by the Muslims during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . He was also among the sincere supporters of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) and he attended the Battle of Jamal as well as Siffin where he was martyred. (*Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 4, p. 1773; *Siffin*, p. 365; *Usd al-Ghaba*, Vol. 4, p. 274; Vol. 5, p. 318; *Al-Isaba*, Vol. 3, p. 341; Vol. 4, pp. 312-313; ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 10, pp. 107-108; *Ansab al-Ashraf*, p. 319).

6. Khuzaymah ibn Thabit al-Ansari. He is known as AThul-Shahadatayn (the man with the two testimonials) because the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) considered his evidence equivalent to the evidence of two witnesses. He was present in the battle of Badr, and other battles as well as in the places of assembly of the Muslims during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . He is counted among the earliest of those who showed their adherence to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) and he was also present in the Battle of Jamal and Siffin. AAbd ar-Rahman ibn Abu Layla narrated that he saw a man in the battle of Siffin fighting the enemy valiantly and when he protested against his action, the man said:

I am Khuzaymah ibn Thabit al-Ansari, I have heard the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) saying, AFight, fight, by the side of Ali. the orator, al-Baghdadi, *Muwaddih Awham al-Jam' wal-Tafriq*, Vol. 1, p. 277).

Khuzaymah was narrated in the battle of Siffin soon after the martyrdom of AAmmar ibn Yasir.

Sayf ibn AOmer al-Usaydi (the well known liar) has fabricated another Khuzaymah, and claimed that the one who was martyred in the battle of Siffin was this one and not the one with the surname of AThul-Shahadatayn'. Al-Tabari has quoted this fabricated story from Sayf either intentionally or otherwise, and through him this story has affected some other historians who quoted from al-Tabari or relied on him. (For further reference, see al-AAaskari, *Khamsun wa miah sahabi mukhtalaq [one hundred and fifty fabricated companions]*, Vol. 2, pp. 175-189).

After having denied this story ibn Abul-Hadid adds (in *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, Vol. 10, pp. 109-110) that:

Furthermore, what is the need for those who to defend Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) to make a boast of abundance with Khuzaymah, Abul-Haytham, AAmmar and others. If people treat this man (Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S)) with justice and look at him with healthy eyes they will certainly realize that should he be alone (on one side) and the people all together (on the other side) fighting him, he will be in the truth and all the rest will be in the wrong. (*Al-Tabaqat*, Vol. 3, Part 1, pp. 185, 188; *al-Mustadrak*, Vol. 3, pp. 385, 397; *Usd al-Ghaba*, Vol. 2, p. 114; Vol. 4, p. 47; *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 2, p. 448; *al-Tabari*, Vol. 3, pp. 2316, 2319, 2401; *Al-Kamil*, Vol. 3, p. 325; *Siffin*, pp. 363, 398; *Ansab al-Ashraf*, pp. 313-314).

7. Among the people who were present in the Battle of Jamal on the side of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) there were one hundred and thirty Badris (those who participated in the battle of Badr with the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) and seven hundred of those who were present in the Apledge of ar-Ridwan' (Bay'atu'r-Ridwan) which took place under a tree. (*al-Thahbi*, *Tarikh al-Islam*, Vol. 2, p. 171; *Khalifah ibn Khayyat*, *Tarikh*, Vol. 1, p. 164). Those who were killed in the Battle of Jamal from the side of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) numbered some five hundred (some said that the number of martyrs were more than that). But on the side of the people of Jamal twenty thousand were killed. (*Al-AIqd al-Farid*, Vol. 4, p. 326).

Among those who were present in the battle of Siffin on the side of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), there were eighty Badris and eight hundred of those who swore to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) the pledge of al-Ridwan (*Al-Mustadrak*, Vol. 3, p. 104; *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 3, p. 1138; *Al-Isaba*, Vol. 2, p. 389; *Tarikh*, al-Ya'qubi, Vol. 2, p. 188).

On the side of Mu'awiyah forty-five thousand were killed, and on the sides of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) twenty-five thousand. Among these martyrs (of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S)) there were twenty-five or twenty-six Badris and sixty-three or three hundred and three of the people of the Apledge of ar-Ridwan'. (*Siffin*, p. 558; *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 2, p. 389; *Ansab al-Ashraf*, p. 322; *ibn Abul-Hadid*, Vol. 10, p. 104; *Abul-Fida'*, Vol. 1, p. 175; *ibn al-Wardi*, *Tarikh*, Vol. 1, p. 240; *ibn Kathir*, Vol. 7, p. 275; *Tarikh al-Khamis*, Vol. 2 , p. 277).

Besides the distinguished and eminent companions of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) like AAmmar, Thul-Shahadatayn and Ibn al-Tayyihan, who lay martyred in Siffin were:-

i. Hashim ibn AUtbah ibn Abu Waqqas al-Mirqal was killed on the same day when AAmmar was martyred. He was the bearer of the standard of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's army on that day.

ii. 'Abdullah ibn Budayl ibn al-Warqa al-Khuza'i was sometimes the right wing Commander of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's army and sometimes the infantry Commander.

SERMON 182

Praise of Allah for His bounties

Praise to Allah Who is recognized without being seen and Who creates without trouble. He created the creation with His Might, and receives the devotion of rulers by virtue of His dignity. He exercises superiority over great men through His generosity. It is He who made His creation to populate the world and sent towards the jinn and human beings His messengers to unveil it for them, to warn them of its harm, to present to them its examples, to show them its defects and to place before them a whole collection of matters containing lessons about the changing of health and sickness in this world, its lawful things and unlawful things and all that Allah has ordained

for the obedient and the disobedient, namely, Paradise and Hell and honor and disgrace. I extend my praise to His Being as He desires His creation to praise Him. He has fixed for everything a measure, for every measure a time limit, and for every time limit a document.

A portion of the same sermon:

About the greatness and importance of the Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an orders as well as refrains, remains silent and also speaks. It is the proof of Allah before His creation. He has taken from them a pledge (to act) upon it. He has perfected its effulgence, and completed through it His religion. He let the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) leave this world when he had conveyed to the people all His commands of guidance through the Holy Qur'an. You should therefore regard Allah great as he has held Himself great, because He has not concealed anything of His religion from you, nor has He left out anything which He likes or which He dislikes, but He made for it a clear emblem (of guidance) and a definite sign which either refrains from it or calls towards it. His pleasure is the same for all time to come.

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

Warning against punishment on the Day of Judgment

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

Therefore, hasten towards the place of return and go ahead of (your) deaths (by collecting provision for the next world). Shortly, the expectations of the people will be cut short and death will overtake them while the door of repentance will be closed for them. You are still in a place to which those who were before you have been wishing to return. In this world, which is not your house, you are just a traveler in motion. You have been given the call to leave from here, and you have been ordered to collect provision while you are here. You should know that this thin skin cannot tolerate the Fire (of Hell). So, have pity on yourselves because you have already tried it in the tribulations of the world.

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

rage), and, when he scolds it, it leaps between the doors of Hell crying on account of his scolding.

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

If you help (in the way) of Allah, He will (also) help you, and will set firm your feet. (Holy Qur'an, 47:7)

and He, the Sublime has said:

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

He does not seek your support because of any weakness, nor does He demand a loan from you because of shortage. He seeks your help, although He possesses all the armies of the skies and the earth and He is strong and wise. He seeks a loan from you, although He owns the treasures of the skies and the earth and He is rich and praiseworthy. (Rather) He intends to try you as to which of you performs good acts. You should therefore be quick in performance of (good) acts so that your way be with His neighbors in His abode; He made His Prophet's companions of these neighbors and made the angels to visit them. He has honored their ears so that the sound of Hell fire may never reach them, and He has afforded protection to their bodies from weariness and fatigue.

... that is the grace of Allah, He bestoweth it upon whomsoever He willeth; and Allah is the Master of Mighty Grace. (Holy Qur'an, 57:21)

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

SERMON 183

One of the Kharijites, al-Burj ibn Mus'hir at-Ta'i, raised the slogan, ACommand behoves only Allah in such a way that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) heard it. On hearing it he said:

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

SERMON 184

Praise of Allah and His wonderful creatures

Praise to Allah. He is such that senses cannot perceive Him, place cannot contain Him, eyes cannot see Him and veils cannot cover Him. He proves His eternity by the coming into existence of His creation, and (also) by originating His creation (He proves) His existence, and by their (mutual) spirituality He proves that there is nothing similar to Him. He is true in His promise. He is too high to be unjust to His creatures. He stands by equity among His creation and practices justice over them in His commands. He provides evidence through the creation of things of His

being from ever, through their marks of incapability of His power, and through their powerlessness against death of His eternity.

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

About the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

I stand witness that Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) is His slave, His chosen Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and His responsible trustee - may Allah bless him and his descendants. Allah sent him with undeniable proofs, a clear success and open paths. So he conveyed the message declaring the truth with it. He led the people on the (correct) highway, established signs of guidance and minarets of light, and made Islam's ropes strong and its knots firm.

A portion of the same sermon:

About the creation of animal species

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

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

Creation of the Universe

In His creation, the big, the delicate, the heavy, the light, the strong, the weak are all equal.¹ So is the sky, the air, the winds and the water. Therefore, you look at the sun, moon, vegetation, plants, water, stone, the difference of this night and day, the springing of the streams, the large number of the mountains, the height of their peaks, the diversity of languages and the variety of tongues. Then woe be to him who disbelieves in the Ordainer and denies the Ruler. They believe that they are like grass for which there is no cultivator nor any maker for their diverse shapes. They have not relied on any argument for what they assert, nor on any research for what they

have heard. Can there be any construction without a constructor, or any offense without an offender.

The wonderful creation of the locust

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

About the Glory of Allah

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

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

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

SERMON 185

About the Oneness of Allah

(This sermon contains principles of knowledge which no other sermon contains.)

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

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

He fuses together diverse things, brings near remote things and separates things which are joined together. He is not confined by limits, nor counted by numbers. Material parts can surround things of their own kind, and organs can point out things similar to themselves. The world¹ Amundhu (i.e. since) disproves their eternity, the word Aqad (that denotes nearness of time of occurrence), disproves their being from ever and the word Alawla (if it were not) keep them remote from perfection.

Through them the Creator manifests Himself to the intelligence, and through them He is guarded from the sight of the eyes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then after its creation He will destroy it, but not because any worry has overcome Him in its upkeep and administration, nor for any pleasure that will accrue to Him, nor for the cumbrousness of anything over Him. The length of its life does not weary Him so as to induce Him to its quick destruction. By Allah, the Glorified, has maintained it with His kindness, kept it intact with His command and perfected it with His power. Then after its destruction, He will resuscitate it, but not for any need of His own towards it, nor to seek the assistance of any of its things against it, nor to change over from the condition of loneliness to that of company, nor from the condition of ignorance and blindness to that of knowledge and search, nor from paucity and need towards needlessness and plenty, nor from disgrace and lowliness towards honor and prestige.

1. The meaning is that the sense for which the words Amundhu, Aqad and Alawla have been formed is opposed to the attributes of AEver, AEternal and APerfect. Therefore, their application to anything would prove that they have come into existence from non-existence and are imperfect. For example, Amundhu is used to denote time as is Aqad wujida mundu kadha (this thing is found since so-and-so). Here a time limit has been stated, and anything for which a limit of time can be described cannot exist from ever or forever. The word Aqad shows (indicating the present perfect tense) the immediate past. This sense also can apply to a thing which is limited in

time. The word Alawla is used to denote the negation of something in another thing, as Ama ahsanahu wa akmalahu lawla annahu kadha) how handsome and perfect it would be if it were so-and-so). Therefore, the thing for which this word is used would be in need of others in handsomeness and perfection, and would remain deficient by itself.

SERMON 186

Regarding the vicissitudes of time (The mischief that is to occur and the absence of lawful ways of livelihood)

May my father and my mother be sacrificed for those few whose names are well-known in the sky and not known on the earth. Beware, you should expect what is to befall you such as adversity in your affairs, severance of relations and the rising up of inferior people. This will happen when the blow of a sword will be easier for a believer than to secure one Dirham lawfully. This will happen¹ when thereward of the beggar is more than that of the giver. This will be when you are intoxicated, not by drinking, but with wealth and plenty, you are swearing without compulsion and are speaking lies without compulsion. This will be when troubles hurt you as the saddle hurts the hump of the camel. How long will these tribulations be and how distant the hope (for deliverance from them) ?

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

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

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

The commentator, Ibn Abul-Hadid has written another meaning of it also, namely if the beggar does not take the wealth from the rich and it remains with him he will spend it on unlawful matters and enjoyments, and since his taking it from him prevents him from using it in unlawful manner; therefore, for this prevention of evil, the beggar will deserve more reward and recompense. (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 13, p. 97)

SERMON 187

Allah's favors

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

Condition of persons facing death

I also advise you to remember death and to lessen your heedlessness towards it. Why should you be heedless of Him Who is not heedless of you? Why expect from him (i.e. The angel of

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

Transience of this world

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

SERMON 188

Steadfast and transient belief

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

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

The challenge of Ask me before you miss me and a prophecy about the Umayyads

Certainly, our case is difficult and complicated. No one can bear it except a believer whose heart Allah has tried with belief. Our traditions will not be preserved except by trustworthy hearts and (men of) solid understanding. O people! Ask me before you miss me, because certainly I am acquainted with the passages of the sky more than the passages of the earth,² and before that mischief springs upon its feet which would trample even the nose string and destroy the wits of the people.

1. This is the interpretation of the word Amuhajir and Amustad'af as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

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

The meaning of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) here is that hijra (migration) was not only obligatory during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , but it is a

permanent obligation. This immigration is even now obligatory for attaining the proof of Allah and the true religion. Therefore, if one has attained the proof of Allah and believed in it, even if he is in midst of the unbelievers of his locality, he is not duty bound to immigrate.

The Amustad'af (weakened) is one who is living among the unbelievers and is far from being informed of the proofs of Allah, and at the same time he is unable to immigrate in order to attain the proofs of Allah.

2. Some people have explained this saying of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) to mean that by the passages of the earth he means matters of the world and by passages of the sky matters of religious law and that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) intends to say that he knows the matters of religious law and commandments more than the worldly matters. Thus, Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani writes (in *Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 4, pp. 200-201) :

It is related from 'allama al-Wabari, that he said that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's intention is to say that the scope of his religious knowledge is larger than his knowledge about matters of the world.

But taking the context into account, this explanation cannot be held to be correct because this sentence (which is the subject of explanation) has been used as the cause of the sentence 'Ask me before you miss me, and after it, is the prophecy about revolt. In between these two the occurrence of the sentence that I know religious matters more than worldly matters, makes the whole utterance quite uncounted, because Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's challenge to ask whatever one likes is not confined to matters of religious law only so this sentence could be held as its cause. Then, after that, the prophecy of the rising up of the revolt has nothing to do with matters of religious law, so that it could be put forth as a proof of more knowledge of religious matters. To ignore the clear import of the words and to interpret them in a way which does not suit the occasion, does not exhibit a correct spirit, when from the context also the same meaning accrues which the words openly convey. Thus, it is to give a warning about the Umayyad's mischief that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) uttered the words: 'Ask me whatever you like'; because I know the paths and courses of the Divine destiny more than the passages of the earth. So, even if you ask me about matters which are recorded in the 'Preserved tablet' and concern the Divine destiny I can tell you, and a serious mischief is to rise against me in those matters in which you should have doubt, because my eyes are more acquainted with those ethereal lines which concern the occurrence of events and mischiefs than with what I know about life appearing on the earth. The occurrence of this mischief is as certain as an object seen with eyes. You should therefore ask me its details and the way to keep safe from it, so that you may be able to manage your defense when the time comes. This meaning is supported by the successive sayings of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) which he uttered in connection with the unknown, and to which the future testified. Thus, Ibn Abul Hadid comments on this claim of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) as follows:

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's claim is also supported by his sayings about future events which he uttered not once or a hundred times but continuously and successively, from which there remains no doubt that whatever he spoke was on the basis of knowledge and certainly and not in the way of chance. (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 13, p. 106)

In connection with this saying of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) it has already been shown and explained (in Sermon 92, Foot-note No. 2) that no one else dared advance such a claim, and those who made such a claim had to face only disgrace and humility. About the prophecies made

by Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) see Ibn Abul-Hadid, *Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 7, pp. 47-51; judge Nurullah al-Mar'ashi, *Ihqaq al-Haqq* (New ed.), Vol. 8, pp. 87-182.

SERMON 189

Importance of fear of Allah, desolateness of the grave, and about the death of the lover of Ahl al-Bayt (□) being like that of a martyr

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

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

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

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

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

They are safe from chastisement, away from punishment, and kept aloof from fire. Their abode will be peaceful and they will be pleased with their longing and their place of stay. These are the people whose acts in this world were chaste, their eyes were tearful, their night in this world were like days because of fearing and seeking forgiveness, and their days were like nights because of feeling of loneliness and separation. Therefore, Allah made Paradise the place of their (eventual) return and a reward in recompense. *They were most eligible and suitable for it* (Holy Qur'an, 48:26) in the eternal domain and everlasting favors.

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

cleared of evil acts. Allah may prompt us and you for His obedience and obedience of His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , and forgive us and you by His great mercy.

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

SERMON 190

Praise of Allah

Praise to Allah Whose praise is wide-spread, Whose army is over-powering and Whose dignity is grand. I praise Him for His successive favors and His great gifts. His forbearance is high so that He forgives and is just in whatever He decides. He knows what is going on and what has already passed. He crafted all creation by His knowledge and produced it by His intelligence without limitation, without learning without following the example of any intelligent producer, without committing any mistake and without the availability of any group (for help). I stand witness that Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) - the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - is His slave and His Messenger whom He deputed (at a time) when people were collecting in the abyss and moving in bewilderment. The reins of destruction were dragging them, and the locks of malice lay fixed on their hearts.

Advice about fear of Allah and an account of this world and its people

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

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

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

Keep away from this world and proceed towards the next world with infatuation. Do not regard humble he whom fear of Allah has given a high position, and do not accord a high position to him whom this world has given a high position. Do not keep your eyes on the shining clouds of the world, do not listen to him who speaks of it, do not respond to him who calls

towards it, do not seek light from its glare, and do not die in its precious things, because its brightness is deceitful, its words are false, its wealth is liable to be looted, and its precious things are to be taken away.

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

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

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

SERMON 191

Known as Aal-Khutbah al-Qasi'a (Sermon of Disparagement)

(It comprises disparagement of Satan [Iblis] for his vanity and his refusing to prostrate before Adam (□), and his being the first to display bigotry and to act through vanity; it comprises a warning to people treading in Satan's path)

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

Allah's trial, vanity of Iblis

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

.Verily I am about to create man from clay. And when I have completed and have breathed into him of My spirit, then fall ye prostrating in obeisance unto him. And did fall prostrating in obeisance the angels all together. Save Iblis." (Holy Qur'an, 38:71 - 74)

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

If Allah, had wanted to create Adam from a light whose glare would have dazzled the eyes, whose handsomeness would have amazed the wits and whose smell would have caught the breath, He could have done so; and if He had done so, people would have bowed to him in

humility and the trial of the angels through him would have become easier. But Allah, the Glorified, tries His creatures by means of those things whose real nature they do not know in order to distinguish (good and bad) for them through the trial, and to remove vanity from them and keep them and keep them aloof from pride and self-admiration.

