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Ibn Ibāḍ’s Letter to ʿAbd al-Malik

كتاب عبد الله بن إباض إلى عبد الملك

First letter attributed to ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ibāḍ · Omani witnesses



Historical illustration · caption and provenance inside the volume

English · Arabic text · Notes and sources

VOLUME XXV

Reading guide

The English text, commentary and sources are gathered in the first part. Documentary reproductions appear at the end of the volume. Historical illustrations accompany the reading.

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Arabic quotations needed for the commentary remain beside their explanations. The continuous Arabic transcription follows in a separate part.

References to editions and manuscripts have been retained. Contents-page references and internal links point to the new pagination.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

About the work

Dating

The letter is traditionally addressed to Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, who ruled from 685 to 705. Wilferd Madelung proposes another recipient of the same name and a date of composition around 718–719. The Izkī copy dates from 1145 AH (1732–1733).

Origin and preservation

Transmitted under Ibn Ibāḍ's name, the epistle is attested in Oman, in the al-Ruqayshī collection at Izkī, catalogue entry 1367. The text translated here follows the version preserved in al-Barrādī's medieval compilation.

Summary

The author asks his recipient to judge the first caliphs' actions in the light of the Quran. He examines their successions, the banishments held against ʿUthmān and the use of shared resources. He also discusses Muʿāwiya's victory before explaining his break with Ibn al-Azraq and requesting a reply.

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Reading guide

The complete letter transmitted by Abū al-Qāsim al-Barrādī, from its address to ʿAbd al-Malik to the request for a reply and the salutation. It debates the conduct of the first caliphs, the meaning of power and the authority of Quranic judgement.

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PART ONE

English translation

التَرجمة الإنجليزية

01 · Sinān brings a letter

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. From ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ibāḍ to ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān. Peace be upon you. Before you I praise God, besides whom there is no god, and I counsel you to fear Him. A good end belongs to the fear of God, and to God we return. Know that He accepts only from those who fear Him. Your letter reached me with Sinān ibn ʿĀṣim. You wrote asking me to write to you in turn. Here, then, is my letter. Some things you will acknowledge and others you will disapprove of, but what you disapprove of is not condemned in God's sight.

As for what you say of ʿUthmān and what you imply about the community, no one can reject the testimony God gives in the Book He sent down to His prophet Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace. 'Those who do not judge by what God has revealed are the unjust', the 'transgressors' and the 'unbelievers' (5:45, 47 and 44). Concerning ʿUthmān, by God, I have told you nothing whose truth you do not know. I shall draw the proofs for you from God's Book and set out what we held against him, to explain his case and his conduct to you.



Gold dinar from Syria bearing a profession of faith, 79 AH / 698–699. This coin dates from Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik's reign; the letter's precise recipient remains debated. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acc. no. 99.35.2386, public domain.

02 · The Book conveyed by Muḥammad

As you recall, ʿUthmān had been in Islam from an early date, but God did not exempt His servants from trial. He sent Muḥammad and revealed Scripture to him. In it He explained every matter and detailed every judgement, so that he might decide between people where they differed. He made it guidance and mercy for those who believe. In it He permitted the lawful, forbade the unlawful, passed judgements and prescribed duties and limits. He says: 'These are God's limits; do not approach them' (2:187), and 'These are God's limits; do not transgress them. Those who transgress them are the unjust' (2:229).

He then commanded His prophet to follow His Book: 'Follow what is revealed to you from your Lord' (33:2), and 'When We recite it, follow its recitation' (75:18). Muḥammad obeyed his Lord's command. ʿUthmān was with him, as were those of his companions whom God willed. They never saw him favour anyone, alter any judgement, permit anything forbidden, forbid anything lawful or change any duty. The Messenger would say: 'If I disobey my Lord, I fear the punishment of a terrible day' (6:15).

He lived as long as God willed, following what he brought from Him, conveying what God had entrusted to him, instructing and enlightening the believers, until God called him back. God then bequeathed to the Muslims what

Muḥammad had brought: His Book. Whoever finds the way finds it by following the Book, and whoever goes astray does so only by abandoning it.

03 · Three successions

After him, Abū Bakr took charge of the people. He held fast to God's Book and followed His prophet's practice. No Muslim broke with him. They found fault with none of his judgements or distributions. He left this world with the people of Islam satisfied with him and united around him. Then came ʿUmar, firm in his office, stern towards the hypocrites. He took the believers who preceded him as guides and acted according to the Book. God tested him with conquests unlike any his two predecessors had known. He left this world with religion manifest and the word of Islam uniting the people. The believers continued to testify to his faithfulness.

They are God's witnesses on earth. God says: 'Thus We have made you a community of the middle, so that you may be witnesses to humankind and the Messenger a witness to you' (2:143). ʿUmar consulted the believers and left the office in their hands. They entrusted it to ʿUthmān. For as long as God willed, he practised what Islam acknowledges. Then the world offered itself to him and the earth's treasures opened up. He introduced practices in which his two predecessors had not engaged, while people still remembered them. Seeing these innovations, the believers came to speak to him and remind him of God's Book and the practice of his predecessor.

He resented being reminded of God's signs. He resorted to coercion, struck whom he pleased, imprisoned these men and banished them to the furthest reaches of the land because they had reminded him of the Book, the prophet's way and the precedents left by the believers. 'Who is more unjust than one who is reminded of his Lord's signs, turns away from them and forgets what his own hands have done?' (18:57). 'Who is more unjust than one who turns away from them after being reminded of them? We take vengeance on the criminals' (32:22).

04 · The banishments held against ʿUthmān

I want to show you, ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān, what the Muslims disapproved of in ʿUthmān and what led them to break with him. If you have forgotten it, I shall remind you. If you do not know it, I shall teach you. Do not let your attachment to ʿUthmān lead you to deny God's signs and turn away from them. He can do nothing for you before God. Be mindful of God, ʿAbd al-Malik, before you must try to reach the thing from too far away, before the sentence becomes inescapable. Here is one reason that led the Muslims, and us with them, to blame him and break with him. God said: 'Who is more unjust than one who prevents His name from being mentioned in God's mosques and works to ruin them?

