

ومن خطبة له (عليه السلام) في الموعظة وبيان قرباه من رسول الله

Warning to neglectful people, and about the vastness of his own knowledge

أَيُّهَا الْغَافِلُونَ غَيْرِ الْمَغْفُولِ عَنْهُمْ، وَالتَّارِكُونَ الْمَأْخُودَ مِنْهُمْ، مَالِي أَرَاكُمْ عَنِ اللَّهِ ذَاهِبِينَ، وَإِلَيَّ غَيْرِهِ رَاجِعِينَ! كَذَّبَكُمْ نَعَمَ أَرَا حَ بِهَا سَائِمٌ إِلَيَّ مَرَعَى وَيِي، وَمَشْرَبٌ دَوِي، وَإِنَّمَا هِيَ كَالْمَعْلُوفَةِ لِلْمَدَى لَا تَعْرِفُ مَاذَا يَرَادُ بِهَا! إِذَا أَحْسَنَ إِلَيْهَا تَحَسَّبَ يَوْمَهَا دَهْرَهَا، وَشَبِعَهَا أَمْرَهَا

O people who are (negligent of Allāh but) not neglected (by Allāh), and those who miss (doing good acts) but are to be caught. How is it that I see you becoming removed from Allāh 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.

وَاللَّهِ لَوْ شِئْتُ أَنْ أَخْبِرَ كُلَّ رَجُلٍ مِنْكُمْ بِمَخْرَجِهِ وَمَوَلَجِهِ وَجَمِيعِ شَأْنِهِ لَفَعَلْتُ. وَلَكِنْ أَخَافُ أَنْ تَكْفُرُوا فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ). أَلَا وَإِنِّي مَفْضِيهِ إِلَى الْخَاصَّةِ مِمَّنْ يُؤْمِنُ ذَلِكَ مِنْهُ. وَالَّذِي بَعَثَهُ بِالْحَقِّ، وَإِصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيَّ الْخَلْقِ، مَا أَنْطَقَ إِلَّا صَادِقًا، وَقَدْ عَهْدَ إِلَيَّ بِذَلِكَ كُلَّهُ، وَبِمَهْلِكٍ مِنْ يَهْلِكُ، وَمَنْجَى مَنْ يَنْجُو، وَمَالَ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ، وَمَا أَبْقَى شَيْئًا يَمُرُّ عَلَى رَأْسِي إِلَّا أَفْرَغَهُ فِي أَذْنِي وَأَفْضَى بِهِ إِلَيَّ.

By Allāh, 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 Allāh - peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him and his progeny - in my favour. I shall certainly convey these things to the selected ones who will remain safe from that fear. By Allāh, Who deputed the Prophet with Right and distinguished him over creation. I do not speak save the truth. He (the Prophet) 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 with-out putting it in my ear and telling me about it. [1]

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنِّي، وَاللَّهِ، مَا أَحْثُكُمْ عَلَى طَاعَةِ إِلَّا وَأَسْبِقُكُمْ إِلَيْهَا، وَلَا أَنَهَا كُمْ عَنْ مَعْصِيَةِ إِلَّا وَأَتَنَاهَى قَبْلَكُمْ عَنْهَا.

O people! By Allāh, I do not impel you to any obedience unless I practise it before you and do not restrain you from any disobedience unless I desist from it before you.

Footnote :

[1] Those who drink from the springs of revelation and 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 Allāh that : “Say: ‘None (either) in the heavens or in the earth knoweth the unseen save Allāh’ . . .” (Qur’ān, 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 divine inspiration, by virtue of which they make prophesies about the future and unveil many events and happenings. Several verses of the Qur’ān support this view such as :

“When the Prophet confided unto one of his wives a matter, but when she divulged it (unto others) and Allāh apprised him thereof, he made known a part of it and avoided a part; so when he informed her of it, said she: ‘Who informed thee of this?’ He said: ‘Informed me, the All-knowing, the All-aware’.” (Qur’ān, 66:3)