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

Warning against Satan

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

He (Satan) said: AMy Master! Because You hast left me to stray, certainly will I adorn unto them the path of error, and certainly will I cause them all to go astray. (Holy Qur'an, 15:39)

Although he (Satan) had said so only by guessing about the unknown future and by wrong conjecturing, yet the sons of vanity, the brothers of haughtiness and the horsemen of pride and intolerance proved him to be true, so much so that when disobedient persons from among you bowed before him, and his greed about you gained strength, and what was a hidden secret turned into a clear fact, he spread his full control over you and marched with his forces towards you.

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

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

You should therefore put out the fires of haughtiness and the flames of intolerance that are hidden in your hearts. This vanity can exist in a Muslim only by the machinations of Satan, his haughtiness, mischief and whisperings. Make up your mind to have humility over your heads, to trample self-pride under your feet and to cast off vanity from your necks. Adopt humility as the weapon between you and your enemy, Satan and his forces. He certainly has, from every people, fighters, helpers, footmen and horsemen. Do not be like him who feigned superiority over the son of his own mother without any distinction given to him by Allah except the feeling of envy

which his feeling of greatness created in him and the fire of anger that vanity kindled in his heart. Satan blew into his nose his own vanity, after which Allah gave him remorse and made him responsible for the sins of all killers up to the Day of Judgment.

Caution against vanity and boasting about ignorance

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

Caution against obeying haughty leaders and elders

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

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

The humbleness of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

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

What?! Do they think that on account of what We aid them with wealth and children, We are hastening unto them the good things?! Nay! They (only) perceive not. (Holy Qur'an, 23:55-56)

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

When Musa son of Alimran went to Pharaoh along with his brother Harun (Aaron) wearing (coarse) shirts of wool and holding sticks in their hands, they guaranteed him retention of his country and continuity of his honor if he submitted. But he said: ADo you not wonder at these

two men guaranteeing me the continuity of my honor and the retention of my country although you see their poverty and lowliness. Otherwise, why do they not have gold bangles on their wrists? He said so feeling proud of his gold and collected possessions, and considering wool and its cloth as nothing.

When Allah, the Glorified, deputed His prophets, if He had wished to open for them treasures and mines of gold and (surround them with) planted gardens and to collect around them birds of the skies and beasts of the earth, He could have done so. If He had done so then there would have been no trial, nor recompense and no tidings (about the affairs of the next world). Those who accepted (His message) could not be given the recompense falling due after trial and the believers could not deserve the reward for good acts, and all these words² would not have retained their meanings. But Allah, the Glorified, makes His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) s firm in their determination and gives them weakness of appearance as seen from the eyes, along with contentment that fills the hearts and eyes resulting from care-freeness, and with want that pains the eyes and ears.

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

The Holy Ka'ba

Do you not see that Allah, the Glorified, has tried all the people among those who came before beginning with Adam, up to the last ones in this world with stones which yield neither benefit nor harm, which neither see nor hear. He made those stones into His sacred house which He made a standby for the people. He placed it in the most rugged stony part of the earth and on a highland with least soil thereon, among the most narrow valleys between rough mountains, soft sandy plains, springs of scanty water and scattered habitants, where neither camels nor horses nor cows and sheep can prosper.

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

If Allah, the Glorified, had placed His sacred House and His great signs among plantations, streams, soft and level plains, plenty of trees, an abundance of fruits, a thick population, close habitats, golden wheat, lush gardens, green land, watered plains, thriving orchards and crowded streets, the amount of recompense would have decreased because of the lightness of the trial. If the foundation on which the House is borne and the stones with which it has been raised had been of green emerald and red rubies, and there had been brightness and effulgence, then this

would have lessened the action of doubts in the breasts, would have dismissed the effect of Satan's activity from the hearts, and would have stopped the surging of misgivings in people. But Allah tries His creatures by means of different troubles, wants them to render worship through hardships and involves them in distresses, all in order to extract out vanity from their hearts, to settle down humbleness in their spirits and to make all this an open door for His favors and an easy means for His forgiveness (for their sins).

Caution against rebellion and oppressiveness

(Fear) Allah! Allah! From the immediate consequence of rebellion (to accrue in this world), and the eventual consequence of weighty oppressiveness (to accrue in the next world), and from the evil result of vanity, because it is the great trap of Satan and his big deceit which enters the hearts of the people like a fatal poison. It never goes to waste, nor misses anyone - neither the learned because of his knowledge, nor the destitute³ in his rags. This is the thing against which Allah has protected His creatures who are believers by means of prayers, and alms-giving, and suffering the hardship of fasting in the days in which it has been made obligatory, in order to give their limbs peacefulness, to cast fear in their eyes, to make their spirits humble, to give their hearts humility and to remove haughtiness from them. All this is achieved through the covering of their delicate cheeks with dust in humility, prostrating their main limbs on the ground in humbleness, and retracting of their bellies so as to reach to their backs due to fasting by way of lowliness (before Allah), besides giving all sorts of products of the earth to the needy and the destitute by way of alms.

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

As for Satan, he felt proud over Adam because of his origin and taunted at him about his creation, since he said: *I am of fire while you are of clay.* In the same way the rich among the prosperous communities have been feeling vanity because of their riches, as (Allah) said:

And said they: AWe are more (than you) in wealth and in children, and we shall not be chastised. (Holy Qur'an, 34:35)

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

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

After you have thought over both the conditions of these people, attach yourself to everything with which their position became honorable, on account of which enemies remained away from them, through which safety spread over them, by reason of which riches bowed before them and as a result of which distinction connected itself with their rope. These things were abstention

from division, sticking to unity, calling each other to it and advising each other about it. You avoid everything which broke their backbone and weakened their power, such as malice in the heart, hatred in the chest, turning away (from each other's help) and withholding the hand from one another's assistance.

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

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

You should take a lesson from the fate of the progeny of Isma'il, the children of Issac and the children of Israel. How similar are their affairs and how akin are their examples. In connection with the details of their division and disunity, think of the days when Kisras of Iran and the Caesars of Rome had become their masters.⁴ They turned them out from the pastures of their lands, the rivers of Iraq and the fertility of the world, towards thorny forests, the passages of (hot) winds and hardships in livelihood. In this way they turned them into just herders of camels. Their houses were the worst in the world and their places of stay were the most drought-stricken. There was not one voice towards which they could turn for protection, nor any shade of affection on whose strength they could repose trust.

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

Now, look at the various favors of Allah upon them, that He deputed towards them a prophet who got them to pledge their obedience to him and made them unite at his call. (Look) how (Allah's) bounty spread the wings of its favors over them and flowed for them streams of its blessing, and the whole community became wrapped in blissful prosperity. Consequently, they were submerged under its bounty and enjoyed its lush life. Their affairs were settled under the protection of a powerful ruler, and circumstances offered them overpowering honor, and all things became easy for them under the auspices of a strong country. They became rulers over the world and kings in the (various) parts of the earth. They became masters of those who were formerly their masters, and began issuing commands over those who used to command them.

They were so strong that neither did their spears need testing nor did their weapons have any flaw.

Condemning his people

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

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

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

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's high position and wonderful deeds in Islam

Beware! Surely Allah has commanded me to fight those who revolt, or who break the pledge, or create trouble on the earth. As regards pledge-breakers, I have fought them; as regards deviators from truth, I have waged holy war against them, and as regards those who have gone out of the faith, I have put them in (serious) disgrace.⁵ As for Satan of the pit,⁶ he too has been dealt with by me through the loud cry with which the scream of his heart and shaking of his chest was also heard. Only a small portion of therebels has remained. If Allah allows me one more chance over them I will annihilate them except a few remnants that may remain scattered in the suburb of the cities.

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

From the time of his weaning, Allah had put a mighty angel with him to take him along the path of high character and good behavior through day and night, while I used to follow him like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother. Every day he would show me in the form of a banner some of his high traits and commanded me to follow it. Every year he used to go in seclusion to the hill of Hira', where I saw him but no one else saw him. In those days Islam

did not exist in any house except that of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - and Khadijah, while I was the third after these two. I used to see and watch the effulgence of the Divine revelation and message, and breathed the scent of Prophethood.

When the revelation descended on the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - I heard the moan of Satan. I said, AO Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah, what is this moan? and he replied, AThis is Satan who has lost all hope of being worshipped. O Ali, you see all that I see and you hear all that I hear, except that you are not a Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , but you are a vicegerent and you are surely on (the path of) virtue.

I was with him when a party of the Quraish came to him and said to him, AO Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household), you have made a big claim which none of your fore-fathers or those of your family have made. We ask you one thing; if you give us an answer to it and show it to us, we will believe that you are a prophet and a messenger, but if you cannot do it, we will know that you are a sorcerer and a liar.

The Messenger of Allah said: AWhat do you ask for? They said: AAsk this tree to move for us, even with its roots, and stop before you. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said, AVerily, Allah has power over everything. If Allah does it for you, will you then believe and stand witness to the truth? They said AYes. Then he said, AI shall show you whatever you want, but I know that you won't bend towards virtue, and there are among you those who will be thrown into the pit, and those who will form parties (against me). Then the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said: AO tree, if you do believe in Allah and the Day of Judgment, and know that I am the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah, come up with your roots and stand before me with the permission of Allah. By Him who deputed the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) with truth, the tree did remove itself with its roots and came with a great humming sound and a flapping like the flapping of the wings of birds, till it stopped before the Messenger of Allah while some of its twigs came down onto my shoulders, and I was on the right side of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) .

When the people saw this they said by way of pride and vanity, ANow you order half of it to come to you and the other half of it remain (in its place). The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ordered the tree to do the same. Then half of the tree advanced towards him in an amazing manner and with grater humming. It was about to touch the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah. Then they said, disbelieving and revolting, AAsk this half to get back to its other half and be as it was. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ordered it and it returned. Then I said, AO Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah, I am the first to believe in you and to acknowledge that the tree did what it did just now with the command of Allah, the Sublime, in testimony to your Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) hood and to heighten your word. Upon this all the people shouted, ARather a sorcerer, a liar; it is wonderful sorcery, he is very adept in it. Only a man like this (pointing to me) can stand testimony to you in your affairs.

Certainly, I belong to the group of people who care not for thereproach of anybody in matters concerning Allah. Their countenance is the countenance of the truthful and their speech is the speech of the virtuous. They are wakeful during the nights (in devotion to Allah), and over beacons (of guidance) in the day. They hold fast to the rope of the Holy Qur'an, revive the traditions of Allah and of His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . They do not boast nor

indulge in self conceit, nor misappropriate, nor create mischief. Their hearts are in Paradise while their bodies are busy in (good) acts.

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

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

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

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

Nay! Verily man is wont to rebel!

As he deems himself needless!

4. If a glance is cast at the rise and fall and events and happenings of the past people this fact will shine like daylight that the rise and fall of communities is not the result of luck or change, but that, to a great extent, it is affected by their acts and deeds. And of whatever type those deeds are, their results and consequences are in accord with them. Consequently, the stories and events of past people openly reflect that the result of oppression and evil deeds has always been ruin and destruction, while the consequence of virtuous action and peaceful living was always good luck and success. Since time and people make no difference, if the same conditions appear again and the same actions are repeated the same results must accrue which had appeared in the earlier set of circumstances, because the accrual of the results of good or bad actions is sure and certain like the properties and effects of everything. If this were not so it would not be possible to kindle hope in the minds of the oppressed and the afflicted by presenting to them past events and their effects, nor could the oppressors and tyrants be warned of the ill-effects of their deeds, on the ground that it was not necessary that the same would accrue now as had accrued earlier. But it is the universality of casualty which makes past events the object of a lesson for posterity. Consequently, it was for this purpose that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) provoked thinking and consideration and mentioned the various events of Banu Isma'il, Banu Is'haq and Banu Isra'il and their affliction at the hands of the kings of Iran and Rome.

The progeny of Isma'il, the elder son of Ibrahim (Abraham), is called Banu Isma'il while the progeny of his younger son Ishaq (Isaac) is called Banu Is'haq which later continued to divide into various off-shoots and acquired different names. Their original abode was at Canaan in Palestine, where Ibrahim had settled after the immigration from the plains of the Euphrates and the Tigris. His son Isma'il had settled in the Hijaz, where Ibrahim (Abraham) had left him and his mother Hajar (Hagar). Isma'il married Sayyidah daughter of Mudad a woman of the tribe of Jurhum which also inhabited this very area. His progeny sprang from her and spread throughout the world. The other son of Ibrahim namely Is'haq remained in Canaan. His son was Ya'qub

(Jacob/Israel) who married Liya daughter of his mother's brother and after her death married his other daughter. Both of them bore his progeny which is known as Banu Isra'il. One of his sons was Yusuf (Joseph), who reached the neighboring country, Egypt, through an accident, and, after suffering slavery and imprisonment, eventually became the ruler and occupier of the throne.

After this change, he sent for all his relations and kith and kin and in this way Egypt became the abode of Banu Isra'il. For some time, they lived there in peace and security, leading a life of respect and esteem. But by and by the locals began to view them with disdain and hatred and made them the target of all sorts of tyrannies, so much so that they used to kill their children and retained their women as slave-maids, as a result of which their determination and courage was trampled and their spirit of freedom was completely subdued. At last, conditions changed and the period of their troubles came to an end, after four hundred years of the shackles of slavery; when Allah sent Musa to deliver them from the oppression of Pharaoh. Musa set off with them to leave Egypt but in order to destroy the Pharaoh, Allah turned them towards the Nile where there was all flood in front, and on therear the huge forces of the Pharaoh. This bewildered them much, but Allah commanded Musa to enter the river without fear. Thus, when he went forward, there appeared in the river not only one but several courses to pass through and Musa crossed to the other side of the river along with Banu Isra'il. Pharaoh was closely following. When he saw them passing he too advanced with his army but when they reached the middle of the stream the still water began moving and, engulfing Pharaoh and his army in its waves, finished them. About them the Holy Qur'an says the following:

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

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

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

On occupying the throne of rule and regaining prosperity and peacefulness, Banu Isra'il forgot all the ignominies and disgraces of the period of slavery, and instead of being thankful to Allah for the favors granted by Him they took to rebellion and revolt. Consequently, they shamelessly indulged in vices and misconduct and partook in mischief and evil deeds to the maximum, made lawful things unlawful and unlawful things lawful by false excuses and disobeyed the prophets who tried to preach and correct them under the command of Allah, and even killed them. The natural consequence of their vicious activities was that they were caught in punishment for their deeds. Consequently, Nebuchadnezzar, who was ruling in Babylon (Iraq) in 600 B.C., rose to march against Syria and Palestine and killed seventy thousand Banu Isra'il with his blood-thirsty swords, divested their towns, drove away the survivors with him like sheep and goats and threw them in the abyss of ignominy by turning them into slaves. Although after this ruination there seemed no way for them to regain position and power, yet nature gave them still another chance to recover. When Nebuchadnezzar died and power came in the hands of

Belshazzar he started all sorts of oppression on the people. Being disgusted with this, they sent word to the ruler of Iran that they were tired of enduring the oppression of their ruler and that he should rescue them from him, and free them from the oppression of Belshazzar. Cyrus the Great, who was a just and upright ruler, rose up in response to this request and, with the cooperation of the local population, overturned the government, as a consequence of which the yoke of slavery on Banu Isra'il's (the offspring of Ishmael) necks was also removed, and they were allowed to return to Palestine. Thus, after seventy years of subjugation they again set foot in their homeland and took over the reins of government. If they had taken their lesson from the past events they would not have committed the same evils as a consequence of which they had to suffer slavery. But the mental constitution of his community was such that whenever they achieved prosperity and freedom from care they lost themselves in the intoxication of riches and in the enjoyment of pleasure, mocked the laws of religion, derided the prophets and even killing them did not mean anything serious to them. Thus, when their ruler Herod at the request of his sweetheart, beheaded the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Yahya (John) and presented his head to her, none of them raised any voice against this brutality or was affected by it in any manner. This was the state of their unruliness and fierceness when AIsa made his appearance. He stopped them from evil deeds and exhorted them to adopt good habits, but they opposed him too and gave him troubles of various sorts, so much so that they tried to end his life. However, Allah foiled all their devices and made AIsa (Jesus) safe against their approach. When their disobedience reached this stage and their capacity to accept guidance was completely wiped out, fate decided to ruin them and made full arrangements for their annihilation and destruction. The ruler of Rome (Byzantine) Vespasianus sent his son Titus to attack Syria, he laid siege round Jerusalem, demolished the houses and broke down the walls of the Synagogue as a result of which thousand of Banu Isra'il (Israelites) left their houses and became scattered abroad, while thousands died of hunger; and those who remained were put to sword. Most of them settled in Hijaz, but because of their rejecting Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) their unity was so disturbed that they could never again converge on any one center of honor and could never regain a life of prestige and dignity in place of disgrace and ignominy.

In the same way, the ruler of then Persia made serious attacks on Arabia and subjugated the inhabitants of those places. Thus, Shahpur ibn Hormuz, at the age of sixteen, took with him four thousand combatants and attacked the Arabs who resided within the boundaries of Iran and then advanced towards Bahrain, Qatif and Hajar and ruined Banu Tamim, Banu Bakr ibn Wa'il and Banu AAbdul-Qays and cut through the shoulders of seventy thousand Arabs, after which his nickname became ADhu'l-Aktaf (the one with shoulders). He forced the Arabs that they should live in tents built of hair, should grow long hair on their heads, should not wear white clothes and should ride unsaddled horses. Then he settled twelve thousand people of Isfahan and other cities of Iran in the area between Iraq and Syria. In this way, he drove the inhabitants of those places from fertile lands to waterless forests which had neither any conveniences of life nor means of livelihood, and for long these people remained the victims of other's oppression due to their own disunity and division. At last, Allah deputed the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and raised them out of disgrace to the highest pinnacle of progress and sublimity.

5. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, Jabir ibn AAbdullah al-Ansari, AAbdullah ibn Mas'ud, AAmmar ibn Yasir, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and AAbdullah ibn AAbbas narrated that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) commanded Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) to fight those who are pledge-breakers (*nakithin*), deviators from truth (*qasitin*) and those

who have left the faith (*mariqin*). (*Al-Mustadrak*, Vol. 3, p. 139; *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 3, p. 1117; *Usd al-Ghaba*, Vol. 3, pp. 32-33; *Al-Durr al-Manthur*, Vol. 6, p. 18; *Al-Khasa'is al-Kubra*, Vol. 2, p. 138; *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, Vol. 5, p. 186; Vol. 6, p. 235; Vol. 7, p. 238; *Kanz al-Aummal*, Vol. 6, pp. 72,82,88,155,215,319,391,392; *Tarikh Baghdad*, Vol. 8, p. 340; Vol. 13, pp. 186-187; *Tarikh*, Ibn AAsakir, Vol. 5, p. 41; *Tarikh*, Ibn Kathir, Vol. 7, pp. 304-306; *Al-Riyad al-Nadira*, Vol. 2, p. 240; *Sharh al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyya*, Vol. 3, pp. 316-317; *Mawaddat al-Awham*, Vol. 1, p. 386).