Such men should enter them only in fear. Disgrace is theirs in this world, and immense punishment in the hereafter' (2:114). Yet ʿUthmān was the first to prevent God's Book from being recounted publicly in His mosques. Another grievance that made us break with him: God said, 'Do not drive away those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, seeking His face. You are not accountable for them, nor they for you. If you drove them away, you would be among the unjust' (6:52). He drove away or banished the best of this community. Among those he banished from Medina were Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, Muslim al-Juhanī and Nāfiʿ ibn al-Ḥuṭām.

From Kufa he banished Kaʿb and Jundab ibn Zuhayr, who killed the magician, then ʿUmar ibn Zurāra, Yazīd ibn Ṣaḥwān, Aswad ibn Duwayj, Yazīd ibn Qays al-Hamdānī and Kurdūs ibn al-Ḥaḍramī, along with many of the city's inhabitants. From Basra he banished ʿĀmir ibn ʿAbd Allāh, Madhʿūr al-ʿAnbarī and countless believers.

05 · Government, pastures and alms

We reproached him for giving his brother al-Walīd ibn ʿUqba authority over the people. This man amused himself with magic and led the prayer while drunk, disobeying God's religion. He owed his appointment solely to their kinship. We reproached him for circulating wealth only among the rich,

when God had said, 'so that it may not circulate only among the rich' (59:7). In this matter he changed God's word and followed his own desire. We reproached him for reserving the rain-watered lands for himself and his people. He denied the servants the sustenance God sent down for them and their herds.

Yet God said: 'Tell me: of the sustenance God has sent down for you, you have made some unlawful and some lawful. Say: Has God permitted this, or do you invent something against Him?' (10:59). We reproached him for being the first to overstep the rule governing alms. God says: 'Alms are for the poor and the needy', down to 'an ordinance from God. God is knowing and wise' (9:60). And again: 'When God and His Messenger have decided a matter, neither a believing man nor a believing woman may retain a choice in it. Whoever disobeys God and His Messenger goes plainly astray' (33:36).

ʿUthmān abolished shares instituted by the Commander of the Faithful, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may God be pleased with him. He cut a million from the allowances of the men of Badr, piled up gold and silver and did not spend them in God's path. 'To those who hoard gold and silver without spending them in God's path, announce a painful punishment, on the day when these metals are heated red-hot in the fire of Gehenna and their foreheads, sides and backs are branded with them…' (9:34–35).

06 · Stray animals and Oman's provisions

We reproached him for adding every stray animal to his camels, without returning it or announcing that he had found it. He took camels and sheep wherever he found them, even if their keepers had owned them when they converted. Under God's judgement, they were entitled to what they owned then. God said: 'Do not deprive people of their property, and do not spread through the land sowing disorder' (26:183), and 'Do not consume one another's property unjustly, except through trade by mutual consent' (4:29). We reproached him for taking for himself the fifth belonging to God and giving some of it to his relatives.

This changed God's judgement, which assigns that fifth to God, His Messenger, his relatives, orphans, the needy and the traveller, down to the words 'God has power over all things' (8:41). We also reproached him for forbidding the people of Baḥrayn and Oman to sell their provisions until the government's had been sold. This forbade what God had permitted. Yet God permitted trade and forbade usury (2:275). ʿUthmān governed otherwise than by God's revelation, contrary to the way of God and of his two companions.

God says: 'Whoever breaks with the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him, and follows a path other than the believers', We abandon him to what he has turned towards and cast him into Gehenna. What a wretched destination' (4:115). He says: 'Those who do not judge by what God has revealed are the unjust, the unbelievers and the transgressors' (phrases from 5:44–47), 'God's curse is upon the unjust' (11:18), 'You will find no help for one whom God curses' (4:52), 'Do not lean on those who do wrong, lest the fire touch you' (11:113), and 'Thus your Lord's word has proved true concerning the transgressors: they will not believe' (10:33).

All these verses testify against ʿUthmān. We have testified against him only to what these verses attest. 'God bears witness through what He has sent down to you; He sent it down with His knowledge; the angels bear witness, and God suffices as a witness' (4:166, freely quoted).

07 · The breach of the covenant, as the letter tells it

The Muslims saw ʿUthmān's acts of disobedience. The believers are God's witnesses on earth and examine people's deeds. God says: 'Say: Act. God, His Messenger and the believers will see your work' (9:105). The dispute between the two sides over truth and falsehood was abandoned, and the trials God had announced came to pass. For God said: 'Alif, lām, mīm. Do people think they will be left to say "we believe" without being tested? We tested their predecessors. God will recognise those who spoke the truth and

those who lied' (29:1–3). The Muslims understood that obeying ʿUthmān in these circumstances meant obeying Iblīs.

They marched towards him from every direction and assembled in the presence of Emigrants, Helpers and most of the Prophet's wives. They reminded him of God and laid his acts of disobedience before him. He declared that he acknowledged what they said, repented before God and returned to the truth. They accepted his admission, his repentance and his return to right conduct. It was for the people of Islam, united in the truth, to receive him and remain united with him so long as he kept to it. When they dispersed, he broke the covenant he had given them and did worse than what he had repented of. Behind their backs, he wrote to his agents to have their hands and opposite feet cut off.

When the believers discovered the letter and the breach of his undertakings, they returned and killed him, in accordance, they say, with God's judgement. God said: 'If they break their oaths after their covenant and attack your religion, fight the leaders of unbelief. They keep no oath; perhaps they will desist' (9:12). For a time he had practised God's Book and stood united with the Muslims, then he had turned back. God says: 'Those who turned back after guidance became clear to them—the devil made their deeds seem fair to them and prolonged their hopes' (47:25).

These episodes, among others, explain why the believers broke with ʿUthmān and we with him, why they censured him and we censure him today.

08 · Who can invoke kinship in his favour?

