

Risalat al Izah wa alTabyin The Epistle of Elucidation and Clarification

‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd – 5th Dai

In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful.

Praise be to God, who is exalted far beyond the soaring reach of intellects and thoughts through the vastness of His greatness; transcendent is He beyond what diverse tongues and languages can express of the essence of His attribute; sanctified is He beyond both affirmation and negation, which pertain to what He brings forth and creates. The lofty intellect fails to comprehend Him, despite its superiority over its own kind through its nobility and precedence. Whenever it rises seeking comprehension, waves of bewilderment overtake it, and it drowns in their current. The hand of incapacity draws it down to the pit of deficiency, and it is left with no refuge but to take shelter near its own limitation, clinging to the pinnacle of confession, which is salvation. He alone is the Origin of the command by which the heavens and the earth were established.

I bear witness that there is no god but God — that the very incapacity to comprehend Him is the essence of true comprehension. The path of His oneness is surrounded by the curtains of transcendence and anthropomorphism. Whoever traverses it without guidance from the Family of the Messenger of God — peace be upon him and his family — falls into ruin. And whoever sets out upon it without a guide from the guides of His religion becomes entangled in snares and traps; his own obstinacy plunges him to the lowest depths of understanding.

And I bear witness that Muḥammad is the best sun that has risen in the sky of religion, the highest banner raised for the salvation of the rightly guided, the noblest prophet who charted the path of divine unity for the monotheists, the most exalted chosen one who demolished the pillars of the atheists with the force of his proof. He is the city of knowledge and wisdom from which the righteous draw their provisions for the abode of the hereafter, and the captain of the ark to which the elect flee from the overwhelming flood of the world of being and corruption. God the Exalted addressed him, saying: “You are only a warner, and for every people there is a guide.”

And I bear witness that ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib is the noblest legatee, who expounded the concise meanings of the Revelation and clarified the truths of its interpretation. He arose after the Prophet, calling to his path — a fountain of radiance and light, the interpreter of inscribed wisdom, the very meaning of the Inhabited House (al-bayt al-ma‘mūr). On the day he was designated, God perfected the religion, completed His favor, and approved Islam as a religion. He is the one who said, “By God, if the veil were lifted, my certainty would not increase.” He is the one destroyed by those who exaggerate about him and those who fall short; and saved by

the faithful believer who recognizes his rank. He is the guide of the community, the leader of the Imams, the gate to the city of knowledge and wisdom, who with his sword and knowledge built the edifice of faith — the one referred to in God's words to His Prophet, peace be upon him: "We will strengthen your arm with your brother, and We will give you both authority."

Peace be upon both of them — two lights that rose from the abode of origination (dār al-ibdā'), whose shining illuminated the paths of guidance. Two brothers whose sciences irrigated the meadows of souls with sparkling rain, so that the earth quivered and grew from that blessed watering, bringing forth every delightful pair of praiseworthy forms.

And peace be upon the Lady of Women, the one specially honored among the People of the Cloak, the pearl of pride, the embodiment of the Night of Power — which is better than a thousand months — Fāṭima al-Zahrā', descendant of the best who ever trod the earth, radiance of the one who said, "Gold and silver have never tempted me," the west where the light of the Imamate sets and its east where it rises, origin of the fruits of the message and source of its blessings.

And peace be upon the two grandsons of prophecy and Imamate, crowned by the guardianship of the Messenger and the nurturing of the angels with the crown of honor — al-Ḥasan, entrusted with the ease of the kingdom of divine dominion (al-mulkūt), and al-Ḥusayn, charged with bearing the calm of the ark (al-tābūt), through whose progeny that secret continues until the Day of Judgment. In his noble descendants is the seat of the ongoing Imamate — the clouds of knowledge pouring down wisdom upon the people of loyalty, the lords of guidance who bring their Shī'a from nonexistence into being. Never did one of them set into the West — the Abode of Honor — without another rising in the East of mercy. Never did one of their lights flicker out without another rising in the sky of religion to shine bright. There has never ceased to be, in every age, a lamp illuminating the darkness of ignorance, confirming God's saying: "Lest they say, 'No bringer of glad tidings or warner came to us.' Say: Surely a bringer of glad tidings and a warner has come to you."

