Zahr al-Maʿānī

Direct English Translation

Introduction and Chapters 1–7

By al-Dāʿī Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn al-Qurashī (d. 872 AH / 1468 CE)
Critical edition prepared by Dr. Muṣṭafā Ghālib

Translation Note

This file translates the source text continuously into English. The argument, quotations, prayers, repetitions, and chapter sequence are retained. Routine critical-apparatus notes that only record minor manuscript spelling variants are not reproduced line by line.

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Zahr al-Maʿānī By the Dāʿī Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn al-Qurashī (d. 872 AH) Edited by Dr. Muṣṭafā Ghālib The University Foundation for Studies, Publishing and Distribution

Editor’S Introduction

We had previously published, some years ago, the fourth, fifth, and sixth parts of ʿUyūn al-Akhbār wa-Funūn al-Āthār, by the Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn al-Qurashī, who died in 872 AH. Today we publish another of his rare and valuable works, Zahr al-Maʿānī. In it the author treats the Ismaili theory of tawḥīd, abstraction, and transcendence, beginning from the unity of the Originator—glorified is He—and proceeding to the necessity of knowing the perfection of the First and the Second, the formation of the corporeal world, and its ascent to the spiritual world, provided that during its existence in the world of generation and corruption the body has benefited from the gnostic sciences and drunk from the everlasting radiant lights. Its soul then passes from the state of potentiality to the state of actuality, where there is eternal felicity and absolute archetypal perfection.

It is apparent that Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn gathered in this valuable work the totality of Ismaili doctrines, both theoretical and practical. He arranged it in twenty-one chapters. In the first chapter he speaks about establishing the Originator and the dependence of existent things upon His ipseity. In the second, he speaks of stripping names and attributes from Him, exalted is He. In the third, he treats the proper referents of the Most Beautiful Names of God and who is entitled to be indicated by them. In the fourth, he describes the existence of the world of origination at the first instant. In the fifth, he speaks of the precedence of the First of the world of origination in tawḥīd. In the sixth, he affirms that the First Origination is the first of the world of origination. In the seventh, he discusses the manner of emanation, what the First Emanated One is—the one designated symbolically as the Tablet—and the distinction it possesses over its world. In the eighth, he surveys the succession of the ranks of the world of origination and their degrees of excellence.

In the ninth chapter he moves to the tenth rank among the intellects, how it fell behind, how it repented, and what governance of the world was imposed upon it. He then speaks in the tenth chapter about prime matter and form and what came into existence from them. In the eleventh he treats the generated beings—minerals, plants, and animals. In the twelfth he turns to the Universal Adam and the supreme and most perfect station he attained. In the thirteenth he discusses the prophets and successors. In the fourteenth he speaks of Muḥammad. In the fifteenth he discusses Imam ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the loftiness of his excellence. In the sixteenth he speaks of Fāṭima and the two grandsons. In the seventeenth he turns to the Imams from the progeny of the Prophet and the loftiness of their rank. He then speaks of the Imamate and the Imam in the eighteenth chapter. The nineteenth is devoted to the ḥudūd and those whom the friends of God appoint among them for guidance. In the twentieth he surveys the question of the Qāʾim of the Resurrection, whom he regards as the seal of the speaking-prophets and the Imams. He reserves the twenty-first for the return of the adversaries and opponents.

All these matters are treated by the Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn in a firm scholarly style, relying upon the views and sayings of the dāʿīs, philosophers, and scholars who preceded him, so that his book became broad, complete, and sufficient—were it not for some attacks and grudges he directs at those who opposed him in his own age or before it and who differed with him in opinion and showed him hostility.

One thing that we cannot accept or believe is the collection of reports and extraordinary miracles he says Imam al-Mustaʿlī performed in the royal palace in Cairo when he met his two brothers Nizār and ʿAbd Allāh. Al-Mustaʿlī, as is historically known, was young and had no real command of affairs. The true master of authority and prohibition was al-Afḍal al-Jamālī, and he alone played the principal role in removing Nizār and in the events surrounding the succession.

How much we would have wished that Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn, though a great scholar, had kept away from such trivialities. He would then have reached the summit and history would have immortalized him in letters of light. But nothing can be done; this was his opinion.

The Dāʿī Al-Muṭlaq Idrīs ʿImād Al-Dīn Al-Qurashī

He is Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥātim al-Qurashī, the first Ismaili historian. He wrote the history of the first period of concealment, the Fatimid era, and the Ismaili daʿwa in Yemen. Most historians and researchers today rely, in their studies of Ismailism, on the historical and doctrinal books he left behind, which have had a major role in revealing some of the obscure aspects that accompanied the Ismaili daʿwa from its emergence until the end of Fatimid rule in Egypt and Yemen.

This is hardly surprising, because the office he occupied—as the nineteenth Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq and deputy during the concealment of the hidden Imam al-Ṭayyib—enabled him to preserve the Fatimid heritage that had been transferred from Cairo after the end of Fatimid rule there. That gave him access to the sciences and learning contained in those works. He drank from their springs and extracted from their rich treasuries the rare pearls with which he adorned his many writings.

We regret to say that we possess no indication at all of the date of his birth. We consider it likely that he was born at the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century AH. In the biography of him that we found in a Yemeni Ismaili manuscript entitled Muntazaʿ al-Akhbār there are only small fragments that give us little information about the chronology of his life or about the role he played as deputy of the concealment and Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq.

The author of Muntazaʿ al-Akhbār says that Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn began his service as Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq in 832 AH and died in 872 AH, after forty years, nine months, and six days in office. He assumed the daʿwa after the death of his nephew, the Dāʿī ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī, in the middle of the day on Thursday, the third of Ṣafar 832 AH. His name was the noble Dāʿī, our master Idrīs, son of the Dāʿī al-Ḥasan, son of the Dāʿī ʿAbd Allāh. He undertook the daʿwa in the best manner.

He carried its affairs out with excellent order, guided those seeking guidance to the path of rectitude, clarified for them the beginning and the return, and called them to Islam, faith, and the worship of the Beneficent King. One of his characteristics was that he accepted nothing from a person except faith and paid no attention to any virtue that was not accompanied by submission.

He composed books and epistles, clarified difficult questions and problems in biographies and histories, and set forth clear proofs for the religion of the One, the Overpowering. He openly explained matters concerning subtleties, taʾwīl, mysteries, and realities which earlier dāʿīs had left concealed.

Among the important works of the Dāʿī Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn are ʿUyūn al-Akhbār wa-Funūn al-Āthār in seven volumes; Risālat al-Bayān; and Nuzhat al-Afkār. In the first part of the latter historical material he relates the history of the daʿwa in Yemen from the days of the Dāʿī al-Dhuʾayb b. Mūsā to the days of his grandfather ʿAbd Allāh. In the second part he continues with the events of the latter portion of the life of Dāʿī ʿAbd Allāh and speaks about the daʿwa, the life of Imam al-Ṭayyib, and the manner in which the call was maintained for the concealed Imams. Among his other works are Rawḍat al-Akhbār wa-Bahjat al-Akhbār, which narrates Yemeni historical events from 458 to 870 AH; Asmāʾ Nufūs al-Muhtadīn; Hidāyat al-Ṭālibīn; and an epistle entitled Mahdiyyāt al-Buhtān.

The author of Muntazaʿ al-Akhbār also transmits verses by Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn describing a plague that struck Yemen and brought upon it a terrible calamity, until only livestock were left grazing without shepherds. The plague reached Ṣanʿāʾ; its ruler and king died; and scarcely any of the wealthy and notable people remained. Death spread through Ṣanʿāʾ in Muḥarram of the year 859 AH, and people died in multitudes. In Ḥarāz there was an especially severe and difficult ordeal from which only a small number escaped.

He then gives the verses composed on this occasion by Dāʿī Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn:

Yet I possess patience before every calamity, although disasters and blows have come in succession. Time wronged me and snatched away my family, and death struck my heart again and again. The seas of knowledge sank with them, and the rising stars descended from the highest horizon. The gathering-place was emptied of those faces, and

what befell them cast upon me grief and anguish. Where in all the worlds could I find their like, when, among the noblest, they are numbered among those lost?

This, then, is the Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn, and these are the works mentioned by the author of Muntazaʿ al-Akhbār. We do not know whether he wrote other works that the author of Muntazaʿ omitted. When the hour of departure from this transient world approached, he designated his son al-Ḥasan b. Idrīs and strengthened him with his cousin ʿAbd Allāh, son of the Dāʿī ʿAlī, son of the Dāʿī al-Ḥasan. He died on the nineteenth of Dhū al-Qaʿda 872 AH. The period of his daʿwa was forty years, nine months, and six days.

Establishing The Text

In establishing and collating this book we relied upon two handwritten copies. The first was obtained from a friend in the city of Surat in India and was designated by us with the letter N (ن). It is written in a clear hand in blue ink, while the headings are in red. It consists of 304 pages, measuring approximately 22 × 14 cm, with fourteen lines on each page. At the end of the manuscript occurs the following: “The copying of this blessed book was completed on the seventeenth day of Shaʿbān in the year 1288 of the Hijra of the Chosen Prophet—may God bless him and his pure family—when night became dark and day grew bright.”

This is a good manuscript. Some chapter headings are missing from it, but despite that it was useful to us in collation. We treated it as the base manuscript because it is older than the second copy and more reliable.

The second manuscript was given to us by Shaykh ʿAlī Yūsuf Najm al-Dīn of Yemen. It consists of 398 pages, measuring approximately 24 × 16 cm, with thirteen lines on each page. At its end appears: “We completed the copying of this blessed book entitled Zahr al-Maʿānī in the year 1367 of the Hijra of the master of the prophets, Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family.” We designated this copy with the letter M (م).

Although this copy was written in a poor hand and is difficult to read, it is complete in its chapter headings. In the margins are explanations and expressions indicating that it had been collated against another copy. It contains many errors and expressions which we corrected from the first manuscript N and restored to their proper places.

Finally, I offer my sincere thanks to the brothers who assisted me with advice, guidance, and some manuscripts. They have my appreciation and admiration. May God help us to repay kindness with kindness. Peace.

Beirut, 10 October 1980 Dr. Muṣṭafā Ghālib

THE BOOK ZAHR AL- MAʿĀNĪ

On the Unity of the Originator—glorified is He—and the Knowledge of the Perfection of the First and the Second, the Formation of the Corporeal World, and its Ascent to the Spiritual World

Composed by our lord and master, the Dāʿī of the Yemeni jazīra and trustee of the Ṭayyibī daʿwa, ʿImād al-Dīn, pillar of the scholars, Idrīs b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥātim b. Ḥusayn—may God perpetuate his support.

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE

From Him are sought increase in every good and aid against every incapacity.

Praise belongs to God, to whom imaginations cannot ascend, whom the perceptions of understanding cannot grasp, whom the letters of speech cannot express, and toward whom neither attributes nor names can point—except insofar as necessity compels the use of name, attribute, and indication. This is only by way of declaration of His loftiness and transcendence beyond what created things can encompass. If He is described by unity, that unity is an attribute of what has been originated; and if He is indicated as Originator, the indication is toward what He originated and brought into existence. He is utterly independent of His creation and of the descriptions of His creation.

He originated the world of origination and initiated the origination of all things, making it prior to time and before age, place, and spatial location. How, then, could knowledge bounded by time and place encompass Him?

I bear witness that there is no god but God, whose act of origination has bewildered the intellects. They became perplexed and incapable of comprehending Him, and so they stood astonished and confounded. And I bear witness

that His chosen one from creation and His elect, the one who came with truth, master of the first and the last and best of those gone before and those yet to come, is Muḥammad, His Messenger, whom He chose by election and purified from defilement.

And ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is his legatee, his chosen one, his elect, and his best one: the one indicated by the "mighty announcement," the one distinguished by the saying of the Exalted, "Indeed it is in the Mother of the Book with Us, exalted and wise." Through worthiness and rightful merit he attained excellence. Through him religion stood upright, and he struggled in the path of God until by his sword God humbled the people of obstinacy and schism.

After him came his descendants, in whom the Imamate became established. They inherited the Word of God, Imam after Imam, one after another: branches of the blessed prophetic tree and fruits of the noble ʿAlid stock. God bestowed upon them lofty and noble ranks, made them the pure household and progeny, and chose them from among creation. They are the forefathers of our lord, the Commander of the Believers, Master of the Age, whose description and designation transcend every description and attribute, heir of the seventh of the witnesses and remnant of what God deposited among them. The Exalted says concerning him: "You are only a warner, and for every people there is a guide." He is the Imam, son of the Imam, al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Qāsim, Commander of the Believers. Peace and blessings be upon all of them continuously until the Day of Judgment.

Thereafter: God has guided me, through the blessings of the ranks of His obedient friend, to the noble walāya owed to him, and has made me one among the servants and devotees of His friends, as a grace, blessing, and favor from God and as a mercy for which I cannot adequately give thanks or fully acknowledge its worth.

It therefore became obligatory upon me to thank the bestower of the blessing and to discharge, to the extent of my ability, some part of what is due, following the discipline of those who follow the Imams and pointing to the excellence of the one who guided me and the favor of those followers through whose favor I myself was favored. The Prophet said: "Whoever is given a blessing should give thanks for it." And it is also reported that when God bestows a blessing upon His servant, He loves to see its traces upon him.

I therefore composed this book so that those among the people who are familiar with wisdom may examine it and so that those among the followers of the Imams whom God has endowed with understanding may look into it. I attribute to myself nothing except whatever falls short of the lofty goal and fails to keep pace with them in the arena of spreading knowledge. Whatever excellence it contains I attribute to the one who guided me, instructed me, and favored me with his blessings. Everything I utter is only a draught from his sea and a breath from his fragrant breeze.

I have entitled this book Zahr al-Maʿānī, concerning the unity of the Originator, the knowledge of the perfection of the First and the Second, the formation of the corporeal world, and its ascent to the spiritual world, so that it might be a fragrance through which the spirit of life breathes and is clothed in its lights.

To God belongs might, and to His Messenger and the believers. I ask Him for guidance to the clear path, that He grant me what I hope for, aid me in the religion of those rightly guided, and cause me to travel the path of the people of piety and right guidance, not making me one of the people of error and corruption, by the right of His friends, the chosen servants and elect of God in the lands.

I take the firm covenant of God and His binding pledge from whoever comes into possession of this book: he must not examine it, nor disclose what it contains and what is folded within its pages, except to one to whom authorization has been granted. Whoever discloses anything of its secret, or of anything comparable to it, without permission from the Master of his Age, upon him be the curse of God by which He cursed Iblīs and expelled him from His power and strength. There is no power and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Magnificent.

From God I seek success, and I ask Him for guidance upon the ancient, upright path; that He overlook whatever I may disclose and make this work purely for His countenance, unmixed with any impurity that would alter it, by the right of His chosen servants and His elect in His lands.

The arrangement of this book follows the chapters I have enumerated. God is the giver of success in what is right.

Chapter List

Chapter One: On establishing the true Originator—glorified is He and sanctified are His names—and the dependence of existent things upon His ipseity. Exalted is His praise.

Chapter Two: On stripping names and attributes from Him—majestic and exalted is He—and explaining that they do not truly apply to Him, that He is not described by them, and that He is not indicated through them.

Chapter Three: On the proper referents of the Most Beautiful Names of God and who is worthy of being indicated by them.

Chapter Four: On the description of the existence of the world of origination at its first instant and the equality of its members in the first existence, in detail and as a whole.

Chapter Five: On the precedence of the First of the world of origination in tawḥīd and what was bestowed upon him, because of that precedence, of support through the light of taʾyīd.

Chapter Six: On how the First Origination became first for its world and the cause by which the others followed him successively in walāya.

Chapter Seven: On the Emanated One, designated symbolically as the Tablet, the distinction he possesses over his world, and how he follows the First and takes light from him in all his courses.

Chapter Eight: On the succession of the ranks of the world of origination, their degrees of excellence in proportion to their precedence, and the greatness of the grace and noble right they received.

Chapter Nine: On the tenth of the ranks, his falling behind and repentance, and what was imposed upon him of the governance of the created world.

Chapter Ten: On prime matter and form, what came into existence from them of the spheres and the elemental mothers, and how these were arranged in the finest ordering and stability.

Chapter Eleven: On the generated beings—minerals, plants, and animals—and how their chosen essence and quintessence appeared, namely the human being.

Chapter Twelve: On the First Universal Adam, the most noble and perfect station he attained, the cycle of unveiling and manifestation, the universal felicity that existed therein, and the movement of the spheres in accordance with the ordained measure.

Chapter Thirteen: On the prophets who established the revealed laws, the settled among them, the bearers of trusts and deposits, those prophets and successors who came after them, and the excellence and election with which God distinguished them.

Chapter Fourteen: On Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—his most excellent and praised station, the excellence he merited, and that he is the best of creation and the quintessence of existence.

Chapter Fifteen: On ʿAlī, the legatee and successor of Muḥammad, the loftiness of his excellence, and the noble rank and exalted station with which God distinguished him.

Chapter Sixteen: On Fāṭima al-Batūl and the two grandsons, and on the Imamate returning after al-Ḥasan as a settled institution that does not leave the descendants of al-Ḥusayn.

Chapter Seventeen: On the Imams from the progeny of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—the loftiness of their excellence, the nobility of their honor, and the greatness of their station.

Chapter Eighteen: On the Imamate and the Imam, and on what is expressed concerning them by the terms nāsūt and lāhūt in theological discourse.

Chapter Nineteen: On the ḥudūd and those whom the friends of God appoint from among them for guidance toward everlasting subsistence and the reality of existence.

Chapter Twenty: On the rising of the Qāʾim—peace be upon his mention—who is the seal of the speaking-prophets and the Imams; through him their number reaches perfection and completion; and on the reward and punishment that occur at his hands and their ascent to the spiritual world, to which is the return and final destination.

Chapter Twenty-One: On the return of the adversaries and opponents of the friends of truth; what they encounter of the perception of Hell and the places of painful punishment in proportion to the measure of their darkened souls and their hostility toward the purified chosen ones of God’s creation; and their destination in the greater punishment, namely Sijjīn. May God preserve us from that, along with all the followers of His pure friends, and make us among those who travel the praiseworthy path and die upon righteous action and sound belief. May He not make us among those upon whom is wrath or among those astray, by the right of Muḥammad and his family—may God’s blessings be upon them all.

The Author

Chapter One

On establishing the Originator and the dependence of existent things upon His ipseity

We say—and through God and through the blessings of His friends are strength and power, and from them and through them we hope for protection in deed and speech—that God Most High, exalted is His ipseity and mighty is His power, is the Originator of originated beings before the existence of created things. Everything in the subtle spiritual world, the light corporeal world, and the dense bodily world bears witness to His lordship and, to the one who understands and reflects, speaks of the unity of the One who brought it into existence.

The Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—was asked about knowledge of God. He said: "The workmanship points you to its maker, and the act to its agent." This is present in creation and manifest in primordial nature: every work indicates that it has a maker; every wise arrangement indicates that it has one who arranged it wisely; and every knowledge indicates that it has one who knows.

Since this is the case with every existent thing, we infer from creation and from the existent the One who brought it into existence. When we look at bodily creation and at the generated beings that appear from it, culminating in human existence and the individual human person, and when we see the soul gathered in a single person after the combination of the four opposed natures, this indicates that there is one who gathers and creates it: the One who joined subtle and dense things by excellent determination and perfect governance and reconciled the disparate opposed natures in the microcosm.

Then, when we contemplate this and intensify reflection, and when we ask those whom God Most High commanded us to hear and obey, this leads us to know that the generated beings appeared upon the earth through the governance of the celestial spheres and heavens, through the movement of the stars in their zodiacal signs and the motions of their spheres; and that the world, with its heaven and earth, its stars and zodiacal signs, its regions and spheres, its rest and motion, is itself inert and without intellect or perception.

Its revolving motions and its incoming and outgoing acts are therefore through the act of an agent and the work of a worker, from whom come motion and rest and the preparation by which what comes into existence comes to be.

When we persisted in reflection upon this and turned to those of the Prophet's household whom God Most High commanded us to ask, we learned from them—and became certain through what they bestowed upon us and guided us toward by their favor and grace—that the spiritual world is what moves these spheres and governs them, and that through its act occur their rest and movement. This is what came from the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—in his sharīʿa and what he indicated in his noble institution concerning the angels entrusted with the worlds and moving them with perpetual motion.

Then we learned from them and received from them that the ranks of the spiritual world are arranged successively. For every rank there is a rank above it that is its origin and cause. All of them depend upon a First, just as numbers depend upon the one that is their beginning and upon which their enumeration depends. This is what is called the First Intellect and the First Existent, the noble, preceding, most excellent one of the spiritual world.

This indicated to us that he has one who brought him into existence and made him one, from whom he appeared through an act issued by Him. He is the Originator of originated beings and the Inventor of inventions, who brought them from non-being into existence and fashioned originated created things after there had been none. Were it not for His transcendent ipseity, there would be no existent being, no creator among creation, and no originated being upon which to rely.

Exalted is God, whose ipseity intellects are incapable of describing. What He originated and created bears witness by His signs. From His ipseity the originated beings appeared. Behind every rest and motion He remains in a veil of greatness and splendor, light and radiance, might and magnificence. Originated beings are incapable of apprehending Him and are bewildered before the brilliance of His shining lights. This is the testimony of the spiritual and corporeal worlds to their Creator and an unfailing indication of the Originator—exalted is He—and of His precedence.

Then, if we look at what the prophets—peace be upon them—brought in their institutions and what they came with in their revealed laws, from which the radiance of their legislation shines, and at what they contained of subtle meanings and noble hidden mysteries, and at what the legatees and Imams—peace be upon them—established concerning religious creation and formal existence, we find therein a world standing opposite the subtle spiritual

world and corresponding to what exists in the corporeal and bodily creation: holy subtle intellects, noble luminous lights, encompassing heavens beneath them, and a receptive, simple earth that receives support.

We find that this religious creation contains a counterpart to the world of origination and creation and a clear testimony establishing the true Originator, for the source of religion is from where creation issued, and the One who brought religion into existence is the One who brought creation into existence and by whose command it stands.

From the First, who is existence after non-being, appeared what appeared and issued what issued. We knew that this First himself has One who brought him into existence and originated him—majestic and exalted above being described by any attribute of what He brought into existence. Thus the testimony establishing the Originator—glorified is He—is firm and the indication of His transcendent ipseity necessary.

Our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—protection of the people of tawḥīd—made this clear when he said:

“Praise be to God, who created the corporeal world as a compendium of the beauties of proportion and as a witness, through the excellence of its governance, to the Wise, Knowing One who has power over every thing. He raised the height of its heavens and proportioned them, darkened their night and brought forth their brightness; after that He spread out the earth, brought forth its water and pasture, and set firm the lofty mountains, completing natural creation and causing provision to flow.

“He set opposite what He created of the corporeal world the spiritual world, which is the return and to which the return is made. He adorned it with psychic heavens possessing luminous meteors and with a holy spiritual earth that, by permission of its Lord, brings forth its vegetation as sustenance for subtle spirits and as nourishment for noble holy forms—a wisdom complete for whoever reflects upon it and a blessing abundant.”

Thus he—may God exalt his sanctity—made clear that religious creation stands opposite corporeal natural creation, and both bear witness through excellent governance and subtle determination to the One who brought them into existence and to His unity. Whoever ascends through the religious creation, each time he rises a degree and his station and rank become higher, sees among the proofs of the tawḥīd of the Creator—glorified is He—what had never occurred to his mind and what he had not imagined could become attainable to one like him.

Exalted is God, the Originator, Creator, and Fashioner, before whom the necessity of expression is incapable. He is described only by what the intellects are compelled to indicate. He is the One who gives existence to what had no existence. The path of saying simply that “He is not” is corrupt; were His transcendent ipseity not existent, nothing among spiritual or corporeal things would exist and neither motion nor stillness would appear.

The Dāʿī Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Kirmānī made this clear in Rāḥat al-ʿAql and brought forth in it one of the greatest proofs against those who stop at what He created among the spheres and natures. He said:

“Since existent things, some of them in their existence, depend upon others, if that thing upon which another depends in its existence and to which its existence is attached were not established in existence and were not existent, the existence of the thing dependent upon it would be impossible. It is therefore established that this thing has no existence except through that.

“From this it is known that the one at which existent things terminate, through which they exist, upon which they depend, and from which they are brought into existence, is the One other than whom there is no god. The negation of His ipseity is false. For were His ipseity non-being, existent things too would be non-being; but since existent things are existent, the negation of His ipseity is false.”

This statement of the Dāʿī speaks through the testimony of low corporeal existent things and high spiritual existent things to the establishment of the transcendent ipseity. The field of what the guides have transmitted concerning establishment of the Originator—glorified is He—is vast, while the possibility of imaginations ascending to His ipseity is barred.

What we have brought in this chapter is sufficient for one who opens the eye of inner sight, looks upon the clear demonstrations, and lets the fruit of reflection ripen within him.

We ask God Most High to protect us from slipping toward deviation, not to cut us off from connection with His friends and His ḥudūd. There is no power and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Magnificent. Through the blessings of His friends we hope for deliverance from taʿṭīl, which brings one to the perception of Hell.

Chapter Two

On stripping names and attributes from the Originator—glorified is He—and explaining that in truth they do not apply to Him, that He is not described by them, and that He is not indicated by them; and that He, exalted is He, is not reached by any attribute and is not apprehended by true comprehension

We have already, in the chapter preceding this one, set forth the establishment of the transcendent ipseity beyond attributes, with what is sufficient for one who lends an attentive ear while being a witness and who remains upright in obedience to the guiding friends of God. We now say that names and attributes do not truly fall upon the Originator. They are only used in speech, pronounced and heard, as expressions referring toward Him. Exalted is He above names and attributes truly applying to Him, and exalted is He above being pointed to.

If we say, "He originated," then "Originator" is a description. If we say, "He created," then "Creator" is a name. If we say, "He brought into existence," then the one who brings into existence has been indicated and designated by what the necessity of expression and borrowed letters compel. As for the names and attributes that occur in the Mighty Qurʾan—such as the Hearing, the Knowing, the Powerful, the Wise, and all the other attributes—they do not truly fall except upon the world of origination because of its nobility and precedence. Attributes point to something like themselves and in something of their own kind they inhere.

But the Creator—blessed and exalted is He—is not a body such that He should be described by the attributes of bodies; nor is He an intellect such that He should be described by what intellects are described by, namely perfection and completeness. Places do not encompass Him so as to delimit Him, nor does the name "oneness" fall upon Him so as to number Him. He is the Originator of the one, the one who made it the cause of causes, and the one who brought forth the "one." He is exalted above likenesses and similitudes. Imaginations do not surround Him and intellects do not measure Him.

Whoever negates Him is drowned in the depths of the sea of taʿṭīl; whoever likens Him falls into the constriction, narrowness, and confinement of associating partners with Him. God—exalted is He—says: "They did not measure God with His true measure." Names, attributes, indications, and expressions therefore fall short of Him. They apply instead to those beneath Him: to His servants who praise Him, worship Him, and give thanks for His magnificent favors. Among them are some who are beyond bodies, lofty in rank and noble in station, who glorify their Originator and give thanks to Him and never cease from sanctifying Him and proclaiming His tawḥīd.

Our master the Dāʿī al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—said in one of his supplications: "O God, You concerning whom our confession agrees with the truth of what He said in His wise remembrance, His word being the truth: 'They did not measure God with His true measure.' We ask You to pardon one who, because he is in the confinement of servitude and under the constraint of limitation, speaks of You in a manner unworthy of You by the rule of necessity. That is a sin accompanied by seeking forgiveness."

This statement of his—may God exalt his sanctity—indicates that names and attributes do not fall upon the Creator, exalted is He, except under compulsion. There must be some indication toward Him by means of expression, and He must be alluded to by names, yet He is transcendent beyond indication and exalted above being reached by expression. This is only because of the necessity of the speaker and his need to climb by the ladder of names and attributes, and then to strip them from the Originator and place them where they truly ought to be placed.

It has been said that names and attributes fall upon corporeal things in truth and upon spiritual beings metaphorically; but they do not fall upon the Creator either truly or metaphorically.

It is related that Kumayl b. Ziyād asked the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—about a pure tawḥīd expressed by a singular tongue of truth. ʿAlī—peace be upon him—said: "O Kumayl, whoever describes tawḥīd by means of expressions is ignorant of it. Whoever points toward Him has made Him two. Whoever speaks of Him [as though comprehending Him] has confined Him. Whoever remains silent concerning Him out of heedlessness is oblivious. Whoever imagines that he has arrived has obtained nothing. Everything you distinguish by your imaginations in the most subtle meanings is turned away from Him and returned to you: something fashioned, originated, and like yourselves."

It is also related that a man asked him: "O Commander of the Believers, have you seen your Lord?" He said: "Would I worship what I do not see?" The man asked: "And how do you see Him?" He replied: "Eyes do not perceive Him

by the witnessing of sight, but hearts perceive Him through the realities of faith. He is near to things without touching them and far from them without being separated from them; speaking without deliberation, willing without hesitation; maker without an organ; subtle without being described as hidden; great without being described as harsh; seeing without being described through a sense; merciful without being described by tenderness. Faces are humbled before His greatness and hearts submit from awe of Him."

The Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—also said: "The beginning of religion concerning God Most High is knowledge of Him; the perfection of knowledge of Him is His tawḥīd; and the order of His tawḥīd is the negation of attributes from Him and the establishment of His ḥudūd. The intellects bear witness that every attribute and every thing described by an attribute is created; and every created thing bears witness that it has a Creator who is neither attribute nor thing described. Every attribute bears witness, through its conjunction with what it describes, and conjunction bears witness to origination; and origination bears witness to the impossibility of pre-eternity in what is originated."

The venerable shaykh Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī said in Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt: "Glory be to the One exalted beyond the apprehension of attributes and beyond the encompassing of Him by the forms of languages. The judgments of alteration do not attach to Him, nor the differences of transformation. The aspirations of dreams do not overtake Him, nor the presence of the conceptions of understanding, nor the roaming thoughts of imagination. He is not attained by a sense, nor described by a genus; He does not occur to conjecture, nor do eyes see Him. He is not described by the senses, apprehended by analogy, or likened to human beings.

"He is exalted beyond an opposing contrary, an equal rival, or the likeness of any thing. Eyes do not perceive Him, while He perceives eyes, and He is the Subtle, the Aware. He is exalted beyond the likeness of bounded beings and distinct from the essences of existent things. Imaginations are subdued before the might of His dominion; understandings are confined before the description of His kingdom; intellects fall short of apprehending the knowledge of His permanence; and eyes become weary before perceiving the manner of His greatness.

"He indicates, through the governance of compounds and the determination of ranks—in the raised roof, the spread-out resting place, and the fashioned human being—that all of this is originated and brought into being, standing in need of an Originator who has neither likeness nor similitude. Otherwise every deity would have gone off with what it had created and some of them would have risen over others. Glory be to God above what they describe. He has no equal, for an equal is one who rivals another in equivalence; and He has no contrary, for a contrary is one who opposes another in opposition.

"He has indicated His ipseity through His creation and His traces, and His path through His prophets and chosen ones. The intellect has no way to attain His essence, for likening the Originator to His originated beings is impossible. Exalted is He above being bounded by thought, encompassed by determination, or having an equal and counterpart. We bear witness with a testimony that is the opening of beneficence and the pleasure of the Merciful that there is no god but God, whose praise no speaker can reach and whose treasuries no recipient can diminish."

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God sanctify him—said: "Since He, exalted is He, insofar as He is He, has no attribute or description, no limit, no likeness, no counterpart, and no minister, then insofar as He is He, He is not perceived, attributes do not overtake Him, and states do not occur to Him in the worlds of body and intellect. His ipseity is an ipseity unlike any ipseity in which another of His originated beings could share. For if it were possible for something to share with Him in any aspect, that thing would necessarily belong to His genus in the aspect in which the sharing occurred.

"Since difference exists among all existent things by what each possesses or lacks, there must be One who precedes them and particularizes them with that by which each differs from its companion and agrees with its companion. That One is the one worshipped, not any other. Therefore when it is said that He, exalted is He, is one, knowing, powerful, living, or the like, this does not mean that He possesses knowledge, life, and power by which He becomes described; rather it means that He is the maker of the one, of the knowing, of the powerful, of the living, and of the rest."

He also said in another discourse: "Praise be to God, who is too mighty to have an exemplar and too majestic for any statement to describe Him in any respect; the One concerning whom intellects are bewildered, so that they cannot take up the search for that by which they might name Him except by the obstacle of their own incapacity to reach

Him; and before whom minds wander so that they cannot strike a spark in seeking something they might make His attribute, except what their ignorance gives them possession of and what they then attribute to Him.

“I praise Him with the praise of one whose intellect has been brought near to nothing concerning His essence except that He alone is He. There is no one among His originated beings but glorifies Him, nor any thing among His inventions but cries out in praise of Him. And I bear witness in truth, with the testimony by which I was raised and by which I hope for deliverance and attainment of triumph when there is no escape, that divinity belongs to none of what is perceived by intellect or soul, nor to what imagination or sense judges, except that souls are driven, when acknowledging Him, to say that He is God, there is no god but He and no one worshipped besides Him.”

This is his statement—may God sanctify him. We say: if, concerning the Originator—glorified is He—we say that He is knowing, then we have posited knowledge, a knower, and a known. If we say He is powerful, we have posited power, one who is powerful, and something over which power is exercised. If His power is over what He brought into existence and created, was He powerful before He brought it into existence? If it is said that He was powerful, then this is a name pre-eternal with Him; if it is said that He became powerful after He brought into existence and created, then that name is originated and is an effect of originated things. The same applies to all other names and attributes.

If we say that He is powerful and that in His creation there is also one called powerful, and if God’s power—glorified is He—is the complete, perfect power while whatever is beneath it is deficient power, this would still be participation in an attribute. The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: “Association is more hidden than the crawling of an ant on a black stone in a dark night.” The only way out of association is therefore to negate names, attributes, descriptions, and indications from God Most High, Creator of created things; to acknowledge that whatever we describe Him by is only from the necessity of expression and does not truly fall upon Him; to recognize that no method is sound by which such descriptions could be placed upon the transcendent ipseity; and to know that incapacity to apprehend Him is apprehension, while He is exalted above being pointed to and said of: “that.”

The Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—said: “Incapacity to apprehend apprehension is apprehension, and searching after the hidden essence is association.” The veils of the unseen are covered over for him by the darknesses of incapacity; the spheres of intellect do not disclose them. Nor is it said of Him that He is a “thing,” because thingness is an attribute of what He originated, created, brought forth, produced, and fashioned.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—said: “Things are divided into three divisions. The first, noblest, and most perfect is that which comes to be without time; this is specifically named ibdāʿ, origination. The second, which is intermediate, is that which is together with time; this is specifically named inbiʿāth, emanation. The third, which is beneath them, is that which comes to be in time; this is specifically named iḥdāth, temporal production. What comes to be in time is an act proceeding from an acting cause within time and place, and this belongs to the world of generation and corruption. As for the one called powerful and knowing, that is the First Existent.”

It is not said that the Exalted—glorified is He—is “a thing unlike things,” for “thing” necessarily implies thingness. Whoever says, “I know nothing except that He is He,” has still made an indication toward something known.

Whoever says that the actions of servants make Him pleased or angry has made states pass over Him, for this would require His transition from anger to pleasure when obedience occurs, and from pleasure to anger when disobedience occurs. The actions of servants return upon the servants themselves, while the true Originator is exalted above such a thing. God—exalted is He—says: “Whoever acts righteously, it is for himself; and whoever does evil, it is against himself; and your Lord is not unjust to the servants.”

The Originator of originated things is exalted above them, because the one who originates does not resemble anything he has originated. Were He to resemble any of them in any respect, He would be originated. If we trace the causes of creation and its coming-to-be, we know that it has an Originator whom our intellects are incapable of apprehending. Exalted is He far above what the wrongdoers say.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn also said: “Exalted is He above one who stands at a summit of loftiness such that it would be possible for another to precede Him and rise above Him so that He would be beneath that other. He is beyond the furthest extremity of all ranks in majesty, greatness, magnificence, praise, power, and splendor. The field of intellect is too narrow to encompass Him. Exalted is God with a great exaltation.”