You recall that he was close to the Messenger and that they were friends. Yet ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib was more closely related to the Messenger, more intimate with him, had emigrated before him and had converted earlier. You testify to this, as do I. What, then, did kinship and friendship gain him? Were they his salvation, if he abandoned the truth, or his ruin? Know that the sign of unbelief in this community is abandoning judgement according to God's revelation in favour of another judgement. 'Who is truer than God in judgement

for people who are certain?' (cf. 5:50). 'In what word after God and His signs will they believe?' (45:6).

ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān, do not be seduced by your power. Do not base your religion on men, for they are led on by degrees without knowing where. Deeds are determined by their end. God's Book is ever new and speaks only the truth. May God, by enabling us to follow it, preserve us from oppression and error! Cling to God's rope, ʿAbd al-Malik. Hold fast to God; He will guide you on a straight path. 'Whoever holds fast to God is guided to a straight path' (3:101). His Book is that strong rope which He commanded the believers to hold fast to: 'All of you, hold firmly to God's rope and do not divide' (3:103).

I implore you by God: ponder the meanings of the Quran, let it guide you and use it as your argument in debate. 'Do they not ponder the Quran, or are their hearts locked?' (47:24).

09 · Muʿāwiya's victory debated

As for your statement about Muʿāwiya—that God supported him, hastened his victory, made his argument manifest and gave him the upper hand over his enemies by having him demand vengeance for ʿUthmān's blood—if you judge religion by reversals of fortune and worldly victories, we do not judge it that way. The Muslims triumphed over the unbelievers so that He might observe their conduct, and the polytheists gained the upper hand over the believers so that He might test the believers and grant the unbelievers a respite. 'These days We cause to alternate among people, so that God may recognise those who believe and choose witnesses from among you. God does not love the unjust.

So that He may purify the believers and destroy the unbelievers' (3:140–141). Look at what the believers suffered at the polytheists' hands at Uḥud. See how Ibn ʿAffān's killers prevailed over him and his supporters when his house was besieged. ʿAlī prevailed over the people of Basra, ʿUthmān's supporters; al-Mukhtār over Zayd and his companions, who belonged to their party; Muṣʿab over al-Mukhtār; the Syrians over the Medinans; and al-Zubayr over the Syrians in Mecca. Do not judge

religion by success. People prevail over one another. God gave Pharaoh a kingdom, and he prevailed on earth. He gave a kingdom to the man who disputed with Abraham about his Lord.

Muʿāwiya bought the command from al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī without fulfilling the commitments he had sworn before God to honour. Yet God says: "Do not break oaths after confirming them" (16:91). Ask no one but me about Muʿāwiya and his conduct, for I knew him in his lifetime and saw him act. I know no one who more thoroughly abandoned the distribution prescribed by God and His judgements, or shed more of the blood He forbids to be shed. Had he been answerable only for the blood of Sumayya's son, that would have sufficed to bring the charge of unbelief against him. Then he appointed his son Yazīd as his successor: a transgressor, accursed, an unbeliever and a wine-drinker. That is evil enough for him.

Their conduct escapes no reasonable person. Fear God, ʿAbd al-Malik, and do not deceive yourself about Muʿāwiya. We have known people of your house who blamed Muʿāwiya and Yazīd and reproached them for many of their deeds. As for anyone who chooses solidarity with ʿUthmān and his people, I call God and His angels to witness my break with him. We are their enemies with our hands, tongues and hearts. Thus we shall live, thus we shall die, thus we shall be raised, and we shall answer for it before God.

10 · Religious excess and the break with Ibn al-Azraq

You wrote to warn me against excess in religion. I seek refuge in God from excess. Since you seem not to know, I shall tell you what it consists in: saying of God something other than the truth, acting against the Book He has explained and the way His prophet laid down. God says: "People of Scripture, do not go to excess in religion and say only the truth of God" (4:171), and "People of Scripture, do not go beyond the truth to excess in religion" (5:77). This is what ʿUthmān and the leaders who came after him did. And you still walk in their way and obey them. You make common cause with them in disobedience. They followed their passions, and you followed them in this.

God says: "Do not follow the desires of people who went astray before, led many astray and strayed from the straight path" (5:77). These are the people of excess. One who is angered for God when He is disobeyed, is content with His judgement and calls to His Book, to the prophet's way and to that of the believers after him practises no excess. You wrote alluding to the Kharijites. In your view, they go to excess in religion, follow a way other than the believers' and break with the people of Islam. I shall describe their way to you. They are ʿUthmān's companions who condemned his innovations and broke with him when he abandoned God's judgement.

They are the companions of al-Zubayr and Ṭalḥa when those two broke their oath, of Muʿāwiya when he committed injustice, and of ʿAlī when he changed God's Book and took ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qays and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ as arbitrators. They broke with all these men and refused to divide on the basis of human judgement instead of God's judgement. They met their successors with still greater hostility and repudiation. Their solidarity was with their religion, the way of God's prophet, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, may God be pleased with them. They called to their path and were content with it. For this they rose up, to this they called, and for this they broke away.

Those who knew them know how well they acted and how vigorously they fought in God's path. That is their story. God and His angels bear witness that we are enemies of their enemies and allies of their allies, with tongue, hands and heart. Thus we shall live for as long as we live; thus we shall die and be raised before our Lord. Before God, we disavow Ibn al-Azraq, his deeds and his followers. When he rose up, he was, so far as we could see, within Islam. But he introduced innovations, turned away and fell back into unbelief. Before God, we break with them.

11 · Two ways of leading people

You asked me to answer your letter and do all I could to advise you. You reminded me of God, and the best of your reminder was these words

that you quoted: "Those who conceal the clear signs and guidance We revealed after setting them out for people in the Book…" (2:159), and "When God took the pledge of the people of Scripture: you shall make it clear to people and not conceal it" (3:187). I have given you my explanation and recounted the leaders' conduct. I was bound to advise you. God did not take me as His servant so that I should deny Him, deceive people by saying something other than what is within me, or indulge in what I forbid.