And peace be upon the culmination of the Imamate in this age, its seat and resting place, the mine of caliphate and the one who seized the prize of its pride — the seventh of the cycle of witnesses, the recipient of the signs of his noble forefathers, the straight path of God stretched between Paradise and Hell, the rope of God whose one end is in the hand of his Shī'a, and the other in the grasp of the Almighty and Compelling. He is God's sun veiled in the shadows of the clouds, His light shining through the noble ḥudūd of His religion. The ignorant went astray concerning him due to the length of his concealment, while the learned were saved by what they drank from the knowledge of his pure forebears. The believer rejoices at the rise of his sun; the disbeliever trembles in fear at his own past denial. He is the Imām al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Qāsim, whose pure remembrance beautifies every festival and season. His followers from among the God-conscious are those to whom it will be said on the Day when

every soul is summoned with its imām: “Whoever is given his book in his right hand, they shall read their book and shall not be wronged even a thread.”

And peace be upon his appointed ḥudūd who follow them with excellence, and his ḥujjas designated to rescue the drowning from the seas of misguidance and tyranny, who blow into the dead of ignorance the spirit of life through their knowledge, and who guarantee deliverance from the darkness of doubt and illusion to those who obey them. They ensure salvation in the hereafter for those who cling to them. Peace and blessings be upon all of them — a continuous and everlasting peace until the Day of Judgment.

O brethren,

May God make you among those whose inner eyes are illuminated by the light of divine aid, and whose secrets are purified through sincere devotion to the People of the Prophet’s Household. Truly fortunate is the one who sees the world as a lesson and uses it as a bridge to the Hereafter, turning away from its pitfalls and taking caution against its deceptions. He has had the veil of illusion torn from the face of its seductions, perceiving them with the eye of certainty and not merely from hearsay. Thus he escapes its fangs and flees from the world, ceasing to be among its lovers or suitors. He has torn through the veils of delusion with the swords of right guidance, and dispelled the darkness of atheism with the light of divine unity. He is not blown about by the storms of trial in the seas of confusion, nor is he enticed by the devilish embellishments of deceit and false ornamentation.

As for what follows:

It is incumbent upon one who receives a favor to respond with gratitude, and upon one shown beneficence to proclaim his Benefactor’s bounty. I was among the drowning in the seas of misguidance, sunk in the abysses of ignorance. But the mercy of my Lord reached me; He forgave my sin and pardoned my error. He brought me into being from nonexistence, and led me from the darkness of overlapping doubts to the light of guidance. He revived me after death, and breathed into me, through knowledge, the spirit of life.

I was incapable of fulfilling even the least part of what is owed to Him — unable to repay even the smallest portion of the obligatory rights He has over me. For the lesser cannot equal the greater, and the deficient cannot compensate the perfect. The hand of incapacity bound me with the cord of captivity, and the circle of inadequacy enclosed me within the tent of limitation. Yet God has promised that gratitude leads to increase, as He says: “If you are thankful, I will surely increase you; but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is severe.” And the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, said: “Whoever is shown a favor should return it; and if he cannot, let him praise [the giver].”

So when recompense fell beyond my reach, praise became an obligation. It became incumbent upon me to publish the favors by which I was made one of his good deeds, in the

hope that this would increase for me his favor. Thus, I have composed a brief treatise and named it “The Epistle of Elucidation and Clarification”, on the manner of the succession of my bodily and religious birth. I address it to the brethren, in companionship and mutual reminder, confessing that I am a commanded servant, not a commander. I merely disclose what my Benefactor has kept hidden within me of His grace. I do not place myself on par with those who are free to speak, nor do I claim strength or power — for strength and power belong to the master of the command. Whatever in it is correct is due to His bounty; and whatever error it contains — and I seek refuge from that — stems from the limitations and defects of my own form. I ask Him for salvation from deviation and distortion, and I seek His guidance in word and deed, by His grace and mercy.

Section (Faṣl)

O brethren, truly the cycles (adwār) alternate between disclosure and concealment. Wisdom structures their order through the revealed laws — with commands and prohibitions. Creation itself is composed of the setting of night after the brightness of day, and the alternation of regimes between the righteous and the wicked. All of this contains radiant signs and luminous proofs for those who apply the light of their reason. These testify that the world of religion has been fashioned in the same way. Both worlds — the greater and the lesser — correspond as analogs, set up by divine power as evidence of the truth of religion.

God, exalted is He, says: “We will show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.” So why should the denier reject the veiling of the sun of the Imamate in the clouds? Why should the rejecter deny the alternation of appearance and concealment, when it serves to distinguish among humankind — so that through testing, the false may be separated from the true, and through purification it becomes clear who among them has believed and acted righteously, and who is in loss?