Ibn Abul-Hadid says, AlI has been proved (by right ascription) from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) that he said to Ali (A.S) :

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

AThe pledge-breakers were the people of Jamal, because they broke their allegiance with him. The deviators from truth were the people of Syria at Siffin. Those who have gone out of the faith were the Kharijites at an-Nahrawan. Regarding these three groups, Allah says (about the first one) :

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

(About The second group) Allah says the following:

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

Concerning the third group, Ibn Abul-Hadid has referred to the following tradition (*hadith*) that al-Bukhari (in *Sahih*, Vol. 4, pp.166-167, 243), Muslim (in *Sahih*, Vol. 3, pp. 109-117), al-Tirmithi (in *Jami'al-Sihah*, Vol. 4, p. 481), Ibn Majah (in *Al-Sunan*, Vol. 1, pp. 59-62), al-Nisa'i (in *Al-Sunan*, Vol. 3, pp. 65-66), Malik ibn Anas (in *Al-Muwatta'*, pp. 204-205), al-Dar Qutni (in *Al-Sunan*, Vol. 3, pp. 131-132), ad-Darmi (in *Al-Sunan*, Vol. 2, p. 133), Abu Dawud (in *Al-Sunan*, Vol. 4 pp.241-246), al-Hakim (in *Al-Mustadrak*, Vol. 2, pp. 145-154; Vol. 4, p.531), Ahmed ibn Hanbal (in *Al-Musnad*, Vol. 1, pp. 88,140,147; Vol. 3, pp.56,65) and al-Bayhaqi (in *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, Vol. 8, pp.170-171) have narrated through a group of the companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) that he said about *Thul-Khuwaysira* (the surname for "Thul-Thudayyah" Hurqus ibn Zuhayr at-Tamimi, chief of the Kharijites) :

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

Then ibn Abul-Hadid continues:

This is the sign for his (Holy Prophet's) prophethood and his prophecy of the secret knowledge. (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 13, p.183)

6. By ASatan of the pit the reference is to Dhu't-Thudayyah (whose full name already mentioned in Foot-note No. 5) who was killed in Nahrawan by the stroke of lightning from the sky, and there was no need to kill him by sword. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had foretold his death. Therefore, after the annihilation of the Kharijites at Nahrawan, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) came out in search, but could not find his body anywhere. In the meantime, ar-Rayyan ibn Sabirah saw forty to fifty bodies in a pit on the bank of the canal. When they were taken out of the body of Thul-Thudayya was also found among them. He was called Thul-Thudayya because of a mass of flesh on his shoulder. When Imam Ali

ibn Abu Talib (A.S) saw his body he said, AAllah is Great, neither I spoke a lie nor was I told wrong. (Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 13, pp. 183-184; al-Tabari, Vol. 1, pp.3383 - 3384; Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 3, p.348).

SERMON 192

It is related that a companion of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) called Hammam1 who was a man devoted to worship said to him, AO Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), describe to me the pious man in such a way as though I see them. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) avoided thereply and said, AO Hammam, fear Allah and perform good acts because AVerily, Allah is with those who guard (themselves against evil), and those who do good (to others) : (Holy Qur'an, 16:128). Hammam was not satisfied with this and pushed him to speak. Thereupon, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) praised Allah and extolled Him and sought His blessings on the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and then spoke:

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

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

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

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

They are not satisfied with their meager good acts, and do not regard their major acts as great. They always blame themselves and are afraid of their deeds. When anyone of them is spoken of highly, he says the following: AI know myself better than others, and my Master knows me

better than I know. O Allah do not deal with me according to what they say, and make me better than they think of me and forgive me (those shortcomings) which they do not know.

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

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

Indecent speech is far from him, his utterance is lenient, his evils are non-existent, his virtues are ever present, his good is ahead and mischief has turned its face (from him). He is dignified during calamities, patient in distresses, and thankful during ease. He does not commit excess over him whom he hates, and does not commit sin for the sake of him whom he loves. He admits truth before evidence is brought against him. He does not misappropriate what is placed in his custody, and does not forget what he is required to remember. He does not call others bad names, he does not cause harm to his neighbor, he does not feel happy at others misfortunes, he does not enter into wrong and does not go out of right.

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

It is related that Hamman passed into a deep swoon and then expired. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said: Verily, by Allah I had this fear about him. Then he added: Effective advice produces such effects on receptive minds. Someone² said to him: O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), how is it you do not receive such an effect? Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) replied: Woe to you. For death there is a fixed hour which cannot be exceeded, and a cause which does not change. Now look, never repeat such talk which Satan had put on your tongue.

1. According to Ibn Abul-Hadid, this is Hamman ibn Shurayh, but *'allama* al-Majlisi says that apparently this is Hammam ibn A'Ubadah.

2. This man was A'Abdullah ibn al-Kawwa' who was in the fore-front of the Kharijite movement and was a great opponent of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S).

SERMON 193

In description of hypocrites

We praise Allah for the succor He has given us in carrying out His obedience and in preventing us from disobedience, and we ask Him to complete His favors (to us) and to make us hold on to His rope. We stand witness that Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) is His slave and His Messenger. He entered every hardship in search of Allah's pleasure and endured for its sake every grief. His near relations changed themselves for him and those who were remote from him (in relationship) united against him. The Arabs let loose thereins (of their horses to quicken their march) against him, and struck the bellies of their carriers to (rouse them) in fighting against him, so much so that enemies came to his threshold from theremotest places and most distant areas.

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

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

Satan has gained hold on them, so he makes them forget the remembrance of Allah; they are Satan's Party; Beware! Verily, the party of Satan are the losers. (Holy Qur'an, 58:19)

SERMON 194

Allah's praise, advice about fear of Allah and details about the Day of Judgment

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

Know, O creatures of Allah, that He has not created you for naught and has not left you free. He knows the extent of His favors over you and the quantity of His bounty towards you. Therefore, ask Him for success and for the attainment of aims. Beg before Him and seek His generosity. No curtain hides you from Him, nor is any door closed before you against Him. He is at every place, in every moment and every instance. He is with every man and jinn. Giving does

not create any breach in Him. Gifting does not cause Him diminution. A beggar cannot exhaust Him and paying (to others) cannot take Him to the end.

One person cannot turn His attention from another, one voice does not detract Him from another voice, and one grant of favor does not prevent Him from refusing another favor. Anger does not prevent Him from mercy, mercy does not prevent Him from punishing; His concealment does not hide His manifestation, and His manifestation does not prevent Him from concealing. He is near and at the same time distant. He is high and at the same time now, He is manifest and also concealed. He is concealed yet well-known. He lends but is not lent anything. He has not created (the things of) creation after devising, nor did He take their assistance on account of fatigue.

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

SERMON 195

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

Allah deputed the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) when no sign of guidance existed, no beacon was giving light and no passage was clear.

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

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

SERMON 196

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's attachment to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , performance of his funeral rites

Those companions of Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) - the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - who were the custodians (of the Divine messages) know that I never disobeyed Allah or His Messenger1 -- the peace and blessing of

Allah be upon him and his descendants -- at all, and by virtue of the courage² with which Allah honored me I supported him with my life on occasions when even the brave turned away and feet remained behind (instead of proceeding forward).

When the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) -- the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants -- died his head was on my chest, and his (last) breath blew over my palms and I passed it over my face. I performed his (funeral) ablution, may Allah bless him and his descendants and the angels helped me. The house and the courtyard were full of them. One party of them was descending and the other was ascending. My ears continually caught their humming voice, as they invoked Allah's blessing on him, till we buried him in his grave. Thus, who can have greater rights with him than I during his life or after his death? Therefore depend on your enemy, because I swear by Him who is such that there is no god but He, that I am on the path of truth and that they (the enemy) are on the misleading path of wrong. You hear what I say, and I seek Allah's forgiveness for myself and for you.

1. Ibn Abul-Hadid has written (in *Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 10, pp. 180-183) that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's saying that he never disobeyed the commands of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) is a sort of taunt to those who felt no hesitation in rejecting the Prophet's commands, and sometimes even checked him. For example, when, at the time of the peace of al-Hudaybiya, the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was agreeable to negotiate peace with the unbelievers among the Quraish, one of the companions became so enraged that he expressed doubts about the prophethood of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) whereupon Abu Bakr had to say:

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

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

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

Similarly, when the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) intended to say the funeral prayers of Ubayy ibn Sallul the same companion said to him, *How do you intend to seek forgiveness for this Chief of hypocrites? And he even drew away the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) by catching the skirt (of his shirt). Then the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had to say, No act of mine is beside the command of Allah. In the same way the Prophet's command to accompany the force of Usamah ibn Zayd was ignored. The greatest of all such insolence was displayed in connection with the Prophet's intention to write down his advice as to when such a blame was laid against the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) which proves an absence of belief in the commands of the Shari'a, and creates a doubt each command as to whether it is based on the Divine revelation or (Allah may forbid) just the result of mental disorder.*

2. Who can deny that the ever-successful lion of Allah, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) shielded the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) on every critical occasion and performed the duty of protecting him by dint of the courage and valor gifted to him by Allah. The first occasion of risking his life was when the unbelievers from the Quraish decided finally to kill the Prophet

(P.B.U.H. and His Household) and Ali slept on his bed surrounded by enemies and under the direct peril of swords, whereby the enemies were not able to succeed in their aims. The n, in those battles where the enemies used to attack the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) together and where the feet of even thereputed heroes could not stand firm. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) remained steadfast with the banner (of Islam) in his hand. AAbdul-Barr and al-Hakim writes about it:

Ibn AAbbas says that Ali had four qualities which no one else possessed. Firstly, he was the first among Arabs and non-Arabs to have said prayers with the Messenger of Allah. Secondly, he always had the banner of Islam in his hand in every battle. Thirdly, when people ran away from the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , Ali remained with him; and fourthly it was he who gave the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) his funeral ablution and laid him in his grave. (al-Isti'ab, Vol. 3, p. 1090; *Al-Mustadrak Aala Sahihayn*, Vol. 3, p. 111).

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

Most certainly did Allah help you in many (battle) fields, and on the day of Hunain, when made you vain your great number, but they availed you nothing, and was straitened the earth against you with all its extensiveness, then ye turned back in retreat. (9:25)

On this occasion also, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was steady like a rock, and eventually, with Allah's support, victory was achieved.

SERMON 197

Allah's attribute of Omniscience

Allah knows the cries of the beasts in the forest, the sins of the people in seclusion, the movements of the fishes in the deep seas and the rising of the water by tempestuous winds. I stand witness that Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) is the choice of Allah, the conveyor of His revelation and the messenger of His mercy.

Advantages of fear of Allah

Now then, I advise you to fear Allah, Who created you for the first time. Toward Him is your return, with Him lies the success of your aims, at Him terminate (all) your desires, toward Him runs your path of right and He is the aim of your fears (for seeking protection). Certainly, fear of Allah is the medicine for your hearts, sight for the blindness of your spirits, the cure for the

ailments of your bodies, therectifier of the evils of your breasts, the purifier of the pollution of your minds, the light of the darkness of your eyes, the consolation for the fear of your heart and the brightness for the gloom of your ignorance.

Therefore, make obedience to Allah the way of your life and not only your outside covering. Make it your inner habit instead of only outer routine, subtle enough to enter through your ribs (up to the heart), the guide for all your affairs, the watering place for your getting down (on the Day of Judgment), the interceder for the achievement of your aims, asylum for the day of your fear, the lamp of the interior of your graves, company for your long loneliness, and deliverance from the troubles of your abodes. Certainly, obedience to Allah is a protection against encircling calamities, expected dangers and the flames of burning fires.

Therefore, whoever entertains fear of Allah, troubles remain away from him after having been near, affairs become sweet after their bitterness, waves (of troubles) recede from him after having crowded over him, difficulties become easy for him after occurring, generosity rains fast over him after there had been famine, mercy bends over him after it had been loath, the favors (of Allah) spring forth on him after they had been dried, and blessing descends over him in showers after being scanty. So, fear Allah Who benefits you with His good advice, preaches to you through His Messenger, and obliges you with His favors. Devote yourselves to His worship, and acquit yourselves of the obligation of obeying Him.

About Islam

This Islam is the religion which Allah has chosen for Himself, developed it before His eyes, preferred it as the best among His creations, established its pillars on His love. He has disgraced other religions by giving honor to it. He has humiliated all communities before its sublimity; He has humbled its enemies with His kindness and made its opponents lonely by according it His support. He has smashed the pillars of misguidance with its columns. He has quenched the thirst of the thirsty from its cisterns, and filled the cisterns through those who draw its water.

He made Islam such that its constituent parts cannot break, its links cannot separate, its construction cannot fall, its columns cannot decay, its plant cannot be uprooted, its time does not end, its laws do not expire, its twigs cannot be cut, its parts do not become narrow, its ease does not change into difficulty, its clarity is not affected by gloom, its straightness does not acquire curvature, its wood has no crookedness, its vast paths have no narrowness, its lamp knows no putting off and its sweetness has no bitterness.

It consists of columns whose bases Allah has fixed in truthfulness, and whose foundation He has strengthened, and of sources whose streams are ever full of water and of lamps, whose flames are full of light, and of beacons with whose help travelers get guidance, and of signs through which a way is found to its highways and of watering places which provide water to those who come to them. Allah has placed in Islam the height of His pleasure, the pinnacle of His pillars and the prominence of His obedience. Before Allah, therefore, its columns are strong, its construction is lofty, its proofs are bright, its fires are aflame, its authority is strong, its beacons are high and its destruction is difficult. You should therefore honor it, follow it, fulfill its obligations and accord the position due to it.

About the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

Then, Allah, the Glorified, deputed Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) - the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - with truth at a time when the destruction of the world was near and the next life was at hand, when its brightness was turning into gloom after shining, it has become troublesome for its inhabitants, its surface had become

rough, and its decay had approached near. This was during the exhaustion of its life at the approach of signs (of its decay), the ruin of its inhabitants, the breaking of its links, the dispersal of its affairs, the decay of its signs, the divulging of its secret matters and the shortening of its length. Allah made him responsible for conveying His message and (a means of) honor for his people, a period of bloom for the men of his days, a source of dignity for the supporters and an honor for his helpers.

About the Holy Qur'an

Then, Allah sent to him the Book as a light whose flames cannot be extinguished, a lamp whose gleam does not die, a sea whose depth cannot be sounded, a way whose direction does not mislead, a ray whose light does not darken, a separator (of good from evil) whose arguments do not weaken, a clarifier whose foundations cannot be dismantled, a cure which leaves no apprehension for disease an honor whose supporters are not defeated, and a truth whose helpers are not abandoned. Therefore, it is the mine of belief and its center, the source of knowledge and its oceans, the plantation of justice and its pools, the foundation stone of Islam and its construction, the valleys of truth and its plains, an ocean which those who draw water cannot empty, springs which those who draw water cannot dry up, a watering place which those who come to take water cannot exhaust, a staging place in moving towards which travelers do not get lost, signs which no trader fails to see and a highland which those who approach it cannot surpass it.

Allah has made it a quencher of the thirst of the learned, a bloom for the hearts of religious jurists, a highway for the ways of the righteous, a cure after which there is no ailment, an effulgence with which there is not darkness, a rope whose grip is strong, a stronghold whose top is invulnerable, and honor for him who owes it, a peace for him who enters it, a guidance for him who follows it, an excuse for him who adopts it, an argument for him who argues with it, a witness for him who quarrels with it, a success for him who argues with it, a carrier of burden for him who seeks the way, a shield for him who arms himself (against misguidance), a knowledge for him who listens carefully, worthy story for him who relates it and a final verdict of him who passes judgments.

SERMON 198

Containing advice given by Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) to his companions about Prayer

Pledge yourself with prayer and remain steady on it; offer prayer as much as possible and seek nearness (of Allah) through it, because it is, (imposed) upon the believers as timed ordinance (Holy Qur'an, 4:103). Have you not heard thereply of the people of Hell when they were asked: What has brought you into the hell? They shall say: We were not of those who offered theregular prayers (to Allah) ! (Holy Qur'an, 74:42-43). Certainly, prayer drops out sins like the dropping of leaves (of trees), and removes them as ropes are removed from the necks of cattle. The Messenger of Allah - the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - likened it to a hot bath situated at the door of a person who bathes in it five times a day. Will then any dirt remain on him?

Its obligation is recognized by those believers whom neither the adornment of property nor the coolness of the eyes produced by children can turn away from it. Allah, the Glorified, says the following:

Men whom neither merchandise nor any diverteth from the remembrance of Allah and constancy in prayer and paying the poor-rate;. (Qur'an, 24:37)

Even after receiving assurance of Paradise, the Messenger of Allah - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - used to exert himself for prayers because of Allah, the Glorified's command.

And enjoin prayer on thy followers, and adhere thou steadily unto it,. (Holy Qur'an, 20:132).

Then the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) used to enjoin his followers to prayer and exert himself for it.

About the Islamic tax (*zakat*)

Then, Islamic tax has been laid down along with prayer as a sacrifice (to be offered) by the people of Islam. Whoever pays it by way of purifying his spirit, it serves as a purifier for him and a protection and shield against fire (of Hell). No one therefore (who pays it) should feel attached to it afterwards, nor should feel grieved over it. Whoever pays it without the intention of purifying his heart expects through it more than its due. He is certainly ignorant of the Sunna, he is allowed no reward for it, his action goes to waste and his repentance is excessive.

Fulfillment of Trust

Then, as regards fulfillment of trust, whoever does not pay attention to it will be disappointed. It was placed before the strong skies, vast earth and high mountains but none of them was found to be stronger, vaster, or higher than it. If anything could be unapproachable because of height, vastness, power or strength they would have been unapproachable, but they felt afraid of the evil consequences (of failure in fulfilling a trust) and noticed what a weaker did not realize it, and this was man.

.Verily he was (proved) unjust, ignorant. (Holy Qur'an, 33:72)

Surely, Allah, the Glorified, the Sublime, nothing is hidden from Him of whatever people do in their nights or days. He knows all the details, and His knowledge covers them. Your limbs are a witness, the organs of your body constitute an army (against yourself), your inner self serves Him as eyes (to watch your sins), and your loneliness is open to Him.

SERMON 199

Treason and treachery of Mu'awiyah and the fate
of those guilty of treason

By Allah,¹ Mu'awiyah is not more shrewd than I am, but he deceives and commits evil deeds. Had I not been hateful of deceitful, I would have been the most cunning of all men. But (the fact is that) every deceit is a sin and every sin is disobedience (of Allah), and every deceitful person will have a banner by which he will be recognized on the Day of Judgment. By Allah, I cannot be made forgetful by strategy, nor can I be overpowered by hardships.