I call you to God's Book and the prophet's way, so that you declare lawful [what is lawful] and forbid what is forbidden, without wronging anyone. Let the Book judge between you and me in what divides us. Let us stand with whoever holds fast to God, break with whoever God disavows, obey whoever He commands us to obey, and disobey whoever He commands us in His Book to disobey. This is what we found our prophet firmly practising. This community shed blood only when God's Book and His prophet's way were abandoned. "Whatever your disagreement, its judgement belongs to God. Such is God, my Lord.

In Him I trust, and to Him I return" (42:10). The Quran is the clear way by which God guided those before us: Muḥammad and his two companions, the two just caliphs. Whoever follows it does not go astray. Whoever abandons it does not find the way. God says: "This is My path, a straight path. Follow it; do not follow the paths that would lead you away from His path" (6:153). Beware of scattering along those paths and following your passion. In this world and the hereafter, people follow only two kinds of leader: a leader of right guidance and a leader of error. The first follows God's Book, distributes according to God's distribution and judges according to His judgement.

God says: "We made them leaders who guide by Our command" (21:73). These are the leaders God commands people to obey and forbids them to disobey. The leaders of error judge otherwise than by His revelation, distribute by other rules and follow their passions outside any divine practice. God says of them: "We made them leaders who call to the fire. On the Day of Resurrection, no one will help them" (28:41). He also says: "Do not obey the unbelievers, but wage a great struggle against them by means of it" (25:52), and "Do not obey

one whose heart We have made heedless of Our reminder and who follows his passion" (18:28). "This is Our Book, which speaks the truth against you" (45:29).

12 · The request for a reply

"What remains beyond the truth but error?" (10:32). Do not turn away from the reminder or doubt God's Book. I have written in answer to your letter. I implore you by God: do not read it while you are occupied. Wait until you can devote yourself to it, ponder its meanings and consider it with discernment. Write me your reply if you can. Draw testimony and proofs for me from God's Book, so that I may believe your words. Do not hold out this world to entice me. I neither desire nor need it. Let your counsel concern religion and what comes after death. That is the best counsel. God has the power to unite you and us in obedience.

There is no good in one who does not obey God. Help comes from God, and in Him is acceptance. Peace be upon you.

NOTES AND SOURCES

Translation nuances
وجوه المعنى

01 · Sinān brings a letter

التَّقْوَى

Reverential fear of God, from which vigilant conduct proceeds.

البَيِّنَة

Clear proof that the correspondent seeks from the Book.

Arabic text · Translation

02 · The Book conveyed by Muḥammad

فَرَائِض

Prescribed obligations.

حُدُود

Limits established by God.

Arabic text · Translation

03 · Three successions

المُهَاجِرُون

The emigrants of the earliest Muslim communities.

الأَمْر

The office or authority to be settled upon the caliph's death.

Arabic text · Translation

04 · The banishments held against ʿUthmān

الجُبْرِيَّة

In the letter, the use of political coercion.

السَّاحِر

The magician Jundab reportedly killed, as the text calls him.

Arabic text · Translation

05 · Government, pastures and alms

دُولَة

What passes from hand to hand; here, wealth monopolised by the richest.

الصَّدَقَات

Alms distributed according to a rule invoked by the author.

Arabic text · Translation

06 · Stray animals and Oman's provisions

ضَالَّة

A stray animal whose discovery must be announced to its owner.

الخُمُس

The fifth of the spoils reserved for the categories named in verse 8:41.

Arabic text · Translation

07 · The breach of the covenant, as the letter tells it

الفِتْنَة

A trial of people and, in this account, conflict within the community.

عَهْد

An agreement or undertaking whose terms the author accuses the ruler of violating.

Arabic text · Translation

08 · Who can invoke kinship in his favour?

خُلَّة

Intimate friendship.

حَبْل اللّه

God’s rope, identified in this letter with the Quran.

Arabic text · Translation

09 · Muʿāwiya’s victory debated

الدَّوْلَة

Here, a reversal of fortune, victory or power gained.

يَوْم الدَّار

The day of the siege of ʿUthmān’s house.

Arabic text · Translation

10 · Religious excess and the break with Ibn al-Azraq

غُلُوّ

Excess or going beyond due measure in religion.

البَرَاءَة

A religious break or disavowal, opposed to solidarity with allies.

Arabic text · Translation

11 · Two ways of leading people

إِمَام هُدًى

A leader who guides rightly according to the letter's criteria.

مِيثَاق

A solemn pledge, here to make Scripture manifest.

Arabic text · Translation

12 · The request for a reply

بَصِيرَة

Inner discernment, here needed for attentive reading.

التَّوْفِيق

God's help that brings an action to fruition.

Arabic text · Translation

DOCUMENTARY APPARATUS

Introduction and sources

This version's heading and the Omani catalogues identify the recipient as Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (reigned 65–86 AH / 685–705). Several historians question this identification. Wilferd Madelung attributes the letter to Ibn Ibāḍ and dates it to around 100 AH / 718–719, with ʿAbd al-Malik, son of Caliph ʿUmar II, as the correspondent. The author's identity has also been debated. The translation retains the names in the witness and presents the judgements on figures of early Islam as the letter's polemical positions.

At Izkī, in the collection of Sheikh Muḥammad ibn Sālim ibn Zāhir al-Ruqayshī (Oman), the catalogue records this epistle as no. 1367 ع-ذ and dates the copy to 1145 AH (1732–1733). The catalogue offers reproductions on request. Two other Omani entries (950 and 1431) concern this correspondence. Versions of the letter differ in detail.

The Arabic was transcribed from printed pages 175–185 of al-Barrādī's medieval compilation, al-Jawāhir al-muntaqāt, in the 2014 edition, scan images 177–187. The text transmitted by al-Barrādī ends with the salutation to the recipient; the narrator then resumes his account of Abū Bilāl. Quranic quotations, sometimes abridged or freely linked, are retained to their full extent. Verse numbers in parentheses help locate the passages. The headings and punctuation are editorial. This English version translates the French edition.

