Tuḥfat al-Qulūb wa Furjat al-Makrūb

The Gift of Hearts and Relief of the Afflicted

English Translation

From the beginning of the edition through the end of Chapter 16

Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī

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The Treatise Entitled Tuḥfat al-Qulūb wa Furjat al-Makrūb
(The Gift of Hearts and Relief of the Afflicted)

Also titled Kitāb Tuḥfat al-Qulūb, concerning the ordering of guidance and the daʿwa in the island (jazīra) of Yemen.

Attributed to our master and lord, Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn b. Abī al-Suʿūd Yaʿqūb al-Ḥāmidī—may God, glorified is He, continue to support him, increase the abundance of His favors toward him, exalt his sanctity, and grant us his intercession and companionship—the ḥujja in the Yemeni jazīra and trustee of the Fāṭimid daʿwa.

Study and critical edition by Dr. ʿAbbās Hamdānī.

About the Book

Tuḥfat al-Qulūb is attributed to the third Yemeni Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq, Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī (d. 596 AH / 1199 CE). The treatise was written in the aftermath of the decline of the Fāṭimids in Egypt and the Ṣulayḥids in Yemen, following Ayyūbid control over the two regions, and also against the background of the Crusades and the continued existence of the Ismailis amid the turbulent politics of the Middle East.

The treatise elaborates the importance of the earlier writings of the Fāṭimid dāʿīs, especially Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī and al-Muʾayyad fī al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, who was regarded as the spiritual father of the Yemeni daʿwa. It warns the Ṭayyibī community against extremist doctrines (ghulūw), in order to safeguard its survival in Yemen and its connection with the daʿwa in western India. The position of the Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq, as articulated in the treatise, has continued to occupy a central place in the Ṭayyibī community.

Chapter 1

Obedience to the Imam Is Obedience to His Da'is

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Praise be to God, who knows the secrets concealed within, who is aware of the hidden contents of consciences, and who is exalted beyond the flashes of thoughts and the glances of reflections reaching Him—much less the perceptions of the senses and faculties comprehending Him. When intellects rise in aspiration to encompass the manner of His greatness, the pavilion of their incapacity veils them within the circles that surround them; and when tongues speak of His unity, they are compelled to borrow the attributes of His Most Beautiful Names, as the helpless and deficient are compelled to do. I praise Him with the praise of one who confesses that praise itself is among His overflowing favors and the continual outpouring of His beneficence.

I bear witness that there is no god but God, whose manifest signs of power point to the majesty of His greatness, and whose path of knowledge cannot be entered except through the guidance of the radiant guides of His religion. Keen eyesight and illuminated inner vision are alike in their inability to comprehend Him. Glorified and exalted is He: the Originator of the first and the last, the Inventor by His power of the hidden and the manifest.

And I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant, chosen from the noblest clans, selected from the purest stocks and elements, a light transmitted from pure loins to purified wombs. May God bless him, a Messenger who by the radiance of truth dispelled the accumulated darkness of falsehood, and who through proclaiming divine unity ennobled the heights of the pulpits. Through the cutting swords of his proofs, unbelief was uprooted, and the hosts of disbelief were humbled by the might of his overpowering authority.

And blessings be upon his wasi, the one who attained the foremost rank in glory, who destroyed the bands of unbelievers, who supported and aided the Messenger of God in manifesting his right, defended his religion with his tongue and his sharp sword, humbled every tyrannical sinner, and was the possessor of clear signs and dazzling miracles; and upon the Imams from his progeny, the pearls and jewels of God's religion. No age is ever devoid of a present Imam for God's creatures, calling them to adhere to the commands of His religion and restraining them from evil acts and ruinous sins.

To proceed: God, exalted is He, has made it obligatory upon all His servants to invoke blessings upon His Messenger, to obey him and his progeny, to acknowledge their excellence, and to seek nearness to Him through them. As He says: "Indeed God and His angels bless the Prophet. O you who believe, bless him and salute him with a worthy salutation" (Qur'an 33:56); and: "O you who believe, fear God and seek the means of approach to Him" (5:35); and: "O you who believe, obey God, obey the Messenger, and those vested with authority among you" (4:59).

Thus, mighty and exalted is He, joined these acts of obedience one to another and permitted none of His servants to abandon any one of them. Since He joined these three obediences together, the same rule and pattern continues among those occupying the ranks beneath them. Just as obedience to God is connected with obedience to His Messenger, obedience to His Messenger with obedience to his wasi, and obedience to both with obedience to the Imams from their progeny—God's blessings be upon them all—so too, we say that the ranks of the World of Religion correspond to and resemble one another, the higher with the lower.

Accordingly, obedience to the Imam of every age in his own time is joined to obedience to his Bab; obedience to his Bab to obedience to his Hujja; obedience to his Hujja to obedience to his da'is; and obedience to the da'is to obedience to those beneath them, namely the ma'dhuns and believers belonging to each da'i. They form the chain whose one end is in the hand of God and whose other end is in the hands of the believers—those ranks comprising the mukasir, the ma'dhun, and the mutlaq. These lower ranks are Imams potentially, for they summon people to the Imams who are Imams actually.

Each one strives in worship and service so that he may raise the person under his care and bring him upward until that person becomes like him. This is the freeing of the "white believing neck," and it is the deed accepted

from its doer. Likewise, every one of the higher ranks has no work, striving, or exertion except to elevate the one beneath him to his own station and raise him to the position in which he himself stands, so that he may then ascend beyond that position and rise to the station of the one above him; and the one above him in turn ascends to the rank of the one higher than both. The lower ranks proceed in exactly the same manner as the ranks above them, and their action is identical in principle.

The proof of this is what we observe in the gradual ordering of creation: each lower thing rises toward that which is above it, which becomes its sustaining material and that to which it returns. Everything in creation moves toward perfection and seeks ascent and elevation. Thus we see that the nourishment of all plants comes from the mineral realm, the purpose being that it should rise in rank, even though it neither perceives nor knows this. Nature leads it to this by the governance of the Governor and by His will, which calls it toward that end, as He says: "Our word to a thing, when We desire it, is only that We say to it, 'Be,' and it is" (Qur'an 16:40).

When a plant feeds upon mineral matter and transforms it into its own substance, that matter becomes plant and rises one degree, standing upright after having lain low and spread upon the ground. Then, since the plant is food for the animal, the animal is naturally disposed to consume it, thereby raising it toward the animal rank and returning it toward that level. It becomes animal, stands upright after being inverted, moves after being motionless, and emerges from the belly of the earth to its surface after having remained within it. It eats with its mouth and moves upon its legs or belly. In it there appears a nutritive and growth soul that had lain hidden in the mineral, rose into the plant, and existed there potentially until it became actual in the animal. In the animal there then appears the sensory soul that moves it toward its aims and the seeking of its food. Thus it has ascended two ranks, and growth and sensation are more manifest in it than in what lies below it.

Human beings in turn feed upon mineral, plant, and animal substances, consume them, dispose of them, and exercise authority over them, just as the plant acts upon the mineral and the animal acts upon plant and mineral. The wisdom in this lies in the additional excellence bestowed upon the human being: the nutritive and sensory souls are united in him, and beyond the animals beneath him he possesses discernment and reflection. In the same manner, the perfect has authority over the deficient, and the knowledgeable person over the ignorant, by supplying him, teaching him, and showing him the path of right guidance. His command is effective with respect to him; and if the ignorant person denies or rejects this, the harm of his denial and rejection returns upon himself.

Thus the ignorant person in relation to the learned is like mineral in relation to plant, plant in relation to animal, and animal in relation to the human being. The connection and interdependence of all these things exists through the will of the Wise Governor and the volition of the All-Hearing, All-Knowing, so that the higher may be a magnet for the lower, a crossing-place for its ascent, and something that draws it toward itself, until the purpose intended by the Wise One—the perfection of governance and the fulfillment of determination—is attained. Glory be to the Subtle, the All-Aware, who has power over all things.

Chapter 2

The Reason for Composing the Book: Responding to the Desire of the People of the Da'wa to Know the Ranks of the Yemeni Jazira

To proceed: a group of the brethren—may God increase them and cause them to flourish—asked me to explain to them the ranks (hudud) of this jazira in our present time, to name each person for them by name, to make clear their stations, the precedence and excellence of the foremost among them and who follows him in excellence, and to describe each of them with the description appropriate to him and according to what he merits in excellence, knowledge, understanding, and the praiseworthy qualities found in him.

I therefore answered their request and composed a treatise in which I deposited concise statements of the haqiqah, so that whoever studies it may travel upon the clearest path of guidance and possess firm assurance concerning the affair of his religion. In attaining this purpose and fulfilling the obligation imposed upon me in this matter, I seek aid from God, exalted is He, and from the awliya' of His religion—God's blessings be upon them all. In God I place my trust; through the awliya' of His religion I seek nearness and means of approach to Him, and before Him I humble myself. I ask Him to grant me success and right guidance in what I dictate, and to supply me from the gifts of His bounty and rectitude, by the right of Muhammad and the pure and good people of the Imams—God's blessings be upon them all.

I have entitled the treatise Tuhfat al-Qulub wa Furjat al-Makrub, "The Gift of Hearts and the Relief of the Afflicted," because what is contained within it is a gift to the hearts of the brethren and a present that relieves them of the distresses and sorrows they experience. Through what it contains, the one whose inner form is luminous finds consolation; and through knowing its contents, the one whose soul is pure of deception and wickedness, clean, purified, and dyed with the sciences of the awliya' of God, rises in rank and excellence.

This treatise is the creed of its author and the image of the thought of the one who composed and arranged it. In composing it I sought only the satisfaction of my Lord, and through what I set down in it the welfare and guidance of every wali. By the bounty and favors of God, exalted is He, I saw that before making clear the matter sought, I should first set forth what necessarily precedes it and explain what ought to be taught and understood. In God is aid and confidence; to Him belong power and might. He is sufficient for us, and excellent is the Trustee.

Chapter 3

Order and Gradation in Teaching

Know, O brother, that the requirement of wisdom is that the mustajib who seeks right guidance be arranged and advanced in instruction in a manner corresponding to the order of bodily creation. The beginning of the body's creation is from a drop of insignificant fluid. It then continually passes from a lower rank to one above it, becoming bones, limbs, nerves, veins, and tendons, and progressing thing after thing until all its instruments are complete.

The condition of the mustajib in instruction is likewise. He advances in acquiring the sciences and forms of knowledge degree after degree and rank after rank. Just as the body cannot be created all at once with its limbs and joints, but only gradually, one stage after another, so instruction cannot be acquired all at once by any created being, except by that exalted rank which is the First Originated Being, upon whom the divine supplies and holy confirmations came all at once at the beginning of his existence.

As for the intellects of the World of Origination beneath him, they obtained those holy supplies only through his mediation, and those divine benefits reached them only through his turning toward them, one after another, according to the precedence that made him the source of their benefit. And as for those below them, among the higher and lower ranks belonging to the intellects of the World of Nature, none obtained what reached it of the higher supplies except thing after thing.

A proof of this is the saying of the Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him and his family: "I am the son of repetitions, and one tested at appointed times." These "repetitions" are an allusion to every rank that bound him by a covenant at the beginning of his instruction, entrusted to him its compact and pledge, tested him through different kinds of trial, and moved him through the ranks of knowledge and exposition. He clarified this by saying: "I received from five, delivered to five, and between me and my Lord are five." These were the ones who imposed the covenant upon him and tested him. This is mentioned in Kitab al-Wahidah. He also indicated and symbolized it when he said: "I remained with Gabriel for such-and-such, and with Michael for such-and-such."

If the angels, messengers, Imams—peace be upon them—and the ranks themselves advance in instruction through degrees and stations, then the awliya' should follow their example, discipline themselves through confirmation, and seek knowledge thing after thing, just as those above them and more excellent than them did, ascending through the ranks of instruction one thing after another. This corresponds to the known ordering of creation, as the Prophet—God's blessings be upon him and his family—said: "God established His religion according to the pattern of His creation, so that by His creation one may infer His religion, and by His religion His unity."

In our own time we have witnessed practices that we condemn because they contradict the customs of the people of religion. Among them is that as soon as the covenant is taken from a person, from that very moment he demands access to the highest and most excellent books. If he is given what he ought to begin with—the exoteric knowledge of the da'wa—he casts it aside and dislikes studying it. He is then given something of ta'wil and spiritual instruction, but he casts that aside as well and does not desire it. Instead, he insists upon the loftiest and most difficult books.

Even if such a person is given that material, he understands nothing of it and cannot unravel even a single line. Some eagerly aspire to read the most difficult and obscure books. When they obtain them and examine them—books being plentiful and available—they interpret what they find in one of several erroneous ways: as ghuluww, transmigration, deficiency, or according to whatever meaning they themselves imagine. They then content themselves with having looked at the book and with the notion that has arisen in their own minds, and do not ask the rank who is the gate of their guidance about the meanings of what they have read. This becomes the cause of their ruin, confusion, and bewilderment in their affair.

Others examine a book whose author intended a particular meaning, but the correct interpretation is closed to the reader. He then begins inwardly to accuse the author of falsehood, blame him, and revile him, though the

corruption lies in the reader, not the author. Such was the servant of Satan who departed from faith, broke his covenant, and dissolved his bond—may God seize him as He seizes the towns while they are wrongdoing: "Surely His seizure is painful and severe" (Qur'an 11:102).

These are varieties among those who claim affiliation with the people of truth. Another type is a person whom his superior has nominated for a certain rank, supposing him suitable because of the eagerness, diligence, chastity, and outward righteousness he observed in him. His superior strives for his salvation and seeks authorization for him in the hope that God may, through him, bring life to a group of His awliya', so that their rescue and salvation occur at his hands. The good conduct, diligence, and outward soundness he displayed encourage his superior, and he is granted permission either to nurture those connected with him or to take the covenant from people in his district and region. Then his soul aspires to go beyond what he was authorized to do.

He claims what he was neither qualified nor authorized to claim, exceeds the prescribed form, violates the established rule, performs what he was not commanded to perform, takes up what was not assigned to him, and lays claim to what was never permitted to him.

Among them is one commanded to instruct those assigned to him, yet he seeks to elevate himself above one who stands higher than he does. If he is asked even one of the simplest questions of the shari'ah, he gives his listeners the impression that the question is the question of a deficient and incapable person. He lowers the questioner's aspiration regarding what he sought and makes him think that he has no understanding and is inadequate. Such behavior becomes the cause of the questioner's fall and retreat.

Among the instructors is one to whom a person seeking instruction comes and asks about something of ta'wil or about a matter containing some haqiqah. The person asked can find no answer except some single section of the haqiqah, one or two questions, or one or two answers that he has acquired during his entire life and period of study. Because he has nothing else to answer with, he gives the questioner whatever he happens to possess. He speaks of it with that unprepared questioner, and the two become partners in the fault.

As our lord al-Sadiq—God's blessings be upon him—said: "When a word of wisdom falls with a hypocrite, it beats about in his heart until it comes out to another, like a bird struggling in its snare. If the one with whom it falls is a believer, it settles with him, for it was deposited with one who brought it to its proper resting place. If he is a hypocrite, he preserves it until it emerges to the one who deserves it." Similarly, our lord Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali b. Abi Talib—God's blessings be upon him—said: "A word of wisdom continues to stir in the breast of the hypocrite until it meets its proper resting place; then it comes forth to it and settles there together with its companions."

Among these pretentious persons is one who has obtained some conception from a rank that favored him because it thought well of him. The person who has obtained this then displays his little merchandise to everyone he meets—believer or hypocrite, liar or truthful person—seeking pride, elevation of rank, and worldly honor, and flattering others in pursuit of a paltry portion of worldly goods.

There is no doubt that one who does this becomes a breaker of the covenant that was taken from him, for the covenant included the condition that he conceal what was imparted to him. When he sought instruction, the covenants and pledges were repeatedly renewed upon him, and he repeatedly bore their responsibility and trust. Yet by divulging the secret in the manner described, he dares to break those covenants, disobey the One worshipped, and violate the ranks. Whoever does this departs from the community of the people of faith and becomes a follower of the people of error and rebellion.

Among seekers of benefit is also one whose superior commands him to receive from the particular person to whom his affair has been directed, but the subordinate violates the prescribed order, exceeds its limits, and asks someone whom he was not commanded to ask. In doing so he disobeys his superior and breaks his covenant.

Among instructors is one who intrudes by giving instruction to a person who is neither among his followers nor assigned to him nor from the people of his own district. The two together thereby become transgressors and covenant-breakers. And among seekers of instruction is one who seeks benefit from everyone who claims knowledge, imagining that this is permissible, without realizing that it is the forbidden "religious fornication" from which no sound spiritual form can arise.

If some form does arise from such a mixture, it has no known instructor to whom it may be affiliated. It resembles the ruling of the luminous shari'ah concerning an immoral woman with whom many men have intercourse and who then becomes pregnant: her child inherits from none of those men, and none of them inherits from him. So too, when a religious form cannot be attributed to a single rank, there is no return for its possessor, because it derives from many partners.

It is therefore obligatory upon all believers to follow the saying of our master al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din—the qiblah of the people of tawhid, may God exalt his sanctity—when he said: "The discipline of religion comes before religion."

Chapter 4

Divine Unity (Tawhid)

By the bounty of the One who has bestowed favors upon us, who graciously extends to us the sustaining flow of His beneficence and gentleness, we say: the first of the concise subjects we promised to set forth must be the unity of God, exalted be His remembrance. It is the most sublime of acts of worship, and for its sake we were created, as He says: "I created jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me" (Qur'an 51:56).

The Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him and his family—said: "Whoever says sincerely, 'There is no god but God,' enters Paradise." Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali b. Abi Talib—God's blessings be upon him—said: "The beginning of religion is knowledge of Him; the foundation of knowledge of Him is affirming His unity; and the ordering of His unity is the negation of attributes from Him." The sage likewise said: "If God, exalted is He, is the most sublime of all things, then knowledge of Him is the most sublime of all sciences."

Since tawhid is the most excellent of acts of worship, we have thought it proper to mention a concise section by which the wali may infer the unity of God, mighty and exalted. We say that when we find our own identities, what is above them, and what is below them all to be originated and created, caused through origination and creation, we know that this marks the utmost limit of our knowledge concerning our Originator and Creator. The cause is like an effusion upon these things from their Originator and Creator, while we are incapable of passing beyond what has been effused upon us and cannot comprehend what lies beyond the cause.

We therefore have no way of comprehending the Originator, exalted is He, other than simply affirming Him, without our grasping what He is. Our affirmation consists in attributing to Him, mighty and exalted, all that has been bestowed upon us, acknowledging that it is His gift and favor to us, His generosity and grace toward us. This rational statement and intellectual belief that we profess concerning tawhid arose after the manifestation of our own identities. This, then, is a concise account of divine unity.

Chapter 5

The World of Command ('Alam al-Amr)

We shall now give a concise account of the World of Command, so that this treatise will not be devoid of something from which the wali may derive benefit and through which advantage may reach him.

We say that God—glorified is He and exalted is His majesty, toward whom thoughts do not dare to reach, whose essence hearts cannot encompass, and whom eyes cannot perceive—originated the World of Command not from anything, not in anything, and not after the likeness of anything, without time and without place, all at once. Our master Hamid al-Din—may God exalt his sanctity—explained this in the seventh pathway of the fourth enclosure of Rahat al-'Aql, saying in meaning that in the abode of origination and emanation there is no impediment, because its beings are free from the material substances that obstruct action. They are pure forms unattached to matter; and where there is no impediment, the existence of its beings is not temporal but occurs all at once. It is like the illumination of transparent air by the light of the sun, which occurs without temporal delay, or the illumination of a dark house by fire all at once, or like nature when it imitates such actions beyond time by bringing forth from the spadix, at the beginning of its appearance, its sheath, grains, and clusters together in their smallest form, without one part of the first perfection preceding another.

This is his statement—may God exalt his sanctity.

Among the beings of that world, one contemplated by himself, from himself, both his own identity and the members of his kind. Without teacher or inspirer he knew that he and they had an Originator unlike them. He therefore denied divinity of himself and the members of his kind and acknowledged lordship for his Originator, glorified is He. Because this contemplation arose from himself through himself, without teacher or inspirer, he was thereby preferred above his world by reason of his precedence in attaining it. He was named the Preceder (al-Sabiq) and the First because he preceded the members of his kind to a knowledge they had not yet attained.

He became "one" through his unique possession of this knowledge, to which none other had preceded him. Names and attributes then followed upon him, derived from the action in which he alone among his world had been singular. Thereafter divine supplies, holy confirmations, and higher lights reached him, and he became a gate to the Hidden of Hidden Things and a veil before Him toward whom thoughts dare not reach. The name of divinity came to be applied to him because of his bewildered devotion toward his Originator and because those below him were bewildered by his elevation, excellence, nobility, and exalted station. He became veiled in splendor, majesty, and sublimity, and the intellects despaired of reaching his rank.

The noblest names and attributes then came to be directed toward him in magnification and reverence of his Originator, though in reality they could not be attributed to or fall upon the transcendent Originator Himself. The noble Qur'an speaks of his testimony to his Originator in the verse: "God bears witness that there is no god but He, and the angels and those possessed of knowledge, upholding justice. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise" (Qur'an 3:18).

The designation "God" in this verse is thus, in this interpretation, an allusion to this witnessing being on account of his devotion and bewilderment toward the One who originated him, as already stated. The Originator Himself was neither named nor designated; rather, the transcendent Ipseity was indicated by the pronoun "He," as our master Hamid al-Din—may God exalt his sanctity—demonstrated in Rahat al-'Aql and in Kitab al-Riyad.

Through this act of the First Preceder, and through the supplies of his Originator that reached him and that he merited by this act, his second perfection was completed. He attained it, gained the rank of unity, and became singular in it among the members of his kind.

Then another from his world, seeing the brilliance of his light and the perfection of his manifestation, became aware of what the First had preceded them in doing. He followed his example in affirming the unity of his Originator, sought nearness to the Originator through him, and acknowledged his precedence. This one was his Follower (al-Tali), the Universal Soul. The Preceder poured upon him from the supplies of his divine blessings and holy confirmations that by which he was ennobled above the members of his own kind and attained his second

perfection. He obtained his allotted share, became deified in the derivative and subordinate sense, was sanctified, and was taken by the Preceder as a veil and a gate between himself and his world.

Thus the First became hidden from his Follower and from all ranks that followed after him. Then, through the Follower, he summoned those beneath him in the World of Origination. Seven intellects responded in succession and obedience. The Follower was named the Universal Soul because his Preceder "breathed" toward him the higher supplies and continually joined him to the sublime blessings, while he in turn breathed those eternal benefits and holy confirmations toward those beneath him.

Within the domain of each possessor of one of these seven ranks is a world whose number cannot be enumerated. Its rank is an inspirer to those beneath it, moving them toward obedience, and is to them like a chief and leader. None knows the number of these hosts except God, as He says: "None knows the hosts of your Lord except He" (Qur'an 74:31). The author of Jawahir al-Hikam is reported to have said: "There is no human or animal individual on earth without a corresponding angel in the World of Origination."

When the seven ranks successively responded in obedience and bore witness to their Originator, mighty is His majesty, just as their Preceder had borne witness to His unity, they denied divinity of themselves and of the members of their kind. Their testimony constitutes the second aspect of the verse, "God bears witness that there is no god but He." The first testimony is that of the Preceder; the words "and the angels" signify the Follower and those intellects who responded to his summons; and the words "and those possessed of knowledge" implicitly include the testimony of the prophets, messengers, and Imams—peace be upon them—who arose later and testified as the angels had testified, as will be explained below, God willing.

The successive response and obedience of those seven ranks, and the ordering of each according to its precedence, occurred in less than the blink of an eye, as God says: "Our command is but one, like the twinkling of an eye" (Qur'an 54:50).

When the mentioned ranks had been ordered, prime matter (hayula) and form were delayed in responding. Their delay became the cause of density and materiality. Both the response and the delay described here were prior to time and place, which themselves came to exist from matter and form.

The Preceder entrusted the governance of those beneath him to each higher rank within its own horizon, until the order reached the last of the higher ranks. The lowest of these higher ranks came to stand, in relation to prime matter and form below it, in the same position as the First Preceder stood in relation to those beneath him in the World of Command. This is the Governor of the World of Nature, concerning whom our master al-Mu'ayyad—may God exalt his sanctity—said: "I seek approach to You through the Tenth, the Governor of the World of Nature, who manifests within its colors the wondrous forms."

When this Governor assumed charge of the World of Nature beneath him, he arranged each of its things in the place appropriate to it. He made the celestial spheres and stars the highest part of the World of Nature because of the nobility of their element and the purity of their substance. From them arose place, and the numbering of their movements became time. Our master al-Mu'ayyad alluded to their governor when he said: "The heavens are folded in the hand of a servant who fulfills His right."

He made the celestial spheres a perfected instrument for extracting and bringing forth that which was intended to be purified from what had sunk into the realm of prime matter and form, just as the instruments of the smith and artisan bring their products from potentiality into actuality. What remained beneath those spheres contained, according to its purity, a residual attraction toward what lay above it, and by the command of the Wise Governor it became the four elemental qualities: heat, cold, moisture, and dryness.

Then there remained density, sediment, and dross. It became dense and sank, and this was the earth—the dross of what remained from the World of Nature, like the impurity of copper, lead, and similar substances that remains when silver is purified. When the earth reached the utmost degree of density, heaviness, and sinking, it descended and became fixed by the four stakes of the sphere—the ascendant, descendant, fourth, and tenth points—together with the northern and southern poles. These six directions attracted it equally, so that it remained established in the midst of the air.

Abraham the Friend—peace be upon him—is said to have symbolized a sensible proof of this for his followers. He went to the Holy House and placed a magnetic stone in each of its four sides, one in its floor, and one in its ceiling. He then brought an iron lamp and placed it in the air of the building. Those stones attracted it equally and it remained suspended in the air without any support other than their magnetic attraction, which God had placed in them.

Likewise, a remainder of what is in the sphere exists in the earth, and a remainder of the kind found in the air exists in the sphere. Air is the noblest residue within the sphere and the earth. Amir al-Mu'minin—God's blessings be upon him—said in one of his intimate prayers: "In the name of God, who gave identity to the air before the earth and heaven," thereby indicating that air is the most excellent thing in the World of Nature. For this reason, when the disciple asked the master about God's saying, "To God belongs the highest similitude" (Qur'an 16:60), asking whether God possesses a similitude, the master replied: "This is an allusion to the air."

Because there was in the air and in what surrounded and contained it a trace from the World of Command, that trace drew it toward its own horizon. Each kind therefore became an attractor of what corresponded to it in genus and type, by virtue of the goodness remaining within it, which had been stored for that which was intended to be purified.

When the earth had attained the condition described and had been fixed by the stakes we have explained, the celestial spheres began to revolve. Mist and clouds thickened. Within the sphere there came to be, by analogy, a head, a heart, and two feet. The true heart is the sun, the noblest and most excellent thing in the sphere; the head is the moon, which is below the sun in nobility and excellence; and the feet are associated with Saturn. The sphere is like an inverted human being and like a curved seal whose curvature makes its impression stable. In correspondence with the inversion and turning of the sphere, the human form—which is its cream and its product—came forth upright by the determination of the Wise Determiner.

When the spheres revolved, the atmosphere darkened, and rains fell, the minerals were differentiated from one another, so that the hidden content of each might emerge. Hylic life permeated them all from the highest encompassing sphere to the center of the earth. Since the spheres, at the summit of the World of Nature, were instruments for extracting what was intended to be purified, each star undertook the governance of the world for a known period. The star nearest to it first assisted it, followed by the next. The first governance belonged to Saturn, which in governance is like a prince, while the assisting planet is like his minister, so that the intention of the governor might be carried out.

When the course of governance reached its appointed time, the rains gradually diminished until the first stage of equilibrium was attained. The first things to emerge after the minerals were blameworthy plants, as a preparation and food for blameworthy animals. These came from the densest, darkest, and foulest of what remained from the previously mentioned matter. Then there appeared the creatures suited to that foul food—animals even fouler than it, arising from what had sunk and descended, deformed in creation, remote from people and repellent to the rest of creation. They consumed the foul nourishment that had preceded them.

Then greater equilibrium occurred in rain and atmosphere. Plants and animals of a rank above the preceding ones appeared, as a preparation for what would later emerge of creeping things, beasts of prey, and birds possessing claws and fangs, which prey upon what is beneath them and feed on the plants and animals that had preceded them into existence, all through the wisdom of the Governor and the determination of the Wise Fashioner.

Then the atmosphere and rain became still more balanced, in a condition in which auspicious and inauspicious influences, good and evil, were mixed. Types of plants appeared that were prepared as food for harmless, useful, and lawful animals. When their food had fully appeared, those animals emerged and fed upon it. They in turn became a preparation for the appearance of human beings whose food was made from them.

Then universal equilibrium arrived, together with rain beneficial to the human species. Grains that nourish people appeared, as did date palms, grapes, figs, and every kind of fruit and grain upon which human beings subsist. This continued until the emergence of such things was complete. Each of the seven wandering stars, and each sphere, governed one of the seven climes and brought forth within each region, according to its own nature

and correspondence, whatever was to be produced there. Thus the kinds of creation were completed, and the time arrived for the appearance of the cream of what the Governor intended to bring forth.

As the sage said: "The human being is the ultimate purpose of the Creator and the final act of nature."

When the time for humanity's appearance arrived, the supporting influences of the spheres came into agreement, the auspicious influences corresponded, the time became favorable, the atmosphere sound, and the air balanced. Rain fell in a condition more balanced, excellent, and noble than what had remained before. In the earth were cavities, caves, and basins in which water from the earlier rains had collected, water that was the clearest and most balanced of those rains, which nature had refined and purified. The newly falling rain mixed with the water already present. Heat and cold, moisture and dryness moved the mixture from above and below until nature refined it and made it like oil, corresponding to the seminal fluid emitted by human beings.

In those caves there then coagulated many individual forms and numerous bodies in every jazira and clime. The celestial spheres took charge of them and, through their governance that preserves order, moved and nurtured them for a period of nine months. Each embryo was surrounded by coverings like the membranes surrounding embryos in the wombs of mothers. During their stay in those caves they were nourished through their entire bodies generally, and through the equivalent of the navel particularly, from the substance out of which they had formed. Each body was a magnet for that from which it had emerged, according to the wisdom of the Wise Governor and the determination of the Creator and Fashioner.

When the period of their stay in those places was complete, they emerged from those coverings with bodies larger than the bodies of embryos later formed in wombs, because of the spaciousness of the places from which they came forth and the vastness of the two structures, heaven and earth. They then moved about the land near them and lived from the foods that had preceded them and had been prepared for them.

In every jazira a human race appeared possessing a language distinctive from those of others, and having a bodily form and temperament according to the influence of the sphere and the angel governing that region, jazira, and clime, and according to the disposition impressed upon them—blackness, whiteness, redness, or other coloration. The text connects these differences with the governance of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, and the remaining seven wandering stars, each star imparting to what it governed a form, temperament, and color corresponding to itself.

When creation had appeared and become complete, there were places on earth nobler and more excellent than other regions, as the heart is nobler than the rest of the body. The most distinguished region is described as the equatorial belt extending from Mecca—may God protect it—to Sarandib, because it is the middle and heart of the earth; and the heart of everything is its noblest, most excellent, and strongest part.

Within this region were caves more balanced, noble, and elevated than others. Among them was one cave nobler than those near and far from it, for it was the cream of the cream, the select of the select, and the purest essence. From it emerged twenty-eight persons, corresponding to the letters of the alphabet and the lunar mansions in the sphere. Among these twenty-eight was one person who was the most excellent, highest, and noblest of them. This cave was like the heart in relation to the surrounding caves and regions, and the person emerging from it who preceded the members of his kind was to the people of his cave and to all human creation like the innate heat dwelling in the heart that distinguishes it from the rest.

When the people of the equatorial belt emerged and these twenty-eight persons had come into being, the most noble, excellent, and perfect among them looked upon the world and what it contained. From himself and by himself he reflected upon himself and the members of his kind, without teacher or inspirer. He knew that he and they had an Originator unlike them. He denied divinity of himself and of the members of his kind and acknowledged the unity of God, mighty and exalted.

Then he sought approach to the Creator of creation through the spiritual ranks. Divine supplies reached him and holy confirmations became connected with him. He called the people of his cave to affirm the unity of their Originator, to declare Him transcendent and free from likeness, and to acknowledge his own Imamate. They all responded to him. He ordered them according to the precedence and manner of their response, appointed twelve

ranks—one in each jazira—and established the rest as Babs and Hujjas before him, calling creation to what he had called them to.

This excellent person is the Universal Adam. His cycle was a cycle of unveiling (dawr al-kashf), lasting fifty thousand years. When it ended, a cycle of concealment (dawr al-satr) followed it. Among the human individuals who subsequently appeared from the remaining portions of those waters were females; the text explains their later appearance in terms of their lesser perfection and lesser preparedness for the perfection intended in this cosmological scheme.

I have summarized for you, O brother, what I mentioned, just as I stipulated that I would. Know it and investigate the realities underlying what I have written for you. Beneath every one of these sections lies a long explanation of the haqiqah. I shall now mention some things by which you may verify what I have set forth, drawing upon what was composed by the ranks of the awliya' of God—may God grant us their intercession and never deprive us of their blessings, through His favor and generosity.

The sage said that the First Cause is above description, and tongues are incapable of describing it because there is nothing resembling it and nothing in the world by which it could be inferred: “Glory be to Him and exalted is He above what they associate” (cf. Qur'an 10:18; 16:1; 30:40; 39:67).

Through the return of the rational soul to its own world, it gathers within itself the forms of all things and no longer requires the external faculties to preserve what it knows. When it separates from the impurities that disfigure it and becomes purified, the senses become as though a single sense, in a spiritual form born of the virtues of knowledge and divine wisdom, corresponding to their prior existence at the beginning of generation in the holy World of Lordship.

The covenant was taken from the progeny through acknowledgment of Him in the World of Lordship. The Greek sages said that there are four things in the world corresponding to four others: intellect with eternity (dahr), soul with time, prime matter with place, and nature with bodies. To these correspond the two principles, the Word and the Command, making six first principles from the World of Lordship. Corresponding to them among humankind are two created beings manifest through divine power and speaking in every age and time—the two knowers who bring people out from the darkness of obscurity and the waves of the sea of regret—so that similitude and correspondence may be completed according to the ordering of the All-Knowing, All-Aware.