1. People who are ignorant of religion and ethics free from the shackles of religious law and unaware of the conception of punishment and reward find no paucity of excuses and means for the achievement of their objects. They can find ways of success at every stage; but when the dictates of humanity, or Islam, or the limitations imposed by ethics and religious law act as impediments, the chances of devising and finding means become narrow. The possibility of action becomes restricted. Mu'awiyah's influence and control was the result of these devices and ways of following: He knew neither impediment nor obstacle in his way of what is lawful or unlawful, nor did he fear the Day of Judgment, so it would prevent him from acting otherwise. As *'allama* ar-Raghib al-Isfahani, while taking account of his character, writes the following:

His aim always was to achieve his object whether lawful or unlawful. He did not care for religion nor did he ever think of the Divine chastisement. Thus, in order to maintain his power he resorted to mis-statements and concoctions, practiced all sorts of deceits and contrivances. When he saw that success was not possible without entangling Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) in war he roused Talhah and az-Zubayr against him. When success could not be achieved by this means he instigated the Syrians and brought about the civil war of Siffin. And when his rebellions' position had become known by the killing of Ammar, he at once duped the people by saying that Ali was responsible for killing him as he had brought him into the battlefield. And on another occasion he interpreted the words 'rebelling party' occurring in the saying of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) to mean 'avenging party' intending to prove that Ammar would be killed by the group that would seek revenge of Othman's blood, although the next portion of this saying namely 'He will call them towards Paradise while they will call him to Hell, does not leave any scope for interpretation. When there was no hope of victory even by these cunning means, he contrived to raise the Holy Qur'an on spears, although in his view neither the Holy Qur'an nor its commandments carried any weight. If he had really aimed at a decision by the Holy Qur'an, he should have put this demand before the commencement of the battle, and when it became known to him that the decision had been secured by Amr ibn al-As by deceiving Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, and that it did not have even a remote connection with the Holy Qur'an, he should not have accepted it and should have punished Amr ibn al-As for this cunning, or at least should have warned and rebuked him. But on the contrary, his performance was much appreciated and in reward he was made the Governor of Egypt.

In contrast to this Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's conduct was a high specimen of religious law and ethics. He kept in view the requirements of truth and righteousness even in adverse circumstances and did not allow his chaste life to be tarnished by the views of deceit and contrivance. If he wished he could face cunning by cunning, and Mu'awiyah's shameful activities could have been answered by similar activities. For example, when he put a guard on the Euphrates and stopped the supply of its water (to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's men), then the supply of water could have been cut from them also on the grounds that since they had occupied the Euphrates it was lawful to retaliate. In this way they could be overpowered by weakening their fighting power. But Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) could never tarnish his hands with such an inhuman act which was not permitted by any law or code of ethics, although common people regard such acts against the enemy as lawful and call this duplicity of character for achievement of success, a stroke of policy and administrative ability. But Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) could never think of strengthening his power by fraud or duplicity of behavior on any occasion. Thus, when people advised him to retain the officers of the days of Othman in their positions and to befriend Talhah and az-Zubayr by assigning them governorship of Kufa and Basra, and make use of Mu'awiyah's ability in administration by giving him the government of Syria, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) rejected the advice and preferred the commandments of religious law over worldly expediency, and openly declared about Mu'awiyah as follow:

If I allow Mu'awiyah to retain what he already has I would be one *Who takes those who lead (people) astray, as helpers* (Holy Qur'an, 18:51). Those who look at apparent successes do not care to find out by what means the success has been achieved. They support anyone whom they see succeeding by means of cunning ways and deceitful means and begin to regard him an administrator, intelligent, a politician, intellectually brilliant and so on, while he who does not deploy cunning and fraudulent methods owing to his adherence to Islamic commandments and

the Divine instructions and prefers failure to success secured through wrong methods is regarded as ignorant of politics and weak in foresight. They do not feel it necessary to think what difficulties and impediments exist in the way of a person who adheres to principles and laws which prevent him from proceeding forward even after approaching near success.

SERMON 200

One should not be afraid of the scarcity of those who tread on the right path

O people! Do not wonder at the small number of those who follow the right path, because people throng only around the table (of this world) whose edibles are few but whose hunger is insatiable.

O people, certainly, what gathers people together (in categories) is (their) agreement (to good or bad) and (their) disagreement, for only one individual killed the camel of Thamud¹ but Allah held all of them in punishment because all of them joined him by their acquiescing in their consenting to it. Thus, Allah, the Glorified, has said:

Then they hamstrung her, and turned (themselves) regretful.

(Holy Qur'an, 26:157).

Then their land declined by sinking (into the earth) as the spike of a plough pierces unploughed weak land. O people, he who treads the clear path (of guidance) reaches the spring of water, and whoever abandons it strays into waterless desert.

1. Thamud, in ancient Arabia, a tribe or group of tribes, seems to have been prominent from about the 4th Century B.C. to the first half of the 7th Century A.D. Their place of stay and homeland was at a place lying on the way between the Hijaz and Syria called the Valley of al-Qura and bore this name because it consisted of several townships. Allah deputed for their guidance and directions the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Salih who preached to them as Allah relates in his story:

And unto (the people of) Thamud (We did send) their brother Salih, he said: AO my people! Worship ye Allah (alone). Ye have no god other than Him, indeed came unto you a clear proof from your Master; this is the She-camel of Allah (which) unto you is a Sign, so leave it (free) to pasture in Allah's earth and touch her not with any harm, or ye shall be seized with a painful chastisement. And remember when He made you successors after the (people) Aad and settled you earth, ye build mansions on its plain and hew the mountains into dwellings. So remember ye the bounties of Allah, and seek ye not evil in the earth, making mischief. Said the chiefs of those who were puffed up with pride among his people to those who were reckoned weak, to those who believed from among them; AKnow ye that Salih is sent by his Master? Said they: AVerily, in what he has been sent with we are believers. Said those who were puffed up with pride; AVerily we, in that which ye believe are disbelievers. They hamstrung the She-camel and rebelled against the command of their Master, and they said: AO Salih! Bring us what thou did threaten us with, if thou art of the Messengers. Then the earthquake seized them (as they were unaware, so they became in their dwellings motionless (dead). Then he turned away from them and said: AO my people! Indeed I did deliver unto you the message of my Master, and did admonish you, but ye love not the admonishers. (Holy Qur'an, 7:73-79).

(The people of) Thamud belied the warners, and said they: AWhat?! A single man from among us?! And we are to follow him?! Verily, we shall then be astray and in distress. It is that (the duty of) reminding has been bestowed on him (alone), of all the (people) among us? Nay! He is a great liar, and insolent one! ASoon they shall know on the morrow, (as to) who is the liar,

the insolent one! (O Our Messenger Salih!) Verily We are going to send She-camel as a trial for them; so watch them and be patient. And (thou O Salih!) make them aware (beforehand) that the water is (to be) divided between them; and every drinking share shall be witnessed (on it). But they called their companions, then he pursued (her) and hamstrung (her). How (great) was My chastisement and My warning? Verily We sent upon them a single (violent) blast, and they were (all) like the dry stubble used by a fencer in a fence. (Holy Qur'an, 54:23-31).

SERMON 201

What Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said on the occasion of the burial of Sayyidatu'n-nisa' (Supreme lady) Fatima (S.A) while addressing the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) at his grave.

O Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah, peace be upon you from me and from your daughter who has come to you and who has hastened to meet you. O Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah, my patience about your chosen (daughter) has been exhausted, and my power of endurance has weakened, except that I have ground for consolation in having endured the great hardship and heart-rending event of your separation. I laid you down in your grave when your last breath had passed (when your head was) between my neck and chest.

Verily we are Allah's and verily unto Him shall we return.

(Holy Qur'an, 2:156)

Now, the trust has been returned and what had been given has been taken back. As to my grief, it knows no bounds, and as to my nights, they will remain sleepless till Allah chooses for me the house in which you are now residing.

Certainly, your daughter would apprise you of the joining together of your¹ *umma* (people) for oppressing her. You ask her in detail and get all the news about the position. This has happened when a long time had not elapsed and your remembrance had not disappeared. My salam (salutation) be on you both, the salam of a grief stricken not a disgusted or hateful person. For it I go away it is not because I am weary (of you), and if I stay it is not due to lack of belief in what Allah has promised those who endure.

1. The treatment meted out to the daughter of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) after his death was extremely painful and sad. Although Sayyidatul-Nisa' Fatima (S.A) did not live in this world more than a few months after the death of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) yet even this short period has a long tale of grief and woe (about her). In this connection, the first scene that strikes the eyes is that arrangements for the funeral rites of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had not yet been made when the contest for power started in the *saqifa* of Banu Sa'idah. Naturally, their leaving the body of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) (without burial) must have injured Sayyidatul Nisa' Fatima's grief-stricken heart when she saw that those who had claimed love and attachment (with the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) during his life became so engrossed in their machinations for power that instead of consoling his only daughter they did not even know when the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) was given a funeral ablution and when he was buried. And the way they consoled her was that they crowded at her house with material to set fire to it and tried to secure allegiance by force with all the display of oppression, compulsion and violence. All these excesses were with a view to so obliterate the prestigious position of this house that it might not regain its lost prestige on any occasion. With this aim in view, in order to crush her economic position, her claim for (the estate

of) Fadak was turned down by dubbing it as false, the effect of which was that Sayyidatul-Nisa' Fatima (S.A) made the dying will that none of them should attend her funeral.

SERMON 202

Transience of this world, and importance of collecting provisions for the next life

O people! Certainly this world is a passage while the next world is a place of permanent abode. So, take from the passage (all that you can) for the permanent abode. Do not tear away your curtain before Him Who is aware of your secrets. Take away from this world your hearts before your bodies go out of it, because herein you have been put on trial, and you have been created for the other world. When a man dies people ask what (property) he has left while the angels ask what (good actions) he has sent forward. May Allah bless you; send forward something, it will be a loan for you, and do not leave everything behind, for that would be burden on you.

SERMON 203

What Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said generally to his companions warning them about the dangers of the Day of Judgment

May Allah have mercy on you! Provide yourselves for the journey because the call for departure has been announced. Regard your stay in the world as very short, and return (to Allah) with the best provision that is with you, because surely, in front of you lies a valley, difficult to climb, and places of stay full of fear and dangers. You have to reach there and stay in them. And know that the eyes of death are approaching towards you. It is as though you are (already) in its talons and it has struck itself against you. Difficult affairs and distressing dangers have crushed you into it. You should therefore cut away all the attachments of this world and assist yourselves with the provision of Allah's fear.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: A part of this saying has been quoted before through another narration.

SERMON 204

After swearing allegiance to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), Talhah and az-Zubayr complained to him that he had not consulted them or sought their assistance in the affairs (of state). Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) replied:

Both of you frown over a small matter and leave aside big ones. Can you tell me of anything wherein you have a right of which I have deprived you or a share which was due to you and which I have held away from you, or any Muslim who has laid any claim before me and I have been unable to decide it or been ignorant of it, or committed a mistake about it?

By Allah, I had no inclination towards the caliphate, nor any interest in government, but you yourselves invited me to it and prepared me for it. When the caliphate came to me, I kept the Book of Allah in my view and all that Allah had put therein for us, and all that according to which He has commanded us to take decisions; and I followed it, and also acted on whatever the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) - may Allah bless him and his descendants - had laid down as his Sunna. In this matter I did not need your advice or the advice of anyone else, nor has there been any order of which I was ignorant so that I ought to have consulted you or my Muslim brethren. If it were so I would not have turned away from you or from others.

As regards your reference to the question of equality (in distribution of shares from the Muslim common fund), this is a matter in which I have not taken a decision by my own opinion, nor have I done it by my caprice. But I found, and you too (must have) found, that whatever the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) - may Allah bless him and his descendants - brought had been finalized. Therefore, I felt no need to turn towards you about a share which had been determined by Allah and in which His verdict has been passed. By Allah, in this matter, therefore, you two or anyone else can have no favor from me. May Allah keep our hearts and your hearts in righteousness, and may He grant us and you endurance.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) added: May Allah have mercy on the person who, when he sees the truth, supports it, when he sees the wrong, rejects it, and who helps the truth against him who is on the wrong.

SERMON 205

During the battle of Siffin Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) heard some of his men abusing the Syrians, then he said:

I dislike you starting to abuse them, but if you describe their deeds and recount their situations that would be a better mode of speaking and a more convincing way of arguing. Instead of abusing them you should say, O Allah! save our blood and their blood, produce reconciliation between us and them, and lead them out of their misguidance so that he who is ignorant of the truth may know it, and he who inclines towards rebellion and revolt may turn away from it.

SERMON 206

In the battle of Siffin Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) saw Imam al-Hasan proceeding rapidly to fight, then he said:

Hold back this young man on my behalf, lest he causes my ruin, because I am loath to send these two (meaning al-Hasan and al-Husain) towards death, lest the descending line of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) - may Allah bless him and his descendants - is cut away by their death.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's words *Aamiku Aanni hadha'l-ghulam* (i.e. *A*Hold back this young man on my behalf) represents the highest and the most eloquent form of expression.

SERMON 207

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's companions expressed displeasure about his attitude concerning Arbitration,¹ he said:

O people, matters between me and you went as I wished till war exhausted you. By Allah, it has overtaken some of you and left others, and has completely weakened your enemy. Till yesterday I was giving orders but today I am being given orders, and till yesterday I was dissuading people (from wrong acts) but today I am being dissuaded. You have now shown liking to live in this world, and it is not for me to bring you to what you dislike.

1. When the surviving forces of the Syrians lost ground and were ready to run away from the field Mu'awiyah changed the whole phase of the battle by using the Holy Qur'an as his instrument of strategy, and succeeded in creating such a division among the Iraqis that, despite Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's efforts at counseling, they were not prepared to take any forward step,

but insisted on stopping the war, whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) too had to agree to arbitration. Among these people some had actually been duped and believed that they were being asked to abide by the Holy Qur'an but there were others who had become weary of the long period of war and had lost courage. Then people got a good opportunity to stop the war, and so they cried hoarse for its postponements. There were others who had accompanied Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) because of his temporal authority but did not support him by heart, nor did they aim at victory for him. There were some people who had expectations with Mu'awiyah, and had started attaching hopes to him for this, while there were some who were, from the very beginning, in league with him. In these circumstances and with this type of the army it was really due to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's political ability and competence of military control and administration that he carried the war up to this stage, and if Mu'awiyah had not adopted this trick there could have been no doubt in Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's victory because the military power of the Syrian forces had been exhausted and defeat was hovering over its head. In this connection, Ibn Abul-Hadid writes:

Malik al-Ashtar had reached Mu'awiyah and grabbed him by the neck. The entire might of the Syrians had been smashed. Only so much movement was discernable in them as remains in the tail of a lizard which is killed, but the tail continues hopping right and left. (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 11, pp.30-1)

SERMON 208

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) went to enquire about the health of his companion al-AAala' ibn Ziyad al-Harithi and when he noticed the vastness of his house he said:

What will you do with this vast house in this world, although you need this house more in the next world. If you want to take it to the next world you could entertain in it guests and be regardful of kinship and discharge all (your) obligations according to their accrual. In this way you will be able to take it to the next world.

Then al-AAala' said to him: O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), I want to complain to you about my brother AAsim ibn Ziyad.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) enquired: What is the matter with him?

al-AAala' said: He has put on a woolen coat and cut himself away from the world.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said: Present him to me.

When he came Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said: O enemy of yourself. Certainly, the evil (Satan) has misguided you. Do you feel no pity for your wife and your children? Do you believe that if you use those things which Allah has made lawful for you, He will dislike you? You are too unimportant for Allah to do so.

He said: O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), you also put on coarse dress and eat rough food.

Then he replied: Woe be to you, I am not like you. Certainly, Allah, the Sublime, has made it obligatory on true leaders that they should maintain themselves at the level of low people so that the poor do not cry over their poverty.¹

¹. From ancient days asceticism and the abandonment of worldly attachments has been regarded as a means of purification of the spirit and importance of the character. Consequently, those who wished to lead a life of abstemiousness and meditation used to go out of the cities and towns to stay in forests and caves in the mountains and stay there concentrating on Allah according to their own conception. They would eat only if a casual traveler or the inhabitant of

nearby dwellings gave them anything to eat, otherwise they remained contented with the fruits of wild trees and the water of the streams, and thus they passed their life. This way of worship commenced in a way that was forced by the oppression and hardships of rulers. Certain people left their houses and, in order to avoid their grip, hid themselves in some wilderness or cave in a mountain, engaging themselves in worship of and devotion of Allah. Later on, this forced asceticism acquired a voluntary form and people began to retire to caves and hollows of their own volition. Thus it became an accepted way that whoever aimed at spiritual development retired to some corner after severing himself from all worldly ties. This method remained in vogue for centuries and even now some traces of this way of worship are found among the Buddhists and the Christians.

The moderate views of Islam do not, however, accord with the monastic life, because for attaining spiritual development it does not advocate the abandonment of worldly enjoyments and successes, nor does it view with approbation that a Muslim should leave his house and fellow men and busy himself in formal worship, hiding in some corner. The conception of worship in Islam is not confined to a few particular rites, but it regards the earning of one's livelihood through lawful means, mutual sympathy and good behavior, and cooperation and assistance also to be important constituents of worship. If an individual ignores worldly rights and obligations, and does not fulfill his responsibility towards his wife and children, nor occupies himself in efforts to earn a livelihood, but all the time stays in meditation, he ruins his life and does not fulfill the purpose of living. If this were Allah's aim, what would have the need for creating and populating the world when there was already a category of creatures who were all the time engaged in worshipping and adoration.

Nature has made man to stand on the cross-roads at which the mid-way is the center of guidance. If he deviates from this point of moderateness even a bit, this way or that way, there is sheer misguidance for him. That mid-way is that he should neither bend towards this world to such an extent as to ignore the next life, devoting himself entirely to this one, nor should he abstain from this world so as not to have any connection with anything of it, confining himself to some corner leaving everything else. Since Allah has created man in this world he should follow the code of life for living in this world, and should partake of the comforts and pleasures bestowed by Allah within moderate limits. The eating and using of things made lawful by Allah is not against Allah's worship, but rather Allah has created these things for the very purpose that they should be taken advantage of. That is why those who were the chosen of Allah lived in this world with others and ate and drank like others. They did not feel the need to turn their faces away from the people of the world, and to adopt the wilderness or the caves of mountains as their abodes, or to live in distant spots. On the other hand they remembered Allah, remained disentangled from worldly affairs, and did not forget death despite the pleasures and comforts of life.

The life of asceticism sometimes produces such evils as ruin the next life also as well as this one, and such an individual proves to be the true picture of the loser in this life as well as the next. When natural impulses are not satisfied in the lawful and legal way the mind turns into a center of evil-ideas and becomes incapable of performing worship with peace and concentration. And sometimes passions overcome the ascetic, so much so that breaking all moral fetters, he devotes himself completely to their satisfaction and consequently falls in an abyss of ruin from which it is impossible to extract himself. That is why religious law accords a greater position to

the worship performed by a family man than that by a non-family man, because the former can exercise mental peace and concentration in the worship and rituals.