God the Exalted says: “Do people think they will be left to say ‘We believe’ and not be tested? Indeed, We tested those before them; so God will surely make evident those who are truthful and those who lie.” And He said, relating His testing of those to come as He tested those who came before: “That God may purify those who believe and destroy the disbelievers.”

So fear God in your inner selves just as you fear Him in your outward actions. For He, exalted is He, says: “We will surely test you until We make evident those among you who strive and are patient, and We will test your claims.” So when the interval (fatra) pitched its tents, the devils raised their heads after being humbled. When the clouds of darkness covered the horizons of religion, the devils of jinn and mankind united in seduction and humiliation — until some imagined that the light of God would be extinguished, and the ignorant supposed that the pillars of the Imamate would collapse when truth withdrew into concealment.

Section (Faṣl)

O brethren, the perceptible is the most complete guide to the intelligible, and the visible the greatest witness pointing to its intended meaning. The natural world is organized in structure, and the celestial order is well-regulated: revolving spheres, wandering stars, interconnected elements, and intermingled composites — all bound together by affinity and harmony, even while they repel one another due to their inherent oppositions and differences. All of them are nurtured and sustained by the light of the solar sun and the planets deriving from it. Their spiritual qualities evolve through the passage of time, moving upward from a lower state to a higher, and being raised and elevated. Or else they fall backward and are cast down to the lowest, most base level.

This process is unceasing — continuing day and night — and their movement toward this goal persists whether manifest or hidden.

Section

Thus it [the divine effusion] moves about in the cosmos, settling into the purity of the [four] mothers after their intermingling, clarifying it by the motion of the surging air, and expressing it through divine care so that it pours down as rain. Then, by divine power, it is driven to the receptive and well-prepared earth, which absorbs the purified essence of the minerals, soaking into the depths of the soil. From it emerge the varieties of plants according to what is stored within it of hidden fruits—ranging from the noble and uplifting to the vile and cast out. Then it stirs within the various kinds of animals, producing individual forms that feed on it and assimilate it into their constitutions, in accordance with what wisdom necessitates and dictates. The divine mystery guards for each of them the portion it is allowed to seize, and the share by which it either ascends in its elevation or regresses in its degradation—according to the dictates of wisdom regarding the noble passing through the lowly, and the base and despicable traversing within the noble and exalted.

This flowing divine care has brought the purified essence of mineral, plant, and animal—among all created beings—into the human being. He takes in that essence, nourished by minerals, plants, and animals that have been resolved and uplifted after long descent and repeated cycles. Then he is transferred to the human domain, raised—after corruption, inversion, degradation, and deficiency—to the upright Millennial Form (al-qāma al-alfiyya), and, if granted divine success (tawfiq), he is guided to the most upright path.

Section

So when the quintessence derived from the elements and generated beings gathers within him, and persons of the human kind partake in it—whether wretched or fortunate—then the males incline toward the females by virtue of the force by which they have been favored and raised above them, as God said, informing His servants so they might understand: “Men are

caretakers over women by what God has preferred some of them over others, and by what they spend [in support of them]” (Qur’ān 4:34).

At that point, they hand over the accumulated trust of those deposits to the females—like one departing this world handing over his inheritance to his heirs—since the goal of most in this is the pleasure of intercourse, not the conscious extraction of the essence of all kinds and species. It is like compulsion disguised in the form of choice, and like volition arising from one compelled by necessity. The females then receive it with acceptance and mix it with their own accumulated portion of the same essence. It then ascends from the seed to the sperm, then to the clot, then passes from it to a formed and unformed lump of flesh, then continues to the level of bones, and ascends to the stage of flesh—the highest rank among the stages of bodies.

The spiritualities of the angels, whose mention preceded, continue to flow within it by the will of the One to whom belongs creation and command—affecting, acting, raising, and transferring it. A subtle, oily nourishment is prepared for it, carried in the blood of menstruation, which it absorbs through the umbilical cord. The power of growth, latent in the quintessence of that sperm, becomes manifest by the command of the Possessor of Power. It is that force which draws the fatty, bloody residues of nourishment and grows the body in length and width, distributing the received nourishment to all the organs, channels, veins, and joints—giving each its proper share and portion.