Prophets and legatees were placed among the bodily ranks, while angels and their worlds belong to the spiritual ranks, in order to generate a lordly form prepared for eternal subsistence in the neighborhood of the One, the Self-Sufficient. The dispositions of the spiritual lordly forms are from the subtleties of the spiritual beings and the elements from which all natural worlds are constituted, until the rational soul becomes for them like a body and the intellect becomes wholly like their spirit. The whole then becomes one in a spiritual form and an intellectual essence possessing an eternal divine life.

This occurs after the soul passes from natural bodies to the world of the rational, intellectual soul through the divine sciences and becomes connected with the eternal Cause: “at the Lote Tree of the Furthest Boundary, near which is the Garden of Refuge” (Qur'an 53:14–15). There it sees, hears, and draws near in the higher realm. Whoever reaches the furthest boundary encompasses what may be encompassed and is hidden from all creation. Just as it had been concealed before its first arrival, so the part that joins the whole becomes wholly of the whole.

Therefore be among those who are intelligent and perceive the hidden meaning of what is sensed. It is transmitted from the Prophet—God's blessings be upon him and his family—that he said: “The believer is discerning and intelligent. He sees what is not seen and what is seen; his heart is still in the face of panic, and his soul is tranquil against alarm. He has seen, heard, and known from where he began and to where he returns.”

The completion of this form is through knowledge, and its governance is through intellect and understanding. This occurs at the completion of the cycles, the fulfillment of the warnings, the perfection of the ages, and the return of the spiritual body to the lordly Whole. Then the believer rejoices in God's latter creation, while the unbeliever perishes in regret in a losing return. Understand this, and you will be rightly guided, God willing.

Chapter 6

Testimony Confirming What Was Previously Said Concerning the World of Command

In the preceding chapter we mentioned what may be used to clarify what we had already explained. We shall now add testimony establishing the truth of what we said, from what has been transmitted from our lord Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Sadiq—God's blessings be upon them both—and cited by the sage.

The sage said: "Know that the spiritual world is that from which the spiritual soul proceeded from the World of Lordship. It is the act of the Preceder and the Follower before nature and hylic bodies came into being through the celestial and earthly mothers and elements." For this reason the ancient philosophers said that there exists a subtle world, which they called "what is beyond nature" (metaphysics), because their knowledge fell short of beginning with the lordly spiritual world. They took as their starting point what they saw and witnessed, and because they found clear proofs of a subtle world they called it "beyond nature."

They indicated that this world possesses a hidden form consisting of the virtues of knowledge and wisdom, which is reached through knowledge, piety, "restraining the soul from desire" (cf. Qur'an 79:40), assuming the higher moral qualities, and exchanging what is lower for what is better, nobler, and more enduring. This form comes into being through divine causes in God's latter creation. It is the sun of divine wisdom and its abode, pointing toward the Universal Soul and the lordly mothers and elements.

Our lord Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Sadiq—peace be upon them both—is reported to have said that after the soul separates from the body it hovers over it until its funerary preparations are completed. He said: "If you were to see the soul after its separation from the body, you would find nothing of the body's form absent from it, so that it might be said that the person himself appears there with all his limbs, color, and distinguishing features."

When the corpse is concealed in the grave, the soul ascends seeking its own world, carrying with it the vegetative, sensory, and animal faculties. The rational soul penetrates the worlds by means of the spiritual form it has acquired, and souls take their places in the worlds from which they originally emerged. When the soul passes through the ether, the highest of the elemental worlds, the form generated from the virtues of knowledge and wisdom joins it in proportion to its purification from impurities. Some travel like lightning, some like the wind, some like a swift horse, some like a running man, and some move fallen upon their faces and hands. This corresponds to His saying: "Is one who walks fallen upon his face better guided, or one who walks upright upon a straight path?" (Qur'an 67:22).

When the rational soul passes into its world and joins its lords, the forms that arrived there before it meet it and ask, "How is so-and-so? What has so-and-so done?" They tell one another, "Leave him for a while; he has escaped a tremendous terror." Once he has recovered from the bewilderment of transition, they question him. If the person they ask about is still alive, he informs them of his life and they rejoice. This is related to His saying: "They rejoice concerning those who have not yet joined them from behind them: no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve" (Qur'an 3:170). But if he says, "He has died," and that person has not arrived among them, they say: "He has fallen."

The sage said: if you wish to contemplate the World of Subtlety while still in this world of generation, corruption, and density, then whatever you see here among dense existents, conceive its corresponding potential in the subtle world: heaven corresponding to heaven, fire to fire, air to air, and water to water. As for the "earth" of that world, what corresponds to it is called the "heaven" of this world.

Our lord al-Sadiq—God's blessings be upon him—said: "The separation of bodies is their life, and their growth is their passing away." The life of the spiritual form after bodies is through divine knowledge in its rising and passing. If the powers are employed through knowledge and wisdom, the soul becomes distinguished through speech and acquires an eternal, everlasting spiritual form in the World of Lordship.

If it does not reach that spiritual form while in the world of compounds, it returns to the world of compounds that it had sought and toward which it was drawn through the qualities of the animal soul. From those compounds the souls of growing plants had risen, and from the inanimate things, minerals, stones, and sensory animals the

successive faculties had been transformed until the rational soul arose. Such a soul, failing to fulfill its purpose, returns after honor to humiliation, after protection to degradation, and after having been human to the lowest state of animality.

For this reason the sage said that whoever dwells in a composite dwelling cannot but perform the actions of corporeal beings, speaking without direct proof until the density of veils and compounds is cut through. The world of spiritual beings is not like this. Whoever learns to return particulars to universals, joining what is dispersed and reconciling opposites, reaches the removal of the things that generate sorrow and attains abiding permanence. The world of spiritual beings is the world of freedom from need and everlasting subsistence, in which there is no anxiety, grief, sorrow, or illness. From it we proceeded and to it we return. We ask God for a beautiful return to the Lord of lords.

These sections combine allusion to the beginning and the end without explicit disclosure. Whoever studies them requires discussion and instruction regarding what they contain. Praise be to God for how He has guided and favored us, and for His generosity and nobility.

A description of the World of Command is also transmitted from our lord Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali—God's blessings be upon him—in one of his sermons. It makes the path clear and supplies a witness and proof for what has been said, and he is sufficient as a witness to truth. We reproduce the sermon so that whoever reads it may understand the correctness of our account. He—God's blessings be upon him and upon the pure Imams from his progeny—said:

"Praise be to God, who is unique in willing whatever judgments He wills, who alone disposes affairs and brings them to completion without speech, and who has reserved all praise for His countenance, Possessor of Majesty and Honor. He is a King before whose power the angels humble themselves, before whose greatness every tyrant bows, and before whose might all lords are subdued. He is a King whose sovereignty is exalted beyond all greatness. His grace is vast, and He gives gifts too numerous to count and benefits whose extent cannot be reached. They are not cut off through fear of diminution nor withheld through fear of changing circumstance. Rather, His abundant gifts follow one another and His favors come time after time. The two hands of the Possessor of Might flow with bounty; in generosity and majesty they are outspread.

"Blessed is the one who, amid confusion, holds fast to the firmest handhold. Blessed is the one who clings to its connection when desire throws people down, who knows the excellence of the blessing and gives thanks for what reaches him of it—the gratitude of one who reflects upon the workmanship and humbles himself before its Maker; who knows and removes from his soul the avenues of doubt; who singles out penetrating certitude for his Lord; who confines his knowledge to the ways of correctness; who through his intellect takes light from the landmarks of people of understanding; who returns through devotion to the will of the One worshipped; who by striving reaches the utmost exertion; and whose ambition does not carry him toward what his imagination cannot reach. He considers his condition and is deliberate in his questioning.

"For the Mighty, the Compeller has angels whom He created from the light of lights. They shine beyond the reach of eyesight and are unaffected by the alternation of night and day. They are spiritual beings whom the dust of bodies has not burdened; celestial beings whom wombs did not contain; everlasting beings who do not eat food; exempt from the transformations of attributes; divine in character, among whom languages are not confused. Their stations and degrees differ. They did not beget so as to reproduce, nor were they begotten so as to possess genealogies, nor are they equal so as to compete. Rather, each one is the servant of one above him, and all are veiled from the Hidden of the Possessor of Might. They are near through veils, honored servants: 'They do not precede Him in speech, and they act by His command' (Qur'an 21:27). They never feel secure from awe of Him and never cease glorifying Him.

"The honor of obedience raises them to the highest matters. Knowledge of might illuminates them so that they reach the marks of what is decreed. Excellence brings them to the tremendous height of elevation. They are those 'possessing wings, two, three, and four' (Qur'an 35:1). Their vast forms rise beyond the boundaries of imagination. Their intense wakefulness protects them from the weakness of slumber, so they do not sleep; the sublimity of might keeps them from couches, so they stand perpetually.

"Their clothing is the weighty matters entrusted to them; their ways are command and obedience. Their food is bearing the divine will and the coverings of divine reports; their drink is knowledge of what comes to them and carrying out all that is made known to them. They were magnified and thus became great; they were given dominion and gave thanks; and though made servants despite their greatness, they did not become arrogant. They are sufficient for what they have been charged with, capable through what they have been given, and convey what they have been made to bear.

"It is not said of them that they stood after sitting or sat after standing. Place cannot encompass their vastness, nor can localities bear their magnitude. Yet the knowledge of their Creator encompasses them. It is for them a garden and refuge. His workmanship perfected them, and that is their first beginning; His command humbled them, and that is their final goal. They became subtle within the vastness and encompassing knowledge of their Creator, and became great through the power to carry out His command and will. If the highest heavens, the lowest earths, what is above them, what lies between them, and what is beneath the soil were weighed against the greatness of one of them, they would be like the wing of a gnat. Where then can penetrating intellects wander, and how can the questioner aspire to the object of his question? 'Whatever mercy God opens for humankind, none can withhold it' (Qur'an 35:2); and 'He taught Adam all the names' (2:31)."

He also said in another sermon describing the World of Command:

"Praise be to God, who rose in exaltation and was high above all height, upon a throne whose rank He ordered by His primordial nature and whose manifestation He differentiated by His will. What eye could stand before Your light, or rise to the radiance of Your holiness? What understanding can comprehend what is below that, except inner visions from which coverings have been removed and blind veils torn away, whose spirits have risen upon the tips of angels' wings? They converse with You among the pillars of truth in the lights of Your splendor and look toward You through the traces of Your making upon the level of Your greatness.

"The people of the Kingdom name them scouts, and the people of the Realm of Power call them pillars. They rejoice among the ranks of the sanctified and take provision from the veils of might: 'They glorify their Lord with praise' (cf. Qur'an 39:75), and 'they are not arrogant' (cf. 16:49; 32:15).

"Glory be to the One who created the heavens and raised them by His power as a work of making, who fixed their foundations without supports in the air. Nothing He intended concerning them escaped Him, nor has any of them ever slipped from its position so as to require a pillar. How could they be displaced when He has caused the purified ones to inhabit them, those who glorify their Lord with praise and 'who are apprehensive through fear of Him' (Qur'an 21:28)."

Chapter 7

Knowledge of the People of the Message and Knowledge of the Ranks

We have cited enough testimony to establish the correctness of what we said concerning the World of Command. If we wished, we could fill pages and scrolls with what the ranks have written on this subject in their works, but what we have already presented is sufficient for one "who gives ear while he is a witness" (Qur'an 50:37).

Since we have explained what the seeker must know concerning tawhid and the World of Command, it is now necessary to mention what the seeker of knowledge must know after that: namely, knowledge of the People of the Message whom God, exalted is He, established for the guidance of His creatures. Through knowledge of them, the proper understanding of tawhid, transcendence, abstraction, and the ranks becomes sound.

We shall therefore state what must be known, verified, and adhered to with regard to those who occupy these stations. When the truthful and affirming believer knows tawhid and the ranks of the hudud and adheres to their walayah, he has known the truth and its people. As our lord Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali b. Abi Talib—God's blessings be upon him and his noble sons—said:

"God created the heart of the believer from truth, so whatever truth comes to it, it accepts even if it does not yet recognize it. He created the heart of the hypocrite from falsehood, so whatever falsehood comes to it, it accepts even if it does not know that it is falsehood."

We now speak about the excellence of prophecy and what must be believed concerning it, for therein lies salvation for the one who believes correctly.

The sage—may God exalt his rank—said: the Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him and his family—appeared to the community with two excellences: knowledge and the sword. Through the sword he subdues the people of this world and makes them fear reversal and defeat; through knowledge he overcomes the people of virtue and inner vision, increasing them in knowledge. Jihad is not permitted until proof has first been fully established and excuse removed, followed by warning through the sword. For this reason the preacher ascends the pulpit wearing the sword, admonishing the people: if they accept his knowledge, then that is the aim; if not, the sword stands between him and them. Whoever stands in the place of the Messenger and acts as his deputy must possess these two excellences if he is truly worthy of standing in his place and representing him.

Chapter 8

Concerning the Extremists (al-Ghulat)

Know—may God teach you the good and make you one of its people—that a faction among those who affiliate themselves with the people of truth has deviated, gone astray, led others astray, slipped away from truth, and caused others to slip. They are extremists in their belief.

Among them are those who believe that our lord Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali b. Abi Talib—God's blessings be upon him and upon the Imams from his progeny—is superior to the Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him. Some claim that the Messenger of God erred and that he stood in opposition to Amir al-Mu'minin, and they utter concerning him repulsive statements and hold monstrous beliefs. Upon such people be the curse of God, the curse of those who curse, and the curse of the angels and all humankind, abiding in it forever and ever.

Another faction believes that the Messenger of God in relation to the Imams of his progeny has the status of a da'i, while Amir al-Mu'minin is superior and more perfect than he. Others hold that "Muhammad the Praised" and "the Greater Muhammad" means Muhammad b. Abi Bakr. Others believe that our lord Amir al-Mu'minin is the Hidden of Hidden Things and that he passes successively into the bodily temples of the Imams. Still others claim that he is the First Originated Being, that he is neither father nor son, and that our lords al-Hasan and al-Husayn are not his sons.

They did not understand—may God oppose and curse them—that every Messenger who rises among creation is established by God in the position, within his world, corresponding to the First Originated Being in its own world. The Messenger receives the benefits of the World of Command and is their receptacle among humankind; divine supplies are directed toward him and arrive upon him, just as the First Originated Being receives the supplies of the Hidden of Hidden Things and is continuously joined from that direction to benefits and emanations.

The First Originated Being supplies his Follower, who receives his benefits and who is his veil, gate, and soul. In exactly the same way, the wasi of every prophet is that prophet's gate and veil, receiving his supplies and benefits. The relation is like that of the Follower to the Preceder. Every wasi of a Messenger is therefore subordinate to that Messenger, who is his superior rank, his instructor, supporter, and the one who pours upon him his blessings, favors, and benefits.

Every wasi is one of the good deeds of his prophet. He receives from him and benefits from him; he is his soul, the gate of his wisdom, and the recipient of the overflowing blessings and supplies of his beneficence. Every wasi acknowledges the right of his Messenger, humbles himself before him, submits to him, acknowledges his elevation above himself, neither opposes his command nor exceeds his prescribed bounds, and recognizes that the Messenger is his qiblah, mihrab, and ladder of salvation. He knows that his own rank is below the Messenger's rank and his station falls short of the Messenger's station. Through the Messenger he seeks approach to the higher origination intellects, and to him is his return.

When that Messenger departs from this world to the abode of God's honor and the place of His good pleasure, the wasi then stands in his place and represents him. Yet the wasi does not acquire or possess the full rank of excellence except after the rank of the one who appointed him. After the Messenger's departure, the wasi stands in the World of Religion in a position analogous to the First Originated Being in the world of intellect; thus the wasi, after the prophet's transfer, is in the World of Religion like the Originated Being in the world of intellect, the difference between them lying in the nobility of precedence.

Likewise every Imam possesses the same obligatory excellence we have described for every Messenger and wasi, in the appropriate relation. As our lord al-Sadiq—God's blessings be upon him—said: "The same excellence that is due to our first is due to our last."

The wali must also believe that the first person of the cycle of concealment after the end of the cycle of unveiling was Adam of the concealment, who inaugurated the cycle called al-manaya. His shari'ah, in relation to the shari'ahs that followed it, existed potentially, with the purpose of eventually emerging into actual establishment.

He did not possess 'azm in the sense of decisively cutting off and abrogating a prior shari'ah. His cycle corresponded to the cycle of Jesus in weakness, lack of worldly power, and absence of an openly manifest territorial rule. For this reason it was called the cycle of al-manaya.

When he had completed what he was appointed to do, he had two wasis. One of them died during his lifetime, so he appointed the other after him to complete what God had established for him. The Imamate then continued through the latter's descendants until the completion of his affair and the end of his cycle.

Then Noah—peace be upon him—arose with a Book and a shari'ah and abrogated what preceded him. He established an affair stronger than that of Adam. He was the first of the possessors of firm resolve, because he cut off what preceded him; this "cutting off" is what the text associates with 'azm. He therefore established a new shari'ah and a new command, laid down what he was ordered to lay down, and continued until the completion of his cycle and the perfection of his affair. He was commanded to appoint his wasi, which he did openly, and then departed to the abode of God's honor and the place of His good pleasure. His wasi stood after him in what God had appointed for him until he handed the affair to his son. The Imamate continued among the Imams in the same manner as it had in Adam's cycle until the appointed term for Noah and his progeny was complete.

Then Abraham—God's blessings be upon him—arose, more noble than those before him, in accordance with God's saying, "And Abraham, who fulfilled" (Qur'an 53:37). His "fulfillment" is interpreted here in connection with his being the seal of the fathers. Adam's wasi was his son; Noah's wasi was his son; Abraham had two sons who were his two wasis, one permanent and one entrusted. Thus he occupies a special position among the fathers whose sons were their wasis, while later "sons" in the spiritual sense were wasis who were not their physical sons. This distinction relates to an excellence that God, mighty and exalted, reserved for our lord Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali —God's blessings be upon him and upon them all—which will be discussed in its proper place, God willing.

When Abraham—God's blessings be upon him—arose with the command, he abrogated the shari'ah that preceded him. His excellence appeared more openly and abundantly than that of those before him. For this reason he was called the Friend of the Merciful (Khalil al-Rahman). In ordinary usage, the intimate friend is the person closest to his friend and more beloved to him than a brother or son. Abraham was connected to the rank that establishes the natiqs in a way not attained by those before him, and the manifestation of that rank through him was greater. This was the special friendship by which he was distinguished over his predecessors.

For this reason it is transmitted that the Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him—resembled his forefather Abraham more than anyone else. The resemblance meant that a similar supply, confirmation, success, right direction, and veiling through that rightly guiding rank reached him.

Among what is prescribed for every worshipper of the Most High, the Glorious, is the prayer: "O God, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, grant peace to Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, and bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You blessed, granted peace to, and bestowed blessing upon Abraham and the family of Abraham. Surely You are Praiseworthy, Glorious."

Two explanations are given for this. According to one, the ranks—may God raise their degrees—explained that it is a supplication by the awliya' of the family of Muhammad asking God to continue the Imamate in the descendants of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad until the rising of their Qa'im, whose rising brings the Hour, just as God continued prophecy, messengerhood, wasayah, and Imamate among the descendants of Abraham and the family of Abraham until their Qa'im arose—Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah, God's blessings be upon him and upon them. He is the Qa'im potentially, the summoner together with his wasi and the Imams from their descendants, until the Qa'im in actuality—peace be upon his mention.

The second explanation is that when the station of greatness was manifested in Abraham and he became God's intimate friend and the nearest creature to Him, the people of the haqiqah implored the One who bestowed this upon Abraham and his descendants not to leave Muhammad and his family without its like. They asked that the family of Muhammad receive supply, confirmation, success, and right direction comparable to what reached Abraham and the family of Abraham, and that Muhammad be blessed through the continuation of the Imamate in his descendants after him. This is the multiplied blessing and complete, successive felicity.

The request for "peace" or "submission" also points to the contentment of the ranks with the portion assigned to them. An example is our lord al-Hasan and his submission to God's command when the affair of the Imamate was directed to his brother, who shared with him the designation and purification. He accepted his allotted share and what God had made obligatory for him, and submitted to it.

Our lord al-Hasan—peace be upon him—accepted what God had decreed for him in the matter of the Imamate: what reached him through designation and divine assistance, and the fact that the Imamate was deposited with him in trust for his brother and his brother's descendants, while al-Hasan's own descendants had no share in that line. He was content with what God apportioned and submitted to the divine command and the requirement of wisdom.

In the same way, divine wisdom made the descendants of Ishmael b. Abraham—peace be upon them—the bearers of the permanent wasayah and Imamate, while the descendants of Isaac—peace be upon them—were the people of prophecy, messengerhood, kingship, sword, and temporal sovereignty, possessing the outward command and celebrated renown. Each accepted his allotted portion and what God assigned him, and each submitted to the command of God, mighty and exalted.

For this reason the Messenger of God used to say: "I seek protection for my two sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn by that with which my forefather Abraham sought protection for his two sons Ishmael and Isaac, lest envy or pride enter between them." This protection consisted in confirming for each of them what he rightly deserved by God's decree, according to divine wisdom and just judgments, just as Abraham established for his two sons what wisdom assigned to each of them and what each deserved. There is much more that could be said concerning this subject.

When Abraham—God's blessings be upon him—entrusted to each of his two sons what God commanded him concerning wasayah, the affair continued in the two branches as described until Moses—peace be upon him—arose. Moses abrogated the shari'ah of Abraham and instituted a new shari'ah. He punished in various ways those who remained attached to the former, now-abrogated shari'ah.

He then appointed Aaron as his wasi. Aaron died during Moses' lifetime, just as Abel died during Adam's lifetime, so Moses appointed another wasi, Joshua b. Nun, as an entrusted guardian for the descendants of Aaron. Moses had no son who could serve as his wasi. The author argues that had Moses possessed such a son, then Jesus would likewise have had to possess a son to serve as his wasi, and had Jesus possessed such a son, then the Messenger of God would likewise have had to possess a son as his wasi. Were that so, the wasayah and special excellence of our lord Amir al-Mu'minin—peace be upon him—would be nullified. For this reason, the text says, God caused the matter to proceed in the same pattern for these three prophets, none of whom had a son serving as wasi, and reserved this excellence and honor for our lord Amir al-Mu'minin—God's blessings be upon him. This is the point we promised to explain.

When Moses appointed Joshua as his wasi and guardian for the descendants of Aaron and departed to the abode of God's honor and the place of His good pleasure, Joshua stood in his place and called people to the Imamate of Aaron's descendants. According to the doctrine presented here, no Imam or prophet from the descendants of Isaac arose except by the command of the Imam of his time from the descendants of Ishmael, through the line extending from Qaydar b. Ishmael to Abu Talib b. 'Abd al-Muttalib, Bahira, and Sergius—peace be upon them all. Were it not for our commitment to brevity, we would relate all their stories; they may be found by whoever seeks them in the books of the da'is—may God raise their degrees, grant us their intercession, and never deprive us of their regard.

The Imamate then continued among the descendants of Aaron until the rising of Jesus—God's blessings be upon him. His affair was one of concealment and secrecy because of the many trials and tests imposed upon the awliya' in his time and the strength of their opponents. He did not obtain a territory in which to proclaim his mission openly, nor did he possess the power enjoyed by earlier figures who arose with sword and kingship. He traveled through the lands and called in secrecy and concealment through different kinds of parables.

For this reason God says concerning him: "Indeed the likeness of Jesus with God is as the likeness of Adam: He created him from dust" (Qur'an 3:59). The two resembled one another in weakness and in their limited ability

to obtain victory over their enemies. Jesus remained in this condition until, as the text states, the Jews killed him and crucified him according to their claim; the true account of his affair is that which the ranks have set forth in their books.

Jesus had already designated his wasi, Simon Peter (Sham'un al-Safa)—peace be upon them both—and handed the affair to him. Simon likewise remained concealed after Jesus and became a fugitive from his enemies. Throughout that cycle the Imamate continued in concealment and secrecy among those of the descendants of Isaac who occupied the outward role, while its true entitlement continued among the descendants of Ishmael—peace be upon them—until the cycle of Jesus was completed. Then the time arrived for the sixth Natiq to arise, and the appearance drew near of the one through whom the religious person and luminous temple would reach completion.

Chapter 9

On the Excellence of the Prophet and the People of the House

We have already set forth what we undertook to mention concerning the matter of the Message, until our discussion reached the Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him, his family, and the Imams from his progeny. Our entire course of discussion leads to mention of his excellence and nobility, the loftiness of his station, and the perfection that God, exalted is He, granted him above those prophets, messengers, and Imams who preceded or followed him—except the Qa'im of the Resurrection, peace be upon his mention, who possesses nobility above all and excellence over everyone.

Our lord al-Sadiq—God's blessings be upon him—said: "God, exalted is He, created seven Adams; every one of them opens with a Muhammad and is sealed with a Muhammad." A questioner asked him: "Was there an Adam before this Adam?" He replied: "Yes," and continued counting until he had counted twenty-one Adams other than this Adam and his progeny.

The sage said that revelation and divine confirmation from God to His Messenger—God's blessings be upon him and his family—consist in the casting of the Spirit of the Haqiqah into him. The Prophet's designation of his wasi—God's blessings be upon both of them—likewise consists in casting the spirit into him. The same applies to the designation of one Imam by the Imam who follows him, and to the rest of the ranks, until even the call of the ma'dhuns to those whom they summon—when those people respond to their call—is a blowing of the spirit into them.

God says: "O you who believe, respond to God and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life" (Qur'an 8:24).

The blowing of the natural spirit, which human beings share with animals, is only a substrate prepared for this tremendous affair. In the same way, one says that the earth is a substrate for forms emerging from it; the Adamic human forms that emerge are better than the earth. The human form is then a substrate for speech, which is better than it; speech is a basis for intellect, which is better than speech. Thus God's signs stand in the horizons and in the soul, bearing witness to the correctness of His religion.

It is transmitted from Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari—may God have mercy upon him—that he said: "We were sitting with the Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him and his family—in the mosque after his return from going out for the mutual imprecation, when al-'Abbas entered with him. He greeted the Messenger and said: 'May my father and mother be your ransom, O Messenger of God, I have a question.' He replied: 'Ask, O uncle.' Al-'Abbas said: 'Tell me what makes you, the People of the House, superior to us when the mineral origins are one?'

"The Messenger—God's blessings be upon him and his family—said three times: 'Come here, O uncle. God created me and created 'Ali when there was no heaven or earth, no Garden or Fire, no Tablet or Pen. When He willed to create us, He spoke a Word and it became a light and a spirit, then He mingled them and created me and 'Ali from them. From my light He created the light of the Throne, and I am more exalted than the Throne. From the light of 'Ali He created the light of the heavens, and 'Ali is more exalted than the heavens. From the light of al-Hasan He created the light of the moon, and from the light of al-Husayn He created the light of the sun and made it illumination for the people of earth.

"'He created the angels from light and caused them to dwell in His heavens. The angels glorified God, mighty and exalted, saying in their glorification: "All-Glorious, All-Holy! How noble are these luminous forms before God, mighty and exalted!" Then God, glorified is He, desired to test the angels with a trial and sent upon them a dense darkness so that they could not see its beginning from its end nor its end from its beginning. They glorified God and said: "All-Glorious, All-Holy! We have never seen anything like what we are experiencing. By the rank of these luminous forms, remove from us what we dislike, for You indeed do whatever You will."

"'God, mighty and exalted, said: "By My might and majesty, I shall do so, and I am the Doer of whatever I will." God then created from the light of Fatimah something in the form of a lamp suspended from the Throne,

and the heavens and earth shone by it. For this reason she was named Fatimah al-Zahra'. God said: "I have made the reward of your glorification, magnification, and sanctification belong to this maiden, her father, her husband, her two sons, their Shi'ah, and those who love them."""

Jabir's report continues that al-'Abbas then went out and encountered 'Ali—God's blessings be upon him—embraced him to his chest, kissed him between the eyes, and said: "The progeny of the Chosen One from the People of the House—how noble you are before God, mighty and exalted! Upon those who hate and wrong you be God's curse."

The Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him—is then reported to have said: "Whoever God, mighty and exalted, provides with the walayah of 'Ali b. Abi Talib—God's blessings be upon him—has attained the good of this world and the next, and I have no doubt that he is destined for the Garden. In love and walayah of 'Ali are twenty qualities: ten in this world and ten in the next.

"As for those in this world: renunciation, eagerness for knowledge, scrupulousness in religion, desire for worship, sincere repentance, standing in prayer at night, giving up hope in created beings, preserving the Qur'an, hatred of the world, and generosity with what one possesses.

"As for those in the next world: no register will be opened against him, no balance will be set up for him, his book will be given in his right hand, a writ of freedom from the Fire will be written for him, God will brighten his face, he will be clothed in the garments of the Garden and sheltered in its shade, God will look upon him with mercy, he will intercede for a hundred members of his household, he will be blessed in the Garden, and he will enter the Garden without reckoning. Blessed is whoever loves 'Ali, and blessed are those who love him and the People of his House."

Chapter 10

The Testimony of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali b. Abi Talib to the Excellence of the Messenger of God

Among the testimonies of our lord Amir al-Mu'minin to the excellence of the Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him and his family—is what is transmitted from him in a sermon in which he taught people how to invoke blessings upon the Messenger. He said:

"O God, Spreader of the spread-out things, Supporter of the raised heavens, and Former of hearts upon their dispositions, both the wretched and the blessed among them: place the noblest of Your blessings and the ever-growing abundance of Your benedictions upon Muhammad, Your servant and Messenger, the seal of what preceded and the opener of what had been closed; the one who proclaimed truth by truth, repelled the surges of falsehood, and crushed the assaults of error.

"He bore the burden placed upon him and rose to it, standing by Your command, hastening toward Your satisfaction, never shrinking from advancing and never weakening in determination. He comprehended Your revelation, guarded Your covenant, and proceeded in carrying out Your command until he kindled a flame for whoever sought a flame and illuminated the path for the one wandering in darkness. Through him hearts were guided after plunging into trials and sins, and he established clear signs and luminous judgments.

"He is Your trustworthy trustee, the keeper of Your hidden knowledge, Your witness on the Day of Religion, the one You raised with truth, and Your Messenger to creation. O God, make spacious for him a spacious place in Your shade and reward him with multiplied good from Your bounty. O God, raise his building above the buildings of all builders, honor his station with You, complete his light, and recompense him for Your sending him as one whose testimony is accepted, whose speech is pleasing, whose utterance is just, and whose way is decisive.

"O God, gather us with him in the coolness of life, the settled abode of blessing, the fulfillment of desires, the sweetest pleasures, the most hopeful object of longing, the ultimate tranquility, and the gifts of honor. Surely You have power over all things."

This is the testimony of our lord Amir al-Mu'minin to the excellence of the Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon them both and their families—his acknowledgment of the Messenger's right, his seeking intercession through him, and his seeking approach to God through the Messenger's lofty rank.

Likewise, in every supplication or intimate prayer he sought approach through him. In his supplication for Sunday he said:

"My Lord, I have deliberately turned toward You with my intention, though sins surround me, O Knower of the unseen. Your generosity gives me hope—though my offenses have become enormous—in Your mercy, O Most Merciful of the merciful. I ask You to bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, and through Muhammad Your Prophet—Your blessings be upon him and his family—to bestow upon me [Your favor]."

In the supplication for the sixteenth day of the month he said:

"O Muhammad! May my father and mother be your ransom. Through you I turn in this need of mine toward my Lord and your Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful."

And in his supplication for the twentieth day of the month he said:

"O God, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad; have mercy upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad; and bestow blessing upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You blessed, bestowed blessing upon, and had mercy upon Abraham and the family of Abraham. Surely You are Praiseworthy, Glorious—with a blessing through which we attain Your satisfaction and are saved from Your wrath and from the Fire.

"O God, raise our Prophet to a praised station for which the first and the last will envy him—God's blessings and peace be upon him and his family. O God, single out our Prophet on the Day of Resurrection for the most excellent share of all excellences and bring him to the greatest joy in the abode of the honored. O God, single

Muhammad out for the praised remembrance and the frequented Pool. O God, ennoble his edifice and magnify his proof; give us drink from his cup and bring us to his Pool; gather us in his company not disgraced, regretful, doubting, changed, covenant-breaking, uncertain, denying, tempted, astray, or leading others astray. Let us be among those content with the reward and secure from punishment, as hospitality from You, for You are the Accepter of repentance.

"O God, bless Muhammad, Your chosen and selected one, the Imam of good and blessing for all lands, servants, beasts, and trees, and a mercy to the worlds. O God, grant Muhammad, from every honor, its best; from every bliss, its best; from every glad tiding, its best; from every gift, its best; and from every allotted portion, its best. Let none of Your creatures be closer to You in assembly, more favored in rank, nearer to You as a means of approach, greater in honor with You, greater in right upon You, or greater in intercession than Muhammad—God's blessings be upon him and his family.

"O God, gather us with Muhammad—God's blessings be upon him and his family—in the coolness of life, the repose of the spirit, the open field of blessing, the furthest limit of excellence, the joyful splendors of honor, the ultimate tranquility, the fulfillment of desires, the beloved pleasures, and a splendor unmixed with anything but satisfaction. We bear witness that he conveyed the Message.

"O God, grant Muhammad the wasilah and bestow upon him elevation and excellence. Make his degree among the highest, his love among the chosen, and the remembrance of his abode among those brought near. We bear witness that he conveyed the Message, sincerely advised Your servants, recited Your signs, established Your limits, proclaimed Your command openly, carried out Your judgment, and fulfilled Your obedience."

The author's purpose in reproducing these supplications is clear: Amir al-Mu'minin repeatedly bears witness to the superior station of the Prophet, seeks God through him, and teaches others to do the same. This testimony refutes any claim that the wasi exceeds the Messenger in rank.

Chapter 11

The Excellence of the Prophet over the Rest of the Prophets

Our master Ja'far b. Mansur al-Yaman—may God sanctify his spirit—said in Kitab al-Shawahid wa'l-Bayan:

God, mighty and exalted, made obedience to Muhammad—God's blessings be upon him and his family—obligatory and bestowed the Imamate upon his descendants. He commanded him to establish his wasi, just as He had done with Abraham. For this reason He says: "The creed of your father Abraham" (Qur'an 22:78).

For the same reason Muhammad—God's blessings be upon him and his family—commanded that blessings be invoked upon him, his progeny, and his community in their prayers with the words: "O God, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, and bestow blessing upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You blessed and bestowed blessing upon Abraham and the family of Abraham."