The Knower—peace be upon him—said: “Praise be to God: likening Him is association, stripping Him of reality is destruction, and incapacity to apprehend Him is apprehension.” He also said—peace be upon him: “I bear witness that there is no god but God alone, without partner, exalted above things and opposites, too great for equivalents and rivals, too mighty for birth and offspring, sanctified beyond measure and number; the One who, by His existence, is exalted beyond the attributes of every created thing and the marks of every lorded-over being. The intellect, despite the majesty of His rank and loftiness of His elevation, with all the varieties of its powers, is unable to apprehend anything of His majesty or encompass even the least of the powers by which He originated it, except by acknowledgment of His ipseity. Then, after that acknowledgment, it remains bewildered and exhausted, negating from Him whatever it conceives of Him—affirming after negating, negating after affirming—and it does not reach His rank except by what the utmost of its power can encompass: pure affirmation consisting in acknowledgment of incapacity and submission to the One who originated it, brought it into existence, and manifested it. Glory be to Him and exalted is He far above what the wrongdoers say.”

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—said: “Then the First Originated Being, which is the complete and perfect origination, despite its completeness and perfection, does not encompass anything concerning His existence—glorified is He—nor comprehend Him. Nor, when establishing Him, does it find anything toward which to point and thereby comprehend Him, except that it itself is the furthest end of all ends among all things, east and west. Whatever it borrows from its own essence in speaking of Him is found in its own essence, and it obtains nothing but a conception of itself. It therefore returns unsuccessful, knowing that such a thing is not within its power.

“Since origination is an act and pure existence, and its direction is toward being existent, it is occupied with what is outside its own essence, from which it proceeded into existence, yet it has no way to behold or encompass it. It is therefore bewildered. Despite its bewilderment, it longs to behold in order to encompass, but the impossibility veils it. Its bewilderment is like the bewilderment of a seeker who seeks what cannot be grasped by his hand, or of one who longs to look directly upon the sun with his sight. That is its limit. It has no knowledge beyond its knowledge of itself: that it is originated, longing to know that from which it came into existence, and bewildered concerning it.

“Its being incapable of comprehending the One from whom it came into existence, and bewildered concerning Him, is not a deficiency in its essence in the way that ignorance of something is a deficiency in our own essences. Rather, it is because the Exalted—glorified is He—is of such tremendous transcendence beyond apprehension that no intellect can encompass Him. Apprehension on the part of the apprehender is possible only by standing opposite the thing sought to be known and seeking from it that by which it may be described. Intellects are restrained from this, become incapable, remain bewildered concerning Him, and fall short—like the shortcoming of our eyes when confronting the disk of the sun. That is not because the eyes are defective as eyes; rather, the sun in the intensity of its light snatches away sight when the eyes face it, so they become incapable and turn away from it vanquished and bewildered.”

This is his statement—may God exalt his sanctity.

Much has been transmitted from the friends of God—peace be upon them—concerning the negation of attributes from the Originator and His transcendence beyond being apprehended, imagined, delimited, described, characterized, given a modality, or encompassed. Its explanation would be lengthy, while its light illuminates the one who accompanies it.

Indeed, a human being is incapable of apprehending even the rank immediately above him—the lower ḥadd from whom he takes his benefit and upon whom he depends. How, then, could he attain knowledge of the supreme station from which religion proceeds and upon which the people of tawḥīd depend? How could he attain knowledge of the Intellect of the world of origination, to whom there comes from his Originator tremendous light and radiance? Such a thing is remote indeed from his apprehension; the path to it is closed except through what he receives from the masters of taʾyīd.

How, then, could intellects describe the Originator of originated beings, the One who brought the earths and heavens into existence, by whose command the celestial spheres move, by whose power the heavenly bodies run in their courses—lights, coverings, flaming stars, and illuminations? Between Him and them are veils of lordship and the greatness of divinity that blind the eyes of hearts and turn them back from ascending to knowledge of the Knower of the unseen. Imaginations wander; understandings fall short; the expression of speech stops after hope and aspiration. It finds before it the pavilions of incapacity spread out, while the sharpest intellects are prevented and veiled.

Exalted is the Originator of originated beings above being characterized by attributes, described by an essence, delimited by directions, apprehended by purified intellects, or likened to anything among sensible or intelligible things. There is no god but God. Praise be to God with the praise of the grateful, those who stand, through incapacity to apprehend Him, in the station of those who know their own limitation. Upon Him we rely, and through Him we seek help.

Chapter Three

On the proper referents of the Most Beautiful Names of God and who is entitled to be indicated and designated by them

We say: we have already established the Originator—glorified is He—who is indicated by the term "ipseity," and we have shown how every attribute, subtle or dense, bears witness to His divinity. We then set forth His transcendence beyond names and attributes, and beyond being characterized by descriptions; and, by the praise and aid of God, the explanation of this has become clear. In this chapter we therefore wish to explain the proper locations of the attributes and the places in which the indications signified by the Most Beautiful Names are to be found: those to whom they are applied and by whom they are designated.

We say: since God—glorified is He and exalted is His ipseity—is transcendent and purified beyond being described by attributes or characterized by descriptions and marks, yet the Noble Qurʾan mentions such names and God—exalted is He—says, "To God belong the Most Beautiful Names, so call upon Him by them," it is necessary that we know those names and the direction in which they are to be applied and the one to whom they refer.

The Most Beautiful Names of God through which His tawḥīd, His transcendence, and His abstraction are known are spiritual intellects and luminous ḥudūd. Through them He is known; from them one draws and drinks from the sea of His tawḥīd. They indicate Him and point toward Him as a name indicates the named and an attribute indicates a meaning—even though, exalted is He, He is not in truth called "the named," nor is anything of that kind intended of Him except because expression and speech by borrowed letters compel us.

The noblest of His names and the most exalted of what He brought into existence in the world of His purity is the First Intellect and the First Existent, to whom the scholars have pointed and whom the sages have indicated. He is the most excellent of the Names.

Some of the ḥudūd—may God exalt their degrees—have said: he is the Greatest Name of God and the greatest named one; the one by whom all existent things are named; the one who calls to his own essence through his essence; the First before every thing and the Last after every thing; the one designated by the past Imam to the following Imam in every period, and manifested through the one who comes afterward in the present state; for he is the one who receives and is received, upon whom no blink of an eye passes in absence; pre-eternal and everlasting with respect to the end assigned to him, appearing however he wills in the noblest of his luminous temples and in the lowest of his spiritual ḥudūd. From him is the beginning and to him the end. He is the one and unique, preceding all existent things, proclaiming the tawḥīd of his Originator, transcendent beyond marks.

This designation falls upon him, and likewise upon every intellective ḥadd and every luminous station among the prophets of God, His friends, and the ḥudūd of His religion, who indicate His clear tawḥīd, His transcendence, and His abstraction. Every such station in its age receives what falls upon the world of origination and there reaches it what reaches the First from his Originator. Thus it is called the Greatest Name of God, His most noble Gate, and the straightest path.

Our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—said, describing the preceding Intellect in the world of origination and holiness, the station of greatness that is the genus of every genus: "Praise be to God, the Originator of the One, complete in himself, intellective of himself, sufficient through his being originated, acting with respect to every effect and bearing every borne thing. He rests upon nothing but the ipseity of the One who brought him into existence; he stands only through the work of His unity as a support. Every one beneath him depends upon him, and from him receives and toward him returns. He is the First, the one who has no first before him; the cause of movements and the cause of rests. Were there a first before him, his firstness would be impaired; were there a cause of his existence, his unity and his pre-eternity would be impaired."

In another place he said: "I bear witness that there is no god but the One whose tawḥīd cannot be known except through His ḥudūd, while the people of deviation go to extremes in likening Him and delimiting Him."

And in one of his supplications he said: "O God, You who are exalted beyond the cause of every bounded thing and above the mention of every existent thing: You manifested Yourself through Your ḥudūd, and by what appeared from Your originated beings You indicated Your tawḥīd."

In one of his sermons he also said: “I bear witness that there is no god but the One from whose ḥudūd whoever deviates falls from the station of His tawḥīd; and whoever turns away from those whose purification His Book bears witness to has turned from the judgment of His justice toward injustice. In every age He establishes among them a guide whom He sets up as caller to religion and announcer of faith. Whoever believes in him is secure; whoever deviates from him is tried and humbled; and whoever opposes His ḥudūd and turns away from them God makes wretched.”

He also said—may God sanctify his spirit: “He fashioned created beings in pre-eternity and brought them into existence from His own act according to what wisdom required. He judged with truth and did not call toward non-being. He is manifest in order to establish the proof over them, yet hidden from senses and imaginations in the world He fashioned. Each looks toward Him according to the degree of purity he possesses, like one who looks at his face in a mirror. He made Himself familiar to them in order to establish the proof over them, while they remain incapable of comprehending His modality and their intellects do not attain knowledge of His quiddity. It is fitting that one for whom existence has not become sound and knowledge of the ḥudūd has not become sound should persist in denial and rejection.”

It is related from our master al-Ṣādiq—peace and blessings upon him—that he heard a man say, “God is greater.” He asked: “Greater than what?” The man replied: “Than every thing.” He said: “You have bounded Him by saying that. Rather, God is greater than being bounded, described, conceived, or known.” He is not joined to bodily forms, nor paired with spirits, limits, or regions. Exalted is He above being delimited, sensed, touched, physically examined, or apprehended by the inward knot of thought or by the encompassing of reflection.

Whatever appears in revelation as language of likeness is intended for His friends, who are His Most Beautiful Attributes and His Highest Names. Through them the knot of tawḥīd becomes sound and through them the distinction between conjunction and abstraction is made clear. Exalted is He above intellects comprehending Him, eyes seeing Him, veils concealing Him, times changing Him, or places surrounding Him; and exalted is He above opposites and rivals, corruption, breaking the promise, and imposing upon servants what they are unable to bear.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—made this plain and disclosed its proof for those who look with the eyes of their intellects when he said in Rāḥat al-ʿAql: “The felicity of souls lies in instruction from the divinely sent guides, such as our Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—and the Imams from his progeny who stand in his place in guidance and explanation. Their felicity is not completed except through receiving what they learn and teach from them, and through knowing and believing that the One upon whom existence depends—glorified is He—has among existent things no form, no attribute, and no condition through which intellects could reach the encompassing of Him according to their conceptions. Every thing conceived and every thing expressed by any language is His creation and His act. Exalted and magnified is He.

“When one of us intends to speak of Him through what he supposes he has refined, examined, reflected upon, estimated, and imagined, what he thought complete and sufficient as a statement concerning the Exalted One turns back into an attribute belonging to the domain of existent things, which are invented and originated. This resembles what occurs when one attempts to represent the hamza, which has no independent written form in the language: it turns into an alif, a wāw, or a yāʾ, all of which are themselves among the structures of the language. This is a general statement behind which lies a detailed explanation grasped by whoever is truly our brother.”

This is his statement—may God sanctify his spirit. In it he makes tawḥīd clear and declares God—majestic and exalted—transcendent beyond the names that fall upon the chosen beings He originated and brought into existence from among the ḥudūd. The hamza, by which he means that it has no form of its own, turns into the alif, the wāw, and the yāʾ. Thus it is a symbol pointing toward names and attributes and showing that they do not fall upon the Creator—glorified is He—who is exalted and transcendent beyond them.

There is therefore no form by which He is described or through which one arrives at knowledge of Him. The alif is a symbol of the First Intellect, which is the first of the higher letters and toward which the name is directed rather than toward the transcendent ipseity. The wāw points to the sixth of the speaking-prophets, who gathered the laws of those before him into his own law and called them to it. The yāʾ points to the waṣī, the gate to the Qāʾim, possessor of unveiling through taʾwīl and explanation.

He is the one intended in the saying of God in the Qurʾan: “Do they await anything but its taʾwīl? On the day its taʾwīl comes, those who had forgotten it before will say: the messengers of our Lord came with the truth.” He is the

possessor of the Day of Separation, the gatherer of all creation, the promised day indicated by His saying—exalted is He: “Say: indeed the former and the later peoples will be gathered to the appointed time of a known day.”

Thus the referents of names and attributes become clear. God is exalted above being marked by the speech of any language. Tawḥīd is the establishment of the Originator—glorified is He—as the One who makes the one, as the cause of originated beings and created things, just as the one is the cause of number. Tanzīh is the stripping of names and attributes from God, the One worshipped, and their placement upon the chosen ranks He originated and created among the ḥudūd. Tajrīd is the stripping of divinity from those ranks and its establishment for their Originator, whom they themselves are incapable of apprehending. Whoever aspires to describe Him falls into the snares of incapacity and association. “That is God, your Lord; there is no god but He, so worship Him. To Him belongs judgment, and to Him you shall be returned.”

One of the eminent sages said: “God—mighty and majestic—is One. Before created beings He was uniquely possessed of pre-eternity, with no second together with Him and no creation. Then He originated creation as a second order and made all creation dependent one upon another, one part holding another, opposed and contrary, similar and paired, connected and separated. Yet He—mighty and majestic—remained independent of all His creation. He needed nothing such that it would be joined to Him because of His need for it; nor did any thing rival Him such that it would become His contrary and harm Him; nor could either of two powers stand distinct from Him. Rather, He was uniquely independent of all His creation, because He was before every thing.

“Firstness therefore indicates uniqueness, for before Him there was no thing sharing pre-eternity with Him as He alone possessed it, such that He would become second by origination.

“The name ‘one’ is a name that indicates one order: by its name one knows that it is one and that no thing precedes it. In arithmetic the one has no number before it; rather it precedes every numbered thing, and it lies outside the series of number. However you intend it or divide it, nothing is added to it and nothing is diminished from it. You say: one times one is one; nothing is added to the one. You say: half of one and half of one; the expression ‘one’ is not altered. This indicates that there is no thing before it.

“When it indicates that no thing precedes it, it indicates the origination of thingness. When it indicates that it is the one who originates thingness, it indicates that it is the meaning of thingness; and when it is the meaning of thingness, it indicates that thingness comes after it. If no thing is before it and no thing is after it in the sense of sharing its pre-eternity, then it is uniquely possessed of pre-eternity. For that reason it is said: the one is one and unique.”

This is the statement of the eminent sage. The First Intellect is described by the name of oneness and uniqueness in truth because he was the first to proclaim the tawḥīd of his Originator, the One who brought him into existence and made him one. Through this he became pre-eternal relative to what followed him and attained the second perfection after the first perfection.

The one is the beginning of number. When you count—doubling, tripling, and proceeding as far as you will—the one is present within the numbers and never absent from them. This indicates that the whole of creation bears witness to the Creator—glorified is He—through lordship and indicates the Intellect whose rank is that of oneness. All the ḥudūd, high and low, proclaim the tawḥīd of their Originator, indicate knowledge of the One who brought them into existence and invented them, and acknowledge the precedence of the First over them, who is the one of the ones. Each among them is singular in the rank in which he stands, issuing and receiving. Each is lorded over by the one above him; all are veiled from the unseen Possessor of Might. They are veils brought near and servants honored: “They do not precede Him in speech, and by His command they act.” Whoever among them were to say, “I am a god apart from Him,” such a one We recompense as We recompense the wrongdoers.

Everything mentioned in the way of attributes, and everything by which the Unseen of the unseen is indicated through any name or sign, falls upon His ḥudūd. Through this comes knowledge of His tawḥīd. There is no god but God: the One whose First Existent proclaimed His tawḥīd and declared Him transcendent beyond the mark of every existent thing. This is a testimony written together with the testimony of the knowers and calling us to stand, with those who stand, at the boundary of His ḥudūd concerning what the True One—glorified is He—originated. Upon God we rely, and through Him we seek help.

Chapter Four

On the description of the existence of the world of origination at the first instant, and the equality of its members in the first existence, both individually and collectively

We say, seeking help from God and relying upon Him, and drawing support from the blessings of His friends for success in word and deed, according to what we have received from the people of excellence and perfection and according to what we answer when asked about it: the Originator of originated beings, exalted beyond names and attributes, originated the world of origination all at once, not from any thing that would serve as a first matter for them, nor upon any thing that would serve as a likeness and model, nor in any thing that would serve as a place, nor together with any thing that would serve as a companion, nor for the sake of any thing that would serve as an aim compelling Him toward it. Exalted and sublime is He.

Rather, it is as our master the Dāʿī Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—described when he said: "In the abode of origination and emanation there is no obstacle, because it is free of the materials that hinder and because its beings are stripped of them, being pure forms neither attached to matter nor containing matter that would bar them from action."

Since there is no obstacle there, the existence of its existent beings is without time and all at once. It resembles the illumination of the simple air by the light of the sun, which occurs without time, and the illumination of a dark house by a lamp all at once and without time. It also resembles the action of nature when it imitates those acts that are raised above time in what it brings forth into existence: for example, the date-palm, which it brings forth with its trunk, fruit, and clusters, the beginning of whose matter lies in the small kernel although none of its parts, in respect of the first perfection to which it belongs, precedes another; and the pomegranate, which it brings forth from the pomegranate tree with its seeds, divisions, interior, and exterior, without bringing forth one of them after another in respect of the archetypal form.

Since the first things and principles existed together in this manner, whereas the opposite is true of the lower ḥudūd because those first things are at the utmost limit of the first perfection while these lower things are at the utmost limit of deficiency, it is not impossible that the existence of the latter occurs through time and duration.

The eminent person, author of the Epistles—peace be upon him—said concerning this: "The things were brought into existence all at once. God—exalted is He—determined their affair when He began it in potentiality all at once, while in actuality it proceeds gradually until the end of its completion, its perfection, and its attainment of the most excellent completeness and the most perfect affair."

This is his statement—God's blessings be upon him. That world was equal in the first existence and in the first perfection. Nothing among it preceded another, and there was no superiority of one thing over another at that stage; otherwise it would have been necessary for the One who created them to make one thing preceding and another following, one thing superior and another inferior. Their superiority came only according to their precedence thereafter, and their falling behind according to the degree of their hesitation, as we shall set forth in this book and relate in the chapters that follow.

Life, power, knowledge, and ability were present among them in the first perfection. Their number cannot be counted and their multitude cannot be grasped by anyone except the One who brought them into existence, originated them, began them, and invented them without model: God, majestic in glory, the Great, the Exalted.

This perfection in which they were brought into existence is life, receptive of the second perfection and bearing the noble attributes in all their meanings.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—said: "When these affairs that are exalted in nobility are mentally stripped away from life, life is thereby stripped away; and when life is removed, the existence of all the rest becomes impossible. This demonstrates necessarily that these affairs—power, knowledge, truth, existence, and the rest—exist through life and depend upon it for subsistence. Life is the substance that receives them, and all of them are accidents attached to it. It is the essence that exists from the Exalted One—glorified is He—and it is the first perfection, bearing the other things. Whatever is besides it follows its existence, is carried in it, and proceeds in it in the manner of the second perfection. Thus it is like the center, while the others are like the circle that turns around it."

Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī—may God sanctify his spirit—said of those essences in his book Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt: "Praise be to God, who generously established existent things not from an existent thing, and who manifested the hidden and concealed not from potentiality; the One whose generosity brought forth, in the first existence, the forms of all things at once, without precedence and without delay. Existence was united with what received existence, and the existent was united with generosity. In His bringing forth the subtle and the dense, the share of a single atom, despite its smallness and littleness, was not diminished, nor was the share of the celestial sphere, despite its nobility and loftiness, diminished from the first existence. Rather, things are diverse and opposed, yet equal with respect to the first generosity, while differing in respects that belong to themselves.

"The thoughts of existent beings and the furthest reach of hidden things are incapable of grasping this, let alone the One who generously bestowed them. There is no god with Him in this power, no counterpart to Him in this generosity, no likeness beside Him in this governance, no matter before Him in this origination, no need driving Him toward this invention, and no necessity compelling Him in this production. He is sanctified and exalted beyond this power, generosity, governance, origination, invention, and production being apprehended by anyone or encompassed by any existent thing with respect to the majesty of His measure.

"He planted in the first existence the form of every manifest and hidden thing and made it preceding with respect to everything that follows and beginning with respect to every end. He is the One whom every thing glorifies and sanctifies, declaring Him transcendent beyond every expression and inward conception and beyond every indication and estimation. Glory be to the God through whose one command these two worlds and all the wonders of wisdom and marvels of governance within them were established.

"If the intelligent and discerning person were to compare the manner in which the lowest of created beings and the noblest of them came to be at once, his intellect would become bewildered and lost; and if the clever and acute person reflected upon it, his thought would return defeated and exhausted. How, then, could anyone be able to apprehend the true Originator by whose command the two worlds stand together with all their differences? No one can apprehend the meaning of His sanctification, glorification, and holiness."

He continued until he said: "For by one command He invented existent things all at once, however He willed and however He intended, and after that He had no need of transformation or alteration."

This is his statement—may God exalt his sanctity—clarifying the existence of what the Originator brought into existence from the world of origination at the first instant, and how all things were manifest in that existence. From that existence there was manifested the One who manifests and originates, the true Originator, through the tawḥīd of the one who proclaimed His tawḥīd; and from it the world of subtlety became ordered according to the measure of its precedence.

Whatever was beneath the First Preceder was beneath him, within his horizon; no lower one preceded a preceding one, and no following one became prior to a higher one, according to their degrees in proclaiming the tawḥīd of the Originator and according to the measure of their noble and exalted stations of excellence.

In that same existence, whatever fell behind fell and became dense. From it came the corporeal and bodily world in proportion to the degree of its falling behind. In the calling of that spiritual world, those who fell behind fell into the rank of densification; because of their incapacity and hesitation in glorifying their Originator they descended from subtlety and fell into the world of natures.

Evil had no root in origination. Rather, evil arose from falling behind, which is the cause of falling into density and into the world of natures.

The eminent person, author of the Epistles—peace and blessings upon him—said in the Comprehensive Epistle: "It has been established and verified by demonstration that evil has no root in origination. The incapacity of things, through some coming to be from others, is called evil in the sense of falling behind and failing to attain the degree of the superior one who preceded them. Thus the inferior failed to attain the degree of the more excellent, and contented itself with the lower, baser station. This is pure evil, far removed from good fortune and distant from felicity."

The chosen Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—set forth an example in his revealed law corresponding to the existence of this world from the true Originator—glorified is He—and made clear in his religious institution what corresponds to it. He made the recitation of the Qurʾan as it was revealed, fulfillment of its conditions, and action according to what it requires—purification, religion, righteousness, trustworthiness, justice,

restraining anger, extinguishing the uprising of evil, performing obligatory duties, required works, acts of obedience, steadfastness in the three [degrees of obedience], good governance, and other righteous works—an image corresponding to that world in its first perfection. To this he directed and upon it he relied.

Whoever among human beings rises with these conditions and institutions becomes prepared to receive what the intellects received from their second perfection and to ascend through it into the spiritual world. Whoever falls behind, is deficient, descends, turns back, retreats, and recoils becomes incapable of that ascent.

Consider from where the excellent arose and the friends of God became manifest: was it not through acceptance of those commands and through guarding themselves from what is forbidden? And from where did those of corrupt inwardness and the people of disagreement arise? God—exalted is He—says: “O you who believe, respond to God and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life.”

They were not called believers until they had affirmed the Prophet—peace be upon him—and upheld the outward form of his sharīʿa and the greatness of his call. Then he called them to the everlasting life through responding to the second call and following the waṣī and the noble, excellent progeny, so that they might live an eternal life and attain a second perfection by which they would resemble the intellects and acquire a station in the everlasting abode.

Life is therefore like walāya, through which the respondent receives. Whoever upholds its commands but does not remain firm upon the inward meaning of walāya and its obligations descends from the rank of the excellent and becomes a pasture for sins and vices. May God make us among those who hold fast to His friends and are saved, and may He make for us a passage out of the constriction of symbols into the spaciousness of meanings.

Reflect, my brother, upon the affair of the world of origination and understand what was instituted from the noble ordinances. Perhaps you may be delivered from the darknesses of the world of natures and join the genus of genera and the highest of kinds when the subtle things are separated from the dense and the meanings are manifested through lights and gnoses.

May God make us and you among those who follow the book of the guides, who hear the call of those who call, and who are among those united in His religion, not among those who differ and oppose one another, by the right of Muḥammad and his family. Amen, amen.

Chapter Five

On the precedence of the First of the world of origination in tawḥīd, and what was bestowed upon him, because of his precedence, of support through the light of taʾyīd

We say: praise and thanks belong to God for His blessings and favors, and we seek good and taʾyīd through the blessings of His friends. We have already mentioned that the Unseen of the unseen—glorified is He—originated the essences equal in their first perfection in every respect. Since they were equal in that first perfection and were prepared for the second perfection, upon which reliance is placed, one among them preceded his fellows in reflection and in clarifying the genus to which he belonged. He looked from his own essence through his own essence, without a teacher, guide, or inspirer other than the One who brought him and them into existence.

He knew that he had an Originator who had brought him into existence. Thus he distinguished himself from his fellows by proclaiming the tawḥīd of his Creator and declaring his Maker transcendent. He placed his Originator and Producer before himself, bearing witness to the establishment of divinity for Him, speaking by indication toward the ipseity and declaring the Originator transcendent beyond whatever could be described of Him. His fellows were equal with him in innate aptitude and true intuition.

Had he had a teacher, one who pointed the way, or an inspirer, the special favor shown him would have been an injustice toward those among his world who were not specially favored in the same way, and his selection above them would have been favoritism. But when he preceded them in tawḥīd and stood among them declaring his Originator transcendent by the tongue of abstraction and sanctifying the One who originated him, there was no external teacher between him and the truth he recognized.

The One who had brought him into existence after it had not been possible for him to exist made him, without place, where his Originator willed him to be. He made him an eye for his world; and just as he was the first of his world in existence, so He made him the most perfect of them in perfection, the loftiest in station, and the highest in majesty. From his Originator there came to him spiritual substance and taʾyīd. The Word reached him, through which he merited pre-eternity relative to those beneath him and merited taʾyīd. Through it he merited excellence, exaltation, light, radiance, illumination, power, splendor, and brightness.

He became the place upon which the rays of the lights of the Unseen were cast, the recipient of that hidden mystery beyond which the other intellects fell short. His Originator singled him out and chose him, brought him near and addressed him intimately, raised and exalted his degree, made him unique and elevated him, made him His Greatest Name, and named him the noblest and most generous.

He was therefore first like the one that is the first of the numbers, preceding the world of holiness that is symbolically designated as the world of units. His Originator made him His nearest veil and His highest and most exalted gate: the meaning of meanings and the utmost end of the second perfection in relation to the spiritual world; the light of lights, the secret of secrets, the hidden mystery belonging to the Dominating, Mighty, Compelling One.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: “The first thing God created was the Intellect. He said to it: Come forward, and it came forward. Then He said to it: Turn back, and it turned back. He said: By My might and My majesty, I have created nothing dearer to Me than you. Through you I reward, and through you I punish.”

Its coming forward was its drawing support from its Originator, who is the one who caused it to subsist, the one from whom it received its spiritual substance, and the one who raised it to the highest spiritual ranks. It was its ascent and its conveying support to its noble spiritual world, its choosing its Originator over the world of holiness, and the coming into existence from it of the noblest relation. The ranks of the world of origination then appeared successively from it.

Its turning back was the manifestation of the lower relation, symbolically designated as prime matter and form, and the succession of the lower world from it, until the three natural kingdoms appeared within it.

This resembles what we have seen in the speaking-prophet of our cycle—God’s blessings be upon him—who was the most excellent of the stations and the one who preceded in excellence toward the loftiest ends. His coming forward was his receiving from the one who instructed him, who was his lord in the sense of the rank that raised him and caused him to ascend; and it was his conveying to the higher ḥudūd what he had received from the light of the world of holiness and pouring upon them what reached him from Intellect and Soul.

His turning back was his rising to establish the commands of his sharīʿa and giving corporeal form to what the Trustworthy Spirit brought down upon his heart so that he might convey it to his community, for in nobility and excellence he was the counterpart of the preceding Intellect.

The noble stations among the ḥudūd of his waṣī correspond to the world of origination, being exalted and lofty; and his sharīʿa, with all its obligations and institutions, corresponds to what exists in the world of nature. He received from the one who had designated him and fulfilled his walāya on the day of Ghadīr through explicit designation of him, indicating his light, beyond whose utmost reach the other lights stand. “There, walāya belongs to God, the True.” Thus the succession of ranks, high and low, becomes clear.

The noble spiritual being who preceded his world of holiness, when he preceded to the tawḥīd of his Originator, Producer, and Inventor, longed to apprehend Him. He stopped, became bewildered, and fell short. His sight returned to him defeated. He remained in loving bewilderment before his Originator and in bewilderment before whatever among the other intellects was beneath him and fell short.

Because of this he merited being indicated by the name “God,” which is derived, in the author’s explanation, from ilāha in the sense of being bewildered and perplexed. The lower intellects were bewildered concerning him just as he was bewildered concerning the Unseen—glorified is He—who is exalted beyond likeness and representation. Their incapacity to apprehend him caused them to remain in bewilderment concerning him.

The Noble Book speaks of this when God—exalted is He—says: “God bears witness that there is no god but He.” What is intended by the name “God” in this esoteric application is the First Intellect, who points toward the transcendent ipseity by saying, emerging from the darkness of negation into the radiance of affirmation and indicating the Unseen—glorified is He—through the subtlest indications, “There is no god but He.” Thus he bears witness to divinity and proclaims unity.

That was his act through which he merited connection with the spiritual substance that is his knowledge. By it his perfection and nobility increased and his name became exalted.

The testimony of the angels is the utterance of the First Emanated One concerning his Originator in tawḥīd, his acknowledgment of the First’s precedence and excellence over him, and his turning toward him in glorification and praise out of reverence for the One who brought him into existence from non-being and originated him before the world of temporal production.

Those possessed of knowledge are the people of the garden of origination and those noble higher stations who arose after them. All of them proclaim the tawḥīd of the Originator—glorified is He—and all hasten to acknowledge the excellence of those noble intellects who preceded them.

All the Most Beautiful Names of God apply to the First Intellect, who stands at the furthest end of perfection, and to those noble stations in the world who manifest the Imamate and the Imam, while inwardly they point toward the unseen that imaginations cannot reach. Some of the Imams—peace be upon them—have said: “Our outward is Imamate and our inward is an unseen that cannot be comprehended.” The indication by the “unseen” is toward the First Originated Being united with them in function and represented through them, while the transcendent Originator remains veiled from all likeness and embodiment.

The eminent person, author of the Epistles—peace be upon him—pointed toward this noble ḥadd, whom his Originator singled out for distinction, in the Comprehensive Epistle when he said: “As for the One described with majesty and greatness, indicated by existence as the beginning of every existent thing, the receiver of the effusion of generosity, and the one at whom the ḥudūd terminate, he is the First Intellect. His Originator is too majestic for the description of describers and the characterization of those who characterize. It is only said, by way of faith and submission, ‘There is no god but He.’”

This statement establishes tawḥīd. For that reason it became the root upon which every sharīʿa and every religion depends. The Intellect negated divinity from his own essence and established it for his Originator, saying, “There is no god but He.” Thus he proclaimed the tawḥīd of his Originator.

He is the Intellect in whom pure unity becomes manifest. This is because spiritual substance and light are continually connected with his essence and never cease or disappear; rather they remain connected forever. For that reason God—exalted is He—says: “What is with you passes away, and what is with God remains.”

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—was asked: “Is there obligation in the world of origination?” He said: “There are two kinds of obligation. One is absolute obligation: the obligation of the celestial bodies and spheres to proceed according to their courses. The other is non-absolute obligation: the worship of human beings, through which they move from ignorance and deficiency toward the utmost nobility; and the worship of the Intellect toward his Originator, which is the negation of divinity from his own essence and its establishment for his Originator by acknowledgment of Him, submission before Him, supplication toward Him, glorification, and sanctification—not by way of apprehending Him.”

Thus he is the qibla of qiblas and the balance of justice in tawḥīd. His support to those beneath him does not cease. Were it to be cut off for even an instant, the heavens and the earth would be corrupted, tawḥīd would be nullified, taʾyīd would be severed, the ḥudūd would be rendered idle, and the affair of the world would pass into annihilation.

The act of giving has no weariness for him. His light and radiance are reward for the believers and his fire is punishment for the deniers.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn also said: “Origination, which is the originated being, cannot have another like it in existence by way of species, such that there would be two. That would necessitate a division in that upon which its existence depends, of some kind of division, so that from each division there would proceed what its relation required. It is therefore necessary that it be neither deficient nor possessed of an equal in its world. It is the origination and the originated being; it is the one and possesses unity. Nothing precedes it in existence as a cause for it or as an intermediary between it and its Originator. Nor is there anything equal to it in its perfection and completeness.”

It was called “origination” in relation to its Originator—majestic and exalted—who selected it, chose it, elected it, and raised and exalted its station. It is the sound, balanced act proceeding from its Originator—majestic, sanctified, and exalted. It was called “the originated being” in relation to its own essence, which is the beginning of its existence and its being together with its world.

The originated being, because its essence bears those other originated essences and because its form is deposited in their essences, came forth complete in actuality without time. Its first perfection and its second perfection were received all at once, faster than the glance of the eye, for there was no time there, no “when,” no prior existence before that existence, and no prior being.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—said in his book Rāḥat al-ʿAql: “Since actions are many, and each action that comes into existence is specifically named by a name by which it differs from the other according to the mode of its existence, and since ibdāʿ is an action through which that whose existence is not from any thing comes into existence, with no thing preceding it in existence to serve as matter for it, with no intermediary between it and that from which its existence comes, with no instrument, upon no thing, and for no purpose belonging to that from which its existence comes, it is named ibdāʿ and indicated by this name in order to make known that it came into existence when it had no prior entity in existence and that it came into existence not from any thing preceding it.”

Our saying “origination” does not require that origination be one thing and the originated being a second thing, consisting of origination and that which became originated through origination. It is known that in ordinary actions an effect is what becomes an effect through the action of an agent: the action is one thing and that which becomes an effect through the action is another thing. But it is impossible that anything precede origination and serve as the matter receptive of origination, because this would entail an existence not resulting from the origination of the transcendent ipseity—glorified is He—which is something imagination itself cannot consistently conceive. Otherwise each of the two would become distinct through a special property by which otherness would arise, one differing from the other, and there would then have to be another existence upon which both depended. Since this is impossible, it is established that the essence of origination is the originated being and that the originated being is the origination.

The originated being that is origination, because it is in the state already described—free of matter through which its existence would subsist, and free of a cause explaining why it exists in the manner in which it exists—stands as a true thing and a pure thing. It is not something possessing attributes that would indicate that its existence belongs to itself by being composed of two states, an attribute and something described. Such composition belongs to whatever falls under invention in the way other existent things do.

The matter is not that its simplicity means that it is, in the manner of other existent things, one thing that bears a description and a second thing that is the description—as in the case of a bed, whose matter is not its form, whose form is not its matter, and neither of which separately is the bed itself. Rather, the attributes by which the First is described follow that described essence in existence through relation.

Thus a human being, in relation to his own essence, is “born”; in relation to his parents he is “a child”; in relation to his child he is “a father”; and in relation to his sibling he is “a brother.” These attributes and meanings attach through relations.

Those two states are the first perfection, upon which the existence of the essence that is described depends, and the second perfection, upon which the nobility of the essence that is the attribute depends. The first perfection is like the bearer; the second perfection is like the explanation of the one borne.

This is his statement—may God sanctify his spirit—making clear that the Intellect, despite the unity of its essence, is called “origination” and “originated being” by two different relations and additions: its relation to its Originator, from whom its existence proceeds, and its relation to its own essence. Its first perfection is like the archetype, and the nobility of its essence lies in the second perfection, which is the explanation.