Textual sources

Oman, Izkī, al-Ruqayshī collection · copy of 1145 AH, entry 1367

Second entry in the Omani catalogue · 1431

Al-Barrādī · scan of the edition used, opening of the letter, image 177

Al-Barrādī · book record and download

W. Madelung, study of the attribution and recipient

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PART TWO

Original Arabic text
النص العربي

01 · Sinān brings a letter

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. من عبد الله بن إباض إلى عبد الملك بن مروان. أما بعد سلام عليك فإني أحمد إليك الله الذي لا إله إلا هو، وأوصيك بتقوى الله فإن العاقبة للتقوى والمرد إلى الله، واعلم أنه إنما يتقبل الله من المتقين. وقد جاءني كتابك مع سنان بن عاصم، وإنك كتبت إلي أن أكتب إليك بكتاب فكتبته إليك فمنه ما تعرف ومنه ما تنكر، ولكن الذي تنكره ليس عند الله بمنكر. وأما ما ذكرت من عثمان والذي عرضت به من شأن الأمة فإن الله ليس ينكر عليه أحد شهادته في كتابه الذي أنزل على نبيه محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم أن «من لم يحكم بما أنزل الله فأولئك هم الظالمون» و«الفاسقون» و«الكافرون». ثم إني لم أكن أذكر لك من شأن عثمان شيئا إلا والله تعلم أنه حق، وسأنزع لك من ذلك البينة من كتاب الله، وسأخبرك خبر عثمان الذي طعنا عليه فيه وأبين شأنه وأمره.

02 · The Book conveyed by Muḥammad

لقد كان عثمان كما ذكرت من قدمه في الإسلام ولكن الله لم يجز العباد من الفتنة، وذلك أن الله بعث محمدا صلى الله عليه وسلم، وأنزل عليه الكتاب وبين فيه كل أمر وفصل فيه كل حكم ليحكم بين الناس فيما اختلفوا فيه وجعله هدى ورحمة لقوم يؤمنون، فأحل فيه حلالا وحرم فيه حراما وحكم أحكاما وفرض فرائض وحدودا، فقال «تلك حدود الله فلا تقربوها»، وقال «تلك حدود الله فلا تعتدوها ومن يتعد حدود الله فأولئك هم الظالمون»، ثم أمر نبيه باتباع كتابه وقال «واتبع ما أوحي إليك من ربك»، وقال «فإذا قرأناه فاتبع قرآنه». فعمل محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم بأمر ربه ومعه عثمان ومن شاء الله من أصحابه، لا يرونه يتعهد أحدا، ولا يبدل حكما، ولا يستحل حراما ولا يحرم حلالا، ولا يبدل فريضة، وكان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول «إني أخاف أن عصيت ربي عذاب يوم عظيم».

فعمر صلى الله عليه وسلم ما شاء الله تابعا لما جاء به من عند الله مبلغا لما ائتمنه الله عليه معلما للمؤمنين، مبصرا لهم حتى توفاه الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، ثم أورث الله عز وجل المسلمين الذي جاء به محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم وهو كتابه الذي يهتدي من اهتدى باتباعه، ولا يضل من ضل إلا بتركه.

03 · Three successions

ثم قام من بعده أبو بكر على الناس فأخذ كتاب الله وعمل بسنة نبيه فلم يفارقه أحد من المسلمين ولم يعيبوا عليه في حكم حكمه ولا قسم قسمه، حتى فارق الدنيا وأهل الإسلام عنه راضون وله مجامعون، ثم قام من بعده عمر فكان قويا على الأمر شديدا على أهل النفاق، يهتدي بمن كان قبله من المؤمنين ويعمل بكتاب الله وابتلاه الله بفتوح من الدنيا بما لم يبل به صاحبيه، وفارق الدنيا والدين ظاهر وكلمة الإسلام جامعة وشهادة المؤمنين له بالوفاء قائمة والمؤمنون شهداء الله في الأرض.

قال الله عز وجل «وكذلك جعلناكم أمة وسطا لتكونوا شهداء على الناس ويكون الرسول عليكم شهيدا»، ثم استشار المؤمنين فتركها فيهم، فولوا عثمان ففعل ما شاء الله بما يعرف الإسلام حتى بسطت له الدنيا وفتح له من خزائن الأرض، وأحدث أمورا لم يعمل بها صاحباه قبله وعهد الناس بهم يومئذ قريب منهم، فلما رأى المؤمنون ما أحدث، أتوه وكلموه، وذكروه بكتاب الله وسنة من كان قبله، فشق عليه أن ذكروه بآيات الله، وأخذ بالجبرية وضرب من شاء منهم وسجن ونفاهم في أطراف الأرض من أجل أن ذكروه بكتاب الله وسنة نبيه صلى الله عليه

وسلم وآثار من كان قبله من المؤمنين، «ومن أظلم ممن ذكر بآيات ربه فأعرض عنها ونسي ما قدمت يداه»، «ومن أظلم ممن ذكر بآيات ربه ثم أعرض عنها إنا من المجرمين منتقمون».

04 · The banishments held against ʿUthmān

وأنا أبين لك يا عبد الملك بن مروان ما أنكر المسلمون على عثمان وفارقوه عليه عسى أن تكون غافلا فأذكرك أو جاهلا فأعرفك، فلا يحملنك هواء عثمان يا عبد الملك أن تكذب بآيات الله وتعرض عنها، فإنه لا يغني عنك من الله شيئا، فالله الله يا عبد الملك قبل التناوش من مكان بعيد وقبل أن تكون لزاما. وإنه كان مما طعن عليه المسلمون وفارقوه وفارقناه عليه قال الله عز وجل «ومن أظلم ممن منع مساجد الله أن يذكر فيها اسمه وسعى في خرابها أولئك ما كان لهم أن يدخلوها إلا خائفين لهم في الدنيا خزي ولهم في الآخرة عذاب عظيم». وكان عثمان أول من منع مساجد الله أن يقص فيها كتاب الله، ومما نقمنا عليه وفارقناه أن الله عز وجل قال «ولا تطرد الذين يدعون ربهم بالغداة والعشي يريدون وجهه ما عليك من حسابهم من

شيء وما من حسابك عليهم من شيء فتطردهم فتكون من الظالمين».