This sign bears witness to the continuity of the Imamate in Abraham and his descendants until Muhammad, and in Muhammad and his descendants until the Qa'im—God's blessings be upon them all. They are those whose obedience is obligatory upon all creatures. The Imamate does not depart from the progeny of Muhammad—God's blessings be upon him and his family—until the end of the world, just as it did not depart from the progeny of Abraham; it remains enduring and everlasting.

All creation recognizes that Muhammad—God's blessings be upon him and his family—is the most excellent of the prophets, in accordance with his saying: "I am the most excellent of the children of Adam; I am the most excellent of the prophets and the master of the prophets, and I say this without boasting." No one doubts that Muhammad is superior to all the prophets.

How, then, can the supplication asking God to treat him "as Abraham" mean that he is merely equal to Abraham when he is superior to Abraham and to all the prophets—both in his own form, in his progeny, and in the Qa'im from among his descendants, peace be upon them all? The intended meaning is the continuity of the divine office through the descendants; otherwise Muhammad himself is the most excellent of the prophets.

This is the statement of the trustworthy da'i Ja'far b. Mansur al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity.

Chapter 12

The Excellence of the Messenger of God and His Wasi

We shall now mention something of the excellence of the Messenger of God and his wasi—God's blessings be upon them and their families—and of the loftiness of their rank with God, exalted is He, and with His awliya'. We shall draw from what God has mentioned in His Book and what the ranks of religion—may God sanctify their spirits—set down in their writings, so that our belief concerning the two may be made clear and the claims of anyone who diminishes the Messenger of God from the station God made obligatory for him may be shown false. Whoever lowers him from his rightful station—upon such a person be the curse of God.

Among the clearest indications of the elevated excellence of the Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him and his family—is what God mentions in Surat al-Najm:

"By the star when it descends: your companion has neither strayed nor erred, nor does he speak from desire. It is only a revelation revealed. One mighty in power taught him, possessed of strength, and he rose upright while he was upon the highest horizon; then he drew near and came down, until he was at the distance of two bow-lengths or nearer. Then He revealed to His servant what He revealed. The heart did not lie about what it saw. Will you then dispute with him concerning what he sees? He certainly saw him another time, at the Lote Tree of the Furthest Boundary, near which is the Garden of Refuge, when there covered the Lote Tree what covered it. The sight did not swerve, nor did it transgress. He certainly saw some of the greatest signs of his Lord" (Qur'an 53:1–18).

In this, God, mighty and exalted, explicitly assigns to him an excellence and nobility greater than the praise He gave his forefather Abraham concerning Abraham's connection to the higher and lower ranks, when He said: "Thus We showed Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might be among those possessed of certainty" (Qur'an 6:75).

Abraham—peace be upon him—was specially favored above the fathers, while Muhammad—God's blessings be upon him and upon them all—was favored above the fathers and the sons with a tremendous, enduring, and continuous excellence in himself and in his progeny, through the words: "He certainly saw some of the greatest signs of his Lord" (Qur'an 53:18).

This is God's statement concerning the excellence of the Messenger of God, and no distorter can divert it nor can any false interpretation diminish it. Where, then, are the accursed extremists in relation to this statement? May God curse them.

In a treatise of our master al-Mu'ayyad—may God exalt his sanctity—there occurs concerning the Prophet's excellence a statement that makes certainty clear and removes doubt from the believers. May God grant us his intercession. He says, in part: "To abandon Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali b. Abi Talib—God's blessings be upon him and upon the Imams from his progeny—is to abandon the shari'ah and the judgments of intellect."

We say that the position of the Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him and his family—in the World of Religion is like the position of the sun in this world. God says: "And He made the sun a lamp" (Qur'an 71:16). He uses the same metaphor for the Prophet when He says: "Indeed We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, a warner, a summoner to God by His permission, and an illuminating lamp" (Qur'an 33:45–46).

Astrologers say that as long as the sun continues to exercise its influence upon a human being, he is alive; when its supply is cut off from him, he dies. This is a necessary matter. We therefore say that as long as a human being remains attached to the bonds of prophecy and the shari'ah, he is truly alive, as God says: "Respond to God and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life" (Qur'an 8:24).

When a person is cut off from them, he dies and becomes one of those whom God describes as "dead, not living, and unaware when they will be raised" (Qur'an 16:21), even though outwardly he still bears the appearance of life.

The people of astrology say that among all the heavenly spheres there is nothing more noble or higher in rank than the sun. We say that among the spheres of the World of Command—which are the ranks and stations of the hudud—there is no rank more noble or higher than prophecy, and through prophecy all of them are sustained, just as all the heavenly spheres are sustained through the sun.

They say that all the forms of plants and animals that arise in the World of Nature arise through the sun's influence. We say that all the religious forms created for eternal existence in the World of Command arise through the power and influence of prophecy.

Moreover, the excellence of prophecy and the illumination of the Hereafter through it are such that no sun, moon, or star can equal them. The physical sun, although everything receives light through it, is dark in itself. By saying it is dark in itself we mean that it does not comprehend itself through knowledge and does not know the station of excellence it occupies. It is therefore dark inwardly though luminous outwardly, just as a lamp illuminates other things while possessing no self-knowledge.

The possessor of the station of prophecy, however, is luminous in himself many times more than he is luminous for others. What reaches others from him is only like the overflow from a vessel filled to the brim. This is the difference between the two.

The astrologers also say that the sun turns toward the moon with supply, while the moon turns toward the sun to receive that supply, and that the moon occupies in relation to the sun the position of a minister in relation to a prince. We say that the Prophet—God's blessings be upon him and his family—turns toward his wasi—peace be upon him—with supply, while the wasi turns toward him to receive, and that the wasi is his minister just as the moon is the minister of the sun.

The shari'ah itself indicates this in God's report of Moses—peace be upon him—saying: "Appoint for me a minister from my family" (Qur'an 20:29), and in the Prophet's saying: "'Ali is to me as Aaron was to Moses, except that there is no prophet after me." God then says: "We certainly bestowed favor upon Moses and Aaron, and We saved them and their people from the great distress, and We helped them so that they became the victors. We gave them the clear Book and guided them to the straight path, and We left for them among later generations: Peace be upon Moses and Aaron. Thus do We reward the doers of good" (Qur'an 37:114–121).

If the Prophet's comparison of himself to Moses is sound, and his comparison of 'Ali to Aaron is sound, then 'Ali accompanies him step by step according to the implications of these verses, while remaining in the relation of wasi to natiq.

The astrologers further say that if, in this world of generation and corruption beneath the sphere of the moon, the influence of the sun were to reach things directly without the mediation of the moon, neither plant nor animal could properly come into existence. Rather, the moon receives the sun's influence, moderates it, and then transmits it to the generated beings of the world, through which growth and flourishing occur.

We say in the same way that the shari'ah and its pillars are connected to the wasi—peace be upon him—and that people reach their realities through him. If his mediation were removed from religion and people attempted to cling to the bonds of prophecy alone without the intermediaries, the offspring of the Hereafter and the forms prepared for eternal life would be nullified.

Blessed, then, is God, who placed stars in the heaven of religion just as He placed stars in the heaven of this world and "placed therein a lamp and an illuminating moon" (cf. Qur'an 25:61), so that one may be a perceptible example and witness and the other its intelligible counterpart.

Chapter 13

The Human Being Is the Microcosm

Among the things that support what we have mentioned is the saying of the sages that the human being is the "small world," or microcosm, because the traces of everything found in the greater world are present within him.

They placed the heart—the noblest thing in the human being, the mine of life and heat—in correspondence with the sun, which is the noblest thing in the celestial sphere, because the heart is specially disposed to receive the powers associated with the sun. They placed the brain, which is the instrument of intellect and the noblest thing in the human being after the heart, and the place in which colors, tastes, and smells are known, in correspondence with the moon, which is the noblest thing in the sphere after the sun.

They said that the brain is the minister of the heart because the passage of power from the heart to the brain is like the passage of the sun's power to the moon. The brain apprehends the realities of tastes, smells, and colors through the instruments of hearing, sight, smell, and taste, and refers them back to the heart from which it received its power; in the same way, the moon depends upon the sun, which supplies it with power, in producing the forms of individual beings and generated things within the World of Nature, just as the heart supplies the brain with heat.

They also said that when the brain is corrupted, intellect and sensation are corrupted and cease to apprehend knowable things, just as, if there were no lunar sphere, the world would cease to bring forth forms.

Since the arrangement is thus, the human being as microcosm corresponds to the shari'ah in the World of Religion. The heart, connected with the sun, the source of life and the commander of the bodily limbs—which neither go forth nor return except by its command—corresponds within the human being to the Prophet, peace be upon him, who is the commander of the World of Religion, the source of life for creation, and the chief from whose judgment and command the ranks of his religion neither go forth nor return.

The brain, connected with the moon, the instrument of intellect, the place of distinguishing colors and odors and of apprehending forms of knowledge, acts as the minister of the heart and receives power from it like the moon receives the sun's power. In the same way, the wasi—peace be upon him—is the minister of the Prophet—God's blessings be upon them both and their families. The Prophet's power reaches him, he is connected to his knowledge, and through the power graciously bestowed upon him he clarifies the realities of the sciences.

The brain's apprehension of tastes and smells through its instruments of hearing, sight, and the other senses, and its referring them back to the cause that supplied its power, corresponds to the wasi's summoning people to the realities of the shari'ah's examples by means of his own instruments—his Imams and ranks—while relying upon the blessings of the Prophet—God's blessings be upon him and his family—who granted him honor and elevation and brought him to the sublime rank.

Just as corruption of the brain entails corruption of intellect and sensation, and just as the absence of the lunar sphere would entail the impossibility of natural forms, so abandoning obedience to the wasi—who occupies in the World of Religion the place occupied by the brain in the human microcosm and the moon among the celestial spheres—entails the impossibility of the religious forms prepared to receive the benefits of the Hereafter.

Just as natural forms would not exist without the moon, and sensory cognitions would not exist without the brain, so divine cognitions would not exist without the wasi—peace be upon him. "Blessed is God, the best of creators" (Qur'an 23:14), and He—most truthful of speakers—says: "On the earth are signs for those possessed of certainty, and in yourselves; will you not then see?" (Qur'an 51:20–21).

This discussion has now conveyed the essence of our belief concerning 'Ali—God's blessings be upon him—and concerning preservation of the shari'ah outwardly and inwardly, in knowledge and in practice. We have established luminous proofs and clear testimonies that neither of these can stand without the other. This is the creed of the awliya' of the Imam of our age, the Proof of God over His creatures—God's blessings be upon him—and not the creed of the accursed extremists, who deserve our curse.

Those extremists call themselves by our names while opposing our beliefs. Through the evil of their false affiliation they attribute to us, by their blameworthy actions and corrupt statements, matters from which God has purified us and protected us. We are continually burned by their fire and blamed for their crimes, while God lies in wait for them and for every wrongdoer.

They are numerous and hold different beliefs. What initially joins us and them is their love of 'Ali—God's blessings be upon him—but after that they go beyond the limit until they strip themselves of religion. Through excess they fall away from the proof just as those who fall short lose it by opposition. They then plunge into their own opinions and analogies. In our judgment, their excess makes them more deserving of blame than the deficient are for their deficiency.

The Prophet—God's blessings be upon him—is reported to have said: "Two kinds of people perish concerning you, O 'Ali: one who goes to excess and one who falls short." He placed the extremist first in blame. We say that these deluded extremists resemble the Christians in asserting the divinity of a human being. Just as those who fall short distort words from their proper places by concealed deficiency, these extremists distort words from their places by concealed excess.

Both the extremists and those who fall short turn to many verses of the Book revealed specifically concerning the People of the Prophetic House. The deficient make them general for all people. An example is the verse of mutual imprecation: "Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then let us earnestly invoke [God's curse]" (Qur'an 3:61). By "our sons," God intended al-Hasan and al-Husayn; by "our women," Fatimah; and by "ourselves," Muhammad and 'Ali—God's blessings be upon them all—not the masses of humankind as some claim.

Likewise, the "family of Muhammad" upon whom God made invoking blessings obligatory are specifically his household and those who follow them through walayah. The same applies to God's saying: "You are the best community brought forth for humankind: you command what is right and forbid what is wrong" (Qur'an 3:110), and: "so that you may be witnesses over humankind and the Messenger may be a witness over you" (Qur'an 2:143).

Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Sadiq—God's blessings be upon him—said: "All of this was revealed specifically concerning us. The Messenger—God's blessings be upon him and his family—is the witness over us regarding what we conveyed from God, and we are the witnesses over the people." Many similar examples exist in which others have carried a specific designation beyond its proper boundary and made it general, thereby including every righteous and wicked person within it.

Just as the deficient among the hostile parties turn verses of specific designation into general statements and thereby deny the excellence of the possessors of excellence, the extremists go in the opposite direction and turn general verses into exclusive references. In this they have taken the pattern of their unbelief and error from the Christians, a great community whose members, in the author's polemical framing, are all extremists because of their doctrine of the divinity of a human being.

They argue from what they adopted as religion concerning Christ—peace be upon him—claiming that God said in the Gospel: "You are My firstborn son," and then they stop there. Few among those who possess knowledge deny that such a statement occurs in some form, but it has parallels which, if brought forward, remove divinity from Jesus. Among them is Jesus' saying to the disciples: "You are the sons of God," and his saying: "If you forgive people their sins, then your Father who is in heaven will forgive you your sins."

When we find that the meaning they restricted to Jesus is also applied generally to his disciples, we do not suppose that the disciples ceased to have known human fathers and mothers. Christ's attribution of them to "sonship of God" must therefore be understood in the same relational and spiritual sense in which he himself was attributed to it. This undermines the Christian argument if literal sonship is claimed, for then the same sonship would include Christ and the disciples alike, multiplying their "gods" beyond three and even beyond thirty-three.

If they claim a difference between what God said to Jesus and what Jesus said to his disciples, they are required to provide a proof. They do not deny that Jesus spoke in this way to his disciples. Thus, just as the meaning of "My firstborn son" and "you are the sons of God" became hidden from them and they carried these expressions

to an unsound interpretation once they had departed from proper guidance, so too people may carry the judgments of the shari'ah to corrupt interpretations.

The extremists, for their part, failed to understand the meaning of the reported saying of Amir al-Mu'minin—peace be upon him: "I am the First and I am the Last; I am the Manifest and I am the Hidden; I possess knowledge of all things; I am the one who raised its heaven, spread out its earth, caused its trees to grow, and made its rivers flow." They interpreted it in a way that led them to belief in his lordship. They then fixed themselves upon this and searched for whatever might reinforce and tighten their doctrine, while guarding against anything that would expose its weakness.

But statements of the same kind as those they exploit contain their own qualification. 'Ali—peace be upon him—also said: "We are a light from the light of God, and our Shi'ah are from us." If the first language were literal proof of divinity, then the second would extend the same status to his followers. Yet God says through Abraham: "Whoever follows me is of me" (Qur'an 14:36), clearly demonstrating a relational meaning rather than identity of essence.

Those who distort the general into the exclusive and those who distort the exclusive into the general both depart from the straight path, abandon truth, and persist in error because they are left to their own souls. O God, do not leave us to our own souls, lest we be humiliated and disgraced.

Had the Christians turned toward the "house of their light" that God commanded them to magnify, in the manner alluded to earlier, they would have understood the guidance contained in what their master symbolized. They would have known that the human being is, in relation to this world, its offspring, and in relation to the subtle meaning through which God established the worlds, likewise an offspring. They would have understood the kind of divine affiliation intended and that all the disciples of Jesus were his spiritual offspring in the same sense in which he himself was an offspring of that higher order.

In the same way, had the extremists who imitate them followed the proof, the meaning of what 'Ali—God's blessings be upon him—said would have been clearer to them than the sun.

His saying, "I am the First and I am the Last," may be explained within the limits permitted to us as follows. This world, in respect of the appearance of composite beings, is "the first," while the Hereafter is "the last." Through taking provision from the first one reaches knowledge of the last. There can be no last for one who has no first.

The order of religion requires that 'Ali—God's blessings be upon him—be "first" in the sense that he is the Gate of the City of Knowledge, while the Prophet, who is the City, is "last" in the sense of the goal reached through the gate. One who does not hold fast to the gate does not truly hold fast to the Prophet. Thus 'Ali is connected with both first and last. The last cannot be reached except through the first. The last is the Garden, while the first is the Word of Deliverance, and knowledge of its realities is obtained through his direction. He is therefore a cause of access to the first and a cause of access to the last.

The first is the light of God's unity through which creation is established; the last is its light through which resurrection is established, as He says: "The earth shall shine with the light of its Lord" (Qur'an 39:69). Because of his mediating relation to both, he may be called "the First and the Last" in this esoteric sense. From God the two run as one affair: "Your creation and your resurrection are only as a single soul" (Qur'an 31:28).

His saying, "I am the Manifest and I am the Hidden," is likewise understood by his true awliya' according to his lofty degrees. By reason of the station described—his authority over passage, his guardianship in relation to the Garden and the Fire, the two ends being in his hand in first and last, and his standing at the place of watch—his true station is manifest to the higher assembly but hidden from the people of doubts. Such people say of him only, "He was a righteous man," and this is the limit of their knowledge. He is thus manifest in the highest assembly by the exalted degree and hidden in the abode of this world, like the believer whom the Prophet described as "unknown in the world, known in the highest assembly."

As for his saying, "I am the one who raised its heaven," and the rest of that report, the matter may be summarized thus. God created the greater world and adorned it with heavens possessing lights and an earth

possessing forms. He created the human being such that the powers of the world terminate in him and its lights set within him; thus He established him as a self-subsisting world corresponding to the greater world in all its states. The higher part of the human being—hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch—consists of lights corresponding to the heavens, while the lower bodily part is like the solid earth bearing forms.

God then created the World of Religion in correspondence with both the greater world and the human microcosm. He gave it a heaven possessing lights and an earth possessing forms. Within it He established prophets, wasis, and Imams—the possessors of divine confirmation, each according to the difference of their stations—in the position of the heavens whose lights differ from one another, and in the position of the higher faculties of the human microcosm, such as hearing and sight. He established the spread of the shari'ah, from which different religious forms arise, in the position of the earth with its different forms and the lower portion of the human being.

Since the World of Religion is a world standing in its own right, adorned with its earth and its heavens, the one through whom its laws were codified and its proofs clarified was 'Ali—God's blessings be upon him. God, mighty and exalted, strengthened Muhammad—God's blessings be upon him and his pure family—through him and made him a miracle supporting the extension of the Prophet's shari'ah. In this interpretive sense 'Ali is truthful in saying: "I am the one who raised its heaven," and in the rest of the report.

This is a flash of lightning from the sciences of our awliya'—God's blessings be upon them—which we have made manifest. We say: O God, forgive us our sins and our excess in our affair, and do not take us to task if we forget or err, through Your generosity.

If it remained hidden from the extremists that 'Ali—peace be upon him—is not God but a servant governed by God, it should not have remained hidden that the Shi'ah whom he joined to himself by saying "our Shi'ah are from us" are not gods. He also said that no servant loves us without God gathering him with us. If all who were joined to him in this way were gods, the gods of the extremists would multiply just as the gods of the Christians would multiply if Christ's saying to the disciples, "You are the sons of God," were taken literally.

The conclusion is that the extremists and those who proceed in their way are lying and deluded. They invalidate the senses that God established as means for acquiring knowledge. Whoever says that Amir al-Mu'minin —whose historical existence is close enough to us that there is agreement concerning his birth, upbringing, eating, drinking, life, and death—is God, exalted far above what the wrongdoers say, must also say that the senses which apprehended him as a bodily individual were entirely mistaken.

This resembles a person looking at black writing upon white paper and denying that it is writing, claiming instead that it is a horse tied to a tethering place. If such a condition were admitted, sensory knowledge would disappear altogether. God says: "They have certainly disbelieved who say, 'God is the third of three,' while there is no god except one God" (Qur'an 5:73), and: "O People of the Book, do not go to excess in your religion and do not say concerning God except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God and His word which He cast to Mary, and a spirit from Him" (Qur'an 4:171), and: "The Messiah will never disdain to be a servant of God, nor will the angels brought near" (4:172).

'Ali—God's blessings be upon him—is, by analogy, the "Messiah" of this community because he was "anointed" by the Word of God and was untouched by the impurity of the Age of Ignorance, being raised only upon purity. Just as the Messiah—peace be upon him—was given the Word that was the sign of prophecy while still a child, the signs of wasayah appeared in 'Ali while he was still a child. And just as a complete renunciation of the world is associated in the tradition with the Messiah, 'Ali said to the yellow and white wealth of this world: "O yellow! O white! Deceive someone other than me."

If we pursued every comparison between the two, we could go very far, but we are not permitted to exceed the limit allowed to us in disclosing the ranks.

The comparison of 'Ali to the Messiah is reinforced by the Prophet's reported saying to him: "Were I not afraid that people would say concerning you what the Christians said concerning the Messiah, I would say about you a statement such that whenever you passed by a gathering of people they would take dust from beneath your feet and drink the remainder of your ablution water."

God says: "When the son of Mary was set forth as an example, behold, your people turned away from it and said, 'Are our gods better or is he?' They set it forth for you only for argument; indeed they are a contentious people. He is only a servant upon whom We bestowed favor, and We made him an example for the Children of Israel" (Qur'an 43:57–59).

For the people of ta'wil, the symbolism and allusion in this verse are not hidden. Why was the son of Mary made an example? Why did the Prophet's people turn away from it, and what hostility existed between them and him? The author's interpretation directs the allusion toward the one occupying in Muhammad's community a position analogous to Christ's position in his own community, particularly in the context of people's opposition to him.

The verse "Are our gods better or is he?" is also explained through the Qur'anic statement: "They took their rabbis and monks as lords apart from God" (Qur'an 9:31). When some said, "We did not take them as lords, O Messenger of God," he is reported to have replied: "Did they not command you and you obeyed them, and forbid you and you refrained?" They said, "Yes." He said: "That was your worship of them and your taking them as lords."

Thus the comparison in Qur'an 43:58 is understood as an argument within the shari'ah and a foundation for dispute arising from disagreement. Then God says: "Rather, they are a contentious people," followed by: "He is only a servant upon whom We bestowed favor" (43:59). The author interprets this as God bestowing the sublime favor of wasayah upon the one in question and making him a divine blessing for creation, guiding them to the straight path.

He is certainly no less entitled to be called a "blessing" than the cool water which commentators have connected with the verse, "Then on that Day you shall surely be questioned concerning the blessing" (Qur'an 102:8). His effect upon the souls of creation through noble and lasting benefits is not inferior to the effect of cool water through transient bodily benefit.

Since correspondence and analogy exist in the cycles, and since a group from the community of Jesus went to the extreme of asserting his divinity, the pattern of correspondence requires, according to the author's scheme, that a group arise in Muhammad's cycle who assert the divinity of 'Ali, so that the analogy between cycles is complete. We have already shown part of the corruption of their belief and, God willing and with His aid, will establish the rational proof against it.

Chapter 14

The Greater World and the World of Religion

We say that God—mighty is His name—created this world for the generation of creation and established within it the revolving celestial spheres as causes through which forms appear and the nourishment sustaining their powers is produced.

We have said that the human being, who is the offspring of the greater world, is himself a small world. The traces of the greater world operate within him and its powers are present in him. We also mentioned the saying of the Prophet—God's blessings be upon him and his family: "God established His religion according to the pattern of His creation, so that by His creation one may infer His religion and by His religion His unity."

We say that reason itself requires this correspondence, so that the greater world, the smaller world that is the human being, and the World of Religion—which is the form of the Hereafter—may stand in mutual correspondence, each indicating the other and serving as a cause in relation to it. The greater world is the cause of the existence of the human being, the small world. The small world is the cause for the existence of the World of Religion, which is the form of return, religious obligation, worship, command, and prohibition. Were there no human beings, none of these would exist. "You see no disparity in the creation of the Merciful" (Qur'an 67:3): all these worlds proceed according to one order and pattern. Blessed is God, Lord of the worlds.

We find that the greater world does not produce the forms of plants and animals at either extreme: neither in the region where excessive cold has overwhelming dominion nor in the region where excessive heat has overwhelming dominion. Plants and animals appear in the middle, the region of equilibrium.

Likewise, the human being, the small world, does not generate natural offspring at the extreme of childhood or at the extreme of decrepitude and old age. Generation occurs in the middle condition, the state of equilibrium, and what lies near it.

Following the same model, the World of Religion—that is, the shari'ah—does not produce the well-formed religious forms prepared for eternal residence in the Gardens of Bliss at either extreme. They do not arise where there is only pure outward form (zahir), whose position in religion is like excessive cold; this is what the hostile and deficient parties cling to. Nor do they arise where there is only pure inward meaning (batin), whose position is like excessive heat that burns plant and animal; this is what the extremists cling to.

The middle, the center of equilibrium, is where the outward is maintained according to its proper limits and judgment and the inward according to its proper limits and judgment, without deficiency or excess. This is the center from which the religious offspring arise whose forms are the forms of angels: "Those are the companions of the Garden; they shall abide therein" (Qur'an 7:42).

The Messenger of God—God's blessings be upon him and his family—said: "This knowledge will be carried in every generation by its upright ones. They will repel from it the distortion of the ignorant, the appropriation of the falsifiers, and the interpretation of the extremists." The upright ones of every generation are the Imams—peace be upon them. They are the middle community whom God, mighty and exalted, established to keep the balance between the outward and inward, to call toward both, urge adherence to both, and affirm both in knowledge and practice. Each confirms and supports the other.

This corresponds to God's creation of the human being from body and spirit joined together in this world. Whoever believes that the inward can subsist without the outward, or that knowledge can be accepted without action, is like one who claims that the spirit can subsist without the body. Such a person has entered into open contention with what is evident, rejected what is seen, and denied the Qur'an.

God—mighty is His name—says: "To Him ascends the good word, and righteous action raises it" (Qur'an 35:10). The "good word" is knowledge of the Word of Deliverance, while righteous action is purification, prayer, zakat, and establishment of the pillars of religion.

Anyone who seeks to alter one of the foundations of religion seeks what he is incapable of and what cannot be accommodated. How could one sever what God has joined—an outward to an inward and an inward to an outward—when this connection is visible to the eye? Earth is the root and bearer of plants; how could they be severed from it? Plants sustain animals and are the means of their existence; how could they be severed from them? Life bears speech; how could speech be separated from life? Speech bears intellect; how could intellect be separated from speech?

Has intellect ever emerged except from where speech emerged? Has speech ever emerged except where life existed? Has life ever existed except where nourishment and plant existed? Has plant ever existed without earth as its resting place? Religion proceeds according to the same arrangement: there is no true knowledge except through action, and no ta'wil except through tanzil.

Just as the resting place of plant and animal in the World of Nature is the earth, upon which the whole depends, so the resting place of the varieties of religious knowledge in the World of Religion is Muhammad—God's blessings be upon him and his family—who bears the whole.

It is transmitted from him—peace be upon him—that he said: "The Qadariyyah are the Magians of this community, the Murji'ah are the Jews of this community, and the Rafidah are the Christians of this community." Our opponents have named us Rafidah and fixed this designation upon us, but however much they try, it does not truly apply to us or accord with our attributes.

We say that the Prophet—God's blessings be upon him—placed these comparisons among the three factions of his community only where they properly belong. Every group among the community denies these descriptions of itself, just as we deny that we are Rafidah; no one willingly accepts such a charge. We therefore return to the beliefs themselves and ask which groups actually resemble the communities named in the hadith.

When we consider the Magians, we find that the basis of their belief lies in light and darkness. They hold that God, glorified is He, wills good but does not will evil, and that He has an opposite who destroys what He builds and corrupts what He sets right. We then ask which people of this community most resemble them and whose doctrine corresponds to theirs. The author identifies the Mu'tazilah, because in their attempt to attribute all justice to God they make everyone who follows desire into an independent opposing source, multiplying opposites instead of limiting them to one as the Magians did. They rely upon their opinions and analogical reasonings to strengthen what those opinions cannot truly strengthen and to correct what, in the author's view, only the pure Imams—peace be upon them—can correctly determine.

Their striving, according to the author's polemic, ends in departing from the judgment of the Qur'an and devising ways to turn aside verses such as Noah's statement: "My advice will not benefit you, even if I desire to advise you, if God desires to lead you astray. He is your Lord and to Him you shall be returned" (Qur'an 11:34); and: "Indeed We created everything according to a measure" (54:49). The actions of servants, the author argues, are not excluded from the general wording "everything." Likewise: "Had We willed, We would have given every soul its guidance" (32:13). From these correspondences he concludes that the designation "Qadariyyah" fits them and that the Prophet's allusion was to them.

We then consider the condition of the Jews, whom the author describes polemically as among the people most hostile to the Prophet—God's blessings be upon him—openly rejecting him and his Message. The name of Muhammad, he says, had been established in the Torah, his right confirmed, and his station elevated, but they erased his name, denied his right, and rejected his rank.

We then ask who resembles them within this community. The author identifies those who removed Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali—God's blessings be upon him—from his proper place in the wasayah, belittled his right, and refused to raise his name, just as the Jews, in this polemical account, removed Muhammad from the station of the awaited Messenger and said, "You are not the awaited Prophet." Just as Muhammad's name had been fixed in the Torah but was erased, his right confirmed but denied, and his position exalted but rejected, so the walayah of 'Ali—God's blessings be upon him—was, according to the author, among the most important obligations of the shari'ah but was erased from it by his opponents; his right was among the greatest rights but was denied; and his

station was the most noble after that of the Prophet but was diminished while others were preferred over him. Thus, the author concludes, the comparison with the Jews applies to them.

Finally, we consider the Christians and their doctrine. The author identifies their defining error as belief in the divinity of a human being, and finds their counterparts among the ghulat who likewise assert human divinity. Some go to excess concerning 'Ali alone and make Muhammad—God's blessings be upon him—his messenger. Some go to excess concerning both but give precedence to 'Ali; these are called the 'Ayniyyah. Some give precedence to Muhammad; these are called the Mimiyyah. Others assert the divinity of Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn—peace be upon them—and regard the five as one, just as the Christians regard the three as one. These are called the Khamsah. Such people, the author says, are the true counterparts of the Christians—upon them be God's curse.

Chapter 15

Differences of Opinion Concerning ʿAlī, and the Imamate as a Branch of Prophethood

We have already set forth an explanation concerning ʿAlī, peace be upon him, and his comparison with the Messiah, peace be upon them both. The discussion has continued to this point. We also cited the saying of the Prophet, blessings of God be upon him, "The Murjiʾa are the Jews of this community," and established the evidence for the correctness of this comparison. Just above, we gave a section concerning ʿAlī, peace be upon him, comparing him to the Messiah and describing the disagreement about him, just as opinions differed concerning Jesus, peace be upon him.

The Christians said that he was the son of God—exalted is God far above such a claim. The Muslims said that he was a Messenger of God. The Jews said that he was the child of fornication. Opinions concerning ʿAlī, blessings of God be upon him, likewise differed in a comparable way. The extremists (ghulāt) said that he was God or the son of God, resembling what the Christians said concerning the Messiah—exalted is God far above that. The middle community, who are the followers of the Imams, said that he is the waṣī of the Messenger of God, peace be upon them, just as the Muslims say concerning the Messiah that he is the Messenger of God. The Murjiʾa, who are the Jews of this community, said that ʿAlī, peace be upon him, was neither the inheritor of the sharīʿa from the Prophet—peace be upon them both—nor entitled to the caliphate. Thus they deprived him of the inheritance of the sharīʿa just as a child of fornication is deprived of inheriting from his father—upon whoever holds such a belief be the curse of God.

This is the clear correspondence and the illuminating proof. I have set forth in it what my ability could encompass and what my capacity could reach, according to the strength of my worship. Whatever error I have made is chargeable to me; whatever is correct is attributable to the master of my blessing, the Imam of the age and time—blessings of God be upon him, upon his pure forefathers, and upon his descendants. What I know in comparison with his knowledge is like the coolness of my body compared with the coolness of the earth, or like the moisture in it compared with the water of the sea, or like the amount of heat in it compared with the sources of heat in air and fire. In the same way, the relation of my knowledge to the knowledge whose pole he is, peace be upon him, is more hidden than the creeping of an ant on a smooth rock in a dark night.

Were I to lift the veil and explain, to the extent of my ability, what I have learned for the one whom I wished to guide—giving him the noblest thing I possess and making his share a share of my very spirit and thought, seeking thereby the reward of my Lord—I would have to expand and elaborate at length. But I have chosen brevity. What I have included in this epistle is a gift to my brethren so that the distinction between them and all the people of doubt and uncertainty may become clear. Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds.

This is the teaching of our master al-Muʾayyad—may God exalt his sanctity and grant us his intercession and companionship—the Dāʿī of the Dāʿīs, the Ark of Salvation, whose master bore witness to him and praised him above all the people of his age. He authorized him throughout the seven climes in the authority entrusted to him, with no hand over his own. This is also al-Muʾayyad's description—may God exalt his sanctity—of the ranks of the Prophet, the Waṣī, and the Imam, peace be upon them; his clarification of the error of the extremists; his curse upon and dissociation from them; and his comparison of them with the Christians, together with the distinctions already mentioned.

This is our creed, which we have received from this Dāʿī—may God exalt his sanctity—and from those like him. We are branches of his tree and boughs of his great trunk: we pasture in his blessings and drink deeply from the pure waters of his knowledge. We have presented our brethren with what we have included in this epistle and have appealed as testimony to the verified, written teachings composed by this Dāʿī—may God exalt his sanctity. Every walī must therefore believe as he believed and understand what he arranged and set forth, so that he may attain salvation in the Return through the saving provision that we shall mention.

We have explained matters in general terms, and now wish to give greater detail concerning the people of abundant merit and exalted knowledge. We therefore follow this with something concerning the Imamate, which is subordinate to the prophetic mission, so that whoever reads our epistle may gain from it that which brings

salvation and, through knowing it, attain triumph in life and death. In God we seek help; upon Him we rely; He is sufficient for us and the best disposer of affairs.

Know—may God teach you goodness and make you one of its people—that the Imamate is a branch of Prophethood, and that the branch possesses much of the special quality of the root. Every Imam in his age stands, among those over whom he has been appointed, in the place of the Messenger, blessings of God be upon him, although every Messenger possesses the honor of the prophetic mission and the distinction of divine election. The part comes from the whole, and the rank of the Imamate is a lofty edifice with firmly raised pillars. As our master, the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, blessings of God be upon him, said: "I possess a station known only to the Messenger of God and to the Imams from among my descendants."