The Intellect, through its first and second perfection, becomes one thing with no separation between the two. We witness an analogue of this in simple air: when light falls upon it, the air and the radiance accepted by the air become as one thing. The illuminated air and the light received by it are not two independent realities in that state.

Likewise there is no separation between the essence of the Intellect and its form, since its first perfection is joined by its second perfection all at once.

The witness to the two perfections is also found in the teaching of the excellent to receptive learners. When teachers raise them to knowledge and explanation, what had existed first with them as words and the meanings they knew becomes, when they conceive it by their inner faculties, a subtle intelligible reality. Whatever becomes subtle joins what made it subtle, and the two become in a single state with no separation between them.

Do you not see that you may conceive sensible things in your intellect after your sight has conveyed them to you? Once you conceive them as intelligible things, you no longer need the eye for them, and you behold them in a state of subtlety.

We have brought these approximations only by way of instruction for the seeker of benefit and to bring the matter near to his understanding—not because that affair may truly be measured by anything among what is with us. It belongs to perfection and completeness in a noble state beyond which there is no end and after which there is no further goal. How could the utmost degree of subtle realities, separate from bodies and united in their own manner, be measured by what exists in this remote place?

“You were heedless of this, so We removed from you your covering, and today your sight is sharp.” May God remove the covering from our eyes and hearts and make us among those who know the meaning of the recitation through the favor of the pure friends of God and through the blessings of those who never cease looking toward us with the eye of their mercy. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.

Chapter Six

On how the First Origination became first for its world and the cause by which those after it followed one another successively in walāya

We say: aid is from God through His subtlety and taʾyīd and through the blessings of His friends and ḥudūd. We have already mentioned in the chapter preceding this one the First Intellect, and the completeness, perfection, exaltation, and majesty by which it is described, and that all of this reaches an utmost limit before which ordered speech falls short. What we brought there was only to indicate its precedence and excellence and to draw attention to the nobility by which it was uniquely distinguished, so that nothing like it exists in its perfection.

The friends of God and their ḥudūd have poured forth on this subject seas of knowledge whose depths are inaccessible to those who remain outside, while the lamp-niche of their lights shines for those who draw near from the side of the Mount of Sinai.

We say: when the First Intellect preceded to tawḥīd, to declaring transcendent the One who originated it, and to abstraction, and when the holy lights and noble spiritual effusions from its Originator became joined to it, it became first for its world and the cause by which the members of that world followed one another successively in walāya. They imitated its glorification of their Originator and Creator through its act, drawing support and drinking from the spring of its taʾyīd that poured upon them from the abundance of its bounty, and acknowledging the lofty nobility and excellence with which it had been specially distinguished.

The First Preceder and most excellent existent being was the one upon whose noble Intellect the noble intellects relied. From it they drew support and borrowed light. Through it they were sent forth with the shining noble holy lights and through it they were saved. It is the intermediary between them and their Originator—majestic and exalted—and His highest and most exalted veil.

It is a mountain of light and splendor, might and magnificence, majesty and radiance. Intellects are incapable of apprehending it and stand before it like one deficient and still, unable to move. Between them and it is a veil of its glittering lights, the purity of its exalted essence, and the noble substances that continually reach it. It is, in its rank, the form of unity. From it the noble ranks of the world of origination came into existence successively after it. It is like the one that is the beginning of number: upon it they rely and to it they are referred.

When the substances and lights of its Originator reached it, brought forth and invented, it poured them upon the noble intellects beneath it and upon the subtle holy lights. Concerning what reached it from the Unseen of the unseen and what was disclosed to it from the concealed secret, the author of the Comprehensive Epistle—peace and blessings upon him—said: “The covenant that He entrusted to it was that He caused it to be acquainted with what He caused it to know from His hidden knowledge and treasured secret: the knowledge of what has been and what will be. This was because He created it from His light and majesty, upon which no attribute expressed by an instrument of temporal origination may be applied. For an originated thing can describe only one like itself, while the Creator—majestic is His glory—is transcendent beyond the descriptions of describers among spiritual and corporeal beings.

“Only so much of this is said as is necessary to establish Him in the intellects of corporeal beings: that He is One without a second. The ‘one’ whose place in number indicates His first pure origination has no second, no equal in likeness or example. For the one does not permit imagination to suppose that anything of number preceded it, since it is the first existent being from which generosity overflowed.”

The existent being that no existence preceded is therefore the one. From it flowed the second. This is the one corresponding to the one in number, namely the First Origination. As for “the Unique” with the alif established, that refers, by way of indication, to the Originator—glorified is He.

Since the alif precedes the letters and the alif appears twice in the word al-aḥad in two different forms, the first is individual in itself while the second differs in form from the first because the letters are joined one to another. The first alif of al-aḥad signifies uniqueness; the second alif signifies oneness. Its oneness lies within its uniqueness. No boundary describes Him and no spatial indication points toward Him. Thus He is “the Unique,” while the first originated being He originated is “the one” from which units are sent forth and the first principle from whose fountain the sources of even and odd numbers spring.

This is his statement—peace be upon him. In it he explains what reached the originated being from its Originator from His hidden knowledge and treasured secret, which He entrusted to it and with which He made it acquainted. He made it the beginning of number, like the one. Since it is like the one, numbers become manifest from the one; likewise the exalted ranks of the world of origination and the worlds become manifest from this noble Intellect and subtle substance through which tawḥīd became clear and from which transcendence and abstraction began. The indications of the ḥudūd stop beneath it.

The term “the Unique” does not truly fall upon the Originator—exalted is He. Rather, in the conventional religious expression it falls upon the act symbolized by the Pen. From it arise the units and from it appear the even and odd numbers. It is the element of the noble elements and the beginning of the lofty subtle intellects. It is the complete one described by completeness. From it the separate intellects arose by the command of its Originator, the Great, the Exalted, the One raised above likenesses and exemplars.

From this noble ḥadd is the beginning and to it is the return. The fact that the one exists without place, time, or temporal instant—those things being the supports of the corporeal world—and the fact that the ḥudūd arise from it and begin from it in formal existence and in the subtle luminous meaning, indicate the unique distinction of this noble Intellect and that the spiritual intellects exist by means of it.

Where, then, can the piercing intellects become lost? Toward what can the questioner aspire with his question? They imagine it in some distant place, yet it is nearer to them than the jugular vein. Whatever benefit the one who seeks benefit receives from his truthful teacher, and whatever realities he draws from his guide and inspirer, are an indication of the overflow of those lights and a sign through which the people of insight are governed. Whoever recognizes the reality from the symbol and the meaning has attained the most excellent station and the highest rank.

Origination is sometimes symbolically called the First Cause because it is the first of causes and because the existence of what lies beneath it in the world of subtlety and pre-eternity depends upon it; while whatever is below that lies in the world of density and action. Existent things depend upon it and rely upon it in the first and second existence.

A witness to this is what we find and observe in natural matters: every thing has a cause from which it exists, and from that cause one ascends to another higher and more elevated cause. This occurs through the governance of the spiritual angels by the command of the Lord of the worlds. We likewise find the same pattern among the ḥudūd of the daʿwa and in the law governing religious affairs: each ḥadd depends upon the higher rank above it, which is its cause, from which it began and to which it returns.

This shows us that this noble Intellect and subtle meaning is the cause of all things, the cause of what is high and what is low; what is hidden and what is manifest depend upon it.

The eminent Dāʿī and excellent master Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Kirmānī clarified this in Rāḥat al-ʿAql when he said: “We say that the thing arranged first in existence is that which is conceived as not having been, which comes into existence by origination and invention: not from a thing, not upon a thing, not in a thing, not by means of a thing, not together with a thing, and not for the sake of a thing. This is what is called the First.

“Thus its existence by way of order is a fixed existence and a first existence, since it is a first end and a first cause upon which the existence of whatever lies beyond it among existent things depends, while the sequence turns from it toward the second end. This resembles the one in the existence of numbers: it is ordered and fixed as a first end and a first cause upon which the existence of every number other than it depends, while the sequence of numbers turns from it toward the second end.

“This is its establishment from the perspective of the order of existent things. From the perspective of the direction of action and its necessary issuance into existence: if the existence of the First were not established, the second would have no path into existence; and if the existence of the second were not established, the third would have no path into existence. Since the second and third cannot exist except through the establishment of something that is first with respect to them and a cause of their existence, then from the existence of the third, fourth, and the other existent things there arises proof of a First that is fixed for them and a cause without which nothing besides it could have existed.

“Thus, through their own existence, existent things establish for themselves a first principle upon which they are arranged in existence. This First Principle we call the First Intellect and the First Existent, whose existence is not from itself but from the origination of it by the Exalted One—glorified is He.

“If you reverse the direction of reasoning, since existent things are joined to their causes and depend upon them, every existent thing among them is in itself an act of what precedes it and an effect of it from no matter, while it acts upon what is beneath it from no matter. From the existence of existent things we therefore know that they terminate at a cause at which causes terminate, fixed and itself an act proceeding from One of whom it is not proper to say in the ordinary created sense that He is an agent. It is an effect not from matter and an agent not in a matter other than itself.

“The existence of an existent thing depends upon the establishment of what precedes it among its causes, which, if not established, would make the later thing impossible—like nine, whose existence is a cause for ten. Whenever nine is not established, ten is impossible. Since existent things are present and established, their causes are present and established. In analysis they continually rise away from multiplicity as one turns toward the first among them, diminishing until they terminate at one fixed thing that is the cause at which all causes terminate.

“Thus nine among the numbers indicates by its existence the existence of eight, and the existence of eight indicates the existence of seven. Analysis continues rising away from multiplicity toward that from which the things came to be until it terminates at one fixed ḥadd that is the cause of them all and by which they subsist. That one, preceding them in rank, does not exist by itself. In its own essence it is an act from One of whom it is not proper to speak as of an ordinary created agent. It is an effect not from matter and an agent not in a matter other than itself.

“We say that it is an act in its own essence because it is the First Existent, as we have explained, after the One of whom it is not proper to say that He is an agent in the same sense. If, by being an agent, it required another act from which its identity as agent arose, that would lead to infinite regress, as we have explained in our Epistle known as al-Rawḍa.”

Al-Kirmānī then says that analysis of existent things into their causes is a witness to what has been stated concerning the establishment of a First upon which everything other than it depends and that this analysis terminates at a one whose existence is not from itself but from another.

He says: “We find the human being, who is the last of existent beings and their second end, analyzable into many things upon which the matter of his composition depends and into many acting things. The abode of nature becomes as matter in which the action of bringing into existence whatever is capable of existing from it—such as the human being and others—takes place. All of these are standing in actuality: they are the angels entrusted with the world.

“Thus the human being is an agent in materials other than himself when he produces an artificial form, while he is an effect from the abode of nature and an act of the angels standing in actuality. His own agency exists because he is himself the act of another whose action established him, that is, brought him into existence.

“We find the abode of nature and the agents within it analyzable into things less numerous than the abode of nature and the agents gathered within it. These are prime matter and form together. Prime matter and form become matter for the formation of the celestial spheres and elements by the angels—that is, by the active principle standing in actuality.

“The abode of nature and those acting within it upon human beings and other existent things are therefore effects from that from which they came to be: the abode of nature from prime matter and form; and the agents from an agent like them that precedes them and is the act of the angel standing in actuality who precedes them all. Their agency exists because they are the act of the one whose action established them.”

He continues—may God exalt his sanctity: “When there exists among human souls one who has come forth into actuality, like the prophets, legatees, Imams—peace be upon them—and their followers, through their attainment of the two perfections, their completion of the two felicities, and their becoming a gathering-place of virtues emptied of vices, then the one who stands in complete actuality in his essence and act is the one through whom their perfection and ascent to the degree of standing in actuality occur. Through their dependence upon him, their existence becomes complete. Were he not there, they would have no passage into actuality.”

This is his statement—may God exalt his sanctity. He makes clear what we have mentioned and explains what we have set forth: that the First Origination is the first thing, existing before the other things and first in order; that its

essence is the cause of what exists among existent things and through it their subsistence and the stability of their spiritual, celestial, and corporeal realities are maintained. It is the First Cause in order, like the one that is the cause of number, and for this reason it is called the one and the unique.

It is the first principle from which the essences of existent things are arranged in existence, because they depend upon it and because their last is connected back to their first, which is the cause of their existence and the root of their procession and return.

Our master Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī—may God sanctify his spirit—explained this when commenting upon the statement of the Dāʿī Ḥamīd al-Dīn, "Every existent thing among them is in its essence an act of what precedes it." He said: "Understand this section: every existent thing depends upon the cause preceding it in existence for its spiritual substance and taʾyīd."

This statement of our master Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn is explanation, clarification, declaration, and explicit disclosure. The First is called the cause of things only because they depend upon it as children depend upon their fathers: were the fathers not existent, the children would not exist. In the same way the pattern continues in the succession of ranks and ḥudūd.

Otherwise the true One who brings into existence is the Originator, sanctified beyond attributes and names, exalted above being pointed to, expressed, or designated. The Intellect's nobility, excellence, and elevation over the members of its own genus became manifest only through what the One who brought it forth from non-being supplied to it when He made it precede the world of temporal and pre-eternal created things.

We see a witness to this in the world of the daʿwa: the ranks there are arranged until the ḥudūd terminate at the Bāb of the Imam—peace be upon him—who stands as the giver of benefit to the ḥudūd and ranks beneath him, bringing them forth from non-being into existence in the religious sense.

That, too, occurs only through the spiritual substance of the one who supports him and gives him taʾyīd, who is his Imam and the source of his perfection and completeness. The existence of the one in every age and time proceeds from the One of whom, in the transcendent sense, it is not proper to say "agent"—sanctified are His names and majestic is His praise. Take this as a lesson. In it are signs for one who reflects.

He has gathered in the world of religion what exists in the world of creation. Its ḥudūd are arranged as the world of origination is arranged according to degrees of precedence.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—has therefore made clear in this chapter that the world of origination depends upon this First Intellect and that upon it they rely in their second existence. Likewise what exists from the world of nature, from prime matter and form, comes to be through the governance of the angels, who are the spiritual intellects and holy luminous angels acting upon the world, supplying the one entrusted with its governance and supporting him in the completion and subjugation of creation.

This is for the existence of the human being, who is the second end. The true human being is the human being of humanity, the eye of all individual essences and the chosen essence of existence and being. Their gathering is the one standing in actuality, possessor of taʾwīl, indicated by the Day of Separation.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn also made clear that all the ḥudūd in the human world, and those among the prophets, legatees, Imams, and their followers who have come forth into actuality by attaining the two perfections, completing the two felicities, and becoming a gathering-place of virtues, point to the Intellect that stands in actuality, complete and perfect, acting upon those beneath it. It is truly the complete, perfected one standing in the spiritual world, just as the Imam stands in the religious world.

Speech on this would become lengthy. We have brought from among the meanings those by which we have lifted the first veil for piercing insight and intellect. Let the reader reflect upon it carefully so that its light may become complete for him.

No one should undertake to read this book unless his intention has become sound and his inner purpose pure. Otherwise it will become a burden against him, and its light will become a ray that blinds the sight of his heart and draws harm toward him.

We ask God Most High for protection and deliverance, and that He make us among those who drink from the water of the Fountain of Life, by the right of Muḥammad and his family, the noble guides.

Chapter Seven

On the Tablet, which is the First Emanated One; on the distinction it possesses over its world; and on how it follows the First and comes after it in all its ordinances

We have already mentioned the precedence of the First Origination in proclaiming the tawḥīd of the Originator and what it thereby deserved of distinction over the people of its world and of glorification, until it became for its Originator the highest of veils and was designated the angel brought near. It attained such perfection and completeness that the descriptions of describers fall short before it and the spiritual angels remain bewildered, incapable of apprehending it.

Then there followed it, imitating its act and traveling upon the path of its nobility and excellence, another person from the world of subtlety. He came after it in proclaiming the tawḥīd of the Originator of originated beings and established the transcendent ipseity. He acknowledged that there was for him and for the members of his genus one who had brought them into existence; he uttered testimony concerning God while proclaiming Him one; and he acknowledged the excellence of the Intellect that preceded him and the nobility of its precedence. He confessed its noble station and was not ignorant of the magnitude of its right.

He therefore merited the connection of taʾyīd from the true Originator through the mediation of the Intellect that preceded him. The subtle holy blessings flowed toward him. Thus, after the Preceder, he acquired excellence and perfection over his world and the nobility of exaltation and majesty. The First Intellect became veiled by him, and he merited, like the First, being called an angel brought near. By the light of what reached him he became the place where that nobility set.

He became for the spiritual intellects beneath him an origin and a cause. Were it not for the excellence of the precedence of the one before him, the noble station to which the First had attained, its precedence in proclaiming the tawḥīd of the true Originator, and what reached it from brilliance, light, delight, joy, and manifest excellence, the Second would not have reached the second perfection, gathered all the noble attributes and meanings, and excelled the whole spiritual world.

He is the one symbolically designated as the Tablet and the Second Intellect. Toward him the indications in the meanings are directed. The First Intellect is veiled by him just as the Originator is veiled by the First. The First made him the origin through which the spiritual substance reached him from the cause above him because of his nobility, exaltation, loftiness, proximity, and nearness.

He was singled out for the first rank of what connects to the First, and he received with acceptance what reached him from his Originator through the mediation of his Preceder. He was named the Tablet because he is the one upon whom the Pen inscribed the knowledge of what has been and what will be and to whom the hidden secret was disclosed.

This is as the Pen inscribes upon the Tablet; and in the religious world the waṣī receives from the speaking-prophet —may God bless him and his family. Every intellective ḥadd in spiritual and corporeal existence is therefore a pen for the one who follows it and a tablet for the one who precedes it, while the one preceding it in excellence is the cause from which it receives.

It is related from the Messenger—may God bless him and his family—that he said: “The first thing God created from His creation was the Pen. Then He created the Tablet, sweeter than honey, whiter than milk, and softer than butter. He caused the Pen to flow and draw support from Him. Then He said to the Pen: Write upon it. It said: What shall I write? He said: Write what has been and what will be until the Day of Resurrection.”

This is the Preserved Tablet mentioned by God—exalted is He—in the Qurʾan. The Intellect is the Pen; the ink is what God Most High supplied it with from the spiritual substance through which it knew what has been and what will be. The following ḥadd is the Tablet, the one that receives the noble command. He is the one who comes after the First in proclaiming the tawḥīd of his Originator and in accepting what the First disclosed to him of his excellence and precedence.

The existence of the Second from the Preceder is inbiʿāth, emanation. His gratitude and praise of the First in the state of perfection became the source of his exaltation and majesty. The First supplied him with its Word, which remains continually connected to him.

Our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—said: “I praise Him as the one who formed the universes praised Him: the one from whom time and place were emanated.” He also said, describing the First Intellect: “Since the Intellect was of such perfection that it did not move by an intention toward a goal, its movement was gratitude for the blessing of the One who supported it; and the Soul’s emanation from it occurred all at once, as in His saying—glorified is He—‘Our command is but one, like the blinking of the eye.’”

This is his statement—may God sanctify his spirit.

As for the manner of the emanation, it was not like a bodily act carried out by intention and deliberation. Rather, when the First looked upon its own perfection, completeness, radiance, splendor, light, and brilliance, and upon what reached it from its Originator and Supporter, and when it recognized how He had singled it out and glorified it, delight and rejoicing appeared to it. From it then shone forth the Second, who is the light of lights.

The perfection, completeness, splendor, exaltation, and radiance of the Emanated One came from the light of the shining Preceder and from its radiant illumination.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—explained this when he said: “The First Intellect, which is the First Originated Being from no thing, is specifically designated by the name ibdāʿ because it is the essence of the act issuing into existence from the Exalted One—glorified is He—not from an existent thing that would function in relation to it as matter among the essences of existent beings.

“We have explained that knowledge of the manner of ibdāʿ is behind a veil through which intellects are prevented from having any path to it, because their essences do not contain it. Their need to rise toward seeking it would require their leaving the state of being intellects, and when an intellect leaves the state of being intellect, its essence is nullified. Thus proof is established that the manner of ibdāʿ is not like the manner of inbiʿāth, which the excellent intellects have encompassed and concerning which they are not bewildered. If the two were the same, ibdāʿ would be inbiʿāth and inbiʿāth would be ibdāʿ, which is impossible according to what we have already explained.”

Inbiʿāth is an arising that does not proceed from a prior deliberate intention. It is an existence that results from an essence combining two aspects: by one of them it encompasses and by the other it is encompassed. That essence shines when it contemplates itself and rejoices in itself; then, from between these two aspects, something comes forth outside it whose establishment depends upon the establishment of the essence.

The Origination that is the Originated Being is living through its own essence, powerful through its own essence, knowing through its own essence, complete and pre-eternal relative to those below it; it is intellect and intellective, together with the other attributes previously explained, because it is the utmost end in the virtues.

Its essence, through its power, encompassed itself. It contemplated and intellectively apprehended itself, so that its essence, which is Intellect, became intellective of its essence, which is intelligible to itself, while both are that same Intellect. Nothing from outside it and nothing from within its own essence prevented it from what its complete power required.

It saw what it loved in itself: that it was first in existence, preceded by no thing; that it was the cause upon which the existence of existent things depends; that it was the utmost end of brilliance, light, radiance, glory, exaltation, greatness, magnificence, power, and splendor; and that it was the pure act existing without intermediary between it and the Exalted One—glorified is He.

It rejoiced in its essence with a rejoicing and took delight in its affair with a delight that cannot be measured by the delights found in our own souls, which remain deficient even when the desired thing is attained and the beloved object obtained. Its delight was greater and more tremendous.

From that, through the radiance of its essence when it encompassed itself, intellectively apprehended itself, and contemplated itself within itself, there shone from it something like a light. Its emergence may be approximated by what occurs in the body when joy enters the soul upon meeting one it loves and seeing its beloved: the hidden redness from the depths of the body penetrates outward to the cheeks and appears in the skin of the face.

In the bodily case, however, because of the obstacles existing in the body in which that redness appears and because of what clings to it and does not separate from it, its penetration from the depths of the body does not extend beyond its appearance on the surface of the face.

The light emanated from the First is otherwise. Because the essence from which it shines is free of obstacles and complete in its power, what shines from it separates from it and stands outside it, fixed and subsisting according to the condition of its cause.

This resembles what happens when the sun shines upon the surface of water or upon the face of a polished mirror: a light appears outside the sun, standing in itself by virtue of the existence and radiance of the sun. If we were to imagine the sun fixed forever in a place in the heavens and forever shining upon a mirror or a surface of water, then the light emanated from it would likewise exist forever.

The essence of the First Originated Being, the First Intellect, in respect of the radiance appropriate to it, is like the sun—but greater. Its essence in purity is like the surface of water or the polished mirror—but purer. Its essence in majesty and splendor is nobler and more glorious than every beautiful and splendid thing.

The contemplation by the First Originated Being, the First Intellect, of its own essence, its intellective apprehension of it, and its encompassing of it resemble the sun's facing the mirror and shining upon it. The fact that the essence becomes intelligible and illuminated resembles the mirror illuminated by the light of the sun. The existence of the Emanated One outside the First Intellect resembles the existence of the light outside the mirror when the mirror reflects outward what it has received of the sun's light.

The Intellect and what is intelligible to it are a single essence and a single thing, just as sun and mirror, with respect to corporeality in the analogy, are each bodily things. The essence of the First Intellect, with respect to its being intellective, is nobler than itself with respect to its being intelligible—even though it is one and the same essence—just as the sun is superior to the illuminated mirror and nobler than it, even though both share corporeality in the analogy.

Thus inbiʿāth is the shining forth of a light from the First Originated Being that is the First Intellect, fixed and subsisting in the manner we have described.

Something analogous occurs with the intellects that are in the world of nature when they come forth into actuality and attain the second perfection, although not in the same degree or manner. The souls of the speaking-prophets, which become pure intellects, at the beginning of their affair continually hunt after cognitions by degrees through the senses that are their instruments and acquire them until, because of the lights of the world of holiness that spread through them, they become independent of the senses' supplying them.

The soul, after it had been served by the senses through their conveying cognitions to it, becomes in turn a servant of the higher meaning through its own power and through its connection to the fountains of light and radiance. It looks, by means of what it has conceived, toward its own essence and sees its power and strength. It then conveys outward what it has verified within itself as the powers of the soul increase in conception.

The common faculty that had received from the imaginative faculty the forms of sensible things and had conveyed them inward as a service becomes the nearest faculty to the soul and assumes the soul's form. The imaginative faculty then pushes those forms outward as the power acquired from the reflective faculty increases. It casts the forms outside, and the surrounding air receives from the imaginative faculty a shape corresponding to them. The air becomes formed by that shape and presents to the sense an image standing before it that it sees. In this way there appears an emanation from the soul that has risen to the degree of the intellects and attained the second perfection.

This is his statement. Thus he—may God exalt his sanctity—explained the manner of ibdāʿ and how it lies behind a veil such that intellects are prevented from apprehending it. Around it they find the walls and spheres of incapacity. If they seek what they cannot attain, they leave the state of intellects, and what was known to them becomes unknown. They therefore stand before the Originator in the station of incapacity.

How, then, could they apprehend the Originator who brought them into existence and invented them? Between them and that are curtains belonging to the mysteries of lordship, lights of divinity whose radiances blind, and lights upon lights.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn also made clear the distinction between ibdāʿ and inbiʿāth. Ibdāʿ is the manifestation of the First Intellect from its Originator, who is described by no attribute and toward whom no kind of indication reaches. Inbiʿāth appears when the First beholds its own essence and looks upon its majesty, beauty, perfection, and splendor bestowed from the Originator; when the light of invention becomes united with it, there appears from it a light before

which sights become bewildered and preceding intellects and thoughts become incapable. This is the emanation from it: a fixed, subsisting affair.

It corresponds to the saying of the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him: "I and Aḥmad are like light from light." This is because he was a light from a light and the meaning of meanings whom God caused to appear together with the Prophet Muḥammad in manifestation. He is the light sent down with him, and through the ḥudūd of their daʿwa they disclosed the sharīʿa.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—offered a sensible example for the appearance of inbiʿāth: the joy of a lover when he finds his beloved, who becomes intimate to him, and the light that appears from the shining sun when it meets a polished mirror.

He then explained, in the words we have cited, the emanation of the intellects that arise from the world of nature: how they hunt after cognitions little by little and state by state, rising from sensible things toward intelligible realities until those intelligible realities become as though witnessed by them. After difficulty they behold their realities through clear demonstrations. At that point they become independent of the senses and return toward likeness with the angels of humankind.

This is not like the First Emanation, which becomes manifest from the First Intellect all at once, as God—exalted is He—says: "Our command is but one, like the blinking of the eye." For that higher world is beyond detailed, measured time, and this is the First Emanation.

Chapter Eight

On The Succession Of The Ranks Of The World Of Origination And Their Degrees Of Excellence According To Their Precedence

We have spoken of the First Origination and the First Emanated One and of the excellence they earned through precedence in tawḥīd and recognition. We now explain the succession of the remaining ranks of the world of origination and the way their excellence differs according to precedence and response.

The ranks do not differ in their first created perfection, for in the first act of origination they came forth without temporal succession. Their differences appear in the second perfection, namely their response to tawḥīd, their recognition of the First, and their acknowledgment of the ranks preceding them.

The one who responds sooner receives a higher degree of taʾyīd; the one who hesitates is delayed; the one who refuses falls further. The spiritual order is therefore a hierarchy of recognition. The higher ranks are not higher because God arbitrarily favored bodies or locations, for there are no bodies or locations in that world, but because of the relative precedence of their acts of knowledge and acknowledgment.

We return to the religious analogy. The ranks of religion are arranged in a corresponding hierarchy. The Prophet, his waṣī, the Imams, and the authorized ḥudūd stand in a graded order. A lower rank does not become equal to a higher rank merely by sharing the same religion. Each has a specific function, capacity, and measure of knowledge.

The spiritual intellects are described as ten principal ranks. The First is the Precedent. The Second is the First Emanated One, designated as the Tablet. After them the remaining intellects follow in order until the tenth. Yet within the domain of each principal intellect are innumerable subordinate spiritual beings whose number cannot be encompassed by us. Each principal rank is like a head or leader of its circle, receiving from the rank above and giving to those within its domain.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī uses the order of the Muḥammadan religious hierarchy as a proof and image of the order of the spiritual world. The speaking-prophet in the religious world is a complete intellect governing those beneath him, overflowing with prophetic virtues and celestial lights and independent, in his appointed function, of those below. This points to the existence in the world of origination of a pure originated Intellect independent of lower things and serving as the cause of the higher limits in particular and of created existents generally.

The waṣī standing in the Prophet's place in the inner dimension points to the second spiritual rank. The seven Imams completing the cycle point to seven further intellective ranks proceeding in sequence from the First Emanated One. The tenth rank corresponds, in the religious analogy, to the rank that takes responsibility for the lower domain and calls what is beneath toward ascent.

Al-Kirmānī's purpose is not to identify human persons with celestial spheres literally but to show one order through another. The visible religious hierarchy testifies to the invisible spiritual hierarchy, just as bodily creation testifies to spiritual causes.

Al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn likewise describes ten exalted spiritual ranks and correlates them with the celestial order and the ranks of religion. In his supplication he asks God by the First, crowned with the crown of origination and distinguished by the nobility of beginning and invention, whose powers flow through the supreme encompassing sphere, root of motions and gate of the simple holy world; then by the Second, raised to the station of receptivity beneath the First; then successively by the remaining ranks, each associated symbolically with a sphere or planet, until the Tenth, governor of the world of nature and manifester of wondrous forms within its generated beings.

These correspond to the religious ranks: the first speaking-prophet, the one whose sun sets in his foundation and whose knowledge is articulated through his speech, the Imam preserving the law, the bāb as the house of knowledge and wisdom, the hujja as proof and guide, the dāʿī al-balāgh, the unrestricted dāʿī, the restricted dāʿī, the authorized maʾdhūn, and the lower rank concerned with bringing souls into obedience.

This arrangement shows that the order of the ḥudūd is not accidental. It reflects the order of the world of origination. Through knowledge of the lower visible arrangement one is given a means to understand the higher invisible arrangement.

We continue: when the First preceded in declaring the transcendence of its Originator, and the Second followed it in the same tawḥīd, the latter rose to the mighty station. Through the Second the summons to tawḥīd, tanzīh, and tajrīd went out to the world beneath. The First's light shone through the Second, and the continuing taʾyīd reached the ranks below.

Worlds beyond counting responded to that summons. They declared the unity of their Originator, sanctified Him above likeness and comparison, acknowledged the excellence of the ranks that had preceded them, and borrowed from their light.

The principal spiritual ranks were ordered as ten, according to their precedence in response. Beneath each principal intellect are innumerable beings that belong to its circle. One of these ten was the Second Emanated Intellect who, although third in one manner of enumeration, became tenth in the order because of the delay that will be explained in the following chapter.

Each of these intellects exists through a relation to what precedes it, ultimately through the First Intellect, which is their created principle. They are the intellects in actuality, free from bodies and at the utmost created degree of completeness and perfection. The continuing supports that reach them from the transcendent Ipseity come through the First Intellect by the mediation of the Universal Soul.

Their ranks follow one another in honor and excellence according to the precedence with which they received the light of the meanings and moved from the first perfection to the second perfection. Their essences were preserved from falling into the condition into which the lagging rank fell, and thus from the corporeal and bodily worlds generated from that delay.

Through the holy lights they were supported and became magnified, sanctified, and glorified. The support reaching them preserved them from error and lapse, and they were raised above entry into the lowly abode of burdensome action. These are the spiritual angels of God and His luminous veils.

The Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—blessings be upon him—described them in one of his sermons: "The Mighty, Compelling One has angels whom He created from the light of lights. They glitter before the perception of eyes. They are beyond the alternation of night and day; spiritual, not weighed down by bodily frames; fashioned in a manner not confined by wombs; self-subsisting in their rank, not eating food; protected from defects, untouched by the confusion of languages; established in degrees so that they neither beget nor are begotten, neither rival one another nor contend.

"Each has a lord above him to whom he is subject, and all are veiled from the Hidden One possessed of might. They are near veils and honored servants: they do not precede Him in speech and they act according to His command. They do not tire of His service and do not cease His glorification. The honor of obedience raises them to lofty affairs and knowledge of the Possessor of might carries them to the stations of perpetuity.

“The ranks of the world of origination follow one another through them. Their excellence reaches the height of elevation. They are those of wings, two, three, and four. Their greatness is beyond the pathways of imagination. Sublime admonition protects them from the drowsiness of heedlessness; they do not sleep. Majesty keeps them from couches; they remain standing. Their garment is dignity, their path is command and obedience, their food is the knowledge continually coming upon them.

“They knew and therefore acted; they possessed and therefore gave thanks. Though mighty in their station they did not become arrogant. They are sufficient without taking food; standing without being burdened by standing. They do not sit after standing, nor does place encompass their vastness, nor localities contain their greatness. Their Lord encompassed them, brought them into being, perfected their making, and He is their goal and limit.”

This description makes clear that the intellects of the world of origination are the angels singled out for subtlety and freed from density, those who roam in the expanse of the holy world. Place does not contain them and the changes of time do not pass over them, because place is the sphere and what it contains, and time is measured by its motions. They are outside that corporeal condition.

The lowest of the ten in the spiritual hierarchy is nevertheless the governor of what lies beneath the sphere of the moon. The Originator supports the First Intellect, the First gives to the Second, and the lights pass through the ranks from the more excellent to the less excellent until the command reaches the Tenth. Through the Tenth the celestial spheres move and the lower natural world is governed.

Everything beneath therefore depends upon the ordered chain: spirits, celestial bodies, elemental bodies, and finally the generated beings. The lower returns toward the higher by becoming subtle and by acquiring the forms of knowledge that allow it to rise from corporeal density to the world of origination.

We return to the enumeration of the ten principal intellects. The circle of the First is the circle of unity, and no other created intellect equals its glory. Within the circle of every one of the principal intellects are beings beyond enumeration. Each principal intellect is like the head of its circle and receives from the nearest rank above it the support that has flowed from those preceding.

The tenth principal intellect is the one who had been the Second Emanated One in another relation but became tenth in this ordered series through imagining equality with the rank above it. It repented of that error, received the universals from its Lord, and was raised again as far as its station allowed. The following chapter explains its condition more fully.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī makes the correspondence with the religious world explicit in Rāḥat al-ʿAql. We judge from the station of the nāṭiq in this world—an intellect in actuality governing those beneath him, complete in prophetic virtues and angelic lights, independent of lower instruction and giving existence to the lower ḥudūd—that in the world of origination there is a pure originated Intellect, independent of lower causes, which is the special cause of the higher ḥudūd and, in a general sense, a cause for all existents beneath it.

The fact that the nāṭiq has a waṣī whom he establishes in his own place points to the existence, after the First Intellect, of another rank, one nobler than the subsequent ranks just as the waṣī is nobler than the lower religious ranks. The completion of the prophetic cycle by seven Imams, each established by the designation of the one preceding him, points to seven intellective ranks after the First and the First Emanated One.

The action of each Imam in one of the pillars of religion and foundations of Islam, bringing outward what the nāṭiq had placed beneath the forms of law, points to the spiritual intellects through which meanings pass into the lower order.

The completion of the cycle with the seven, and the standing of the tenth rank in the place of the nāṭiq when a new cycle begins, correspond to the Tenth Intellect’s eventual role in governing the lower corporeal order and preparing the return toward a renewed spiritual cycle.

The multiplicity of Imams also points to the innumerable angelic beings within the circles of the principal intellects. Although the Imams differ in bodily persons and historical times, their rank as Imamate is one; likewise the spiritual intellects are one in their freedom from bodies while differing in relative precedence and function.

Al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn gives a prayer naming these ten ranks through their celestial correspondences. He asks God by the First, crowned with the crown of origination and singled out for the honor of first invention, whose powers run

through the greatest encompassing sphere, the source of motions and gate of the simple holy world; then by the Second, raised to the next degree and made receptive in relation to the First, through whose radiance the sphere of the fixed stars is ordered.

