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Letter 78: To Abu Musa al-Ash`ari

To Abu Musa al-Ash`ari in reply to his letter regarding the two arbitrators. Sa`id ibn Yahya al-Umawi has mentioned this in his "Kitab al-maghazi"

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام)

إلى أبي موسى الاشعري جواباً في أمر الحكمين

ذكره سعيد بن يحيى الاموي في كتاب المغازي

Certainly, many people have turned away from many a (lasting) benefit (of the next life), for they bent towards the world and spoke with passions. I have been struck with wonder in this matter, upon which people who are self-conceited have agreed. I am providing a cure for their wound but I fear lest it develops into a clot of blood (and becomes incurable). Remember that no person is more covetous than I for the unity of the ummah of Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his descendants) and their solidarity. I seek through it good reward and an honourable place to return to.

فَإِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ تَغَيَّرَ كَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ كَثِير مِنْ حَظِّهِمْ، فَمَالُوا مَعَ الدُّنْيَا، وَنَطَقُوا بِالْهَوى، وَإِنِّي نَزَلْتُ مِنْ هذَا الاْمْرِ مَنْزِلاً مُعْجِباً، اجْتَمَعَ بِهِ أَقْوَامٌ أَعْجَبَتْهُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ، فإِنِّي أُدَاوِي مِنْهُمْ قَرْحاً أَخَافُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَلَقاً.

وَلَيْسَ رَجُلٌ ـ فَاعْلَمْ ـ أَحْرَصَ عَلَى جَمَاعَةِ أُمَّةِ مُحَمَّد ـ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ ـ وَأُلْفَتِهَا مِنِّي، أَبْتَغِي بِذلِكَ حُسْنَ الثَّوَابِ، وَكَرَمَ الْمَآبِ.

I shall fulfil what I have pledged upon myself even though you may go back from the sound position that existed when you left me last, because wretched is he who is denied the benefit of wisdom and experience. I feel enraged if anyone speaks wrong, or if I should worsen a matter which Allah has kept sound. Therefore, leave out what you do not understand, because wicked people will be conveying to you vicious things; and that is an end to the matter.

وَسَأَفِي بِالَّذِي وَأَيْتُ عَلَى نَفْسِي، وَإِنْ تَغَيَّرْتَ عَنْ صَالِحِ مَا فَارَقْتَنِي عَلَيْهِ، فَإِنَّ الشَّقِيَّ مَنْ حُرِمَ نَفْعَ مَا أُوتِيَ مِنَ الْعَقْلِ وَالتَّجْرِبَةِ، وَإِنِّي لاَعْبَدُ أَنْ يَقُولَ قَائِلٌ بِبَاطِلِ،أَنْ أُفْسِدَ أَمْراً قَدْ أَصْلَحَهُ اللهُ، فَدَعْ مَا لاَ تَعْرِفُ، فَإِنَّ شِرَارَ النَّاسِ طَائِرُونَ إِلَيْكَ بِأَقَاوِيلِ السُّوءِ، وَالسَّلاَمُ.

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