We shall mention a portion of what has come from the Imams of truth, peace be upon them, by which their exalted stations, the sublimity of their ranks, and what is due to them may be made clear, and what must be believed concerning them. Among this is what our master al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, blessings of God be upon him, said in one of his sermons:

Praise belongs to God, the One who makes the unique ones signs of His unity; who glorifies the enduring through the majesty of His lordship; who gives pre-eternity to the pre-eternal through the pre-eternity of His divinity; who joined duration to time through the origination of His lordship; who made the caused thing dependent upon its cause and exalted the moving thing and its mover by His motion, while He Himself is exalted above them both through the might of the sovereignty of His power. He was before motion and rest, manifestation and concealment; the one who rolls up the spheres, causes the heavens to turn, and determines night and day; hidden through the origination of intellect and the senses, manifest through the forming of forms and persons.

I praise Him for having singled us out and chosen us, and for having brought us forth in persons without equals. He made us a means to the might of His great and exalted sovereignty. We are His gates and His treasurers, His Face and His Side, and His two hands outstretched among His servants. We are the Gate of Ḥiṭṭa: whoever enters it has his sins forgiven and his afflictions removed. We are the gate to His Frequented House and its raised roof, the Straight Path, and the Great Announcement.

O people! We have made the Reminder clear to you, so remember the completion of God's favor upon you through us and the perfection of the religion that God has approved for you as religion: the religion of submission (islām), other than which He accepts nothing: "Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers" (Qurʾān 3:85). Abraham is its beginning, Muḥammad its end, and we are its perfection, completion, and culmination.

"Indeed Satan is an enemy to you, so take him as an enemy; he only calls his party so that they may become companions of the Blaze" (Qurʾān 35:6). God has never ceased, whenever He manifests us in an age and a time, to manifest a satan beside us, so that through his deficiency our excellence may become apparent, and through his corruption our rectitude. The Prophet, blessings of God be upon him and his family, said: "With every prophet a satan was paired, and with me two satans were paired." So do not purchase error in exchange for guidance by obeying one who rebelled, transgressed, denied, and turned away, and who, together with those of his predecessors who passed before him, shed blood in the Sacred Month while the people were in a state of sanctity—disbelieving in God and denying what God promised of security to the friends of God. "Those are the ones whom God has cursed for their disbelief," and their hearts were made hard through their wrongdoing. "Indeed, the curse of God is upon the wrongdoers" (Qurʾān 11:18).

O God, forgive me and the believing men and believing women. "And increase the wrongdoers only in destruction" (Qurʾān 71:28). "Peace be upon me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I am raised alive" (Qurʾān 19:33): in generation a noble human being, and in the Return a subtle divine light—from Him it began and to Him it returns.

Chapter 16

The Earth Is Never Without an Imam

Our master al-Ṣādiq, Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad, blessings of God be upon him, was asked: "Can there be an earth in which there is no Imam?" He replied: "No, by God—for their lawful and unlawful matters and for what they need in the affairs of their religion." Abū Jaʿfar [Muḥammad al-Bāqir], blessings of God be upon him, said: "If the Imam were removed from the earth, it would surge with its inhabitants as the sea surges with those upon it."

Zurāra said: "I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh: Can the Imam depart from this world without leaving a successor?" He replied: "That does not happen for three [days], unless God, exalted is He, is angry with His creation and hastens punishment upon them." Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Sinān said: "I entered with my father ʿAlī upon Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him. He said: 'How will you be when you reach a condition in which you see no Imam of guidance and no visible sign, and none of you is saved except one who supplicates with the supplication of a drowning man?' I said: 'We belong to God! This indeed is the trial. What shall we do, may I be your ransom?' He replied: 'As for you, you will not live to see it. But when it happens, hold fast to what is in your hands until the matter becomes clear to you.'"

Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, said: "We—and those from among us—are God's proofs (ḥujaj) over His creation so long as there is a need for us among them. When God is angry, He raises us to Himself; and when He wills to create others, we are His messengers to them. When God, exalted is He, is angry with His creation, He saves us from dwelling among them."

Our master Abū Jaʿfar, peace be upon him, related from his fathers from the Messenger of God, blessings of God be upon him and his family: "There is no fertile land and no barren land except that in it is a group that misguides a hundred and guides a hundred. I know them, and I have taught them to my Household; their elder teaches their younger until the Day of Resurrection." He also said: "Every ʿAlid or Fāṭimid who denies the excellence of the awṣiyāʾ from the descendants of al-Ḥusayn is among those who take the signs of God in mockery."

He said, blessings of God be upon him: "When the Imam dies, everyone upon the face of the earth goes astray except one who recognizes his successor at that very time." He was asked: "When does the knowledge of the preceding Imam pass to the Imam after him?" He replied: "In the final instant remaining of the former Imam's life."

Our master Jaʿfar, peace be upon him, said: "Do you think that this affair belongs to us in such a way that we may place it wherever we wish? No, by God. It is a covenant from the Messenger of God to a named man after a named man among us until it reaches its possessor, the last of us." Abū Jaʿfar, peace be upon him, said: "After the Messenger of God, blessings of God be upon him and his family, the affair came to us"—and he gestured toward himself—"so we are the guardians of the blood and the seekers of vengeance. By God, God has granted no Muḥammadan a right in it other than us."

Our master ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, blessings of God be upon him, said: "Whoever calls upon God through us succeeds and attains his need, while whoever calls upon Him through others than us destroys himself and is destroyed. None who went astray from this community went astray except because of us, and none who was saved from this community was saved except through us. The Qurʾān was gathered only by a waṣī."

Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, was asked: "Have the people always had among them someone whom they were commanded to obey?" He replied: "Yes, but most of them do not believe." He also said: "The Imam has two signs. Among them is that he is the person most entitled to the Imam who preceded him, and that he possesses excellence and the designation (waṣiyya)."

Abū Jaʿfar said: "Everyone who perseveres in acts of worship, exhausting himself in them, while having no Imam from God, exalted is He, is lost and bewildered, and God rejects his deed. His likeness is that of a sheep which has strayed from its shepherd and its flock. It wanders back and forth throughout its day. When night envelops it, it sees another flock of sheep, inclines toward them, and takes comfort among them, spending the

night with them in their fold. When the shepherd drives his sheep onward, it does not recognize its shepherd or its flock and wanders away in confusion. Then, while it is in that state, it sees another flock with its shepherd, inclines toward it and seeks comfort among it. The shepherd cries out to it: 'O bewildered, straying sheep! Return to your own shepherd and your own flock.' It then rushes away, lost and confused, with no shepherd to guide it to its pasture or return it to its fold. While it is thus, the wolf seizes the opportunity presented by its being lost and devours it.

"So it is, by God, with one from this community who awakens having no Imam from God: he awakens lost and bewildered. Know that the Imams of truth and their followers are guides to the religion of God, while the imams of unbelief and their followers are removed from the religion of God. They have gone astray and led others astray. Their deeds are 'like ashes upon which the wind blows violently on a stormy day; they have no power over anything of what they earned. That is the farthest error' (Qurʾān 14:18).

"God's proof against His creation is not established through an Imam until they recognize him. Nor does a servant perfect faith until he knows that what applied to our last applies to our first: they are alike in obedience and in matters of lawful and unlawful. Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, and ʿAlī, the Commander of the Faithful—blessings of God be upon them both—possess their own superior excellence."

A man said to him: "You are a Household of mercy, with which God, exalted is He, has specially distinguished you." He replied: "So we are. We do not cause anyone to enter error, nor do we remove anyone from guidance."

Abū Jaʿfar, peace be upon him, said: "Our affair is difficult and demanding; none can bear it except a complete believer, a God-fearing heart, or a fortified city." Our master the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī, blessings of God be upon him, said: "We shall remain until no one remains, and God, exalted is He, will bring about the destruction of the parties by our hands." He also said: "By God, I was taught the delivering of the Message, the warning of punishment, and the completion of the Words."

Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, was asked concerning God's saying, "God desires ease for you and does not desire hardship for you" (Qurʾān 2:185). He said: "The ease is ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the Commander of the Faithful, blessings of God be upon him, and the hardship is Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān."

Concerning God's saying, "Whatever sign We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or the like of it" (Qurʾān 2:106), he was asked: "If He abrogates it and then brings its like, how has He abrogated it in the first place?" He replied: "That is not how God, mighty and exalted, said it." He was asked: "Then how did God, mighty and exalted, say it?" He replied: "There is neither an alif nor a wāw [in the relevant reading]: 'We bring one better than it—its like.' That is: whenever We cause an Imam to die, or cause his remembrance to be forgotten, We bring as successor one from his loins like him." Then he turned to the questioner and said: "O so-and-so, is not your son from you?" He replied: "Yes." He said: "By God, nothing benefited you except what I have told you." In another recension: "except what I have informed you of."

He was asked concerning God's saying, "This is My straight path, so follow it, and do not follow the paths lest they separate you from His path" (Qurʾān 6:153). He said: "ʿAlī and the Imams from the descendants of Fāṭima are His Path. Whoever comes to it travels His way."

Concerning God's saying, "Among the people are those who take equals besides God, loving them as they love God" (Qurʾān 2:165), he said: "By God, they are the parties of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān. They took them as imams instead of the Imam whom God, exalted is He, appointed as Imam for the people." Then he recited the verse as far as, "and they will never emerge from the Fire" (Qurʾān 2:167), and said: "By God, they are the imams of wrongdoing, their adherents, and their followers."

Concerning God's saying, "Indeed, those who say, 'Our Lord is God,' and then remain steadfast" (Qurʾān 41:30), he said: "They are the Imams and the awṣiyāʾ. They professed tawḥīd and remained steadfast in the walāya and obedience of ʿAlī; 'the angels descend upon them'—to the end of the verse." Then he said: "By God, they descend upon us, recline upon our couches and cushions, and converse with us."

Concerning God's saying, "Bring a Qurʾān other than this, or change it" (Qurʾān 10:15), he said: "This was the speech of God's enemies to His Messenger, blessings of God be upon him and his family, concerning the one he

appointed after him. They imagined that God, exalted is He, did not hear them saying: 'If only he appointed an Imam other than ʿAlī, blessings of God be upon him, or replaced him with Abū Bakr or ʿUmar.' God, exalted is He, therefore revealed in reply to them: 'Say, O Muḥammad: It is not for me to change it of my own accord; I only follow what is revealed to me' (Qurʾān 10:15)—concerning ʿAlī, blessings of God be upon him."

He related from his fathers that our master the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī, peace be upon him, said: "If only the ignorant of this community knew when I was named 'Commander of the Faithful'!" He was asked: "When?" He replied: "When God took the covenant from the descendants of Adam. Thus Gabriel brought down to Muḥammad, peace be upon him: 'And when your Lord took from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants, and made them bear witness concerning themselves: Am I not your Lord?'—and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God and ʿAlī is the Commander of the Faithful, blessings of God be upon him—'They said: Yes'" (cf. Qurʾān 7:172).

Then Abū Jaʿfar, peace be upon him, said: "By God, God, exalted is He, named him with a name by which no one before him had been named." Concerning God's saying, "We made them Imams guiding by Our command" (Qurʾān 21:73), he said: "It was revealed concerning the descendants of Fāṭima, peace be upon her and upon them."

He said, blessings of God be upon him and his family, concerning God's saying, "Know that God gives life to the earth after its death" (Qurʾān 57:17): "It means that He will set the earth right through a Qāʾim from the family of Muḥammad, peace be upon them, after its death through the injustice of those who rule it. 'We have made the signs clear to you so that you may understand.'"

Abū al-Jārūd said: "I entered upon Abū Jaʿfar, blessings of God be upon him, and said: 'I would like you to teach me something by which I may worship God and which I may convey to others, for I am an old man: my bones have become delicate and my body has grown thin.'" He said—he had been reclining, but then sat upright—"The testimony that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God; establishing prayer; giving the zakāt; our walāya, the walāya of the People of the House; awaiting our Qāʾim from the People of the House; rendering trusts; and striving diligently."

Our master the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī, blessings of God be upon him, said: "Concerning us was revealed: 'We desire to show favor to those who were oppressed in the earth, to make them Imams and to make them the inheritors'" (Qurʾān 28:5).

The Messenger of God, blessings of God be upon him, said: "If nothing remained of time except the brightness of a day or the darkness of a night, God would prolong that day until He raised up in my community one who would fill it with justice just as it had been filled with injustice, until no house of clay and no tent of hair remained except that justice entered it."

Abū ʿAbd Allāh [Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq], blessings of God be upon him, was asked concerning God's saying, "When they see it brought near, the faces of those who disbelieved will be distressed, and it will be said: This is what you used to claim" (Qurʾān 67:27). He said: "This refers to when the hypocrites saw the Messenger of God, blessings of God be upon him, establish ʿAlī, peace be upon them both, on the Day of Ghadīr Khumm: their faces darkened with envy toward him. And His saying, 'This is what you used to claim,' means that you used to call yourselves by his name. That belonged only to him and to his awṣiyāʾ after him, one after another from among his descendants, peace be upon them."

He was asked concerning the words, "the Companions of the Right" (Qurʾān 56:27), and said: "By God, they are our Shīʿa." He was asked concerning God's saying, "We were not among those who prayed" (Qurʾān 74:43). He said: "This is what our enemies will say tomorrow on the Day of Resurrection, after they have entered the Fire, when they are reproached and asked, 'What brought you into Saqar?' (Qurʾān 74:42). They will say, 'We were not among those who prayed,' meaning: we were not among those connected to the walāya of ʿAlī and the awṣiyāʾ after him from among his descendants and the descendants of Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, peace be upon them; nor did we invoke blessings upon them, out of hatred for them."

Concerning God's saying, "Were it not for God's favor upon you and His mercy, you would have followed Satan, except a few" (Qurʾān 4:83), he said: "Were it not for God's favor upon you through Muḥammad and His mercy, exalted is He, you would have followed Satan except for a few."

Concerning God's saying, "Say: On the Day of Victory, the faith of those who disbelieved will not benefit them, nor will they be granted respite" (Qurʾān 32:29), he said: "The Day of Victory is when God grants victory to the Qāʾim. 'No soul's faith will benefit it'—the reward of no one's faith will benefit him if he had not previously possessed walāya for ʿAlī, the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him."

He was asked concerning God's saying, "Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the destination" (Qurʾān 31:14). He said: "The two parents in this passage are the Messenger of God and his waṣī ʿAlī, blessings of God be upon them and their family. In tenderness, mercy, and defense of the believers, they were like two compassionate parents."

Concerning God's saying, "Indeed, those who believed and then disbelieved" (Qurʾān 4:137), he said: "They believed in Muḥammad and disbelieved by abandoning the walāya of ʿAlī, peace be upon him. God, exalted is He, therefore called them unbelievers, though this is manifest only to those of understanding. He made one who denies ʿAlī's walāya like one who denies Muḥammad's prophetic mission."

He was asked concerning God's saying, "He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and what We have revealed to you" (Qurʾān 42:13). He said: "He enjoined Noah, those before him, and those after him to acknowledge the walāya of Muḥammad and ʿAlī and the awṣiyāʾ after them until the Day of Resurrection."

Concerning God's saying, "When we heard the guidance, we believed in it" (Qurʾān 72:13), he said: "The jinn said: When we heard the command of the Messenger of God, blessings of God be upon him and his family, concerning the walāya of ʿAlī, peace be upon him, we accepted it as true and believed in his walāya."

He was asked concerning God's saying, "Hasten to the remembrance of God and leave trade" (Qurʾān 62:9). He replied: "Leave the bargain of the one who sold his Hereafter for his worldly life. And 'that is better for you, if you only knew' is an allusion to ʿAlī, the Commander of the Faithful, blessings of God be upon him—not as those who fabricate against God by their opinions and analogical reasoning say: that whoever abandons prayer behind the imams of error when their caller calls on Friday is not a Muslim. The one whose obedience God made obligatory by the tongue of Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, is better for you."

Sharīk b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Nakhaʿī related: "I entered upon al-Aʿmash, Sulaymān b. Mihrān—may God have mercy on him—on the day he died. While I was with him, Abū Ḥanīfa entered to visit him and said: 'O Abū Muḥammad, fear God. You are in the first day of the days of the Hereafter and the last day of the days of this world. You have transmitted reports concerning ʿAlī which have remained in the hands of the people. Fear God and retract what you have narrated.' Al-Aʿmash—may God have mercy on him—said: 'Bring in the people of the mosque, all of them.' When they entered, he said: 'Prop me up,' and they propped him up. He said: 'ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ related to me that he heard Ibn ʿAbbās—may God be pleased with him—say: The Messenger of God, blessings of God be upon him, turned toward ʿAlī, peace be upon them both, and said to him: "O Abū al-Ḥasan, shall I not tell you?" He replied: "Yes, O Messenger of God." He said: "Gabriel informed me concerning God's saying, 'Cast into Hell every stubborn unbeliever' (Qurʾān 50:24): I and you shall cast them into it, O ʿAlī."'"

Saʿīd b. Jubayr said: "I witnessed the death of ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās—may God have mercy on him and be pleased with him—in Ṭāʾif. I heard him say: 'O God, I call You to witness that ʿAlī is my mawlā and the mawlā of every believing man and believing woman.' He said this three times, and then died."

Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, was asked: "What do you say, O son of the Messenger of God, concerning a man who is called to this affair and recognizes it while living in a remote land; death approaches him, but he has not yet come to know the Imam, and while he is waiting to know what he should do, his appointed time arrives?" He replied: "By God, he is in the position of one who emigrates toward God and then dies; his reward has fallen due from God."

He was also asked: "What do you say concerning a man who recognizes the Imams but does not recognize the Imam who is in his own age—is he a believer?" He said: "No." It was asked: "Is he a Muslim?" He replied: "Yes, a Muslim."

He was asked concerning God's saying, "Among those We created is a community that guides by the truth and by it acts justly" (Qurʾān 7:181). He said: "They are the Imams concerning whom God said, 'God has promised those among you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, just as He made those before them successors' (Qurʾān 24:55). They are the Imams."

One of the Shīʿa said: "I said to Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him: 'I ask the God who granted your fathers, in you, this station, to grant you from your descendants one who holds the same station in relation to you.' He replied: 'God has already done so, and to Him belongs praise.'"

Our master the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, blessings of God be upon him, said: "From the descendants of al-Ḥusayn there will emerge one whose emergence will cause heaven and earth to rejoice." Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, said: "God will grant victory to us, the People of the House, and from among us there will be rightly guided caliphs, guided and obedient to God, who act according to the Book and the Sunna. Whoever claims that there is only one Mahdī from among us has lied. Among us is one who enjoys it for nine [years], and among us one who enjoys it for forty. Our first is a proof of our last, and our last confirms our first, for when God, exalted is He, decrees a decree, He causes it to run its course."

Concerning God's saying, "Indeed, this Qurʾān guides to that which is most upright" (Qurʾān 17:9), he said: "It guides to the walāya of the Imam."

He also said: "There is no person except that between his eyes is written 'believer' or 'unbeliever.' This is concealed from all creatures except the Imams and the awṣiyāʾ." He then recited God's saying: "Indeed in that are signs for those who discern" (Qurʾān 15:75), and said: "By God, no one enters upon us without our knowing whether he is a believer or an unbeliever."

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Chapter 17

The Necessity of Knowing the Imam of the Age

We say: We have already set forth, in this general discussion, the meaning of the Imams—blessings of God be upon them—whom it is obligatory to know and to adhere to after knowledge of the messengers, blessings of God be upon them all. Their obedience is joined to obedience to God and to His Messenger, as the Mighty and Majestic has declared: "O you who believe, obey God, obey the Messenger, and those vested with authority among you" (Qur'an 4:59). He has also informed us that in every age there is among them a guide, saying to His Messenger—blessings of God be upon him and his family—"You are only a warner, and for every people there is a guide" (13:7). He has informed us that in every age people will be summoned by their Imam: "On the Day We shall call every people by their Imam" (17:71). And He has established the Imam's particular relation to the knowledge of all things in His saying: "We have enumerated everything in a manifest Imam" (36:12).

The Messenger of God—blessings of God be upon him and his family—confirmed what is obligatory concerning knowledge of the Imams when he said: "Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his age dies the death of the Age of Ignorance." He also said: "Whoever dies while there is no covenant to the Imam of his age upon his neck dies, if he wills, as a Jew or a Christian." For this reason we have explained in this treatise what is obligatory concerning knowledge of them, blessings be upon them, following their example, adhering to their walaya, following them, and following their ranks and representatives.

When the wali has known this, he must then know what God commanded His Messenger concerning His religion and the signs that He established for it in the horizons and within the soul, of which He said: "We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves" (41:53), and: "And within yourselves; will you not then see?" (51:21). He must then know his own self, to which the Messenger of God—blessings of God be upon him and his family—directed attention when he said: "The one among you who best knows himself best knows his Lord. Whoever knows himself knows his Lord, and whoever is ignorant of himself is still more ignorant of other things and more inclined toward the path of falsehood."

From the divine scholar and knower of this community, our master Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali b. Abi Talib—blessings of God be upon him—there has come concerning knowledge of the soul a teaching sufficient for a worshipping people and a guidance for those who seek guidance. It was given in answer to a questioner who asked him about the soul. We reproduce it in full so that inner visions may be illuminated, walaya may be made sound, and inward dispositions may be purified.

A man asked him—blessings be upon him—saying: "My master, I ask you to make my soul known to me. I am a man who has died in love for you, one of your Shi'a and among those devoted to you. I am in the protection of God Most High and in your protection, so release me from bondage and rescue me, my master, from destruction. You are the gate of the City of Knowledge, the treasury of wisdom, the Ark of Salvation, and the lord of the guides. You are the gate through which no believer ought to enter except by way of it."

Our master Amir al-Mu'minin smiled and laughed, then said: "The proof has become binding upon me for your sake, and the obligation lies with me." He then said—blessings of God be upon him and upon the Imams among his descendants—"O seeker of right guidance, about which of the souls are you asking?"

The questioner said: "Are there, my master, many souls?"

He replied: "Yes."

The questioner said: "I desire, my master, that you make known to me what they are."

He said: "Empty your thought for me, for you have asked about a mighty hidden matter and searched into a tremendous secret."

The man said: "There is no power except through God; upon Him I rely."

Amir al-Mu'minin said to him: "Yes, O questioner. Know that the souls are four: a dense natural vegetative soul; an animal sensory, Iblis-like soul; a holy rational soul; and a universal divine soul."

The questioner said: "My master, I ask you about the natural vegetative soul."

He replied: "It is a natural power. Its origin, at the beginning of creation before procreation came to be, in the time of nonexistence, is from the four natures by permission of God Most High. The explanation of its origin in the first beginning of creation is long and subtle for seekers of guidance, and you will know it, God willing, when the will has reached maturity and nursing has been completed.

"The supplies of this vegetative soul are from the subtle portions of foods, according to the root from which it began in the origin of generation, for every soul draws sustenance from that from which it was created. Do you not see that when the child is formed from a sperm-drop, it is nourished in the womb of its mother from the subtle materials of nourishment by the command of God Most High? Then, when it is born, it clings to the breast of the mother in whom it was created, from whom it was formed, and within whose womb it had been nourished. Every soul draws sustenance from the origin from which it was created.

"The beginning of its union is at the place where the sperm-drop settles; its seat is the liver. Its supplies, as I have told you, are from the subtle portions of foods. Its activity is growth and increase. The cause of its separation, by the command of God Most High, is the separation and alteration of the materials. When it separates, it returns to that from which it began.

"It is the most forceful of the souls against the human being, the most harmful, and the greatest trial, for it is a dense bestial soul. Its concern is intercourse and livelihood, like the concern of beasts. It is the soul that inclines the human being toward what causes his ruin and destruction. It possesses no nobility and has no knowledge. It is the soul that commands evil, shameful deeds, and disgraces, for the greater part of its concern is intercourse and eating, and nothing else. It overpowers the other souls when left alone with them because of the smallness of its knowledge and the weakness of its nobility. It was created from the dense and stamped with its nature. It has no spiritual substance, for the dense possesses no such substance and no nobility. Within it and belonging to it are destructive and disgraceful qualities unless true knowledge strengthens and supports it."

The questioner said: "My master, I have heard what you have imparted concerning the vegetative soul. I now ask you about the sensory soul."

He replied: "Yes. It is a celestial power and an animal sensory, Iblis-like soul. Its activities are sensation and movement, severity and courage, heat and pride, treachery and cunning, evil and hastening to kill, carrying weapons, anger and partisan zeal. It is neither strengthened by higher support nor tranquil. Its nature is blood, and its color corresponds to its nature, while the color of the first, vegetative soul is the color of dustiness and murkiness according to the four natures.

"This sensory soul corresponds to the vegetative soul, for it loves it, resembles it, and agrees with it in its correspondence. The nature of the sensory soul is what we have mentioned, while the nature of the vegetative soul is anxiety, greed, sexual desire, eating, and drinking. Both move toward one meaning, except that the nature of the sensory soul is sensation and domination, while the nature of the other is growth and increase. Their strength lies in their joining together. Thus the vegetative soul draws the sensory soul downward toward itself, and the two mix and intermingle.

"The sensory soul is a celestial power whose origin is in the spheres. The beginning of its union occurs at bodily birth. Its seat is the heart. Its activity is sensation, movement, assault, and domination. The cause of its separation is the separation of the material instruments by the command of God Most High, and when it separates, it returns to that from which it began.

"These two souls are the most hostile to the children of Adam and the most harmful to them. If the sensory soul is not strengthened by the soul above it—the holy rational soul—it blends with the vegetative soul and becomes tightly twisted together with it, like a plaited cord in which the strands cannot be distinguished and into which wisdom cannot enter because of the firmness of its twisting.

"But if the rational soul supports it, that twisting is gradually loosened. The sensory soul is freed from the bestial vegetative soul, and the rational soul causes light to shine upon it, makes known to it the ugliness of that bestial soul, raises it toward itself, and teaches it that it is nobler than that lower soul. If it accepts wisdom from the

rational soul, and if the rational soul is in turn supplied by the universal lordly soul above it, the two draw it away from the lower state toward the holy rational soul. Their drawing is by true knowledge and religion and by sacred gnosis, until it becomes familiar with them, recognizes them, longs for them, directs its gaze upward toward knowledge, and forgets what lies beneath it. Whenever the dye is continuously applied to it, it takes on that dye—though it is quicker to descend than to rise. Understand, therefore, what God has inspired you to understand."

The questioner said: "My master, I have understood what you have said concerning the sensory soul, what it does, and how it mixes with the other. I now ask you, my master, about the holy rational soul."

Our master—blessings of God be upon him, his fathers, and his descendants—said: "Yes. Know that it is a cognitive power, a transparent spiritual substance, knowing both potentially and actually, alive by nature. Its origin is the Universal Soul. The beginning of its coming into existence is at religious birth. Its seat is the true sciences. Its supplies come from lordly gnoses flowing from the bodily ranks whose origins are the spiritual ranks, each rank conveying what reaches its station and communicating it to the rank below it. The cause of its separation is the separation of the bodily instruments. When it separates, it returns to that from which it began."

The questioner said: "My master, I have heard what you have imparted concerning the holy rational soul. I now ask you about the universal lordly soul."

Our master—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: "Know, O questioner, that the Universal Soul is a divine power. It is a simple spiritual substance, knowing potentially and actually. Its origin is the Intellect; from it it receives support and toward it it calls. It is the highest Word of God, the Tree of Tuba, and the Lote Tree of the Furthest Boundary, beside which is the Garden of Refuge. Whoever knows it is saved, while whoever is ignorant of it goes astray and is ruined. Know, O questioner, that these meanings are divine symbols and prophetic indications."

The questioner said: "My master, if the rational soul is a spiritual substance and the Universal Soul is a spiritual substance, what then is the Intellect in itself?"

He replied—blessings of God be upon him, his fathers, and his descendants—"The Intellect is a perceiving spiritual substance encompassing all things, knowing a thing before it comes to be. Blessed is whoever knows the divine symbols and the indications of wisdom, so that he may fulfill the due measure of knowledge of his religious form and thereby complete for himself everlasting humanity."

Chapter 18

Knowledge of the Ranks Is Necessary after Mastery of the Religious Sciences

We have already explained at the beginning of this treatise the reason that led to its composition: the request made by certain brethren—may God strengthen them—concerning the ordering of the ranks in the jazira, their names, and the precise sequence of their stations. We considered it proper to place before that answer the matters that a person of religion ought first to know. We now explain the answer to the question, with the help of God—glorified is He—through His favor and through the favor of His wali upon the earth, blessings of God be upon him.

Knowledge of the ranks is necessary for every person of insight after acquiring mastery of the religious sciences, acting according to the prophetic commands, and patiently enduring the hardship of worship that raises the one who performs it toward ascent through the higher stations and progression through the sacred ranks. When the wali acts according to what God and His Messenger have made obligatory for him, understands the meaning and ta'wil of it, and knows the rank from which his beginning came and to which his return and completion are directed, then he will triumph among those who triumph and will be gathered with "the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous—and excellent are those as companions" (Qur'an 4:69).

Qusta b. Luqa urged knowledge of the ranks and called attention to it in his answer to the Greek king 'Amlaq when the latter questioned him. He said: "Will you not make clear to me the one whom I should worship, so that I approach none but him and seek refuge with none but him?"

He replied: "O king, do you know the one who made you know yourself when you had been ignorant of it, who showed you the benefits and harms of your life when you had been heedless of them, and who taught you that which, if you follow it, causes you to forget the fear with which you were threatened, rescues you from anxiety, produces within you something whose sweetness you taste and whose strength you feel, and makes you independent of what is not of it?"

The king said: "I knew none of this except through you."

He replied: "Then you have found your lord, and you are among the believers."

'Amlaq said: "O mine of the light of the unseen, what lies beyond my lord, so that I may be among those who attain felicity?"

He answered: "Beyond him is one who is to him as he is to you, one for one, until one reaches a Gate in whom all those beneath him are gathered, before whom every scholar of his age is incapable, and whom all the people of his cycle need. He is the lord of the lords of that age and a master who occupies a station among creation. He receives support from his exalted lord and hears from his hidden supplier. Through what is hidden above him, he is himself hidden from those beneath him; through what is exalted above him, he is exalted above those below him, until the remotest One is reached: the lord of the world of origination, the full Holy Spirit, the locus of the first heat. He is the First Intellect. From him is the beginning, and to him is the end. As for what lies beyond that, it is an unseen that is not named and a blessing that cannot be enumerated."

'Amlaq said: "Sallina, sallina"—that is, "Yes, yes."

Understand, O brother, to whom this indication points. This is the description of every one who is ranked beneath his superior: what he owes him and what he must believe concerning him. Through that superior lie his deliverance and salvation if he obeys him, receives from him, follows his command, refrains at his prohibition, and acts according to what the noble covenant has made binding upon him, just as Qusta b. Luqa has stated here.

If, however, he opposes him, transgresses against him, denies his right, behaves arrogantly toward him, and allows the soul that commands evil to aspire beyond its station, he loses this world and the hereafter and returns to the plain of resurrection, wavering among the depths of the abyss. We seek refuge in God and in His pure awliya', blessings of God be upon them all, from such a station. Through them we seek nearness to Him, asking Him to grant us success in obedience to Him and obedience to them. He is the possessor of bounty and beneficence.

Chapter 19

The Ranks of the Da'wa Are Imams Potentially in the Order of Knowledge and in the Order of Wisdom

Some time ago, O brother, one of your virtuous brethren, a man of religion and walaya, asked about the very matter concerning which you have now asked. We named for him the ranks existing at the time of his question. Then some among them passed into the mercy and good pleasure of God, to the abode of His sanctity and His gardens. The first questioner then added a second question concerning the ranks of the time about whom he had asked, and I answered him in a treatise following the first treatise, the one entitled al-Jawhara ("The Jewel"). Whoever wishes to consult it may do so there, God willing.

Know, O brother, that when what we have already described concerning precedence and delay in the World of Command had taken place, and when thereafter the human species appeared at the end of creation, there likewise arose among human beings degrees of precedence and delay according to what justice required and what prior acts had entailed. No prophet, wasi, or Imam has ever arisen to guide the people of his age without those who responded to him being divided between a true, verified believer and a deceitful hypocrite.

When one who succeeds such a guide in his rank arises to guide the people of the community after him, those who possess gnosis and the realities, sincere walaya, and pure conviction hasten to obey him. The hypocrites deny him and exalt themselves over him; the deceivers and flatterers doubt him and reject his excellence. The same pattern continues through the Gates, the hujjas, the da'is, and the ma'dhuns. Whenever one rank departs and another is established in his place to preserve that station, the elite among his followers obey the newly established holder of the rank, whereas others who had outwardly appeared to be among his supporters deny him. Indeed, those deniers may become more intensely hostile toward him than enemies and opponents among the people of the zahir.

How could the matter be otherwise, when all of this arose only from the original error and slip concerning which God Most High said: "We said: Descend, some of you enemies to others" (Qur'an 2:36)? Salvation cannot be hoped for by one whose condition is like this except if God Most High singles him out for mercy, rescues him from punishment, and makes him one of the people of blessing.

The denial by a person of the station of one appointed to a rank, and his doubt concerning him, may arise from one of two causes. The first is pride and self-admiration that the denier finds within himself. His pride and self-admiration cause him to covet the station of the master of the age, imagining that he is more entitled to it than the appointed person. He therefore claims the station in arrogance and exaltation over its rightful holder, just as oppressors have done from the beginning of time to its end in relation to the lords of their cycles and the Imams of their ages.

The second cause is that the deniers belittle and despise their own rank-holder because of his lack of wealth or because his name is obscure. They therefore disdain him, elevate themselves above him, and imagine themselves to be nobler and higher than he. By this they resemble the person about whom God Most High reports: "I am greater than you in wealth and mightier in followers" (18:34). They do not know the hidden wisdom of God Most High concerning him, nor that "God knows best where to place His message" (6:124).

Nor have they realized that every successor whom his predecessor appoints—whether in a high or a low station of the ranks of religion—is placed in a rank that constitutes his righteous work, the object of his striving, the repository of the trust that he is charged to discharge, and the completion of his faith. Al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah—blessings of God be upon him—said: "A believer does not truly become a believer until he establishes another believer like himself."

This affliction arising from envy, pride, desire, and self-admiration is rooted in natural dispositions and runs through creation, except in those leaders and followers whom God Most High protects. Thus the sages have said: "The wonder is not at one who perished—how he perished—but at one who was saved—how he was saved—from a world that adorns itself, a soul that commands evil, and a rebellious Satan."

