

Descriptions of the Khawārij

Original Title: فقد جاء أشراطها

Author: Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Din al-Albānī¹

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¹ This article was taken from a book called “Faḡad Jāa’ Ashrāṭuhā” by a student of the famous scholar of Ḥadīth, Shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Din al-Albānī. This article is a collection of some Ḥadīth and narrations from that book considered authentic by al-Albānī in some of his collections.

The Dogs of Hell

Imam Aḥmad, Ibn Mājah, and al-Ḥākim recorded a Ḥadīth from Ibn Abī Awfá, and Aḥmad and al-Ḥākim also recorded it from Abū Umāmah that the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

الْخَوَارِجُ كِلَابُ النَّارِ

“The Khawārij are the dogs of Hell.”

The Khawārij are a sect of people who innovate and follow beliefs and practices foreign to Islam. They are called that (derived from the Arabic root verb: خَرَجَ - meaning to exit or rebel against) for their leaving the religion and for their rebellion against the best Muslims (prophet Muhammad’s companions).

The Khawārij used to renounce ‘Uthmān (the third Caliph of Islam) for several things and they declared themselves free of him announced their disassociation from him. The origin of that was that some of the citizens of Iraq criticized the behavior of some of ‘Uthmān’s relatives, so they blamed ‘Uthmān for that. Those people were known as “Reciters” for their diligence in reciting the Quran and for their worship. Yet, they used to twist and misinterpret the Quran from its intended meanings. They used to persist on their own personal opinions, and they used to appear very strict and devout in their humility, their renouncement of worldly things, and other things.

After ‘Uthmān was killed, they fought alongside ‘Alī. They believed ‘Uthmān was a disbeliever and whoever follows him. They considered ‘Alī’s leadership to be legitimate

and considered anyone who fought against him to be disbelievers – those who fought him during the Battle of the Camel when their leaders were Ṭalḥah and al-Zubayr.²

Yet when ‘Alī made a peace agreement regarding the leadership with Mu’āwiyah, they then declared ‘Alī to be a disbeliever and revolted against him, so he fought them.

They are the Worst of People, the Worst of All Creatures

Aḥmad, Muslim, and Ibn Mājah recorded a Ḥadīth from Abū Dharr who narrated that Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

إِنَّ بَعْدِي مِنْ أُمَّتِي أَوْ سَيِّكُونُ بَعْدِي مِنْ أُمَّتِي قَوْمٌ يَقْرَأُونَ الْقُرْآنَ لَا يُجَاوِزُ
حَلَاqِيمَهُمْ يَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ الدِّينِ كَمَا يَخْرُجُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ ثُمَّ لَا يَعُودُونَ
فِيهِ هُمْ شَرُّ الْخَلْقِ وَالْخَلِيقَةِ

“There will definitely be a people after me from my nation who recite the Quran yet it will not even reach beyond their throats. They will pass through the religion as an arrow passes through a target, then they will not return back to it. They are the worst of people, the worst of all creatures.”

Ibn al-Ṣāmit, who narrated the Ḥadīth from Abū Dharr, said, “I met Rāfi’ Ibn ‘Amr al-Ghifārī and asked him about this Ḥadīth of Abū Dharr. He said, “I (too) heard it from Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).”³

² See “Fath al-Bārī” (vol. 12/283).

³ Recorded by Muslim (no. 1067) and it is in “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi’” by al-Albānī (no. 2035).

The Anti-Christ Will Emerge Among Them

Ibn Mājah recorded a Ḥadīth from Ibn ‘Umar (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا) that the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

يَنْشَأُ نَشْءٌ يَقْرَأُونَ الْقُرْآنَ لَا يُجَاوِزُ تَرَاقِيهِمْ كَلَّمَا خَرَجَ قَرْنٌ قُطِعَ

“There will arise a group of people who will recite the Quran but it will not reach beyond their throats. Every time a new generation of them rises, they will then disappear.”

Ibn ‘Umar said, “I heard Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) say, ‘Every time a new generation of them rises, they will then disappear,’ more than twenty times and then said:

حَتَّى يَخْرُجَ فِي عَرَاضِهِمُ الدَّجَالُ

“Until the Anti-Christ finally appears among them.”⁴

They are the Worst of People Killed; The Best are Those Whom they Kill

Ibn Mājah recorded a Ḥadīth in which Abū Umāmah said:

⁴ Recorded by Ibn Mājah (no. 174 and it is in “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi” by al-Albānī (no. 8027).

