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Letter 5: To al-Ash'ath ibn Qays (al-Kindi), the Governor of Azarbaijan

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام)

إلى الأشعث بن قيس عامل أذربيجان

Certainly, your assignment 1 is not a morsel for you, but it is a trust round your neck, and you have been charged with the protection (of the people) on behalf of your superiors. It is not for you to be oppressive towards the ruled, nor to risk yourself save on strong grounds. You have in your hands the funds which are the property of Allah, to Whom belongs Might and Majesty, and you hold its charge till you pass it on to me. Probably, I will not be one of the bad rulers for you, and that is an end to the matter.

وَإِنَّ عَمَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَكَ بِطُعْمَةٍ، وَلَكِنَّهُ فِي عُنُقِكَ أَمَانَةٌ، وَأَنْتَ مُسْتَرْعَى لِمَنْ فَوْقَكَ،
لَيْسَ لَكَ أَنْ تَفْتَاتَ فِي رَعِيَّةٍ، وَلَا تُخَاطِرَ إِلَّا بِوَثِيقَةٍ، وَفِي يَدَيْكَ مَالٌ مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ
عَزَّوَجَلَّ، وَأَنْتَ مِنْ خُزَّانِهِ حَتَّى تُسَلِّمَهُ إِلَيَّ، وَلَعَلِّي أَلَّا أَكُونَ شَرًّا وَلَاتِكَ لَكَ،
وَالسَّلَامُ.

1. When Amir al-mu'minin was free from the battle of Jamal he wrote to al-Ash'ath ibn Qays (al-Kindi) who had been the Governor of Azarbaijan from the days of `Uthman, to send the revenue and levies of his province. But since he had fears about the future of his position and assignment, he intended to swallow all this money like other officers of `Uthman.

Therefore, when this letter reached him he sent for his chief associates and after mentioning this letter to them said: "I fear that this money will be taken away from me; I therefore intend to join Mu`awiyah." Whereupon those people said that it was a matter of shame to leave kith and kin and seek refuge with Mu'awiyah. Consequently, on the advice of these people he postponed his idea to run away but did not agree to part with the money. On getting this information Amir al-mu'minin sent Hujr ibn `Adi al-Kindi to bring him to Kufah. He persuaded him and brought him to Kufah. On reaching there his kit was found to contain four hundred thousand Dirhams out of which Amir al-mu'minin left thirty thousand for him and deposited the rest in the public treasury.

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