

His Excellency, Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī's Message to the
5th Annual Conference of the Muslim Congress of America

*I seek refuge from the accursed Shayṭān.
In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.*

All praise belongs to God, Lord of all the worlds. Blessings and Peace be upon all the prophets and messengers—especially their Seal and their Exceller, Muḥammad; and his Immaculate Family, the Good and Noble ones—especially the Remnant of Allah in the worlds [Imām Mahdī]. We associate ourselves to them and disclaim their enemies in God's presence.

On the birth anniversary of the chief of the trustees and of the friends of God, Amīr al-Mu'minīn [leader of the faithful], the master of the monotheists, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (upon whom be the best benedictions of the devotees) we send our felicitations to the Remnant of Allah [Imām Mahdī] (may the souls of all those apart from him be sacrificed for him), and to all those attached to the Qur'ān and the Family [of the Prophet], and to you noble guests. We beseech God, the All-Sacred to grant all of you—in particular the conveners of this important symposium—prosperity and pre-eminence in this world and the next, and that the example and tradition of the master of the monotheists, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (the peace of God be upon him) becomes the model for all people, especially you noble [guests].

'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (upon whom be the best benedictions of the devotees), according to the luminous statement of the Seal of the prophets (upon whom and his Progeny be countless felicitations and praise), was the possessor of the "Jawāmi' al-Kalim" [the Comprehensive Words], as the Prophet said with regards to Imām 'Alī (peace be upon both of them):

اعطيتُ جوامع الكلم و أعطيتُ علي جوامع الكلم^١

I have been given the Comprehensive Words by God, and He also gave
you 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib the Comprehensive Words.

The Comprehensive Words are those sublime and supernal teachings that take into consideration and explain the following: first, the responsibilities of the individual and society; second, the responsibilities with respect to this world and the afterlife; third, the responsibilities of the government and the people; fourth, local, regional, and global relations; and finally, the responsibilities pertaining to both the terrestrial and angelic realms. A one-dimensional human being sees only the world, or only the responsibilities pertaining to the individual, and if he should perchance speak of something "comprehensive", he means by it something that is conventional and his thought dwells within a purely material synthesis. A man who sees death to be a

^١. الطراط المستقيم، ج ١، ص ١٦٨.

mortification and not a morphosis—such a person cannot even take into account the intermediary prospect of man, that is purgatory, let alone the long-term destiny that is eternal life. Someone who possesses the Comprehensive Words, someone like ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (the peace of God be upon him), takes into account the short-term plan—that is the worldly responsibilities—does not ignore the intermediary prospect—that is the purgatory—and gives consideration to the long-term destiny—that is man’s eternal after-life. Such a man as possesses the Comprehensive Divine Word guides us towards all of these facets. One of the most important instructions of Amīr al-Mu’minīn is that we should determine this Way by the very provisions provided by God; that is to say, if we live in the world, then we must envision and manage the world in accordance with the commands of the Creator of the world—this is [true] God-wariness (*taqwā*). With regards to government, Amīr al-Mu’minīn himself said: “O God! You well know that I did not desire governance for the sake of territorial expansion or statecraft and I did not go after such things. Rather, I accepted this governing post only so that I could invite the people towards intellectuality and justice.” The most important mandate of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his sublime plan was that which he outlined in his famous letter to Mālīk Ashtar. He wrote the following words to Mālīk Ashtar:

فَإِنَّ هَذَا الدِّينَ قَدْ كَانَ أُسِيرًا فِي أَيْدِي الْأَشْرَارِ يُعْمَلُ فِيهِ بِالْهَوَى وَتُطَلَّبُ بِهِ الدُّنْيَا^٢

O Mālīk! Surely this religion had been held hostage by evil people who would employ in it their whims and who would seek by it the world.”

To paraphrase, he said to Mālīk: “My taking a stand, my perseverance, and my struggle, was not for the freedom of an individual or society, because it is religion that frees an individual or a society. But if religion is imprisoned by the ruling powers, imprisoned by oppressors, then such a religion that is itself imprisoned cannot be in command—hence I took a stand so as to free this Qur’ān from the clutches of renegades”. [To quote again,] “Surely this religion had been held hostage by evil people who would employ in it their whims and who would seek by it the world.” The Qur’ān was there, but was made the slave of those who would interpret it according to their personal opinions. The Sunnah of the Prophet (upon whom and his Progeny be countless felicitations and praise) was there as well, but was incarcerated by those who had sequestered it. If the Sunnah is confiscated and if the Qur’ān is imprisoned, then it can never be able to free the individual or to free society. The freedom of a people is a consequence of their religion being free. This then is the enlightening statement of Amīr al-Mu’minīn, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib that when religion is freed from the clutches of oppressive rulers, it makes society free and makes man aware of his humanity. When man becomes aware of his responsibilities he is released from his bondage to the world and is no longer a slave to the glitter of jewels, property, children, livestock and green-

^٢. نهج البلاغه، ص ٤٣٣، نامه ٥٣.

pastures. In the beginning of surah Āli ‘Imrān, the Qur’ān has posited these four false beloveds:

زَيْنَ النَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ
وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ

To mankind has been made to seem decorous the love of [worldly] desires,
that of women and children, accumulated piles of gold and silver, horses
of mark, livestock and farms (3:14).

