

Theological Aspects of *Nahj Al-Balāghah* & Social Implications

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Jamadi Al-Awwal 14th, 1437 A.H.

February 23rd, 2016

Introduction

How does the knowledge of Allah (swt) help us become better people?

Ja'far ibn Abi Talib to King of Ethiopia, “O king! We were living in ignorance: worshipping idols; eating dead animals; committing adultery and fornication; sever family ties; attack our neighbours; the strong takes the right of the weak. We lived that way, until Allah sent us a messenger of us, who we know his family, his truthfulness, honesty and chastity. He (the messenger) invited us to worship Allah alone, and leave the rocks and idols that we and our forefathers used to worship. He ordered us to talk truthfully, fulfill the trust, visit and respect our kin, look after our neighbours, refrain from sins and murder, prohibited adultery and fornication as well as false testimony, taking the rights of orphans, and falsely accusing a married woman. He ordered us to worship Allah alone without associating anything with Him,” (*Sīrat ibn Husham*, vol. 1).

Relationship

- Premise 1: Recognition results in piety.
- Premise 2: Piety results in positive interaction.
- Conclusion: Therefore, recognition results in positive interaction.

Letter #45 - 1

O Ibn Hunayf, I have come to know that a young man of Basrah invited you to a feast and you leapt towards it. Foods of different colours were being chosen for you and big bowls were being given to you. I never thought that you would accept the feast of people who turn away the beggars and invite the rich. Look at the food you ingest, leave out that about which you are in doubt and take that about which you are sure that it has been secured lawfully.

Letter #45 - 2

Remember that every follower has a leader whom he follows and is enlightened through his knowledge. Realize that your Imam has contented himself from this world with two simple garments and two loaves for his meal. Certainly, you cannot do that, but at least support me in piety, exertion, chastity and uprightness, because, by Allah, I have not treasured any gold out of your world nor amassed plentiful wealth nor collected any clothes other than the two old garments.

Letter #45 - 3

Of course, we had Fadak in our possession with all its land that was covered by the sky, but a group of people felt greedy for it and the other party withheld themselves from it. Allah is, after all, the best Judge. What shall I do with or without Fadak? While tomorrow this body is to go into the grave in whose darkness its traces will be destroyed and (even) news of it will disappear? It is a pit that, even if its width is widened or the hands of the digger make it broad and open, the stones and lumps of clay will narrow it and the falling earth will close its aperture. I try to keep myself tamed through piety so that on the Day of great fear, it will be peaceful and steady in slippery places.

Letter #45 - 4

If I wished I could have taken the way leading towards (worldly pleasures like) pure honey, fine wheat and silk clothes but it cannot be that my passions lead me and greed take me to choosing good meals while in the Hijaz or in Yamamah there may be people who have no hope of getting bread or who do not have a full meal. Shall I lie with a full belly while around me there may be hungry bellies and thirsty livers? Or shall I be as the poet has said:

It is enough for you to have a disease that you lie with your belly full while around you people may be badly yearning for dried leather.

Letter #45 - 5

Shall I be content with being called Amir al-Mu 'minin (The Commander of the Believers), although I do not share with the people the hardships of the world, or be an example for them in the distresses of life? I have not been created to keep myself busy in eating good foods like the tied animal whose only worry is its fodder or like a loose animal whose main concern is finding its food. It fills its belly with its food and forgets about its purpose. Shall I be left uncontrolled to pasture freely, or draw the rope of misguidance or roam aimlessly in the paths of bewilderment?

Letter #45 - 6

I see as if one of you would say that if this is what the son of Abu Talib eats then weakness must have made him unfit to fight his foes and encounter the brave. Remember that the tree of the forest is the best for timber, while green twigs have soft bark, and the wild bushes are very strong for burning and slow in dying off. My relation with the Messenger of Allah is that of one branch with another, or of the forearm with the upper arm. By Allah, if the Arabs join together to fight me I will not run away from them and if I get the opportunity I will hasten to catch them by their necks. I shall surely strive to relieve the earth of this man of perverse mind and uncouth body, till the bits of earth are removed from the grain.

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