He proceeds through the remaining ranks and their spheres: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon, until the Tenth, the governor of the natural world and the one through whom the wondrous forms of generation appear.

He then places opposite these spiritual ranks the ranks of religion: the nāṭiq corresponds to the First, the asās to the Second, and the successive Imams and ḥudūd correspond to the remaining spiritual principles according to their functions. The purpose is not to identify a human body with a star or intellect, but to show the same wisdom of ordered dependence in the spiritual, celestial, and religious worlds.

Chapter Nine

On The Tenth Rank, His Falling Behind And Repentance, And What Was Imposed Upon Him Of The Governance Of The Created World

We have explained the succession and arrangement of the intellects, their differing degrees, and how they came to be ordered according to their precedence, thereby deserving the noble holy spiritual supports. We now wish to explain the Second Emanation who became tenth, and how he was last after having been third.

We already mentioned the First Emanated One, the second origination, and the excellence of his precedence by which he deserved to follow the First. With him, in the initial movement toward recognition, was another emanated rank. But this other one fell short of his limit and stopped beneath his lofty excellence. It was as though two competitors entered the same field and one preceded the other.

Before the second perfection—which is the reality of knowledge—became connected to him, he failed to acknowledge the noble precedence, lofty rank, and great right of the one above him. He imagined himself equal to that preceding rank, and some supposition is sin. In the first perfection the inhabitants of that world were not yet protected from such falling behind; protection belongs to the completion of the second perfection when the order of recognition becomes established.

The First had declared the transcendence and tawḥīd of the Originator, recognized his own incapacity before Him, acknowledged the excellence of the one immediately above where appropriate, and understood the gate and veil through which support reached him. The one who later became Tenth, however, stopped short in his tawḥīd and did not properly acknowledge the right of the rank preceding him. He imagined equality with what was superior to him.

This supposition produced incapacity, doubt, and bewilderment, a darkness upon darkness. The First had experienced a noble bewilderment arising from incapacity to comprehend the Originator, whereas this lower bewilderment arose from failure to recognize the preceding rank. Because of this he was delayed while the other ranks of the world of origination proceeded successively in their brilliant stations.

When he saw himself delayed from those ranks, stopped from the course they had taken, and veiled from the one who had once been near him in emanative order, he returned in repentance. He asked why he had been delayed from joining those lofty ranks. He was answered that the delay came from his own supposition of equality with one above him and that there was no salvation except through seeking a means through the ranks God had placed above him.

He then confessed his fault and sought intercession through the “words” he received from his Lord: the intellects preceding him. For this reason he is symbolized as the spiritual Adam whose repentance and return earned him honor and excellence. He sought a means through the intellect immediately above him, and through that one to the one above, until his supplication reached the Second Intellect, who stands immediately after the First in the spiritual world.

He confessed what he had committed and sought mediation through those to whom excellence and honor had been given. His repentance and return were accepted. The lights united with the preceding intellects became connected to him by their mediation. Noble holy meanings and secrets reached him through those luminous intellects.

He thereby became a gate and means for the many noble intellects beneath him, a veil through which they could ascend. He became himself a noble intellect, luminous, subtle, sanctified beyond bodily forms, endowed with power and capacity. He became, so to speak, the soul of the lower intellects because through him they received the lights of their Originator as mediated through the preceding ranks.

Because the abode of origination and emanation contains no material obstacle, what reaches completion there can attain the second perfection without the temporal delays found in bodies. Thus the Tenth, after his repentance, became perfect in rank, completeness, loftiness, excellence, honor, and radiance.

It was then assigned to look toward the essences that had fallen behind and had not yet reached the second perfection by which there is subsistence and existence in the spiritual realm. He was to govern them, arrange them in the finest order, call them in his spiritual world toward guidance, tawḥīd of the true Originator, and recognition of the preceding spiritual ranks.

Those among the lagging beings who accepted this call rose; those who hesitated remained suspended; and those who persisted in pride descended further toward density. The Tenth repeated the call, explained the means by which they could be saved from slipping and error, and urged them to repent as he had repented.

They divided into three groups. The first regretted, sought forgiveness, acknowledged the First Precedent and the ranks following him, but stopped short at some point in the chain. The second doubted and became bewildered and delayed in acknowledging the precedence of the higher ranks. The third persisted, grew proud, turned away from the caller, and denied the Originator who had formed them.

These conditions produced the first dimensions of density: length, breadth, and depth. What had been subtle became corporeal in proportion to its falling away from the higher world. They no longer possessed existence in the noble spiritual world and therefore deserved an order of ascent through the light corporeal and dense bodily worlds.

The Tenth Intellect became their governor and agent, acting through the support of its Originator and the ranks above it. Beneath it there remained no spiritual rank corresponding to the higher intellects; instead begins the world of bodies, obligations, symbols, and arrangements.

Al-Kirmānī says that the tenth of the lower ḥudūd is the limit for the ranks beneath it, and by its existence the spiritual "offspring" are produced. Its task is the care of souls in the abode of nature and drawing them toward the house of worship so that they may ascend through degrees. Correspondingly, the Tenth of the spiritual intellects is the final one from which powers proceed into bodies so that corporeal generated beings may come forth. Because it is the limit, emanation stops at it in this direction, and its task becomes the care of the world of generation and corruption and continued assistance to what is prepared to receive.

This Tenth had originally been second in a certain movement of emanation and third in counting, but became tenth in final rank through its falling behind the preceding spiritual beings. It therefore became the governor of the world of nature and the manifester within its generated things of wondrous forms.

Its action aims at extracting the second finality, the perfect child—the Qāʾim of cycles and eras—through whom the noble stations reach their completion. Whenever such a perfected Qāʾim is extracted, the Tenth rises toward the Ninth, the Ninth toward the rank above it, and so on. This ascent continues with every perfected gathering from the natural world until all reach the enclosure of holiness and the gathering of the Second Emanation, after the cycles have reached their end and the worlds have returned to their principles and elements.

Praise be to God for what He has indicated and guided us to. Thanks belong to the friends of the blessing who guided us, made us know, showed us the path of salvation, and caused us to stand upon it. There is no power and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Magnificent. I seek His forgiveness and turn to Him. He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

Chapter Ten

On Prime Matter And Form, What Came Into Existence From Them Of The Spheres And Elemental Mothers, And The Wondrous Order Established In Them

We say, seeking aid from God, relying upon Him and returning to Him, drawing support from the blessings of His friends and seeking Him through them: we have spoken of the world of subtlety to the extent expression permits, and have clarified something of the meanings indicated therein. We now wish to describe in this chapter how those who fell behind that world through failure to accept were ordered into the world of the spheres and the world of generation and corruption so that, through the passing of cycles and ages, their purified essence might be extracted and made to join the intellects that preceded them.

When the preceding intellects rose toward subtlety through tawḥīd and were protected from the causes producing density by holding fast to taʾyīd, there remained many essences that had not preceded in tawḥīd and had not joined them through imitation of their example. They therefore fell short of ascent and remained beneath the degree by which the higher ranks deserved eternal subsistence.

Their bewilderment became darkness and they were deprived of the lights and merciful meanings possessed by those intellects. They fell into the enduring sickness of separation. The last of the spiritual ranks, who himself had once

stopped and imagined equality with one above him but then repented, became responsible for their salvation. His own error made him especially suited to call them and purify their confusion.

He called them to tawḥīd of the Originator, knowledge of the First Intellect, and acknowledgement of the excellence of the preceding ranks. They hesitated at his call. He repeated it, explaining what would bring them from potentiality into actuality and warning them not to imitate his former lapse. They divided into those who repented, those who doubted, and those who persisted in pride.

From the different degrees of their response arose the differentiated corporeal order. The first corporeal dimension arose from one kind of falling behind, the second from another, and the third from further persistence. Thus bodily extension—length, breadth, and depth—corresponds symbolically to stages of remoteness from pure spiritual simplicity.

The first corporeal order is the system of the celestial spheres. These are noble bodies, subtler than the lower elemental bodies and stable in their forms. Their circular motions proceed under the governance of the spiritual intellects. The outermost encompassing sphere is the noblest of the corporeal spheres because of its nearness in rank to the spiritual principle that moves it.

We return to the analogy of religious creation. Just as the Prophet's call has an outward movement and an inward movement, so the celestial order has two principal movements: the highest movement from east to west, belonging to the outermost sphere, and the movement of the sphere of the stars from west to east beneath it. The outward prophetic call moves souls from the manifest law toward its inward meaning; the inner call of the waṣī and the ḥudūd moves from the concealed treasury of meaning back toward the illumination of spiritual knowledge.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn explains that the active mover is the active intellect and the first moved body is the supreme encompassing sphere. Its motion is the noblest of bodily motions. Beneath it the starry sphere moves in the opposite direction, and beneath that are the planetary spheres.

The celestial spheres are called absolute body because they have left the domain of pure subtlety and entered corporeality, although they are the noblest bodies. The outermost sphere is the simplest of them. Its form does not undergo the corruption that affects lower bodies, because the spheres serve as first instruments, prior causes for things awaited below, and proximate causes through which the world of generation is ordered.

Their corporeality nevertheless signifies that they stand below the world of pure subtlety. This is the "evil" that has no root in origination itself: descent from the subtle spiritual world into the light corporeal world through failure fully to attain the perfection of the preceding ranks. But the purified aspect of repentance and return remains present within them as the form by which the spheres move.

This form is the divine providence and ordering principle flowing through the cosmos. The philosophers call it the fifth nature, beyond the four elemental natures. It is the root of life in the world and the source from which motion and generation proceed. In symbolic language it is compared to Eve joined to the Tenth, the repentant spiritual Adam, because through their relation the lower world becomes productive.

This life-principle flows from the spheres to the four elemental "mothers" beneath the sphere of the moon and then through the generated beings, moving successively until it reaches human forms. Human beings who receive the religious meanings then rise together with the ḥudūd of religion, returning toward the spiritual origin from which the second perfection is drawn.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn says that this universal life is spread throughout the world of body; the heavens and earth are filled with it and no thing is entirely outside its influence. It gives each thing its first perfection according to its capacity. When it moves the higher bodies in circles it is celestial motion; when it moves fire and air upward it appears as lightness; when it moves water and earth downward toward the center it appears as heaviness; when it moves plants toward nourishment and growth it is vegetative soul; and when it moves the human being toward comprehension of existents it is rational soul. The actions differ according to the receptive subjects even though the flowing principle is one.

Then comes the ordering of the spheres. Beneath the outermost encompassing sphere is the sphere of the zodiac containing the twelve signs and the fixed stars. Beneath it are the seven planetary spheres: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. Their circles are nested one within another.

The Sun stands in the middle among the seven and gives support to those above and below it through the light rising and setting within it. It is compared to the heart within the human form: the house of life and the prince of the limbs, from which heat and movement are distributed. The Sun is the house of life of the world and the source of natural heat for the celestial and lower bodies.

But solar heat and dryness alone would not complete generation. Divine providence therefore placed the Moon opposite it with coldness and moisture, moderating the effects of the Sun. The two form a pair through whose balancing influences lower generation becomes possible.

In Rāḥat al-ʿAql, Ḥamīd al-Dīn says that the Sun is the center of nature within the first corporeal enclosure and is, relative to all the parts, the center of their perfection because of the connection through which it receives the overflow from the world of origination. It is prepared to receive the blessings of the world of unity in a manner unlike other bodies. The lights of the higher “letters” converge upon it and the lower existents are connected to it in a distinctive way.

It therefore stands, by analogy, in the corporeal abode as the First Origination stands in the abode of unity: a created center through which blessings reach what lies below. Its rays spread through every existent thing and act in each according to that thing’s receptivity, just as a magnet acts specifically upon iron and not upon every material indiscriminately.

Body has many divisions—spheres, stars, and elements—but nature itself is not limited to one of those divisions. The Sun is singled out because through it the life of the whole corporeal world is manifested and because, together with the Moon, it contributes to the generation of minerals, plants, animals, and ultimately the human being.

Nature is intermediate between two ends: the first origination and the human being who gathers the virtues of what precedes him. From the second emanative route the final human perfection, the Qāʾim—peace be upon him—emerges as the second finality corresponding to the first finality that is origination. He is the culmination of speaking-prophets, foundations, Imams, and the ḥudūd of religion.

The motions and rotations of the spheres and the appearances generated through them occur through the act of the final spiritual Intellect governing nature. Its flowing support throughout the world is the “creative leaven” that raises lower forms toward higher. It is the form spread through prime matter.

From this ordering of the spheres we turn to the four elemental mothers. When some matter remained that was not suited to the rank of the celestial bodies, divine providence arranged it beneath the spheres into four receptive elements upon which celestial influences act. They stand below the spheres as females stand, in the symbolic comparison, below the active male principle in the hierarchy of generation.

The nearest to the celestial motions is the sphere of fire, hot and dry because of the strength and speed of motion. Beneath it is air, hot and moist, more distant from the direct celestial motion. Beneath air is water, cold and moist. Lowest is earth, cold and dry, farthest from the celestial motion and least disposed to motion in itself.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn compares these differences to rooms of a bathhouse at different distances from the fire. The room nearest the heat is hottest; the next receives less heat; the next still less, so cold becomes more evident; and the outermost is scarcely warmed at all. In the same way the four elements acquire their characteristic qualities according to their nearness to or distance from celestial movement.

This entire arrangement is preparatory to the completion of creation and its attainment of the purpose intended by the Wise Maker. Once the elements were completed and ordered, the rays of the planets flowed into them and the acts of the spheres continually reached them so that the hidden treasure might be extracted at its appointed time.

The elements are lower bodies, while the spheres are higher bodies. Both are corporeal, but the higher bodies are stable in their essences and preserve their forms and matters, while the lower bodies are receptive to the effects of the moving heavens, changing in qualities, prepared for action and passion, acting upon one another and producing the generated beings.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn explains that prime matter and form are concepts by which we understand the relation between receptive and determining principles. The celestial bodies are like instruments fixed in their centers, while the lower elemental bodies continually receive qualities from the rays of the higher bodies. The higher bodies act without losing their own stable forms; the lower bodies undergo alteration and mixture.

Glory be to the One who perfected creation, made it manifest, arranged it, and established it with such precision. Since the physical cosmos is ordered in this remarkable manner—with spheres acting like fathers and elements receiving like mothers—we look to religious creation and find a corresponding arrangement.

The Imams—peace be upon them—are arranged after the prophets and legatees in instruction. They raise their followers, teach them, and establish them upon the straight path so that they may extract what the speaking-prophet concealed within the earth of the sharīʿa and ascend through true perfection to the lofty stations.

The encompassing sphere is compared to the bābs who stand in universal taʾwīl and correspond to the selected essence of the corporeal world. With them is the decisive explanation. Beneath them stand the hujjas, like the sphere of the zodiac containing the stars. From the hujjas proceed the dāʿīs by the penetrating light of truth. Twelve dāʿīs are assigned in the symbolic arrangement, one in each jazīra, establishing those within the daʿwa of the Imam of their age upon insight.

Beneath them are seven ranks encircling one another in correspondence with the seven planetary spheres: the dāʿīs of proclamation who convey from the hujjas of the Imam; the unrestricted dāʿīs who establish the ḥudūd in the regions according to worthiness and preparedness; the dāʿīs of the sword who restrain aggressors and support those who follow the command of the friends of God; the dāʿīs of iḥrām who indicate the Imam through sign and expression; the unrestricted maʾdhūns who prosper through upright obedience to their dāʿīs; the restricted maʾdhūns charged with concealing the inner sciences of the friends of God; and beneath them the circle of mukāsirs who clarify the proofs of truth for those who are deficient and lagging.

The four elemental mothers correspond to four fundamental modes of instruction given to respondents: establishing the signs of tawḥīd, guiding to knowledge of the ḥudūd, admonitions that awaken desire for that knowledge, and the ordinances of the sharīʿa and action according to them by which one draws near to God and His walī.

The stars and planets indicate the brilliant sciences carried by the religious ranks. Divine providence connects the support of the ḥudūd from the high to the low, making known the realities by which souls ascend toward the second perfection.

The author of the work cited as Ḍiyāʾ/Jalāʾ al-ʿUqūl says that wisdom is the act of the wise one, and his act falls upon something ordered and perfected. The Second Intellect, expressed as the First Emanated One, is the true “wise one” in the spiritual analogy; his wisdom is the effect flowing downward from him through the lower order. In the religious analogy the noble waṣī and the supreme bāb are the wise ones, and their wisdom is the subtle knowledge they convey, supporting the ḥudūd with the inner meanings of the concealed knowledge of God’s religion.

The effect in souls is the ordering of the ḥudūd through that knowledge until the act reaches its perfection. As al-Muʿizz—blessings of God upon him—said: “A believer is not truly a believer until he brings forth a believer.” The perfect rank gives rise to a corresponding form beneath it through instruction and guidance.

As for the Prophet in the people of his cycle and the Imam in the people of his age, their rank corresponds to the First Intellect and the noblest, most excellent station. Above it in the created religious hierarchy there is no rank toward which ordinary thoughts and imaginations may boldly aspire.

We say that “matter” and “form” are not two independent substances preceding the divine act. They are names by which the mind distinguishes two aspects of the created corporeal order: receptivity and determination. The heavenly bodies stand as forms that act, while the lower elemental bodies stand as receptive materials upon which those actions appear.

The higher bodies are fixed in their own ordered natures. Their circular motions do not corrupt their essences; their forms and matters remain, while their effects descend into what is beneath. The lower bodies, by contrast, continually receive the qualities of the moving heavens. Their natures change, their qualities are transformed, they act upon one another and are acted upon, and from their mixtures arise minerals, plants, animals, and human bodies.

Thus the celestial bodies resemble active fathers and the elements receptive mothers. From the union of active celestial influences with elemental receptivity there arise the “children” of the natural world.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn says: once it is established that prime matter and form are needed to account for the corporeal world, they are to be understood after the higher bodies have been placed in their centers like instruments. There is no

temporal “before” and “after” between them in the way bodily events succeed one another; the priority belongs to logical and causal exposition.

The heavenly bodies are like craftsmen’s instruments that remain stable while producing effects. The lower bodies receive their rays and powers as the material of an art receives the form imposed by the artisan. One may also compare them to the female that receives the power of the male: the receptive principle acquires qualities through the active rays directed toward it.

Although all bodies share corporeality and extension, the higher and lower bodies differ in function. The higher preserve their individual forms and exercise influence through motion. The lower are disposed to receive, change, combine, dissolve, and generate.

When this ordering is understood, the correspondence with religious creation becomes clearer. The prophets and waṣīs stand at the highest terrestrial limits of instruction. After them the Imams maintain the teaching and raise the believers. Their task is to extract what the nāṭiq placed within the “earth” of the sharīʿa, to bring its hidden meanings into manifestation, and to raise receptive souls to the degrees of true perfection.

The encompassing sphere is an image of the Bāb, who possesses the universal taʾwīl and gathers what is dispersed beneath. As the encompassing sphere contains all lower spheres, the Bāb gathers the sciences of the lower ḥudūd and receives from the Imam.

The zodiacal sphere containing the fixed stars corresponds to the hujjas. The daʿwa of the hujjas contains the dāʿīs like stars within a heaven, and through the light of truth the dāʿīs branch out from them.

Twelve dāʿīs are set, in the symbolic scheme, in the twelve jazāʾir, as the twelve signs divide the celestial circle. Each establishes those within the daʿwa of the Imam of his age upon insight.

Then come seven encircling ranks corresponding to the seven planetary spheres. The first among these are the dāʿīs of balāgh, who convey from the hujjas of the Imam. After them are the unrestricted dāʿīs, who arrange the ranks in the regions according to preparedness and merit.

Then come the dāʿīs associated with the sword, whose function is to restrain aggressors and strengthen those who follow the command of the friends of God. After them are the dāʿīs of iḥrām, who indicate the Imam through allusion, expression, and disciplined speech.

Then are the unrestricted maʾdhūns, fortunate through upright obedience to their dāʿīs; then the restricted maʾdhūns, who are commanded to conceal the inner sciences of the friends of God from those not prepared for them; and beneath them the mukāsirs, who break the attachments of the deficient by clarifying the proofs of truth.

The four elemental mothers correspond to four fundamental matters taught to respondents: first, the establishment of the signs of tawḥīd; second, guidance to knowledge of the ḥudūd; third, admonitions that awaken longing for that knowledge; and fourth, the ordinances of the sharīʿa and action according to them, through which the believer draws near to God and His walī.

The stars correspond to the brilliant sciences manifested by these ranks. Just as the stars fill the heavens with lights of differing magnitudes, the ḥudūd fill the religious world with sciences differing according to their stations.

The continual connection of the heavenly order from the highest to the lowest is therefore an image of the continual flow of the spiritual “matter” of knowledge from the Imam through the ranks beneath. Through this flow the realities by which souls ascend to the second perfection become known.

It is said in a work on the illumination of the intellects: “Wisdom is the act of the wise one, and his act is made firm in a firmly ordered object.” The Second Intellect, expressed as the First Emanated One, is the “wise one” in the spiritual correspondence; his wisdom is the effect flowing from him downward into the lower order. The receptive prime matter is the object made firm by that effect.

In the religious correspondence, the noble waṣī and the supreme Bāb are “wise ones,” while their wisdom is the subtle knowledge they transmit. They support the ḥudūd with the inner meanings of the concealed sciences of God’s religion. The “effect” is what this knowledge produces within souls, ordering them until the religious act reaches completion.

Al-Muʿizz—blessings of God upon him—is reported to have said: “The believer is not a believer until he brings forth a believer.” Just as a perfected natural cause produces a corresponding effect, a perfected teacher forms another soul through knowledge and guidance.

The station of the Prophet among the people of his cycle and the Imam among the people of his age corresponds, in the terrestrial order, to the First Intellect in the world of origination: the noblest and highest created station relative to those beneath it. The analogy does not raise them to the transcendent Originator; rather, it establishes the order of created guidance.

Therefore, my brother, understand this essence and bind the knot through the walāya of the friends of God. Act righteous deeds so that you may rise degree after degree and horizon after horizon. This orderly correspondence between creation and religion is itself a witness to truth.

The Tenth Intellect governs the spheres and planets and receives its support from the noble spiritual intellects through the radiant light flowing upon it. Through its governance the elemental world is prepared, and from the elements the generated beings emerge. The following chapter will therefore speak of minerals, plants, animals, and the human being.

Understand, then, my brother, this essence. Bind the knot through walāya of the friends of God, and act with righteous deeds so that you may rise, ascending horizon after horizon. This ordering corresponds to creation and bears witness to it. The Tenth is the governor of the spheres and planets and receives support from the noble spiritual intellects through the radiant light poured upon him. May God grant us and you guidance and not remove us from obedience to Him and His friends, by the right of Muḥammad and his family. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds; there is no power and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Magnificent.

Chapter Eleven

On The Generated Beings — Minerals, Plants, And Animals — And How Their Chosen Essence And Quintessence Appeared, Namely The Human Being; And On The Governance Of The Stars Over Them Until They Came Forth From Potentiality Into Actuality And Culminated In The Appearance Of The Human Being, Who Is Distinguished By Excellence.

We say, seeking help from God, relying upon Him, and hoping, through the sustaining influence and blessings of His friends, to reach the desired end: When we had mentioned the celestial spheres, which are in the position of fathers, and the elements, which are in the position of mothers, and how they were arranged and combined in the firmest and most excellent ordering, we wished to speak next of the generated beings that arise from the earth, until they reach their furthest limit, which is the purpose of the composites that acquire depth after length and breadth through the celestial motions.

The earth, being the most remote of the elements from the celestial motions and the furthest from the administration of the heavenly bodies, is at the utmost limit of cold and dryness and at the extreme of the density produced by the governance of Intellect and Soul. For that reason it became earthy and stony. Yet by the excellence of divine providence the spheres and stars act upon it so that what is hidden within it may be brought forth and its fruit may appear. It is closed in upon itself, while the pegs of the sphere — the ascendant, the fourth, the seventh, and the tenth — draw upon it as the magnet draws iron, through a property placed in them by the wise Governor according to what He wills.

There remained upon the face of the earth something of the nature of the celestial bodily world which had not sunk deeply into it. It remained like vapor: not condensed with the density of earth, nor wholly separated from it. The sphere turned in its appointed motion, and the stars cast their rays toward the earth. Those rays were reflected and mingled with the vapors rising from the lower elements. From the repeated turning, heating, cooling, rarefaction, and condensation, the substances of the world were prepared to receive forms according to their capacities.

The spiritual beings govern the celestial bodies, and the celestial bodies govern the elemental world. Thus the lower is connected to the higher, one rank after another. The movements of the stars are not without purpose, nor are their effects random; rather, they proceed according to the wisdom of the One who arranged the whole and assigned to every cause its effect. Through those motions winds move, clouds gather, rains descend, waters flow into the earth, vapors rise from it, and the four qualities — heat, cold, moisture, and dryness — combine and separate.

At first the surface of the earth was overwhelmed by waters and vapors. The celestial motions continued through immense stretches of time. Mountains were raised, valleys opened, waters gathered into seas, and dry land appeared. The subtle and the dense were gradually distinguished from one another. The stars continued their action upon the elemental mothers until the world became ready for the emergence of the generated children.

The seven planets have their turns in the governance of the lower world. Saturn, because of its distance and the coldness and dryness attributed to its nature, is associated with the first preparation and hardening of matter. Jupiter follows with a more temperate and beneficent influence, loosening what has been excessively hardened and preparing it for reception. Mars adds heat and severing force; the sun gives vital heat and illumination; Venus contributes softness and generation; Mercury gives differentiation and articulation; and the moon, nearest to the elemental world, gathers and transmits the effects of the higher bodies to the lower.

These influences do not operate independently of the spiritual causes above them. The celestial bodies are instruments, while their spiritual governors stand above them, and above those are the higher intellective ranks. The entire order is joined together. Were the sustaining effusion to cease from the higher world even for the blink of an eye, the lower order would lose the causes by which it remains.

In the first ages, when Saturn's influence predominated, the world was exceedingly cold and humid. Clouds were thick and rains abundant. The sun's rays were weak upon the earth because of the density of the vapors. The surface hardened in some places and dissolved in others, and mountains and stones increased. When the celestial configurations altered and other planets shared in the governance, the excess waters decreased, the air became more temperate, and dry land became habitable.

Then, from mixtures that were still coarse and corrupt, arose creatures suited to those mixtures: insects, creeping things, scorpions, serpents, and other animals generated from putrefaction. Their forms corresponded to the quality

of the matter from which they arose. In the wisdom of providence even such creatures have a function, for they consume corrupt substances and confine harmful matter that would otherwise spread.

When the mixture became more balanced and the influence of the sun, moon, and beneficent planets became stronger, the earth produced plants. The plant is nobler than the mineral because it possesses nourishment, growth, and reproduction. Its roots draw from the earth, its body rises toward the air, and by the action of heat and moisture it transforms elemental material into living substance.

From the finest and most balanced vegetal mixtures, and through further celestial administration, animal forms appeared. The animal adds sensation and voluntary movement to the nutritive and growing powers possessed by the plant. The most imperfect animals remain near the condition of plants, while the more perfect possess stronger senses, greater movement, memory, and a degree of discernment.

The progression continues until the animal world reaches the human form. The human being is the quintessence of the generated beings, gathering within himself the mineral, vegetal, and animal powers while possessing in addition the rational soul by which he thinks, distinguishes, learns, remembers, plans, and seeks what lies beyond sensation.

Know that the first appearance of human bodies was not, according to the teaching transmitted by the people of wisdom, by ordinary generation from father and mother in the manner known to us now. The earth had to be prepared through long ages until, in certain balanced places, the mixture became capable of receiving the human form. In cavities and protected places resembling wombs, water, earth, heat, and the celestial influences combined until bodies suitable for the human soul were formed.

The heavenly bodies contributed, by the command of the higher governors, to the differentiation of the organs and faculties. The sun is associated with the heart and the natural heat by which life is sustained; the moon with growth, moisture, and the changes of the body; Mercury with articulation, inscription, and the ordering of forms; Venus with reproduction and the attraction between male and female; and each of the other planets with the bodily powers appropriate to it.

The forming body was surrounded by moisture, and nourishment reached it from what surrounded it, just as nourishment reaches the embryo through the placenta in the mother's womb. The nutritive substance was refined by natural heat and converted into what the growing members required. It is not as some suppose that the fetus is simply nourished by impure menstrual blood; rather, the material is purified and transformed before it becomes fitting nourishment for the developing body.

When the organs were completed and the proportion of the body became fit, the vital spirit moved from the heart through the vessels and members, breathing began, and the body rose from mere potentiality to living actuality. The subtle life-force is linked with the celestial administration but is not itself one of the gross elements. It is the bridge by which the living organism receives the effects of the soul.

The first human beings remained for a period in the places of their formation until their bodies became strong. Then they emerged from those womb-like caverns and were nourished by what divine providence had prepared in the surrounding world. Their development was more rapid than that of children later born from women, because their original matter had been prepared through long cosmic processes. Male and female appeared, and thereafter ordinary generation by sexual reproduction continued.

This doctrine is supported by what the Brethren of Purity mention in their Epistles concerning the first generation of complete animals from earth and water in temperate regions. After the first members of a species appeared, reproduction continued through mating, and what had first required a long natural preparation became transmitted through seed and womb.

Thus the order of the generated beings is mineral, plant, animal, and human. From the mineral world rises a subtle vapor that becomes suitable for plant life; from the plant world a subtler essence is prepared for animal life; and from the choicest essence of animal existence arises the human body. Humanity is therefore the selected essence of the lower kingdoms and the final fruit of their natural composition.

But know, my brother, that this physical order is an example of another order, more important and more enduring: the religious creation. The prophets and their legatees establish in the world of religion what the heavens and earth establish in the world of nature. The nāṭiq is like a heaven that pours down the rain of revelation, and the waṣī is like

the earth that receives, conceals, and brings forth its inner fruits. From their union arise the ranks of the religious world.

The respondent who merely accepts the outward call resembles mineral existence: he has entered into formation but has not yet acquired the growth of knowledge. When he receives instruction, his understanding grows like a plant. When he receives taʾwīl, recognizes the correspondences of the revealed forms, and develops spiritual perception, he resembles an animal endowed with sensation and movement. When he reaches a balanced recognition of tawḥīd, the ḥudūd, and the inner purpose of the sharīʿa, he becomes a true human in the religious sense.

In this religious generation the teacher is like the male and the receptive student like the female. Knowledge is the seed. The covenant and instruction are the conditions in which the seed develops. A sound teacher deposits a sound form in the soul of the learner; a corrupt teacher generates a corrupt form. For this reason the quality of the spiritual parentage is more important than bodily lineage.

Those who remain imprisoned in the outward forms and refuse the inward meaning are like creatures that never rise beyond the lower kingdoms. Those who accept false taʾwīl, exaggerate, deny the ranks, or interpret by private opinion without authorization generate within themselves malformed spiritual forms corresponding to harmful beasts. The defect does not lie in knowledge itself but in receiving it from a false source or applying it outside the order established by the friends of God.

The purpose of the daʿwa is to draw the rational soul from potentiality to actuality, just as the celestial order draws the forms of minerals, plants, animals, and humans from the potentiality of matter. The soul is first capable of knowledge, then by instruction it actually knows. It is first capable of virtue, then through discipline it actually becomes virtuous. It is first capable of ascending, then through true recognition it rises toward the world appropriate to it.

For that reason the human being is a microcosm. In his body are correspondences to the heavens, elements, minerals, plants, and animals; and in his soul are correspondences to the ranks of the religious world. Whoever understands the lower through the higher and the outward through the inward recognizes that one wisdom runs through both creations.

The physical human being is the final fruit of nature, but the perfected believer is the final fruit of religion. The first is born from the four elements under the celestial motions; the second is born from revelation and taʾwīl under the guidance of the prophets, Imams, and ḥudūd. As the physical person cannot exist without the causes of natural generation, the perfected believer cannot exist without the causes of spiritual generation.

So consider, my brother, the wisdom that has joined the two worlds. Do not stop at the example and neglect the meaning for which the example was given. The mineral, plant, animal, and human grades are signs for the grades through which the soul passes. Whoever remains in the density of the outward has not yet reached the purpose of the human form; whoever receives the true knowledge and acts by it becomes fit for the world of subtlety and enduring life.

We ask God, through Muḥammad and his pure family, to lead us from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, to make us among those who receive the spiritual nourishment of His friends, and to bring us forth from potentiality into the actuality of faith and recognition. There is no power and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Mighty.

We continue by explaining how the rays of the heavenly bodies act upon the four elemental “mothers.” Fire and air, because of their subtlety, rise; water and earth, because of their density, tend downward. Yet the ceaseless circular motions of the heavens continually stir these elements, mixing what is unlike and separating what is excessively compounded. From this administration come the vapors that rise from earth and water, the clouds that gather in the air, and the rains that descend again to the earth.

When the sun approaches a region, it heats the moistures contained in it. The more subtle parts rise as vapor, while the denser remain behind. The vapor, meeting colder regions above, thickens and becomes cloud. When its parts become too heavy to remain suspended, it descends as rain. When the opposition of heat and cold is violent, winds, thunder, lightning, hail, and other atmospheric phenomena are produced. Each effect has a natural cause, but the whole chain remains under the governance of the spiritual and celestial order.

Rain penetrates the earth and is altered by the soils through which it passes. In one place its mixture becomes suitable for salts, in another for sulfurous substances, in another for metals, and in another for stones. The mineral kingdom is therefore the first great child of the celestial fathers and elemental mothers. Minerals differ according to the balance of the powers acting upon their matter.

The noblest metals arise from the most proportionate mixtures. Gold is placed at the summit of the metallic order because of the balance, purity, and stability of its composition. Silver and the other metals follow according to their degrees. Precious stones likewise differ through the particular influences under which their material was prepared.

But mineral existence remains bound to one place and possesses neither nourishment nor growth in the sense found in plants. When the mixture becomes more subtle and the celestial influences act upon a prepared moisture within earth, a nutritive power appears. Root, trunk, branch, leaf, flower, fruit, and seed are unfolded from what had previously been only elemental and mineral matter.

The plant draws the suitable parts of earth and water into itself and rejects what is unsuitable. Its nutritive faculty converts what it receives into its own substance. Its growing faculty increases its dimensions, and its reproductive faculty produces seed from which another of its kind may arise. In this way the plant stands between the fixed mineral and the sensing animal.

Some plants approach the mineral condition because their life is weak and their forms simple. Others approach animal life through sensitivity to light, touch, season, and nourishment. Nature does not leap from the lowest to the highest without intermediates; it prepares each higher form through degrees.

Likewise the animal kingdom begins with beings whose sensation and movement are weak and culminates in animals of complex perception, memory, affection, and teachability. Each higher degree gathers the powers of what precedes it and adds a new perfection. The animal contains the mineral and vegetal powers but adds sensation and voluntary movement.

The human being is the final product of this natural ascent because he gathers bodily composition, nutrition, growth, generation, sensation, movement, imagination, memory, and above them rational discernment. He can contemplate causes, learn arts, transmit knowledge, and understand meanings that are not themselves sensible.

For that reason the human body is called a small world. What exists dispersed through the greater world is gathered in him: the hardness of minerals, the growth of plants, the senses and movements of animals, and the rational capacity by which the spiritual world may be known.

We return to the first generation of humanity. He says that when the earth had reached the required balance through the long celestial administration, places appeared whose conditions were like natural wombs. In them the elements were mixed in a proportion that could receive the human form. Heat acted upon moisture, moisture softened earth, and the celestial rays continually refined the compound.

At first the forming bodies were like plants rooted in the place of their generation. Nourishment reached them from the prepared earth and water. As the organs differentiated they passed through conditions comparable to the stages of an embryo. When the heart, vessels, brain, limbs, and senses were completed and the vital spirit circulated, the bodies became capable of independent animal life.