So when its form is perfected within those layers of darkness, and the time comes for it to be transferred to the first stage of the living after having been in the final ranks of the dead, the flowing divine care pushes it from the narrowness of the womb to the expanse of the open world. Then the sensory soul (al-rūḥ al-ḥissī) that enlivens it is connected to it at the inhalation of the breath of air.

God said, confirming what is stated in His clear Book:

“Indeed We created man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging. Then We created the sperm-drop into a clot, then We created the clot into a lump [of flesh], then We created the lump into bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is God, the best of creators.” (Qur’ān 23:12–14)

And our lord al-Mu’ayyad—may God exalt his sanctity and grant us his intercession and companionship—said, explaining what we have detailed and confirming what we have clarified:

“Ah, if only I knew! Why were you drawn forth from the powers of the spheres and the celestial bodies, inserted into the loins and wombs, brought forth from the narrowness of that veil to the breadth of this open world, exchanged darkness for light, and in you was established a hidden reality of the essence, manifest in signs, encompassing the heavens and the earth—all this, only to imitate the beasts, clinging to what you crave of food and drink? Then you die, perish, and vanish—left neglected? No, never! The wisdom of the All-Wise in you is not rendered void, nor the decree of the Mighty, the All-Knowing.”

Section

When this froth (the seminal essence) that is cast forth at birth appears, and the sensory force moves within it, driving it to attract matter and draw from the residual wastes of the various foods, passing these through the layers of the bodily apparatus prepared to sustain the completed individual, then the divine care transforms those blood residues into pure milk in the mother’s breast. She absorbs it to nourish what was lagging behind and to complete what was deficient.

And when the stage of nursing and nourishment is fulfilled, and all the adverse afflictions that might cause corruption and harm are removed, then the child begins to feed on the sustenance of his parents. He draws in what strays from those scattered residues through nourishment, disciplined by their manners, cared for by their guardianship and oversight, inspired by their guidance for his spiritual interests if they are righteous, or diverted from the path of his proper growth by their will if they are wicked—according to how they influence or perceive the newborn.

The Prophet said: “Every child is born upon the natural disposition (fiṭrah) of Islam until his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.”

When the child reaches the stage where his reason is enlightened by upbringing, and divine care reaches him through the subtle Germanic influences in his bodily creation to the utmost goal, having perfected him with the utmost perfection, structured him with the most excellent order, and adorned his form with the finest attire, he becomes a microcosm — a smaller world reflecting the greater world, limited and contained within the totality, but secretly the noblest over it.

And with the spiritual soul granted to him, he is like a sphere placed before the divine presence, revealing his true reality and the cause of his existence. This, though but a small part of one of the pillars of the universe, is composed by his Creator and Maker with a heart full of care for his body, managing its functions, regulating its desires. It is the house of his life and his essence, the center of his intellect and his dwelling place. His limbs move or cease only by its will, and no movement or stillness occurs except by its governance and care.

The Germanic solar substance flows within the greater world, corresponding in the realm of religion to the most honored and luminous position of the Imamate. This heart of the human being is thus testified as a prince over his body, and this station is of unique rank in the religious world, operating according to its will and management.

God Almighty says: “God has not made for any man two hearts in his interior.” This is an irrefutable proof accepted by the sharpest intellects and the keenest minds.

Section

When this froth cast forth as described reaches the stage of its parents, ready to bring forth the aggregate from the froth of the mothers and offspring within them, it then begins to act in manifesting its likeness. It rises, extracting, though not intentionally, its form, which is the ultimate act of the Germanic influences whose complete fulfillment was the intended purpose of the Planner through His plan, and the final outcome of the work of transporting it after corruption to the ranks of the cosmos and its transition.

Glory be to Him for this great care for even His lowest close servants. Exalted is He who, with His vast length and mercy, passes over the mistakes of the erring and the sins of the guilty.

Section

O brothers, refine your intellects and purify them, polish away the rust of thoughts and clear them, and look with the eye of insight at this lowly bodily creation and the secret that moves within it and preserves its existence by divine care. How not a single subtle or immense thing is missing from it, nor is any share of attention and preservation from it neglected, whether little or much. The materials of the Germanic sun never cease to flow to it, nor do the influences of the wandering planets and the fixed stars weaken.

And if the bodily creation follows this perfect order, conforming to the natural kingdom, preserved in dissolution and reassembly, the matter will not cease for even a blink of an eye, nor will the successive sustainer grow weary or desist.