شَرُّ قَتْلَى قُتِلُوا تَحْتَ أَدِيمِ السَّمَاءِ وَخَيْرُ قَتِيلٍ مَنْ قَتَلُوا كِلَابُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ قَدْ
كَانَ هَؤُلَاءِ مُسْلِمِينَ فَصَارُوا كُفَّارًا

“(They are) the worst people killed under the sky, and the best people killed are those whom they kill. They are the dogs of Hell. These people used to be Muslims but they became disbelievers.”

I (Abū Ghālib, one of the narrators) asked, “Abū Umāmah, is this something only you yourself are saying?” He replied, “No, rather I heard it from the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)”⁵

Their Distinguishing Signs on the Day of Nahrawān

al-Bukhārī and Muslim both recorded a Ḥadīth from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) who said, “We were with Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) while he was distributing some wealth. Dhu al-Khuwaṣirah, a man from the Tamīm tribe, came to him and said, ‘Messenger of Allah, be fair!’ The prophet replied:

وَيْلَكَ وَمَنْ يَعْدِلُ إِذَا لَمْ أَعْدِلْ قَدْ خَبِتَ وَخَسِرْتَ إِنْ لَمْ أَكُنْ أَعْدِلُ

“Beware. And who would be fair if I was not? You would be ruined if I were not just.”

‘Umar said, “Messenger of Allah, allow me to strike his neck.” He replied:

⁵ Recorded by Ibn Mājah (no. 176 and it is in “Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah” by al-Albānī (no. 146).

دَعَهُ فَإِنَّ لَهُ أَصْحَابًا يَحْقِرُ أَحَدُكُمْ صَلَاتَهُ مَعَ صَلَاتِهِمْ وَصِيَامَهُ مَعَ صِيَامِهِمْ
يَقْرَءُونَ الْقُرْآنَ لَا يُجَاوِزُ تَرَاقِيهِمْ يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الدِّينِ كَمَا يَمْرُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنْ
الرَّمِيَّةِ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى نَصْلِهِ فَلَا يُوجَدُ فِيهِ شَيْءٌ ثُمَّ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى رِصَافِهِ فَمَا يُوجَدُ فِيهِ
شَيْءٌ ثُمَّ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى نَضِيئِهِ وَهُوَ قِدْحُهُ فَلَا يُوجَدُ فِيهِ شَيْءٌ ثُمَّ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُدْزِهِ فَلَا
يُوجَدُ فِيهِ شَيْءٌ قَدْ سَبَقَ الْفَرْثَ وَالْدَّمَ آيَتُهُمْ رَجُلٌ أَسْوَدٌ إِحْدَى عَضْدِيهِ مِثْلُ
تُدْيِ الْمَرْأَةِ أَوْ مِثْلِ الْبُضْعَةِ تَدْرُدُ وَيَخْرُجُونَ عَلَى حِينِ فُرْقَةٍ مِنَ النَّاسِ

“Leave him. He will certainly have companions (from his progeny) whom one of you would belittle his own prayer when compared to their prayer and his fasting compared to their fasting. They will recite the Quran but it will not go beyond their throats. They will pass through the religion as an arrow passes through a game animal. One could then look at the arrowhead and not see a thing remaining on it. He could look at the binding which attaches the arrowhead to the rod and not see a thing. He could look at the rod and not see a thing. He could look at the feathers and not see a thing. It would go straight through the bowels and blood. Their sign is that of a black man. One of his limbs will appear like a woman’s breast or a disfigured lump of flesh. They will emerge when the people are disunited.”

Abū Sa’īd said, “I testify that I indeed heard this Ḥadīth from Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), and I testify that ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib fought them while I was with him. He instructed that we search for that man. He was found and ‘Alee was brought to him. I saw that man exactly as the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) described him.”⁶

⁶ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 3610) and Muslim (no. 1063).