Know, O brother—may God strengthen you and make you fortunate—that the ranks of the guiding da'wa, peace of God be upon its lords, from the mukasir up to the Bab, are Imams potentially in the order of knowledge. The holders of the ranks have arranged this doctrine and have illustrated it by saying: the sperm-drop is a human being potentially, and it must one day emerge into actuality if the stars look upon it with their auspicious influences, if it settles in the secure resting place, and if it is preserved from accidents that interrupt the development of the embryo.

Likewise, the ranks just mentioned are, in the ordering of wisdom, Imams potentially, as we have said. They journey toward the perfection that consists in becoming Imams actually, so long as they remain upright upon the path, nourish themselves on the sciences of the haqiqa, persist in the commands of the shari'a, faithfully perform the prescribed obligations, and each subordinate adheres to the superior rank above him and serves him by exerting every effort and sincere counsel in whatever matter his superior directs to him. He must be sincerely loyal to whomever his superior befriends, openly hostile to whomever his superior treats as an enemy, make him his qibla, take him as his intercessor and means toward the one above him, never oppose his command, and never transgress the limits of his station. If he does this, then one day he becomes an Imam in actuality.

Our master al-Sadiq Ja'far b. Muhammad—blessings of God be upon them both and upon their family—was asked about balagh, and he said: "Balagh is of two kinds: universal balagh and partial balagh. Partial balagh is from one degree to another, an ascent from one rank after another. Universal balagh is the completion of all the ranks and the reaching of their ultimate end. It is arrival at the furthest limit of the appointed times and their crescents. Through this one becomes an Imam after having been a follower. From him the Light of the Light rises, and through him the Truth becomes manifest at the time of manifestation. When the servant reaches that, no human limitation remains upon him and he is no longer described by a single form; rather, all forms are seen within him."

This is his saying—blessings of God be upon him. For this reason we have said that these mentioned ranks are Imams potentially who call toward Imams standing in actuality.

Know that beneath every expression of this saying there is knowledge by which salvation, triumph, and life are attained for one whom God Most High grants success and guides to it. The truth of what we have said is testified by the words of our master al-Mu'ayyad—may God exalt his sanctity and grant us his intercession and companionship—in the three hundred and sixty-sixth majlis: "The Imam of the God-fearing, absolutely speaking, is in every age and time one alone. None claims his station except a lying impostor doomed to perish."

Then his da'is, who call by his permission and speak according to his judgment and command, are Imams for their own people. Their faces are turned toward the absolute Imam just as the prayer-niches and qiblas are directed toward the Ka'ba, the Sacred House.

Chapter 20

The Earlier Da'is of Yemen

Know, O brother, that because the ranks of the guiding da'wa—peace of God be upon its master—have always been preserved and protected by those who occupy them, appointed to them by the awliya' of God and the Imams of His religion, peace of God be upon them, in all the jaziras, the jazira of Yemen was among the regions held in particular regard by the masters, peace of God be upon them. This was because of its distinction among the jaziras through the Chosen and Honored Prophet and the venerated Ancient House.

Our master al-Amir—blessings of God be upon him—made this clear in one of his noble sijillat when he said: "Since the jazira of Yemen is among the regions whose every affair Amir al-Mu'minin watches over, and whose great and small conditions he particularly desires to set right—because it was among the places of migration of the Muslims at the beginning of time and has been a dwelling of the people of faith from the time the foundation of Islam became firm until now, and has never been devoid of the sons of the Fatimid da'wa and the awliya' of the 'Alid state..."

This is his saying, blessings of God be upon him. Thus the da'wa in this jazira, together with the lands of India and Sind that were attached to it, continued uninterrupted throughout the ages. No holder of a rank departed without first establishing another in his place to preserve the order of the religion of God.

Eventually their affair came to our master Mansur al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity—whose coming to Yemen as a migrant had been by the command of our master al-Husayn b. Ahmad, the last of the concealed Imams, blessings of God be upon them. He remained for a period calling to him until the command reached him to call to our master al-Mahdi, blessings of God be upon him. The da'i Abu 'Abd Allah al-Shi'i then came to him as a migrant from his master. Our master Mansur al-Yaman undertook his training, elevated his degree through the stations of knowledge, and dispatched him from his presence as a migrant to the Maghrib. He also sent one of the sons of the da'i who had preceded him in Yemen to India and Sind as a da'i by the command of his master. For this reason the affairs of those two regions came to be directed to the holder of the jazira of Yemen.

What occurred with Mansur al-Yaman in Yemen has been related by the author of Iftitah al-Da'wa. After him the da'wa continued through the da'is whom he appointed, one after another, until it reached the da'i Sulayman b. 'Abd Allah al-Zawahi. He appointed our master, the unique and exalted da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Sulayhi—may God exalt the sanctity of them all.

Among the missions of 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Sulayhi was his dispatch of his maternal uncle, the sultan Ahmad b. Muzaffar—may God sanctify their souls—to our master al-Mustansir, blessings of God be upon him, seeking permission to rise with the sword. This followed the vision he had seen, which stirred him to undertake armed action and to seize one of the fortresses of Masar, as is related in the book of his sira. He then rose with the sword and took possession of the entire jazira.

Afterward he resolved to set out toward Iraq and migrate to the Pure Gates. Yet he found no way to do so except to send our master, the chief qadi of Yemen and guide of its guides, Malik b. Malik—may God exalt his sanctity—to seek permission for him from our master al-Mustansir bi-llah, blessings of God be upon him and upon his pure fathers and descendants, concerning whatever the exalted command should require regarding what the da'i intended.

The qadi set out with a group of prominent awliya' until he reached the Pure Abodes. After performing the duty of salutation, he delivered what the unique and exalted da'i had entrusted to him and took up residence in the house of our master al-Mu'ayyad—may God exalt the sanctity of them both. He began to address the Prophetic Presence, peace be upon it, seeking permission for the aforementioned da'i. The only answer he received was: "How can he seek permission when the time of winter has arrived?"

He remained there for a period. During this time he studied under our master al-Mu'ayyad—may God exalt the sanctity of them both—and wrote down what al-Mu'ayyad taught and imparted to him. When winter had ended,

he renewed his petition, yet received only the same answer as before. He sought the intercession of our master al-Mu'ayyad to secure the fulfillment of his needs, but al-Mu'ayyad himself gave him only that same reply.

Five years passed while he remained in the Pure Abodes. Each time he raised the matter, he was answered only as he had first been answered. One day he said to our master al-Mu'ayyad—may God exalt the sanctity of them both: "Our master, what are we to understand from this answer? Winter after winter has passed, yet every petition receives the same reply."

Al-Mu'ayyad said to him: "Know that the speech of the Imams, peace be upon them, possesses a zahir, a batin, and a haqiqa. None knows all of that except God and they, peace be upon them."

Throughout the qadi's stay, he scarcely left our master al-Mu'ayyad—may God exalt the sanctity of them both. He remained before him, asking him questions, receiving from him, and recording what he learned from him until he had exhausted everything al-Mu'ayyad possessed. At the end of this period al-Mu'ayyad wrote for him twenty-seven questions and asked him to obtain their answers. He said: "The answer to these can come only from your master. Nothing stands between you and him as a barrier."

The qadi presented the questions to our master al-Mustansir, blessings of God be upon him, and he answered them with twenty-seven replies. At each answer he clothed him in a qamis, thereby indicating—blessings of God be upon him—that he had raised him through twenty-seven degrees of knowledge and gnosis.

One day the command came to our master al-Mu'ayyad and our master Malik—may God exalt the sanctity of them both—to appear before our master, blessings of God be upon him. When they stood before him, he said to the qadi: "May God Most High make good your consolation for your da'i, for the Sudan have killed him at this very hour." The qadi memorized the date and precise hour. It proved to be exactly the hour in which the unique and exalted da'i had been martyred, neither earlier nor later.

In the answer that our master had previously given to our master al-Mu'ayyad when he interceded concerning the permission already mentioned, he had said: "The time of winter has arrived, O Mu'ayyad, and he shall surely depart with a new mission and a new command." Condolences for our master Malik—may God sanctify his soul—were received for five months from the people of the provinces and cities.

Then the Imam, blessings of God be upon him, appointed our master al-Mukarram—may God sanctify his soul—and dispatched our master Malik—may God exalt his sanctity—with that appointment. This was the "new mission and new command" which he had symbolically indicated before its time.

Our master al-Mustansir bi-llah, blessings of God be upon him, then said to our master Malik—may God sanctify his soul: "When We saw that the lifespan allotted to that da'i had come to an end and that the winter of the harvest had drawn near, We deemed it proper to hold you back so that the said da'i would not be killed outside his own jazira, for then all the awliya' with him would have been killed as well."

When our master Malik returned to Yemen bearing the appointment of the da'i al-Mukarram as successor to his father—may God sanctify all their souls—he communicated only a small portion of the realities of his knowledge to the da'i al-Mukarram, to al-Hurra al-Malika, and to Ahmad b. Qasim b. Wali, and to no others—may God sanctify their souls.

He then entrusted his son, our master Yahya b. Malik, with everything he possessed of knowledge and wisdom. He singled him out for that knowledge and prepared him to succeed to his station. When the son had fully absorbed all the gnoses held by his father and his father's departure drew near, the father established that son in his own place and appointed him as his successor and deputy in the office he had held. Then he departed to the abode of God's good pleasure and the locus of His sanctity.

He—may God exalt his sanctity—was holder of the Rank of the Pen, walking alongside the two exalted da'is, the holders of the sword: the unique and exalted da'i and his son al-Mukarram. May God raise their degrees, exalt their stations, grant us their intercession, and never deprive us of their blessings, through His favor and generosity.

Then a nass came from our master al-Mansur Abu 'Ali al-Amir bi-Ahkam Allah, blessings of God be upon him, confirming our master Yahya b. Malik in the rank in which his father had placed him, just as the nass concerning his father's rank had reached his father from our masters al-Mustansir and al-Musta'li, blessings of God

be upon them both, together with the authorization granted him by our master al-Mu'ayyad—may God exalt their sanctity.

When the affair of the da'wa came to our master Yahya b. Malik—may God exalt the sanctity of them both—he appointed the ranks of the jazira, commanding and prohibiting among them for the duration of his life. Then our master Dhu'ayb b. Musa al-Wadi'ī—may God exalt his sanctity—came into contact with him. He taught him, refined him, and then, together with al-Hurra al-Malika—may God sanctify their souls—appointed him in the jazira of Yemen as a da'ī, warner, and guide for its people.

Our master Dhu'ayb then appointed our master al-Khattab—may God exalt the sanctity of them both—as his helper and supporter, and he obtained for him the noble authorization from al-Hurra al-Malika and the aforementioned da'ī—may God sanctify all their souls. The two of them stood in the jazira, appointed all the ranks, and called to the worship of the true Object of worship and to the Imamate of their Imam, present and existing in their age, throughout the lifetime of the hujja and da'ī—may God exalt the sanctity of them both—and after their departure.

Then our master al-Khattab—may God sanctify his soul—passed away. Our master Dhu'ayb b. Musa al-Wadi'ī appointed the exalted father Ibrahim b. al-Husayn al-Hamidi—may God exalt the sanctity of them both—in his place and made him his successor after him, assigning him the same authority of binding and releasing that he himself had exercised. He then entrusted to him the entire affair of the Yemeni jazira, near and far, and transferred to him everything over which he had exercised authority in all its regions and districts.

The aforementioned father—may God raise his degree—had fully absorbed all the sciences and gnoses that our master al-Khattab—may God exalt the sanctity of them both—possessed. Our master Dhu'ayb—may God sanctify his soul—then increased his perfection by what he conveyed to him and disclosed to him of the secret of the haqiqa.

When our master Dhu'ayb departed to the abode of God's honor and the locus of His good pleasure, there were under his authority a number of appointed ranks. Before his departure he placed their affairs under the authority of the father: he was to raise among them those worthy of honor, retain in his station whoever deserved to remain, remove whoever wisdom required to be removed, and exercise over them all whatever the religious governance demanded in matters of appointment and dismissal.

Thus he stood over the jazira as those before him had done. He appointed ranks, composed books, cut off the arguments of the extremists, silenced them, and effaced their doctrines. He caused the crop of wisdom to grow, illuminated by gnosis the forms of those who had possessed darkness, and encompassed them with abundant blessing throughout his days and during the long period of his residence among them.

Among the most excellent of those virtuous and righteous ranks whom he appointed, and among the chosen learned masters, was the exalted shaykh, learned, chaste, pure, and noble, 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. al-Walid—may God sanctify his soul. He taught the awliya' and raised the people of purity through the ranks. Likewise there was the virtuous shaykh, the perfect master, Muhammad b. Tahir, noble in origin and discloser of radiant sciences.

These two noble rank-holders occupied among the people of truth a praiseworthy station. Knowledge and excellence existed through them in their days. The God-fearing prospered through their felicity, while the wretched became wretched through opposition to them.

When the virtuous and exalted shaykh 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. al-Walid—may God exalt his sanctity—departed to the abode of God's honor, the exalted shaykh Muhammad b. Tahir assumed his station among the awliya' and preserved after him the order of the religion. The father—may God exalt his sanctity—populated all the regions of the jazira by appointing virtuous ranks, people of complete gnoses.

When the father's departure drew near and the time came for his journey to the locus of God's good pleasure, he granted authorization to this slave of the Family of Muhammad, the Pure Ones, peace be upon them—one who is truly their slave and truly their freedman—and made him his successor and deputy in the affair of the jazira over which he himself had presided. He then departed to the abode of God's honor, the encampment of His sanctity, the refuge of His awliya', and the locus of His companionship.

Thereupon this slave of the Family of Muhammad, peace be upon them, renewed the authorizations of those who acknowledged the matter and obeyed. He investigated the condition of everyone who had been authorized in all the regions, sometimes by written correspondence and messages, sometimes through direct speech and personal encounter. He taught those who desired knowledge and benefited those who sought it. He exerted himself to remove the doctrines of ghuluw and transmigration from those who held them, and he bound those who adhered through his guidance to the middle path, avoiding both extremism and deficiency.

Two exalted shaykhs exerted themselves in assisting him: Muhammad b. Tahir and 'Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Walid—may God raise their degrees and greatly increase the good they impart. Through spreading their sciences they effaced falsehood; with decisive proofs they straightened the doubter who had strayed; with brilliant demonstrations they struck sparks from the fire-sticks of truth; and through luminous evidences they gave speech to the tongues of truthfulness.

The exalted sultan, the master Ahmad b. Hisham, supported them all with his wealth, his praiseworthy deeds, and his abundant generosity. He immersed the awliya' in beneficence and encompassed them with generosity and favor. These virtuous masters therefore became an adornment for the people of this world and religion, and a beauty for faith and the believers. Whoever knew them—whether a sincere wali or even an apprehensive opponent—longed for their praiseworthy actions and noble qualities. Through their excellent conduct in religion and the eloquence of their speech to those seeking guidance, they drew many people to the truth and brought them out of doubt and confusion.

The exalted shaykh and most excellent master, 'Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Walid, a man of lofty rank and station, firm religion, and praiseworthy action—may God raise his degree in the two abodes and exalt his station in religion and this world—studied in his youth under his paternal uncle, the rightly guided and divinely aided shaykh 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. al-Walid—may God exalt his sanctity—during the latter's lifetime. He drew from his complete sciences and followed his praiseworthy and virtuous conduct.

When that exalted shaykh departed, this noble, ascetic shaykh—the exemplar of righteous awliya' and worshippers—turned to learning from the exalted shaykh Muhammad b. Tahir, of praiseworthy striving and noble achievements. He drank deeply from the torrent of his knowledge and imitated him in his excellence and forbearance until he had emptied his vessel, equaled him in rank, and became his peer.

Then the aforementioned exalted shaykh passed into the mercy and good pleasure of God Most High, to the locus of His sanctity and His gardens. I then completed for 'Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Walid what his own father had intended regarding appointing him as successor during his lifetime and after his death. I did so because of what I had come to know and test in him: his chastity, devotion, purity, scrupulousness, religion, truthfulness, walaya, knowledge, trustworthiness, sincerity, excellent conduct, clarity of speech and expression, and his possession of every noble quality. Indeed, all excellence seems to have come to rest in him and with him.

I therefore granted him the noble and unrestricted authorization and entrusted to him throughout the entire jazira the taking of the covenant and mithaq, the authorization of those among the people of religion and concord who deserved it, and the authority over everyone whom I myself had authorized. He is to advance among them the learned and virtuous and to remove those who turn aside from the conduct of the people of truth. Understand, O questioner, what I have told you concerning him. Through him seek nearness, and make his knowledge your reliance.

I had formerly appointed and established a number of virtuous brethren who have since passed into the mercy and good pleasure of God. Then, when I tested the dear son who is with me and before me, 'Ali b. Hatim b. Ibrahim—may God take charge of granting him success and rectitude in the affairs of his religion and his worldly life—I found him pure in conduct, clear in inner vision, radiant in form, complete in his affairs, and avoiding every prohibited thing. I therefore authorized him to take the covenant and mithaq, to teach the people of concord, and to act as my deputy in everything for which I had been responsible throughout all the regions and horizons. I established him in my own place according to what his entitlement required.

May God Most High take charge of his assistance and protection, his success and care, by the right of Muhammad and his family—blessings of God be upon them all.

Chapter 21

The Ordering of the Da'is of Yemen in the Time of the Da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim al-Hamidi

As for your question, O brother, concerning the comparative degrees of the ranks of the jazira, their sequence and connection, and how the one who precedes is distinguished from the one who follows, know—may God teach you goodness and make you one of its people—that since every rank in the jazira occupies one of the ranks of religion, from the da'i downward, our master Dhu'ayb—may God exalt his sanctity—was in his time superior to all of them. Our master al-Khattab stood beneath him in his horizon because he was his subordinate rank-holder.

When our master al-Khattab departed, the Father of All—may God exalt the sanctity of them both—stood in the place of our master al-Khattab and preserved his rank. When our master Dhu'ayb later departed after establishing the Father of All in his place, the shaykh 'Ali b. al-Husayn stood with the Father of All in the same relation in which our master al-Khattab had stood with our master Dhu'ayb. When that shaykh departed, the exalted shaykh Muhammad b. Tahir stood with the Father of All in the station formerly occupied by the exalted shaykh 'Ali b. al-Husayn—may God exalt the sanctity of them all.

Then, when the affair came to your brother—that is, to the author—the exalted shaykh Muhammad b. Tahir remained with him as he had been with his father. When that shaykh departed to the abode of God's honor, the exalted and noble shaykh 'Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Walid stood with your brother in the station previously occupied by Muhammad b. Tahir, just as 'Ali b. al-Husayn and our master al-Khattab had stood with their respective da'is. These are the people of precedence among whom those who remained came to occupy the stations of their da'is and to possess their ranks.

As for the rank-holders of your own time, I shall now name for you those who possess precedence among them and the degrees by which they surpass one another in excellence.

I have already told you that I established my dear son, who is with me and before me, in my own station. He is therefore the first among the ranks of the jazira and the one who precedes them.

Next to him in excellence and rank is the man whom I have already described in this treatise as the most perfect of the rank-holders of this jazira in our time, the most excellent, learned, chaste, and complete: the exalted and noble shaykh 'Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Walid. Know his excellence, recognize the loftiness of his rank and the nobility of his action, and do not place anyone else before him. I have entrusted to him everyone whom I have authorized and placed them beneath his authority. I have already mentioned to you the authorization of each of them. This is because of his excellence, perfection, knowledge, chastity, purity, discipline, and sound judgment.

Following the two of them in excellence is the exalted sultan and noble master Ahmad b. Hisham, because of his chastity, precedence, and the expenditure of his wealth.

Following them in excellence is the exalted shaykh Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Hawri, because of his walaya, scrupulousness, devotion, and worship.

Following them are the two exalted sultans Munif b. Hisham al-'Alawi and Zuray' b. As'ad al-Shaybani, with Munif placed first because of his excellence, precedence, and nobility.

Following them is the exalted shaykh 'Abd Allah b. al-Mansur b. Abi al-Fath.

Following him is the exalted young man Hanzala b. Qasim.

Then follow the exalted qadis and masters: 'Ali b. Hanzala b. Abi Salim, then Mas'ud b. 'Abd Allah, then Muhammad b. 'Ali.

Following them is the exalted shaykh Jabir b. Ya'la al-Wadi'i; then the exalted shaykh 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad al-Ishaqi; then the exalted shaykh As'ad b. Muhammad b. Sulayman b. Harith; then the exalted qadi Muhammad b. As'ad b. Ahmad b. 'Imran; then the exalted shaykh Sulayman b. Abi al-Mas'ud; then the exalted shaykh Mu'ammar b. 'Atwa al-Qaysi; then the exalted shaykh Rafi' b. Ahmad b. Mansur b. Mahran; then the exalted shaykh Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Ibrahim; then the exalted noble shaykh Jawhar b. Musa.

Following them is the exalted sultan, the master 'Ali b. Hasan b. Malik—may God take charge of granting him success and make firm his path upon guidance.

Then follow the exalted shaykh Musa b. Zuhayr al-Yami; the exalted shaykh Ma'ar b. Rashid; the exalted shaykh Ma'ar b. Sharhabil; the exalted sultan Hajfal b. 'Ali; the exalted sultan al-Washshah b. 'Imran; the exalted shaykh 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Malik; the exalted sultan Zinji b. Hasan; the exalted shaykh Hatim b. Mudafi'; the exalted shaykh 'Abd 'Ali b. Mahmud; the exalted shaykh 'Umar b. Yahya; the sultan 'Ali b. Muhammad b. Abi Samra; the exalted qadi Yahya b. 'Abd al-Husayn; the exalted shaykh Ibrahim b. Sa'id b. Ahmad b. Nu'man; and, following them, the exalted qadi Hasan b. 'Ali at Jabal al-Mashriq.

These are the rank-holders in the Yemeni jazira, the possessor of sublime blessings. May God take charge of their care and protection, supply them with His sacred supports, strengthen them through the flashes of His merciful regard, raise them to nearness before Him, and make this jazira flourishing through the helpers of religion and watched over by the merciful glances of those vested with His command, through His favor and generosity, Mighty and Majestic is He.

This ordering is according to the arrangement of the stations of these rank-holders, their degrees, and their succession in excellence. Whoever reads it should know it, verify it, and act in accordance with it. God takes charge of granting success to all through His mercy, Mighty and Majestic.

Chapter 22

The Order and Ranks of the Da'wa, the Covenant to Conceal Its Secrets, the Appointment of Da'is in Its Jaziras, and Disavowal of Those Who Depart from It

Know, O brother, that these rank-holders—may God raise their degrees and illuminate their inner visions—have each been placed in one region of the aforementioned jazira, distant from the next rank-holder who is his brother. Some among them have little study and little training in knowledge. Necessity alone required that they be appointed, and each was set in his region as a protection against deficiency, so that a vulnerable frontier might be guarded when no one more suitable could be found among its people.

At times such a man may be asked a question for which, because of the small amount of his study, understanding, and training, he can find no answer. Yet he may possess some portion of the haqiqa that he acquired only under covenants, solemn pledges, and binding oaths requiring him to conceal it. He then fears that the questioner will discover his inability to answer. He gives the questioner the impression that he possesses knowledge the other cannot understand and continues to embellish his speech until the importunity of the questioner forces him to disclose the haqiqa to one who does not deserve it. He thereby reveals it and exceeds the command concerning it.

He has failed to take warning from the saying of the Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family: "There are four things for which, even if riding beasts were saddled and ridden until they became emaciated, that would be little: a servant should hope in none but his Lord; he should fear nothing but his own sin; the ignorant person should not be ashamed to learn; and when the learned person is asked about what he does not know, he should not be ashamed to say: I do not know." Amir al-Mu'minin—blessings of God be upon him—said: "Half of knowledge, for one who does not know, is to say: God knows best."

At the beginning of this treatise we have already mentioned much of this kind of conduct: the demands of those who make improper demands and the obstinacy of questioners who abandon the discipline of religion.

Sufficient as a reply to them is the answer of our master al-Husayn b. 'Ali—blessings of God be upon them both—to a questioner. The man asked him: "My master, has God made it obligatory upon us to ask you?"

He replied: "Yes."

The questioner said: "Where is that?"

He answered: "In His saying: 'Ask the people of remembrance if you do not know'" (Qur'an 16:43).

The questioner then said: "My master, has God also made it obligatory upon you to answer us?"

He replied: "No. That is entrusted to us. If we wish, we give; and if we wish, we withhold."

The questioner said: "Where is that?"

He replied: "In the saying of God Most High: 'This is Our gift; so bestow or withhold without reckoning'" (38:39).

We have repeated this here because we intend to make clear that throughout the jazira it is forbidden to speak openly concerning the haqiqa except through those whom we shall mention below.

The proofs, O brother, requiring concealment of the secret of the awliya' of God are more numerous than can be counted and greater than can be exhaustively set forth. It is sufficient to cite the words of our master al-Sadiq—blessings of God be upon him: "The one who broadcasts our secret is like one who brandishes his sword in our faces." He also said—blessings of God be upon him and the Imams among his descendants: "Whoever broadcasts the secret of the People of the House, God will make him taste the cold of iron."

Our master al-Mu'izz—blessings of God be upon him—said something similar: "By God, if the da'is were truthful toward Us in what We commanded them, not two persons would remain behind from answering Us—no,

by God, not even one. God Most High says: 'If they had remained upright upon the path, We would have given them abundant water to drink'" (72:16).

Should not the one who commits such a disclosure remember what was stipulated to him in the noble covenant: "And that you conceal what you hear of the ta'wil of the Qur'an..." through the remainder of the stipulation?

Among the greatest innovations is that the mustajib should demand of the mukasir that he disclose to him what he does not deserve. Rather, it is obligatory that he ask him with humility and submit to him, imploring him for benefit. If the mukasir wishes, he gives; if he wishes, he withholds, according to what divine wisdom requires and lordly governance demands.

Likewise it is not permissible for the mukasir to demand of the mutlaq; nor for the mutlaq to demand of the da'i; nor for the da'i to demand of the hujja; nor for the hujja to demand of the Bab; nor for the Bab to demand of the Imam; nor for the Imam to demand of the wasi; nor for the wasi to demand of the prophet; nor for the prophet to demand of al-Khayal; nor for al-Khayal to demand of al-Fath; nor for al-Fath to demand of al-Jadd; nor for al-Jadd to demand of the Tali; nor for the Tali to demand of the Sabiq; nor for the Sabiq to demand of the Unseen of the Unseen.

Rather, each one is the servant of the one above him, and all of them are veiled from the unseen of the Possessor of Might by veils that bring nearness. They are honored servants: "They do not precede Him in speech, and by His command they act" (21:27).

My purpose, O brother, in presenting this chapter is to discipline those of the brethren—may God increase and cause them to flourish—who read it, and to inform them that every subordinate rank-holder must receive the benefits of his superior without arrogance, without demanding what has not been given, without belittling him, and without self-praise. Rather, he should be satisfied with whatever reaches him through his superior and whatever benefit his superior gives him. He should accept what has been bestowed and granted to him, stop when his superior forbids him, and thank him for whatever favor he has bestowed upon him.

Now let everyone among the brethren who reads my treatise know that I have forbidden discussion and instruction concerning the haqiqa, mutual study of it, or seeking it throughout the jazira except through five rank-holders.

In the lands of Haraz and the districts attached to them, this must come only from my dear son 'Ali b. Hatim, or from one whom he approves to impart it and whom he authorizes to do so.

In the lands of Hamdan and the districts attached to them, this must come only from the exalted and fully virtuous shaykh 'Ali b. Muhammad, or from one whom he commands, approves, and authorizes to discuss it.

In 'Adan, Abyan, Lahj, and the districts attached to them, it must come only from the exalted shaykh Muhammad b. Ahmad b. 'Abbad al-Hawri.

In the region of Mikhlaf Ja'far, al-Ma'afir, and the territories adjoining them, it must come only from the two exalted and fortunate sultans Munif b. Hisham and Zuray' b. As'ad—may God take charge of the care, protection, rectification, and success of them all.

Whoever seeks this knowledge from anyone other than the aforementioned rank-holders commits what is forbidden, both for the one imparting and the one receiving. Whoever opposes this arrangement and exceeds this fixed command has broken the covenant and violated its condition. I am disassociated from the person who does so because he has opposed what I have stated and exceeded what I commanded.

Whoever is of me should act according to this and accept what I have stipulated to him here. Whoever exceeds what I have ordered—God Most High is sufficient to requite him and to judge him.

Among those who had once received authorization was Isma'il b. 'Ali al-Zawahi. He fell into ghuluw regarding the Imams of truth and attributed to the Messenger of God—blessings of God be upon him and his family—claims like those made by Jews, Christians, Magians, and Sabians. He attributed to him what brings punishment

from God and causes a person to remain in grievous chastisement, lasting disgrace, affliction, and exemplary punishment.

He led astray the ignorant who followed him, attributed deficiency to the lords of perfection, claimed divinity for human beings, and denied the excellence of the purified Prophet, God's chosen one among His servants and His mercy sent down upon the people of His lands. May God, Mighty and Majestic, curse whoever lowers the Prophet from his exalted rank and grant him justice against whoever attributes to him that from which he is entirely free and pure.

How can vile and corrupt people hold evil beliefs concerning the people of excellence and perfection? May God fight them and curse them by the number of the grains of sand and pebbles, by all that is seen and unseen, by the drops of water, the stars of heaven, and everything encompassed by the air—by the right of Muhammad and his pure family, blessings of God be upon them all.

Our master the da'i Abu al-Barakat b. Bishr al-Halabi—may God exalt his sanctity—said in one of his majalis: "The evil da'is are those who exaggerate concerning the Imams of the ages and diminish the stations of the lords of the cycles. They have gone astray and led many astray, departing from the straight path."

If we were to set out everything that has come from the masters, peace of God be upon them, and from their ranks—may God exalt their sanctity—in refutation of this deviant group that exaggerates concerning the Imams and detracts from the natiqs, blessings of God be upon them all, together with the curses upon them and disavowal of them, we would require several books. What the brethren can consult in the books of the guiding da'wa—peace of God be upon its master—on this subject is sufficient for a worshipping people.

Chapter 23

The Nobility of the Ranks of the Da'wa According to al-Mu'ayyad fi al-Din al-Shirazi

How astonishing—truly astonishing—is the condition of one who has drawn close through walaya, affiliated himself with the people of purity, been established for teaching, and appointed for guidance and instruction, yet does not reflect upon the saying of God, Mighty and Majestic: "We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves until it becomes clear to them that He is the Truth" (Qur'an 41:53); or His saying, glorified is He: "And within yourselves; will you not then see?" (51:21); or His saying: "You have certainly known the first creation" (56:62)—by which He means the creation of bodies—and then: "Why, then, do you not remember?"

From the creation and nurturing of bodies one ought to understand how souls should be brought forth in the other creation through teaching and refinement. Every bodily organ receives a share of nourishment suited to it, appropriate to it, harmonious with it, and peculiar to it—some nourishment being dense and some subtle. Rarely do two organs feed on exactly the same nourishment.

The same differentiation exists throughout creation among minerals, plants, and animals. Every species belonging to these three genera possesses nourishment peculiar to it and distinct from that of another species. Likewise, souls prepared for teaching differ in purity, receptivity, discernment, intelligence, and dullness.

The one responsible for teaching them must therefore exercise insight concerning them, reflect frequently, and carefully examine their conditions. He must give them instruction according to their preparedness, receptivity, capacity, and entitlement. He must not burden any soul with more than it can bear and thereby destroy it, nor give it less than it deserves and thereby wrong it. His attention and instruction should correspond to the demand of justice, following the middle path and turning away from both excess and restriction.

The one who follows this path deserves the praise expressed by God Most High: "Those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly, but take a course between the two" (25:67). Let him also discipline himself according to what God Most High taught His Prophet—peace be upon him and his family—in His saying: "Do not keep your hand chained to your neck, nor extend it completely" (17:29).

Let him know that God Most High has made the ranks of His religion different in their stations and degrees, and unequal in their gnoses and conditions. Each one undertakes a particular portion of the establishment of His religion different from the portion undertaken by another. In the same way God has made the organs and senses of the human person differ and vary in constitution and action. He made the activity of each organ involved in digesting and distributing nourishment serve the organ that follows it, and through their cooperation nourishment reaches its completion and perfection.

He likewise divided all objects of perception in the bodily world among the senses and limbs of the human person. Visible things are objects of sight; audible things of hearing; odors of smell; flavors of taste; and tangible things of touch. Each sense conveys the knowledge of its particular sensible object to the soul and acts independently in the domain entrusted to it. Through their cooperation in perception, and because they are instruments of a single soul, the soul perceives all the divisions of the world and encompasses them.

In exactly the same way, every rank among the ranks of religion is charged with instructing a particular class of people. One class of knowledge has been assigned to one group of rank-holders; another class of knowledge to another group of ranks. Through their cooperation guidance becomes general among those who seek guidance, and the degrees and classes of knowledge become fully distributed between those who impart and those who receive. Through them the Universal Soul reaches the fulfillment of its aim, and through mutual assistance all attain every division of nobility and felicity.

Know, O brother, that when a teacher gives a student something beyond what his station deserves and beyond what his rank can bear, the case is like nourishment reaching an organ of the body for which that nourishment was not assigned in the original ordering of creation. The organ is corrupted by feeding on what it was not prepared to receive, and the corruption of that organ may corrupt the entire body.

Likewise, the corruption of most of the awliya' arises only from the bad management of those who instruct them and from the teachers' presenting to them things they cannot bear, so that they perish. This is the destruction of cultivation and offspring. Consider, O brother, the sins that accrue to one who acts in this way and the burdens he carries: he exceeds what he was not commanded to do, breaks his covenant, opposes his superior rank, contradicts right guidance, betrays the trust entrusted to him, strays from the purpose intended for him, and leads astray those whom he was ordered to guide.

Therefore beware, O brethren—beware with the utmost caution—of following this path. A single one of these traits is enough to destroy its possessor; what, then, of one who gathers all of them together? We seek refuge in God from this and from whoever commits it.

Chapter 24

The Ranks of the Hierarchy and the Knowledge Proper to Each Rank According to Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani

We have now fulfilled what we promised at the beginning of this treatise concerning the ranks of the hierarchy —may God raise their degrees—and the excellence they deserve. Perhaps someone may read what we have explained about them and the excellence, elevation, loftiness, nobility, and sublimity they possess before God Most High, consider it excessive, and accuse us of ghuluw concerning them.