So how much more in the supreme spiritual kingdom and the creation which is loftier and more sublime in its spirituality? Do you think its sun's influence would be cut off causing disorder, or the connection of its materials by means of its religious planets severed so that corruption and dysfunction enter it? No, it is more deserving and appropriate that it be preserved, for it is the cause of existence. The other, if disturbed, is certain and more so because it is relative to the soul as a mere thrown thing.

But the care of the Divine Planner, exalted is He, is spread over all. The planets of might and power shine upon all. Would the Germanic materials — which are the cause of the first

perfection — be cut off? Would the spiritual emanations by means of the luminous intellects — which are the cause of the second perfection and the intended goal — be severed? Those intellects ascend and return to the world of creation according to how luminous and radiant they were, having cast off the dark afflictions, held fast to the bonds of infallibility, and armed sciences and actions adorned with the allegiance of the Imams.

This is attested by the truthful words of God Almighty: “To Him belongs creation and command. Blessed is God, Lord of the worlds.”

Section

O brothers, even though the proof of the divine care in the bodily creation and the first bodily perfection is established, a clearer demonstration of the religious creation, which is the intended goal and the second perfection, is found in the preceding explanation. It is a clearer proof that the light of the Imamate is unbroken, and although it may be concealed by a veil, the materials of the One-Ranked Master are always connected, even if hidden behind the cloud of obscurity.

So listen, O brothers, open your ears and minds, obey your guardian and listen to him. Accept with acceptance the proofs I have presented to you. Exalt what God Almighty, His angels, His messengers, and the Imams of His religion have exalted in status. It is the noble rank, the great news, the straight path, the spirit of the third week and its seal, the completer of the witnessing cycle and its overseer, the spring of what is lost and the pride of those who rest in the sweetness of his mention at the rise of pulpits, and the one looking towards his gifts.

As the one foretold said: the hope of every beginning and present, the Pure Imam Abu al-Qasim, Commander of the Faithful, his father the Orderer, the one by whom the radiant Fatimid state was organized, as his father (peace be upon them) said: the necklace of virtues and pride.

He is named by the Helper as the Pure due to his pure essence, nicknamed by the Kunya of his grandfather, the Prophet of Guidance, who extracted his essence from his essence, the light that flows from the prophetic lineage, the one who ascends the peak of honor from the lofty rank, singled out by God with the unique station and radiant gift.

He tests people in his time, as his grandfather said in the Book of Periods and Cycles: a religious ordeal, through which the believer is distinguished from the opposer, and the pure essence from the false.

So, O brothers, after the words of the Infallible Imam, who would seek a witness? After the arrival of the water of life descending from the abode of creation, who would thirst? After the

river of clear water, what could heal except it? What is there after the truth except misguidance?

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O brothers, abundant proofs have arrived concerning the validity of the Imamate of our Master al-Ṭayyib, which is the clearest path to God Almighty and the most upright way. These proofs in the words of the Imams and the boundaries have stamped the heads of those with intellect and denial. Whoever benefits from even a small portion of the explanation that God has opened his heart to is on a light from his Lord, and is distinguished among the many whom God has blinded their insight and sealed their hearts.

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This suffices to meet the purpose of what I have composed and accomplishes the brevity I previously stipulated.

O brothers, those committed to the guardianship of the Master of the Time, in what I explain following what was previously mentioned about the spiritual creation and its sequence, and the intertwining and continuity of the luminous forms, there is clear evidence that the light of the Imamate never fades, and the one mounted on the lightning steed of the guiding call—peace be upon its bearer—holds firmly to the bonds of its lords and never stumbles.

So breathe in its breeze to clear the echo in your souls, and immerse yourselves in its light to free yourselves from relapse and reversals.

I have already explained, O brothers, the descent of the bodily creation and its ordering in the first perfection, until it reached a point where it acts exactly as the cause of its existence does.

Therefore, when it reaches this rank, its address to the guardian of the addressed—the extractor of the legitimate froth of matter—is necessary.

To abandon this highest level of the first creation is to accept the nonsense of naturalistic falsehood on the surface, but the reality is that something precious has flowed to it.

Its intellect shone, its light sparkled, its dawn's brightness gleamed and shone forth, its glory rose high and ascended, its fortunate star rose and shone brightly.

It was guided by success toward the most righteous paths and mercy saved it from the pitfalls of destruction.

It opened the door of the city of knowledge seeking, turning away from the snares of devils and whispers of Satan.