The first humans therefore emerged only after the natural world had passed through the lower kingdoms. This is why man is called their quintessence. The subtle part of mineral composition becomes material for plants; the finest part of plants becomes nourishment and material for animals; and the finest animal form becomes the bodily preparation for rational humanity.

Once male and female had appeared, the lengthy first natural generation no longer needed to be repeated. The power of the species was gathered into seed, and the womb became a concentrated image of the earlier earth. What nature had performed over long ages in the first generation is performed in months within ordinary reproduction.

The womb is thus a small earth, and the embryo repeats in brief the progressive composition of the larger world. Its matter is first undifferentiated, then organs appear, then sensation and movement become possible, until the complete human form is brought forth.

This natural doctrine has its counterpart in religious generation. The religious world also has fathers, mothers, seeds, wombs, births, nourishment, growth, and maturity. The nāṭiq and waṣī establish the great framework; the Imam and

ḥudūd transmit the formative powers; the teacher deposits knowledge in the receptive soul; and the respondent is gradually formed into a spiritual human being.

The outward sharīʿa is like the bodily frame. Admonition and discipline are like nourishment and growth. Taʾwīl gives the soul perception of the inner meanings. Knowledge of the ḥudūd gives it ordered understanding. Tawḥīd raises it from created forms toward recognition of the transcendent Originator.

A person who receives only the outward form but refuses the inner growth resembles a mineral: fixed, useful perhaps in its place, but not alive with the higher powers. One who begins to grow through obedience and instruction resembles a plant. One who receives the inner meanings and begins to discern resembles an animal endowed with sensation. The complete believer who joins knowledge, action, and recognition becomes the true human of the religious world.

The same law explains malformed spiritual births. If the receptive soul is fed by false teaching, exaggeration, denial, or unauthorized interpretation, it acquires a distorted form just as corrupted natural matter produces defective bodies. The correction is to return to the ordered causes established by God and to receive from the proper spiritual parent.

Thus the study of nature is not separate from the knowledge of religion. The generation of bodies is a visible witness to the generation of souls. The ascent from mineral to human is an image of the ascent from ignorance to knowledge, from the outward form to the inward reality, and from the lower ḥudūd to the higher world.

Chapter Twelve

On The First Universal Adam And The Most Noble, Most Perfect Station That He Merited; On His Cycle, Which Was The Cycle Of Unveiling And Manifestation; On The Universal Felicity That Existed Therein; And On The Motion Of The Spheres In Accordance With The Ordained Measure.

We say, seeking assistance from God and drawing support from the blessings of His friends: We have already explained the beginning of human bodily creation and the manner in which its first forms arose from the earth under the governance of the heavens. We now turn to the purpose for which that creation was prepared, the chosen essence of the human species, the first Universal Adam, and the cycle in which the realities were manifest without the heavy veils that later came to cover them.

Divine wisdom has placed in every genus a most excellent member and in every ordered series a summit toward which what lies below tends. Among the heavenly bodies the sun is distinguished by its light and central influence. Among minerals the precious stones and noble metals excel common stone and earth. Among plants some are more balanced and beneficial than others. Among animals some display greater intelligence, discipline, and receptivity. It would therefore be contrary to this visible order if humanity had no chosen summit.

When the natural world had reached the measure appointed for it, there appeared in the most temperate and purified region a group of human persons whose bodies and souls were more balanced than those who followed. The tradition places this first appearance in Sarandīb. Twenty-eight persons are mentioned as the chosen beginning of that human order, corresponding in number to celestial and linguistic arrangements known to the people of wisdom.

Among those twenty-eight there was one whose balance, intelligence, subtlety, and receptivity surpassed all the others. He was to them like the sun among the stars and like the First Intellect among the spiritual ranks. He was the First Universal Adam.

He contemplated his own existence and the ordered forms around him. He saw the heavens turning in measure, the stars differing in their places and effects, the earth bearing its products, and the members of his own body joined together in a wisdom that none of them had produced for itself. From the workmanship he was led to the Maker, and from the ordered effects to the One whose command gives every cause its station.

No human teacher preceded him in this recognition. By the purity of his nature and the excellence of his preparation he reflected upon himself by himself. He knew that neither he nor the beings around him were self-subsisting. He stripped the Originator of likeness to the things originated and proclaimed His transcendence. Thus he preceded his companions in tawḥīd.

Because he preceded them in the recognition of the transcendent Originator, the light of taʾyīd reached him from the higher spiritual world. The rays of the intellective ranks were reflected in his purified soul. He became the terrestrial counterpart of the First Intellect: not because he was identical with it in substance, but because in his own world he stood first in receiving and communicating divine guidance.

He then turned to his companions. He did not keep the grace to himself, for the perfection of the higher is to benefit the lower. He called them to the recognition to which he had been guided: to deny likeness, corporeality, place, and limitation of the Originator; to recognize the spiritual ranks through which taʾyīd descends; and to acknowledge the precedence that God had granted him among them.

They responded according to their capacities. Those who were nearest in preparation received more, and those beneath them received through those above. Thus the religious hierarchy began among humanity in the same ordered manner as the ranks of the world of origination. The higher benefited the lower, and the lower recognized the right of the higher.

This process is compared to the purification of substances in alchemy as described by the people of wisdom. When the material is purified, the proportions balanced, and the celestial time favorable, a noble substance appears that can transform what receives its influence. Likewise Universal Adam appeared when the natural and spiritual conditions were prepared, and through him the latent capacities of the others were awakened.

He arranged the ranks of his daʿwa, established guides for the people, and taught both the sciences by which bodily life is maintained and the higher sciences by which the soul is perfected. The twenty-eight primordial persons were distributed in an ordered structure, and from them the teaching passed to the rest of humanity.

That first age was a cycle of kashf, unveiling and manifestation. The inner realities were not hidden under the dense coverings of ritual symbols to the degree they would be in later cycles. Knowledge was openly proclaimed according to the capacity of each rank. The people were nearer to subtlety, and the burdens that later became necessary because of human decline had not yet multiplied.

Do not understand from this that there was no distinction of ranks or no obligation. On the contrary, the hierarchy itself is permanent. There was a superior and an inferior, a teacher and a learner, an Imam and those guided by him. What differed was the degree of concealment. In a cycle of unveiling, the realities are named more directly; in a cycle of concealment, they are guarded by symbols, legal forms, and graduated instruction.

The people of that first cycle therefore enjoyed a universal felicity. Their souls were more receptive, the truth was less obscured by contention, and the sacred sciences were not hidden from their qualified possessors. What later generations sought through difficult symbols was nearer to them in open teaching.

Universal Adam completed what had been entrusted to him. When his earthly period ended, the spiritual form he had acquired did not perish with the body. He ascended through the ranks to the world appropriate to him. Those beneath him rose according to what they had received, while the hierarchy continued on earth through a successor.

A fundamental rule follows from this: no divinely appointed guide leaves his station vacant. Whoever rises leaves behind one who stands for those below. The earth is not abandoned without a proof. If a rank were removed without succession, the chain of spiritual benefit would be broken, just as the natural order would be broken if the intermediate causes between higher and lower were suddenly removed.

The settled Imamate therefore continues through designation and lineage. We distinguish the mustaqarr, the permanent or settled Imam, from the mustawdaʿ, the depositary who may temporarily bear or protect a trust. A depositary rank can perform great functions and may appear publicly in circumstances where the settled line is concealed, but the permanent light does not thereby leave the hereditary line ordained for it.

The Imam who is mustaqarr is the son of an Imam and receives both bodily descent and spiritual designation. He is the root from which the next settled Imam proceeds. The depositary person is entrusted with something that ultimately belongs to another line. To confuse the two is, in this doctrine, to confuse protection of the trust with possession of the permanent station.

As the cycles proceed, the original clarity does not remain at the same level. Souls become attached to the sensory world, philosophical and secondary sciences increase, disputes multiply, and the true sciences become scarce among the people. The Imams and their ḥudūd are compelled to conceal much of what had once been proclaimed openly.

Thus the cycle of unveiling gives way to a cycle of satr, concealment. The realities are covered with the garments of law, symbol, parable, and bodily obligation. This covering is not a defect in revelation. It is a mercy suited to the condition of the people, for a medicine must be given according to the strength of the patient, and a secret that an unprepared person cannot bear may harm rather than benefit him.

The nāṭiq of a cycle therefore establishes the outward law, while the waṣī and the Imams preserve its interior. The law disciplines bodies and communities; taʾwīl leads qualified souls toward the reality hidden within it. When the world again reaches the appropriate stage, the Qāʾim unveils what was concealed and the cycle returns toward disclosure.

We describe vast cycles in which the ranks rise and the whole order is renewed. The Tenth Intellect, whose delay was previously explained, rises when the lower world reaches completion; the ranks above and below are gathered according to the wisdom of the cycle. What appears as history on earth corresponds to movements within the spiritual hierarchy.

The traditional number of one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets is interpreted within this immense succession of ages. Prophets, legatees, Imams, and their faithful followers rise according to their degrees and remain in the barzakh appointed to them until the universal gathering. Their identities are not lost; rather, their acquired spiritual forms are preserved within the higher totality.

The cycles of kashf and satr alternate. One age displays what another age veils. One age emphasizes knowledge, another discipline and action. Yet both serve a single purpose: the ascent of souls from potentiality to actuality and their return to the world of intellect.

At the completion of the great cosmic period the present celestial arrangement itself reaches its end. The relations of the spheres, elements, and generated beings are dissolved, and from the purified residue a new order begins. Just as the first human world arose from a prepared natural world, another primordial humanity appears when the new conditions become complete.

Thus the beginning and return correspond. The First Universal Adam is not an isolated figure in a disconnected past; his cycle is a model for the structure of sacred history. What begins in unveiling passes through concealment and discipline and tends again toward a higher unveiling in the Qāʾim.

Understand this correspondence and do not imagine the sacred histories as disconnected tales. The same wisdom governs the spiritual world, the natural world, and the religious world. The names and bodies change; the principles of hierarchy, reception, guidance, concealment, and unveiling remain.

We ask God to make us among those who recognize the guides of their age, receive from the proper ranks, and are raised through knowledge and righteous action to the world of enduring felicity. He is the giver of success.

We describe the twenty-eight primordial persons as a chosen group emerging from the most balanced region of the inhabited world. They were not equal in preparedness. Just as the stars differ in light although all belong to the heaven, these persons differed in the subtlety of their natural constitutions and in the speed with which they received intellectual perfection.

The foremost among them contemplated himself and the world. He saw that his body was composed of opposed natures held together in one ordered form; that the heavens moved with regularity; that the sun, moon, and stars performed their courses; that the earth brought forth its children in measure; and that no part of the whole sufficed to explain its own order.

From the act he rose to the agent, and from the arrangement to the arranger, yet he did not stop at a corporeal maker. He stripped the Originator of body, place, time, likeness, and limitation. In this way he preceded the others in tawḥīd and became receptive to the lights flowing from the world above.

When the higher support reached him, knowledge that had been dispersed in potentiality became actual within him. He became the first teacher of his human world. He did not claim the rank by force; his precedence was recognized through the knowledge, wisdom, and order made manifest in him.

He called the remaining chosen persons and explained to them what had become clear to him. Those who recognized his precedence received from him and were arranged beneath him according to their capacities. In this way the first human daʿwa arose as an image of the spiritual hierarchy.

We repeatedly compare the Universal Adam to the First Intellect. The comparison is relative, not absolute. The First Intellect is first in the spiritual world; Universal Adam is first in the human religious world of his cycle. The First receives the created effusion without a human teacher; Adam receives from the spiritual order and becomes the teacher of those beneath him.

The twenty-eight are also related symbolically to the letters and lunar mansions, for number, language, heaven, and hierarchy are seen number, language, heaven, and hierarchy as ordered according to corresponding principles. The purpose of these correspondences is to show that revelation and cosmos arise from one wisdom.

The first Adam established ranks, taught the sciences, regulated social life, and guided human beings in the arts by which they preserved their bodies. Yet because the people of that cycle were subtle in nature, the religious burden placed upon them was light in bodily forms and heavy in knowledge.

Their “worship” consisted principally in recognition, contemplation, obedience to the higher ranks, and reception of the sciences. The realities that later ages would know only through symbols were more openly declared among them.

This is why their age is called the cycle of kashf. The veil between expression and meaning was thin. The teacher could speak more openly, while the student’s preparedness allowed him to receive meanings that later people could not bear without the protection of parable and ritual form.

Nevertheless, even in kashf there remained hierarchy. Disclosure does not abolish the difference between teacher and student, superior and subordinate, giver and receiver. Rather, it removes some of the coverings made necessary by density and opposition.

The Universal Adam eventually completed his work. When his soul became fully prepared and his earthly function was finished, he rose toward the higher spiritual rank. Before leaving, however, he did not abandon the people without guidance. He established one who would succeed him.

This becomes a universal law in this doctrine: the guide does not depart without appointing a guide. The spiritual order is continuous. If a rank were simply removed without a successor, the chain of benefit would be broken and those beneath would be deprived of the cause through which they receive.

The settled Imam is therefore compared to a continuous root. The individual bodies change, but the rank remains. A depositary person may carry a trust for a time, yet the permanent Imamate belongs to the divinely ordered line.

As ages pass, however, the preparedness of communities changes. The first clarity weakens. People become attached to bodily pleasures and competing sciences; disputes multiply; the people of truth are opposed; and what could once be spoken openly becomes dangerous or incomprehensible.

At that point the Imam and the people of knowledge adopt concealment. Meanings are clothed in symbols; commandments discipline bodies; prohibitions restrain passions; and the outward law becomes a protective shell for the inner wisdom.

Thus kashf gives way to satr, and satr prepares eventually for a new kashf. Neither is arbitrary. Each form corresponds to the condition of the people and to the divine wisdom governing the cycles.

We describe vast cosmic periods in which these cycles recur. The prophetic figures known to ordinary history belong to one portion of a much greater order. The number of prophets, the succession of dispensations, and the long barzakh between completed ranks are all fitted into this cyclical scheme.

Those who finish their earthly degree do not vanish. Their purified souls remain associated with the higher ranks, awaiting the completion of the universal gathering. In this way the labors of one cycle become the prepared material for the next.

The final Qāʾim is therefore already implicit in the first Adam: the first opening points toward the last disclosure. The beginning and end are linked as two ends of one circle.

Chapter Thirteen

On The Prophets Who Established The Revealed Laws: The Settled Among Them And The Bearers Of The Entrusted Deposits

We say: We have already set forth the beginning of human creation and its origin, which was like a growth from the earth according to the requirement of divine wisdom; and we have described the purity and subtlety possessed by the people of that cycle, and their reception of the noble sciences openly, by the requirement of mercy from the Wise Governor and His compassion. We have also spoken of the First Universal Adam and of those who succeeded him in the caliphate. We now wish to speak of the cycle of concealment, in which the meanings were hidden, and of the arising of the corporeal Adam and, after him, the Imams and the speaking-prophets, receiving taʾyīd from the spiritual world.

We say: We have mentioned the cycle of disclosure and what it contained of manifestation. At the end of that cycle, during the last three thousand years of the fifty-thousand-year period, the power of disclosure weakened and the attachment of its people to the divine sciences by which salvation is obtained diminished. The people turned toward philosophical sciences, mathematical astronomy, and geometry, while the true sciences became covered over, their seekers decreased, their possessors were rejected, and what was obligatory concerning them was cast aside. What had been strong became weak; those noble disciplines and virtues diminished; the signs of the sciences were effaced and those who upheld them disappeared. What had formerly been common came to be transmitted only to particular individuals. The Imams, peace be upon them, put on the garment of taqiyya. The sciences of geometry and mathematical astronomy became manifest, while opponents and adversaries multiplied, their word rose, and corruption spread throughout the earth.

At that time the prophets appeared with corporeal revealed laws and religious obligation, while true knowledge and the subtle meaning were concealed. Adam then arose with the cycle of concealment, as we have mentioned. This has continued through the ages and recurs with the passing of cycles and periods. Praise be to God; there is no power and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Magnificent. We ask God to pour His favor upon us; truly He is the Subtle, the Merciful.

We say: When God, exalted is He, willed to manifest His friend Adam and to begin the revealed laws by which the people of the world would be purified, He said to His angels—meaning the ḥudūd of that cycle—addressing them through the tongue of their Imam and informing them of what He intended, so that the proof might be established over them by making it known: “I am placing upon the earth a khalīfa.” They answered in the language of objection: “Will You place therein one who will cause corruption therein and shed blood, while we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?” That is: Will You veil the meanings, and establish one who will stand by means of forms whose inner reality corporeal creation does not recognize from the kingdom? He said: “I know what you do not know,” indicating what had been concealed from them of the knowledge of the realities and what had become absent from them. They had not reached what was hidden behind the veil, but only its outward appearance.

Adam had grown up within the daʿwa of Hunayd, the possessor of that age. It was he who commanded the ḥudūd entrusted with his daʿwa to submit to Adam both secretly and openly. He informed them that Adam would establish the laws of religious obligation and would summon in the earth of the daʿwa those who responded, raising them from the rank of response through the stages of instruction until they reached the exalted stations. They all prostrated and obeyed, entered under his authority, and worked according to the obligations to the extent they were able. This was after they had taken refuge in the Throne—meaning the support of the First—and had attached themselves to their Imam, obeying what he conveyed to them of knowledge like it.

But al-Ḥārith b. Murra became arrogant, mounted the mount of rebellion and obstinacy, and said by his own analogy, which his soul had embellished for him, and by his false reasoning without taʾwīl: “I am better than he. You created me from fire, and You created him from clay.” That is: I arose from subtle knowledge in the cycle of disclosure, whereas he has appeared in the bodily veil that is the lowest of the formative ḥudūd. At that point he was expelled from the garden, taʾyīd was withheld from him within the daʿwa, he was removed and driven away because of his arrogance, and he was expelled from its realities when he persisted in rebellion and excess.

It was said: “O Adam, dwell, you and your spouse, in the garden, and eat freely from it wherever you wish.” That is: Manifest, you and the one joined to you in knowledge—your hujja of the daʿwa—to those whom you guide what belongs to your guidance. Then the adversary appeared to them pretending to be a sincere adviser. He deceived them

with delusion and said: “Your Lord has forbidden you this tree only lest you become angels or become among the immortals.” The meaning is: What is the reason for this concealment? If you disclose the meanings, you will prevail over the people of dense corporeality and become among the exalted angels, the immortal ones. By this he meant the matter of the final Qiyāma.

Adam then disclosed what had been inward to the outward rank. Because Adam stood at the beginning of the circle and the Qāʾim at its end, he saw the nearness of its beginning to its end and manifested from his knowledge what he had been commanded to conceal. He imagined that he might stand in the rank of the Qāʾim, although that rank did not belong to him or to the people of his cycle. His lapse was therefore like the lapse of the Second Emanation when it imagined itself equal to the First Emanation. For this reason that spiritual rank was also symbolized as Adam. Adam was made to descend from the garden, returning from the rank of taʾyīd to the rank of instruction, receiving through embodied expression what he had formerly received through subtlety without the crookedness of words.

Our master, the excellent person, the author of the Epistles—God’s blessings be upon him—made this clear in the Comprehensive Epistle. He said: The Sage said that when God created Adam, He caused him to dwell in the garden, which is the abode of His generosity, and established him in it with a secure station among His chosen, near angels. He covenanted with him that he was not to approach a tree that He identified for him, and forbade him from eating from it. He informed him that it was stored up until an appointed time; that through it the return to the beginning would occur; that the ranks would end in it after beginning from it; and that he was not to eat from it except through guidance. It was the end of the first cycle of disclosure, while Adam was the first of those appointed as khalīfas in the first cycle of concealment.

The fruit of that tree was hidden within its branches and concealed beneath its leaves. It was present in its branches, yet hidden in the leaves of the cycle, so that no one could reach it or take anything from it except at the time God had appointed and made easy, when the intention would be to manifest it by means of the appearance of the Universal Soul on the day of the second presentation, when the Soul would become manifest for the decisive judgment. Then the Tree of the Furthest Boundary would appear, and the other creation would take place.

God covenanted with Adam and informed him that this would not occur in his time and was not prepared for his age. He permitted him everything else among the trees and every kind of fruit that would be nourishment for him and for those whom he taught. Then Satan made his evil action appear fair to him, induced him to commit what had been forbidden, caused him to take what was not lawful for him, and persuaded him to eat what had been barred to him. He could not accomplish this except through stratagem, gentleness, and deceptive speech toward Adam and his spouse.

He came to Adam in the form of a compassionate counselor and said: You seek benefit from the Teacher, wisdom, and knowledge that no one before you was given. You have been preferred over the angels who were commanded to prostrate to you and to humble themselves before you, and you have been made their teacher, teaching them the names of what will be. Nothing remains concealed from you except knowledge of one thing and recognition of those exalted angels who were not commanded to prostrate to you and did not enter under your obedience, for they are the lofty stations and exalted degree with God.

Adam said to him: What is this knowledge that God has hidden from me and has not disclosed to me, although He knows that I am in need of it and cannot dispense with it? His enemy replied, pretending to be one of his sincere advisers: It is knowledge of the Resurrection, the nature of the other creation, the emergence for decisive judgment, and the manner in which spiritual luminous forms appear from bodily persons in the abode of permanence. If you and your spouse knew this knowledge, you would be angels and would be among the immortals in religion. That is, if you were among the people of the cycle of disclosure, your creation would be spiritual rather than corporeal, since permanence and immortality in the superior condition are more fitting for the soul than for the body.

At this Adam’s soul longed for it. He wished to look upon it and to bring it from potentiality into actuality, so that he might see how the cycle of disclosure would be, how the people of that age would receive it and respond to it, and what the station of the purified soul would be at that time. He therefore disclosed something of what he had been forbidden to those who were not its people, showed it to one who did not deserve it, and put something of it in a place other than its proper place. This was equivalent to eating from that which had been forbidden.

When this appeared from him, his circumstances became disturbed and the matter became difficult for him. When Adam’s trial was prolonged, he withdrew the statement, communed with his Lord, and sought a means to Him

through the Qāʾim of the appointed time, in whose age the realities would be manifested, and through the possessors of the exalted stations, the complete words and radiant signs. He confessed that he had not intended rebellion; rather, he had longed for that sublime station and exalted degree, without denying it or arrogantly refusing to acknowledge the excellence of its possessor. Then God accepted his repentance and eased his life. He sent to Adam and his spouse an angel from among His angels who taught them cultivation, propagation, sowing, harvesting, planting, clothing, adornment, and what they required in worldly life for the maintenance of bodies in the abode of generation and corruption.

Adam received taʾyīd, revelation, and inspiration. He was commanded to establish the revealed laws, to prostrate to God, to perform bodily works, and to manifest the crafts. His children became numerous, his progeny spread, his daʿwa expanded, and his abode and settlement were populated. He remained in that condition for as long as God, majestic is His majesty, willed him to remain, until his appointed term was completed. Then God transferred him to the abode of His mercy and the abode of permanence, and showed him what he had desired to see. His striving was not disappointed and his work was not rendered vain. He attained what he had sought.

So accept what we have conveyed to you of this noble knowledge and be among the grateful. Worship your Lord until certainty comes to you, as the prophets and messengers—God's blessings be upon them all—were commanded: establishing prayer, giving zakāt, perfecting purification, and striving toward the purified places and flourishing mosques which God has permitted to be raised and in which His name is remembered. In them men—and what men they are—glorify Him; neither trade nor sale distracts them from the remembrance of God, the establishment of prayer, and the giving of zakāt, until certainty comes, which is the pure essence of religion, when the trumpet is blown and what is in the breasts is brought forth: "Surely their Lord on that day will be fully aware of them." Let not worldly life deceive you, nor let the deceiver deceive you concerning God. Do not be among those of whom God says: "We shall turn to whatever deeds they did and make them scattered dust," and: "while they think that they are doing good work," and: "laboring, weary, entering a blazing Fire." We seek refuge in God for ourselves and for you from the Fire and ask Him to keep us from the company of the wicked.

Reflect, then, upon the words of our master, the author of the Epistles—blessings of God upon him—concerning the tree and his exposition of its meaning: that it is knowledge of what will be in the cycle of disclosure which the Qāʾim will manifest. Adam revealed what he had been commanded to conceal and uncovered what ought not to have been uncovered in his cycle. He then received the words, returned to the station of light, and adhered to his walī who had brought him forth from the burning heat into shade.

Adam's lapse was not arrogance, nor self-exaltation, nor obstinate denial of one whom God had preferred. God had saved him from that, protected him, and purified and exalted him above its disgrace. Rather, it came from longing for those lofty stations and seeking to manifest their exalted and inaccessible meanings. He was prevented because it was not their appointed time. His repentance was accepted when he sought a means through the possessor of his age, and he was commanded to manifest his sharīʿa and establish its proof. He attained what he had sought after completing his term, the passing of his time, and the completion of his work, when he became subtle and free from density and bodies and the people of his sharīʿa rose at its end to the inner sciences. Thus he returned to the garden.

He appointed one to stand in his place for the guidance of humankind. Adam, peace be upon him, was the first to stand in the corporeal, legal, practical cycle of concealment. His likeness in the natural world is the bodily form of man, for he stood by the pure outward form. God, exalted is He, had made it obligatory that the speaking-prophets arise with concealment at the time He appointed and the term He fixed, and made them corporeal ḥudūd between the people and God, exalted is He—ranks through whom the meanings descend to those beneath them and through whom those beneath ascend toward what is above.

The spiritual beings who descend to them by revelation are proof of this. God—glorified is He—says: "God chooses messengers from among the angels and from among mankind." Mankind here means the prophets, while the messengers are the angels sent down to the prophets, for God created angels and human beings, and corporeal beings cannot directly receive the knowledge of the spiritual kingdom from spiritual beings except through an ordered arrangement that He established. The proof of this is what God, exalted is He, relates of Abraham, peace be upon him, in his seeing the star, then the moon, then the sun. This indicates his ascent from one ḥadd to another and from one rank to another.

The trustworthy dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity—said in Taʾwīl al-Zakāt, in describing the angels charged with the affair of wisdom and in describing the prophets, that the world of Intellect and the world of Soul contain among those entrusted with the completion of wisdom beings whose number cannot be counted. The angels are of two kinds: those in actuality and those in potentiality.

Those in potentiality are the possessors of taʾyīd who are sent to created beings, for the name "messengers" encompasses the angels. After the corruption and dissolution of their bodily frames, when their spiritual forms separate from corporeal forms, they pass from the limit of potentiality to the limit of actuality. They then become spiritual angels after having been corporeal angels in potentiality, and become near angels. This is confirmed by God's saying: "Had We made him an angel, We would surely have made him a man, and We would have confused for them what they themselves confuse." Likewise concerning the Messiah, peace be upon him: "They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it was made to appear so to them"; and: "They have no certain knowledge of it."

The "making to appear" here means that those supported ones, who are the near angels and the possessors of protection and rectitude, are clothed in the likeness of corporeal persons, lest arrogance or disobedience befall them. They have been distinguished by election and by actual ʿiṣma from the rank of angels in potentiality because they have been purified from disobeying the divine command. Concerning them God says: "And eight will bear above them the Throne of your Lord on that day." That is, when by their emergence from potentiality into actuality they become above the stations and the ḥudūd, they are eight—neither more nor fewer. This points to the seven Imams who summon to the station of the possessor of the eighth rank, namely the Qāʾim al-Mahdī, peace be upon him, the eighth of the successors.

It is thus established that the near angels are those manifest in actuality, and they are the numbered Imams; whereas the angels in potentiality are the supported messengers, for in the state of their potentiality they are spiritual but are beneath the rank of actualized angels. God, exalted is He, says: "The Messenger believes in what was sent down to him from his Lord, and so do the believers; each believes in God, His angels, His Books, and His messengers." By "angels" He means the near ones who are angels in actuality, for they are nearer to God than others in degree and station. By "His Books" He means His revelation and its taʾwīl, its decisive and ambiguous passages, its outward and inward meanings. By "His messengers" He means the supported ones who are angels in potentiality. These angels in potentiality believe in the angels who are in actuality, the possessors of the second ranks and the bearers of the Throne of God.

It is not permissible that those actual angels disobey God in any respect because they are protected from disobedience: there is no rank above their rank and no station higher than their stations toward which their souls might aspire so that by such aspiring they would become disobedient. The angels in potentiality, however—the supported messengers—are not maʿṣūm in this same sense, not because they intentionally disobey God, but because their souls may aspire toward ranks that do not belong to them. Through such aspiration they are called disobedient and astray, as God says: "Adam disobeyed his Lord and went astray." This shows that whenever a soul aspires to a rank that does not belong to it and is not of its proper ḥadd, that person is called disobedient and astray.

Their disobedience is not like the disobedience of Iblīs and his ḥudūd, for his disobedience was opposition to God, denial of His station, rejection of His signs, and transgression of His ḥudūd. Iblīs therefore became despairing, expelled, and punished after having been an obedient, rewarded angel. The disobedience of supported figures is of another kind and is not deliberate. Those who disobey deliberately are the proud and denying iblīses, like Iblīs who was too proud to prostrate to Adam. Those who disobey without deliberate rebellion are the supported ones, like Adam in his lapse and like the corporeal angels who were commanded to prostrate to him but objected to their Lord when they said: "Will You place therein one who causes corruption therein?" Their fault was unintentional and they intended obedience. When He said to them: "I know what you do not know," they recognized that they had erred, took refuge in the Throne, circled its station, and He accepted their repentance. They are the twelve angelic hujjas who are angels in potentiality.

So too Noah asked concerning his son that he was of his family, and God answered: "He is not of your family; indeed, his conduct is unrighteous." Abraham was told: "I am making you an Imam for mankind." He said: "And of my descendants?" He answered: "My covenant does not reach the wrongdoers." His request concerned Isaac. Moses asked to see His face that he might look upon Him, and what happened to him at the mountain occurred; when he recovered he sought forgiveness for his sin. Pharaoh said to him: "You did your deed which you did, and you were among the ungrateful," and Moses replied: "I did it then while I was among those who had gone astray." Jonah

departed in anger. Joseph inclined toward the wife of the ʿAzīz and she toward him, had he not seen the proof of his Lord. Solomon was tested when a body was cast upon his throne, and he said: “My Lord, forgive me.” David fell down bowing and repented. Repentance is a return from a sin committed or from a limit that has been exceeded. The same principle applies to David in the matter of the wife of Uriah, and to Jesus in the words: “Did you say to the people, ‘Take me and my mother as two gods apart from God?’” and to our Prophet Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, in the words: “That God may forgive you what preceded of your sin and what followed.”

This proves that the angels are of two kinds: angels in actuality, who are the maʿṣūmūn, and angels in potentiality. The latter in turn are of two kinds: one who deliberately disobeys, like Iblīs and his party, and one who seeks to rise to what is not his rank, intending obedience rather than opposition. The believing sinner remains a believer, God willing, if he proceeds toward actuality; the protected believer is a believer in truth. Likewise the sinning angel is an angel in potentiality who has not yet emerged into actuality, God willing, while the protected angel is an angel in actuality.

All created beings share the fact of name, form, and meaning, while this is denied of the Creator—majestic and exalted is He—because He resembles created beings in no respect whatsoever, neither in form nor in meaning. “There is nothing like Him,” and: “They do not encompass Him in knowledge.” All names are therefore denied of Him in the creaturely sense.

This is the end of his statement—may God exalt his sanctity—in which he clarified the settled and the entrusted ranks, the angels who are in actuality and those who are in potentiality, and the nature of the sins attributed to them. The protected angels are the Imams, and their cycle is the cycle of disclosure, because they stand by the subtle sciences of the spiritual kingdom in which there is no doubt and no ambiguity. Doubts, ambiguities, and believing things contrary to their realities are the “sins” of knowledge. The prophets, blessings of God upon them, belong to the cycle of concealment and the manifestation of the revealed laws and corporeal sciences. Those who cling only to their outward forms without returning to the people of realities fall into such errors; hence those sins and faults are attributed to the prophets in the language of symbolism.

The first of the prophets was Adam. A sin befell him first, then he returned through ʿiṣma and deserved entry into the garden after repenting from his fault and separating from his bodily frame; he then became an angel in actuality. Likewise the prophets are angels in potentiality. If a fault overtakes them, they return in repentance and enter the state of protection after leaving bodies and forms and returning to meanings in the abode of subtlety, which is the abode of final refuge.

Those who persist in sins and errors, abandoning repentance and seeking forgiveness, are the iblīses and the wicked. Their first was al-Ḥārith b. Murra, who arrogantly refused to prostrate to Adam and exalted himself above him through his error, disbelief, and satanic rebellion. He looked at Adam’s dense body and failed to perceive the subtle spirit and noble soul by which Adam was supported. Iblīs—God’s curse upon him—was deceived by being one of the remnants of the people of the cycle of disclosure and by the fact that their knowledge was nearer to subtlety, whereas Adam was the possessor of concealment and the outward form. Thus Iblīs fell into his corrupt supposition and incurred expulsion from the abode of God’s reward and His curse.

Our master, the author of the Epistles—God’s blessings be upon him—made clear in the Comprehensive Epistle that Iblīs was among the people of the cycle of disclosure and that he became proud on account of this against Adam, refusing obedience and prostration. He said: Know, my brother—may God support you and us with a spirit from Him—that Iblīs is a name derived from bewilderment and misguidance. A man is said to have “ablasa” when he is cut off, bewildered, and stopped from the matter that would have been best for him had he done it. Likewise Iblīs, when commanded to prostrate to Adam, became bewildered and stopped. His bewilderment and refusal to prostrate were due to his belittling Adam and being arrogant toward him, because he imagined himself to possess a lofty state and, by his own analogy, thought he had reached the first rank. He therefore refused, became arrogant, persisted in disobedience, and departed from obedience. It was said to him: “You are not among the exalted ones.” He argued, grew proud, repeated his opposition, and then persisted, bringing what he had concealed of disobedience from potentiality into actuality.

In truth, he was a person remaining from the people of a former cycle of disclosure, one who had attained some of its conditions and acquired something of its knowledge. For that reason it was said that he was among the jinn and that he departed from the command of his Lord. Those remnants of the cycle of disclosure who reached the cycle of

concealment were called jinn because their state was of a kind different from the state of the people of concealment. It is related that when Adam was created, Iblīs passed by him while he lay at the gate of the garden as a body without spirit. He tapped him and struck him with his foot, saying to himself: I shall prevail over him, for he is hollow. Hence his words: “You created me from fire and created him from clay.” He did not understand the cycle of concealment and refused to prostrate to the one who was the first khalīfa established by God’s command. Iblīs wanted to be the one who stood with that command. God disappointed his expectation, placed him beneath Adam as a follower, and Iblīs became arrogant, refused, rebelled, denied, and left obedience. He deceived Adam, misled him, cheated him, and opposed him by reminding him of the knowledge of the cycle of disclosure and of the enduring intellectual benefits contained in it.

Thus the proof establishes that Iblīs was a person who arrogantly refused to accept the truth, departed from the company of the truthful, and disobeyed the one whom God had commanded him to obey and forbidden him to disobey. This was his own choice; he was not compelled or forced into it. The “Satan” was the first of the persons who followed him in that matter, assisted him in it, stood in cooperation with him, and acted as his deputy in misguidance.

The iblīses and satans therefore exist in every age alongside each person whom God—glorified is He—establishes from among His prophets, messengers, Imams, and successors, until the time of their disappearance and annihilation with the end of the cycle of concealment and the appearance of the cycle of disclosure. Then the accursed Iblīs will be slain, the burning meteors will be sent against the satans, and none of them will remain. May God hasten that by His favor and power, until the world becomes entirely felicity.