We therefore deem it appropriate to reproduce a passage from our master al-Mu'ayyad—may God exalt his sanctity and grant us his intercession and companionship—from the one hundred and third of his majalis, so that it may testify to the truth of what we have stated concerning the nobility of the ranks. He said:

"You have previously heard the saying of God, glorified is He: 'Give glad tidings to those who believe and perform righteous deeds that for them are gardens beneath which rivers flow' (Qur'an 2:25), together with the discourse explaining its ta'wil and confirming it by reason and its proof, up to His saying: 'beneath which rivers flow.'

"We then spoke of the Garden potentially and the Garden actually, both of which are witnessed in the Qur'an in the saying of God Most High: 'The fruit of the two gardens hangs near' (55:54), and: 'And beneath those two are two gardens' (55:62).

"We said that there is no access to the Garden prepared for the God-fearing except through the Garden that is the da'wa of ta'wil, which imparts the knowledge of certainty. We mentioned the confusion of the exegetes regarding His saying, glorified is He, 'beneath which rivers flow,' because they restricted the description of the Garden to its trees rather than including its ground, upon which everything depends. If the ground of the Garden is counted as part of the Garden, then to imagine the water flowing literally beneath it turns the image from beauty into deformity.

"We said that the gardens are the ranks of religion in the realm of ta'wil. They contain the gardens of souls and the fruits of intellects. Souls delight in their fruits in a way that bodily beings do not delight in ordinary fruit. The one who takes from them obtains a share of permanence; the one who eats bodily fruit receives only a share of passing-away.

"When knowledge of the meaning of the gardens is established according to this example, the meaning of His saying 'beneath which rivers flow' is likewise established, because every higher rank supplies the one beneath it: the Pen supplies the Tablet, the Tablet Israfil, Israfil Mika'il, Mika'il Jibra'il, and Jibra'il Muhammad—blessings of God be upon them all. The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: 'Between me and God are five intermediaries: Jibra'il, Mika'il, Israfil, the Tablet, and the Pen.'

"Muhammad, blessings be upon him, by means of the support he receives, supplies the wasi; the wasi supplies the Imam; the Imam the hujja; the hujja the da'is; the da'is the ma'dhuns; and the ma'dhuns the believing mustajibs. These are gardens beneath which rivers flow; through them the pastures of wisdom become fertile and the lands become green.

"You now hear what we shall present concerning the meaning of the saying of God Most High: 'Whenever they are provided with a fruit therefrom as provision, they say: This is what we were provided with before; and it is given to them in resemblance' (2:25).

"The exegetes say that the reason is that Adam, peace be upon him, descended to the earth carrying fruits from the Garden, so that the fruits of the earth derive originally from the fruits of the Garden. When the people of the Garden see those fruits, they recognize their resemblance to what they tasted and ate on earth and say: 'This is what we were provided with before,' meaning in the world; hence, 'it is given to them in resemblance.'

"In one respect the exegetes have spoken truly, and in another falsely. Their claim that Adam, peace be upon him, descended carrying grapes, figs, apples, fresh dates, and the like is unsound. These things belong to the subtle

products of the earth, not to the Garden, and they are extracted only by the human being through psychic management and intellectual discrimination.

"But their statement that he descended carrying the fruits of the Garden is correct if by those fruits are meant the benefits he received through his divine share and prophetic support, extracting them from the unseen of God—glorified is He—just as the human being extracts from the earth fruits that are not visibly present within it.

"Their error lay in transferring the meaning from spiritual fruits to earthy, bodily fruits that are destroyed by being eaten and spent. Spiritual fruits, however, increase through being taken from and distributed, and nothing is diminished from them. This is the description of the fruits of the Garden: they are taken from, yet do not decrease.

"The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—likened the Qur'an to these fruits because, despite the multitude of those who draw from it and take from it, it grows, increases, and becomes more abundant. Adam, peace be upon him, was the first to extract the fruits of the Garden and descend with them in the sense we have described, not in the sense claimed by the exegetes.

"When the Book reaches its appointed term and those who receive reward arrive at the place of reward, they will see as fruit what Adam, peace be upon him, had sown for them. At the end they encounter the harvest of what was imparted to them at the beginning, and they say: 'This is what we were provided with before.'"

This is the statement of our master al-Mu'ayyad—may God exalt his sanctity. It is a witness to what we have stated concerning the ranks and supports our explanation that each holder of a rank is assigned a particular class within the world of religion, in which those beneath him do not share. Every higher rank has authority over the ranks below it, while its own sphere is restricted to the class appropriate to it. It has no authority to interfere in matters belonging to the ranks above it, or in the people specially assigned to those ranks, except by their command and appointment.

As further explanation and clarification, there follows what our master Hamid al-Din—may God exalt his sanctity—said in the sixth pathway of the fourth enclosure of his Rahat al-'Aql, after discussing the intellects of the World of Origination and establishing their ranks by comparison with the intellects of the world of nature:

"We say that the ten ranks consist of three universal ranks and seven subordinate ranks.

"The three universal ranks are: first, the Prophetic Mission, which is the outpouring of blessing through establishing the laws of practical, outward worship by tanzil and shari'a. These consist of many matters through which the soul comes into existence and attains its first perfection.

"Second is the Wasaya, which is the reception of the blessing in its totality, the undertaking of the whole tanzil, and the establishment of inward, intellectual worship by ta'wil. Ta'wil gathers many matters through which the soul assumes everlasting forms and attains its second perfection.

"Third is the Imamate, which consists in command and governance of the entire community according to the norms of religion. It embraces many matters relating to the cultivation of land and offspring, outwardly and inwardly, and to drawing the soul into true existence. For this reason God Most High named them 'those vested with command.'

"The seven subordinate ranks are as follows. First, decisive discourse, which belongs to the Bab. Second, judgment concerning the ordering of ranks and the assessment of opinions and beliefs according to the balance of creation, together with the disclosure of the ta'wil of the Book, which belongs to the hujja. Thus God Most High said, speaking of His favor to David: 'We gave him wisdom and decisive speech' (38:20), for he was a hujja whose degree was elevated and who received the favor of Bab-hood.

"Third is argument by demonstration for establishing the higher ranks and their degrees among existent things, and making known the return; this belongs to the da'i al-balagh.

"Fourth is teaching intellectual worship, spreading ta'wil, and making known the higher ranks; this belongs to the da'i al-mutlaq.

"Fifth is teaching the rules of intellectual worship and making known the lower ranks and their cycles, both minor and major; this belongs to the da'i al-mahsur.

"Sixth is taking the covenant and mithaq and teaching the rules and disciplines of religion; this belongs to the ma'dhun al-mutlaq.

"Seventh is the act of mukasara, guiding toward the truth and holding fast to the rope; this belongs to the ma'dhun al-mahsur.

"Every one of these ten ranks possesses authority over what lies beneath it, but the relation is not reversible. Thus the natiq possesses authority over the ranks below him; the wasi possesses authority over those below him but not over those above him. The higher is a universal in relation to the lower, while the lower is a particular in relation to the higher."

This is the statement of our master Hamid al-Din—may God exalt his sanctity. What has come from these two noble rank-holders—may God exalt the sanctity of them both—is fully sufficient and completely adequate concerning what we have previously explained. Know this well.

Chapter 25

The Treatise Entitled al-Mujaza al-Kafiya on the Conduct of the Da'is and the Conditions of the Guiding Da'wa, by the Da'i Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Naysaburi

Having completed what we promised to present, we considered it proper to append to it what has come from the exalted and virtuous da'i Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Naysaburi—may God exalt his sanctity—in the treatise entitled al-Mujaza al-Kafiya fi Adab al-Du'at ("The Concise and Sufficient Treatise on the Conduct of the Da'is"). We make it the conclusion of our own treatise and a restraint upon any rank-holder who reads it from transgressing its conditions.

The aforementioned da'i—may God raise his degree—said, after a lengthy introduction that we have omitted in pursuit of brevity:

To proceed: the da'wa is among the noblest ranks in religion, the highest, the most elevated in degree and station, and the most sublime. God Most High has attributed it to Himself in His saying, "To Him belongs the call of truth" (Qur'an 13:14), and in His saying, "God calls to the Abode of Peace" (10:25). He did this to honor the da'wa, to encourage and incite the believers toward it, and to urge them to compete in works that lead to its rank and ascend toward its station.

God Most High called His Prophet—peace be upon him—a da'i in His saying: "Indeed We sent you as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings, a warner, a caller to God by His permission, and a radiant lamp" (33:45–46). He also designated the da'is among past communities as prophets, according to the saying of the Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family: "God Most High has one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets, among them three hundred and thirteen messengers. The remainder saw in dreams, and some were prophets to one village rather than another, or to one people rather than another."

The degree of the da'is has always been lofty and noble in every community. People magnified and honored them, and even now the traces of this remain among every religious community. The Magians call such figures hirbads and mobads; the Jews call them marayya; the Christians call them bishops, patriarchs, deacons, and similar names. Each group obeys its da'i to such a degree that he may declare forbidden things lawful and lawful things forbidden, as God Most High has reported: "They took their rabbis and monks as lords apart from God" (9:31). The people of the zahir likewise magnify their scholars and jurists, who function as their da'is.

The da'is of truth remained upright so long as they did not covet the debris of this world and did not drink into their hearts the love of leadership. Every person who coveted the world and desired leadership went astray from the path and led others astray.

For a long time people entered religion and the da'wa sincerely for God and for religion, until God fulfilled His promise to the Imams, peace be upon them, in His saying: "God has promised those among you who believe and perform righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, as He made those before them successors, and He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them, and He will surely substitute security for them after their fear" (24:55).

After that, the intentions of some who entered religion changed. They began to covet leadership and worldly things, seeking worldly debris in the name of religion. They turned religion into a net by which they hunted, and were satisfied with the mere name and titles of religion without wisdom, knowledge, or discipline. They imagined that loftiness was obtained through titles and honorifics and claimed that virtues could be acquired by bribes and the expenditure of wealth, by deception, stratagems, incantations, magic, and soothsaying.

They were content to be called da'is though they knew nothing of the conditions of the da'wa. They were content to be called scholars though they knew not a single letter of knowledge. They abandoned striving to acquire sciences and disciplines, virtues and worthy attainments, and occupied themselves instead with deception, trickery, sophistry, foolish argument, obstinacy, pride, arrogance, rivalry over the debris of this world, extravagance in dress, riding animals with heavy trappings, and acquiring fine horses and mules—all in place of knowledge, discipline, sound judgment, intellect, wise counsel, praiseworthy virtues, and noble and correct deeds.

They demanded that people praise them though they had performed no noble deeds; that people extol them though they possessed no knowledge, discipline, or virtue; and that people serve them though they had conferred no praiseworthy favor, reward, beneficence, or gift. Whoever recognized their deficiency in action and the ugliness of their speech, they rose to harm him and exerted themselves in hostility toward him until they subdued him, overpowered him, wronged him, and refused to support him.

Their corruption eventually exceeded the corruption of the enemy. Many people fell into doubt, antinomianism, and ghuluw. Most abandoned the shari'a and tanzil and rejected the batin and ta'wil. The enemy thereby found a way to speak and extended his hand against them with ugly deeds. Religion became as the Prophet —blessings of God be upon him—had foretold: "A time will come when nothing will remain of Islam except its name, and nothing of religion except its outward trace."

The Imams, peace be upon them, complained of da'is of this kind. Such men were satisfied with the name "da'i" but neither said what the true da'is said nor followed what they did. Many of them therefore became callers to error, falsehood, and impossibility, just as God Most High has said: "We made them Imams calling to the Fire" (28:41).

The name "da'wa" in its true sense applies only to one who calls to the truth, follows the sunna of God Most High, and speaks truthfully. God Most High called Himself a caller in His saying: "God calls to the Abode of Peace and guides whom He wills to a straight path" (10:25).

God's calling of creation takes three forms. The first is through the tongues of the prophets, awsiya', Imams, and da'is—peace be upon them all. The second is through the signs and testimonies that He has created in the world and within human beings, signs that call them to tawhid and to the Abode of Peace. The Abode of Peace is that which is safe from annihilation and from the defects found in this abode, and safe from injustice, oppression, and change. The third form is through inspiration, divine enabling, and guidance.

God Most High said, addressing His Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family: "Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good exhortation, and dispute with them in the manner that is best" (16:125). In this verse He makes clear that there can also be a da'wa to something other than the way of God, and therefore commands that the Prophet's da'wa be specifically to the way of God.

Whoever does not call to the way of God, and whose call does not conform to the sunna of the Messenger of God and the sunna of the Imams, peace be upon them, is in fact calling to the way of Satan and to the Fire, and obedience to such a caller is not obligatory.

In this verse God commanded the Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—that his da'wa be conducted through wisdom and good exhortation, and that his disputation be in the best manner, so that people may know that one who does not know wisdom and good exhortation is not fit to be a da'i. He says: "Dispute with them in the manner that is best." Whoever does not know how to dispute well is better off not being a da'i.

Disputation, debate, and mukasara can be performed well only by one who has mastered the knowledge of the zahir and the batin, rational knowledge and revealed law. Wisdom is knowledge joined to action. Good exhortation is exhortation through the batin, and "the good" is the walaya of our master Amir al-Mu'minin—peace of God be upon him. God Most High says: "Whoever brings a good deed shall have ten like it" (6:160), meaning: whoever believes in the walaya of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali b. Abi Talib—blessings of God be upon him—will come to know the ten ranks: the five bodily and the five spiritual.

God Most High says: "Indeed We sent you as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings, a warner, a caller to God by His permission, and a radiant lamp" (33:45–46). In this verse He makes clear that one who is not just and trustworthy is not fit to give testimony concerning religion and the world and is not fit to be a da'i. One who does not know how to give people glad tidings of the spiritual world, reward, and the return, calling them toward it through knowledge, and who does not disclose the haqiqa only to one whom he approves after testing and examining him through many trials, is not fit to be a da'i.

His saying, "and a warner," means that one who does not know the spiritual world and does not know punishment cannot warn, caution, or frighten people away from punishment; how, then, could he properly be a da'i?

The same verse makes clear that the da'wa should occur only by the permission of one who has the authority to expand and restrict. A subordinate must neither advance nor delay anyone, neither impart nor receive, except by the command of his superior rank and by that superior's authorization. God Most High explicitly stipulated this in His phrase "by His permission." Whoever makes a display of knowledge and calls by means of it without possessing authorization is a caller of Satan. Every da'i who abandons the command or betrays it even in the smallest matter has departed from the authorization, broken the covenant, and is calling... ...without authorization. Such a person is a treacherous liar, and it is forbidden to receive from him or to give him anything of knowledge.

The same verse also makes clear that one from whom the light and radiance of knowledge do not shine in such a way that the mustajib can be guided by him and illuminated through his knowledge is not fit to be a da'i. It further makes clear that whoever does not know tawhid is not fit to be a da'i. If he associates anything with God and describes the Creator—Majestic and Exalted—with attributes of created beings, then he is calling to a created thing like himself rather than calling to God Most High. Likewise, whoever does not nurture the mustajibs but leaves them in the darknesses of ignorance is not fit for the da'wa.

God Most High says: "O you who believe, respond to God and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life" (Qur'an 8:24). This verse makes clear that one who is unable to give life to the mustajibs through knowledge and wisdom is not fit to be a da'i.

God Most High relates concerning Noah, peace be upon him: "My Lord, indeed I called my people night and day... Then I called them openly; then I proclaimed to them and spoke to them secretly" (71:5–9). This verse makes clear that he first called creation to the zahir and then called them to the batin in secret. Whoever does not properly understand both the zahir and the batin cannot properly call to either and is not fit to be a da'i.

God Most High says: "The Messenger calls you so that you may believe in your Lord, and He has already taken your covenant" (57:8). This makes clear that the da'wa is to faith in God and that the mithaq is taken from people upon this foundation. Whoever does not know tawhid—how can he take the covenant?

God Most High says: "To Him belongs the call of truth" (13:14). Truth is that which is balanced and straight, possessing no crookedness. Whoever exaggerates concerning the awliya' of God and departs from their sunna and from the path of the Imams of the da'wa does not possess a call of truth, and it is not lawful to receive from him.

God Most High says: "We made them Imams guiding by Our command, and We revealed to them the performance of good deeds, the establishment of prayer, and the giving of zakat, and they were worshippers of Us" (21:73). He thereby makes clear that they guide creation to the truth and call them to God Most High while themselves performing good works by the command of the One who holds authority over them.

Whoever calls people to God Most High and to the Imams, peace be upon them, must himself perform good deeds, establish prayer outwardly and inwardly, give zakat outwardly and inwardly by the command of the wali of his affair, be a worshipper, command good deeds, and himself perform them. Whoever is not a practitioner of knowledge, does not perform good deeds, does not uphold the da'wa, and does not pour forth knowledge upon those mustajibs worthy of it whom he has been ordered to teach is not fit to be a da'i.

God Most High says concerning the callers of falsehood: "Those whom you call upon apart from God will never create even a fly, though they gathered together for it; and if a fly should snatch something from them, they could not recover it from it. Weak are the seeker and the sought" (22:73). That is: those who call to falsehood and to Imams of error cannot create a living religious creature through knowledge even if they all gathered together. "If a fly should snatch something from them, they could not recover it from it" means that if even a weak mustajib breaks through their argument by means of a question, they are unable to answer his question with proof.

This verse therefore makes clear that one who, after receiving authorization, is unable to bring a mustajib to life from ignorance through true knowledge and tawhid is not fit to be a da'i.

God—exalted be His remembrance—says: "Who is better in speech than one who calls to God, acts righteously, and says: Indeed I am among the Muslims?" (41:33). This verse makes clear that in religion and in the world there is no station more beautiful or noble than that of one who calls to God. Yet it also makes clear that righteous action is a condition of the da'wa. If righteous action is absent, the person is not fit to be a da'i.

Likewise, if he does not disassociate himself from shirk, does not affirm God's unity, does not understand tawhid correctly, and likens God Most High to created beings, he is not fit to be a da'i.

Our master Amir al-Mu'minin—blessings of God be upon him and the Imams among his descendants—said: "The da'is of religion distinguish between doubt and certainty." The distinction between doubt and certainty is the distinction between truth and falsehood; it may also mean the distinction between the zahir and the batin. One who does not know truth and certainty—how can he distinguish doubt from certainty and truth from falsehood? The da'i must know both truth and falsehood so that he can distinguish between them. Otherwise he may judge falsehood to be truth and truth to be falsehood; people may accept this from him, and corruption will enter the da'wa.

God Most High has said: "Let there be among you a community calling to the good, commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong; those are the successful" (3:104). This verse contains a description of the Imams, peace be upon them, and makes clear that a da'i should conform to their sunna: he should call to good, command what is right, forbid what is wrong, act upon what they command him, and abstain from what they forbid him.

Al-Sadiq Ja'far b. Muhammad—blessings of God be upon him—said: "Be silent callers to us." He was asked: "O son of the Messenger of God, how can we call while remaining silent?" He replied: "Act according to what we have commanded you concerning obedience to God, and abstain from what we have forbidden you."

It is not permissible for a person to command what is right while not practicing it himself, lest he become like those of whom God Most High said: "Do you command people to righteousness while forgetting yourselves?" (2:44). The preceding verse also makes clear that a person who possesses such a quality is the opposite of the successful—that is, he is among the ruined.

The affair of the da'wa is difficult and demanding, and its conditions are many. Every quality that God Most High has stipulated in the Qur'an concerning the believer, and every quality that the Imams have stipulated in their books concerning what must be present in the believer, must be present in the da'i. Beyond this, the da'i requires additional virtues, and such virtues must be clearer and more firmly present in him.

A deficiency that may still be compatible with a person's basic faith may nevertheless be unacceptable in a da'i. Al-Sadiq Ja'far b. Muhammad—blessings of God be upon him—said: "Our knowledge is difficult and demanding. None can bear it except a sent prophet, an angel brought near, or a believer whose heart God Most High has tested for faith."

The "believer" here is the Imam and those who follow him among the da'is and believers who have been tested within the da'wa and have fulfilled its conditions. Testing is an established sunna concerning da'is, hujjas, Imams, awsiya', and prophets—peace be upon them all.

God Most High says: "He who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed" (67:2). He says: "When Abraham's Lord tested him with words and he fulfilled them, He said: I shall make you an Imam for mankind" (2:124). And He says: "Alif Lam Mim. Do people suppose that they will be left to say, 'We believe,' and will not be tested?" (29:1–2)—that is, that they will not be subjected to trial.

The conditions of the da'wa rest upon three things: knowledge, taqwa, and governance.

As for knowledge, it is divided into two parts: knowledge of the zahir and knowledge of the batin. Knowledge of the zahir is itself divided into five branches.

The first is knowledge of fiqh and legal judgments, by which the affairs of people are maintained and religion and worldly life are set right. It is a pillar of religion and the da'wa.

The second is knowledge of hadith, reports, transmitted traditions, and chains of transmission from the Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—and from the Imams, peace be upon them. Through this

branch religion and the shari'a endure by preservation of reports and traditions, and upon it the structure of fiqh is built.

The third is knowledge of the Qur'an, ta'wil and tafsir, and knowledge of the clear and ambiguous verses, the abrogating and abrogated, commands and prohibitions.

The fourth is knowledge of exhortation, reminding, and narratives... ...God Most High said to His Prophet—peace be upon him: "Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good exhortation" (16:125). Through exhortation hearts become tender, people desire the hereafter and religion, and they become detached from this world.

The fifth branch is knowledge of dialectical argument and theological discourse, by means of which they strive in religion and defeat the zanadiqa, atheists, philosophers, materialists, and people of false doctrines. Every one of these sciences possesses particular virtues, which must be discussed in its proper place, God willing.

The da'i needs all of these branches. He is asked concerning the fiqh of religion; if he does not know it well, how can he answer? If he does not understand the outward fiqh, how can he understand its ta'wil? How can he teach people religion and call them to it?

The da'i should know the reports and hadiths of the Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—and the reports of the Imams, peace be upon them, and the transmitted traditions from them, so that by these he can demonstrate the truth of what he says to the mustajibs and they will accept it from him.

He needs knowledge of the Qur'an so that he may cite it as evidence and answer whatever he is asked concerning its zahir and batin. He needs knowledge of exhortation, remembrance, and narratives so that he may admonish the mustajibs. God Most High says: "Remind, for reminding benefits the believers" (51:55); and: "You are only a reminder" (88:21); and: "Ask the people of remembrance if you do not know" (16:43).

The da'i also needs theological discourse so that he may break the arguments of opponents, debate them, and answer the words of an adversary by proof. God Most High says: "Dispute with them in the manner that is best" (16:125).

As for knowledge of the batin, it branches into many kinds. Among them is sensible knowledge, which is knowledge of the lower ranks, knowledge of the worlds of the shari'a, their ta'wil and the wisdom contained within them, and knowledge of everything connected with visible knowledge or with a perceivable individual.

The second is imaginal and reflective knowledge: knowledge of the higher ranks and numbers and knowledge of forms whose realities are neither visible nor sensible but are apprehended through imagination and thought.

Among them also is intellectual knowledge, which is knowledge of the realities of things, their causes, beginnings, and ends.

These are the three degrees. The first is like nursing for the infant: for the mustajib it is sensible knowledge in the process of teaching. The second is upbringing and training, the union of imaginal knowledge with rational knowledge. The third is like the union of intellect with the person until he becomes fully mature and the Pen runs for him, corresponding to a maturity that no longer changes or alters in that respect.

The sensible is what is perceived by the five senses. The imaginal is what is apprehended by reflection. The intelligible is the abstract reality. A human being apprehends something through the senses, raises it to thought and reflects upon it, then raises it to the intellect, which distinguishes truth from falsehood and knows its reality in the knowledge of religion.

They have said: sensible knowledge is knowledge of the shari'a; imaginal knowledge is knowledge of ta'wil; and intelligible knowledge is the bayan that does not change. Every one of these branches into many forms and many modes of ta'wil. The ta'wil of the shari'a is a sea that cannot be exhausted, whose end no one reaches. The depth of the science of the Qur'an cannot be known. Knowledge of the higher ranks and the spiritual world is reached only by the outstanding, pure, striving, intelligent person.

Knowledge of the horizons and the soul is the deep sea. It is the root from which every science is known, the balance and decisive standard to which every science is returned. Whatever agrees with it is manifest truth; whatever contradicts it is falsehood and fabricated speech.

The science of tawhid is the ultimate goal. It is the noblest of the sciences and the noblest of obligations; by it all worship and all sciences are accepted. Knowledge of the soul is the knowledge through which the human being is made responsible and by which he reaches knowledge of tawhid.

No one reaches these sciences until he has gathered a portion from every kind of knowledge: from the science of nature, its cause and the wisdom within it; from geometry and numbers; from philosophy; from the foundations of the schools and their disagreements. Then, when he reads a book or hears a discourse, he can recognize what agrees with truth and what contradicts it.

The intelligent person should reflect upon this. The trial in this time and place arises from the absence of discrimination between truth and falsehood. One must distinguish truth from falsehood and not judge truth to be falsehood or falsehood to be truth. Judgment made in ignorance is what leads people away from the way of God. For this reason God Most High said to His Messenger—peace be upon him: "Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge" (17:36).

If someone says: "The one who gathers all these sciences is the Imam," we answer: even if the da'i does not gather every branch to perfection, he must at least know something of the principles of every branch. When he is questioned about one of them, he returns the branch to its root, compares it with that root, and returns it to the root of religion. If it agrees with the root of religion and with the horizons and the soul, it stands; if it does not, the force of truth refutes it and its falsehood becomes manifest. Furthermore, if a question is asked in his gathering or some discourse occurs concerning one of these sciences, he should not be a stranger among the people, unable to understand what they are saying.

As for taqwa, it is a name that gathers together knowledge and action with correct belief. It gathers fulfillment of the conditions laid down in the Qur'an, doing what God has commanded, and refraining from what God has forbidden. This cannot be attained without knowledge. One who does not possess sound knowledge cannot free himself before God from shirk and anthropomorphic comparison. If a person commits shirk or likens God to created beings and then performs every act of worship, this is not taqwa and will not be accepted from him.

Taqwa is the gathering of every virtue and abstention from every vice. Therefore God Most High says: "Indeed the most noble of you before God is the most God-fearing of you" (49:13). He says: "The best provision is taqwa" (2:197). He says: "The garment of taqwa—that is better" (7:26). And He says: "Fear God, O people of understanding," and: "Whoever has taqwa of God, He will make for him a way out" (65:2).

As for governance (siyasa), it has three degrees: governance of the particular, governance of one's household and dependents, and governance of the general public.

First, the da'i needs governance of the particular, which is governance of his own soul. He must set himself right, govern and overcome his soul, prevent it from every vice and bad character, keep it from blameworthy desires and all forbidden things, and compel it to acquire virtues and to fulfill the obligatory acts and the sunan.

When his soul does wrong, he must punish it with blame, regret, reproach, and repentance. When it does well, he rewards it with joy and praise, urges it toward further good action and acquisition of knowledge, so that the mustajib may look at him, take from his character, and imitate his action and speech.

Our master al-Sadiq Ja'far b. Muhammad—blessings of God be upon him—said: "Be silent callers to us." They asked: "How can we call while we remain silent?" He replied: "Act according to what we commanded you regarding obedience to God Most High and abstain from what we forbade you regarding disobedience to Him."

Whoever succeeds in governing his own soul becomes sound and capable of governing others. It has been said: "Set yourself right and the people will follow you." God Most High says: "O you who believe, take care of yourselves; one who goes astray cannot harm you when you are rightly guided" (5:105).

The governance of one's household and dependents consists in a man's governing the people of his house and those around him: disciplining them, teaching them, compelling them to acquire virtues, preventing them from vices, rewarding whoever among them does well, and punishing whoever does badly.

God Most High says: "O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire" (66:6). The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: "A man continues to bequeath knowledge and proper discipline to the people of his house until he enters the Garden and brings them all into it with him, without losing from among them a child or an adult, a servant or a neighbor."

God says: "Command your family to prayer and persevere in it" (20:132). And He says: "He used to command his family to prayer and zakat and was pleasing to his Lord" (19:55).

Whoever fulfills governance of himself and governance of his household is fit to possess governance over the rest of creation in religion. Whoever does not govern himself and his household is not fit to be a da'i.

Governance of the general public consists in the governor's undertaking the management of those under his authority with regard to the soundness of both their livelihood and their return, disciplining them with religious and communal discipline, preventing them from vices and forbidden things, and compelling them toward... ...the virtues, reward those among them who do well, punish those who do badly, and undertake the sound ordering of their religion. One who does not know how to govern both the particular and the general is not fit for the da'wa.

The da'i needs to discipline the one beneath him in knowledge, test and examine him, govern his affairs, punish or reward him, each according to his station. Likewise the da'i disciplines the ma'dhun and urges him toward attaining the rank above him. He disciplines the believer, raises him through knowledge and proper conduct, and elevates him toward the rank of authorization. Likewise he nurtures the mustajib, manages his affairs, and orders his training according to his station, the measure of his understanding, and his strength.

He likewise manages the affairs of the people of the zahir: their governance, proper companionship, mukasara, debate, and disputation in the best manner. The same applies to the common and the elite and to the people under protection. He must offer each one his sincere counsel and good cheer and preserve the welfare of each according to truth, justice, and equity. Whoever lacks these three forms of governance is not fit to be a da'i.

The Virtues of the Da'i

After stating the conditions of the da'wa in general terms, we shall explain them in detail and mention some of the defects that occur within the da'wa when these conditions are absent from the da'i.

We say: as we have stated, the da'wa gathers within itself all the ranks of religion and is the highest of them, with all the others beneath it. Likewise the da'i needs to gather within himself all the virtues that are dispersed among other people.

He needs the virtue of the jurists, for he is a jurist in both zahir and batin.

He must possess the virtues of judges, for he judges concerning both zahir and batin. He therefore needs patience, knowledge, deliberation, judgment, discernment, intelligence, chastity, manliness, and the other conditions required of judges.

He should possess the conditions and virtues of those who exercise command: courage, generosity, management, judgment, governance, and discipline, for he is the commander over religion and its people.

He should gather the conditions of justice, for he is the witness over religion and its people.

He should possess the conditions of the imam of prayer, for he is the imam in the true prayer and the imam of those beneath him.

He should possess the conditions of the muezzins, for he is in truth the muezzin and has the task of calling people to prayer and to true success.

He should possess the conditions of trustees and reliable guardians, for he is entrusted with the religion of God, His treasuries, and the souls of those who follow him.

He should gather the conditions of the mujahids, for he is the one who strives in the way of God.

He should possess the conditions of physicians: their compassion and good management of the sick, for he is the physician of spirits.

He should possess the conditions of astrologers, for he is the astrologer of religion, its knower, and the geometer of intellects. God Most High says: "He looked a look at the stars and said: Indeed I am sick" (37:88–89).

He should possess knowledge of harmonious composition and proportion among numbers, for he composes rational melodies and intellectual words.

He should possess the conditions of farmers and cultivators, their knowledge of gardens, the times of sowing, and irrigation. He tills the cultivation of religion, cultivates the gardens in truth, and digs channels so that the true water—that is, knowledge—may flow through them by means of preparatory disciplines and exercises. God Most High says: "Whoever desires the harvest of the hereafter, We increase for him in his harvest" (42:20).

He should possess the conditions of shepherds in guarding, watering, and pasturing the flock, for he is the true shepherd. Moses, peace be upon him, said: "I beat down leaves with it for my sheep" (20:18). The Prophet—peace be upon him—said: "Every one of you is a shepherd, and every one of you is responsible for his flock."

The da'i should understand buying and selling and the conditions of commerce, for he is the true merchant. God Most High says: "Shall I direct you to a trade that will save you from a painful punishment? You believe in God and His Messenger..." (61:10–11).

The da'i should gather the conditions of craftsmen and artisans, for he is the one who prepares clothing for people so that they may cover their nakedness. He is the fuller who washes their garments clean of filth. God Most High says: "The garment of taqwa—that is better" (7:26). God said to David: "Make coats of mail and measure well the links" (34:11). And God says: "Garments that protect you from heat and garments that protect you in your warfare" (16:81). It is said that the disciples of Jesus, peace be upon him, were fullers.

The da'i should possess the conditions of sailors, for he is the sailor of the true ship.

He should possess the conditions of guides who lead people through deserts and difficult wildernesses in the dark night, for he is the guide who directs toward the straight path and upright road.

If these conditions that we have mentioned do not exist truly in the da'i, yet he is called "da'i," then the name is without reality. It neither enriches nor benefits him. Rather, it becomes a calamity upon him and he bears sin and burden because of it.

God Most High says: "We made you peoples and tribes so that you might know one another" (49:13), making clear that such names exist for recognition. Then He says: "Indeed the most noble of you before God is the most God-fearing of you," so that people will not be deceived by names and titles. Honor lies in taqwa and knowledge.

If the name "da'i" is not accompanied by these conditions, there is no honor, abundance, or glory in it—neither among rational people, nor among people of religion, nor before God. Rather, it brings loss, blame, and ridicule.

Many names are used for their opposites, as is well known among people, without the name thereby making the thing truly what it says. The desert called mafaza ("place of salvation") is in reality a place of destruction. One bitten by a snake may be called salim ("safe"). A blind man may be called Basir ("seeing"), a black man Kafur ("camphor-white"), and Pharaoh called himself a lord though the name did not benefit him. The unbelieving Arabs called our Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—a magician and a madman, yet this harmed him in no way. Iblis was numbered among the angels and called an angel, yet when he disobeyed, the name did not benefit him.

The Conditions of the Da'wa

We now return to the conditions of the da'wa and their explanation.

The da'i should firmly believe in the religion to which he calls, with the strength of certainty and sincerity unmingled with anything else. He must have firm conviction concerning the Imam to whom he calls and

concerning the Messenger who is the root of the religion, from whom the entire da'wa comes, to whom it returns, and through whom it exists. He must be a true upholder of tawhid.

A person who lacks sound belief, even if he is learned and devout and outwardly and inwardly performs deeds through hypocrisy and display, will eventually reveal his hypocrisy. His followers will not benefit from his knowledge or his da'wa. No blessing will be in him, no mustajib or believer will be formed through his hands, and the da'wa will never become upright through him.