فكان خيار هذه الأمة قد طردهم ونفاهم، فكان ممن نفى من أهل المدينة أبا ذر الغفاري ومسلم الجهني ونافع بن الحطام، ونفى من أهل الكوفة كعبا وجندب بن زهير قاتل الساحر، ونفى عمر بن زرارة ويزيد بن صحوان وأسود بن دويج ويزيد بن قيس الهمداني وكردوس بن الحضرمي في أناس كثير من أهل الكوفة، ونفى من أهل البصرة عامر بن عبد الله ومدعور العنبري ومن لا يستطاع عددهم من المؤمنين.

05 · Government, pastures and alms

ومما نقمنا عليه أنه أمر أخاه الوليد بن عقبة على الناس فكان يلعب بالسحر، ويصلي بالناس سكران فاسق في دين الله، وإنما أمره من أجل قرابته. ومما نقمنا عليه جعل المال دولة بين الأغنياء، وقد قال الله عز وجل «كي لا يكون دولة بين الأغنياء» فبدل فيه كلام الله واتبع هواه، ومما نقمنا عليه أنه منع مواضع القطر وحماها لنفسه ولأهله ومنع الرزق الذي أنزله الله لعباده متاعا لهم ولأنعامهم، وقد قال الله عز وجل «قل أرأيتم ما أنزل الله لكم من رزق فجعلتم منه حراما وحلالا قل

الله أذن لكم أم على الله تفترون». ومما نقمنا عليه أنه أول من تعدى في الصدقات وقد قال الله «إنما الصدقات للفقراء والمساكين» إلى قوله «فريضة من الله والله عليم حكيم».

وقال «وما كان لمؤمن ولا مؤمنة إذا قضى الله ورسوله أمرا أن يكون لهم الخيرة من أمرهم ومن يعص الله ورسوله فقد ضل ضلالا مبينا». والذي أحدث عثمان منعه فرائض كان فرضها أمير المؤمنين عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه، وأنقص أهل بدر من عطاياهم ألف ألف، وكنز الذهب والفضة ولم ينفقها في سبيل الله، وقال الله عز وجل «والذين يكنزون الذهب والفضة ولا ينفقونها في سبيل الله فبشرهم بعذاب أليم يوم يحمى عليها في نار جهنم فتكوى بها جباههم وجنوبهم وظهورهم» الآية.

06 · Stray animals and Oman’s provisions

ومما نقمنا عليه كان يضم كل ضالة إلى إبله، ولا يردها، ولا يعرفها. وكان يأخذها من الإبل والغنم إذا وجدها عند أحد وإن كانوا قد أسلموا عليها وكان لهم في حكم الله ما أسلموا عليه، وقد قال الله عز وجل «ولا تبخسوا الناس أشياءهم ولا تعثوا في الأرض مفسدين»، وقال «ولا تأكلوا أموالكم بينكم بالباطل إلا

أن تكون تجارة عن تراض منكم». ومما نقمنا عليه أنه أخذ خمس الله لنفسه وأعطى منه أقاربه، وكان ذلك تبديلا لحكم الله وفرض الله الخمس لله وللرسول ولذي القربى واليتامى والمساكين وابن السبيل، إلى قوله «والله على كل شيء قدير». ومما نقمنا عليه منع أهل البحرين وأهل عمان أن يبيعوا شيئا من طعامهم حتى يباع طعام الإمارة، وذلك تحريم لما أحل الله، وأحل الله البيع وحرم الربا.

وكان من عمل عثمان أنه يحكم بغير ما أنزل الله وقد خالف سبيل الله وسبيل صاحبيه، وقال الله «ومن يشاقق الرسول من بعد ما تبين له الهدى ويتبع غير سبيل المؤمنين نوله ما تولى ونصله جهنم وساءت مصيرا». وقال «ومن لم يحكم بما أنزل الله فأولئك هم الظالمون والكافرون والفاسقون»، وقال «ألا لعنة الله على الظالمين»، وقال «ومن يلعن الله فلن تجد له نصيرا»، وقال «ولا تركنوا إلى الذين ظلموا فتمسكم النار»، وقال «وكذلك حقت كلمة ربك على الذين فسقوا أنهم لا يؤمنون». وكل هذه الآيات تشهد على عثمان، وإنما شهدنا عليه بما شهدت عليه هذه الآيات «والله يشهد بما أنزل إليكم أنزله بعلمه والملائكة يشهدون وكفى بالله شهيدا».

07 · The breach of the covenant, as the letter tells it

فلما رأى المسلمون الذي أتى به عثمان من معصية الله، والمؤمنون شهداء الله في الأرض ناظرون في أعمال الناس، وقال الله عز وجل «وقل اعملوا فسيرى الله عملكم ورسوله والمؤمنون»، وترك خصومة الخصمين في الحق والباطل ووقع ما وعد الله من الفتن، وقد قال الله عز وجل «ألم أحسب الناس أن يتركوا أن يقولوا آمنا وهم لا يفتنون، ولقد فتنا الذين من قبلهم فليعلمن الله الذين صدقوا وليعلمن الكاذبين»، وعلم المسلمون أن طاعة عثمان على ذلك طاعة إبليس فساروا إلى عثمان من أطراف الأرض واجتمعوا إليه في ملأ من المهاجرين والأنصار وعامة أزواج النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، فأتوه فذكروه بالله، وأخبروه بالذي أتى من معاصي الله، فزعم أنه يعرف الذي يقولون وأنه يتوب إلى الله عز وجل منه ويرجع إلى الحق، فقبلوا الذي أتاهم به من الاعتراف بالذنب، والتوبة إلى الله عز وجل ومراجعة الحق، وكان حقا على أهل الإسلام إذا التقوا بالحق أن يقبلوه ويجامعوه ما استقام على الحق.