Man has four false beloveds. We have been absolved of these four false beloveds by the Qur’ān through the leadership of the Ahl al-Bayt [People of the House]. It is as if the Qur’ān is saying, “The man who does not know himself, who does not know the world, and who does not know the Creator of the world, is sometimes enraptured by minerals, i.e. ‘accumulated piles of gold and silver’, his bank balance [and financial clout]—all of these being solidified matter and minerals; sometimes he is captivated by farming and livestock; and sometimes he is attached to women and children. The false beloved of man is not apart from these four types, for it is either mineral, plant, animal or human. The Qur’ān says that these are “the love of [worldly] desires”. First women and children, next gold and silver, then farming, and finally livestock. All of these are means. A person who is attached to the means cannot make [it to the end of] the heavenly journey. In surah Āli ‘Imrān, these four false beloveds have been expunged from us and have thus set us free.

In an enlightening statement of Imām ‘Alī (upon whom be peace) he says:

أَلَا حُرٌّ يَدْعُ هَذِهِ اللَّمَازَةَ^٢

Is there no [truly] free man who can leave this chewed morsel—*lumāzah*—
[for those of its ilk]”.

“Lumāzah” is that morsel of chewed food that gets caught in the teeth. If someone eats food and something gets left in his teeth for which he uses a toothpick to remove, this leftover stuck in between his teeth is called “lumāzah”. Imām ‘Alī is saying that all that is currently in the possession of the rich in the East and the West, is nothing but the remains that got caught in the teeth of previous generations. Those predecessors consumed wealth and passed away. What ended up getting caught in their teeth, they spat out, and it was this that was picked up by the wealthy of our times. Hence the earth is not virgin territory, nor are the accumulated riches new [unused] products. It is not the case that livestock are a novelty, nor are women and children totally new creations—they are all the leftovers of previous generations. The crux of the luminous saying of Amīr al-Mu’minīn (upon whom be peace) is that what is needed in this hour is the truly free man or the truly free woman—someone who can become free of the morsels lodged

^٢. نهج البلاغة، حكمت ٤٥٦.

in the teeth of the previous generations. Initially, religion must be freed so that religion can then free mankind. Such emancipation is ingrained in the school of the Qur’ān and the Ahl al-Bayt. When man is set free, he will not go astray himself, nor will he impede the way for others, and nor will he make the journey abased and empty-handed.

In two places in the Qur’ān it is written that when some people die and pass away, angels strike their backs and slap their faces:

يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهُهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ

“...striking their faces and their backs...” (8:50).

Great gnostics have commented that the reason why the angels slap the faces of the evildoers and punch their backs during death is because of the following: There is one group of angels—responsible for the affairs of this lower world—and they punch the back of the person so as to force him to leave this world and enter the purgatory saying, “You have wasted away your life and have not done a single thing”; there is another group of angels—responsible for the affairs of the purgatory—who see this person as he enters, dark-faced [abased] and empty-handed, and they slap him saying, “You have wasted your life”. [Hence, the Qur’ānic expression:] “...striking their faces and their backs...”

Such illuminating speech comes as issues from he who possesses the Comprehensive Words, speaks to the reality of both this world as well as the purgatory. Such a person knows what the world does; what the angels deployed in this world do with him and what the angels deployed in the afterlife do with him. When Amīr al-Mu’minīn was the ruler of the entire middle-east—in those days the Persian empire had been subjugated as well as the Roman empire, and the Hijāz was located between these two great empires and other than these two blocs there were no others in the middle-east—it is recounted that at that time, he [Amīr al-Mu’minīn] set his gaze upon some honey and said, “You look splendid but I do not know what you taste like.” It was this ‘Alī that could guide the entire world. With his lasting counsels, he could help the poor, he could bring the youth back onto the Path, and he was able to remind the elderly. In his youth he could be the role model for the youth, in his middle years he could be the example for the middle-aged, and in his later years he was an exemplar to the elderly. In fact, he was also an example for the learned scholars, the warriors, the politicians, and the rulers. He was a paragon for the exegetes of the Qur’ān as well as for all other intellectuals. Hence, because his being is identified with the Comprehensive Words, he was a comprehensive human being and takes into consideration all the various aspects.