This is his statement, blessings of God upon him. In it he mentioned Iblīs, his pride against obedience to Adam, and his being deluded by his precedence in the earlier cycles. He did not obey Adam or acknowledge the excellence with which God had distinguished him. In all cycles the iblīses stand opposite the chosen prophets, the legatees, and the righteous Imams. Since Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, is the most excellent of the prophets and his cycle the most complete of the cycles, the Iblīs of his cycle is the seal of the wicked iblīses: the one who opposed his waṣī concerning his exalted rank and lofty station, refused obedience to him, and said in effect: I am better than he, for I preceded him and I heard directly from the scholars of the earlier cycle. He imagined that excellence belonged to him over one who arose in the age of the Prophet. He therefore turned from the side of truth and withdrew.

Our master al-Muʾayyad—may God sanctify his spirit—symbolized this when he said: In proportion to the power of the possessor of each cycle is the power of its iblīsiyya. This cycle of yours is the seal of the cycles, and its Iblīs is the seal of the wicked iblīses. The Satan is the one who followed Iblīs upon his scheme and was second to him in his affair. God made this manifest upon his own tongue when he said: “Indeed, I have a satan that overtakes me.”

The iblīses and satans continue to oppose the friends of God so long as the daʿwa remains concealed within the limits of revelation and taʾwīl. They cast bewilderment upon the followers through the falsehoods they introduce into religion. When the Qiyāma rises, the possessor of the universal taʾwīl appears, and the clear proof becomes manifest, Iblīs is slain, bewilderment and denial disappear, and the iblīses are burned by the flood of fire.

We return to the story of Adam, peace be upon him. The dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity—said in Asrār al-Nuṭaqāʾ, when mentioning Adam, peace be upon him: He continued moving from degree to degree and from ḥadd to ḥadd until God completed his creation and perfected his affair, and he deserved the spiritual creation and the formal breath. Then God, exalted is He, said: “I am placing upon the earth a khalīfa.” This address comes from the Imam of the age, who is the qāʾim for the people of his time—blessings of God upon him. The transcendent Creator does not address corporeal beings directly, and speech does not occur except through an ordered speaking instrument until the speech reaches the rank of the one through whom it is spoken.

When God appointed Adam as khalīfa, commanded the angels to prostrate to him, caused him to dwell in His garden—that is, the abode of the daʿwa—prohibited to him what He prohibited, caused Iblīs to make him slip and swear to him, and Adam was expelled from the garden, Adam sought forgiveness from his Lord, asked to be released from his fault, and sought a means through the names which had first been taught to him. These are the five luminous veils through whom the daʿwa exists perpetually.

Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, said: God created from the light of His Face veils, and named each of them by a name derived for him from His Names. The first of His Names is al-Ḥamd, and from it Muḥammad was named. He has the Name al-Aʿlā, and from it ʿAlī was named. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names, and from them al-

Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn were named, just as ʿAlī was derived from al-ʿAlī al-ʿAẓīm. He has the Name Fāṭir al-samāwāt wa-l-arḍ, and from it the name Fāṭima was derived.

When God created them at the right side of the Throne, Adam said: My Lord, by Your right over them and by their right before You, who are these five? He said: O Adam, these are My chosen ones and My intimates. I created them from My light and derived for them names from My Names. Adam said: My Lord, by Your right over them and by their right before You, will You not teach me their names? He said: O Adam, you possess a secret of My secret which no one may be shown until I ask you concerning it and give permission regarding each of them. Adam said: Yes, my Lord; then take from me a covenant concerning it. So He took the covenant from him and taught him their names.

He then presented them to the angels, although Adam had not taught any of them to the angels, and said: “Tell Me the names of these, if you are truthful.” They said: “Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us; surely You are the Knowing, the Wise.” He said: “O Adam, inform them of their names.” When Adam informed them of their names, the angels knew that Adam was an entrusted bearer and that he had been preferred over them by the knowledge God—mighty and majestic—had taught him. When they knew that, they were summoned to prostrate. Their prostration to Adam was worship of their Lord, since it was obedience to Him and an honoring of Adam. Only the rebellious Iblīs refused to prostrate to Adam and acknowledge his excellence.

This is the statement of our master al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, as transmitted by our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God sanctify his spirit—in one of his compositions. It indicates that these five lights, the fifth of whom in the order of manifestation is ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn—blessings of God upon them—are the axis of the daʿwa from the beginning of the cycles to their end and to the culmination of the ages, and that God forgave Adam when he sought a means through them to Him.

This may also be understood in the age of the speaking-prophet of the cycle: Abū Ṭālib, his Imam and ḥadd who established him, taught him the knowledge of these and singled him out for knowing them apart from the angelic ranks. Therefore those ranks were commanded to prostrate and were obliged to submit. They were twelve hujjas. When uncertainty and disclosure of the secret occurred, he returned in repentance and sought a means through those whose names he had first been taught—the very ones of whose excellence and blessing he had been commanded to inform the angels. Then the angels knew that he was an entrusted bearer and that he had been preferred over them by God’s singling him out for this knowledge.

The same principle runs through the cycle of every speaking-prophet: their walāya is presented to him and recognition and obedience to them are made obligatory for him. Whoever acknowledges is saved; whoever holds back falls. A proof and witness to this is what our master al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, said when a man asked him: O son of the Messenger of God, God has made it obligatory upon us to ask you and obey you in His saying: “Ask the People of the Remembrance if you do not know.” Has He also made it obligatory upon you to answer us? He said: No. We are given choice regarding you: if we wish we answer you, and if we wish we do not, according to the saying of God—glorified is He—“This is Our gift, so bestow or withhold without account.”

A similar event happened to Moses b. ʿImrān, peace be upon him. He was noble before God and among those brought near, yet when he asked for what exceeded his ḥadd, saying: “My Lord, show Yourself to me, that I may look upon You,” the answer came in a way that displeased him and referred him to another: “You shall not see Me; but look at the mountain. If it remains in its place, then you shall see Me. When his Lord manifested Himself to the mountain, He made it crumble, and Moses fell unconscious.” Thus the mountain was crushed, although Moses was God’s chosen one, confidant, interlocutor, and one of the greatest of creation before Him. God tested him with the thunderbolt and the crushing when he asked to see what surpassed his rank and sought a station not belonging to him.

How much more, then, should you, whose station and rank are lower, recognize the rank of your own soul and ask only what your ḥadd permits, lest you exceed it and be answered by what is painful and addressed with what displeases you. The near prophets slipped only because they looked toward lofty ranks that were not theirs and not of their proper ḥadd.

That was called disobedience because excess in obedience can itself become disobedience, just as falling short is disobedience. Thus what we have explained has become manifest from his words, peace be upon him. This passage is also among the transmissions of our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity. It is therefore established and clear that the “sin” of each speaking-prophet is what occurs at the beginning of his daʿwa when he

begins with negation, saying “There is no god,” because he comes first with the dense outward form in which tawḥīd is not yet manifest and the ranks of the ḥudūd are not yet disclosed. His faculties may therefore become deceived and almost go astray because of it.

Then he returns to affirmation, saying “except God,” an affirmation after negation and an indication of the world of subtlety when one becomes stripped of density. Within that lies the tawḥīd of the true God and the establishment of the settled Imam, whose station is the exalted rank, the most fitting and most rightful. When the speaking-prophet appoints his asās and causes his planting to bear fruit through knowledge and wisdom, his offering is accepted, his work is completed, he delivers the entrusted deposit to the one entitled to it, fulfills the obligatory right owed concerning it, and returns the command to its settled locus when the work is completed and the appointed term is reached.

We now return to where our account of Adam, peace be upon him, had reached. When he was made to descend into religious obligation and commanded to stand by the outward form concealed from those who held the belief in the subtle meaning, he migrated toward Yemen and arrived in the wilderness of Mecca. There he met his hujja, whom he had sent ahead to seek for him an abode of migration, and they met at ʿArafāt. This indicates the ḥadd of maʿrifa to which the exposition of its taʾwīl had reached.

He was commanded to build Mecca as a place of migration for himself and to erect the tent of light, an indication of the station of his waṣī, by whom his faith was completed when he found his likeness. He commanded his ḥudūd to circumambulate around his tent, indicating to the friends of his religion that they were to seek refuge only in his waṣī, his successor in rank. He took covenants concerning this and concealed the secret of God from the people of deviation and denial. The adversaries therefore worshipped the outward and were blind to the inward. They did not acknowledge the excellence of the people of excellence because they did not recognize the hidden secret.

He commanded his sons Hābīl and Qābīl to present their offerings and to manifest their inner condition by which the soundness of faith is known. Hābīl’s offering was accepted, while Qābīl’s offering was not. Qābīl slipped and went astray out of envy toward his brother for the noble station granted to him. He took refuge with the adversary of his father who had caused his father to leave the garden and made him slip, and he killed his brother outwardly and inwardly, just as the arrogant among the communities did to the legatees of their prophets in every religious community.

The people of misguidance and misleading continued until Hibat Allāh Shīth appeared, the seventh among the sons of Adam. The command of Adam continued among his descendants according to what had been determined. The story of Adam’s descent, his repentance, and his migration from one land to another because of the strength and dominance of his adversary became a recurring pattern. After him the same pen continued to write and the same divine custom operated among the nations. Righteousness mixed with corruption, the friends of God and their adversaries existed side by side, and the matter continued according to the ordinance of Adam’s cycle until his cycle and revealed law reached their end and the appointed term established for them was completed.

Then Noah, peace be upon him, arose with the command. He was the second of the speaking-prophets and corresponds to the drop of semen in the corporeal creation of the religious body. He abrogated the sharīʿa of Adam and established his own sharīʿa, extracting its obligations and recommended acts through the support of the spiritual angels who are the messengers of the Lord of the worlds to the messengers who bring glad tidings.

Abrogation does not mean that what the first Imam or speaking-prophet brought becomes false. Rather, the purpose is this: the first establishes his law as a hidden symbol and a clear outward form. Then the second speaking-prophet arises and manifests those symbols through a second set of symbols, so that his sharīʿa is clearer than the one preceding it, while still containing symbols whose full disclosure belongs to the one who will come after. He and his asās teach their chosen followers the taʾwīl of the sharīʿa of the speaking-prophet who preceded them.

Noah’s miracle was the manifestation of the Flood and the Ark. The Flood was what overwhelmed his people of the outward sciences which surged like a sea, while the earth indicated by his hujja overflowed with them. He erected the Ark as a symbol of his waṣī. By him there is salvation from the outward forms and from the waves of their disagreements, and by adherence to him there is triumph and life. Our speaking-prophet of this cycle, peace be upon him, made the same indication in his words: “The likeness of the people of my household among you is like the Ark of Noah: whoever boards it is saved, and whoever remains behind is drowned and falls.” He would not have

mentioned the Ark had there not been a Flood and had there not been a need to direct people to it so that they would not drown by embarking upon rebellion and disobedience.

Whoever falls into the mere outward knowledge of the messengers is confounded by its shifting levels and drowns, in respect of his soul, in a drowning that leads him toward destruction in the lowest abyss. Whoever adheres to the waṣī and to the Imams of their cycle, recognizing their right and drawing from the torrent of their taʾwīl—a current remote from ordinary seeking but near to their reality—has protected himself from drowning by the Ark and has held fast to the remnant left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron, carried by the angels in the Ark of tranquility.

Noah appointed his waṣī, who was his Ark, and by him whoever connected himself to him was saved, if his element was noble and his clay pure. His waṣī was his son Sām. The adversary of Sām was Ḥām and his descendants, who were more astray than cattle. Their blackness was interpreted as a change from the whiteness derived from light and as a likeness to darkness because of their wrongdoing and their distance from shade toward burning heat.

The Imamate continued in the descendants of Noah, and the good things remained connected to them from the higher ḥudūd and flowed continually toward them, until Noah's term was completed, his revealed law came to an end by God's decree, and its time ceased.

Then Abraham, peace be upon him, arose with the command and stood to manifest the religion as a ḥanīf, as God had commanded him. He is the third of the speaking-prophets and corresponds to the clot in the ḥanīf religious creation. He abrogated the sharīʿa of Noah, established his own revealed law, and clarified its obligations and recommended practices through the support of the spiritual angels who are the messengers of the Lord of the worlds to the human messengers.

Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity—said in Taʾwīl al-Zakāt: The Creator—majestic and mighty—is not described by the attributes of His origination, nor does He directly encounter each of His creation. He therefore established from His creation a chosen group of spiritual beings whose forms are not perceived by the eye, whom no place encompasses and no time annihilates. Whoever knows the angels in this manner has true faith in them, just as his faith in God is true when he knows that He is beyond attributes and relations.

Reports in many traditions state that angels came to the messengers in the forms of human beings, conveying to them what they had been sent with by direct reception and delivery, from speech to hearing, through the embodied instrument of speech. An example is what is related of the Messenger of God, blessings and peace upon him: while he was in his mosque with his companions, a questioner came to him and asked: What is Islam? The Messenger answered him. The man departed. Then the Messenger of God said to his companions: Do you know who that was? They said: God knows best. He said: That was Gabriel; he came to teach you the matter of your religion. Thus they perceived them in the forms of human beings although they are spiritual angels.

God—glorified is He—made this clear in the verses recited in the Qurʾan concerning Lot and his guests, Abraham and his guests, and David and the disputants who came to him. They are perceived by the eyes in the form of human beings. This is further indicated by what exists in the higher divine world, whose dispersed parts are gathered within the small world that is the human being. The higher world is the simple world, the world of virtues and taʾyīd, whose influence is connected to the small world in which the degrees of virtues and the knowledge of vices are gathered. Victory is what follows him, success is what is joined to him, rectitude is what he returns to; angels are his protectors and inhabitants, messengers his resting place and planting, wisdom his speech and hearing, remembrance his mount, reflection its blessing, correctness its fruit.

The human form in which the human creation is completed is its beauty: no spiritual virtue becomes manifest, no intellectual support comes from afar, no luminous light shines, no natural bodily nobility appears, no higher sight is opened, no tongue of knowledge speaks, no sensory hearing understands, and no spiritual angel descends to an ancient messenger except through a prepared human form. Man is the best proportioned of creatures and the most wondrously composed, gathering soul and intellect together with sense and nature.

The soul harvests what it has sown and reaches what it intended. It becomes fit for the company of the angels through their beholding it, addressing it, and perceiving its form and configuration. The angels are capable of appearing to them and assuming forms before them because of their encompassment of the nobility of their essence and the generosity of their origin. They are the transmitters of lights from the simple world to receptive souls and to

fortunate souls united with human forms. They convey from it according to the measure of those souls' understandings, the arrangement of their forms, and the subtlety of their perception, just as a human being may be fit for messengerhood and become a speaking messenger sent forth.

Thus the forms in which the angels appear are configurations of compositions and what is generated from their natural forms, indicating events that come to be in accordance with what is fitting for their stability for the appointed period. What is prepared for them in their overseeing of that form in the age of the speaking messenger is a light that flashes within the soul of the messenger and causes his subtle form to inherit majesty, greatness, perfection, and awe. Fear becomes his protection and victory his power. That light must therefore be an angel accompanying his soul, so that it may be a guide to recognizing the composite forms through the capacity of his soul to encompass their images.

This is the meaning of God's saying: "The Trustworthy Spirit brought it down upon your heart so that you might be among the warners, in a clear Arabic tongue," because by means of it he oversees those many unseen things. The power transferred into his soul deserves the name of messenger and angel. This power is the beginning of messengerhood, of which God says: "Knower of the unseen, He does not disclose His unseen to anyone, except a messenger whom He has chosen; then He appoints guards before him and behind him." When this faculty becomes accustomed to perceiving the composite form by which he oversees the divine unseen things, it rises from there toward the unseen things of thoughts and minds.

When language expresses those meanings through speech of the tongue, letters emerge as signs pointing toward and indicating them. No thought is wholly free of this condition, for expression requires that the tongue translate the meaning in its utterance. This is the end of his statement—may God sanctify his spirit—in which he clarifies the connection of the angels with the messengers, the connection of revelation to them, and the human being in whom the virtues are gathered.

The "human being" intended here is the one whom God has singled out for His taʾyīd and in whom He has gathered the virtues, unlike the blameworthy human who gathers vices. The angels in actuality are the Imam and his ḥudūd established for every speaking-prophet, just as Abū Ṭālib stood before our Prophet Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, and as the corresponding ranks stood before the prophets who preceded him. The angels in actuality are those stripped of the clothing of bodies. Likewise the Imam and his ḥudūd are, by their subtlety, stripped from the bodily outward forms and made subtle through the knowledge of the spiritual angels. The angels in potentiality are the speaking-prophet and his ḥudūd, who convey what reaches them from the world of subtlety, bringing it near to the understanding of those who hear and embodying in forms what reaches them from the world of subtlety.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn made this clear by making the spiritual angels intellects receiving support from the Origination that corresponds to the Imam. His ḥudūd receive from him and depend upon him. One of the blessed ḥudūd, those symbolized as the Companions of the Right, said: Many minds have plunged deeply into explaining the intellects. The dāʿī Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—made this clear in his Epistle of Illumination. He also affirmed that whoever acts arrogantly toward true knowledge falls into error. He says: What belongs to the soul is divided into the animal, such as man, horse, and bird, and the vegetal, such as vegetables, fruit, and trees. The animal is divided into the rational, such as man, and the non-rational, such as beasts, birds, and creeping things. The rational is divided into angelic, such as angels separated from bodies, and human, such as prophets, legatees, Imams, and their followers. The angelic is divided into that which is ibdāʿī, such as the First, and that which is inbiʿāthī, such as the other speaking souls.

Ḥamīd al-Dīn thus agrees in this statement with Jaʿfar—may God sanctify the spirits of them all. He makes the first beings angels, some belonging to origination and some to emanation, stripped from bodies; and he places opposite them the later ranks, concerning whom he says that the "human being" is the speaking-prophet, the asās of his cycle, the Imam, and their ḥudūd, embodied and capable of receiving spiritual material and taʾyīd. The truth has therefore become manifest, the sound doctrine made luminous, and the connection of the angels with the messengers, the angels in actuality, and the angels in potentiality established by what the noble ḥudūd transmitted and explained openly.

Let us return to the story of Abraham, peace be upon him. God preferred him and made him first a servant, then a prophet, then a messenger, then an intimate friend; then He said: "I am making you an Imam for mankind." He raised him to the highest of the ḥudūd and gave him ranks encompassing the knowledge of what exists. Abraham "turned his face toward the One who originated him." He was the locus and settled place of God's command, not turning

toward the star, the moon, or the sun, but toward the One who originated the worlds of Intellect and Soul. Through his nobility in relation to those worlds and his ascent to the highest attainments, he received from the Imam of his age and the possessor of his time the four ranks: prophecy, messengerhood, waṣāya, and Imamate.

Thus he fulfilled the religion of his father Noah, peace be upon him, by establishing his own revealed law—meaning that he completed its particular inner reality, for every qāʾim fulfills the religion of the one preceding him. He is the one who discloses the reality of what the first brought and makes its meanings plain. Concerning this God, exalted is He, says: “And Abraham, who fulfilled.” Adam came with the tanzīl; Noah after him established the taʾwīl; and Abraham came with the ḥaqīqa and clarified the subtle meanings. He was the last of the three “fathers” who arose with revealed laws: Adam, Noah, and Abraham.

Moses renewed the sharīʿa of Adam, Jesus renewed the sharīʿa of Noah, and Muḥammad renewed the sharīʿa of Abraham. Muḥammad completed the reality with which Abraham had fulfilled the religion. For this reason Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, clarified the totalities and resolved the detailed matters when he indicated ʿAlī, who was the khalīfa after him, saying: “Whoever has me as his mawlā, ʿAlī is his mawlā.” Thus the religion and the blessing were completed through him, just as Abraham had completed his religion and fulfilled the revealed laws of the speaking-prophets before him.

Abraham, peace be upon him, left behind his two sons Ismāʿīl and Isḥāq. He established Ismāʿīl in the waṣāya and made Isḥāq stand with the rank of prophecy and messengerhood before him, calling to God by his permission and guiding to Him. This was among the matters God commanded Abraham, so he obeyed his Lord and gave every possessor of a right his right, for Abraham was noble before God and among those brought near.

The command came down to Abraham and Ismāʿīl together: “Purify My House for those who circumambulate it, those who remain therein, and those who bow and prostrate.” The outward House is the noble House, while the inward House is Qaydār b. Ismāʿīl, the inheritor of the light, and his descendants after him until Muḥammad and ʿAlī—blessings of God upon them. The divine Word turned away from Isḥāq and his descendants in the settled line. This is confirmed in the Noble Book by Abraham’s truthfulness to the vision in which God—glorified is He—showed him the sacrifice of Ismāʿīl. He laid him upon his forehead, and “We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.” That “great sacrifice” is Lot, symbolized as the ram and established as his hujja, while Qaydār b. Ismāʿīl was the entrusted bearer.

Ismāʿīl covenanted with his son Qaydār to hand over prophecy and messengerhood to the descendants of his brother Isḥāq. No one among the descendants of Isḥāq stood with these two ranks except through the establishment of the possessor of the command from among the descendants of Ismāʿīl. The affair continued in the settled and entrusted lines until the command reached Moses. The cycles of the three fathers were completed, and the time came for the three sons to arise.

Moses received the command and Joshua b. Nūn was appointed over him as the one indicated by the command of the walī of the age and time. He disciplined him, raised him, and elevated him from one ḥadd to another until he reached maturity. He then connected with Shuʿayb, the Tree of the Call and the Caller, the walī of his age, ʿAdnān, possessor of the command settled in him and continuing in his descendants.

When Moses reached that noble ḥadd, he was called by subtle taʾyīd and was told: “Take off your sandals; surely you are in the sacred valley Ṭuwā.” That is: Remove what you are upon of the outward form of the first sharīʿa and renew for yourself a revealed law, for your command has reached completion and become balanced.

Moses b. ʿImrān, peace be upon him, then arose by God’s command and revelation. He was the fourth of the speaking-prophets and corresponds to the lump of flesh in the religious creation, and to the fourth of the elemental principles in the natural world. He corresponds to the sun in the fourth sphere among the governing bodies. Through these correspondences he possessed in the religious world the power and authority by which he manifested miracles and made signs clear, such as the staff, the stone, and the sea.

He journeyed, emigrating with the Children of Israel from the abode of his adversary Pharaoh, just as Adam, peace be upon him, had emigrated. He was the fourth among those who declared tawḥīd, renewed the sharīʿa of Abraham, manifested its particular meanings, and then manifested his own sharīʿa. He turned toward the qibla in the union of the sons with the fathers. The intended meaning is the appearance of one of the odd numbers after three pairs, as God says: “You shall be three kinds.” God singled him out for speech from the blessed tree in the sacred valley Ṭuwā.

The tree is the Soul; through it the supports of the Intellect reached him. God chose him from among the people of his time for what was revealed to him.

Because he was fourth, events analogous to those that had occurred with Adam appeared in his age. He migrated with the Children of Israel and left among them Aaron as an asās and waṣī. The Samaritan opposed them with his lowing calf and the wicked hypocrites followed him, seeking advantage, worldly gain, and pride. Moses corrected this for the walī of God and His Word.

When Aaron's time came, he made his son Phinehas stand in the rank of trusteeship, indicating a hidden secret and a guarded knowledge transferred at the time of the speaking-prophet by God—mighty and majestic. The first three fathers had their sons as their foundations; but when the first of the three "sons" appeared, his foundation was his brother. God therefore transferred the matter in another manner and revealed to Moses and Aaron that Joshua b. Nūn should be appointed as hujja for Aaron's son. Moses was commanded to raise him, and Aaron's brother was charged with establishing him.

At Moses the command began in this form, and it remained so until it reached Shuʿayb, the Tree of the Caller, symbolized as the Dyer because he dyes souls with the spiritual elixir and causes God's blessing to be complete upon those who follow him from the world of bodies toward subtlety and ascent. Its counterpart in the final cycle is Ubayy b. Kaʿb, one of the ranks through whom our Prophet Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, was connected with the walī of the age and through whom the covenant reached the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, who is singular beyond pairing, exalted above what is indicated by the station of waṣāya, unique in the lofty self-sufficient rank because he is the seal of the cycles and the qāʾim who manifests the lights, symbolized as the Footstool belonging to the possessor of the Mighty Throne, subtle beyond corporealization.

The Throne is the light of the intellective world, the radiant light of which God—glorified is He—says: "And eight will bear above them the Throne of your Lord on that day." The second class of bearers are the asās figures: Hābīl, Shīth, Sām b. Nūḥ; the foundations associated with Abraham, namely Ismāʿīl and Isḥāq; those associated with Moses, Aaron and Joshua; and the foundation of Jesus, Simon Peter. These are the second bearers of the Throne because the address is directed to Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him.

What they bore is the knowledge of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib transmitted from the beginning of the cycles and the commencement of the ages. In the cycle of Muḥammad it was borne by Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, al-Bāqir, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Ismāʿīl, and Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl—blessings of God upon them. These are the bearers of the hidden secret which God does not manifest to any of His creation except to them in particular.

Our master al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, peace be upon him, was asked about the taʾwīl of God's saying: "those who believe in the unseen." He said: The unseen is threefold. The greatest unseen is the Creator—glorified is He—for He is absent from sight and imagination: no vision perceives Him, no thought or fancy encompasses Him. The second unseen is the unseen taʾwīl concealed beneath the sharīʿa, and this is taʾwīl in reality. The third unseen is the Qāʾim, for he is in the unseen, and acknowledgment of him is an obligatory duty.

Our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God sanctify his spirit—said in Kitāb al-Kashf, speaking of the unseen, the Footstool, and the Throne: God says, "His Footstool encompasses the heavens and the earth, and preserving them does not weary Him; He is the Most High, the Magnificent." That is, whose knowledge is this and who encompasses it? The Footstool is a gate of knowledge of an outward unseen among the unseen matters; it is the Gate of the Inscription. The Inscription is the Commander of the Believers. God says of the "written Book" that "those brought near witness it." They are the bearers.

His saying, "His Footstool encompasses the heavens and the earth," means that in that Gate is the knowledge of the heavens and the earth. The Throne has many different attributes according to each ḥadd and position, while in the Qurʾan it is placed in one general description: "Lord of the Mighty Throne," and: "The All-Merciful established Himself upon the Throne." That is, He encompassed the kingdom; this is an indication of his knowledge. Then the Throne in one passage is a neighbor and in another a reflection. If someone asks: How can the Throne be separate from the Footstool? It is said: Do you not know that they are two gates from among the gates in the heart of the Qurʾan? Together they are unseen, while in the unseen they are distinguished.

The conjunction indicates Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, in the discourse, because the Footstool is the outward gate of the unseen in which is the point of emergence for the originated beings, the beginning of all things,

the placing of instruments, the knowledge of expressions, motion, and return and beginning. The Throne is the inward through which knowledge of generation, guidance, the ḥadd, the son, the youth, and the shaykh is found. Thus they are two gates of knowledge, because the dominion of the Throne is other than the dominion of the Footstool and the knowledge of the ḥadd is other than the knowledge of the Footstool. Hence He says: "Lord of the Mighty Throne."

Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity—also said at the beginning of his discourse that the Throne has many attributes: Know that everyone who brings a knowledge, that knowledge is his throne. Muḥammad has a Throne, and there is another who stands in relation to him. God says: "The All-Merciful established Himself upon the Throne." The speaking-prophet is the Throne of the outward, while the Commander of the Believers is his Throne when the outward and inward are taken together. The proof is God's saying: "None knows its taʾwīl except God and those firmly rooted in knowledge." That is, say to them: ʿAlī is the one who stands with the taʾwīl and conveys it by the command of God; and those firmly rooted in knowledge say: "We believe in it," through the walāya of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, for they have been named those firmly rooted in knowledge. This is the greatest and most healing proof.

Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity—said further: The Footstool is an outward gate of the unseen from which the originated beings appear. He thus hinted—may God sanctify his spirit—at the Throne and its Lord. If you understand the Throne to mean Muḥammad, then he is the supported one to whom the supreme rank was delivered; if you refer it to knowledge, then he—blessings and peace upon him—is the source of the sciences and the clarifier of the secret of the hidden. He made this plain at the end of the passage. Hence the expression "Lord of the Mighty Throne," because its quality is greater than the quality of the Footstool, although both are joined in meaning.

If it is asked how the Throne became adjacent to the Footstool, know that this is because its manner in the outward realm belongs to the gates of the nuqabāʾ and their stations. The opening and closing of its ranks is found at the gate of the Throne, where one of their ḥudūd is next to his companion. Through this the scholars are known and the truthfulness of their claims is proved. "He singles out for His mercy whom He wills; He is the Strong, the Mighty." Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, exalted is the Lord of the Throne above what they describe.

This is the Throne of divine unity in the face of people who associate with God that for which they possess no knowledge. God says, "Lord of the Mighty Throne," meaning Lord of the unity which is beyond what they describe. He has no likeness, peer, equal, or child. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names, by which no other is named in the same reality. Of them He says: "To God belong the Most Beautiful Names, so call upon Him by them and leave those who deviate concerning His Names," plunging into His signs without knowledge.

Those who disbelieve have the ṭāghūt as their friends, because they envied the friends of God whom He had singled out. When Muḥammad arose as a Messenger, he became the guide to that light by God's permission. His grace toward us in what he brought was immense. He established for his community a proof, a guide, and one rightly guided. But because some of his relatives indicated him during his life and after his death through the outward aspect of his knowledge, the people did not recognize that the command belonged to the hujja and went astray.

Then the command returned to its beginning in the Gate of the Footstool. For when God—exalted is He—willed to originate the kingdom, He willed knowledge; but that knowledge is not described as being "where" with respect to God, nor is it described "how," nor is knowledge separated from God, nor is there a boundary between God and His knowledge. He brought forth from that knowledge what He willed to bring forth. The origination was an unseen Throne for every thing according to its ḥadd. In it were the kingdom, place, manner, where-ness, joining and separating, form and motion, the Fire and its fires, its darknesses and layers, its gates, the number of its beginnings, its causes, its signs, its judgments, its confirmations, its outwardness and inwardness—all of this was inscribed and enthroned. He built His Throne upon the water: a Throne within which everything has its appointed time, its ḥadd, and its manner.

This is His saying, "Lord of the Mighty Throne." In one place the Mighty Throne is this; in another it is the absent quality which describers have not described, and those entitled to it are the ones singled out for this Throne. From this the unseen is called "the absent," because every thing created before another thing is unseen and absent from what comes after it. God knows all of that.

We therefore know that the human being cannot describe the manner of his own soul within the body, although every unseen thing God created in him is from His unseen. How then could he describe the unseen realities before him? Likewise every unseen reality before another has its "mothers," and the mothers of the unseen cannot describe their Lord, because He brought them into being and gave them existence.

Our master Jaʿfar—may God brighten his face—began with the human being and stated that he cannot describe his own soul and that it is absent from him. Likewise every unseen reality which God causes to appear within His unseen does not describe what precedes it of the unseen realities. That is, every ḥadd among the ḥudūd, because its spiritual form is unseen from ordinary perception, cannot describe the ḥudūd preceding it, for they are unseen realities whose forms God has concealed. He formed them from His spirit, and they are the bearers of His Throne.

Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God brighten his face—said elsewhere in describing them: "Veils brought near." Then he said: "Every one of them has a lord above him, and all of them are veiled from the unseen of the Possessor of Might." He then continued: The unseen realities—meaning the ḥudūd—cannot describe what precedes them of their mothers. The "mothers" here are the principle from which counting and beginning proceed and to which return and finality belong: the Imam, the greatest hujja, and the bāb, which are the three supported letters having neither written shape nor dot. Then he said: The mothers of the unseen cannot describe their Lord. Their Lord is the Great ʿAyn, the First Originated One who is the first finality in the world of the intellects; the Great ʿAyn is the Lord of the Mighty Throne.

Our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr—may God brighten his face—clarified this when he said in this passage: God, exalted is He, says: "There is no god but I, so worship Me." When He constructed this Throne by His power and opened these pillars within the foundation of His Throne which had preceded them in the knowledge of what would be, He made for this Throne a gate. The first Gate was its Throne. Within it He placed these ḥudūd and called it a known secret and an absent unseen. It is the Gate that God established for this Throne, in which He concealed the knowledge of what becomes manifest, and He called it the Footstool. He said: "His Footstool encompasses the heavens and the earth, and preserving them does not weary Him, and He is the Most High, the Magnificent."

The Originator then established for it its flowing ḥadd as an axis, and upon it He established all that He had originated within the Throne. He then gave it permission and it flowed by the axis of its course to the second Gate called the Footstool, in which is the knowledge of every thing. When it flowed along its axis to the Gate of the Footstool, He made it twenty-two letters.

This discourse indicates to me that Muḥammad is the Gate of the Throne of the outward, while ʿAlī is the Gate of the Throne of taʾwīl together with the outward. They are two mighty gates. When the unseen was manifested, the flowing ḥadd that had been established did not become absent. Muḥammad was appointed as the axis of the Gate of the Throne of the outward, and from him the matter flowed to the second Gate called the Footstool, in which is the knowledge of every thing—that is, knowledge was delivered to him and made manifest. When it flowed by its axis through the sharīʿa to the Gate of the Footstool, namely ʿAlī, it was made twenty-two letters: twenty-two ḥudūd were appointed, twelve outward and ten hidden—six from among the Emigrants and six from among the Helpers who did not slip or go astray with those who went astray, and other hidden ranks such as Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, and Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr.

Concerning Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī said: "As for Muḥammad, he was a son to me." He thus attributed him to his own children because of his belonging to the daʿwa in whose chamber he had been spiritually born and because he supported the possessor of its command. He was not attributed spiritually to his bodily father who opposed the mawlā, denied his command, and transgressed against him.

We return to where our discourse had reached. When Moses appointed Joshua b. Nūn as an entrusted holder for the settled authority of Aaron's son, the meaning of appointing an entrusted holder by God's command was to veil the friends of God and to form a screen around His settled light. The friends of God are radiant lights whose manner cannot be described. When the walī wishes to manifest the concealment and his luminous son who is to stand in his place has not yet reached the age and condition of the station, he appoints for him a veil and establishes a hujja and gate, showing those of limited understanding that he has appointed someone to succeed him in his rank until his son reaches maturity, receives his covenant, rises in the station for which he was established, and manifests the command of God, the Most High, the Magnificent.

The chosen ones, however, know the secret of God in this arrangement and know that the appointed one is a gate and veil for the child, calling to him and to the one from whom he comes. Trustworthy transmitters have related many accounts from the Imams, peace be upon them, concerning the manifestation of miracles during childhood and youth. It is related that one of them entered before a teacher, who wished to make him write, but the child refused and said: "I am a hand above which no hand is raised; that is the Hand of God." The Jews of this community said, "The Hand of God is bound," meaning that the rank of the Imamate was cut off, and their own hands were bound—that is, their Imams were prevented from extending their power within the religion of God to resolve its forms and explain its analogies. They were cursed for what they said, meaning expelled from mercy for their wrongdoing and deception. "Rather, both His hands are outspread," through the establishment of His ḥudūd who stand with revelation and taʾwīl and explain the difficult matters throughout the sharīʿa of the Messenger.

It is related that Aaron died three years before Moses. After Aaron's concealment, Joshua received what Moses had delivered to Aaron and journeyed with the Children of Israel to the Holy Land—that is, he disclosed the daʿwa of taʾwīl in which is knowledge of Intellect and Soul. It is related that he fought on a Friday. When night approached, the Children of Israel turned away from him and said: We will not violate the Sabbath, as the Messenger commanded us. He forbade them from opposition and disobedience, but because of their deficiency in recognition and explanation they did not accept his words.

Joshua turned toward the west and prayed to God with words while facing the west, and the sun was returned for them. Those present saw it with the eye of sense. The counterpart of this occurred with the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, when the sun was returned after it had disappeared. Likewise, he disputed with his first adversary and reminded him of what the Prophet-Messenger had said concerning his excellence. The adversary increased in hostility and stubbornness and denied what he had witnessed with his own eyes. ʿAlī said to him: If I show you the Messenger of God, blessings and peace upon him, confirming my command and condemning the injustice and transgression in which you stand, will you return? He said: Then I will acknowledge my sin and abandon my disobedience and injustice.