Individuals who put on the cloak of Sufism and make a loud show of their spiritual greatness are cut off from the path of Islam and are ignorant of its wide teachings. They have been misled by Satan and, relying on their self-formed conceptions, tread wrongful paths. Eventually their misguidance becomes so serious that they begin to regard their leaders as having attained such a level that their word is as the word of Allah and their act is as the act of Allah. Sometimes they regard themselves beyond all the bounds and limitations of religious law and consider every evil act to be lawful for them. This deviation from faith and religion is named Sufism (complete devotion to Allah). Its unlawful principles are called Aat-tariqah (ways of achieving communion with Allah) and the followers of this cult are known as Sufis. First of all Abu Hashim al-Kufi and Shami adopted this nickname. He was of Umayyad descent and a fatalist (believing that man is bound to act as pre-ordained by Allah). The reason for giving him this name was that, in order to make a show of his asceticism and fear for Allah, he put on a woolen cloak. Later on this nickname became common and various grounds were put forth as the basis of this name. For example, one ground is that ASufi' has three letters Asad', Awaw and Afa'. Asad stands for Asabr (endurance), Asidq (truthfulness and Asafa (purity of heart) ; Awaw stands for Awudd (love), Awird (repeating Allah's name) and Awafa' (faithfulness to Allah) ; and Afa' stands for Afard (unity), Afaqr (destitution) and Afana' (death or absorption in Allah's Self). The second view is that it has been derived from Aas-Suffah, which was a platform near the Prophet's mosque which had a covering of date-palm leaves. Those who stayed there were called Ashabu's-Suffah (people of the platform). The third view is that the name of the progenitor of an Arab tribe as Sufah, and this tribe performed the duties of serving the pilgrims and the Ka'ba, and it is with reference to their connection with this tribe that these people were called Sufis. This group is divided among various sects but the basic sects are seven only.

1) al-Wahdatiyyah (unitarian) : This sect believes in the oneness of all existence. Its belief is that everything of this world is Allah, so much so that they assign to even polluted things the same godly position. They liken Allah with the river and the waves rising in it, and argue that the waves which sometimes rise and sometimes fall have no separate existence other than the river, but their existence is exactly the existence of the river. Therefore, nothing can be separated from its own existence.

2) al-Ittihayyah (the unitists) : They believe that they have united with Allah and Allah has united with them. They liken Allah with fire and themselves with iron that lies in the fire and acquires its form and property.

3) al-Huluyyah (the formists) : Their belief is that Allah takes the form of those who claim to know Him and the perfect ones, and their bodies are places of His stay. In this way, they are seemingly men but really Allah.

4) al-Wasiliyyah (the combiners) : This sect considers itself to have combined with Allah. Their belief is that the laws of the *Shari'a* are a means of development of human personality and character, and that when the human self combines with Allah it no more needs perfection or development. Consequently, for the Awasilin, worship and ritual become useless, because they hold that when truth and reality is achieved *Shari'a* remains of no avail. Therefore, they can do anything and they cannot be questioned.

5) az-Zarraqiyyah (the revelers) : This sect regards vocal and instrumental music as worship, and earns the pleasures of this world through a show of asceticism and begging from door to

door. They are ever engaged in relating concocted stories of miraculous performances of their leaders to over-awe the common people.

6) al-AUshshaqiyyah (the lovers) : The theory of this sect is that appearance is the means to reality, meaning that carnal love is the means to achieve love for Allah. That is, in order to reach the stage of Allah's love it is necessary to have love with some human beauty. But the love which they regard as love for Allah is just the product of mental disorder through which the lover inclines to one individual with all his attention and his final aim is to have access to the beloved. This love can lead to the way of evil and vice, but it has no connection with the love of Allah.

A Persian couplet says the following:

The truth of the fact is that carnal is like a jinn and a jinn cannot give you guidance.

7) at-Talqiniyyah (those who encounter) : According to this sect, the reading of religious sciences and books of scholarship is thoroughly unlawful.

Rather, the position that is achieved by an hour of spiritual effort of the Sufis cannot be achieved by seventy years of reading books.

According to Shi'a *Aulema'* all these sects are on the wrong path and out of the fold of Islam. In this connection, numerous sayings of the Imams are related. In this sermon also Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has regarded Theseverance of AAsim ibn Ziyad from this world as the mischief of Satan, and he forcefully dissuaded him from adopting that course. (For further study, see *Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, al-Hajj Mirza Habibullah a-Khoei, Vol. 13, pp.132-417; Vol. 14, pp. 2-22).

SERMON 209

Someone1 asked Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) about concocted traditions and contradictory sayings of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) current among the people, whereupon he said:

Certainly, what is current among the people is both right and wrong, true and false, repealed and repealed, general and particular, definite and indefinite, exact and surmised. Even during the Prophet's days false sayings had been attributed to him, so much so that he had to say during his sermon that, AWhoever attributes falsehoods to me makes his abode in Hell. Those who relate traditions are of four categories,² no more.

First: the lying hypocrites

The hypocrite is a person who makes a show of faith and adopts the appearance of a Muslim; he does not hesitate in sinning nor does he keep aloof from vice; he willfully attributes false things against the Messenger of Allah -- may Allah bless him and his descendants. If people knew that he was a hypocrite and a liar, they would not accept anything from him and would not confirm what he says.

Rather they say that he is the companion of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , has met him, heard (his sayings) from him and acquired (knowledge) from him. They therefore accept what he says. Allah too had warned you well about the hypocrites and described them fully to you. They have continued after the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . They gained positions with the leaders of misguidance and callers towards Hell through falsehoods and slandering. So, they put them in high posts and made them officers over the heads of the people, and amassed wealth through them. People are always with the rulers and after this world, except those to whom Allah affords protection. This is the first of the four categories.

SECOND: Those who are mistaken

Then there is the individual who heard (a saying) from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) but did not memorize it as it was, but surmised it. He does not lie willfully. Now, he carries the saying with him and relates it, acts upon it and claims that: AI heard it from the Messenger of Allah. If the Muslims come to know that he has committed a mistake in it, they will not accept it from him, and if he himself knows that he is on the wrong he will give it up.

Third: Those who are ignorant

The third man is he who heard the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ordering to do a thing and later the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) refrained the people from doing it, but this man did not know it, or he heard the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) refraining people from a thing and later he allowed it, but this man did not know it. In this way he retained in his mind what had been repealed, and did not retain the repealing tradition. If he knew that it had been repealed he would reject it, or if the Muslims knew, when they heard it from him, that it had been repealed they would reject it.

Fourth: Those who memorize truthfully

The last, namely the fourth man, is he who does not speak a lie against Allah or against His Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . He hates falsehood out of fear for Allah and respect for the Messenger of Allah, and does not commit mistakes, but retains (in his mind) exactly what he heard (from the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)), and he relates it as he heard it without adding anything or omitting anything. He heard the repealing tradition, he retained it and acted upon it, and he heard the repealed tradition and rejected it. He also understands the particular and the general, and he knows the definite and indefinite, and gives everything its due position.

The sayings of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) used to be of two types. One was particular and the other common. Sometimes a man would hear him but he would not know what Allah, the Glorified, meant by it or what the Messenger of Allah meant by it. In this way the listener carries it and memorizes it without knowing its meaning and its real intention, or what was its reason. Among the companions of the Messenger of Allah all were not in the habit of putting him questions and ask him the meanings, indeed they always wished that some Bedouin or stranger might come and ask him (□) so that they would also listen. Whenever any such thing came before me, I asked him about its meaning and preserved it. These are the reasons and grounds of differences among the people in their traditions.

1. This was Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali who was one of the relaters of traditions through Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S).

2. In this sermon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has divided the traditionists into four categories:

The first category is that of a man concocts a tradition and attributes it to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Traditions were in fact falsified and attributed to him, and this process continued, with the result that numerous novel traditions came into being. This is a fact which cannot be denied but if anyone does deny it his basis would be not knowledge or sagacity by oratory or argumentative necessity. Thus, once, AAlamu'l-Huda (Ensign of Guidance) Sayyid al-Murtadha had a change of meeting the Sunni *Aulema'* (scholars) in confrontation and on this occasion Sayyid al-Murtadha proves by historical facts that the traditions related about the merits of the great companions are concocted and counterfeit. On this, the (Sunni) Aulama' argued that it was impossible that someone should dare speak a lie against the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His

Household) and prepare a tradition himself and attribute it to him. Sayyid al-Murtadha said there is a tradition of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) that:

A lot of false things will be attributed to me after my death and whoever speaks a lie against me would be preparing his abode in Hell. (al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, p. 38; Vol. 2, p. 102; Vol. 4, p. 207; Vol. 8, p. 54; Muslim, Vol. 8, p. 229; Abu Dawud, Vol. 3, pp. 319-320; al-Tirmithi, Vol. 4, p. 524; Vol. 5, pp. 35-36, 40, 199, 634; Ibn Majah, Vol. 1, pp. 13-15)

If you regard this tradition as true then you should agree that false things have been attributed to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , but if you regard it false, this would prove our point. However, these were people whose hearts were full of hypocrisy and who used to prepare traditions of their own accord in order to create mischief and dispersion in religion and to misguide Muslims of weak convictions. They remained mixed with them as they used to do during the lifetime of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) ; and just as they remained busy in activities of mischief and destruction in those days, in the same way, even after the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , they were not unmindful of deforming the teachings of Islam and metamorphosing its features. Rather, in the days of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) they were always afraid lest he unveiled them and put them to shame, but after the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) their hypocritical activities increased and they attributed false things to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) without demur for their own personal ends, and those who heard them believed in them because of their status as companions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , thinking that whatever they said was correct and whatever they gave out was true. Afterwards also, the belief that all the companions are correct put a stopper on their tongues, as a result of which they were taken to be above criticism, questioning, discussion and censure. Besides, their conspicuous performance had made them prominent in the eyes of the government, and also because of this it needed courage and daring to speak against them. This is proved by Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's words:

These people gained positions with the leaders of misguidance and callers towards Hell, through falsehood and slandering. So, they put them in high posts and made them officers over the heads of the people.

Along with the destruction of Islam, the hypocrites also aimed at amassing wealth, and they were doing so claiming to be Muslims, because of which they did not want to remove the veil of Islam (from their faces) and to come out openly, but they wanted to continue their Satanic activities under the garb of Islam and engaged themselves in its basic destruction and spreading of division and dispersal by concocting traditions. In this connection, Ibn Abul-Hadid has written:

When they were left free they too left many things. When people observed silence about them they also observed silence about Islam, but they continued their underground activities such as the fabrication of falsehoods to which Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has alluded, because a lot of untrue matters had been mixed with the traditions by the group of people of wrong beliefs who aimed at misguidance and the distortion of views and beliefs, while some of them also aimed at extolling some particular party with whom they had other worldly aims as well.

On the expiry of this period, when Mu'awiyah took over the leadership of religion and occupied the throne of temporal authority, he opened an official department for the fabrication of false traditions, and ordered his officers to fabricate and popularize traditions in disparagement of Ahl al-Bayt (□) (the Household of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)) and to extol A'Othman and the Umayyads, and announced rewards and grants of land for this work.

Consequently, a lot of traditions about self-made distinctions gained entry in the books of traditions. Thus, Abul-Hasan al-Mada'ini has written in his book *Kitab al-Ahadith* and ibn Abul-Hadid has quoted it, namely:

Mu'awiyah wrote to his officers that they should take special care of those who were adherents of AOthman, his well-wishers and lovers and to award high position, precedence and honor to those who related traditions about his merits and distinctions, and to convey to him whatever is so related by any person, along with his name, the name of his father and the name of his tribe. They did accordingly and heaped up traditions about the merits and distinctions of AOthman because Mu'awiyah used to award them rewards, clothes, grants and lands.

When the fabricated traditions about the merits of AOthman had been spread throughout the realm, with the idea that the position of the earlier Caliphs should not remain low, Mu'awiyah wrote to his officers:

As soon as you receive this order of mine you should call upon the people to prepare traditions about the distinctions of the companions and other caliphs also, and take care that if any Muslim relates any tradition about Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) you should prepare a similar tradition about the companions to contradict it because this gives me great pleasure and cools my eyes, and it weakens the position of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) and his party men, and is more severe to them than the merits and distinctions of AOthman.

When his letters were read to the people, a large number of such traditions were related extolling the companions that are all fabricated with no truth at all. (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 11, pp. 43-47)

In this connection Abu AAbdillah Ibrahim ibn Muhammed ibn AArafah known as Niftawayh (244/858 - 323/935) who was one of the prominent scholars and traditionists has written, and Ibn Abul-Hadid has quoted him, that:

Most of the false traditions about the merits of the companions were fabricated during the days of Mu'awiyah in order to gain position in his audience because his view was that in this way he could disgrace Banu Hashim and render them low. (ibid.)

After that, fabrication of tradition became a habit, the world seekers made it a means of securing position with kings and nobles and to amass wealth. For example, Ghiyath ibn Ibrahim an-Nakh'i (2nd cent. A.H.) fabricated a tradition about the flight of pigeons, in order to please al-Mahdi ibn al-Mansur (the AAbbasid Caliph) and to secure position near him. (*Tarikh Baghdad*, Vol. 12, pp. 323-327; *Mizan al-I'tidal*, Vol. 3, pp.337-338; *Lisan al-Mizan*, Vol. 4, p.422). Abu Sa'id al-Mada'ini and others made it a means of livelihood. The limit was reached when the al-Karramiyya and some of the al-Mutasawwifah gave the ruling that the fabrication of traditions for the prevention of sin or for persuasion towards obedience was lawful. Consequently, in connection with persuading and dissuading, traditions were fabricated quite freely, and this was not regarded against the religious law or morality. Rather, this work was generally done by those who bore the appearance of asceticism or fear of Allah and who passed their nights in praying and days in filling their registers with false traditions. An idea about the number of these fabricated traditions can be had from the fact that out of six hundred thousand traditions al-Bukhari selected only two thousand seven hundred and sixty-one traditions, (*Tarikh Baghdad*, Vol. 2, p.8; *Al-Irshad as-Sari*, Vol. 1, p.28; *Sifatul-Safwah*, Vol. 4, p. 143). Muslim thought fit for selection only four thousand out of three hundred thousand (*Tarikh Baghdad*, Vol. 13, p. 101; *Al-Muntzam*, Vol. 5, p.32; *Tabaqat al-Huffaz*, Vol. 2, pp. 151, 157; *Wafiyyat al-A'yan*, Vol. 5, p. 194). Abu Dawud took four thousand and eight hundred out of five hundred thousand (*Tarikh*

Baghdad, Vol. 9, p. 57; *Tabaqat al-Huffaz*, Vol. 2, p. 154; *Al-Muntazam*, Vol. 5, p. 97; *Wafiyyat al-A'yan*, Vol. 2, p. 404), and Ahmed ibn Hanbal took thirty thousand out of nearly on million traditions (*Tarikh Baghdad*, Vol. 4, p. 419-420; *Tabaqat al-Huffaz*, Vol. 2, p. 17; *Wafiyyat al-A'yan*, Vol. 1, p. 64; *Tahthib al-Tahthib*, Vol. 1, p. 74). But when this selection is studied some traditions which come across can, in no circumstances, be attributed to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . The result is that a group of considerable number has cropped up among Muslims who, in view of these (so-called) authoritative collections and true traditions, completely reject the evidentiary value of the traditions, (For further reference see *Al-Ghadir*, Vol. 5, pp. 208-378).

The second category of narrators of traditions are those who, without appreciating the occasion or context, related whatever they could recollect, right or wrong. Thus, in al-Bukhari (Vol. 2, pp. 100-102; Vol. 5, p. 98) ; Muslim (Vol. 3, pp. 41-45) ; al-Tirmithi (Vol. 3, pp. 327-329) ; al-Nisa'i (Vol. 4, p. 18) ; ibn Majah (Vol. 1, pp. 508-509) ; Malik ibn Anas (*Al-Muwatta'*, Vol. 1, p. 234) ; ash-Shafi'i (Ikhtilafu'l-hadith, on the side lines of Aal-Umm, Vol. 7, p. 266) ; Abu Dawud (Vol. 3, p. 194) ; Ahmed ibn Hanbal (Vol. 1, pp. 41, 42) and al-Baqyhaqi (Vol. 4, pp. 72-74) in the chapter entitled 'Aweeping over the dead' it is stated that when AOmer was wounded Suhayb came weeping to him, then AOmer said:

O Suhayb! You weep over me, while the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) had said that the dead person is punished if his people weep over him.

When after the death of AOmer this was mentioned to AA'isha, she said: AMay Allah have mercy on AOmer. The Messenger of Allah did not say that weeping of relations causes punishment on the dead, but he said that the punishment of an unbeliever increases if the people weep over him. After this AA'isha said that according to the Holy Qur'an no person has to bear the burden of another, so how could the burden of those who weep be put on the dead. After this the following verse was quoted by AA'isha:

And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another; (Holy Qur'an, 6:164; 17:15; 35:18; 39:7; 53:38).

The wife of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) , AA'isha, relates that once the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) passed by a Jewish woman over whom her people were weeping. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) then remarked, AHer people are weeping over her but she is undergoing punishment in the grave.

The third category of the relaters of traditions is of those who heard some repealed traditions from the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) but could not get any change to hear the repealing traditions which he could relate to others. An example of a repealing tradition is the saying of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) which also contains a reference to the repealed tradition, namely: AI had disallowed you to visit graves, but now you can visit them. (Muslim, Vol. 3, p. 65; al-Tirmithi, Vol. 3, p. 370; Abu Dawud, Vol. 3, pp. 218, 332; al-Nisa'i, Vol. 4, p. 89; ibn Majah, Vol. 1, pp. 500-501; Malik ibn Anas, Vol. 2, p. 485; Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Vol. 1, pp. 145,452; Vol. 3, pp. 38, 63, 66, 237, 350; Vol. 5, pp. 350, 355, 356, 357, 359, 361; al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, Vol. 1, pp. 374-376; and al-Bayhaqi, Vol. 4, pp. 76-77). Herein the permission to visit graves has repealed the previous restriction on it. Now, those who heard only therepealed tradition continued acting according to it.

