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Letter 65: To Mu`awiyah

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام)

إليه أيضاً

Now, this is the time 1 that you should derive benefit by observing a clear view of the main matters, because you have been treading in the path of your forefathers in making wrong claims, spreading false and untrue notions, claiming for yourself what is far above you and demanding what is not meant for you, because you want to run away from right and to revolt against what is more fastened to your flesh and blood namely what has been heard by the depth of your ears and has filled your chest. And after forsaking right there remains nothing except clear misguidance, and after disregarding a (clear) statement there is nothing except confusion. You should therefore guard (yourself) against doubts and its ill-effects of confusion, because for a long time mischief has spread its veils and its gloom has blinded your eyes.

أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَقَدْ آنَ لَكَ أَنْ تَنْتَفِعَ بِاللَّمْحِ الْبَاصِرِ مِنْ عِيَانِ الاْمُورِ، فَقَدْ سَلَكْتَ مَدَارِجَ أَسْلاَفِكَ بِادِّعَائِكَ الاْبَاطِيلَ، وَإِقْحَامِكَ غُرُورَ الْمَيْنِ وَالاْكَاذِيبِ، وَبِانْتِحَالِكَ مَا قَدْ عَلاَ عَنْكَ، وَابْتِزَازِكَ لِمَا قَدِ اخْتُزِنَ دُونَكَ، فِرَاراً مِنَ الْحَقِّ، وَجُحُوداً لِمَا هُوَ أَلْزَمُ لَكَ مِنْ لَحْمِكَ وَدَمِكَ، مِمَّا قَدْ وَعَاهُ سَمْعُكَ، وَمُلِىءَ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ، فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ إِلاَّ الضَّلاَلُ، وَبَعْدَ الْبَيَانِ إِلاَّ اللَّبْسُ؟ فَاحْذَرِ الشُّبْهَةَ وَاشْتِمالَهَا عَلَى لَبْسَتِهَا، فَإِنَّ الْفِتْنَةَ طَالَمَا أَغْدَفَتْ جَلاَبِيبَهَا، وَأَغْشَتِ الاْبْصَارَ ظُلْمَتُهَا.

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

وَقدْ أَتَانِي كِتَابٌ مِنْكَ ذُو أَفانِينَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ضَعُفَتْ قُوَاهَا عَنِ السِّلْمِ، وَأَسَاطِيرَ لَمْ يَحُكْهَا مِنْكَ عِلْمٌ وَلاَ حِلْمٌ، أَصْبَحْتَ مِنْهَا كَالْخَائِضِ فِي الدَّهَاسِ، وَالخَابِطِ فِي الدِّيمَاسِ، وَتَرَقَّيْتَ إِلَى مَرْقَبَةٍ بَعِيدَةِ الْمَرَامِ، نَازِحَةِ الأَعْلاَمِ، تَقْصُرُ دوُنَهَا الأَنُوقُ، وَيُحَاذَى بِهَا الْعَيُّوقُ.

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

وَحَاشَ لله أَنْ تَلِيَ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ بَعْدِي صَدْراً أَوْ وِرْداً، أَوْ أُجْرِيَ لَكَ عَلَى أَحَد مِنْهُمْ عَقْداً أَوْ عَهْداً!! فَمِنَ الآنَ فَتَدَارَكْ نَفْسَكَ، وَانْظُرْ لَهَا، فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ فَرَّطْتَ حَتَّى يَنْهَدَ إِلَيْكَ عِبَادُ اللهِ أُرْتِجَتْ عَلَيْكَ الأُمُورُ،مُنِعْتَ أَمْراً هُوَ مِنْكَ الْيَوْمَ مَقْبُولٌ.

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

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