فلما تفرقوا عنه نكث الذي عاهدهم عليه وعاد إلى أعظم من الذي تاب منه فكتب إلى عماله في أدبارهم أن تقطع أيديهم وأرجلهم من خلاف، فلما ظهر المؤمنون على كتابه ونكثه العهود

رجعوا إليه وقتلوه بحكم الله. وقد قال الله عز وجل «وإن نكثوا أيمانهم من بعد عهدهم وطعنوا في دينكم فقاتلوا أئمة الكفر إنهم لا أيمان لهم لعلهم ينتهون». وقد عمل بكتاب الله وجامع المسلمين زمانا ثم ارتد على عقبيه، وقد قال الله عز وجل «إن الذين ارتدوا على أدبارهم من بعد ما تبين لهم الهدى الشيطان سول لهم وأملى لهم». فهذا وأمثاله من خبر عثمان هو الذي فارقه عليه المؤمنون وفارقناه وطعنوا عليه فيه وطعنا نحن اليوم فيه.

08 · Who can invoke kinship in his favour?

وذكرت كونه مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وخلته معه، فقد كان علي بن أبي طالب أقرب قرابة إلى رسول الله وأعظم خلة وأقدم هجرة وأسبق إسلاما، وأنت تشهد له بذلك وأنا بعد ذلك، فكيف كانت قرابته وخلته هل كانت نجاة إذا ترك الحق أم هلاكا؟ واعلم أن علامة كفر هذه الأمة إذا تركوا الحكم بما أنزل الله وحكموا بغير ما أنزل الله «فمن أصدق من الله حكما لقوم يوقنون»، وقال «فبأي حديث بعد الله وآياته يؤمنون». فلا يغرنك يا عبد الملك بن مروان عز نفسك، ولا تسند دينك إلى الرجال، فإنهم يستدرجون من حيث لا يعلمون، فإن أملك

الأعمال خواتمها وكتاب الله جديد أبدا لا ينطق إلا بالحق. أجارنا الله باتباعه أن نبغي أو نضل. فاعتصم بحبل الله يا عبد الملك واعتصم بالله يهدك إلى صراط مستقيم، قال الله عز وجل «ومن يعتصم بالله فقد هدى إلى صراط مستقيم».

وكتاب الله هو حبل الله المتين الذي أمر المؤمنين أن يعتصموا به، فقال «واعتصموا بحبل الله جميعا ولا تفرقوا». فأنشدك الله أن تدبر معاني القرآن وتكون مهتديا به مخاصما به. قال الله عز وجل «أفلا يتدبرون القرآن أم على قلوب أقفالها».

09 · Muʿāwiya’s victory debated

وأما قولك في معاوية أن الله قام معه وعجل نصره وبلج حجته وأظهره على عدوه بالطلب لدم عثمان، فإن كنت تعتبر الدين من قبل الدولة والغلبة في الدنيا فإنا لا نعتبره من قبل ذلك، فقد ظهر المسلمون على الكافرين لينظر كيف يعملون وظهر المشركون على المؤمنين ليبلي المؤمنين ويملي للكافرين، وقال «وتلك الأيام نداولها بين الناس وليعلم الله الذين آمنوا ويتخذ منكم شهداء والله لا يحب الظالمين، وليمحص الله الذين آمنوا ويمحق الكافرين». وانظر ما أصاب المؤمنين من المشركين يوم أحد، وانظر كيف ظهر قتلة ابن عفان عليه وعلى

شيعته يوم الدار، وظهر علي على أهل البصرة وهم شيعة عثمان، وظهر المختار على زيد وأصحابه وهم شيعتهم وظهر مصعب على المختار وظهر أهل الشام على أهل المدينة وظهر الزبير على أهل الشام بمكة.

فلا تعتبر الدين من قبل الدولة فقد يظهر الناس بعضهم على بعض، فقد أعطى الله فرعون ملكا وظهر في الأرض، وأعطى الذي حاج إبراهيم في ربه ملكا، ثم إن معاوية إنما اشترى الإمارة من الحسن بن علي ولم يف له بما اشترطه عليه وعاهد الله العظيم ليوفين له، وقد قال الله عز وجل «ولا تنقضوا الأيمان بعد توكيدها» الآية. فلا تسأل عن معاوية وعن صناعته غيري، لأني قد أدركته ورأيت عمله وسيرته، ولا أعلم من الناس أحدا أترك للقسمة التي قسمها الله ولا لحكم حكمه الله ولا أسفك دم حرمه الله منه، فلو لم يصب من البلاء إلا دم ابن سمية لكان فيه ما يكفره، ثم استخلف ابنه يزيد فاسقا لعينا كافرا شاربا للخمر، فيكفيه من الشر فلا يخفى عمل معاوية ويزيد على كل عاقل.

فاتق الله يا عبد الملك ولا تخادع نفسك في معاوية، فقد أدركنا أهل بيتكم يطعنون في معاوية ويزيد ويعيبون عليهما كثيرا فيما يصنعون، فمن يتول عثمان ومن معه فإني أشهد الله

وملائكته أني منهم بريء، أعداء لهم بأيدينا وألسنتنا وقلوبنا، نعيش على ذلك ونموت عليه إذا متنا ونبعث عليه إذا بعثنا ونحاسب بذلك عند الله.

10 · Religious excess and the break with Ibn al-Azraq

وكتبت إلي تحذرني الغلو في الدين، أعوذ بالله من الغلو، وسأبين لك ما الغلو في الدين إذا جهلته. والغلو في الدين أن يقال على الله غير الحق، ويعمل بغير كتاب الله الذي بين وسنة نبيه التي سن، وقال الله «يا أهل الكتاب لا تغلوا في دينكم ولا تقولوا على الله إلا الحق»، وقال «يا أهل الكتاب لا تغلوا في دينكم غير الحق»، كما غلا عثمان والأئمة بعده وأنت بعد على سبيلهم وطاعتهم، تجامعهم على معصية الله وتتبعهم، وقد اتبعوا أهواءهم واتبعتهم أنت عليها، وقال الله عز وجل «ولا تتبعوا أهواء قوم قد ضلوا من قبل وأضلوا كثيرا وضلوا عن سواء السبيل». فهؤلاء أهل الغلو في الدين، فليس من غضب لله حين عصي ورضي بحكم الله ودعا إلى كتاب الله وإلى سنة نبيه وسنة المؤمنين بعده بغال في الدين.