The fourth category of relaters of traditions is of those who were fully aware of the principles of justice, possessed intelligence and sagacity, knew the occasion when a tradition was first uttered (by the Prophet [□]) and were also acquainted with the repealing and the repealed

traditions, the particular and the general, and the timely and the absolute. They avoided falsehood and fabrication. Whatever they heard remained preserved in their memory, and they conveyed it with exactness to others. It is they whose traditions are the precious possession of Islam, free from fraud and counterfeit and worthy of being trusted and acted upon. That collection of traditions which has been conveyed through trustworthy bosoms like that of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) and has remained free from cutting, curtailing, alteration or change particularly present Islam in its true form. The position of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) in Islamic knowledge has been most certainly proved through the following traditions narrated from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) such as:

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), Jabir ibn AAbdullah, Ibn AAbbas and AAbdullah ibn AOmer have narrated from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) that he said:

I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its door. He who wants to acquire (my) knowledge should come through its door. (*Al-Mustadrak*, Vol. 3, pp. 126-127; *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 3, p. 1102; *Usd al-Ghaba*, Vol. 4, p. 22; *Tarikh Baghdad*, Vol. 2, p. 377; ol. 4, p. 348; Vol. 7, p. 172; Vol. 11, pp. 48-50; *Tadhkirah al-huffaz*, Vol. 4, p. 28; *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, Vol. 9, p. 114; *Tahthib al-Tahtib*, Vol. 6, p. 320; Vol. 7, p. 337; *Lisan al-Mizan*, Vol. 2, pp. 122-123; *Tarikh al-Khulafa'*, p. 170; *Kanz al-AUmmal*, Vol. 6, pp. 152, 156, 401; *AUmdat al-Qari*, Vol. 7, , p. 631; *Sharh al-Mawahib al-Laduniyya*, Vol. 3, p. 143).

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) and ibn AAbbas have also narrated from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) that:

I am the store-house of wisdom and Ali is its door. He who wants to acquire wisdom should come through its door. (*Hilyat al-Awliya'*, Vol. 1, p. 64; *Masabih as-Sunna*, Vol. 2, p. 275; *Tarikh Baghdad*, Vol. 11, p. 204; *Kanz al-AUmmal*, Vol. 6, p. 401; *Al-Riyad al-Nadira*, Vol. 12, p. 193).

If only people could take the Prophet's blessings through these sources of knowledge. But it is a tragic chapter of history that although traditions are accepted through the Kharijites and enemies of the Prophet's family, whenever Theseries of relaters includes the name of any individual from among the Prophet's family there is hesitation in accepting the tradition.

SERMON 210

The greatness of Allah and the creation of the Universe

It is through the strength of Allah's greatness and His subtle power of innovation that He made solid dry earth out of the water of the fathomless, compact and dashing ocean. Then He made from it layers and separated them into seven skies they had been joined together. So, they became stationary at His command and stopped at the limit fixed by Him. He so made the earth that is born by deep blue, surrounded and suspended water which is obedient to His command and has submitted to His awe while its flow has stopped due to fear of Him.

He also created high hills, rocks of stone and lofty mountains. He put them in their positions and made them remain stationary. Their peaks rose into the air while their roots remained in the water. In this way He realized the mountains above the plains and fixed their foundations in the vast expanse wherever they stood. He made their peaks high and made their bodies lofty. He made them like pillars for the earth and fixed them in it like pegs. Consequently, the earth became stationary; otherwise it might bend with its inhabitants or sink inwards with its burden, or shift from its positions.

Therefore, glorified is He who stopped it after the flowing of its waters and solidified it after the watery state of its sides. In this way He made it a cradle for His creatures and spread it for them in the form of a floor over the deep ocean which is stationary and does not move and is fixed and does not flow. Severe winds move it here and there and clouds draw up water from it.

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

SERMON 211

About those who give up supporting right

O Lord! whoever listens to our utterance which is just and which seeks the prosperity of religion and the worldly life and does not seek mischief, but rejects it after listening, then he certainly turns away from Your support and desists from strengthening Your religion. We make You a witness over him and You art the greatest of all witness, and we make all those who inhabit Your earth and thy skies witness owe him. Thereafter, You alone can make us needless of his support and question him for his sin.

SERMON 212

The Sublimity of Allah and a eulogy of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

Praise to Allah who is above all similarity to the creatures, is above the words of describers, who displays the wonders of His management for the on-lookers, is hidden from the imagination of thinkers by virtue of the greatness of His glory, has knowledge without acquiring it, adding to it or drawing it (from someone), and Who is the ordainer of all matters without reflecting or thinking. He is such that gloom does not concern Him, nor does He seek light from brightness, night does not overtake Him nor does the day pass over Him (so as to affect Him in any manner). His comprehension (of things) is not through eyes and His knowledge is not dependent on being informed.

A portion of the same sermon: about the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

Allah deputed the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) with light, and accorded him the highest precedence in selection. Through him Allah united those who were divided, overpowered the powerful, overcame difficulties and leveled rugged ground, and thus removed misguidance from right and left.

SERMON 213

The Prophet's nobility of descent

I stand witness that He is just and does justice, He is the arbiter Who decides (between right and wrong). I also stand witness that Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) is His slave. His Messenger and the Master over His creatures. Whenever Allah divided the line of descent, He put him in the better one, and therefore, no evil-doer never shared with him nor was any vicious person his partner.

Beware! surely Allah, the Glorified, has provided for virtue those who are suited to it, for truth pillars (that support it), and for obedience protection (against deviation). In every matter of obedience you will find Allah, the Glorified's succor that will speak through tongues and accord firmness to hearts. It has sufficiency for those who seek sufficiency, and a cure for those who seek a cure.

The characteristics of the virtuous whose guidance must be followed

Know that, certainly, those creatures of Allah who preserve His knowledge offer protection to those things which He desires to be protected and make His springs flow (for the benefit of others). They contact each other with friendliness and meet each other with affection. They drink water from cups that quench the thirst and return from the watering places fully satiated. Misgiving does not affect them and backbiting does not gain ground with them. In this way Allah has tied their nature with good manners. Because of this they love each other and meet each other. They have become superior, like seeds which are selected by taking some and throwing away others. This selection has distinguished them and the process of choosing has purified them.

Therefore, man should secure honor by adopting these qualities. He should fear the day of Doom before it arrives, and he should appreciate the shortness of his life and the shortness of his sojourn in the place of stay which has only to last for his change over to the next place. He should therefore do something for his change over and for the known stages of his departure. Blessed be he who possesses a virtuous heart, who obeys one who guides him, desists from him who takes to ruin, catches the path of safety with the help of him who provides him light (of guidance) and by obeying the leader who commands him, hastens towards guidance before its doors are closed, opens the door of repentance and removes the (stain of) sins. He has certainly been put on the right path and guided towards the straight road.

SERMON 214

A prayer which Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) often recited

Praise to Allah! Who made me such that I have not died nor am I sick, nor have my veins been infected with disease, nor have I been hauled up for my evil acts, nor am I without progeny, nor have I forsaken my religion, nor do I disbelieve in my Master, nor do I feel strangeness with my faith, nor is my intelligence affected, nor have I been punished with the punishment of peoples before me. I am a slave in Your possession, I have been guilty of excesses over myself. You hast exhausted Your pleas over me and I have no plea (before You). I have no power to take except what You gives me, and I cannot evade except what You savest me from.

O Lord! I seek Your protection from becoming destitute despite Your riches, from being misguided despite Your guidance, from being molested in Your realm and from being humiliated while authority rests with You.

O Lord! Let my spirit be the first of those good objects that You takes from me and the first trust out of Your favors held in trust with me.

O Lord! We seek Your protection from turning away from Your command or revolting against Your religion, or being led away by our desires instead of by guidance that comes from You.

SERMON 215

Delivered at the battle of Siffin Mutual rights of the ruler and the ruled

So now, Allah, the Glorified, has, by placing me over your affairs, created my right over you, and you too have a right over me like mine over you. A right is very vast in description but very narrow in equitability of action. It does not accrue to any person unless it accrues against him also, and right does not accrue against a person unless it also accrues in his favor. If there is any right which is only in favor of a person with no (corresponding) right accruing against him it is

solely for Allah, the Glorified, and not for His creatures by virtue of His might over His creatures and by virtue of the justice permeating all His decrees. Of course, He the Glorified, has created His right over creatures that they should worship Him, and has laid upon Himself (the obligation of) their reward equal to several times therecompense as a mark of His bounty and the generosity that He is capable of.

Then, from His rights, He, the Glorified, created certain rights for certain people against others. He made them so as to equate with one another. Some of these rights produce other rights. Some rights are such that they do not accrue except with others. The greatest of these rights that Allah, the Glorified, has made obligatory is the right of the ruler over the ruled and the right of the ruled over the ruler. This is an obligation which Allah, the Glorified, has placed on each other. He has made it the basis of their (mutual) affection, and an honor for their religion. Consequently, the ruled cannot prosper unless the rulers are sound, while the rulers cannot be sound unless the ruled are steadfast.

If the ruled fulfill the rights of the ruler and the ruler fulfill their rights, then right attains the position of honor among them, the ways of religion become established, signs of justice become fixed and the Sunna gains currency.

In this way time will improve, the continuance of government will be expected, and the aims of the enemies will be frustrated. But if the ruled gain sway over the ruler, or the ruler oppresses the ruled, then difference crops up in every word, signs of oppression appear, mischief enters religion and the ways of the Sunna are forsaken. Then desires are acted upon, the commands (of religion) are discarded, diseases of the spirit become numerous and there is no hesitation in disregarding even great rights, nor in committing big wrongs. In such circumstances, the virtuous are humiliated while the vicious are honored, and there are serious chastisements from Allah, the Glorified, into the people.

You should therefore counsel each other (for the fulfillment of your obligations) and cooperate with each other. However extremely eager a person may be to secure the pleasure of Allah, and however fully he strives for it, he cannot discharge (his obligation for) obedience to Allah, the Glorified, as is really due to Him, and it is an obligatory right of Allah over the people that they should advise each other to the best of their ability and cooperate with each other for the establishment of truth among them. No person, however great his position in the matter of truth, and however advanced his distinction in religion may be, is above cooperation in connection with the obligations placed on him by Allah. Again, no man, however small he may be regarded by others, and however humble he may appear before eyes, is too low to cooperate or to be afforded cooperation in this matter.

One of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's companions replied to him by a long speech wherein he praised him much and mentioned his own listening to him and obeying him, where Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

If a man in his mind regards Allah's glory as being high and believes in his heart that Allah's position is sublime, then it is his right that on account of the greatness of these things he should regard all other things small. Among such persons he on whom Allah's bounty is great and Allah's favors are kind has a greater obligation, because Allah's bounty over any person does not increase without an increase in Allah's right over him.

In the view of virtuous people, the worst position of rulers is that it may be thought about them that they love glory, and their affairs may be taken to be based on pride. I would really hate that it may occur to your mind that I love high praises or to hear eulogies. By the grace of Allah I

am not like this. Even if I had loved to be mentioned like this, I would have given it up in submissiveness before Allah, the Glorified, rather than accept greatness and sublimity to which He is more entitled. Generally, people feel pleased at praise after good performances; but do not mention for me handsome praise for the obligations I have discharged towards Allah and towards you, because of (my) fear about those obligations which I have not discharged and for issuing injunctions which could not be avoided, and do not address me in the manner despots are addressed.

Do not evade me as the people of passion are (to be) evaded, do not meet me with flattery and do not think that I shall take it ill if a true thing is said to me, because the person who feels disgusted when truth is said to him or a just matter is placed before him would find it more difficult to act upon them. Therefore, do not abstain from saying a truth or pointing out a matter of justice because I do not regard myself above erring.¹ I do not escape erring in my actions but that Allah helps me (in avoiding errors) in matters in which He is more powerful than I. Certainly, I and you are slaves owned by Allah, other than Whom there is no Master except Him. He owns our selves which we do not own. He took us from where we were towards that means prosperity to us. He altered our straying into guidance and gave us intelligence after blindness.

1. That the innocence of angels is different from the innocence of man needs no detailed discussion. The innocence of angels means that they do not possess the impulse to sin, but the innocence of man means that, although he has human frailties and passions, yet he possesses a peculiar power to resist them and he is not over-powered by them so as to commit sins. This very ability is called innocence and it prevents the rising up of personal passions and impulses. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's saying that AI do not regard myself above erring refers to those human dictates and passions, and his saying that AAllah helps me in avoiding Aerrors' refers to innocence. The same tone is found in the Holy Qur'an in the words of Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) Yusuf that:

I exculpate not myself, verily (one's) self is wont to bid (him to) evil, except such as my Master has had mercy on; *verily my Master is Oft-forgiving, All-merciful.* (Holy Qur'an 12:53)

Just as in this verse, because of the existence of exception, its first part cannot be used to argue against his innocence, similarly, due to the existence of the exception Abut that Allah helps me in avoiding errors in Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's saying, its first part cannot be used to argue against his innocence. Otherwise the Prophet's innocence too will have to be rejected. In the same way, the last sentence of this sermon should not be taken to mean that before the proclamation of prophethood he had been under the influence of pre-Islamic beliefs, and that just as others had been unbelievers he too might have been in darkness and misguidance, because from his very birth Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was brought-up by the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and the effect of his training and up-bringing permeated him. It cannot therefore be imagined that he who had from infancy trod in the footprints of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) would deviate from guidance even for a moment. Thus, al-Mas'udi has written:

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) never believed in any other god than Allah so that there could be the question of his accepting Islam. He rather followed the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) in all his actions and (virtually) initiated him, and in this very state he attained majority. (*Muru' al-Thahab*, Vol. 2, p. 3).

Here, by those whom Allah led from darkness into guidance, the reference is to the persons whom Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was addressing. Ibn Abul-Hadid writes in this connection:

The reference here is not to his own self because he had never been an unbeliever so as to have accepted Islam after that, but in these words he is referring to those group of people whom he was addressing. (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 11, p. 108)

SERMON 216

About the excesses of the Quraish

O Lord! I beseech You to take revenge on the Quraish and those who are assisting them, for they have cut asunder my kinship and over-turned my cup, and have joined together to contest a right to which I was entitled more than anyone else. They said to me: Alif you get your right, that will be just, but if you are denied the right, that too will be just. Endure it with sadness or kill yourself in grief. I looked around but found no one to shield me, protect me or help me except the members of my family. I refrained from flinging them into death and therefore closed my eyes despite the dust, kept swallowing saliva despite (the suffocation of) grief and endured pangs of anger although it was more bitter than colocynth and more grievous than the bite of knives.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: This utterance of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has already appeared in an earlier Sermon (171), but I have repeated it here because of the difference of versions.

A portion of the same sermon: about those who went to Basra to fight Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S)

They marched on my officers and the custodians of the public treasury which is still under my control and on the people of a metropolis, all of whom were obedient to me and were in allegiance to me. They created division among them, instigated their party against me and attacked my followers. They killed a group of them by treachery, while another group took up swords against them and fought with the swords till they met Allah as adherents to truth.

SERMON 217

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) passed by the corpses of Talhah ibn A'Ubaydullah and A'Abd ar-Rahman ibn A'Attab ibn Asid who were both killed in the Battle of Jamal, he said:

Abu Muhammed (Talhah) lies here away from his own place. By Allah, I did not like that the Quraish should lie killed under the stars. I have avenged myself with the descendants of A'Abd Manaf, but the chief persons of Banu Jumah¹ have escaped me. They had stretched their necks towards a matter for which they were not suited, and therefore their necks were broken before they reached the goal.

1. In the Battle of Jamal a group of Banu Jumah was with AA'isha, but the chief men of this group fled away from the battle-field. Some of them were: A'Abdullah at-Tawil ibn Safwan, Yahya ibn Hakim, Amir ibn Mas'ud and Ayyub ibn Habib. From this group (Banu Jumah) only two persons were killed.

SERMON 218

Qualities of the God-fearing and the pious

He (the believer) kept his mind alive and killed (the desires of) his heart till his body became thin, his bulk turned light and an effulgence of extreme brightness shone for him. It lighted the

way for him and took him on the (right) path. Different doors led him to the door of safety and the place of (his permanent) stay. His feet, balancing his body, became fixed in the position of safety and comfort, because he kept his heart (in good acts) and pleased his Allah.

SERMON 219

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) recited the verse

*Engage (your) vying in exuberance, until ye come to the graves.*¹ (Holy Qur'an, 102:1-2)

Then he said:

How distant (from achievement) is their aim, how neglectful are these visitors and how difficult is the affair. They have not taken lessons from things which are full of lessons, but they took them from far off places. Do they boast on the dead bodies of their fore-fathers, or do they regard the number of dead persons as a ground for feeling boastful of their number? They want to revive the bodies that have become spiritless and the movements that have ceased. They are more entitled to be a source of lesson than a source of pride. They are more suitable for being a source of humility than of honor.

They looked at them with weak-sighted eyes and descended into the hollow of ignorance. If they had asked about them from the dilapidated houses and empty courtyards, they would have said that they went into the earth in the state of misguidance and you too are heading ignorantly towards them. You trample their skulls, want to raise constructions on their corpses, you graze what they have left and live in houses which they have vacated. The days (that lie) between them and you are also bemoaning you, reciting elegies over you.

They are your fore-runners in reaching the goal and have arrived at the watering places before you. They had positions of honor and plenty of pride. They were rulers and holders of positions. Now they have gone into the interstice where earth covers them from above and is eating their flesh and drinking their blood. They lie in the hollows of their graves lifeless, no more growing, and hidden, not to be found. The approach of dangers does not frighten them, and the adversity of circumstances does not grieve them. They do not mind earthquakes, nor do they pay heed to thunders. They are gone and not expected back. They are existent but unseen. They were united but are now dispersed. They were friendly and are now separated.

Their accounts are unknown and their houses are silent, not because of length of time or distance of place, but because they have been made to drink the cup (of death) which has changed their speech into dumbness, their hearing into deafness and their movements into stillness. It seems as though they are fallen in slumber. They are neighbors not feeling affection for each other, or friends who do not meet each other. The bonds of their knowing each other have been worn out and the connections of their friendship have been cut asunder. Every one of them is therefore alone although they are a group, and they are strangers, even though friends. They are unaware of morning after a night and of evening after a day. The night or the day when they departed has become ever existent for them.² They found the dangers of their place of stay more serious than they had apprehended, and they witnessed that its signs were greater than they had guessed. The two objectives (namely paradise and hell) have been stretched for them up to a point beyond the reach of fear or hope. Had they been able to speak they would have become dumb to describe what they witnessed or saw.

Even though their traces have been wiped out and their news has stopped (circulating), eyes are capable of drawing a lesson, as they looked at them, ears of intelligence heard them and they spoke without uttering words. So, they said that handsome faces have been destroyed and

delicate bodies have been smeared with earth. We have put on a worn-out shroud. The narrowness of the grave has over-whelmed us and strangeness has spread among us. Our silent abodes have been ruined. The beauty of our bodies has disappeared. Our known features have become hateful. Our stay in the places of strangeness has become long. We do not get relief from pain, nor widening from narrowness.

Now, if you portray them in your mind, or if the curtains concealing them are removed from them for you, in this state when their ears have lost their power and turned deaf, their eyes have been filled with dust and sunk down, their tongues which were very active have been cut into pieces, their hearts which were ever wakeful have become motionless in their chests, in every limb of theirs a peculiar decay has occurred which has deformed it, and has paved the way for calamity towards it, all these lie powerless, with no hand to help them and no heart to grieve over them, (then) you would certainly notice the grief of (their) hearts and the dirt of (their) eyes.