They Murder the People of Islam and Ignore the People of Idol-Worship

al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nasā'ī all recorded a Ḥadīth from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) that he said:

'Alī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) sent some gold to the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) so divided and distributed it among four groups: al-Aqra' Ibn Ḥābis al-Ḥanzalī, al-Mujāshī'ī, 'Uyaynah Ibn Badr al-Fazārī, and Zayd al-Ṭā'ī; a man from the Nabhān tribe and 'Alqamah Ibn 'Ulāthah al-'Āmirī; then a man from the Kilāb tribe.

(The Muslims of) Quraysh and the residents of Medina became upset and said, "He gives to the noble one from Najd and leaves us?" The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

إِنَّمَا أَتَأَلَّفُهُمْ

"I am only trying to unite their hearts."

Then a man with sunken eyes, thick cheeks, a high forehead, a thick beard, and a shaven head came up and said, "Fear Allah, Muhammad!" He replied:

مَنْ يُطِيعُ اللَّهَ إِذَا عَصَيْتُ؟ أَيَأْمِنُنِي اللَّهُ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ فَلَا تَأْمَنُونِي؟

"Who would obey Allah if I were disobedient (to Him)? Allah trusts me with regards to the people of the earth but you don't trust me?"

A man then asked to kill him – I think it was Khālid Ibn al-Walīd – but the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) forbade him from doing so. After the man left, he said:

إِنَّ مِنْ ضَيْضِيِّ هَذَا أَوْ فِي عَقَبِ هَذَا قَوْمًا يَقْرَأُونَ الْقُرْآنَ لَا يُجَاوِزُ حَنَاجِرَهُمْ
يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَرُوقَ السَّهْمِ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ يَقْتُلُونَ أَهْلَ الْإِسْلَامِ وَيَدْعُونَ أَهْلَ
الْأَوْثَانِ لَيْنٍ أَنَا أَدْرِكْتُهُمْ لِأَقْتُلَنَّهُمْ فَتَلَّ عَادٍ

“From the progeny of this man,” or he said, “From the offspring of this man, there will come a people who will recite the Quran but it will not go beyond their throats. They will go through the religion like a arrow going through a target. They will murder the people of Islam while ignoring the people of idol-worship. If I were to reach them (their time), I would destroy them like the people of ‘Ād were destroyed.”⁷

Their Sign is Their Shaven Heads

Imam Aḥmad, al-Bukhārī, and Muslim recorded a Ḥadīth from Sahl Ibn Ḥanīf who narrated that the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

يَخْرُجُ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ أَقْوَامٌ مُحَلَّقَةٌ رءُوسُهُمْ، يَقْرَأُونَ الْقُرْآنَ بِأَلْسِنَتِهِمْ لَا يَعْدُو
تَرَاقِيهِمْ، يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الدِّينِ كَمَا يَمْرُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ

⁷ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 3344), Muslim (no. 1064), al-Nasā’ī (no. 2578), and Abū Dāwūd (no. 4764). It is also in “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi” by al-Albānī (no. 2223) and “al-Lu’lu’ wa al-Marjān” (no. 639).

“A people will emerge from the East having shaven heads. They will recite the Quran with their tongues but it will not pass beyond their throats. They will pass through the religion just as an arrow passes through a target.”⁸

Aḥmad and al-Bukhārī record a Ḥadīth from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī that Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

يَخْرُجُ نَاسٌ مِنْ قِبَلِ الْمَشْرِقِ وَيَقْرَءُونَ الْقُرْآنَ لَا يُجَاوِزُ تَرَاقِيهِمْ يَمْرُقُونَ مِنْ
الدِّينِ كَمَا يَمْرُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَةِ ثُمَّ لَا يَعُودُونَ فِيهِ حَتَّى يَعُودَ السَّهْمُ إِلَى
فُوقِهِ

“People will emerge from the East who will recite the Quran but it will not go beyond their throats. They will pass through the religion as an arrow passes through a target, and they will not return to it until an arrow returns to its bow.”

It was asked, “What is their distinguishing sign?” He answered:

سِيمَاهُمْ التَّحْلِيقُ

“Their sign is shaven heads.”⁹

They Recite the Quran with Only Their Tongues

al-Ṭabarānī recorded a Ḥadīth from ‘Uqbah Ibn ‘Āmir from Sahl Ibn Ḥanīf who narrated that Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

⁸ Recorded by Muslim (no. 1068) and it is in “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi” (no. 7913) by al-Albānī.