وكتبت إلي تعرض بالخوارج وتزعم أنهم يغلون في دين الله ويتبعون غير سبيل المؤمنين ويفارقون أهل الإسلام، وأنا أبين

لك سبيلهم. هم أصحاب عثمان الذين أنكروا عليه ما أحدث من بدعة وفارقوه حين ترك حكم الله وهم أصحاب الزبير وطلحة حين نكثا، وأصحاب معاوية حين بغى، وأصحاب علي حين بدل كتاب الله وحكم عبد الله بن قيس وعمرو بن العاص، فهم فارقوا هؤلاء كلهم وأبوا أن يفرقوا بحكم البشر دون حكم الله. فهم لمن بعدهم أشد عداوة وأشد مفارقة، كانوا يتولون في دينهم وسنة نبي الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وأبي بكر وعمر رضي الله عنهما ويدعون إلى سبيلهم ويرضون على ذلك، كانوا يخرجون وإليه يدعون وعليه يفارقون، وقد علم من عرفهم وعرف حالهم أنهم كانوا أحسن عملا وأشد قتالا في سبيل الله.

هذا خبر الخوارج، شهد الله والملائكة أنا لمن عاداهم أعداء ولمن والاهم أولياء بألسنتنا وأيدينا وقلوبنا، نعيش على ذلك ما عشنا ونموت عليه إذا متنا ونبعث عليه عند ربنا. إنا براء إلى الله من ابن الأزرق وصنيعه وأتباعه، لقد كان حين خرج على الإسلام فيما ظهر لنا ولكنه أحدث وارتد وكفر بعد إسلامه فنبرأ إلى الله منهم.

11 · Two ways of leading people

وأنت كتبت إلي أن أكتب إليك بجواب كتابك وأجتهد لك في النصيحة، وذكرتني بالله وأفضل ما ذكرتني به أن قلت «إن الذين يكتمون ما أنزلنا من البينات والهدى من بعد ما بيناه للناس في الكتاب» الآية، «وإذا أخذ الله ميثاق الذين أوتوا الكتاب لتبيننه للناس ولا تكتمونه». فقد بينت لك وأخبرتك خبر الأئمة وكان حقا علي أن أنصح لك، فإن الله لم يتخذني عبدا لأكفر به، ولا أن أخادع الناس بشيء ليس في نفسي، وأخالف إلى ما أنهى عنه، أدعوكم إلى كتاب الله وسنة نبيه صلى الله عليه وسلم لتحل وتحرم الحرام ولا تظلموا الناس شيئا، وأن يكون كتاب الله حكما بيني وبينكم فيما اختلفنا فيه وأن نتولى من تولى الله وأن نبرأ ممن تبرأ الله منه وأن نطيع من أمر الله بطاعته ونعصي من أمر الله بمعصيته في كتابه. فهذا الذي أدركنا عليه نبينا صلى الله عليه وسلم.

وأن هذه الأمة لم تسفك دما إلا حين ترك كتاب الله وسنة نبيه، وقد قال الله عز وجل «وما اختلفتم فيه من شيء فحكمه إلى الله ذلكم الله ربي عليه توكلت وإليه أنيب». والقرآن هو السبيل الواضح الذي هدى الله به من كان قبلنا محمدا وأصحابه الخليفتين الصالحين ولا يضل من اتبعه ولا يهتدي من تركه،

وقال «وأن هذا صراطي مستقيما فاتبعوه ولا تتبعوا السبل فتفرق بكم عن سبيله». فاحذر أن تتفرق بك السبل وتتبع هواك، فإن الناس إنما يتبعون في الدنيا والآخرة إمامين، إمام هدى وإمام ضلالة.

فإمام الهدى الذي يتبع كتاب الله ويقسم بقسمة الله ويحكم بحكم الله وهو الذي قال الله عز وجل «وجعلناهم أئمة يهدون بأمرنا» وهؤلاء هم الأئمة الذين أمر الله بطاعتهم ونهى عن معصيتهم، وأما أئمة الضلالة فهم الذين يحكمون بغير ما أنزل الله ويقسمون بغير قسمة الله ويتبعون أهواءهم بغير سنة من الله. فهؤلاء الذين قال الله عز وجل فيهم «وجعلناهم أئمة يدعون إلى النار ويوم القيامة لا ينصرون» وفيهم قال «ولا تطع الكافرين وجاهدهم به جهادا كبيرا»، وقال «ولا تطع من أغفلنا قلبه عن ذكرنا واتبع هواه» وهذا كتابنا ينطق عليكم بالحق.

12 · The request for a reply

فماذا بعد الحق إلا الضلال فلا تضربن عنك الذكر صفحا ولا تشكن في كتاب الله. وقد كتبت إليك بمرجوع كتابك فأنشدك الله لما قرأته وأنت مشغول حتى تتفرغ له وتدبر معانيه وتنظر فيه بعين البصيرة، واكتب إلي جواب كتابي إن استطعت وانزع

لي الشواهد من كتاب الله والبينة منه فأصدق بذلك قولك، ولا تعرض لي بالدنيا فإنه لا رغبة لي في الدنيا وليست من حاجتي، ولكن لتكون نصيحتك لي من الدين ولما بعد الموت فإن ذلك أفضل النصيحة، والله قدير أن يجمع بيننا وبينك على الطاعة، فإنه لا خير فيمن لم يكن على طاعة الله وبالله التوفيق وفيه الرضا والسلام عليك.