It took refuge from the heat in the shade of security and fled behind the veil of the ancient purified house under the care of its humblest guardians.

It poured out its painful complaint and asked for the cure of its ailment and the removal of its blindness.

At that point, the master of that rank softened toward it and lamented, hastening to address it with diligence and zeal.

He clarified the echo of its essence with legitimate proofs, washed the stains from its intellect with inherited evidences of tradition, guided the foundations of its doubts with verses from the clear Book, stirred the depths of its thought with flashes of signs and the throwing away of explanations.

When the fire of fanaticism for the doctrines of fathers and predecessors died down, and it was saved from the storms of bias towards justice, giving itself over to the reins and knocking at the door of benefit, surrendering to captivity that is truly its liberation, and seeking refuge with the party of truth from the deception and ruin of Satan, it deserved thereby to be entrusted with the noble covenant and was permitted to enter the first gates of the Garden of Delight.

Thereupon, it was established within the circle of faith and joined the ranks of the servants of the Imam of the Time, encompassed by the enclosure of the sanctuary, where whoever enters is safe.

It became active with the motion of longing after having been still.

Its desire for reform manifested, which had previously been hidden.

Its guardian extracted for it the subtlety and essence of the verses, derived from the husks of words the closest meanings, nourished it with the gentle sustenance of the religious world, and disciplined it with the manners of the guided and the saved.

He bound this pattern to continue until its nursing was complete, and it followed the obligatory customs incumbent upon it.

Section

When this is completed with activity, unity, and desire, it must be raised to a rank higher than this.

Its essence and the core of interpretation are revealed to it, and its secret—previously concealed and preserved—is made apparent.

It is nourished by the core without the husks, and all that was hidden of interpretation and mystery is made accessible to it.

It ascends to its summit, climbs, descends into its depths, is rescued, quenched from its thirst by its sweet water, and clears the veil of blindness with the light of its clarification.

Every parable is used to verify its reality, every perceptible thing becomes evidence for its rationality.

It understands the branches of religion and traces their roots.

The current of interpretation is cut off by ships of insight.

It journeys through revelation with proofs from contemplation and consideration.

When it reaches the summit of its goal and climbs the peaks of its heights, it turns to its patron and master, imploring him by his mastership as he bestowed upon it.

Then the proof stands for it in the necessity of obedience to his commands; its inner sincerity matches its outward compliance.

At that moment, he raises it to the unveiling of realities and grants it expansion in knowledge in place of those narrow constraints.

Its insight is illuminated by the verification of clarification.

It becomes a place for the ray of the light of its Lord, distinguished from others of its kind and company, and endowed with the purest and most refined speech.

At that time, its guidance becomes intimate; it understands from the signs of its master the intent and purpose.

It deserves to act as its originator was created to act, and to go forward to God in thankfulness and praise.

Thus, its master releases it from its bonds, frees it from the habit of confinement and its chains, and liberates it from captivity and enslavement.

Section

It stands, casting its weariness into the depths of nature, extracting from its entanglement in its fire by its various exquisite indications, so as to save from drowning in the sea of matter as it had been first saved from bewilderment.

It carries what it can carry in the ship of salvation and frees it from the flood of error and delivers it.

When it fulfills its service for which it was established and fulfills its trust in what is due and commanded, it prepares to preserve its rank among the people of its circle—those it knows to be filled with what suits them and strong and trustworthy in preserving what has been entrusted to them.

It ascends, differing from its lord in his high orbit, and the ranks continually raise it until it obtains in the sacred enclosure—known as such—the encounter with the rank of the next.

None reaches this circle or these ranks through one course except the sincere among the individuals and the elite who are the chosen of their Creator from among the servants.

Section

As for the rest of the *awliyā'* (spiritual friends of God) among the people of the *da'wa* (summons), those who enter through the gates of mercy and cling to the cords of the Imams—then indeed, the one who succeeds (in spiritual rank), the learned and active servant upon whom the comprehensive bounty of his Master has been bestowed, whose loyalty and belief are sound, and who strives in obedience to his appointed guide with utmost diligence—whenever the time of his transfer arrives, while he is still in a state of uprightness, and his journey draws near from the realm of trial to the abode of peace, he joins his elevated guide and is drawn to him by the magnetic pull emanating from the guide toward him. Thus, by virtue of his spiritual preparedness, he attains elevation and ascends, progressing through the ranks of religion level by level.