⁹ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 7562) and it is in “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi” (no. 7919) by al-Albānī.

سَيَخْرُجُ قَوْمٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يَشْرَبُونَ الْقُرْآنَ كَشُرْبِهِمِ اللَّبَنَ

“There will arise a people from my nation who will drink¹⁰ the Quran just as they drink milk.”¹¹

There are many other Ḥadīth to this same effect. Some of them have been mentioned so there is no need to repeat them.

They are Mostly People of Talk, Not Action

Abū Dāwūd, and al-Ḥākim recorded a Ḥadīth narrated by both Abū Sa’īd and Anas in which the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

سَيَكُونُ فِي أُمَّتِي اخْتِلَافٌ وَفُرْقَةٌ ، قَوْمٌ يُحْسِنُونَ الْقِيلَ وَيُسَيِّئُونَ الْفِعْلَ ،
يَقْرَأُونَ الْقُرْآنَ لَا يُجَاوِزُ تَرَاقِيهِمْ ، يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الدِّينِ مُرُوقَ السَّهْمِ مِنْ
الرَّمِيَّةِ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ حَتَّى يَرْتَدَّ عَلَى فُوقِهِ ، هُمْ شَرُّ الْخَلْقِ وَالْخَلِيقَةِ ، طُوبَى
لِمَنْ قَاتَلَهُمْ وَقَتَلُوهُ ، يَدْعُونَ إِلَى كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَلَيْسُوا مِنْهُ فِي شَيْءٍ ، مَنْ قَاتَلَهُمْ
كَانَ أَوْلَى بِاللَّهِ مِنْهُمْ

“There will appear within my nation differences and division – people who will perfect their speech and make evil their actions. They will recite the Quran but it will not pass beyond their throats. They will pass through the religion just as an arrow passes through a target and they will not return until it (the arrow) returns

¹⁰ Meaning: They will merely move their tongues with it, neither pondering over its meanings nor being concerned with its laws and rulings. Instead, it will simply pass over their tongues just as a drink of milk quickly passes over them.

¹¹ The Ḥadīth is in “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi” (no. 3547) by al-Albānī.

back to its bow. They are the worst of people, the worst of all creatures. Tūbá (a tree in paradise, success) is for whoever kills them or they kill him. They will call to the book of Allah yet they have nothing to do with it. Whoever fights against them has more right upon Allah than they do.”

The companions asked, “What is their sign?” He replied:

التَّحْلِيقُ

“Shaven heads.”¹²

Their Religious Actions Amaze Some People

al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Ibn Mājah recorded a Ḥadīth from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) who said that he heard Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) saying:

يَخْرُجُ فِيكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَحْقِرُونَ صَلَاتَكُمْ مَعَ صَلَاتِهِمْ وَصِيَامَكُمْ مَعَ صِيَامِهِمْ وَعَمَلَكُمْ مَعَ عَمَلِهِمْ وَيَقْرَأُونَ الْقُرْآنَ لَا يُجَاوِزُ حَنَاجِرَهُمْ يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الدِّينِ كَمَا يَمْرُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ يَنْظُرُ فِي النَّصْلِ فَلَا يَرَى شَيْئًا وَيَنْظُرُ فِي الْقِدْحِ فَلَا يَرَى شَيْئًا وَيَنْظُرُ فِي الرَّيشِ فَلَا يَرَى شَيْئًا وَيَتَمَارَى فِي الْفُوقِ (هَلْ عَلَّقَ بِهِ مِنْ الدَّمِ شَيْءٌ)

“There will emerge among you people whom you would belittle your prayer when compared to their prayer, your fasting compared to their fasting, and your deeds compared to theirs. They will recite the Quran but it will not reach beyond their

¹² Recorded by Abū Dāwūd (no. 4765) and it is in “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi” (no. 3562) by al-Albānī.

throats. They will pass right through the religion just as an arrow may pass right through a target (game animal). One may look at such an arrowhead and see nothing remaining. He may look at the arrow rod and see nothing remaining. He may look at the feathers and see nothing. And he may look at the end-notch (to see if anything of blood stuck to it).”¹³

Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim recorded in “Kitāb al-Sunnah” a Ḥadīth narrated by Anas Ibn Mālik (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) in which he said: It was narrated to me that Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

يَخْرُجُ فِيكُمْ - أَوْ يَكُونُ فِيكُمْ - قَوْمٌ يَتَعَبَّدُونَ وَيَتَدِينُونَ حَتَّى يَعْجِبُواكُمْ
وَتَعْجِبَهُمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الدِّينِ كَمَا يَمْرُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ

“There will emerge among you – or (he said) there will be among you - a people who will worship and be religious so much that they will amaze you and amaze themselves. They will pass right through the religion just as an arrow may pass right through a target.”¹⁴

They are the Māriqūn (They Pass Right through the Religion)

al-Bazzār recorded, as did Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim in “Kitāb al-Sunnah,” a narration that ‘Alī Ibn Abī

Ṭālib (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) said on the Day of al-Nahrawān:

¹³ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 5058) and others, and it is in “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi” (no. 7909) by al-Albānī.

¹⁴ Recorded by Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim in “Kitāb al-Sunnah” (no. 945).

أُمِرْتُ بِقِتَالِ الْمَارِقِينَ، وَهَؤُلَاءِ الْمَارِقُونَ

“I have been ordered to fight the Māriqūn, and these people are the Māriqūn.”¹⁵

The Closer of the Two Parties to the Truth Will Defeat Them

Muslim and Abū Dāwūd recorded a Ḥadīth from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) who said that the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

تَمْرُقُ مَارِقَةٌ عِنْدَ فِرْقَةٍ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، يَقْتُلُهَا أَوْلَى الطَّائِفَتَيْنِ بِالْحَقِّ

“A group of Māriqah will renegade when the Muslims will split (the party of ‘Alī and that of Mu‘āwiyah); the closer of the two parties to the truth will kill them (the Māriqah).”¹⁶

And in a narration recorded by Muslim:

تَكُونُ فِي أُمَّتِي فِرْقَتَانِ، فَتَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمَا مَارِقَةٌ، يَلِي قَتْلَهُمْ أَوْلَاهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ

“There will be in my nation two parties. Between them, a group of Māriqah will emerge. The closer of the two parties to the truth will kill them.”¹⁷

al-Nawawī said in his explanation of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim:

¹⁵ For this statement of ‘Alī, see “Kitāb al-Sunnah” (no. 907) by Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim along with the referencing of al-Albānī.

¹⁶ “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi” (no. 2994) by al-Albānī.

¹⁷ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim with the explanation of al-Nawawī (7/168).

“These narrations are explicit in that ‘Alī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) was correct, and the other party, the companions of Muā’wiyah (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ), were mistaken in their interpretations. And in these narrations, it is clear that both parties still remained believers; they did not, because of their fighting one another, leave their faith nor are they considered wicked.”¹⁸

Ibn Tamiyyah said:

“And we know that ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) was better and closer to the truth than Muā’wiyah and those who fought against him with Muā’wiyah. This is confirmed by the narration in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) said that the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

تَمْرُقُ مَارِقَةٌ عِنْدَ فِرْقَةٍ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، يَقْتُلُهَا أَوْلَى الطَّائِفَتَيْنِ بِالْحَقِّ

“A group of Māriqah will renegade when the Muslims will split; the closer of the two parties to the truth will kill them (the Māriqah).”¹⁹

“And in this Ḥadīth, there is evidence that both parties had something of truth with it, but that ‘Alī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) was closer to the truth.”²⁰

The Encouragement of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ to Defeat them & the Reward for Doing So

¹⁸ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim with the explanation of al-Nawawī (7/168).

¹⁹ See footnote no. 16.