Every trouble of theirs is such that its position does not change and the distress does not clear away. How many a prestigious body and amazing beauty the earth has swallowed, although when in the world he enjoyed abundant pleasures and was nurtured in honor. He clung to enjoyments (even) in the hour of grief. If distress befell him he sought refuge in consolation (derived) through the pleasures of life and playing and games. He was laughing at the world while the world was laughing at him because of his life full of forgetfulness. Then time trampled him like thorns, the days weakened his energy and death began to look at him from near. Then he was overtaken by a grief which he had never felt, and ailments appeared in place of the health he had previously possessed.

He then turned to that with which the physician had made him familiar, namely suppressing the hot (diseases) with cold (medicines) and curing the cold with hot doses, but the cold things did nothing save aggravate the hot ailments, while the hot ones did nothing except increasing the coldness, nor did he acquire temperateness in his constitution but rather every ailment of his increased till his physicians became helpless, his attendants grew loathsome and his own people felt disgusted from describing his disease, avoided answering those who inquired about him and quarreled in front of him about Theserious news which they were concealing from him. Thus, someone would say Ahis condition is what it is and would console them with hopes of his recovery, while another one would advocate patience on missing him, recalling to them the calamities that had befallen the earlier generations.

In this state when he was getting ready to depart from the world and leave his beloved ones, such a serious choking overtook him that his senses became bewildered and the dampness of his tongue dried u, p. Now, there was many an important question whose reply he knew about he could not utter it, and many a voice that was painful for his heart that he heard but remained (unmoved) as though he was deaf to the voice of either and elder whom he used to respect or of a younger whom he used to caress. The pangs of death are too hideous to be covered by description or to be appreciated by the hearts of the people in this world.

1. The genesis of the descending of this verse is that the tribes of Banu AAbd Manaf and Banu Sahm began to boast against each other over the abundance of their wealth and the number of their tribesmen, and in order to prove they had a greater number each one began to include their dead as well, whereupon this verse was revealed to the effect that abundance of riches and majority in numbers has made you so forgetful that you count the dead also with the living. This verse is also taken to mean that abundance of riches and progeny has made you forgetful till you

reached the graves, but the utterance of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) supports the first meaning.

2. This means that for him he who dies in the day it is always day whereas for him who dies in the night the darkness of night never dispels, because they are at a place where there is no turning of the moon and the sun and no rotation of the nights and the days. The same meaning has been expressed by a poet like this:

There is sure to be a day without a night,
Or a night that would come without a day.

SERMON 220

Delivered after reciting this verse:

.therein declare glory unto Him in the mornings and the evenings: Men whom neither merchandise nor any sale diverteth from the remembrance of Allah and constancy in prayer and paying the poor-rate; they fear the day when the hearts and eyes shall writhe of the anguish. (Holy Qur'an, 24:36-37)

Certainly, Allah, the Glorified, the Sublime has made His remembrance the light for hearts which hear with its help despite deafness, see with its help despite blindness and become submissive with its help despite unruliness.

In all the periods and times when there were no prophets, there have been persons with whom Allah, precious are His bounties, whispered through their wits and spoke through their minds. With the help of the bright awakening of their ears, eyes and hearts they keep reminding others of the remembrance of the days of Allah and making others feel fear for Him like guide-points in wildernesses. Whoever adopts the middle way, they praise his ways and give him the tidings of deliverance, but whoever goes right and left they vilify his ways and frighten him with ruin. In this way, they served as lamps in the darkness and guides through these doubts.

There are some people devoted to the remembrance (of Allah) who have adopted it in place of worldly matters so that commerce or trade does not turn them away from it. They pass their life in it. They speak into the ears of neglectful persons warning against matters held unlawful by Allah, they order them to practice justice and themselves keep practicing it, and they refrain them from the unlawful and themselves refrain from it. It is as though they have finished the journey of this world towards the next world and have beheld what lies beyond it. Consequently, they have become acquainted with all that befell them in the interstice during their long stay therein, and the Day of Judgment fulfillls its promises for them. Therefore, they removed the curtain from these things for the people of the world, till it was as though they were seeing what people did not see and were hearing what people did not hear.

If you picture them in your mind in their admirable positions and well-known sittings, when they have opened the records of their actions and are prepared to render an account of themselves in respect of the small as well as the big things they were ordered to do but they failed to do, or were ordered to refrain from but they indulged therein, and they realized the weight of their burden (or bad acts) on their backs, and they felt too weak to bear them, then they wept bitterly and spoke to each other while still crying and bewailing to Allah in repentance and acknowledgment (of their shortcomings), you would find them to be emblems of guidance and lamps in darkness, angels would be surrounding them, peace would be descending upon them, the doors of the sky would be opened for them and positions of honor would be assigned to them in the place of which Allah had informed them. Therefore, He has appreciated their actions and

praised their position. They call Him and breathe in the air of forgiveness, they are ever needy of His bounty and remain humble before His greatness, the length of their grief has pained their hearts, and the length of weeping their eyes. They knock at every door of inclination towards Allah. They ask Him Whom generosity does not make destitute and from Whom those who approach Him do not get disappointed.

Therefore, take account of yourself for your own sake because the account of others will be taken by one other than you.

SERMON 221

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) recited the verse:

O thou man! what has beguiled thee from thy Master, the Most Gracious One. (Holy Qur'an, 82:6)

Then he said:

The addressee (in this verse) is devoid of argument and his excuse is most deceptive. He is detaining himself in ignorance.

O man! what has emboldened you to (commit) sins, what had deceived you about your Allah and what has made you satisfied with the destruction of yourself. Is there no cure for your ailment or no awakening from your sleep? Do you not have pity on yourself as you have on others? Generally, when you see anyone exposed to the heat of the sun you cover him with shade, or if you see anyone afflicted with grief that pains his body you weep out of pity for him. What has then made you patient over your own disease, what has made you firm in your own afflictions, and what has consoled you from weeping over yourself although your life is the most precious of all lives to you, and why does not the fear of an ailment that may befall you in the night keep you wakeful although you lie on the way to Allah's wrath due to your sins?

You should cure the disease of languor in your heart by determination, and the sleep of neglectfulness in your eyes by wakefulness. Be obedient to Allah, and love His remembrance, and picture yourself that you are running away while He is approaching you. He is calling you to His forgiveness and concealing your faults with His kindness, while you are fleeing away from Him towards others. Certainly, Great is Allah the powerful Who is so generous, and how humble and weak are you and still so bold to commit His disobedience although you live in His protection and undergo changes of life in the expanse of His kindness. He does not refuse you His kindness and does not remove His protection from you. In fact, you have not been without His kindness even for a moment, whether it be a favor that He conferred upon you or a sin of yours that He has concealed or a calamity that He has warded off from you. What is your idea about Him if you had obeyed Him? By Allah, if this had been the case with two persons equal in power and matching in might (one being inattentive and the other showering favors upon you) then you would have been the first to adjudge yourself to be of bad behavior and evil deeds.

I truthfully say that the world has not deceived you but you have had yourself deceived by it. The world had opened to you the curtains and divulged to you (everything) equally. And in all that it foretold you about the troubles befalling your bodies and the decay in your power, it has been too true and faithful in promise, and did not speak a lie to you or deceive you. There are many who advise you about it but they are blamed, and speak the truth about it but they are opposed. If you understand the world by means of dilapidated and far reaching power of drawing lessons you will find it like one who is kind over you and cautious about you. It is good abode

for him who does not like it as an abode, and a good place of stay for him who does not regard it a permanent home for stay.

Only those who run away from this world today will be regarded virtuous tomorrow. When the earthquake occurs, the Day of resurrection approaches with all its severity, the people of every worshipping place cling to it, all the devotees cling to the object of their devotion and all the followers cling to their leader. Then on the day even the opening of an eye in the air and the sound of a footstep on the ground will be assigned its due through His Justice and His Equity. On that day many an argument will prove void and a contention for excuses will stand rejected.

Therefore, you should now adopt for yourself the course with which your excuse may hold good and your plea may be proved. Take from the transient things of this world that which will stay for you (in the next world), provide for your journey, keep (your) gaze on the brightness of deliverance and keep ready the saddles (for setting off).

SERMON 222

About keeping aloof from oppression and misappropriation

AAqil's condition of poverty and destitution

By Allah, I would rather pass a night in wakefulness on the thorns of as-sa'dan (a plant having sharp prickles) or be driven in chains as a prisoner than meet Allah and His Messenger on the Day of Judgment as an oppressor over any person or a usurper of anything out of worldly wealth. And how can I oppress any one for (the sake of a life) that is fast moving towards destruction and is to remain under the earth for a long time.

By Allah, I certainly saw (my brother) AAqil fallen in destitution and he asked me a *saa'* (about three kilograms in weight) out of your (share of) wheat, and I also saw his children with disheveled hair and a dusty countenance due to starvation, as though their faces had been blackened by indigo. He came to me several times and repeated his request to me again and again. I heard him, and he thought I would sell my faith to him and follow his tread leaving my own way. Then I (just) heated a piece of iron and took it near his body so that he might take a lesson from it, then he cried as a person in protracted illness cries with pain and he was about to get burnt with its branding. Then I said to him. AMoaning women may moan over you, O AAqil. Do you cry on account of this (heated) iron which has been made by a man for fun, while you are driving me towards the fire which Allah, the Powerful, has prepared for (a manifestation of) His wrath? Should you cry from pain, but I should not cry from the flames?

A stranger incident than this is that a man came to us in the night with a closed flask full of honey paste but I disliked it as though it was the saliva of a serpent or its vomit. I asked him whether it was a reward, or *zakat* (poor tax) or charity, for these are forbidden to us members of the Prophet's family. AChildless women may weep over you. Have you come to deviate me from the religion of Allah, or are you mad, or have you been overpowered by some jinn, or are you speaking without sense?

By Allah, even if I am given all the domains of the seven (stars) with all that exists under the skies in order that I may disobey Allah to the extent of snatching one grain of barley from an ant I would not do it. For me your world is lighter than the leaf in the mouth of a locust that is chewing it. What has Ali to do with bounties that will pass away and pleasures that will not last? We do seek protection of Allah from the slip of wisdom and the evils of mistakes, and from Him we seek succor.

1. It was al-Ash'ath ibn Qays.

SERMON 223

Supplication

O Lord! preserve (the grace of) my face with easiness of life and do not disgrace my countenance with destitution, lest I may have to beg a livelihood from those who beg from You, try to seek the favor of Your evil creatures, engage myself in praising those who give to me, and be tempted in abusing those who do not give to me, although behind all these thou art the master of giving and denying.

. *Verily You over all things, art the All-powerful.* (Holy Qur'an, 66:8)

SERMON 224

Transience of the world and the helplessness of those in graves

This is a house surrounded by calamities and well-known for deceitfulness. Its conditions do not last and those who inhabit it do not remain safe. Its conditions are variable and its ways changing. Life in it is blameworthy and safety in it is non-existent. Yet its people are targets; it strikes them with its arrows and destroys them through death.

Know, O creatures of Allah, that, certainly, you and all the things of this world that you have are (treading) on the lines of those (who were) before you. They were of longer ages, had more populated houses and were of more lasting traces. Their voices have become silent, their movements have become stationary, their bodies have become rotten, their houses have become empty and their traces have become obliterated. Their magnificent places and spread-out carpets were changed to stones, laid-in-blocks and cave-like dug out graves whose very foundation is based on ruins and whose construction has been made with soil. Their positions are contiguous, but those settled in them are like far-flung strangers. They are among the people of their area but feel lonely, and they are free from work but still engaged (in activity). They feel no attachment with homelands nor do they keep contact among themselves like neighbors despite nearness of neighborhood and priority of abodes. And how can they meet each other when decay has ground them with its chest, and stones and earth have eaten them.

It is as though you too have gone where they have gone, the same sleeping place has caught you and the same place has detained you. What will then be your position when your affairs reach their end and graves are turned upside down (to throw out the dead) ?

There shall every soul realize what it has sent before, and they shall be brought back to Allah, their true Master, and what they did fabricate (the false deities) will vanish (away) from them. (Holy Qur'an, 10:30)

SERMON 225

Supplication

O Lord! You art the most attached to Your lovers and the most ready to assist those who trust in You. You sees them in their concealment, knows whatever is in their consciences, and art aware of the extent of their intelligence. Consequently, their secrets are open to You and their hearts are eager from You. If loneliness bores them, Your remembrance gives them solace. If distresses befall them, they beseech Your protection, because they know that the reins of affairs are in Your hands, and that their movements depend upon Your commands.

O Lord! if I am unable to express my request or cannot see my needs, then guide me towards my betterment and take my heart towards the correct goal. This is not against (the mode of) Your guidance nor anything new against Your ways of support.

O Lord! deal with me through Your forgiveness and do not deal with me according to Your justice.

SERMON 226

About a companion who passed away from this world before the occurrence of troubles

May Allah reward such and such man¹ who straightened the curve, cured the disease, abandoned mischief and established the Sunna. He departed (from this world) with untarnished clothes and little shortcomings. He achieved good (of this world) and remained safe from its evils. He offered Allah's obedience and feared Him as He deserved. He went away and left the people in dividing ways wherein the misled cannot obtain guidance and the guided cannot attain certainty.

1. Ibn Abul-Hadid has written (in *Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 14, pp. 3-4) that the reference here is to The second AOmer, and that these sentences have been uttered in his praise as indicated by the word AOmer written under the word Asuch and such in Sayyid ar-Radhi's own hand in the manuscript of *Nahjul-Balagha* written by him. This is ibn Abul-Hadid's statement, but it is to be seen that if Sayyid ar-Radhi had written the word AOmer by way of explanation it should have existed, as other explanations by him have remained, in those versions which have been copied from his manuscript. Even now there exists in Mosel (Iraq) university the oldest copy of *Nahjul-Balagha* written by the famous calligraphist Yaqut al-Musta'simi; but no one has afforded any clue to this explanation of Sayyid ar-Radhi. Even if the view of ibn Abul-Hadid is accepted it would be deemed to represent the personal opinion of Sayyid ar-Radhi which may serve as a supplementary argument in support of an original argument but this personal view cannot be assigned any regular importance.

It is strange that two and a half centuries after Sayyid ar-Radhi namely in the seventh century after Hijra, Ibn Abul Hadid makes the statement that the reference here is to AOmer and that Sayyid ar-Radhi himself had so indicated, as a result of which some other commentators also followed the same line, but the contemporaries of Sayyid ar-Radhi also wrote about *Nahjul-Balagha* have given no such indication in their writings although as contemporaries they should have had better information about Sayyid ar-Radhi's writing. Thus, 'allama Ali ibn Nasir who was a contemporary of Sayyid ar-Radhi and wrote an annotation of *Nahjul-Balagha* under the name of A'lam *Nahjul-Balagha* writes in connection with this sermon:

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has praised one of his own companions for his good conduct. He had died before the troubles that arose after the death of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah.

This is supported by the annotations of *Nahjul-Balagha* written by 'allama Qutbud-Din ar-Rawandi (d. 573 A.H.). Ibn Abul-Hadid (Vol. 14, p. 4) and ibn Maytham al-Bahrani (in *Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 4, p. 97) have quoted his following view.

By this Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) refers to one of his own companions who died before the mischief and disruption that occurred following the death of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) of Allah.

Al-Allama al-Hajj al-Mirza Habibullah al-Khoei is of the opinion that the person is Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar on the ground that after the assassination of Malik the situation of the Muslim community was such as Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) explains in this sermon.

Al-Khoei adds that:

"Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has praised Malik repeatedly such as in his letter to the people of Egypt sent through Malik when he was made the governor of that place, and like his utterances when the news of Malik's assassination reached him, he said: Malik! who is Malik? If Malik was a stone, he was hard and solid; if he was a rock, he was a great rock which had no parallel. Women have become barren to give birth to such as Malik. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had even expressed in some of his utterances that, Malik was to me as I was to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Therefore, one who possesses such a position certainly deserves such attributes and even beyond that." (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 14, pp. 374-375)

If these words had been about Omer and there was some trustworthiness about it Ibn Abul-Hadid would have recorded the authority or tradition and it would have existed in history and been known among the people. But here nothing is found to prove the statement except a few self-concocted events. Thus about the pronouns in the words Akhayraha and Asharraha he takes them to refer to the caliphate and writes that these words can apply only to one who enjoys power and authority because without authority it is impossible to establish the Sunna or prevent innovation. This is the gist of the argument he has advanced on this occasion; although there is no proof to establish that the antecedent of this pronoun is the caliphate. It can rather refer to the world (when Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) says, He achieved good [of this world] and remained safe from its evils.) and that would be in accord with the context. Again, to regard authority as a condition for the safeguarding of people's interest and the propagation of the Sunna means to close the door to prompting others to good and dissuading them from evil, although Allah has assigned this duty to a group of the people without the condition of authority:

And that there should be among you a group who call (mankind) unto virtue and enjoin what is good and forbid wrong; and these are they who shall be successful. (Holy Qur'an, 3:104)

Similarly it is related from the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) :

So long as people go on prompting for good and dissuading from evil and assisting each other in virtue and piety they will remain in righteousness.

Again, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S), in the course of a will, says in general terms:

Establish the pillars of the Unity of Allah and the Sunna, and keep both these lamps aflame.

In these sayings there is no hint that this obligation cannot be discharged without authority. Facts also tell us that (despite army and force, and power and authority) the rulers and kings could not prevent evil or propagate virtue to the extent to which some unknown godly persons were able to inculcate moral values by imprinting their morality on heart and minds, although they were not backed by any army or force and they did not have any equipment save destitution. No doubt authority and control can bend heads down before it, but it is not necessary that it should also pave the way for virtue in hearts. History shows that most of the rulers destroyed the features of Islam. Islam's existence and progress has been possible by the efforts of those helpless persons who possessed nothing save poverty and discomfiture.