Any subject or matter that was of a general use was first and foremost in the teachings of Amīr al-Mu’minīn (upon whom be peace). There are instances of very deep and profound matters that are found in his sermons; these he would expound to the elite. But the general and pervasive responsibility—that is to say something that is universal and eternal and must be considered by everybody at all times—[such a matter]

was explained every night and at every opportunity by Imām ‘Alī. Make note of these two principles: something that is 1) universal and 2) eternal—that is, it is for all people and all places—was put front and centre by his eminence, in that every night, I repeat, **every** night, after Ṣalāt al-‘Ishā’, when the congregation in the masjid was about to disperse, he would say:

تجهّزوا رَحِمَكُمُ اللهُ^٤

Prepare your provisions! Allah have mercy on you.

This was not just for one night, not ten nights, not a hundred nights; but rather **every** night he would ask them to get ready for the journey. The secret behind such repetition is that the whisperings of Satan are always being repeated. Day and night he calls us towards worldliness, inculcating greed and encouraging us on. So, [it stands to reason] that if the illness is chronic, if the danger is ever-present, if the damage is recurrent, and if the problem is perpetual, then the [solution and] reminder must be at every moment. Hence, he said, “Prepare your provisions! Allah have mercy on you”. We also see that whenever he would give a sermon, after the declaration of God’s unity and His praise, he would say to the people, “Have *taqwā*” [or be Godwary]. That is, be careful. The reason for the repetition is that the diabolic whispering is continuous. Matters of knowledge are such that a person once he has heard and understood them, their repetition is not of much use. But matters of morals, matters that pertain to the purification of the soul, these, as they say, are like:

هو المسك ما كرّرتَه يتضوّع^٥

Musk, which remains fragrant the more it is reapplied.

Or like [any other] perfume. Man never tires of fresh air and pleasant scents and fragrances. Amīr al-Mu’minīn was like this in all of his roles, whether those pertaining to his governance or the public treasury.

There is a comment made by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd al-Mu‘tazilī in his commentary on the *Nahj al-Balāgha*. This great personality was quite competent in literature and history. He writes in his commentary of the *Nahj al-Balāgha* of Amīr al-Mu’minīn (upon whom be peace) that, “I did not think that this commentary would take anything less than fourteen years. But thank God, that in the course of ten years of continuous efforts I have been successful in finishing this commentary”. In his exposition of one of the sermons of Imām ‘Alī, he writes, “‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him) once every week, after having justly distributed the contents of the public treasury to the poor and needy, would broom the [empty] treasury room and would give thanks that nothing that rightfully belongs to the Muslims is in his possession. He would then perform two

^٤. نهج البلاغه، خطبه ٢٠٤.

^٥. بحار الأنوار، ج ١٧، ص ١٦٦.

rak'ah of prayers in thanksgiving and would say, 'Thank God that I kept pure, distributing in a pure way, keeping trusts in a pure way, and that my hands were never soiled by Public Goods'. He would do this every week. Such power [and command over one's self], because it is amiable to our innate nature and because our inner beings are in harmony with it, we bow down and show our utter respect and humility towards it. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd says: "I do not have knowledge of what transpired before recorded history—what took place before Noah for instance, whatever it was, it was never recorded so that I could have knowledge of men who lived before the storm of Noah. But from what I know about the men who lived after that storm, whether amongst the Christians, Jews or any other nation or peoples, and from what I have heard and what I have studied, no religion, no nation, and no group has a person of the stature of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Of course, everybody in the religion that they belong to has some great person who excels in say literature, or warfare, or generosity, or bravery, or chivalry, or politics or in any other field—for in the end, every nation has some outstanding figure, but in all of these nations and groups, I have not seen any man who surpasses 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib."

You noble guests in general and the conveners of this conference in particular should be thankful that by the blessed name of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib first, you will bring the Qur'ān and the Family of the Prophet out of being sequestered [and hijacked] by the enemies; second, you will be free in your thought and will not exclude [or ostracize] anyone; third, you will invite one and all to the Qur'ān and the Family of the Prophet; fourth, in this affair of unity, you will be extremely wise and just. In the same way that 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib himself embraced his visitors with a big heart—confronting, debating, inviting, guiding, and instructing them [in this spirit of magnanimity]—you too should be like this *inshā' Allāh*, so that under the Walāyah of 'Alī and his progeny (upon whom be the best benedictions of the devotees) you are able to introduce these sublime Islamic and divine teachings to the East and the West, and thereby be able to establish the name of Imām [Khumaynī] and the Rahbar, the name of the Islamic Revolution, the name of the martyrs, and [ultimately] the name of 'Alī and his Progeny (upon whom be the best benedictions of the devotees) in the hearts of all mankind, especially the Muslims, and in particular the Shias, *inshā' Allāh*.

I once again honour the presence of you noble guests. I acknowledge the efforts of the conveners of this worthy conference. I beseech God Almighty to grant all of you prosperity and pre-eminence in this world and the next, to acquaint all human societies with the virtues and outstanding qualities of the Book and the Sunnah of the Infallibles (upon them be blessings and peace) and to intensify all the more the affinity in our hearts for the Qur'ān and the Family.

May Allah forgive us and you.

Peace be upon you and the Mercy of Allah and His Graces

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