²⁰ Majmū’ al-Fatāwá (3/407).

al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Abū Dāwūd recorded a narration in which ‘Alī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) said:

“When I speak to you, narrating to you something that Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, I would rather fall from the sky than to lie upon him. And if speak to you about what is happening between you and I, then surely in war there may be misleading strategy. Yet, I heard the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) saying:

يَأْتِي فِي آخِرِ الزَّمَانِ قَوْمٌ حُدَّتْهُمُ الْأَسْنَانُ، سَفَهَاءُ الْأَحْلَامِ، يَقُولُونَ مِنْ قَوْلِ خَيْرِ
الْبَرِيَّةِ، يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الْإِسْلَامِ كَمَا يَمْرُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ، لَا يُجَاوِزُ إِيمَانُهُمْ
حَنَاجِرَهُمْ، فَأَيْنَمَا لَقِيتُمُوهُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ، فَإِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ لِمَنْ قَتَلَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

“There will come towards the end of time a people who will be young in age, having reckless and deficient intellects. They will speak with the statements of the best of creation, yet they will pass through Islam just as an arrow passes through a target. Their faith will not even reach beyond their throats. Wherever you find them, kill them, for whoever kills them will have a reward on the Day of Resurrection.²¹

And Muslim also narrated that Salamah Ibn Kuhīl said: Zayd Ibn Wahb al-Juhanī told me that he was among the army under the command of ‘Alī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) that went out to fight the Khawārij. ‘Alī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) said:

Oh people, indeed I heard Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) saying:

²¹ “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi” (no. 7883) by al-Albānī.

يَخْرُجُ قَوْمٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يَقْرَأُونَ الْقُرْآنَ، لَيْسَ قِرَاءَتُكُمْ إِلَى قِرَاءَتِهِمْ بِشَيْءٍ، وَلَا صَلَاتُكُمْ إِلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ بِشَيْءٍ، وَلَا صِيَامُكُمْ إِلَى صِيَامِهِمْ بِشَيْءٍ، يَقْرَأُونَ الْقُرْآنَ، يَحْسِبُونَ أَنَّهُ لَهُمْ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ، لَا تُجَاوِزُ صَلَاتُهُمْ تَرَاقِيهِمْ، يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الْإِسْلَامِ كَمَا يَمْرُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ

“There will arise a people from my nation, those who will recite the Quran; your recitation is nothing (insignificant) compared to theirs, your prayer is nothing compared to theirs, and your fasting is nothing compared to theirs. They recite the Quran believing it is evidence in support of them yet it is actually against them. Their prayers will not even go beyond their throats. They will pass through and out of Islam just as an arrow passes through a target.”

(‘Alī continued:) “If the army that is to encounter them were to know what (rewards) have been assured to them upon the tongue of their prophet, then they would almost rely solely upon that deed.

Their (the Khawārij) distinctive mark is that there will be among them a man with one upper-arm having no forearm. Its end will resemble a breast (of a woman) and there will be white hair upon it.

You will march towards Muā’wiyah and the people of al-Shām, leaving them (the Khawārij) behind with your children and wealth! By Allah, I hope that these are those people (that the prophet informed of), for they have shed blood that was to be held sacred and have raided and attacked people. So go in the name of Allah.”

Salamah Ibn Kuhīl said:

Zayd Ibn Wahb was with me at every point until we came to the bridge. That day, ‘Abdullah Ibn Wahb al-Rāsibī was at the head of the Khawārij. He (‘Abdullah) said to his army, “Throw your spears and draw your swords from their sheaths, for I fear that they will confront you in the way they did on the Day of Ḥarūrā.” So they went back, let loose their spears and drew their swords. The people fought against them with spears, stabbing them and killing them one after another. And no one was killed that day (from ‘Alī’s army) except two men. ‘Alī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) said:

“Search among them (the casualties) for the deformed one.”

So the people searched but did not find him. ‘Alī then stood and began searching himself until he came to a group of people who had been killed. He said:

“Search everyone of these to the last (of them).”

So they found him at the bottom, on the ground. ‘Alī said:

“Allah is the greatest! Allah told the truth and His messenger conveyed it.”

'Abīdah al-Salmānī stood before him and asked, “Oh Chief of the Believers, by Allah other than whom there is no god, did you in fact here this Ḥadīth from Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)?” He replied:

“Yes, by Allah other than whom there is no god.”