He must possess taqwa. Taqwa cannot exist except through knowledge of zahir and batin. The first aspect of taqwa is to fear God—Majestic and Exalted—and associate nothing with Him, never describe Him with any attribute of created beings, and exercise taqwa concerning all ranks by neither raising one above his station nor lowering one beneath his station. He must avoid all forbidden things, guard against abandoning any obligation, and never abandon commanding and forbidding.

The da'i must be learned in zahir and batin, in the revealed and the rational sciences. God Most High says: "Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only those possessed of understanding take heed..." ...understanding" (39:9). God Most High says: "Rather, it is clear signs in the breasts of those who have been given knowledge" (29:49). And He says: "Is one who guides to the truth more worthy of being followed, or one who cannot find guidance unless he himself is guided? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?" (10:35).

The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: "There are four things for which, even if riding animals were saddled and ridden until they became emaciated, that would be little: a servant should hope in none but his Lord; fear nothing but his own sin; the ignorant should not be ashamed to learn; and the learned, when asked about what he does not know, should say: I do not know."

Our master Amir al-Mu'minin—blessings of God be upon him—said: "Half of knowledge, for the one who does not know, is to say: God knows best. If a young man from among our Shi'a were brought to me without having gained understanding of religion, I would discipline him severely."

God—blessed and exalted—is says: "Why should not a group from every party among them go forth so that they may gain understanding in religion and warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware?" (9:122).

If the da'i is not learned in these sciences, people will ask him and he will be unable to answer, or he will debate opponents and they will defeat his arguments. This produces immense disorder, alienation, scandal, and harm to the madhhab. What befell Jonah when the fish swallowed him is an image of the opponent who defeated him in argument: he was overwhelmed and cast down through that defeat. The fish's swallowing of him represents what befell him through the opponent's victory and the weakness that consequently fell upon religion and its people.

The da'i should be scrupulous and chaste. God Most High says: "To Him ascends good speech, and righteous action raises it" (35:10). And He says: "Those who repent, those who worship, those who praise, those who journey, those who bow, those who prostrate, those who command what is right and forbid what is wrong, and those who preserve the limits of God—give glad tidings to the believers" (9:112). If these are the ones to whom glad tidings are given, then those who are their opposites are the ruined.

The da'i should be compassionate toward the believers, tender and merciful to them. God Most High says: "We sent you only as a mercy to the worlds" (21:107). And He says: "Merciful among themselves; you see them bowing and prostrating, seeking bounty from God and good pleasure" (48:29).

The da'i should imitate God Most High in His mercy toward His servants, and the Messenger and the Imams, peace be upon them, in their mercy, compassion, and tenderness toward the community despite the community's disobedience, bad actions, and injuries. God Most High says: "If God were to take people to task for what they have earned, He would not leave upon its back a single creature" (35:45). And He said, Mighty and Majestic, to His Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family: "Take to forgiveness, command what is recognized as good, and turn away from the ignorant" (7:199).

The da'i should be humble and not behave arrogantly toward the believers. God Most High says: "That abode of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltation upon the earth or corruption; and the outcome belongs to the God-fearing" (28:83).

Al-Sadiq Ja'far b. Muhammad—blessings of God be upon him—said: "Do not be domineering scholars, lest your falsehood carry away your truth." The Prophet—blessings be upon him—said: "Pride is God's cloak; whoever contends with Him over His cloak, He breaks him."

The da'i should be rational, complete in intellect together with knowledge. Knowledge without intellect is a calamity. God Most High says: "None understands them except those who possess knowledge" (29:43). He says: "Only those possessed of understanding take heed" (13:19). And He says: "Eat and pasture your cattle; surely in that are signs for those possessed of intelligence" (20:54).

The da'i should be of respectable lineage among his people, for nobility of lineage is impressive in the eyes of people. If a da'i is from a despised lineage, many may consider it beneath them to sit before him, learn from him, and humble themselves to him. I have seen many people refrain from entering the religion because of the low social origin of a da'i, his family background, or his association with a base occupation or humble craft. For this reason, even in worldly leadership people choose those of lineage and nobility, for lineage possesses a powerful awe in people's hearts.

The da'i should be generous and not miserly. Miserliness is baseness, and baseness is blameworthy. God Most High says of "those who are miserly and command people to miserliness" (4:37; cf. 57:24), and He says: "Those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly, but take a position between the two" (25:67).

If the da'i is miserly, the mustajib imitates him and learns miserliness from him and is destroyed. The da'wa requires expenditure upon those who deserve it by right, and sometimes even upon those who do not yet deserve it so as to win their hearts. A situation may arise in which something must be spent immediately; if the da'i fails to spend it, delays, and acts miserly, the believers of an entire jazira may perish and immense disorder may result.

The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: "God never fashioned a wali except upon generosity." He also said: "Generosity is a tree whose root is in the Garden. Whoever takes hold of one of its branches is drawn by it into the Garden. Miserliness is a tree whose root is in the Fire; whoever takes hold of one of its branches is drawn by it into the Fire." It has been said: "A generous ignorant man is better than a miserly scholar." And it has been said that generosity is praised by everyone and in every religious community.

The da'i should be truthful in speech. If he is not truthful, how can people believe what he says? How can they accept his words or rely upon him? God Most High says: "Fear God and be with the truthful" (9:119), meaning: be among the truthful and follow the truthful, who are the Imams, peace be upon them.

The da'i should possess muru'a—upright manly dignity—for muru'a is part of faith. If the da'i abandons his muru'a, his dignity disappears from the eyes of the mustajibs and believers and they begin to look upon him with contempt. The da'i should possess modesty, for "modesty is part of faith." Modesty prevents him from many things that would disgrace the da'wa. It also moves him to fulfill people's needs, to bear with them, and to treat them with gentleness.

The da'i should possess sound judgment and good management, for the affair of the da'wa cannot be completed through bad management. If an error occurs in his management of an affair of the da'wa, it may corrupt the da'wa and destroy the believers, and there may be no way whatsoever to repair it. It has been said: four qualities rise to four stations—intellect to leadership, sound judgment to governance, knowledge to precedence, and forbearance to dignity.

The da'i should fulfill what he says, for religion is fulfillment of covenant and word. If people see in him little fidelity and treachery, believers may imitate him and religion will be corrupted. God Most High praised fulfillment when He said: "And Abraham, who fulfilled" (53:37), and He said concerning Ishmael, peace be upon him: "Indeed he was true to his promise, and he was a messenger and prophet" (19:54).

The da'i should carefully conceal the secret. The affair of religion is founded upon concealment of the secret and preservation of the secrets of religion from those who do not deserve them. If he neglects the secret, he

neglects religion. At times the disclosure of a single secret of religion can cause the destruction of a people and the ruin of an entire jazira.

The da'i should be compassionate and merciful toward the believers, bear no rancor against them, and not occupy himself with retaliation, partisan zeal, quarrelling, or conflict. The mustajib is deficient in knowledge and will inevitably make slips and errors in intention and then repent. If the da'i does not pardon him and treat him gently, the mustajib may despair of religion.

God Most High says: "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of God. Indeed God forgives all sins; indeed He is the All-Forgiving, the Merciful" (39:53). And God Most High said to Muhammad, His Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family: "Take to forgiveness, command what is recognized as good, and turn away from the ignorant" (7:199). And He says: "Lower your wing to those among the believers who follow you" (26:215).

The da'i should have pleasant speech and sweet expression and explanation, so that the souls of the mustajibs long to hear his words and do not become weary, alienated, or bored by his speech. God Most High says: "A good word is like a good tree" (14:24). And He says: "To Him ascends good speech, and righteous action raises it" (35:10). The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: "Indeed, some eloquence is magic."

The da'i should be patient and forbearing. Many kinds of people, with different levels of intellect, come to him with needs and questions. If he becomes irritated, reckless, and unable to restrain himself, people will flee from him. God Most High says: "Had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you" (3:159). He says: "Be patient, and your patience is only through God" (16:127). And He says: "Be patient as those messengers of firm resolve were patient" (46:35).

No patience was greater than that of the prophets, awsiya', and Imams in bearing the bad character and disobedience of the community. They endured and bore the people's offenses, looking upon sinners with the eye of mercy and compassion until they rescued them from the Fire.

The da'i should be a capable governor, for governance is the foundation of leadership in religion and in the world. Whoever does not know governance cannot complete leadership. It has been said: whoever seeks leadership must endure the bitterness of governance. The da'i needs to govern individuals through communal and religious governance and to lead souls through knowledge until the da'wa is completed for him.

The da'i should possess discipline of the soul together with knowledge, for knowledge without disciplined character has no beauty, no acceptance, and gives its possessor no dignity; nor does he benefit from his knowledge.

The da'i should possess great aspiration and attach himself to great affairs in religion and the world, for God Most High opens lands for the Imams of His religion in every age through the hands of their da'is and hujjas.

The da'i should have excellent companionship and character. God Most High says: "Live with them honorably" (4:19), and: "Indeed you are upon a tremendous character" (68:4). Al-Sadiq Ja'far b. Muhammad—blessings of God be upon him—said: "Associate with people according to their character, and do not call them pigs." He also said: "Make us beloved to people and do not make us hated by them."

The da'i should know the measures and capacities of people. When he looks at them and hears their words, he should know whether a person is fit for religion or not, whether his intention is religion or something else, and whether he is able to receive knowledge or not.

He should know how to test a person and investigate his condition until his proper station becomes clear to him.

He should know the siras of the Imams, peace be upon them, and the ordering of the da'wa, so that he can imitate them, their conduct, and their sunna.

If the da'i is able to travel and observe the jaziras, he should know the dispositions of the people of the various jaziras and the kind of knowledge toward which they incline and in which they take interest, so that he can choose for them someone capable of debating them and conducting mukasara with them.

The da'i should know the rights of those who migrate to him and recognize what they have endured of hardship and trial and their abandonment of family, homeland, and wealth. He should know the rights of messengers and visitors and the fear and hardship they suffer on the roads. Every such person is honored and respected in his own land and has undertaken his journey, risked his life and wealth, and endured hardship only for the sake of religion.

The da'i therefore must not belittle them, look upon them with contempt, or despise their clothing and outward condition. He must not look down on them from a sense of superiority based on his own status, wealth, or comfort. He should know that the hearts of kings, princes, commanders, leaders, and believers are won and possessed by kindness shown to their messengers.

Every person sends on a mission someone who holds a station with him, whom he trusts and selects for qualities known to him even if the recipient does not know the messenger. The da'i should understand that kindness shown to messengers becomes a source of pride and joy to the one who sent them and is taken as evidence of the value placed upon his messenger and letters. People often rely more upon the messenger's oral statement than upon the written letters.

The alienation of many jaziras, princes, da'is, and leaders from religion and the da'wa has arisen because intermediaries treated their messengers with carelessness and contempt. This is a matter to which the da'i must devote serious effort and careful attention, without becoming weary or negligent. Whatever is spent in such a cause is not lost.

The da'i should send to the jaziras da'is who know the language of the people of each jazira, as God Most High says: "We sent no messenger except in the language of his people, so that he might make things clear to them" (14:4)—that is, he makes the truth clear to them in their own language and through concepts closest to their understanding.

For this reason God Most High made the miracle of every prophet belong to the kind of knowledge or eloquence claimed by his community. Because the people of Abraham, peace be upon him, worshipped fire, his miracle was the cooling of the fire. Because the people of Moses, peace be upon him, claimed mastery of magic, his miracle was the staff. Because the people of Jesus, peace be upon him, claimed mastery of medicine, his miracle was what rendered them helpless: curing the blind and leper and reviving the dead. Because the Arabs took pride in eloquence and courage, the miracle of the Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—was the Qur'an and the sword of his wasi, peace be upon them both, until through them they were silenced, broken, defeated, and destroyed by God Most High.

Likewise the da'i of every jazira should know the schools, sciences, dispositions, inclinations, and intellectual capacities of its people so that he can debate them, conduct mukasara with them, and cause them to accept knowledge from him.

The da'i should know the ranks and stations of the people of knowledge, honor and respect them, and not look at their poverty or lack of outward adornment. The souls of learned people are great and proud and do not easily bear humiliation or contempt. Their submission is difficult and the harm they may inflict is subtle. They seize opportunities and scrutinize a person's speech for a slip of the tongue, harshness, or something capable of several interpretations, then expose his flaw and destroy his reputation. The honor of religion lies in honoring the people of knowledge. Whoever honors them honors religion, while whoever humiliates them humiliates himself... ...If people see the people of knowledge honored, they all become desirous of knowledge and learn. The nobility of knowledge itself then refuses to let a person seek it except sincerely for God.

The da'i should love knowledge and its people. People infer from his love of the people of knowledge that he himself belongs among them, is learned, and truly believes what he says concerning knowledge; they will therefore accept from him.

Most of the da'i's sitting should be with the people of knowledge. If he is learned, he increases their knowledge and they learn from him. If he is not learned, they give him knowledge. If he makes an error in some matter of knowledge, they correct him before the mistake reaches opponents, who would otherwise reproach him for it and use it as a proof against him.

By sitting with learned people he acquires discussions and questions that require reflection and investigation into their meanings, and this compels him to strive in thought and learning. God Most High says: "God will raise those among you who believe and those who have been given knowledge by degrees" (58:11).

This address applies from the rank of the mukasir up to the Bab, because every one of them is a da'i to those beneath him. He is a da'i potentially, and the purpose is that he become so actually. God Most High says: "Only the learned among His servants truly fear God" (35:28).

The da'i should honor the ascetics and worshippers among the people of religion and bring them near in station, so that people become desirous of worship, knowledge, and asceticism.

The da'i should distance people of corruption after first exhorting and advising them so that they may repent. He should not sit frequently with them or love them, for whoever loves a people is one of them, and a man is measured by his companion. God Most High says: "Whoever turns away from the remembrance of the All-Merciful, We assign to him a Satan who becomes his companion" (43:36).

By distancing and condemning people of corruption, people become averse to corruption and do not desire it; he should restrain such people with rebuke and prevention.

The da'i should not be covetous. The root of every calamity is greed. It is related that our master Amir al-Mu'minin—blessings of God be upon him—was asked: "What is religion?" He said: "Scrupulousness." He was asked: "What corrupts it?" He replied: "Greed."

Greed may cause a da'i who lacks scrupulousness to take bribes and illicit payments in religion. The first consequence is that he breaks the covenant, because the covenant was taken from him that he would not betray the Imam of his age in wealth or religion. Whoever does that has betrayed; whoever breaks the covenant has departed from religion and is removed from the walaya of the da'wa. Any covenant he takes from another person after that, or any intimate initiation he performs, is like illicit intercourse and fornication and contains no blessing, because one who acts for something other than God has fallen and become forbidden.

The da'i should not love worldly leadership. Such love causes him to lie, either while seeking leadership by praising himself, or after reaching it out of fear that his leadership might be lost. It may cause him to disparage one of his peers whom he sees as qualified for the same leadership, in order to prevent that person from attaining it. It causes him to prefer himself over his peers, to lie, and to pursue their faults.

All of this is falsehood, and falsehood is the root of all blameworthy traits. Falsehood gives birth to slanderous tale-bearing; tale-bearing gives rise to hatred, severing relations, rancor, quarrelling, enmity, warfare, and conflict. In all of this lies departure from religion and from the covenant.

The da'i should not be voracious or excessively driven by desire. Voracity and excessive desire incline him toward wastefulness, squandering the soul's share and powers, and they urge him toward miserliness and love of wealth. They lead him to greed; greed leads him to betrayal. In all of this lies departure from religion and the covenant and abandonment of muru'a.

The da'i should not accuse the believers or think badly of them. Suspicion and lack of trust in people arise from baseness and lowness of soul. Lowness of soul gives rise to inclination toward contemptible things, and that is departure from every virtue and from religion.

The da'i should not joke excessively. Joking removes dignity and breeds hostility and rancor in the heart. It has been said: joking is the prelude to evil. If the joking is with someone beneath him, it causes excessive familiarity, removes awe, and emboldens the subordinate against him, until the matter ends in hostility. If it is with someone above him, it may produce resentment toward the superior and lead to hostility between them.

The da'i should not be obscene or speak indecently, for this is falsehood, slander, and sin, and it causes loss of dignity and awe and falling in station. It has been said that any leader given to excessive foolishness and frivolity is attributed to deficiency of intellect and knowledge.

The da'i should possess dignity, awe, and an appearance considered respectable among his people. His manners should be good, and he should have an imposing presence and appearance so that one who sees him does not

despise him. Beauty and appearance leave an impression upon hearts and establish authority and awe in a way that other things do not. For this reason God Most High said: "He increased him abundantly in knowledge and body" (2:247).

Likewise the da'i should choose among mustajibs one whose form is sound and who is free of extremism and obvious defects, for bodily balance can indicate balance of temperament, and balance of temperament can indicate good conduct, goodness, receptivity, faithfulness, and abundance of virtues.

Just as he should select one whose bodily form and constitution are sound, so too he must select people according to character, speech, and religious affiliation. God Most High likewise commanded that the animal chosen for sacrificial offering be sound and free from defects, as an indication of how the mustajib should be selected inwardly.

The Messenger of God—blessings of God be upon him—prohibited sacrificing an animal whose horn is entirely broken; he prohibited the one with a split horn; and commanded that the eyes and ears be carefully examined so that the animal not be one-eyed, diseased, mutilated, obviously lame, emaciated, perforated-eared, marked in front, or marked behind. The ta'wil of all these defects concerns the mustajib: he should not possess corresponding defects in religion, character, habits, or be someone already branded by false doctrines.

The da'i should know the defects of mustajibs and should not take the covenant from a person who possesses such qualities when he sees in him the equivalents of the defects we have mentioned. Much corruption entered religion because da'is failed to investigate carefully and failed to distinguish sound mustajibs from defective ones.

The da'i himself should be free of these defects, for people cannot be set right through his hands unless he first sets himself right. Thus God Most High says: "Take care of yourselves; one who goes astray cannot harm you when you are rightly guided" (5:105). That is: concern yourselves with setting yourselves right. If you set yourselves right and a mustajib from whom you took the covenant later becomes corrupt without betrayal on your part, his deviation and corruption will not harm you. But if you have not set yourselves right and the mustajib is corrupted through your corruption, the burden lies upon you, for you are the ones who corrupted him.

When the da'i selects a mustajib and finds him sound and free of defects, his intention in taking the covenant from him must be sincerely for God Most High and for His wali—peace be upon him—seeking nothing besides God, Mighty and Majestic: no greed, status, gratitude, patronage, or intercession. His attention to the mustajib must not be because of the person's wealth or worldly standing, but solely for religion.

The da'i should know the mustajib's purpose and investigate his intention and reason for entering religion. If his purpose is something other than God, he should not take a covenant from him. If his purpose is God, Mighty and Majestic, and religion, then the da'i should first perform mukasara with him, invalidate the falsehood he previously held, and break his former belief until no argument remains to him.

God Most High says: "When you meet those who disbelieve, strike the necks until, when you have thoroughly subdued them, bind them firmly; thereafter either release them by grace or ransom until war lays down its burdens" (47:4). The da'i should quench him with argument, just as a sacrificial animal is not slaughtered until water has first been offered to it.

Then, after breaking his old position and wishing to take the covenant from him, the sunna is that the mustajib first fast for three days. Both the da'i and the mustajib should be in a state of purity, and each should perform two rak'as of prayer so that the act may be more purified. Then the da'i begins with praise and glorification of God Most High and blessings upon His Messenger and upon the Imams... ...the pure ones. He then takes from him the covenant of God, His angels and messengers, the covenant of the awsiya' and the pure Imams, and the covenant and bay'a of the Imam of his age. He binds him to believe in him, to uphold the zahir and the batin, to aid the Imam and his da'wa with his wealth and his soul, to conceal the secrets entrusted to him, not to betray any of the brethren, and to take as friends those whom the Imams take as friends and as enemies those whom they take as enemies. He binds him to sincere counsel toward God, His Messenger, His wali, and the believers. If he violates anything of this covenant knowingly and deliberately, then the consequences stipulated in the covenant fall upon him.

After the covenant has been taken, the da'i should teach the mustajib gradually and in proper order. He begins with tawhid, then obedience to God, His Messenger, the Imam, and the ranks of the da'wa. He confirms these matters for him through the signs in the horizons and in themselves, as God Most High says: "We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth" (41:53), and: "And in yourselves; will you not then see?" (51:21).

The da'i should not withhold from the mustajib knowledge to which he has become entitled, nor should he cast upon him knowledge above his capacity. Knowledge is like food: each body takes what suits it, and too much of what it cannot bear harms it. The da'i must therefore give each person according to his rank, understanding, and preparedness.

As the Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: "I was commanded to speak to people according to the measure of their intellects." If the da'i answers beneath the questioner's understanding and station, the man will not be satisfied or benefit; if he answers above his station, he will be unable to bear it and may be corrupted.

When a mustajib speaks, the da'i can judge the measure of his knowledge from his question and can discern whether the question is truly his own or one taken from another person or from a book. Not every question should receive the same answer. If the questioner possesses a foundation for what he asks, he should be answered according to what he deserves and can bear. If he has no foundation for it, the answer should be given gently and in a way appropriate to him. The da'i should also discern whether his purpose is learning or contentiousness.

It is not permitted simply to turn away a questioner. He should be answered according to his entitlement. God Most High says: "As for the petitioner, do not rebuke him" (93:10). The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: "Do not turn away the petitioner even if he comes on horseback," and: "Give to the petitioner even if only half a date." The "one on horseback" signifies the questioner among the ranks of the hujjas and da'is: do not turn him away, but answer him according to his knowledge and station. "Half a date" signifies the half belonging to the zahir, namely the batin.

The da'i should not be conceited or boastful. Luqman said to his son: "Do not walk exultantly upon the earth; indeed God does not love every conceited boaster" (31:18).

The da'i should set aside a particular time for the advanced believers, during which they may receive instruction from him and ask him questions fitting their ranks and what lies within their souls, apart from the general body of mustajibs. God, Mighty and Majestic, tells of a mustajib who was in the assembly of Solomon—peace be upon him—when questions were being discussed that did not belong to the rank of the other mustajibs but were above them. He therefore said to the other mustajibs, in effect: return to our da'is and to our own ranks lest our beliefs be corrupted by what these people discuss above our stations. Solomon approved of this, and God Most High related it: "An ant said: O ants, enter your dwellings lest Solomon and his hosts crush you while they are unaware" (27:18).

Likewise He says: "When there were displayed before him in the evening the standing, swift horses" (38:31), meaning the hujjas and da'is and their questions at a special time apart from the rest of the people. And in His saying, "the birds in ranks," each of the da'is, ma'dhuns, and believers stands in his own rank without one becoming confused with another.

The da'i should observe the ma'dhuns and believers. If he sees among them one who is constant in learning, practices the shari'a, readily accepts ta'wil, is perceptive and understanding, and is chaste, he should test and examine him. He should subject him to different kinds of trials in religion and worldly matters and learn his circumstances without the man realizing that he is being examined.

If the da'i finds him sound in what he loves and approves, he should raise him to the rank of the da'is. At first he should test him by having him instruct mustajibs in his presence. If he fulfills this well, the da'i should increase his rank and place him over a locality near himself, while continuing to hear and inquire about his conduct and affairs. Then he should raise him degree by degree until he is fit for a district or a jazira.

If he becomes complete in everything required of him, the da'i should increase his testing and examination until his outward and inward condition, his private and public conduct, become clear to him. If his excellence and desire increase and he becomes complete in all respects, the da'i may judge him fit to be his successor and replacement. This is the believer whom one cannot be excused from establishing, concerning whom our master al-Mu'izz—blessings of God be upon him—said: "A believer will not truly be a believer until he establishes a believer like himself."

It is not permitted for a da'i to risk entrusting the affair of the da'wa to one whom he has not tried and examined and whose right guidance has not become clear, unless that person has already served under someone before him, his soundness has become evident, and he is approved by everyone. Only then may he rely upon him.

If some people declare a man upright while others impugn him, the da'i should not employ him merely because of the commendation. A substantiated criticism takes precedence over commendation, because the person who testified that he was satisfactory may have seen only what was good, whereas another may have seen what was not good. If a thousand men testified to one man's righteousness while two testified to some corruption in him, or four to another fault, the testimony concerning corruption must be taken seriously.

The impugning of da'is, judges, and trustees is not identical with testimony in a legal hadd case. A criticism of character may be established through hearing, widespread report, and the statements of trustworthy persons even when the formal conditions of courtroom testimony are absent; and a person may be impugned for conduct that does not itself incur a hadd punishment.

It has been said: test even what appears sound, for it may break quickly. A person whom people unanimously regard as trustworthy and upright may, when you test him, prove treacherous. How much more so one already broken and corrupt against whom people have testified to corruption.

If two believing men testify that a person is unfit for the da'wa, it is not permitted for the da'i to employ him in it and thereby hazard the souls and property of the believers. Error and betrayal in this matter are not like betrayal concerning ordinary wealth, for through such a mistake the people of entire jaziras may be destroyed because of the corruption of their da'is. The destruction of the people of the jaziras comes from the corruption and bad administration of the da'is, the abundance of their greed, the weakness of their scrupulousness, and the deficiency of their knowledge. Therefore, in proportion to the gravity and difficulty of the risk involved, the da'i must exercise the greatest care and effort in testing anyone appointed as a da'i, especially in jaziras under the rule of oppressive sultans.

The da'i must not entrust the da'wa to someone merely to reward past service, discharge an obligation, satisfy affection or kinship, honor companionship or intercession, show favor, obtain a benefit, avert harm, avoid embarrassment, preserve social standing, or act from fear. All of these motives lie outside religion, justice, trustworthiness, and sincere counsel toward God Most High and the Messenger—peace be upon him. Much of the corruption that has entered religion has entered through precisely these causes.

It is related that the Byzantine emperor wrote to Nushirwan asking: "By what means have your affairs been made so orderly that no defect is seen in them?" He replied: "Because I appoint on the basis of competence, not favoritism; I punish for the offense, not from anger; I give according to entitlement, not affection; and I do not fail in either promise or threat." The whole governance of religion and worldly affairs is contained within these words. If they took them from the awliya' of God in their own age, they are all the more fitting. The da'wa should therefore be entrusted on the basis of competence, not favoritism.

The da'i should not seek to remove a da'i who is upright in the da'wa merely because something about him personally angers him or because that da'i has served him insufficiently. He should remove him only for betrayal in religion. If he sees a person possessing competence and religion, he should employ him even if he does not love him and even if there is estrangement between them. If he abandons what is right and turns away from it for personal reasons, he has acted unjustly, transgressed, and broken his covenant.

If the da'i sees betrayal or an intentional error in a believer or ma'dhun, he should advise him. If he does not accept advice and what he does causes corruption to return upon religion and the da'wa and makes people turn away, the da'i should rebuke and exhort him. If he still does not return, his deed should be made known; if he

returns, then the da'i may refrain from removing and replacing him. If the matter is a sin between the person and God Most High that does not harm the da'wa, the da'i should conceal it. But if it harms the da'wa, he should expose it so that others take warning and refrain from similar conduct. Thus he distinguishes the corrupter from the reformer.

If uprightness, trustworthiness, chastity, and knowledge become manifest in a believer or ma'dhun, the da'i should raise his station, praise him, rely upon him more, and promote him above his former rank. This will encourage him to greater effort and will cause others who observe him to desire the same. If no distinction is made between the benefactor and the wrongdoer, while the people of wrongdoing are left with less effort, more ease, and greater advantage, there will be no restraint from corruption and no desire for uprightness. That itself corrupts the people and encourages disobedience.

The da'i should be angry with no one except for the sake of God Most High, and his sincere friendship with anyone should likewise be only for God, Mighty and Majestic. God says: "You will not find a people who believe in God and the Last Day loving those who oppose God and His Messenger, even though they be..." (58:22). The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him—said: "A person will be gathered with the one whom he loves."

The da'i's door should be open to people; he should not be excessively inaccessible. Both those who agree and those who disagree should be able to approach him. If they cannot reach him, they become estranged and alienated, and death may overtake some of them while they remain in error.

His doorkeeper should be a trustworthy and reliable person from among the people of religion who loves and honors the believers. At the proper time of admission, he should allow them to enter with good grace. When it is not the proper time, he should send them away with kind words and inform his master of their presence when he reaches him. Since the children and women of people may sometimes enter the da'i's house, such a doorkeeper cannot be someone untrustworthy.

The chamberlain should be intelligent, pleasant in speech, cheerful of face, chaste, and free from greed. The chamberlain of a leader is his deputy. It has been said: a man's chamberlain is evidence of his governance, and the rectitude of a leader's household indicates the rectitude of the leader. Nothing is more harmful to a leader than the corruption of his entourage, his excessive attachment to them and acceptance from them, and especially partiality toward relatives and acceptance of their claims. This is even more important for the da'i.

The da'i's secretary should be a believing, religious, and chaste person, for he becomes acquainted with his secrets and the secrets of religion, and none but a believer may be allowed to know the secrets of religion. It has been said: a man's secretary is the representative of his knowledge, and the secretary is the man's tongue. The da'i's secretary therefore must not be a sinner, gluttonous, treacherous, or greedy, for such a man would betray religion and his corruption would be grave. It has been said: whoever opposes you in religion will agree with you in nothing, and whoever is an enemy to your religion will strive to corrupt both you and your religion.

The members of the da'i's household should be discreet believers, as is fitting for religion and the da'wa. Knowledge is continually discussed in his house and conversations concerning wisdom take place there, and none but a believer may hear such things. People's children and women may also enter the da'i's house, and therefore only a chaste believer can be trusted to serve him closely.

The da'i himself should be chaste and far from anything that invites suspicion. Among women, none should serve him privately except a mahram relative, his wife, or his female slave. Among men, he should not be served privately by a beardless youth or anyone regarded with suspicion. The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: "Avoid places of suspicion," and: "Whoever circles around a protected enclosure is likely to fall into it." If the person serving him is a cause for suspicion, people find an opening for accusation. The affair and station of the da'wa are difficult, and its holder must protect himself from every suspicion.

The da'i should not tolerate intoxicating drink among his entourage, nor employ anyone from whom such behavior has become manifest, nor anyone known for immorality and corruption. The disgrace of such conduct returns upon the da'i. God Most High says: "O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are angels stern and severe" (66:6). As we have said, the faults of the

entourage return upon the da'i. If he is incapable of governing his own house and retinue and setting them right, how can he set right and govern the people of the jaziras and lands?

Most of the time in his house should be devoted to discussion and study of knowledge. His intimates and companions should be people of religion and knowledge. The Qur'an should be recited in his house, prayer established at its appointed times, what is right commanded, and what is wrong forbidden.

The da'i's assembly should be dignified and free of joking, obscenity, and offensive or foolish speech, for these things destroy the da'i's awe, dignity, and honor and diminish the dignity of religion itself.

The da'i should not be excessively familiar with everyone, nor excessively talkative except in wisdom and knowledge, because excessive speech diminishes dignity. It has been said: whoever speaks much commits many slips. God Most High says: "There is no good in much of their private conversation except one who commands charity or what is right..." (4:114).

The da'i should not be arrogant, for arrogance drives people away from him. Rather, he should be humble. The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: "No servant humbles himself for God except that God raises him." He also said: "Pride is God's cloak; whoever contends with Him for it, He breaks him." God Most High says: "That abode of the Hereafter We assign to those who desire neither exaltation on earth nor corruption, and the final outcome is for the God-fearing" (28:83).

The da'i should know people's stations and their proper ordering in address and response, in bringing people near and keeping them at a distance. He should address each person in the manner appropriate to someone like him and according to what he is accustomed to. He should neither give someone undeserving an excessive form of address nor diminish what is due to someone of his rank. Such mistakes plant resentment and rancor in hearts and may cause a person to think that some error or sin of his has brought about the slight.

Likewise, in seating people in the assembly he should preserve each person's proper place where rank must be observed. Those who serve the assembly should know the station of its members, acknowledge their entrance and greeting, seat them in their proper places, and make their hearts content both upon entering and leaving.

The da'i should fulfill the needs of the believers, secure justice for them, and obtain redress for them from anyone who wrongs them. He should mediate in matters in which they require mediation and seek the assistance of the ruler in their worldly affairs when necessary, for their worldly affairs are connected with their religious affairs.

If a dispute arises between believers, he should mediate between them and compel them to what is right. He should not leave them to quarrel with one another or take their disputes for judgment to someone other than their da'i, because "the discipline of religion comes before religion." They should not pass beyond him to a sultan or judge, for their da'i has the greater right over them. Whoever does not submit to his judgment has strayed; whoever opposes him incurs his anger; and whoever incurs his anger incurs the anger of all the awliya', who will not be satisfied until he is satisfied.

The da'i should strongly restrain them from mutual contention, disputation, and obstinate quarrelling, and they should act according to God's saying: "Remember God's blessing upon you: when you were enemies He joined your hearts together, and by His blessing you became brothers" (3:103), and His saying: "The believers are but brothers" (49:10). The da'i should exhort the people of his assembly at all times, causing them to give thanks for the condition in which they find themselves and reminding them of the trials that occurred in other times. If the age is one of weakness and tribulation, he should console them, urge them to patience, and give them glad tidings of relief and of the reward toward which they are proceeding through what they endure.

If a believer is afflicted by a trial or loss, the da'i should listen to his words and complaint, grieve with him and have compassion for him, give him glad tidings of reward and recompense, and assist him as much as he can. If he is unable to assist him, he should explain his excuse and the circumstances of the time, telling him that the circumstances have not allowed it and that relief is near, so that the believer does not leave him except with a tranquil soul and heart. He must not increase the man's grief through indifference, harsh speech, or rebuke.

If someone from his assembly suffers a bereavement or has a funeral, the da'i should accompany it and fulfill the person's right, or, if he cannot go out, send some of his companions and members of his assembly and urge the believers to fulfill his right. Likewise, if one of the people of his assembly becomes ill, he should visit him himself or send to him companions whose visit will be dear to him. He should ask about his condition in the assembly, grieve for him, and pray for his recovery.

If one of the members of his assembly is absent, he should inquire after his family. If one of them has a marriage or returns from travel, he should fulfill what is due to him. All of these are among the rights that one believing brother owes another and among the things that bring joy to a believer and increase his desire for religion.

It is related that the Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—was asked: "Which deed is best after prayer?" He replied: "Bringing joy into the heart of a believer." The report also contains the teaching that among the worst deeds is bringing sorrow and grief into the heart of a believer.

When a messenger arrives from a jazira, or a visitor or emigrant comes, the da'i should attend to him according to his station, make his heart content, strengthen him, and reward him with good, for God does not waste his reward or disappoint him.