Then, when the time of the guide's own transition arrives, and his light begins to withdraw, and the destined joy awaited by him approaches and his sorrows fade, the successor is raised to the horizon of his predecessor and his source of sustenance. He ascends stage by stage until he is united with his guide. And so on, continuing toward the *Bāb* (Gate), which is the gathering point of all essences and intellects—a counterpart to the gradual development of the bodily creation and a parallel to its advancement through the ranks of primordial matter.

Thus, the believer reaches the rank of the *mukāsir* (one who breaks open the shells of knowledge), the *mukāsir* ascends to the horizon of the unrestricted *ma'dhūn* (authorized deputy), and the *naqla* (transfer) of the unrestricted deputy is into the sphere of the *dā'ī* (summoner), being his guide and protector. Then the *ma'ād* (return) of the *dā'ī* is an ascent to the rank of the *ḥujja* (proof), for he is the clear path and evident way. And the final return of all is to the *Bāb*, which is the central point and resting place for all—until the awaited time of the final term draws near.

These are six religious ranks, corresponding to the six bodily ranks.

Section

None, O brothers, shall ascend this ladder—the ladder of salvation—nor rise upon these steps—the stages of felicity—nor drink from this brimming cup of the water of life, nor cling to this chain and thereby attain to the everlasting righteous deeds, except one who is cloaked in the commands of the Sacred Law, consistent in observing the prescribed practices, sincere in loyalty to his ḥadd (appointed guide), and has made obedience to him the utmost aim and purpose of his striving. He must be enwrapped in the walāya of the Speaker of the Cycle (Nāṭiq) and his legatee, the Imams of their religion, peace be upon them, firmly convinced that the one who assumes their place in every era and time will never cease to exist—being the heart of religion that animates its limbs. From him flows the creative effusion throughout the world of religion, to bring into being the Perfect Child, who is the beginning of contemplation and the culmination of action and its realization.

Through this knowledge and action, the aspirant connects to his Beloved, and through the grace of the compassion of the forerunners upon him, he attains his desire. So strive, O brothers, with diligence in both action and knowledge, for they are the nutfah (seed) of religion. Be eager in sincere devotion to the walī of your time and his appointed ranks, peace be upon them—for they are the life-giving breeze that revives the soul and elevates it to the loftiest heights. He, peace be upon him, is the magnet of the believer, the one to whom his return is due, as God says: “To Him ascend good words, and righteous deeds He raises” (Qur’ān 35:10).

Section

Whenever one has attained ascent within this supreme sphere and becomes among the noblest of names before his Creator, then there remains only for him to reach the rank of unity—when the Unifier gives leave—and to ascend the peak of the glory of Imāma, which is the ultimate aim of the Creator. He becomes the locus upon which the rays of the creative intellects shine, and he sets into motion all the spheres of religion, which are the radiant luminous lights. Thus is fulfilled for him the promise of the One who never fails His promise in His manifest Book, where He says—and He is the most truthful of speakers: “And We desire to bestow favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them Imams and make them the inheritors” (Qur’ān 28:5).

At that moment, he sets the spiritual spheres into motion, casting their rays upon the pure and noble land of the Book and the Sacred Law. From it he extracts the purest of its people and its essence, applying the intellect to extract its cream and refine it. This passes from the lineage of Prophethood through the most noble of passages, ascending from the nutfah of the Message to the loftiest of glories, progressing from the ‘alaqah (clinging form) of religion through the purest of stages, and ascending to the muḍghah (chewed morsel) of the God-

fearing in the purest of ascents. It then rises from the soul-like creation to the rank of bones, and joins the heavenly fleshly station akin to that of the honored ones who are brought near.

When this spiritual pregnancy is complete, and the time of the soul's blowing from the Greatest Station to produce a new rank approaches, then the human bodily sheath is cast off through the prior and preceding sheath. Then appears the camphor-white image, distinct from the essence of the people of East and West—the purest among the bodies of those with religious rank, and the distilled residue of their purified souls and remainder. As our Master al-Mu'ayyad, may God elevate his sanctity, said: "Your bodies are born from the clay from which our hearts are formed. You were created from that clay—and we were also created from it—but we are the ones who refined it."

At this point, the lights of Divinity unite with him, and he becomes the orient of the Kingdom and the sunrise of the possessors of Might. He becomes the locus for the radiation of the various kinds, and through him occur both veiling and unveiling. The first rank withdraws, and this elevated one succeeds it. He becomes deeply involved in producing his successor, working to refine and extract him.