“These are of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal unto thee (O Our Prophet Muḥammad) . . .” (Qur’ān, 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 Allāh has personal knowledge of the unknown. When it is not so and the knowledge possessed by the Prophets and Imāms is that given by Allāh it has no connection with duality. If duality should mean what is alleged, what would be the position of ‘Īsā’s (Jesus’s) assertion related in the Qur’ān 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 Allāh’s permission; and I shall heal the blind and the leper and will rise the dead to life by Allāh’s permission; and I will declare to you what ye eat and what ye store up in your houses . . .” (Qur’ān, 3 :49)

If it is believed that ‘Īsā (Jesus) could create and bestow life with Allāh’s permission does it mean that he was Allāh’s partner in the attributes of creation and revival? If this is not so then how can it be held that if Allāh 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 Allāh 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 the senses 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-Bahrānī 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 centre of knowledge can see those realities and secrets which the ordinary eyes are unable to discern. Therefore, keeping in view the spiritual greatness of Ahlu'l-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 Khaldūn 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 Allāh had for their noble root (namely the Prophet) is a proof of the high performances of his chaste off shoots (Ahlu'l-bayt). Consequently many events about knowledge of the unknown are related about Ahlu'l-bayt which are not related about others.. (al-Mugaddamah, p. 23).

In this way there is no cause for wonder over Amīr al-mu'minīn's claim since he was brought up by the Prophet and was a pupil of Allāh'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 divine cognizance and reality. If this kind of claim were unique and were heard only from Amīr al-mu'minīn then minds could have wavered and temperaments could have hesitated in accepting it, but if the Qur'ān records even such a claim of 'Īsā (Jesus) that — "I can tell you what you eat or drink or store in your houses," then why should there be hesitation over Amīr al-mu'minīn's claim, when it is agreed that Amīr al-mu'minīn had succeeded to all the attainments and distinctions of the Prophet and it cannot be contended that the Prophet did not know what 'Īsā (Jesus) knew. Thus, if the successor of the Prophet advances such a claim, why should it be rejected, particularly as this vastness of knowledge of Amīr al-mu'minīn 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 Amīr al-mu'minīn did not, through any of his words or deeds, indicate that he knew them.

Thus, commenting on the extraordinary importance of this claim, as-Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs writes:

An amazing aspect of this claim is that despite the fact that Amīr al-mu'minīn was aware of conditions and events, yet he observed such conduct by way of his words and deeds that one who saw him could not believe that he knew the secrets 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 Amīr al-mu'minīn did not act upon the dictates of his secret knowledge. The reply to this is that the commands of the sharī'ah are based on apparent conditions. Otherwise secret knowledge is a kind of miracle and power which Allāh grants to His prophets and Imāms. Although the prophets and Imāms possess this power always, they cannot make use of it at any time unless and until by the permission of Allāh and on the proper occasion. For example, the verse quoted above about 'Īsā (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 practise this power on every thing or every corpse or everyone who met him. He used to practise this power only by the permission of Allāh and on the proper occasion.

If prophets and other 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 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 Allāh 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 extended to them the treatment that should be extended to a Muslim.

Now, there can be no scope for the objection that if Amīr al-mu'minīn 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 the requirements 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, Imām Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) informed Yaḥyā ibn Zayd that if he went out he would be killed. Ibn Khaldūn writes in this connection :

It has been authentically related from Imām Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣādiq that he used to apprise some of his relations of the events to befall them. For example, he warned his cousin Yaḥyā ibn Zayd of being killed but he disobeyed him and went out and was killed in Jūzajān. (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 Amīr al-mu‘minīn avoided more details, in view of the fear that people would begin to regard him higher than the Prophet. Despite all this people did go astray about ‘Īsā (Jesus), and in the same way about Amīr al-mu‘minīn also they began to say all sorts of things and were misled into resorting to exaggeration.