He ('Abīdah) asked him ('Alī) to swear three times and he did swear.²²

al-Nawawī said:

“‘Abīdah al-Salmānī, may Allah have mercy on him, asked ‘Alī to swear three times. He only asked him to swear for the others present to hear and so that it would be emphasized and that it be made known the miracle that Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) informed about. And he wanted to make it well-known to the people that ‘Alī and his companions were the closer of the two parties to the truth and that he was correct in fighting them.”²³

They Consider Their Rebellion to be a Form of Migration for the Sake of Allah

Aḥmad recorded a narration as did Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim recorded in “Kitāb al-Sunnah” – and the wording is his – that Abī Ḥafṣ said:

²² Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim with the explanation of al-Nawawī (7/171-173).

²³ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim with the explanation of al-Nawawī (7/173).

“I heard from ‘Abdullah Ibn Abī Awfá when they were fighting the Khawārij. He used to have a young man (that served him, helped him, etc.) but he joined the Khawārij. So we called to him (the young man), ‘Oh Fayrūz! Fayrūz, this is ‘Abdullah Ibn Abī Awfá.’ He replied, ‘A great man if he only made Hijrah (migration)!’ ‘Abdullah asked, ‘What is Allah’s enemy saying?’ He was told what he said. So he (‘Abdullah) said, ‘A Hijrah after the Hijrah I made with the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)? I surely heard Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) saying:

طُوبَى لِمَنْ قَتَلَهُمْ وَقَتَلُوهُ

Tūbá (a tree in Paradise, success) is for he who kills them or they kill him.²⁴

‘Alī’s Attempt to Return Them to the Truth Before Fighting Them

Ibn Jarīr recorded in his “al-Tārīkh” that Ismā‘īl Ibn Samī’ al-Ḥanafī narrated that Abū Zarīr said:

When the issue of al-Taḥkīm (before ‘Alī’s battle with the Khawārij) took place, ‘Alī returned from Şiffīn and those who split from him (the Khawārij) also returned. When they reached the river, they established themselves there. ‘Alī entered Kufa (in Iraq) along with the people and they (the Khawārij) were at Ḥarūrā. ‘Alī then sent ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbās to them but he returned without accomplishing

²⁴ “Kitāb al-Sunnah” by Ibn Abī ‘Āşim (no. 906).

much. So, ‘Alī went out to them and spoke to them until he and they were pleased and mutually content. They all then entered Kufa and a man came to him (‘Alī) and said, “The people are saying that you returned back from your disbelief because of them.” So, he addressed the people after the noon prayer and mentioned the affair. They began criticizing him and gathered near the mosque, saying, “There is no rule except the rule of Allah!” Then a man faced him (‘Alī) and recited:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَئِنْ أَشْرَكَتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ
وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴾

And it was already revealed to you and to those before you that if you should associate (anything) with Allah, your work would surely become worthless, and you would surely be among the losers.

[al-Zumar, 39:65]

‘Alī replied, reciting:

﴿ فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَا يَسْتَخِفَّنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُوقِنُونَ ﴾

So be patient. Indeed, the promise of Allah is true. And do not let those who have no certain faith worry you.

[al-Rūm, 30:60]²⁵

Muslim and al-Nasā’ī recorded a narration in “Khaṣā’iṣ ‘Alī Ṛaḍī ‘anhu” in which ‘Ubayd Allah Ibn Abī Rāfi’ said:

²⁵ See “Irwā al-Ghalīl” (2468) by al-Albānī and “Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mamlūk” (5/688) by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī.

Indeed, the Ḥarūriyyah, before they rebelled, they were with ‘Alī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ).

Then they began saying, “There is no rule except the rule of Allah!” ‘Alī said:

“A word of truth, but intended therewith falsehood. Indeed, Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) described a people and I certainly recognize their description within these people. They speak the truth with their tongues, but it does not reach beyond here (and he pointed to his throat) from them. They are from the most hated to Allah of His creation. Among them will be a black man with one arm that will resemble a sheep’s teat or a breast.”

So, after ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) killed them, he said, “Search (for the deformed man).” They searched but found nothing. He then said, “Return (and search again) for by Allah, I did not lie nor was I lied to.” He repeated this two or three times. They then found him among the ruined remains and brought him in front of ‘Alī.

‘Ubayd Allah (the narrator) then said, “I was present at that time among them and heard ‘Alī’s statements about them.”²⁶

²⁶ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim with the explanation of al-Nawawī (7/173) and “Irwā al-Ghalīl” (8/118) by al-Albānī.