The Commander of the Believers led him to the mosque of the Messenger of God. When he saw the Prophet as he had formerly seen him and the Prophet rebuked him for what he had done, commanded him concerning ʿAlī, and recited to him what God says concerning those who disbelieved, he intended to return from the tyranny he had committed. But his satan, who used to overcome him, met him while he was blind and said: "Your sorcery has penetrated you and the sorcery of the son of Abū Kabsha has taken effect in you." The accursed one thus declared the Messenger of God and the Commander of the Believers false. The wrongdoer followed him, believed him, accepted his words, and continued in his injustice, rebellion, disbelief, and disobedience.

Ṣafrāʾ bt. Shuʿayb then rose against Joshua and sought to secure the community of Moses around obedience to herself. Hypocrites gathered around her and she rose against him. What occurred between them corresponds to what occurred when ʿĀʾisha—God's curse upon her—and those who followed her rose against ʿAlī, the waṣī of Muḥammad. She came against him with a tremendous slander and the hypocrites and those who envied the waṣī leaned toward her.

When Phinehas b. Aaron reached maturity, Joshua b. Nūn delivered the trust to him and gave him the covenant, preserving the right of his Prophet's waṣī. In this manner the command continued throughout the cycle of Moses among entrusted holders drawing support from the settled Imams and drinking from the pure flowing water of their knowledge, until the command reached Zechariah.

Zechariah's hujja was Simon Peter, symbolized by Mary Magdalene, who clarifies the station through truthful speech and purity of intention. He made the covenant over Jesus and took his pledge while Jesus was still in childhood and had not passed beyond the rank of response appropriate to his ḥadd. His maternal uncle Judas Iscariot was responsible for his upbringing and instruction. Jesus was born in Nazareth, and for this reason his followers were called Nazarenes.

It is related that his uncle Judas fled with him to Antioch and remained with him until anger arose between them. Jesus, peace be upon him, sought reconciliation with him, but Judas filled his heart with hatred and envy toward Jesus because of the excellence with which he had been singled out and refused to accept the signs of his merit and indications of his victory. He departed from Jesus fearing his rank and came into the hands of the dyer known as Simon. He affiliated himself with him and sought his protection. Simon recognized him, brought him near, honored

him, raised him, and, through his guidance, chose him until Jesus' degree before him became exalted and his rank and station great.

Jesus then served his teacher Simon in the rank of explanation and benefited from him when taʾyīd reached him through the possessor of that age. This is what God, the Most Mighty of speakers, relates: whenever Zechariah entered the sanctuary upon Mary he found provision with her and said, "O Mary, from where is this for you?" She said, "It is from God"—meaning from the awaited qāʾim who was to be a walī of God. The "provision" is the knowledge he found with her, which had reached her from the one who was raising and supporting her.

Jesus' knowledge surpassed Zechariah's because Jesus was the speaking-prophet commissioned with messengerhood by his Lord. Zechariah therefore prayed to his Lord that He compensate him for Mary, and he was given the glad tidings of John. God "gave him judgment while still a child." The manifestation of Jesus the Messiah occurred through John, as the dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God brighten his face—mentions in Asrār al-Nuṭaqāʾ. He relates that Mary, the mother of Jesus, brought him to John so that John might "dye" him. John said to Jesus: How can a servant dye his master? Jesus answered: Today it is yours, tomorrow it belongs to another.

Jesus therefore arose by the command and revelation of the walī of his age from his chosen ranks. Jesus did not connect directly to ʿImrān, the possessor of the daʿwa in that age; his arising occurred only through the hujja of the possessor of the age. Jesus was the fifth of the speaking-prophets and corresponds to the bones. The correspondence shows that he had no fixed place of migration in which to establish the ḥudūd openly and inwardly. He traveled through the lands and passed continually from region to region, and for his traveling across the earth he was called the Messiah.

The meaning of naming the speaking-prophets Adam, then Noah as the drop, Abraham as the clot, Moses as the lump of flesh, Jesus as the bones, the sixth as the flesh, and the seventh as the other creation, is that the knowledge of religion and reality in the second is clearer and more manifest than in the first, becoming progressively stronger until its completion appears with the manifestation of the seventh speaking-prophet, the Qāʾim, possessor of disclosure and manifestation, splendor and light.

The proof from the sensible example is that material life in the elemental mothers is like the extract, in the earth like the drop, in minerals like the clot, in plants like the lump of flesh, in animals like the bones, in human beings like the flesh, and their subtle essence like the other creation, which is true life. It appears standing in actuality after having been in potentiality. Likewise the reality of the sciences becomes manifest through the unveiling of pure taʾwīl at the hands of the "other creation," namely the seventh speaking-prophet, the Qāʾim. Upon this meaning these names are applied.

When Jesus arose, he abrogated the sharīʿa of Moses and composed his own revealed law. He turned toward the qibla of Adam for the completion of the pairing we have already mentioned. This is what God, the Most Mighty of speakers, relates when He says that the likeness of Jesus is as the likeness of Adam. Jesus arranged the ḥudūd of his religion symbolically, commanded the Cross, and gathered within its form the example indicating the exemplified meaning, which was hidden beneath the secret. He manifested dazzling miracles outwardly and inwardly, such as reviving the dead, healing the blind and the leper, and creating a bird by God's permission.

When the appointed term approached and the period came to an end, he appointed his teacher Simon Peter, just as the first of the "sons," Moses, had appointed his teacher Joshua. When the time came, Jesus manifested concealment through killing. Judas, out of envy toward Simon, plotted against Jesus and sold him to the Jews. He was the one who indicated him to them. They stabbed him with spears, crucified him for three days, and he was buried afterward.

There were believing women in the city who used to visit his grave. On the third day, one woman went before the others to the grave and saw him after he had come forth from it. He had stripped off his grave-clothes, cast them aside, and shaken the dust from his head. She went back to meet the women and informed them. They returned and informed the people of the city. The people went out and saw what had occurred, and dispute and doubt arose among them. Some said the woman was a Christian and that the Christians had taken him out of his grave and buried him in another place. But the woman who testified was a free, noble, well-known woman from among the notables of the city, and those who knew her standing believed her.

It is related that Judas, his maternal uncle, came to know the reality of what had occurred. He took a spear, thrust it through his chest until it came out of his back, regretting what he had done and seeking retaliation against himself.

The people had regarded Judas highly. When they saw him in that condition at the grave, they fought and much blood was shed among them. It is also related that the earth shook while Jesus was on the cross for three days. When fighting occurred at the grave, some believed that he had come forth, while others who doubted said that the Christians had removed him and spread the story.

God willed that the truth of the matter be made certain, so Jesus appeared to his disciples at the Mount of Olives. They gathered around him and said: Did you not teach us that we should revive the dead by our supplication, as you yourself used to do and revive the dead through your prayer? He said to them: Truly I say to you, whenever you remain steadfast upon what I have told you, you will be sons of the Father just as I was from Him. He urged them thereby to establish the daʿwa and to guard against disagreement.

Thomas was absent from them on that day. When he came, they informed him. He acknowledged it with his tongue but did not believe it in his heart, showed regret at having missed the meeting, and regarded the matter as extraordinary. Jesus appeared to them a second time, but Thomas was again not present. He was greatly troubled by this, showed sorrow, yet still did not believe in his heart. Then Jesus appeared to them a third time while Thomas was present.

The Messiah turned to Thomas with blame and said: O Thomas, you did not accept the report and did not believe your brothers concerning what they told you. Thomas was frightened by his words and apologized. Jesus then turned to all of them and said: I am the son of the Truth, and He originated me. None knows my like, because God—glorified is He—knows His Name, and none knows Him with true knowledge except Him.

Jesus said to the disciples: What do the people say concerning my manifestation? They said: One group says that you appeared from John; another says from Joseph son of Jacob. He said to Simon: What do you say concerning my manifestation? Simon replied: I say that you are from the light of the Living God, to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. You are not flesh and blood, nor from a drop of emitted semen.

They said to him: O Simon, what is your proof of this? He said: Let every person turn his face and sight. Let one group look east, another west, another right, another left, another toward the sky, another toward the earth, and each one look for the Messiah where he thinks him to be. They then fell before him in prostration.

They said to Jesus: O Gate of the Light, why did you allow the Jews power over yourself so that they were able to do this to you? He said: I gave them power over their own souls, because they blinded themselves to me and to the One who sent me. They were ignorant of me and did not know me. Had they known me and known the One who sent me, they would have known death and known that nothing on earth lies outside my encompassment. Then he disappeared from them.

This incident of killing and the manifestation of life after it became a precedent at the beginning of the matter that continued among those after him. The Christians differed. Simon fled from them for his life, and each person claimed that Jesus had designated him. The Noble Qurʾan states concerning this: “They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it was made to appear so to them,” and: “They did not kill him with certainty; rather, God raised him to Himself.”

The affair continued among the Imams of his cycle, who stood by the command of the settled Imams among the descendants of Ismāʿīl and received their spiritual support from the descendants of Ismāʿīl, the people of istiqrār who remained upon the religion of their father Abraham. They did not enter into the legal dispensations of Moses and Jesus. God made this so that the people of realities would know their excellence and know that the descendants of Isaac drew support from their lights and stood with the entrusted rank by their command.

Quṣayy then delivered the command to his son Hāshim ʿAbd Manāf b. Quṣayy—whose name was al-Mughīra. He stood by the command of God and took custody of the House, the House of his father Abraham, the Friend of God. When his affair was completed he delivered the command to his son Hāshim at the completion of his own term; his name was ʿAmr and al-ʿAlī. The daʿwa flourished in his name and its ḥudūd rose through the knowledge with which he supported them.

The custody of the House remained in his hand, indicating knowledge of Ismāʿīl and his rank and knowledge of Isaac and his rank. When the appointed term ended, he delivered it to his son ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. The ranks gathered with him, the light encompassed him, and the time of manifestation approached, so he disclosed what had been concealed.

He is the one who said: O caller, you have made me hear from the side of truth, and there is no deafness in me. We are the family of God in His town; from the time of Abraham we have possessed that. The House has a Lord who protects it. Whoever comes against it with corruption will be destroyed. Jurhum perished through wrongdoing, and Ṭasm and the living people from among the sons of Adam disappeared. To us belong the seas whose waves we fold; to us belong the Torah and the ancient Books. We are the inhabitants of the highest heavens; within them we divide the lights and the darknesses. We sent the two prophets to ʿĀd and to Jadīs and Iram. We sent a truthful prophet, Arabic in speech, faithful to covenants. In every cycle we have power; within it we distribute provision and deprivation. We possess a king of tremendous rank; whoever has walāya toward us possesses every blessing. When the cycle reaches the end of its appointed time, the bird comes forward with a Book whose verses are detailed and within which is the exposition of the accounts of the nations.

The Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, spoke by what it contained of lights and disclosed what had been hidden in it of secrets, making them plain to those of understanding and inner sight. To this the Prophet alluded when he said that the light was divided into two halves, and God said: Be, O this one, Muḥammad; and be, O this one, ʿAlī.

When the appointed term of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib came, he designated his son ʿAbd Allāh with the inheritance of the descendants of Isaac, namely prophecy and messengerhood, and delivered to Abū Ṭālib the inheritance of the descendants of Ismāʿīl, namely waṣāya and Imamate. When ʿAbd Allāh passed away, Abū Ṭālib took charge, in the rank of trusteeship, of prophecy and messengerhood for his son Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him. When he entrusted him with this, he appointed for him Baḥīrā the monk, the last of the Imams of the cycle of the Messiah, just as Moses, when Aaron became hidden, placed Joshua in trusteeship for Aaron's son Phinehas. Baḥīrā stood under Abū Ṭālib as John b. Zechariah had stood under ʿImrān, and as Shuʿayb had stood by the command of the possessor of his age. These three are the Tree of the Call from which God addresses each qāʾim who stands in the rank of the prophets, and whoever stands in their place in the successive times, until what God sends down of the messages is conveyed.

Abū Ṭālib concealed Baḥīrā, whose name was Jirjīs, and Baḥīrā appointed the ḥudūd and called toward the possessor of the age, namely Abū Ṭālib, his present and existing Imam, just as Baḥīrā's role in the daʿwa of Jesus, peace be upon him, came at the end of the Imams of his cycle.

Understand, my brother, what we have explained and ponder what we have clarified. May God grant us and you success in knowing the realities, make us among those whose knowledge rises in the subtle sciences, and perpetuate for us His favor, blessings, and successive gifts through the exalted Names of God.

Chapter Fourteen

On Muḥammad, Blessings And Peace Upon Him, His Most Excellent And Praised Station, The Grace He Merited, And That He Is The Choicest Of Creation And The Quintessence Of Existence

We say: Since we have already spoken of the prophets, peace be upon them, clarified the settled and entrusted ranks, and explained what illuminates every form by the lights of meanings and makes it shine, and since the completion of the chosen creation and its perfection had drawn near, the manifestation of Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, came.

He was born in the time of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib after the death of his father ʿAbd Allāh. He grew up within the daʿwa of his uncle Abū Ṭālib and became connected to Ubayy b. Kaʿb, who bound him by covenant, disciplined him, taught him, instructed him in proper conduct, and trained him. Ubayy was one of the ḥudūd appointed by Baḥīrā the monk for the daʿwa to the possessor of the age, Abū Ṭālib.

When Muḥammad had received all that was with Ubayy and completed his rank there, Ubayy raised him to the possessor of the jazīra and the one standing with the manifest daʿwa, Zayd b. ʿAmr. He remained with him until he had fully received what belonged to that ḥadd and completed all that was with him. He then raised him to the monk, who delivered to him the entrusted rank. Muḥammad received from him what belonged to the degrees of prophecy and messengerhood according to the completion of the ranks.

After that he became connected to the hujja of the Imam, namely Khadīja, a woman of tremendous excellence and noble rank. From Fāṭima al-Zahrāʾ would come the Imams of guidance. Khadīja married him outwardly and inwardly. She hired him to tend her camels—that is, to benefit her ḥudūd—just as Shuʿayb hired Moses to tend his sheep.

The Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, said: “I remained with Gabriel for ten years, with Michael for ten years, and with Isrāfīl for ten years.” This is an indication of his learning from these ḥudūd and of his ascent with them through the ranks of knowledge by which there is life, second perfection, and true existence. He then became connected to the hujja of the possessor of the time, as we have mentioned—the rank corresponding to the Universal Soul and Intellect. This was Abū Ṭālib, possessor of the station of majesty and walāya, in whose hand were the reins of affairs.

Khadīja’s “submission” to him signified the completion of his reception of the ranks of the descendants of Isaac and his attaining the ranks he deserved by right. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib’s submission to him signified his delivering to ʿAlī the highest of the ranks and raising him to the loftiest virtues within the daʿwa of his father Abū Ṭālib, peace be upon him.

When Abū Ṭālib entrusted Muḥammad with the deposited authority for the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, and raised Muḥammad to knowledge of the highest ranks, he caused Muḥammad to recognize the Commander of the Believers in his lofty station and made known through him the sons of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib who were the ḥudūd of Abū Ṭālib appointed in his daʿwa. He raised Ḥamza and placed Ubayy b. Kaʿb beneath him as the foundation of his daʿwa, while he raised ʿAlī, peace be upon him, to a rank whose quality neither the earliest nor the latest of the ḥudūd can adequately describe.

Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī asked the Messenger of God, blessings and peace upon him, concerning the stages through which he had been brought. He said: “O Jābir, I am the son of inheritances and one tested through appointed times. ʿAbd Allāh begot me, and my father brought me onward. A grace from my Lord overwhelmed me, so I caught up with those who had preceded me and soared above those who had gone before me, when Abū Ṭālib raised Ḥamza, made Fāṭima equal, and refined Ḥalīma.”

Abū Ṭālib, peace be upon him, possessed such purity that his station was not prolonged and his days in the trial did not endure. He ascended spiritually, became subtle in essence, poured complete favor upon those who turned to him, and completed the upbringing of those entrusted to him. How many pearls arose through that nurturing, and how many precious gems shone by its fragrance.

Then he entrusted to me the rearing of every possessor of rank in his house. I raised the one who would be guided, arranged the one who would rise, and made equal with the one attached to me the one who is my kinsman in degree and my cousin by lineage, the one who shares with me in fatherhood: ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. I found him in need of

shelter and gave him shelter, in need of guidance and guided him; then he became a seeker and I brought him to his goal; then a gate and I pointed to him. I continued with him until I completed for him the degrees of prophecy and reached the first veil, and I raised him to a place whose heights none had reached before me from the first of the ḥudūd.

This was when I raised him upon my shoulders to the top of the Kaʿba and he broke the idols. This was an indication for the reflective person, not merely a report for the narrator. My carrying him was proof that I had conveyed him to his rank. My bringing him to the door of the Kaʿba was so that the knower might know that I had brought him to the rank of the Gate, for I am the Kaʿba that bears the Gate.

The Messenger is the one whose waṣī assumes the punishment of whoever rejects him and the reward of whoever obeys him. I carried him; he did not carry me. I bore him; he did not bear me. When I rose in the ranks of the veils and reached the highest of the stations, I attained the clear horizon, and between me and my Lord was the distance of two bow-lengths or nearer. These are the two essential descriptions of the unseen and radiance. I became a place for the shadow.

Then I raised ʿAlī to the first veil and pointed him toward the station through which I had ascended and from which I had been raised. That occurred on the day of Ghadīr, when I said: “O assembly of people, whoever has me as his mawlā, this one is his mawlā.” Let the people of truth know that I had been for him in the first veil a gate and a Kaʿba: he had walāya toward me as a prophet, circled around me, and completed the rites through recognition of me. Today I became for him a lord in the rank, judging for him and entrusting to him. He would then take charge of that which lay below my degree once I had conveyed him to his rank.

When I attained the perfection of the stations, reached the goal of the degrees, and arrived at the highest horizon, the lofty attributes, and the furthest lote-tree, I raised ʿAlī to the station to which I myself had been raised and made him equal with me in the degree that I had attained. This was when I caused the forms in the ranks to join and revealed to him, saying: “He is to me as Aaron was to Moses,” when Aaron had reached the rank of messengerhood and the degree of being addressed, so that he was made equal to his brother in that rank and rose to it.

I said to ʿAlī: “There is no prophet after me,” so that the knower might know that ʿAlī at that time had already attained the degree of prophecy in the inner meaning and was not descending to it afterward nor seeking it anew, since I had completed for him what was above it. This is the taʾwīl of my saying concerning him. Between us there remained no difference of rank except precedence, and he would complete what remained after me.

Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh said: I became as though intoxicated until I could scarcely move, and I remained for a while in overwhelming bewilderment. When that passed from me, thought came upon me concerning Muḥammad and ʿAlī—blessings of God upon them—and I saw the Messenger of God enveloped by a light that almost snatched away my sight. He appeared within it like a figure in clear water stirred by the winds. I saw that certainty had overtaken him, as it did when the truth manifested through him, and he was saying: “We indeed created man, and We know what his soul whispers to him, and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.”

Then he said in a voice higher than before: “The praised one, willingly and unwillingly, is I. I am Muḥammad to the hearts even if they turn away from me, and I am ʿAlī to the thoughts even if they become bewildered. In my hand are the signs, and through me are the meanings of the attributes disclosed. No attribute comprehends me and no knowledge encompasses me. I am the power of the intellect and the light of the heart. From my purity flows whoever is purified, and toward my light ascends whoever fulfills. Whoever God does not grant light has no light.”

Then the Prophet remained silent for a while, while the beholder in him was stunned by what he witnessed. Then he said: “The first statement is complete. I am a servant of God and a brother of His Messenger. I preceded through the precedence granted to me. I am nothing except a human being like you.”

This is the statement of Jābir—may God be pleased with him. The Prophet’s movement among these ḥudūd and his ascent through the noble ranks from ḥadd to ḥadd and station to station resembles the ascent of his forefather Abraham through the ranks, his rising through the gates, and his elevation in virtues until he reached the utmost attainment of the seekers.

Abraham saw the star and said: “This is my lord.” When he saw the moon he said: “This is my lord.” When he saw the sun he said: “This is my lord; this is greater,” as he looked upon the power of the created ranks and recognized

God's ḥudūd within souls and horizons. Then he said: "I have turned my face toward the One who originated the heavens and the earth, as a ḥanīf in submission; I am not among the associators."

Likewise the Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, rose through the ranks by moving from one to another and ascended to them degree by degree. When he completed what was with Ubayy, he received benefit from ʿAmr b. Nufayl. When he completed what was with ʿAmr b. Nufayl, he rose to Maysara, then to Khadīja, until he had received everything with them and encompassed what they possessed. Then he received the command from Abū Ṭālib, possessor of the age, taking from him without an intermediary from among the ḥudūd of that time.

He turned his face toward him, associating no one with him in the Imamate, and stood in the reality of the knowledge of his Originator with pure tawḥīd. He was his lord in the rank, the one who taught him, raised him, gave him sight, guided him, raised him to the highest ranks, completed in him all virtues and excellences, and entrusted him to deliver what he possessed to his son, the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.

At that point Khadīja, the hujja of the Imam, submitted to him and acknowledged his excellence without pride or arrogance. This is what the Qurʾanic statement indicates: "O my sons, God has chosen the religion for you, so do not die except as those who submit"—that is, except while recognizing the settled ranks, submitting to their excellence, not acting arrogantly or proudly, and stopping at what they command and forbid.

Abū Ṭālib did not enter into the sharīʿa of Muḥammad, because he was the one who had established and appointed him and conveyed to him what God had made obligatory and required. Muḥammad therefore deserved to be the speaking-prophet of the age and the seal of the sent speaking-prophets of that time.

The nāṭiq is the one who explains the meanings and gives expression to them. Whoever gives expression to a meaning that had been hidden is a true nāṭiq. We call this speech because true speech gives expression to the meaning: it illuminates darkness, removes distress, lights the heart, makes the servant know his Lord and the Lord knowable to the servant in the proper sense of recognition. When discourse has this quality, it is "speech" and the one from whom it issues is a nāṭiq. What lacks this quality is not truly speech, nor is its source properly called a nāṭiq.

The speaking-prophet of our cycle, blessings and peace upon him, deserved the name nāṭiq because his speech expressed the living, speaking meanings whose symbols were veils within his daʿwa and whose opponents were too stubborn to obey them. Through his waṣī, peace be upon him, he uncovered those veils and explained the meanings of what had been sent down to the prophets in the Books "in a clear Arabic tongue." The clear Arabic tongue is his waṣī, from whom comes the manifestation of taʾwīl and clarification.

This corresponds to God's saying in the story of Moses: "And my brother Aaron is more eloquent than I in tongue." In Moses' daʿwa there was greater need for clarification. The "non-Arabs" are those who remain upon the outward forms, before whom the realities and meanings remain inarticulate; the "Arabs" are the people of the inward, who make clear what was concealed of the taʾwīl by which ascent occurs from the lower ḥadd to the exalted station.

Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, therefore stood at the final rank of their outward revealed laws because he was their culmination and goal. He gathered the meanings dispersed through the laws of the speaking-prophets before him. He is the seal of the revealed laws, the gatherer of what had been scattered from the powers of the prophets through the inward aspect and secret of his daʿwa.

He said to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib: In you is the knowledge that descended with Adam and all by which the prophets were preferred, gathered in the Seal of the Prophets and in his descendants, the pure Imams. Where then are you being taken? Where are you going?

The Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, removed many of the burdens, as God says: "He removes from them their burden and the shackles that were upon them." He manifested visible, witnessed miracles so that ordinary people might believe what the prophets had indicated and what the speaking-prophets had established of signs pointing toward him.

He was the culmination of the fathers and sons and the seal of all the prophets. He turned toward the qibla of Abraham and revived his ḥanīf religious way after the communities of Moses and Jesus. At the beginning of his affair he turned toward the Holy House. When he had fully traced the steps of the entrusted prophets and was addressed as Moses had been addressed—"Surely you are in the sacred valley Ṭuwā"—Khadīja was for him the Tree

of the Call, and Baḥīrā likewise. The caller was Abū Ṭālib, possessor of the settled rank and the one who had been appointed to support and manifest his command.

When Muḥammad received the ranks of istiqrār and was commanded to deliver them to his waṣī ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the niche of the lights, it was said to him: "Turn your face toward the Sacred Mosque," and turn your face toward the religion of Abraham. He then turned his waṣī toward the direction of what he had brought and delivered to him what his Lord had entrusted to him.

Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, interpreted the revealed laws of the preceding prophets and composed his own sharīʿa through the supports God granted him by means of the five veils from whom he had received. His revelation was therefore called Qurʾān, Furqān, and Arabic, because it gives expression to the living speaking Names whose recognition and walāya are worship of God in reality.

His revelation was a miracle for the people of eloquent expression because of the meanings hidden within it whose reality they could not grasp and the stored jewels concealed within its folds. They could not uncover them. They were veiled within its words and were unable to derive their meanings. Its miraculous character for them therefore lay in the way it remained obscure to them despite their eloquence.

God—glorified is He—says: "Bring ten suras like it, invented, and call upon whomever you can besides God, if you are truthful." And He says: "If humankind and jinn were to gather together to produce the like of this Qurʾān, they could not produce its like even if they supported one another." The jinn are the people of the inward daʿwa who were at the end of the daʿwa of the Messiah, while the human beings are the ḥudūd who were within the daʿwa of Abū Ṭālib, standing in sanctification and glorification.

Muḥammad manifested the miracle and brought that which silenced each of them and rendered him incapable. The Arabs are those who give expression to the realities and clarify their subtle, obscure sciences; the non-Arabs are those who remain confined to the outward forms of the revealed laws, veiled from their meanings because the ḥudūd and the people of the entrusted deposits preserve them. This is God's saying: "Indeed We sent down the Reminder, and indeed We are its guardians"—that is, We preserve it through what We entrusted to the ḥudūd of meanings, guarding them from being exposed to the iblīses of the cycle and their followers.

Those disobedient ones who oppose the friends of God, peace be upon them, remain connected through hostility to the adversaries of their cycles and distant from the chosen friends of God. Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, rendered incapable all the people of the previous revealed laws and all those who had been established in the inward rank which he supported through his waṣī, the radiant one. None of them could bring a sura like one of his, nor match what he and his waṣī clarified of its nobility and excellence. He proclaimed the truth openly and established truthfulness, removing the covering for those endowed with insight.

The speaking-prophets before him had used hidden indications; their revealed laws were stripped of full explanation, and their meanings were locked beneath non-Arab, obscure symbols. Muḥammad alone manifested their meanings. Examples include the Ark of Adam, the Ark of Noah, the House—the Kaʿba—whose foundations Abraham and Ismāʿīl raised, the fire-temples that indicated the House of the great and noble Light, Abraham's ram, Moses' staff and stone and Sabbath, Jesus' cross, and the seven girdles and other symbols. Were we to exhaust them all, the explanation would become very long.

When Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, arose, he disclosed what they had symbolized and what they had indicated concerning him, his waṣī, and the seventh Qāʾim from his progeny. The realities became manifest and their proofs clear and luminous. The speaking-prophets before him had stood in potentiality, while his standing was in actuality, from the first of them to the last. Their likeness is that of a farmer who sows seed, waters it, and improves its condition until the planting grows, bears fruit, and its ears appear. The fruit is the purpose of the planting. Muḥammad is the exemplified meaning of that fruit, and the harvest of this planting is his waṣī, the Qāʾim and his child, peace be upon him. His command extends to the lands and his good reaches the harvesters of the crop.

The first is like the sowing and the last like the harvesting. This is the meaning toward which the ḥudūd pointed when they made the first of the speaking-prophets correspond to the extract and the sixth to the flesh, while the seventh corresponds to the other creation. The sixth and seventh are joined as soul and body are joined: the soul has no manifest stability except through the corporeal instrument and natural senses, while the body does not move except through the moving soul.

Their arising—blessings of God upon them both—therefore occurs at an appointed time, one standing with tanzīl and the other with taʾwīl, mingled as body and soul are mingled. They stand with sword and tongue. The sixth speaking-prophet is the hujja of the Qāʾim, preparing for him. Hence the Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, said: "I and the Hour were sent like these two," and joined his two forefingers. He thereby symbolized the command of the Qāʾim, the precedence of his own daʿwa before the Qāʾim's daʿwa, the extraction of the meanings of his sharīʿa, the conjunction of himself and his waṣī with the Qāʾim, and the fact that his tanzīl is supported by the taʾwīl of his waṣī.

The proof of this is clear and the truth manifest to those with insight. The seventh Qāʾim is the possessor of recompense and bestowal. At his rising he unveils the meanings of what the speaking-prophets brought before the time of recompense. Then their taʾwīl appears clearly and the explanation of what the friends of God had symbolized in concealment becomes manifest: "Do they await anything but its taʾwīl? On the day its taʾwīl comes, those who had forgotten it before will say: The messengers of our Lord indeed came with the truth."

Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, informed us of the spiritual angels who supported him with revelation from God—glorified is He—while he strove against creation concerning the two testimonies. Whoever pronounced them truthfully protected his blood and property, while his reckoning was with God.

The testimony begins with negation: "There is no god," and then establishes with the words "except God" the one through whom the true meaning is upheld in the hierarchy: the one who establishes the ḥudūd, who is supported by each heaven with its command, the possessor of trusteeship who supports the Prophet in strengthening his religion, manifesting its proofs and demonstrations, and carrying out what he commanded him. God aided and supported Muḥammad through his waṣī ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—blessings of God upon them both—making clear thereby the sincerity of the testimony and its intended meaning.

Those people of the outward who did not become connected to his waṣī, peace be upon him, and who did not know his reality, remained at the negation "there is no god" in the true sense of the esoteric interpretation and did not complete the affirmation because they denied the waṣī who, in his daʿwa, is the establishment of tawḥīd and the indication of the true Originator through His providence. Those who sincerely bore witness and to whom the Prophet promised entry into the Garden are those who followed his waṣī ʿAlī and recognized that his station before God is exalted and that through the brilliance of his light the truth becomes clear.

The Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, said: "Whoever says it sincerely enters the Garden." He did not say "will enter," because "enters" indicates a present, existing ḥadd, whereas "will enter" would indicate only a future matter. When he was asked what constitutes the sincerity of the testimony, he said: "Fulfilling its rights and recognizing its ḥudūd." Thus he made clear that whoever recognizes the station in which there is no true standing except by it, together with its spiritual ḥudūd, has entered the Garden in which are things no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and which have not occurred to the heart of any human being.

Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, disclosed what had not been disclosed before him and required his community to bear this testimony, whereas the earlier speaking-prophets had not required their communities to use it in this explicit form. Rather, they named God—exalted is He—through differing Names concealed in veils, obscure and hidden. Yet God is "found" where His Names are found and where wisdom is found. The wise one is where power is, and the powerful one is indicated through the bounded rank. Whoever recognizes the ḥadd is guided toward recognition of the Worshipped One, for these are the Most Beautiful Names, and through recognition of them the highest share is attained.

Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, arose while under the protection of the Holy Spirit, possessor of excellence. He established him, strengthened his pillars, and made him a preparation for the seventh Qāʾim. The possessor of trusteeship is the First Intellect and the Great ʿAyn; his hujja is the Universal Soul—that is, the soul of the sharīʿa, tanzīl, taʾwīl, and reality: "None knows its taʾwīl except God and those firmly rooted in knowledge," who believe in it and affirm what its hujja has indicated to them.

The speaking-prophet removed associationism, established the eloquent ordinances of his sharīʿa and explanation through the spiritual support of those who aided him, and made the pillars of Islam six and walāya the seventh. There is therefore no reward for one who practices the six unless he believes in the seventh and knows it in reality. He strove for this and then disclosed the excellence which the seventh—walāya—requires.

In the final stage of his training, before revelation descended upon him, he ascended from Mecca to the mountain. At that time he was called a dāʿī because he began his daʿwa with “There is no god but God.” Baḥīrā the monk reached him at the mountain path and delivered to him what remained in his hand of the inheritance of prophecy and messengerhood. From that point he was called a prophet and reached maturity. The waṣī and direct address then descended upon him; he was sent and therefore called a Messenger. His lights shone forth and his station became settled.

He imagined that there was no Imam other than himself after Abū Ṭālib. The guiding sign and path were altered in his perception, and this was the first “sin,” when his soul aspired to a rank not belonging to him. Then he learned that God possessed a secret in that matter and that the Imam who possessed the trusteeship was a deposited rank for him. He repented and returned, sought a means through the ḥudūd to his Creator, and recognized the settled Imam and the awaited Qāʾim. His lapse was not deliberate but an excess in obedience. Then, by knowledge of the seventh Qāʾim and his signs, the truth became clear.

He was made to descend to the “earth,” meaning to the service of the hujja of the possessor of the age, because he had reached that rank in the hierarchy. Through that hujja the true recognition of the walī of his time was uncovered for him. The “earth” to which he descended belonged to the abode of the daʿwa and was one of the first gates of the daʿwa from whom he had initially taken knowledge—the rank of Ubayy b. Kaʿb, to whom he was returned.

He was returned to Ubayy and to those of his kind, such as Diḥya and others, and was made in need of them. This is the meaning of the descent. When he was returned to Ubayy, he returned to one who had begun his instruction and had broken the outer shell for him. Ubayy’s compassion toward him was like Abraham’s testing through the stars, because Ubayy was like that star. When he was commanded to train Muḥammad in the reality of the seventh Qāʾim and in the succession of that meaning through all the cycles from the age of Adam, he renewed and confirmed the covenant and taught him what he possessed of it. Muḥammad then ascended through the ranks of the ḥudūd, each one teaching him what he possessed concerning the reality of the Qāʾim and his passage through these ranks.

He made this clear in his saying: “I am the son of inheritances and one tested through appointed times.” Then he ascended through the heavens and was raised upon the Miʿrāj after first being raised upon the Burāq—the flashing support that appeared to him from the rank of taʾyīd which gathers all the lower ḥudūd.

The Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, set forth an example concerning this when he said: “I was taken up to the lowest heaven and saw my brother ʿAlī among the angels; they magnified him and sought blessing through him. Then I was taken up to the second heaven and saw him likewise. Then I ascended to the third, then the fourth, then the fifth, then the sixth, seeing in each heaven the form of my brother ʿAlī and the angels magnifying him. When I reached the seventh heaven, I saw him seated upon the Throne of Honor, with the angels surrounding him, magnifying him, sanctifying God—exalted is He—and glorifying Him.”

I said: “O Gabriel, has my brother ʿAlī preceded me to this station?” He said: “O Muḥammad, the angels complained to God of their longing for ʿAlī, peace be upon him, because they knew the sciences of his station and asked to look upon him. God therefore created for them this angel in his form and obliged them to magnify God, glorify Him, and sanctify Him through it.” When the Messenger informed them of this, they declared him false and concealed their denial of ʿAlī’s rank and their rejection of his lofty station. Abū Bakr and ʿUmar then spread doubt among the Companions and the matter of hypocrisy became manifest and corruption spread.

This is the reality of the Night Journey: his ascent through the sublime ranks and his rising through the lofty stations. His journey from the Sacred Mosque to the Furthest Mosque is what he brought through his noble daʿwa, raising the ḥudūd through their ranks from recognition of Abū Ṭālib, who is the Imam, to recognition of his waṣī, the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him. He was commanded to disclose ʿAlī’s rank in symbolic form, while the rank of the possessor of trusteeship itself remained forbidden to disclose openly.

When God—glorified is He—knew of the doubt, association, slander, and falsehood among the Companions, the verse was sent down confirming the Messenger: “Glory be to Him who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Furthest Mosque.” This informed his community of his movement through the ranks and his ascent.

God then said: “By the star when it descends: your companion has neither gone astray nor erred; nor does he speak from desire. It is only revelation revealed. One mighty in power taught him, possessed of strength; and he rose, while he was at the highest horizon; then he drew near and descended, 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 concerning what it saw. Will you then dispute with him concerning what he sees? He 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 that which covered it. The sight did not turn aside nor transgress. He certainly saw some of the greatest signs of his Lord."