If it is insisted that the reference here should only be to a ruler, then why should it not be taken to mean a companion of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) who had been the head of a Province such as Salman al-Farisi for whose burial Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) went to Mada'in; and it is not implausible that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) might have uttered these

words after his burial by way of comments on his life and way of governance. However, to believe that they are about AOmer is without any proof. In the end, Ibn Abul-Hadid has quoted the following statements of (the historian) al-Tabari in proof of his hypothesis:

It is related from al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah that when AOmer died ibn Abu Hathmah said crying. AO AOmer, you were the man who straightened the curve, removed ills, destroyed mischief, revived the Sunna, remained chaste and departed without entangling in evils. (According to al-Tabari) al-Mughirah related that AWhen AOmer was buried I came to Ali and I wanted to hear something from him about AOmer. So, on my arrival Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) came out in this state that was wrapped in one cloth after bathing and was jerking the hair of his head and beard and he had no doubt that the Caliphate would come to him. On this occasion he said, AMay Allah have mercy on AOmer. Ibn Abu Hathmah has correctly said that he enjoyed the good of the Caliphate and remained safe from its evils. By Allah, she did not say it herself but was made to say so. (al-Tabari, Vol. 1, p. 2763; Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 12, p. 5; Ibn Kathir, Vol. 7, p. 140)

The relater of this event is al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah whose adultery with Umm Jamil, the AOmer's saving him from the penalty despite the evidence, and his openly abusing Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) in Kufa under Mu'awiyah's behest are admitted facts of history. On this ground what weight his statements can carry is quite clear. From the factual point of view also, this story cannot be accepted. Al-Mughirah's statement that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had no doubt about his Caliphate is against the facts. What were the factors from which he made this guess when the actual facts were to the contrary. If the Caliphate was certain for any one, it was AOthman. Thus, at the Consultative Committee AAbd ar-Rahman ibn AAwf said to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) : AO Ali! do not create a situation against yourself for I have observed and consulted the people and they all want AOthman. (al-Tabari, Vol. 1, p. 2786; Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 3, p. 71; Abul-Fida', Vol. 1, p. 166)

Consequently, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was sure not to get the caliphate as has already been stated on the authority of al-Tabari's *Tarikh*, under the "sermon of the Camel's Foam" (ash-Shaqshaqiyya), namely that on seeing the names of the members of the Consultative Committee, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had said to al-AAbbas ibn AAbdul-Muttalib that the caliphate could not be given to anyone except AOthman since all the powers had been given to AAbd ar-Rahman ibn AAwf and he was AOthman's brother-in-law (sister's husband) and Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas was a relative and tribesman of AAbd ar-Rahman. These two would join in giving the caliphate to him.

At this stage, the question arises as to what the reason was that actuated al-Mughirah to prompt Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) to say something about AOmer. If he knew that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had good ideas about AOmer, he should have also known his impression. But if he thought that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) did not entertain good ideas about him then the purpose of his asking Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) would be none other than that whatever he may say he would, by exposing it, create an atmosphere against him and make the members of the Consultative Committee suspicious of him. The views of the members of the Consultative Committee are well understood from the very fact that by putting the condition of following the conduct of the first two Caliphs in electing the caliph they had shown their adherence to them. In these circumstances when al-Mughirah tried to play this trick Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said just by way of relating a fact that AOmer achieved the good (of this world) and remained safe

from its evil. This sentence has no connection with praise or eulogy. AOmer did in his days enjoy all kinds of advantages while his period was free from the mischief that cropped up later. After recording this statement ibn Abul-Hadid writes:

From this event the belief gains strength that in this utterance the allusion is towards AOmer.

If the utterance means the word uttered by ibn Abu Hathmah about which Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has said that they are not her own heart's voice but she was made to utter them, then doubtlessly the reference is to AOmer, but the view that these words were uttered by Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) in praise of AOmer is not at all established. Rather, from this tradition it is evidently shown that these words were uttered by ibn Abu Hathmah. Allah alone knows on what ground the words of ibn Abu Hathmah are quoted and then it is daringly argued that these words were uttered by Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) about AOmer. It seems Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) had uttered these words about someone on some occasion, then ibn Abu Hathmah used similar words on AOmer's death and then even Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's words were taken to be in praise of AOmer. Otherwise, no mind except a mad one can argue that the words uttered by ibn Abu Hathmah should be deemed a ground to hold that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said these words in praise of AOmer. Can it be expected, after (a glance at) the sermon of the Camel's Foam, that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) might have uttered these words. Again, it is worth consideration that if these words had been uttered by Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) on AOmer's death, then at the Consultative Committee when he refused to follow the conduct of the (first) two Caliphs it should have been said to him that only the other day he has said that AOmer had established the Sunna and banished innovations, so that when his conduct was in accord with the Sunna what was the sense in accepting the Sunna but refusing to follow his conduct.

SERMON 227

(About allegiance to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) for the Caliphate.

A similar sermon in somewhat different version has already appeared earlier.)

You drew out my hand towards you for allegiance but I held it back and you stretched it but I contracted it. Then you crowded over me as the thirsty camels crowd on the watering cisterns on their being taken there, so much so that shoes were torn, shoulder-cloths fell away and the weak got trampled. And the happiness of people on their allegiance to me was so manifested that small children felt joyful, the old staggered (up to me) for it, the sick too reached for it helter skelter and young girls ran for it without veils.

SERMON 228

Advice about fear of Allah, and an account of those who remain apprehensive of death and adopt abstemiousness

Certainly, fear of Allah is the key to guidance, provision for the next world, freedom from every kind of slavery and deliverance from all ruin. With its help the seeker succeeds and he who makes for safety escapes and achieves his aims.

Perform (good) acts while such acts are being raised (in value), repentance can be of benefit, prayer can be heard, conditions are peaceful and the pens (of the two angels) are in motion (to record the actions). Hasten towards (virtuous) actions before the change of age (to oldness) or lingering illness or snatching death (overtakes you). Certainly, death will end your enjoyments, mar your pleasures and remove your objectives. It is an unwanted visitor, an invincible adversary

and a miscalculating killer. Its ropes have entrapped you, its evils have surrounded you, its arrowheads have aimed at you, its sway over you is great, its oppression on you is continuous and the chance of its missing you is remote.

Very soon you will be overwhelmed with the gloom of its shades, The severity of its illness, the darkness of its distresses, the nonsense utterances of its pangs, the grief of its destruction, the darkness of its encompassment and the unwholesomeness of its taste. It will seem as if it has come to you all of a sudden, silenced those who were whispering to you, separated your group, destroyed your doings, devastated your houses and altered your successors to distribute your estate among the chief relatives, who did not give you any benefit, or the grieved near ones who could not protect (you), or those rejoicing who did not lament (you).

Therefore, it is upon you to strive, make effort, equip yourself, get ready and provide yourself from the place of provision. And let not the life of this world deceive you as it deceived those before you among the past people and by-gone periods - those who extracted its milk, benefited from its neglectfulness, passed a long time and turned its new things into old (by living long). Their abodes turned into graves and their wealth into inheritable estate. They do not know who came to them (at their graves) ; do not pay heed to those who weep over them, and do not respond to those who call them. Therefore, beware of this world as it is treacherous, deceitful and cheating, it gives and takes back, covers with clothes and uncovers. Its pleasure does not last, its hardship does not end and its calamity does not stop.

Part of the same sermon about ascetics

They are from among the people of this world but are not its people, because they remain in it as though they do not belong to it. They act herein on what they observe and hasten here in (to avoid) what they fear. Their bodies move among the people of the next world. They see that the people of this world attach importance to the death of their bodies but they themselves attach more importance to the death of the hearts of those who are living.

SERMON 229

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) delivered this sermon at Thi-Qar on his way to Basra, and the historian al-Waqidi has mentioned it (in Kitab al-Jamal).

About the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household)

The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) manifested whatever he was commanded and conveyed the message of his Master. Consequently, Allah repaired through him the cracks, joined through him the slits and created (through him) affection among kin although they bore intense enmity in (their) chests and deep-seated rancor in (their) hearts.

SERMON 230

Abdullah ibn Zama'ah who was one of the followers of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) came to him during his Caliphate to ask for some money when Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

This money is not for me nor for you, but it is the collective property of the Muslims and the acquisition of their swords. If you had taken part with them in their fighting you would have a share equal to theirs, otherwise the earning of their hands cannot be for other than their mouths.

SERMON 231

On Ja'dah ibn Hubayrah al-Makhzumi's¹ inability to deliver a sermon.

About speaking the truth

Know that the tongue is a part of a man's body. If the man desists, speech will not cooperate with him and when he dilates, speech will not give him time to sto, p. Certainly, we are the masters of speaking. Its veins are fixed in us and its branches are hanging over us.

Know that - may Allah have mercy on you - you are living at a time when those who speak about right are few, when tongues are loath to utter the truth and those who stick to the right are humiliated. The people of this time are engaged in disobedience. Their youths are wicked, their old men are sinful, their learned men are hypocrites, and their speakers are sycophants. Their young do not respect their elders, and their rich men do not support the destitute.

1. Once Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) asked his nephew (sister's son) Ja'dah ibn Hubayrah al-Makhzumi to deliver a sermon, but when he rose for speaking his tongue faltered and he could utter nothing, whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) ascended the pulpit to speak and delivered a long sermon out of which a few sentences have been recorded here by Sayyid ar-Radhi.

SERMON 232

Causes for difference in the features and traits of people.

Dhi'lib al-Yamami has related from Ahmed ibn Qutaybah, and he from AAbdullah ibn Yazid and he from Malik ibn Dihyah who said, AWe were with Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) when discussion arose about the differences of men (in features and conduct) and Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said:

They differ among themselves because of the sources¹ of their clay (from which they have been created). This is because they are either from salty soil or sweet soil or from rugged earth or soft earth. They resemble each other on the basis of the affinity of their soil and differ according to its difference. Therefore, sometimes a person of handsome features is weak in intelligence, a tall statured person is of low courage, a virtuous person is ugly in appearance, a short statured person is far-sighted, a good-natured person has an evil trait, a person of perplexed heart has bewildering mind and a sharp-tongued person has a wakeful heart.

1. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has ascribed the differences in features and characters of people to the differences in the clay from which they are created and according to which their features are shaped and the skeletons of their characters are formed. Therefore, to the extent that their clay of origin is akin, their mental and imaginative tendencies too will be similar and to the extent by which they differ, there will be a difference in their inclinations and tendencies. By origins of a thing are meant those things on which its coming into existence depends, but they should not be its cause. The word Atin is the plural of Atinah which means origin or basis. Here Atinah means semen which after passing through various stages of development emerges in the human shape. Its origin means those constituents from which those items are created which help in the formation of semen. Thus, by salty, sweet, soft or hard soil the reference is to these elementary constituents. Since those elementary constituents carry different properties These men growing out of them will also bear different characteristics and propensities which will (eventually) show forth in the differences in features and conduct of those borne in it.

Ibn Abul-Hadid has written (in *Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 13, p. 19) that Aorigins of tinah implies those preservative factors which are different in their properties as Plato and other

philosophers have held. The reason for calling them Aorigins of tinah is that they serve as an asylum for the human body and prevent the elements from diffusion. Just as the existence of a thing hinges on its basis, in the same way the existence of this body which is made up of elements depends on preservative factors. So long as the preservative factor exists the body is also safe from disruption and disintegration and the elements too are immune to diffusion and dispersal. When it leaves the body the elements also get dispersed.

According to this explanation Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's words would mean that Allah has created different original factors among whom some are vicious and some are virtuous, some are weak and some are strong, and every person will act according to his original factor. If there is similarity in the inclinations of two persons it is because their original factor are similar, and if their tendencies differ it is because their original factors do not have any similarity. But this conclusion is not correct because Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's words do not only refer to differences in conduct and behavior but also of features and shape and the differences of features and shape cannot be the result of differences in original factors.

In any case, whether the original factors are the cause of differences in features and conduct or the elementary constituents are the cause, these words appear to lead to the negation or volition and to prove the compulsion (of destiny) in human actions, because if man's capacity for thinking and acting is dependent on Atinah then he would be compelled to behave himself in a fixed way on account of which he would neither deserve praise for good acts nor be held blame worthy for bad habits. But this hypothesis is incorrect because it is well established that just as Allah knows everything in creation after its coming into being, in the same way He knew it before its creation. Thus, He knew what actions man would perform of his free will and what he could leave. Therefore, Allah gave him capacity to act according to his free will, and created him from a suitable Atinah. This *tinah* is not the cause of his actions so as to snatch away from him his free will but the meaning of creating from suitable *tinah* is that Allah does not by force stand in man's way but allows him to tread the path he wants to tread of his own free will.

SERMON 233

Spoken when Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) was busy in the funeral ablution (ghusl) of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and shrouding him

May my parents be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of Allah! With your death, the process of prophethood, revelation and heavenly messages has stopped, which had not stopped at the death of others (prophets). Your position with us (members of your family) is so special that your grief has become a source of consolation (to us) as against the grief of all others; your grief is also common so that all Muslims share it equally. If you had not ordered endurance and prevented us from bewailing, we would have produced a store of tears and even then the pain would not have subsided, and this grief would not have ended, and they would have been too little of our grief for you. But this (death) is a matter that cannot be reversed nor is it possible to repulse it. May my father and my mother die for you; do remember us with Allah and take care of us.

SERMON 234

In¹ this sermon, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) has related his own condition after the Prophet's immigration till his meeting with him.

I began following the path adopted by the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and treading on the lines of his remembrance till I reached al-AArj.

Sayyid ar-Radhi says the following: Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's words Afaata'u dhikrahu constitute the highest forms of brevity and eloquence. He means to say that he was being given news about the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) from the commencement of his setting out till he reached this place, and he has expressed this sense in this wonderful expression.

1. Since the commencement of prophethood, the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) remained in Mecca for thirteen years. For him, this period was of Theseverest oppression and destitution. The unbelievers of the Quraish had closed all the doors of livelihood upon him, and had left no deficiency in inflicting hardships upon him, so much so that in order to take his life they began contriving how to do away with him. Forty of their nobles assembled in the hall of audience (Dar an-Nadwa) for consultation, and decided that one individual should be picked out from every tribe and they should jointly attack him. In this way, Banu Hashim would not dare to face all the tribes, and the matter would quiet down on the payment of blood price. To give a practical shape to this scheme, these people sat in ambush near the house of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) on the night of the first of Rabi'al-Awwal, so that when the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) slept in his bed he would be attacked. On this side the preparation for killing him was complete, and on the other side Allah informed him of all the intrigues of the Quraish unbelievers and commanded him to make Ali (A.S) sleep on his bed and himself to immigrate to Medina. The Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) sent for Ali (A.S) and disclosing to him his plan, said: Ali (A.S) , you lie on my bed. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) enquired: AO Messenger of Allah, will your life be saved by my sleeping here? the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) said: AYes. Hearing this Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) performed a prostration in thanks-giving and, exposing himself fully to the danger, lay on the Prophet's bed while the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) left from therear door. The Quraish unbelievers were peeping and getting ready for the attack but Abu Lahab said: AIt is not proper to attack in the night because there are women and children also in the house. When morning dawns you attack him, but keep watch during night that he should not move anywhere. Consequently, they kept their eyes on the bed throughout the night and soon, on the appearance of the dawn, proceeded forward stealthily. Hearing the sound of their footsteps, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) removed the covering from his face and stood u, p. The Quraish gazed at him with stretched eyes as to whether it was an illusion or fact. After making sure that it was Ali they inquired, AWhere is Muhammed (P.B.U.H. and His Holy Household) ? and Ali replied, ADid you entrust him to me, that now you are asking me? They had no reply to this. Men ran to chase him but found footprints only up to the cave [of Hira'] in the mountain of Thawr. Beyond that there were neither footprints nor any sign of hiding in the cave. They came back bewildered while the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) after staying in the cave for three days left for Medina. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) passed these three days in Mecca, returned to the people their properties lying in trust with the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and set off towards Medina to join the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) . Upto al-AArj which is a place between Mecca and Medina, he kept getting news about the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) and he continued his anxious march in his search till he met the Prophet (P.B.U.H. and His Household) at Quba on the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal, and entered Medina with him. (al-Tabari, Tafsir, Vol. 9, pp. 148-151; *Tarikh*, Vol. 1, pp. 1232-1234; ibn Sa'd, *Al-Tabaqat*, Vol. 1, Part. 1, pp. 153-154; ibn Hisham, *as-Sira*, Vol. 2, pp. 124-128; Ibn al-Athir, *Usd al-Ghabah*,

Vol. 4, p. 25; *Al-Kamil*, Vol. 2, pp. 101-104; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, Vol. 2, pp. 302-303; *Tarikh*, Vol. 3, pp. 180-181; Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 13, pp. 303-306; al-Sayyuti, *Al-Durr al-Manthur*, Vol. 3, pp. 179-180; 'allama al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 19, pp. 28-103).

SERMON 235

About collecting provision for the next world while in this world
and performing good acts before death

Perform (good) acts while you are still in the vastness of life, the books are open (for recording of actions), repentance is allowed, the runner away (from Allah) is being called and the sinner is being given hope (of forgiveness) before the (light of) action is put off, time expires, life ends, the door for repentance is closed and angels ascend to the sky.

Therefore, a man should derive benefit from himself for himself, from the living for the dead, from the mortal, for the lasting and from the departer for the stayer. A man should fear Allah while he is given age to live up to his death, and is allowed time to act. A man should control his self by therein and hold it with its bridle, thus by therein he should prevent it from disobedience towards Allah, and by the bridle he should lead it towards obedience to Allah.

SERMON 236

About the two arbitrators (Abu Musa al-Ash'ari and AAmr ibn al-As) and disparagement of the people of Syria.

Rude, low people and mean slaves! They have been collected from all sides and picked up from every pack. They need to be taught the tenets (of Islam), disciplined, instructed, trained, supervised and led by the hand. They are neither Muhajirun (immigrants from Mecca), nor Ansar (helpers of Medina) nor those who made their dwellings in the abode (in Medina) and in belief.

Look! They have chosen for themselves one who is nearest of all of them to what they desire, while you have chosen one who is nearest to what you dislike. You may certainly recall that the other day AAbdullah ibn Qays (Abu Musa) was saying: AIt is a mischief, therefore, cut away your bow-string and sheathe your swords. If he was right (in what he said) then he was wrong in marching (with us) without being forced, but if he was lying then he should be viewed with suspicion. Therefore, send AAbdullah ibn AAbbas to face AAmr ibn al-As. Make use of these days and surround the borders of Islam. Do you not see that your cities are being attacked and your prowess is being aimed at?

SERMON 237

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) describes herein the members of the Prophet's family

They are life for knowledge and death for ignorance. Their forbearance tells you of their knowledge, and their silence of the wisdom of their speaking. They do not go against right nor do they differ (among themselves) about it. They are the pillars of Islam and the asylums of (its) protection. With them right has returned to its position and wrong has left its place and its tongue is severed from its root. They have understood thereligion attentively and carefully, not by mere heresy or from relaters, because therelaters of knowledge are many but those who understand are few.

SERMON 238

When AOthman ibn AAffan was surrounded, AAbdullah ibn AAbbas brought a letter to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) from AOthman in which he expressed the desire that Imam Ali (A.S) ibn Abu Talib (A.S) should leave for his estate, Yanbu', so that the proposal that was being mooted out for him to become caliph should subside. AOthman had this request earlier also. Upon this Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (A.S) said to ibn Abbas:

O Ibn Abbas! AOthman just wants to treat me like the water-drawing camel so that I may go forward and backward with the basket. Once he sent word that I should go out then sent me word that I should come back. Now, again he sends me word that I should go out. By Allah, I continued protecting him till I feared lest I become a sinner.

SERMON 239

Exhorting his men to jihad and asking them to refrain from seeking ease

Allah seeks you to thank Him and assigns to you His affairs. He has allowed time in the limited field (of life) so that you may vie with each other in seeking the reward (of Paradise). Therefore, tighten your girdles and wrap up the skirts. High courage and dinners do not go together. Sleep causes weakness in the big affairs of the day and (its) darkness obliterates the memories of courage.