He must not say to such visitors: "Why have you come? Who summoned you? You should not have come; the times are difficult and corrupt; there is no money at the Presence to give you; the Imam—peace be upon him—has turned away from this group; Amir al-Mu'minin—peace be upon him—is angry with you, weary of you, and has turned his face toward others." Such speech breaks their hearts, weakens their intentions, and makes them despair of every good. Rather, he must make their hearts content, give them hope, and promise them the mercy and compassion of Amir al-Mu'minin—peace be upon him.

When the da'i sends a messenger to a jazira or a land, he should choose him for the mission on the basis of competence, trustworthiness, justice, and religion. A messenger from the Presence will be asked about matters concerning the Presence; he should therefore mention what benefits and not what harms, and provide sound answers to what he is asked. When he returns, he must truthfully report what he has seen and heard.

The da'i must not select his messengers because of personal benefit, friendship, intercession at his door, social deference, or fear. Much of the corruption that has entered the da'wa has entered through messengers—through their betrayal and lying, their praise of those from whom they accepted bribes, and their disparagement of those who did not satisfy their greed.

The da'i should continually praise the religion and its people, make manifest its benefits, miracles, and proofs, and beautify religion in the eyes of people. When addressing them, he should condemn those who oppose the people of religion and make clear their faults and the defects of their doctrines. If the da'i himself disparages religion and its people, he distances people and drives them away from religion rather than calling them to it.

The da'i should undertake the affairs and administration of the da'wa and bear that burden on behalf of the Presence. The Imam—peace be upon him—appointed him precisely to administer the da'wa and set right the affairs of the jazira. Once he has arranged and ordered those affairs, however, he should not make them binding except by the command of the Presence, for command belongs to God Most High and to His wali—peace be upon him—and no one has the right to usurp it.

The da'i should spend from his own private wealth, with which Amir al-Mu'minin—peace be upon him—has favored him, on necessary interests of the da'wa in matters where it is not practicable to refer to the Presence and request funds, for leaving such a need unattended may produce a defect.

The relation of the da'i to the people of the da'wa in religion is like that of a mother. A man casts his drop into her, and she receives, preserves, forms, and governs it until the fetus is complete. Then she raises the child and protects it from water and fire, and attends to its nourishment, interests, and upbringing, while the man supplies her with maintenance. In the same way, the da'i must undertake all the affairs of the da'wa, administer it and the jazira, and order its ranks, while the Imam provides him with knowledge and wealth.

Thus every corruption, calamity, corruption of belief, doubt in religion, error, rebellion, or disobedience that appears within the da'wa or the jaziras is something the da'i must remedy and set right. If he knowingly neglects it, is negligent, overlooks it for his own ease, or fails through incapacity, then its burden and consequence are upon him.

If God Most High calls the Imam—peace be upon him—to account concerning any matter of his community, its preservation, and its care, the Imam in turn will question the da'i, because the Imam placed this responsibility upon his neck and he undertook it. He must therefore fulfill it. If he is incapable, he must make his incapacity clear to the Imam—peace be upon him—and seek forgiveness for it until another is appointed who can perform it. The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: "All of you are shepherds, and all of you are responsible for your flock." God Most High says: "So that He may question the truthful concerning their truthfulness" (33:8), and: "By your Lord, We shall surely question them all about what they used to do" (15:92–93).

The da'i should not be miserly with the wealth of the Imam—peace be upon him—when it is spent properly. The Imams—peace be upon them—seek wealth and dominion for the sake of religion and its establishment, and wealth must always serve as a guardian of religion. If the da'i withholds expenditure that is properly required for religion, a great defect may arise in the da'wa.

If the da'i fails to fulfill what religion and the da'wa require, his punishment is more severe than that of others. God, Blessed and Most High, says: "O wives of the Prophet, you are not like any other women..." (33:32). The "wives of the Prophet" are his hujjas in religion; likewise, the hujjas of the Imam are his da'is. God has promised them reward twice over and punishment twofold.

The da'i should unite the hearts of the believers, reconcile them, gather them together, and urge them to mutual aid, affection, and cooperation. He should warn them against envy, hatred, rancor, backbiting, and enmity, and teach that whatever a believer would not accept for himself he must not accept for his believing brother.

If one believer's aggression against his brother becomes manifest, the da'i should prevent and rebuke him. If he does not desist, his affair should be made known among the believers, he should be excluded from the da'wa and the assembly, and the believers should disavow him until others take warning.

The da'i should continually urge the believers to obey the Imam, love him, and give him sincere counsel, and to expend their wealth and their very selves in seeking his satisfaction and obeying him, and in jihad before him if he commands them. He should make clear to them that God's satisfaction lies in the Imam's satisfaction, that obedience to God lies in obedience to him, and that their salvation lies in obeying him and attaining his satisfaction.

He should explain to them that the Imam—peace be upon him—owes nothing to anyone. Whatever he grants creatures of the goods of this world or of knowledge is his favor and beneficence, and whatever he withholds he withholds in justice.

The da'i should discipline the believers so that they do not burden the Presence of Amir al-Mu'minin with their needs except when necessity compels them. Even then, their request should be conveyed through the proper intermediaries, at a permissible time, in a fitting manner, and only to the measure of the need. They must not covet the Imam's wealth or ask for excess.

If they request something and the circumstances do not require that their need be fulfilled, no doubt or sickness should arise in their hearts, like those whom God Most High describes: "If they are given some of it, they are pleased; but if they are not given from it, at once they become angry" (9:58). The da'i should train them in contentment and submission to the Imam's actions, commands, prohibitions, and judgments. They should object to none of these, but know that all of them proceed from consummate wisdom. Even if they do not perceive that wisdom at the time, they may come to know it later. Once they know that the Imam—peace be upon him—is the sage of the age, they must know that everything he does is done with wisdom, even when the face of that wisdom is hidden from them. The da'i should refine and exhort the believers. When he employs one of them in a service or mission concerning religion or the state, he should urge him to discharge the trust, to give sincere counsel and compassionate care, and warn him against betrayal, neglect, laziness, and failure. If one of them commits any of

these things, he has departed from religion and broken the covenant; disgrace and exposure will attach to him in this world and the next, together with regret, blame, and the severing of benefit and spiritual support.

If betrayal or deceit becomes manifest in someone whom the da'i has employed in a service, he should discipline him, make an example of him, and lower him from that rank so that others take warning. If he sees in someone excellent trustworthiness or competence, he should praise him and raise him above his former rank.

The da'i should instruct the believers that if they see anyone betray the Imam in religion, the state, or governance, they must prevent him if they are able. If they are unable, they must convey the matter to the Presence, because the defect may increase until it reaches a point that cannot be remedied. The Prophet—blessings of God be upon him and his family—said: "Religion is sincere counsel." God Most High says: "There is no blame upon those who find nothing to spend, when they are sincere to God and His Messenger; there is no way against the doers of good, and God is Forgiving, Merciful" (9:91).

The da'i should know that kingship is the guardian of religion, and that the dominion of the Imams—peace be upon them—is founded upon religion. When the affair of religion and the da'wa is sound and upright, the affair of kingship is likewise upright and no defect is found in it. All the subjects, both in the Presence and in the jaziras, become servants of the Imam—peace be upon him—and become his soldiers, helpers, and sincere advisers. No one is then able to betray or disobey the Imam, because all the people become the betrayer's opponents, enemies, combatants, and adversaries.

But when there is a defect in religion, and the da'i is incapable and negligent, fails to govern and administer religion, is neither learned nor scrupulous, and lacks competence, sincere counsel, and trustworthiness, he corrupts the beliefs of the believers. They turn back, retreat upon their heels, fall into the doctrines of the materialists, the people of negation, and the libertines, doubt religion, and suffer sickness in their hearts. Disagreement, contention, warfare, and division arise; betrayal, lying, greed, treating the forbidden as lawful, and mutual aggression multiply. Defect enters both religion and kingship; the jaziras are ruined; and people become enemies to one another.

Trustworthiness, chastity, scrupulousness, modesty, generosity, and muru'a disappear. People return to the nature of beasts and predatory animals and repeatedly prey upon one another. The heart of the Imam—peace be upon him—becomes occupied and burdened, and he grows weary of his community and of the people of religion, turns away from them, and becomes angry with them. The ill-fortune of disobedience and the effect of the Imam's anger then overtake them; mercy becomes distant from them, and each day they increase in corruption and punishment, just as corruption has now become manifest in the condition in which we live.

We ask God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, to grant us repentance and a return to obedience to God and obedience to His wali—peace be upon him; to enable us to cease from such deeds, regret what has preceded from us, reform our intentions and resolve, and return to obedience. Perhaps God Most High will incline the heart of the Imam—peace be upon him—toward his servants by looking upon them, reviving them, and showing them mercy through every da'i who fulfills the conditions of the guiding da'wa—peace be upon its masters.

We ask Him also to pardon us for what has preceded from us and brought about this punishment through the closing of the door of repentance, and that the Imam seek forgiveness for us until God Most High forgives us, as God says: "If, when they wronged themselves, they had come to you and asked forgiveness of God, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found God accepting of repentance and merciful" (4:64).

I have now discharged what I was required to set forth concerning what every subordinate owes to his superior, from the Bab down to the mukasir. These conditions are binding upon everyone who undertakes the guidance of a people or is established among them, for among them he stands in the place of the one above him.

Let whoever desires salvation and belongs among the awliya' of God and the people of His obedience act accordingly. Let neither pride, self-exaltation, nor pretension seize him in the religion of God. Let him place himself exactly where his master and lord has placed him and remove from himself pride and envy. Whoever bears these resembles the one who said, "I am better than he" (cf. 38:76); whoever rejects them belongs among those meant by God's saying: "Indeed, My servants—you have no authority over them" (15:42).

If I were to investigate exhaustively in every section of this treatise all that is incumbent upon the da'i, the hujja, and those who are called, the treatise would become very long and exceed its proper limit. I have therefore restricted each section to concise points out of fear of excessive length.

Indeed, if I wished to reduce the entire matter still further, I could summarize it by saying: the da'wa is founded upon knowledge, taqwa, and governance. These words gather together all its conditions.

Whatever I have stated correctly in this treatise is through the success granted by God and through the excellent spiritual support of the wali of the age—peace be upon him—for his servants. Whatever deficiency or error it contains comes from my incapacity, negligence, and deficiency of knowledge. I intended the truth and desired the good. I gathered and composed according to the measure of my knowledge and ability, and in all my affairs I have placed my trust in God.

Here ends the concise and sufficient treatise concerning the conditions of the guiding da'wa.

Chapter 26

Return to the Book Tuḥfat al-Qulūb

O brother, there has already been transmitted in this treatise from this da'i—may God exalt his sanctity—what is sufficient and ample for all the brethren, both the holders of ranks and those subordinate to them. It is sufficient as discipline for them, and it explains what is incumbent upon each of them toward the one above him and toward those below him. Understand this, and you will be rightly guided, God Most High willing.

Chapter 27

Conclusion of the Book: Praise of the Da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Walid

Know, O brother, that when we seek the presence of all the qualities mentioned by this da'i—may God exalt his sanctity—we find them gathered completely in none other than the noble shaykh already mentioned, 'Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Walid—may God undertake his protection.

As for nobility of lineage, he is among the people of his age of the most exalted ancestry and the most distinguished family standing, among those longest established in the guiding da'wa and foremost in pleasing and approved deeds. His grandfather, Ibrahim b. Abi Salama—may God sanctify his spirit—was, because of his distinction, sent by the unique and noble da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad—may God exalt both their sanctities—as an envoy to our master al-Mustansir bi-llah—blessings of God be upon him.

It is said that when he entered before our master—blessings be upon him—he spoke in his presence in a manner that amazed everyone who heard him. He returned to his lodging and that very night was struck by a fever. In the morning he was unable to attend the noble assembly, and word was sent complaining of the fever that had afflicted him. The Imam—peace be upon him—took an Egyptian water-jug filled with water, recited over it, and ordered that it be sent to him. As soon as he drank from it, he was cured of his illness.

He remained for some time at the Pure Presence and then departed. Such was the sincerity of his walaya that he covered the jug with a protective wrapping so that it would not break, and as long as he lived he drank from it. Whenever someone was afflicted by illness, he gave him water from that jug and the person recovered. Eventually the jug broke; he crushed its fragments and preserved the dust. Whenever one of the awliya' became ill, he gave him some of that dust and the sick person recovered. When his own death drew near, he told his son: "When I die, place this dust with me." They did so. All of this arose from the sincerity of his walaya and his seeking blessing.

It is also related that one of the sons of this man and of his cousin once said to the two elders: "These soldiers have taken our wealth, our estates, and our wooded lands." He replied: "Do not say that. They have a greater right to them. Were it not for them and their da'i, we would not have known the truth and would not have emerged from falsehood. We have taken their religion, and they have taken our worldly possessions." Such was their walaya and religion.

This concerns the nobility of religion. As for worldly lineage and ancestry, they are among the noblest of Quraysh and the highest of the Arabs, from the descendants of 'Abd Manaf b. Qusayy—peace be upon them.

As for purity, scrupulousness, chastity, worship, devotion, walaya, trustworthiness, and adab, no one among the people of his age can be compared with him. Everything that this da'i—may God exalt his sanctity—has mentioned in this treatise is found in him and with him.

For that reason I entrusted to him the affair of the guiding da'wa—peace of God upon its master—in the Jazira of Yemen. I have also mentioned that every one of the rank-holders whom I appointed has been placed under him: none is to be advanced or delayed except by his command, and no one is to impart or receive instruction except from him or from one whom he approves for that purpose.

Now, O brother, I have made clear to you in this treatise what every wali needs in every time and age, so that what I have set down in it may be your creed and that of all our brethren—may God increase them, cause them to flourish, grant them success, and guide them.

Know that if one of the rank-holders mentioned should pass away, the ranks remain preserved as we have described, and their stations are watched by the eye of God Most High and observed by the eyes of His awliya'—peace be upon them—with divine assistance. No one among the people of the ranks disappears without an acceptable successor returning in his place, as the established sunna has proceeded. There is no alteration in the sunna of God Most High and the sunna of His awliya', nor any change, because God Most High never leaves His earth empty of one who stands for Him with His right, lest creatures possess an argument against God.

I now conclude my treatise with that with which I began it: praise belongs to God, the Benefactor toward His obedient servants, who has favored them with knowledge of the guiding leaders who show those who fear Him and follow His guidance the landmarks of religion and the means of salvation for seekers who desire deliverance from humiliating punishment.

May God bless the one sent as a mercy to the worlds, God's chosen one from among His sincere servants, Muhammad, the qibla of those who bow and prostrate, by whose mission God sealed the prophets and whose rank He exalted above all the messengers; and may He bless his wasi and right hand, the slayer of the covenant-breakers, the unjust, and the renegades, the destroyer of the unbelievers, the mighty Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali b. Abi Talib; and the Imams from his pure and purified progeny, the standards of religion and commanders of the believers, from whom no age or time is ever without a manifest Imam who restores whoever follows and obeys him to certain truth.

And may blessings be upon our master, the wali of our age and Imam of our time and era, the Imam al-Tayyib Abu al-Qasim, Amir al-Mu'minin; and upon his pure forefathers and his noble, awaited descendants until the Day of Religion. Peace be upon them all.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs, the best Master and the best Helper. May God bless the best of His creation, Muhammad, and all his family.

Appendix

Excerpt from Nuzhat al-Afkar

[Excerpt from Nuzhat al-Afkar, vol. 1, by the da'i Idris 'Imad al-Din b. al-Hasan al-Anf al-Qurashi (d. 872/1468). The numbers in square brackets in the Arabic edition indicate pages in a manuscript from the Hamdani Collection, now held by the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London. Modern editorial notes are omitted here except where they affect the sense of the translated text.]

[91] The noble da'i Ibrahim b. al-Husayn al-Hamidi then took charge of the da'wa. He established the pillars of the upright shari'a, clarified its landmarks, forbade what is wrong and commanded what is right. He showed compassion toward the people of his da'wa like a tender and affectionate father. He directed them to the walaya of the pure Ahl al-Bayt and openly and secretly made clear the call toward them, suppressing the wicked deniers of the truth.

He was supported by the steadfast da'i 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. Ahmad of the family of al-Walid al-Qurashi. He assisted him in his affair and undertook the spreading of the da'wa in private and in public. Both men were learned scholars who guided toward the walaya of the purified Imams—peace be upon them. They possessed merit, worship, religion, asceticism, good character, and obedience to God, the One Creator. Those who sought guidance were guided through them and followed their example in righteous works.

Concerning the da'i 'Ali b. al-Husayn, the shaykh Muhammad b. Tahir al-Harithi said in verse:

O Abu Hasan, through knowledge you rescued souls,
And saved them from the assaults of passing events.
You were rewarded with goodness and requited with hopes fulfilled,
And you remained happy in the noblest station.
You took provision from every moment that brought its gift,
A provision by which our Lord preserves from affliction.
[92] In San'a you built a pure da'wa,
Laying its foundation and strengthening its structure.
You did not fear within it the power of a stubborn foe,
An oppressive tyrant approaching with hostility.
O son of Abu al-Walid, for its people you became
A refuge from enemies and a shelter in distress.
May its assembly remain flourishing through your continuance,
Bringing joy to us and healing what afflicts us.

The noble da'i 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. Ja'far b. al-Walid al-Qurashi al-'Abshami—may God sanctify his spirit—died in the night leading into Saturday, the fifth of Ramadan in the year 554 AH.

After his death, the da'i Ibrahim b. al-Husayn al-Hamidi was supported by his son, who resembled him in asceticism and merit, Hatim b. Ibrahim b. al-Husayn al-Hamidi, and by the noble shaykh Muhammad b. Tahir al-Harithi. They supported and assisted him and openly upheld the noble da'wa. They were the two radiant stars of the da'wa and its two rain-bearing clouds of knowledge and generosity. In the illustrious da'wa they possessed excellent conduct and guidance leading to knowledge of the haqiqa.

These da'is continued standing in guidance and adhering to the call toward God and His awliya' until the noble da'i Ibrahim b. al-Husayn al-Hamidi—may God's pleasure be upon him—died in Sha'ban of the year 557 AH.

His son, the da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim b. al-Husayn al-Hamidi—may God sanctify his spirit—then assumed the affair of the da'wa in the Jazira of Yemen. He sent to those distant from him people who would guide them to the clear path of truth. He clarified the proof and made manifest the path regarding the merit of the wasi and his pure family, transmitting sound reports from the traditionists to explain their merit and demonstrate their justice.

In the da'wa he possessed the highest share, and he was most worthy of the celebrated merit attributed to him. His books and compositions were well known to seekers and available to those who asked and desired them. People came to know his merit, his exhortation, and the clarity of his proof, and many inclined toward him. Himyar and Hamdan turned toward him, and they delivered to him the fortress of Kawkaban.

When Sultan 'Ali b. Hatim al-Yami—then lord of San'a and the surrounding territories from Dhamar and the other regions as far as Naqil Bani Sharha—saw the people's inclination toward the da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim and their gathering around him, rivalry and envy entered him. He feared for the worldly authority to which he devoted himself and upon which his attention was fixed. Yet the world was insignificant in the eyes of the da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim. He turned away from what people pursued in it, seeking instead the greater share in the Hereafter and turning away from the world's transient goods and substances.

Sultan 'Ali b. Hatim therefore sought every means against him because of the pride and envy that had entered him. By spending wealth and multiplying gifts and grants, he won over Hamdan and drew most of them to his side. He exerted himself to the utmost in hostility toward the da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim.

Ahmad b. al-Hubayr al-Habari was among those whose affection the da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim trusted and from whom he had taken solemn oaths and a covenant. Yet he inclined toward Sultan 'Ali b. Hatim al-Yami and asked him to place him over Hamdan. He corrupted many of those who were with the da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim in Kawkaban.

The wars between the da'i and Sultan 'Ali b. Hatim had continued for a long time. The sultan besieged Kawkaban until he became weary of war and inclined toward peace, not knowing the da'i's actual condition. The wicked Ibn al-Hubayr then informed him that the garrison had been depleted and that the provisions prepared by the Hamidi da'i had grown scarce because of the long strife. He asked the sultan to place him over Hamdan and make him commander of the infantry and cavalry.

The lord of San'a granted what he asked and advanced him, and he prevailed within a short time. When the da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim learned what had been plotted, he departed from the fortress in which he had been staying and withdrew from direct confrontation with 'Ali b. Hatim. He went to the shaykhs of Habra among Hamdan, in Lu'lu'a and Ray'an. 'Ali b. Hatim then advanced against them in war, gathered forces against them, brought cavalry and men in strength, and pressed the fighting.

Sultan 'Ali b. Hatim afterward wrote to the noble da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim, reproaching him while speaking with apparent gentleness. He said to him: “Make your religion manifest and gather the people of your da'wa, but do not divide Hamdan and drive them into hostility and hatred.” He included these sentiments in verse. The da'i understood that this was treachery and deception, and answered him with verses rebuking him for his actions and blaming him for the stratagem he had contrived:

A letter came to me from Abu Zayd,
Containing many kinds of reproach and insult.
[95] He rebukes me and tells me of his claim,
While men and travelers are made to bear its burden.
He hurls biting words,
Words that hearts shun and will not soften toward.
Yet I shall forge an answer for them and press on,
Scattering truth among claws without yielding.
Remain secure in your position if you will,
For every noble trust requires a faithful guardian.
You say that I have broken the staff of unity,
Yet you yourself claim to mend what you have shattered.
By the Pure, the Chosen One, no worldly peer
Can stand beside the covenant that binds me.
I have not made the world my object,
Nor sought it as one consumed by greed.
You permitted what should have been protected,
And treated honor as though it had no sanctuary.
You cast away the rope of the da'wa of the family of Taha,
Though their rope is the firm and unbreakable bond.
You claim that I seek worldly dominion;
The seeker of such a thing is blameworthy and accursed.
No covenant between us rests on mere suspicions;

Suspicions cast stones upon the unseen.
There is no shame in battle when battle has begun;
Such is the established custom of war.
Come near and do not remain distant;
Each man is pledged to what he strives for.
You will learn to whom the final victory belongs,
And then the certain news will become clear.
By God, in openly proclaiming my religion,
Tribes and sons have given me their support.
You shall regret how you turned from us,
For every trial has consequences still to come.
You gathered secretly and divided the ranks,
But what is concealed does not remain hidden forever.
Abu al-Hasan, the noble and steadfast,
Has supported him—he of sound and discerning judgment.
You confiscated from me and seized without right,
Yet you did not understand the sign or its meaning.
You boast of what you bestowed upon them,
But true honor is guarded by knowledge and religion.
Your predecessors in the illustrious da'wa
Possessed ancient glories and distinguished merit.
Yet you have turned away from their path;
The clear dawn has now become manifest.
If you return and become upright,
The satisfaction of our Lord—God the Helper—awaits you.
Beware the changing days of the age,
For the fortunes of every house may turn.
When the appointed death descends,
Neither fortresses nor strongholds save a man from death.

When the noble da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim saw how Hamdan had divided both for him and against him, he feared that their division would occur through his hands. He went to the lord of Bayt Radam of Banu Shihab, who was the husband of the da'i Hatim's daughter, and reached his daughter secretly and in grief. When her husband learned of his arrival, he received him with honor and dignity and asked him to remain with him for a long stay. The da'i declined and asked him instead to convey him to Haraz, which he did.

He reached a place called Shu'af and began calling the people, although they had inclined toward 'Abd al-Majid and given him their allegiance. When the people saw Hatim's merit, asceticism, eloquence, excellent exhortation, sweetness of speech, and the knowledge of the Imams and virtues of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali b. Abi Talib—upon him be the best peace—that he spread among them, they hurried toward him and gave their allegiance to him. The da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim was extraordinarily eloquent and possessed learning of a rank difficult to attain.

He ascended from Shu'af to al-Zahra, and they surrendered the stronghold to him. The people of his da'wa came to him group after group. Concerning him, Hanzala b. 'Ali b. 'Abd Allah—may God have mercy upon him—said:

At dawn the mountain appeared in al-Zahra,
And within it the da'wa found firm settlement.
For within it stands Hatim, guide of humanity,
The da'i of the da'wa, seeking the best of Imams.
I mean Ibn Ibrahim, whose counsel is obeyed,
The inheritor of the landmarks of guidance and proofs.
He stood in al-Zahra until he gained its fortress,
And it became the meeting place of Haraz for the da'wa.

He remained at al-Zahra until he took possession of the fortress of al-Hutayb, one of the lofty strongholds and impregnable fortresses of Haraz. The people of his da'wa then gathered around him and gave him allegiance, united in obedience. Their leader was Saba' b. Yusuf al-Ya'buri.

Saba' advanced upon the fortress of Shibam and took possession of it. There were only four guards at the top of its gate; they did not realize what was happening until he had gained control. Concerning this, a poet said:

The banner of our master, the pure Imam,
Has been raised over every lofty stronghold.
The fortress of Shibam shines today like a moon,
And every difficult height bows to its ascent.
In it the Ya'abir are a mighty band,
Famous for courage when battle is joined.
A people who, in noble deeds, possess a heritage
By which they attain the highest rank.
Their fortress has taken the fortifications around it,
And its strength has humbled the stubborn.
They journey by night like lions of the dark,
And dawn finds their standards still advancing.

Horsemen from Hamdan gathered to him, together with the people of his da'wa from the towns of Haraz. Their leaders were the Ya'abir, and Saba' b. Yusuf among them was like a roaring lion. He was the sword of the Hamidi da'i, striking with his edge, and the commander who led his troops.

Saba' b. Yusuf led them into Lahab against the tribes there and killed every fighter among them upon those hills. He charged upon them like a lion attacking its prey. A poet said:

Your generosity flowed like the mercy of the Forgiving,
And your decree moved among them like a piercing command.
The people of your noble house rode under your order,
Their banners traveling by your command.
You realized the merit that was yours,
And opened by kindness what had long been barred.
You came upon Lahab with a force that advanced,
And every fortress saw its walls shaken.
You sent against them men of resolve,
Warriors whose courage does not retreat.
From Hamdan came horsemen like burning embers,
Driving hardship and terror before them.
The obedient rose to the call,
While rebels learned the price of defiance.
The da'wa's supporters—men of Hamd—
Cut down the stubborn and broke the wicked.
From Janb, 'Ans, and the neighboring clans
Came champions who bore the struggle.
Every tribe among them had a share,
Their swords speaking where words had failed.
Thus the da'wa's purpose became manifest,
And opposition bent beneath its force.

Saba' b. Yusuf—may God have mercy upon him—continued in Lahab fighting the opponents and humbling the rebels. He advanced upon Hamda and continued to struggle against its people until God granted him victory over it. He took the fortress of Hamda, the highest mountain in Lahab, and everyone dwelling in those districts listened to him and responded.

Hanzala b. 'Ali—may God have mercy upon him—said concerning this:

Through you the gates of happiness and victory opened,
O da'i of the pure and chosen line.
Without you the fortresses of oppression would not have fallen,
Nor would the darkness of tyranny have been lifted.
O supporter of Hatim, you rose with resolve,
And the heights of Haraz answered your call.

The fortress of Shibam became a witness to your strength,
And every summit bowed before determination.
Your sword moved like a cutting star,
And your purpose never weakened in hardship.
You are the man whose courage saved the people of walaya,
The one whose resolve does not turn from the truth.
March, then, with the da'wa's clear proof,
And let every rebel know the certainty of your path.
May God preserve you for the believers,
And make your victory a joy to those who seek the truth.

Saba' b. Yusuf al-Ya'buri continued to charge against enemies like a lion, casting death upon the enemies of the da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim. He was obeyed among his people, and they lived in strength and security, until Banu Hakam treacherously assassinated him and killed him—may God have mercy upon him—through injustice and a monstrous act.

The da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Walid al-Anf, in a poem urging vengeance for him and the taking of blood-revenge, said:

O guiding one, bear the burden of the calamity,
For the time has brought terror and grave affliction.
The death of Ibn Yusuf has stirred us deeply;
Do not let the fire of his blood grow cold.
Rise, men of noble lineage and resolve,
And do not leave his killers unopposed.
A man of courage has been struck down,
One whose life was a shield for the people of faith.
Do not sleep while his blood calls out,
Nor accept humiliation after such a crime.
Gather every rider and every spear,
And let firm hearts answer the summons.
The enemy has broken the bond of security,
So answer treachery with justice and resolve.
Let no fear prevent you from demanding the right,
For endurance in truth is the ornament of men.
The Ya'abir know the path of honor,
And they will not abandon a brother's blood.
Let your ranks be united and your purpose one,
For division is weakness and unity is strength.
Seek the judgment of God in what has occurred,
And do not let anger carry you beyond justice.
If you advance, advance with knowledge;
If you strike, strike only the one who bears guilt.
The goal is not wrongdoing or corruption,
But restoring a right that was violently taken.

[102] The Ya'abir rose and assembled. They stood and sat in pursuit of blood-revenge, and their allies and brethren joined them. The noble da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim agreed with them, encouraged them, and counseled them to patience so that they might achieve their purpose.

They advanced against Banu Hakam at their settlement, the hill of al-'Uluw at Hawzan. Banu Hakam met them in battle, reinforced by armies of opposing warriors. The fighting between them continued and intensified. Every Ya'buri became fierce and lion-like. They entered upon them in their dwellings by force, killing some and taking others captive. Only a few escaped with their lives because their appointed deaths had been delayed.

It is said that three hundred men of Banu Hakam were killed that day. The women and children were spared. The goods and wealth they possessed were taken, and the hill of al-'Uluw was laid waste; it remains a desolate ruin to this day.

Concerning the victory God Most High granted them and the fulfillment of their vengeance, the distinguished da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Walid—may God sanctify his spirit—said:

A settled truth appeared with the disclosure of His proof,
And victory drove away the hostile ones.
The protection of God surrounded those who stood firm,
While fear clothed those who opposed them.
Do not think this steadfastness arose from yourselves alone;
It was a gift from the One who governs the passing night.
For the sake of justice, the people rose to take vengeance,
And the broken right was restored to its people.
Such is how the loftiest aims are fulfilled,
And how traces of oppression are erased.
No vengeance was sought except for one wronged,
Nor was a sword raised except against one who transgressed.
The people of Hakam had committed a monstrous act,
And the judgment of the Wise One came upon them.
They killed a man whose life was a protection,
So calamity returned upon all of them.
Their stronghold became empty after its prosperity,
And the circling turns of destruction surrounded them.
[103] Thus are the consequences of violence made manifest:
Whoever sows injustice reaps its bitter fruit.
Do not be deceived by the strength of fortresses,
For God's decree reaches the inaccessible height.
The story of Thamud is a warning to every people,
When they harmed the she-camel and defied the command.
The same lesson remains in every age:
The tyrant's power does not outlast divine judgment.

When Shibam of the Ya'abir came into the hands of the noble da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim, he perfected its construction and built and fortified the lower summit, for the upper summit had been built in the days of the unique Sulayhi da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad. Al-Jawhab was constructed later; we shall mention that when we reach the proper place, with God's help.

The residence of the da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim was at al-Hutayb. The noble da'i Muhammad b. Tahir al-Harithi, from Banu al-Harith b. Ka'b and from Banu Muharriz, the house of their leadership, supported him in his affair and in maintaining his da'wa. Hatim established Muhammad b. Tahir in San'a for the da'wa and appointed a ma'dhun in every district of Yemen. The people of the da'wa from Sind, India, and the regions of Yemen maintained communication with him.

Beneath al-Hutayb is a large cave in which the people of his da'wa would gather before him, and he would spread among them his knowledge and wisdom. He composed many works establishing the Imamate of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali b. Abi Talib—blessings of God be upon him—his precedence over the Companions, and many other branches of knowledge.

In his days the Ayyubid rulers entered Yemen: Turan Shah and Tughtegin b. Ayyub. They gained control over Yemen and overcame the rulers and tribes. Many who shared the Hamidi da'i's doctrine and religion sought refuge with him in Haraz.

The da'i Muhammad b. Tahir continued to uphold the da'wa in San'a, unconcerned by the oppression and aggression into which people had fallen, until the da'i Muhammad b. Tahir al-Harithi—may God exalt his sanctity—died in the noble month of Shawwal in the year 584 AH.

After him, the da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim appointed the distinguished da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Walid, relied upon him, and entrusted to him the affairs of the people of his da'wa. The noble da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad then stood for the da'wa in San'a and remained steadfast, carrying out in the fullest manner the affairs of those connected with him.

[105] He would travel to the noble da'i Hatim b. Ibrahim in Haraz. He also undertook the instruction of Hatim's son, 'Ali b. Hatim, until he approved of him and recognized his deep mastery of the sciences in which he had become his equal. He said to his father: "Your son is worthy that you place him in your own station and establish him in the da'wa so that he may succeed you after your days are completed." His father examined and tested him and found him exactly as the da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad had described.

Hatim therefore established his son 'Ali b. Hatim for the da'wa after him and strengthened him through the support of the da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Anf. When the affair of the da'wa was entrusted to 'Ali b. Hatim and his father relied upon him to uphold it, the da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad said concerning him:

O Abu Hasan, I have perceived in you
The highest aims to which striving men aspire.
You have become in the horizon of religion a unique one,
A meaning for the sacred ranks and their order.
The sun of religion rises through your light,
And the stars take guidance from its brilliance.
I have watched you from the time of youth,
Until you reached maturity complete in worth.
No strange man but one of our own noble house,
No untested person, but a son of proven lineage.
I found you fit to bear the trust,
And worthy to carry what the da'wa requires.
You inherited purity, knowledge, and resolve,
And a spirit awakened to the proof of guidance.
So stand for the affair with firm determination,
And let no hardship turn you aside.
For religion has found in you a rising support,
A pillar by which the people may be strengthened.
The world and its passing ornaments do not tempt you;
Your concern is the enduring good beyond it.
Advance, then, with knowledge, patience, and justice,
And make clear the path of those who seek certainty.
May God raise your rank among the people of walaya,
And preserve you as a guide for every sincere seeker.

The da'i 'Ali b. Hatim supported his father, while the da'i 'Ali b. Muhammad continually assisted him, until God decreed the death of the da'i Hatim al-Hamidi—may God sanctify his spirit—and his allotted lifespan was completed.

His death—may God exalt his sanctity—occurred in the fortress of al-Hutayb in Haraz on Saturday, the sixteenth of Muharram at the beginning of the year 596 AH. His grave lies beneath the fortress of al-Hutayb in Haraz, in the land of the Ya'abir.