Our Master al-Mu'ayyad, in his explanation of the births of the body and religion—which form the path to guidance for the rightly guided—said in one of his noble gatherings, may God magnify his reward and confirm what we have mentioned above:

"O believers, may God benefit you through the hearing of wisdom and inspire you with gratitude to the Master of blessings: distance your souls from affinity with the dark body, formed of flesh and blood, residing in two unmentionable organs, just as indecency is concealed. After that, it bears burdens and filth, wrapped at all times in filthy rags. Were it not for continual cleansing and washing, it would rot alive before rotting in death. And were it not for the attachment of the human soul to it, its origin would be vile."

So turn instead to the form of the Word—of revelation and interpretation—whose nutfah is wisdom, its stream the tongue, its channel the ear, and its lodging the pure soul. Its return and final destination is the realm of sanctity and purity—there are radiance and light and brilliance—light upon light, and God guides to His light whom He wills (Qur'ān 24:35).

Section

O brothers, at this stage the one who has reached the supreme station will encounter what those before him encountered, and he will bear the burdens of the kingdom's load just as they bore it. The matter will continue until the Book reaches its term, and every believing soul of faith attains the fullest hope of good it longed for. All nations, past and future, will be gathered, the groups of the awliyā' will unite to ascend to the presence of the All-Merciful, and all the wretched will plunge into the abyss of the Fire.

So, O brothers, lighten your burdens and be gentle. Refine yourselves with knowledge, action, and yearning. The truth of the matter has now been unveiled—so lighten yourselves! And hasten to what our Master, the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, said: “Lighten your loads and you will catch up. The first among you only awaits the arrival of the last.”

So strive, may God have mercy on you, for what will make your trade most profitable. O brothers, if the goal is to reach this exalted station—which the subtlest of imaginations fall short of—and if the final outcome is to join the ranks of the noble angels, then why not hasten to action before death arrives and passes? Why not seize the moments before they slip away and come to an end? Why not mount the docile steeds of taqwā (piety) that will carry you to the chambers of Paradise while you say:

“For this, let the workers work!” (Qur’ān 37:61)

The one who ascends returns according to the refinement he possessed before his fall and returns to a state of even greater illumination and radiance than before his descent, assured from corruption and annihilation, eternal in the presence of the Lord of Sovereignty and Glory, in a lofty garden and a pleasing life, as God says:

“O tranquil soul, return to your Lord well-pleased and pleasing.” (Qur’ān 89:27–28)

So let the supplicant plead humbly to God, and raise his yearning to Him, exalted be He, by means of His noble intercessors, seeking His favor—that He seal for all with the best of endings in the hereafter, and that He make all the brothers among those who fulfilled the reward of the Prophet through love of the near kin. For by God’s life, this is the most upright path and the safeguard from the flames of Hell.

May God grant you and me the best of conclusions, protect us from destruction and peril, and assist us in fulfilling His obligatory duty.

Praise be to God, who pours forth the rain of His mercy upon His awliyā’, and who bestows upon them the establishment of the guides and proofs of religion. And may blessings be upon the best of His creation—he who bore the burdens of the message: Muḥammad, His chosen one among creation and elect. And upon his legatee and the husband of his daughter, he who breathed the spirit of interpretation into the body of the Sacred Law, and who stands in the place of Intellect within his community. And upon the Imams from their progeny—the suns and moons of religion, the faithful guardians and stewards of its sanctuary. And upon the Insān of their eye, the pulse of their da‘wa, the seventh of the witnesses, the Gate of right guidance, the child-heir to the Imamate—upon whom the veil of divine wisdom has been cast

as a shade of overflowing protection—the Imam al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Qāsim, Commander of the Faithful, the Proof of God over all creation. May God’s peace be upon him.

Sufficient is God for us, and what an excellent trustee. There is no power and no strength except in God, the Most High, the Most Mighty.

The epistle is complete.

This blessed epistle was completed on the eighteenth day of the month of Muḥarram al-Ḥarām, in the year 1424 AH. Peace be upon its author. It was transcribed during the time of the noble dā‘ī, our master and lord and sovereign, Abū al-Qā’id Jawhar Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn, Ṭāba Allāhu tharāh, by the blessing of his noble prayers, in the city of Surat, on a computer. May God forgive its scribe and his parents, by the right of Muḥammad, ‘Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and their noble progeny and their generous dā‘īs.