This alone is sufficient as proof and clarification. It was no secret that, in this esoteric reading, ʿAlī is the "mighty in power" from whom he learned through what he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord—knowledge not disclosed except to the chosen messengers and eloquent hujjas, meaning the angels of heaven. The verse testifies that he saw the possessor of truth at the Lote-Tree of the Furthest Boundary, the rank of the preceding Intellect in the world of the command. Its likeness in the religious world is ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, through whom he knew his Lord and reached his final station.

The Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, therefore stood in acceptance and acknowledgment. In every gathering and assembly of his Companions his speech contained mention of ʿAlī either openly or symbolically. He said: "I and the Hour were sent like these two." He meant that it nearly preceded him, but he preceded it—that is, he was sent before the reckoning and punishment, giving glad tidings of it and clarifying the excellence of ʿAlī, peace be upon him, who is its knowledge. God says: "Knowledge of the Hour is with Him, so do not doubt concerning it."

He made the prayer fivefold at five times. The five times indicate him, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn. The five prayers indicate the five speaking-prophets preceding him.

The Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, said: "I received from five and delivered to five, and between me and my Lord are five intermediaries." The five from whom he received are the five speaking-prophets of whom he is the sixth and seal. The intermediaries between him and his Lord in the spiritual world are Gabriel, Michael, Isrāfīl, the Tablet, and the Pen; in the terminology of the daʿwa they are the Jadd, Fatḥ, Khayāl, the Tālī, and the Sābiq.

In the ranks of the daʿwa they correspond to Ubayy b. Kaʿb, Zayd b. ʿAmr, Baḥīrā the monk, Maysara, and Khadīja, who taught and benefited him. He rose with them through the ranks of instruction until he became connected to the possessor of the age, Abū Ṭālib, peace be upon him, the lord of his daʿwa and possessor of its command.

The five to whom he delivered are his waṣī, ʿAlī the Commander of the Believers—whom he appointed and indicated both openly and secretly in many places—then al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, concerning whom he said: "al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are Imams whether they stand or sit"; then their father through the imamic line, and al-Bāqir of knowledge, concerning whom he instructed Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī, pointing to al-Ḥusayn: "You will live to meet a descendant of this son of mine. Convey to him my greeting and say to him: O one who splits open knowledge, split it open completely."

The fifth is the Qāʾim of the Imams, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, possessor of the cycle, to whom he bore witness by the formula of messengerhood and excellence. He said: "I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God." The first occurrence points to the Prophet Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, while the other points symbolically to the seventh who completes the cycle and is the last of its Imams.

When Muḥammad arose and explained what God had commanded and taught him, and completed what had been revealed to him, the hypocrites declared him false. God—exalted is He—declared them false by His saying: "When the hypocrites come to you, they say: We bear witness that you are surely the Messenger of God. God knows that you are His Messenger, and God bears witness that the hypocrites are liars." This is a divine testimony that cannot be rejected, declaring the hypocrites false and Muḥammad His truthful, manifest Messenger.

Abū Ṭālib, peace be upon him, made this clear and bore witness to the Messenger in his poem: "By God, were it not that I would bring a reproach upon our elders in the assemblies, we would follow him in every condition throughout time, not from mockery. They know that our son is not to be called a liar among us, nor is he concerned with the speech of falsehood."

The ignorant then said that Abū Ṭālib did not enter into the daʿwa of Muḥammad and was not of his religious community. They were ignorant of the meaning according to the ordering of the ḥudūd of religion and did not know the rank in which Abū Ṭālib stood, the excellence he manifested, and his establishment of Muḥammad with his command. His words, "Were it not that I would bring reproach upon our elders in the assemblies," mean that his "elders" are the Imams who appointed the prophets; they themselves do not enter under the command of those prophets, for the ḥadd does not enter into obedience to the one bounded beneath him. His saying "our son is not a

liar" makes clear that Muḥammad was sent by them with the truth, far removed from falsehood and its disgrace, purified from fabrication and deceit.

When Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, was commanded to establish his waṣī and successor ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, he clarified his station and made clear the command of God to follow him, obey him, and comply with his command. God says: "Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatever he forbids you, refrain from it." He says: "O you who believe, respond to God and the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life."

The "dead" are those who do not recognize the one whom ʿAlī represents in the hierarchy. They are dead by the death of ignorance and misguidance; the spirit of life has not been breathed into them and spiritual support and taʾyīd have not reached them. When they respond to the Messenger and to the one whom he appoints, ignorance and doubt are removed and they live a true life whose conviction does not disappear.

God says: "O you who believe, when the call is made for prayer on the day of gathering, hasten to the remembrance of God and leave trade; then when the prayer is completed, disperse through the land." When the call is made to prayer—which in the inward sense is the daʿwa to ʿAlī—on the day of gathering, meaning from Muḥammad who gathers the revealed laws, hasten to the remembrance of God: obey Muḥammad concerning ʿAlī and the designation of him, and leave the bayʿa to another. When allegiance has been fulfilled and delivered to the walī, disperse through the earth of the daʿwa and seek from the realities of ʿAlī's knowledge what raises you from potentiality toward the rank of Intellect.

The one addressed by this was not merely the silent outward day which resembled the Sabbath of the Jews, who in ignorance turned toward a literal Sabbath and imagined that Moses had meant only that. They did not know its inner meaning or what he had indicated and intended. The Prophet had hoped that the reality of the rank of his waṣī, the Commander of the Believers, would not be disclosed except symbolically until the Book reached its appointed term.

God therefore said: "Do not move your tongue with it to hasten it. Surely upon Us is its gathering and its recitation." The People of the House recited it: "Surely ʿAlī is its gathering and its recitation." Thus when ʿAlī recites it, follow his recitation; then upon ʿAlī is its explanation. The intended meaning here is not the gradual descent of the outward revelation, for the Prophet conveyed that piece by piece. The intended meaning is his waṣī, who gathered the Qurʾan, comprehended it, recognized it, and recited it.

ʿAlī, peace be upon him, said: No verse descended upon the Messenger of God except that I knew concerning whom it descended and where it descended. He is the one who raised the Qurʾan above his head and said three times: "O Book of God, speak!" Then he said: "I am the speaking Book of God; this is His silent Book."

The Messenger had said: "This Qurʾan has been revealed to you as command and prohibition, warning and stories, and the striking of similitudes." This verse concerning gathering and explanation therefore pointed toward the Qāʾim and commanded concealment of his station and the veiling of his rank. "When ʿAlī recites it, follow his recitation; then upon him is its explanation"—that is, taʾwīl and explanation are with him.

The Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, therefore stood commanding them to recognize ʿAlī, peace be upon him. In recognition of him is recognition of the Resurrection and its possessor, for he is the "great announcement concerning which they differ." The names of the prophets are derived from his Name, and their ordinances submit to his command and ordinance.

God said to His Prophet: "Do not hasten with the Qurʾan before its revelation to you is completed, and say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge." That is: when We command you to designate him, follow Our command, and seek the Qāʾim in manifesting what We have commanded you to manifest.

The dāʿī Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God sanctify his spirit—was asked concerning the meaning of the Prophet's concealment of the truth and why he did not declare it explicitly so that all creation would know it. He said: God had commanded the Prophet and the other possessors of the entrusted deposits: "When God took the covenant of those who were given the Book: You shall make it clear to mankind and not conceal it." When the verse was sent down concerning his hujja—"O Messenger, convey what has been sent down to you from your Lord; if you do not, you have not conveyed His message; and God will protect you from the people"—he designated him at Ghadīr Khumm.

He said: "Am I not more entitled to you than you are to yourselves?" They said: Yes. God had already designated him through the verse: "The Prophet is more entitled to the believers than they are to themselves." This formed the

preface to the designation. Three times he asked them, “Am I not more entitled to you than you are to yourselves?” and they answered him. Then, as a guide to God, as one rightly guided, and speaking of his Lord’s favor, he called out: “Whoever has me as his mawlā, this ʿAlī is his mawlā. O God, befriend whoever befriends him, oppose whoever opposes him, support whoever supports him, abandon whoever abandons him, and cause the truth to turn with him wherever he turns.”

When he had finished, he called God as witness over them, greeted ʿAlī with the greeting appropriate to his rank, and commanded them to greet him with submission. But they did not understand and denied his command even after they knew, concealed hostility, withdrew from submission, hated him, and said: He brought this for his cousin.

It is related that the Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, said to al-Ḥārith b. Ḥawṭ: “O Ḥārith, the truth is the lost property of the believer. The matter is confusing and you seek the truth from men. Seek the truth and you will know its people.” The truth is ʿAlī, peace be upon him, the root of every reality, the balance of every path, the opener of the unseen things, and the manifester of the inward of the unseen secret of the veiled divine command.

God indicates him in His saying: “Rather, We hurl the truth against falsehood and it crushes it, and behold, it vanishes,” and: “Say: the truth has come and falsehood has vanished; surely falsehood is ever vanishing,” and: “Falsehood neither originates nor restores.” The Prophet said to ʿAlī: “O ʿAlī, you are the truth. Wherever you turn, the manifest truth turns with you.”

God says: “They know that God is the manifest Truth.” After the designation He sent down: “Those who conceal the clear proofs and guidance We have sent down after We made it clear for mankind in the Book—those God curses, and those who curse curse them.” And He says: “Had they referred it to the Messenger and to those vested with authority among them, those able to draw conclusions from it would have known it.” He says: “Why should you not believe in God while the Messenger calls you to believe in your Lord and He has taken your covenant, if you are believers?” These verses were sent down after the designation of the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him.

God says: “On the day We gather the God-conscious to the All-Merciful as a delegation, and drive the criminals to Hell as a thirsty herd; they possess no intercession except one who has taken a covenant with the All-Merciful.” The Messenger of God said: “No one enters the Garden except one who possesses a safe-conduct from you, O ʿAlī.” God says: “It is guidance and healing for those who believe; but those who do not believe have deafness in their ears, and it is blindness upon them.”

The Messenger of God used to say: “Looking upon the face of ʿAlī is worship.” He also said: “Love of ʿAlī is a garden against the Fire; no sin harms with it.” What worship of God is greater than obedience to Him, and what obedience is complete without obedience to the walī?

The Messenger of God, blessings and peace upon him, said: “There is no prophet after me.” He is the seal of the messengers and the completer of the cycles of concealment. In meaning he says: I and those who preceded me were sent toward the truth, giving glad tidings of the seventh Qāʾim and warning of his power and the certainty of his proof. When he appears there will be no messenger bringing further prophetic news, for his light will confront them from himself, calling them to account and punishing. Whoever obeys him and knows his taʾwīl and the reality of his meaning has entered reward. Whoever disobeys him, denies his command, and transgresses against him—how great is that punishment and how dark that bewilderment. “A wall will be set up between them, having a gate: within it is mercy and outwardly, facing it, is punishment.”

The Messenger of God Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, is the seal of the prophets, and there is no prophecy after his prophecy because he reached the furthest degree of prophecy and ascended from its levels to their final point.

He is the Qāʾim of the descendants of Isaac and of all the prophets who possessed revealed laws, the gatherer of the noble essences and assemblies. He was a luminous temple and a divine station. For this reason he said: “I am the son of Abraham.” When Muḥammad rose through the ranks until he reached the rank of divine speech, the Imam of his age, the one who established him in that rank, transferred to the Tenth Intellect, which is the tenth rank. There is the gathering of those who ascend from among the prophets and the pure Imams, together with their noble companies, all of them possessors of subtle holy forms.

That is the barzakh in which they are gathered until the appointed time of the known Day and the rising of the Qāʾim, possessor of the second blast, the sea from which rains draw and to which valleys and streams return. The Prophet Muḥammad gathered from among those noble companies the forms of the people of the outward daʿwas who stood in worship and righteous deeds: the people of the entrusted ranks who preserved the deposits and the messengers who spread the revealed laws.

The Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, gathered the lofty divine stations and luminous temples through all the cycles from the first of the three fathers after the cycle of disclosure until Hāshim b. ʿAbd Manāf. Thus the Prophet was the gathering-point of the prophets and entrusted holders among the descendants of Isaac, while ʿAlī his waṣī—blessings and peace upon him—was the gatherer of the people of settled authority by right and deserving.

None remained from those noble companies and subtle assemblies who did not enter the two noble Muḥammadan and ʿAlid gatherings except ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, ʿAbd Allāh, and Abū Ṭālib, because they remained as supporters of Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, and as messengers between him and the Tenth Intellect, the Governor. They are the Jadd, Fatḥ, and Khayāl, symbolized as Isrāfīl, Michael, and Gabriel. This is because of their becoming subtle beyond bodies and their forms becoming stripped like the noble angels.

ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib is the Jadd; ʿAbd Allāh is Fatḥ; and Abū Ṭālib is Khayāl. In the language of the sharīʿa they are called Gabriel, Michael, and Isrāfīl: Abū Ṭālib is Gabriel who strengthened Muḥammad first and last and was manifest with him; Michael is ʿAbd Allāh; Isrāfīl is ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib.

In the same way every station is supported by three Imams before it who serve as intermediaries between it and the Governor of the natural world. The supporters of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib were Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, who was Gabriel strengthening him and manifesting his excellence; Abū Ṭālib as Michael; and ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib as Isrāfīl. Likewise every Imam after him is supported by three Imams preceding him.

When the Prophet and the Commander of the Believers passed away, they ascended into the Tenth and the noble subtle stations contained within its rank until the universal Qāʾim rises and the light of his clear proof becomes manifest. The light connected to Muḥammad from the Tenth was universal, and for that reason he was a nāṭiq. With ʿAlī, peace be upon him, was a ray of that light, and for that reason during the age of the Prophet he was ṣāmit, silent.

The Prophet possessed knowledge of what had been and what would be; ʿAlī possessed knowledge of what had been. When Muḥammad fulfilled what was upon him of service and designated the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, then passed to the abode of triumph and mercy, the Commander of the Believers became in his station a veil of the Intellect, with the Tenth as the source of his ray, just as Muḥammad had been knowing of what had been and what would be when Muḥammad delivered his command to him.

Because Muḥammad, blessings and peace upon him, was the gatherer of the prophets who preceded him, he also had adversaries from among those possessed of rank and apparent dignity, as God says: “Thus We have appointed for every prophet an enemy from among the criminals.” His adversary was Abū Jahl, who had been from the daʿwa of Abū Ṭālib, and ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib’s line encountered opposition from those who saw the favored light become manifest and grew arrogant, like the disobedience of al-Ḥārith b. Murra. The adversary persisted and became arrogant.

Among those who assisted him in this were Abū Jahl b. Hishām, Ibn Abī Quḥāfa, and Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. The plotting of Abū Jahl was weak, while the plotting of ʿAtīq and ʿUmar was great. They plotted, betrayed, persisted, acted arrogantly, altered the sharīʿa, corrupted it, and diverted its guidance. The first among them was the spiritual Iblīs because he possessed precedence from the cycle of the Messiah and its daʿwa.

He had heard enough taʾwīl to imagine that he had reached its furthest limit. For that reason he became proud against the waṣī of the possessor of the cycle and acted like al-Ḥārith b. Murra. He followed him and relied on his command. His satan was ʿUmar, who overtook him but had not become connected to any knowledge of taʾwīl; rather, he transgressed against the Lord of the cycle with the transgression of one profoundly unjust in ignorance.

The Qurʾan contains verses indicating, their faults and the faults of their parties and followers, revealing their ugly forms and exposing their shame and disgrace. Among them is His saying: “There were in the city nine men who caused corruption in the earth and did not set things right.” These nine are ʿAtīq, Ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk, Ibn ʿAffān, Ṭalḥa,

al-Zubayr, Saʿd, Saʿīd, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf, and Abū ʿUbayda b. al-Jarrāḥ. They corrupted the earth of the sharīʿa and did not set it right; they opposed the Commander of the Believers with hostility and preferred the world behind them.

God says concerning the first two wrongdoers: “And what was sent down upon the two angels at Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt,” meaning, in this interpretation, what they possessed of sorcery and what they taught no one until they said: “We are only a trial, so do not disbelieve.” They were symbolized as two angels because they had been among the hujjas of the speaking-prophet and because of what they boasted of concerning their precedences. Their striving was lost, their affair was disappointed, and they returned to tribulation and animality among those who denied the excellence of the prophetic family.

They taught no one until they said, “We are only a trial,” thereby calling out against themselves and bearing witness concerning themselves before those who followed them. ʿAtīq said: “I have been made ruler over you, though I am not the best of you; set me straight,” and he said: “Indeed I have a satan that overtakes me.” Ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk said: “The allegiance to Abū Bakr was a sudden affair; whoever returns to its like, kill him.” Thus they acknowledged error and disbelief with their own tongues. Yet the Merciful still gave them judgment, but the people followed them and overlooked their disgrace, for God had rendered them deaf and blinded their sight.

God says in His Noble Book: “On the day when the wrongdoer bites his hands, saying: Would that I had taken a path with the Messenger! Woe to me! Would that I had not taken so-and-so as a friend! He led me away from the Reminder after it had come to me.” He says concerning those who followed them: “Our Lord, show us the two among jinn and humankind who led us astray so that we may place them beneath our feet.” He says to His Prophet: “Recite to them the account of the one to whom We gave Our signs, but he stripped himself of them; then Satan followed him, and he became among the deviators.”

He says: “If they break their oaths after their covenant and attack your religion, then fight the leaders of disbelief; indeed, they have no oaths, so that they may cease.” He says: “Shall We inform you of the greatest losers in deeds? Those whose striving is lost in the life of this world while they think they are doing good; those are the ones who disbelieved in the signs of their Lord and in meeting Him, so their deeds became worthless and We shall assign them no weight on the Day of Resurrection.” He says: “The unbeliever is ever a supporter against his Lord.” He says: “They entered with disbelief and departed with it.” He says: “And of the people is one whose speech in worldly life pleases you, and he calls God to witness what is in his heart, while he is the fiercest of opponents. When he turns away, he strives throughout the earth to corrupt it.” He says: “We made them leaders calling to the Fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped; We caused a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be among those made hideous.” He says: “God will gather the hypocrites and unbelievers in Hell altogether.” He says: “The worst of creatures before God are those who disbelieve; they do not believe. Had God known any good in them, He would have made them hear; but if He had made them hear, they would still have turned away in aversion.”

God caused them to hear through the signs, and the Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, caused them to hear through both allusion and explicit declaration; yet they became blind and deaf. When the appointed term approached, the period came to an end, and the sent Prophet became hidden, ʿAlī, peace be upon him, attended to his funeral arrangements: preparing him, washing him, perfuming him, shrouding him, praying over him, accompanying his bier, and burying him, while others turned their strength toward transgression.

— End of Chapter Fourteen —

Chapter Fifteen

On ʿAlī, the legatee of Muḥammad and his successor; on the loftiness of his excellence; and on the noble rank and exalted station with which God Most High singled him out

When the Messenger departed from this abode and ascended to the world of the kingdom and the abode of permanence, the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—stood in his place by the command of God, glorified is He, and by His revelation. He—peace be upon him—was the gatherer of the four ranks: prophecy and messengerhood, through the Prophet's surrendering that to him and his explicit designation of him; and the legateship and the Imamate, because he was the gathering-place of the settled ranks from the beginning of the three speakers, the quintessence of the ages, the settled center of the inner meaning, and the foundation of religion.

Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—was his guardian until he discharged the guardianship to him and delivered the trust to him. After him he was the station of the Light, the renowned veil, and the hidden gate whose name was concealed through ages and epochs: the end of ends, the goal of goals, and the sign of signs, whose meaning ran through the first of the lawful lineages until the appearance of the stage represented by flesh. He was the first to Islam, and this was his submission to Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—because of what he had been given of guardianship and his satisfaction with what was in it, having been established in prophecy and messengerhood.

He therefore rose as his helper, striving and fighting in his religion. God strengthened His Prophet through him, made His word manifest through him, gave Islam victory through him, and through him the judgments and rulings became manifest and the lawful was distinguished from the unlawful. By him God cut off the roots of the obstinate. Adam and his legatee, among the lawgiving cycles, occupied the station of the extract; Noah and his legatee the station of the drop; Abraham and his legatee the station of the clot; Moses and his legatee the station of the lump; Jesus and his legatee the station of the bones; and Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—occupied the station of the flesh, completing the bodily creation and bringing the legal acts to their end. Then the Commander of the Believers appeared through divine providence from potentiality into actuality, from concealment into manifestation, and from non-being into existence.

In relation to all the laws and ordinances from the age of Adam to Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—he—peace be upon him—stood in the place of the life that gives life and growth, the sensing, perceiving, speaking, knowing soul: the proof of God, His power, His sign, and His miracle; the sword of His vengeance against His enemies and His blessing upon His friends. Through him the revolving spheres revolved; through him the angels moving through their constellations were ordered; through him the natures and the mothers were brought to labor; and what had been contained in minerals, plants, and animals emerged. Through him appeared the chosen essence that gathers the quintessence of humanity. He is the "attentive ear" of God Most High, His outstretched hand, the Commander of the Believers, the qibla of those who proclaim divine unity, and the light of the Lord of the worlds, bringing His friends from the darkness of unbelief and deception into radiance and light, and substituting for them, through his shade, protection from scorching heat. Whoever acknowledges him gains peace and profit; whoever denies him is forbidden and deprived.

Our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God sanctify his spirit—said: It is mentioned in the chronicles and biographies that God does not accept the repentance of a prophet, nor the choosing of a legatee, nor the walāya of a saint, nor any act of obedience performed by anyone, even if he devoted himself completely to worship and strove in it, except through the walāya of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him. Whoever is without the walāya of ʿAlī loses his prophecy, his legateship, his sainthood, and his righteous deed; God accepts none of it from him and does not purify his act. ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is from the descendants of Ismāʿīl b. Abraham—peace be upon him. What excellence could be greater than this, in which he has no partner, but rather is uniquely singled out? Just as God is One, Single, Everlasting, with no partner in His dominion, no consort and no child, so ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is one in his excellence, unique and singular in it, with no partner in it and none comparable to him.

He said in another section: God Most High says, "A wall was set between them, having a gate; within it is mercy, and outside it, before it, is punishment." He caused the Gate to exist before them openly and made it known to them clearly. He established the proofs and demonstrations concerning it by symbols and allusions, intimations and the

unveiling of stations. He placed His Gate beneath allusion throughout all the cycles, by pointing toward him and turning toward him, and He manifested him and made him plain in the final cycle and the seal of the great cycle.

He made its explanation flow upon the tongue of the Seal of His prophets and messengers, Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—His chosen one and elect. He said, "I am the city of knowledge and ʿAlī is its gate." And He, glorified is He, said, "Righteousness is not that you enter houses from their backs; rather righteousness belongs to one who is God-fearing, and enter houses through their doors." This is an announcement that the outward aspect of the gate is that which the people of doubt and suspicion cling to—those far from taʾwīl, who stop at the sensible and abandon the intelligible. He made mercy and reward obligatory for the people of the inner aspect of the Gate, and vengeance and punishment for the people who stop at its outward aspect.

The inner aspect of the Gate is the walāya of the Commander of the Believers, attachment to him, uprightness in following him, fidelity to him, and the fulfillment of the covenant: "And fulfill the covenant, for the covenant will be questioned." The speaking-prophets alluded to him through symbols: Adam through the Ark of the Shekinah, Noah through the ship, Abraham through the House, Moses through the staff, and Jesus through the cross.

Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—said, "I am the city of knowledge and ʿAlī is its gate," a clear designation, explicit in wording and meaning. Muḥammad's miracle was the Qurʾān, before which creation was unable to bring even a single sūra like it, while the power that is his legatee, the possessor of taʾwīl, established his miracle and made his truth manifest.

Our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity—said that our master al-Ṣādiq—God's blessings be upon him—related from our master ʿAlī—peace be upon him—that he said: "I have a station that has never occurred to the heart of any human being, and a degree whose true knowledge none has attained. Divine lordship itself does not occur to the hearts of human beings as they imagine it; only the people of realities among them know it."

All creation knows God by acknowledging what the outward signs of knowledge establish, while the people of realities know God with the reality of His knowledge and proclaim His unity from the proper aspect of His tawḥīd. Likewise, no one has known ʿAlī—peace be upon him—in the complete reality of his knowledge except the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—and the Imams from his descendants—peace be upon them. The people of certainty know him through the outward aspect of knowledge and through the establishment of the signs, proofs, and miracles that God Most High manifested through them time after time.

In this section he made clear that creation knows God Most High through the establishment of His workmanship, while the people of realities proclaim His unity with the tongue of His unity. As the sage said, "Wherever the miracle appears, prostrate." Salmān al-Fārisī entered upon the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—and prostrated to him. It was said to him: "Salmān, do you prostrate to a human being like yourself?" He said: "I prostrated only to the light between his eyes." That light was the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him. His prostration was because he recognized what others had fallen short of recognizing. The miracle became manifest to him, so he submitted and obeyed. He did not reject the excellence of his master, nor did he disdain obedience to him, nor deny what had been bestowed upon him.

No one was made manifest with miracles like those manifested for our Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. Knowledge of the Messenger and of the Imams from his progeny is through the second end-point, and he deserves the attributes that terminate in him by reason of what the First End deserves, and because he is its veil, its gate, its truthful tongue, and its proof. Therefore he said: "I am the First and the Last; I am the Manifest and I am the Hidden; and I know all things. I am the one who raised its heaven, spread its earth, made its rivers flow, and caused its trees to grow."

The First End is the Intellect, and the Second End is the walī. He deserves the same sort of predicates: he is first in Islam and faith; he is first by union with that which is united with him; he is last because he is the Second End that became manifest in actuality after being in potentiality; and he is hidden because of what is hidden within him of knowledge, wisdom, lights, and mysteries. He is the one who "raised its heaven," that is, he established its speaking-prophet, who is like heaven, until his proof stood and his affair became manifest. He "spread its earth" by establishing the ranks and extending the daʿwa from which the second creation comes into existence. He "made its rivers flow" by making the sciences manifest from each rank to the one beneath it, and from every superior to the one below. He "caused its trees to grow" through what he extended to the believers, forming them in the form of

knowledge and religion and guiding them to clarification and understanding. He is a Second End corresponding to the First End to which we have pointed, because the creator, fashioner, and giver of form to what is lower and higher in the heavens above and the earths below, and what lies between them and beneath the soil, is the Commander of the Believers in the religious creation—the one about whose reality souls became bewildered and intellects fell short, and through whose support miracles became manifest.

He is the creator of the forms of religion by which souls take form and reach their second perfection through what is cast upon them from his spiritual current of knowledge. He is the supreme elixir that does not become corrupted, through which souls attain the noble and majestic station: their deficiency returns to completeness, and they become angels after having been like the souls of beasts.

His appearance together with Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—was, in comparison and analogy, like the appearance of soul and body together. The body is the outward forms of the sharīʿa, restricted to the degree of density. The soul is the degree of taʾwīl, which transforms whoever receives it through the subtlety it contains. Thus ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is the soul of the laws, the fruit hidden within their branches and breathed into them when they were formed. He is the one who gives the laws life, strengthens them, brings them together, and completes them, just as the subtle soul gives life to the body, establishes it, and completes it by being breathed into it. The Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—used to magnify him, honor him, and ennoble him.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: “None has known me with the reality of my knowledge except the Messenger of God and the pure Imams from my descendants and progeny.” The Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—was the most perfect of the speaking-prophets in perfection, the greatest of them in loftiness and majesty, the greatest of them in knowledge, the soundest of them in judgment, and the best of them in character, as God Most High said in describing him: “Indeed, you are upon a tremendous character.” God praised him in Sūrat al-Najm because the light of majesty became manifest through him until he saw Him another time and saw the greatest signs of his Lord. Likewise He manifested this through Abraham—peace be upon him—when He showed him the kingdom of the heavens and earth. Muḥammad and ʿAlī are the chosen essence of God among His creation and His gift to Abraham His friend, answering his supplication when God Most High said: “And when Abraham and Ismāʿīl raised the foundations of the House: Our Lord, accept from us; indeed You are the Hearing, the Knowing. Our Lord, make us submissive to You and from our progeny a community submissive to You; show us our rites and turn toward us; indeed You are the Relenting, the Merciful. Our Lord, raise among them a messenger from themselves who will recite Your signs to them, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them; indeed You are the Mighty, the Wise.”

Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—is the answer to Abraham’s supplication, and ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is the light that was sent down with him: “Those are the successful.”

It is related that the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—was once sitting among his companions when the Commander of the Believers approached. He said to them: “Who among you would like to look upon Adam in his knowledge, Noah in his understanding, Abraham in his wisdom, Moses in his intimate discourse, Jesus in his miracles and his practice, and Muḥammad in his excellence and perfection? Then let him look at this man who is approaching.” This was an allusion and explanation, a clarification and designation, that ʿAlī—peace be upon him—gathered all those noble stations, completed their ordinances, and clarified the taʾwīl of their laws. He is the possessor of proof and explanation, the universal taʾwīl made manifest to sight. To him belong the parables that were struck and the mysteries that were veiled.

God Most High said: “He is the One who is God in heaven and God on earth.” This means the Commander of the Believers insofar as he stands in the earth of religion as the substitute of God by His command, while the intellects of creation stop in bewilderment before the One who is above all. In relation to the settled Imams before him, whom he gathered into his noble collective form, he is their universal Qāʾim and the manifestation of their proof. Yet in relation to the Qāʾim of the Resurrection, he is partial because of his manifestation within the daʿwa and his appearing in the garment of the sharīʿa, whereas the sharīʿa of the Qāʾim is intellectual and his daʿwa universal, not divided, because the stations are gathered within his call.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—established Ubayy b. Kaʿb in the rank of breaking opposition and instruction in the outward sciences; he stood in relation to Muḥammad as Joshua stood to Moses, because he began his instruction and established the construction of his form. The Prophet used to say, “The best reciter among

you is Ubayy." Thus he held the place of Joshua b. Nūn in preserving the outward sharīʿa. But the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, held the supreme station and majestic rank, exalted and sanctified above the legatees. After the station of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—he stood to interpret the symbols and hidden matters of the law and to disclose the realities of its secret meanings.

He is the possessor of unveiling because he disclosed what the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—had veiled within the outward form of his law, revealing it to his friends and elect without diminishing the station of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—or adopting the claims of the misguided extremists and false exaggerators. Rather, we say of him that he attained true speech, rose above all ranks, possessed the highest stations, and stood in the world of religion in the place of the First Intellect, above which there is nothing except its Originator and Maker. The Prophet accepted Ubayy b. Kaʿb as a foundation only because of the appearance through human form and the manifestation through a veil. When inquiry reaches the understanding of his station and the height of his honor, whoever studies these sciences must investigate carefully and truly, neither reducing one rank from its rank nor raising it beyond its station, so that knowledge of the ranks may lead him to knowledge of the Originator of existence, the Creator who brought it forth from no pre-existing thing. Understand what we have explained and discern what we have made clear.

It is related that a man named Sunān asked al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—about the meaning of divinity and the walī. He said to him: "O Ibn Sunān, Muḥammad pointed to ʿAlī when he said, 'Whomever I am his master, ʿAlī is his master.' God is the master of ʿAlī, and this outward human manifestation has a special relation to Him. As for the hidden meaning, this is a power that He manifested from Himself; and there is no power greater than the manifestation of the form through which He made Himself known to His creation. He made some people rightly guided through it and others go astray. The name ʿAlī falls upon the manifest form, while the name Allāh Most High falls upon the hidden meaning. Thus ʿAlī is the walī of God and God is the walī of ʿAlī. Yet that human form was known by its name, just as the human forms of the world are known by their names. Were you not to call them by their names, they would not be known, nor would people know one another. So when you say 'ʿAlī', you know the name of the form through which a power appeared and creation was guided. God is manifest in its inward aspect within His creation, because the divine meaning is not perceived by you, while His walī is a human form perceived by you."

Al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—said: "You see Me through another than Me, yet I show you the One who is my Lord." And he said: "When you have known me, there is nothing upon you regarding knowledge of what lies beyond that. He established the human forms only because of the infirmity of your bodies, so that you might see the sign of knowledge and power in a form similar to your human form. For knowledge of the heart alone, being without visible existence, was inaccessible to you; so the existence of knowledge was placed in a human form, but they were ignorant of it. May God protect us from that."

This is the speech of the truthful and trustworthy one, the one who split open the knowledge of religion. The Messenger said, "God created Adam upon His form," and said, "I saw my Lord in the form of a young man of abundant hair," while he was a young man in the prime of youth, his hair falling toward his ears. He did not point thereby to God Most High, the transcendent Originator.

It is related from Rashīd al-Hijrī—may God have mercy on him—that he said: I heard the Commander of the Believers say concerning one of his particular companions: "By God, by the prophethood of His Messenger, by my walāya, and by obedience to my command—true obedience to me—there was the likeness of Solomon b. David—peace be upon him—when he asked God to grant him a kingdom that would belong to no one after him. God answered his request, subjected to him the jinn, humans, and winds, taught him the speech of birds, and gave him of everything. He marveled at his kingdom and at what had been given him. My walāya was presented to him, but he hesitated before it, so God stripped him of his kingdom and afflicted him with the body that was cast upon his throne; his prophethood was suspended for forty days until he acknowledged my walāya. Then God returned to him what had been taken, removed the affliction that had struck him, and he again judged among the people."

"Likewise David—peace be upon him—marveled at what had come to him. My walāya was presented to him, but he hesitated concerning it, so God afflicted him with what passed through his heart until he acknowledged my walāya, returned to obedience to me, turned back, and repented. Likewise Job—peace be upon him—my walāya was presented to him, but he hesitated. God afflicted him with the affliction that has been mentioned and tested him with a tremendous test. God found him patient in affliction until he acknowledged my walāya; then God healed him of

what He had afflicted him with and removed his harm. Likewise Jonah—peace be upon him—my walāya was presented to him and he hesitated, so God afflicted him with the fish that swallowed him; when he acknowledged my walāya, he was delivered and healed.

"Likewise our Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—my walāya was presented to him and he hesitated concerning it, and trials resembling those descended. Whoever hastened to answer with walāya was among the messengers, and whoever delayed the answer and acknowledgment of me was among those who were not messengers. Behold, my walāya is the walāya of God. 'There, the walāya belongs to God, the Real'—and by God, that is my walāya. Whoever acknowledges it acknowledges God; whoever denies it has disbelieved in God, denied Him, and disbelieved in His Messenger."

It is related from Abū Dharr—may God be pleased with him—that he said: I heard the Commander of the Believers say to a group of his elect: "I am the true religion of God. I am the true satisfaction of God. I am the true tawḥīd of God." No denier can say it and no claimant can falsely claim it. "I am the one whom God magnified in His oath when He said: 'No! I swear by the positions of the stars—and indeed it is a tremendous oath, if you but knew.' I am the Most High, the Great. I am that side of God that He mentioned in His Book when He said, 'Alas for me for what I neglected concerning the side of God.' I am the face of God of which He said, 'Wherever you turn, there is the face of God.' My name is gathered in the Qurʾān; in the Torah it is complete; in the Gospel it is fixed; in the Psalms it is widespread; and in the first scrolls of Abraham. I know what was; I know what will be; in the worlds I am ancient in rank; in the heavens I behold; and on earth I know."

The dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God illumine his face—said in the Book of the Taʾwīl of Zakāt: True knowledge does not perish and is not annihilated, and the knower never dies. The persistence of his knowledge in the world is his persistence. When he departs this world his knowledge departs with him, yet after him it remains and people transmit it. By the persistence of his knowledge, he remains among people forever. Thus every Imam in his age is the Name of God among the people of his era. Their obedience to him is the face of worship toward God. Whoever recognizes the Imam of his time, takes his covenant, submits to him in all his affairs, recognizes his ḥudūd and acknowledges them, and gives each rank its due, has known God with true knowledge and proclaimed His unity from the proper aspect of tawḥīd. Whoever sees the Imam of his time otherwise than through this form and is ignorant of the stations of the ḥudūd has neither known him, nor known God, nor proclaimed His unity, obeyed Him, or worshiped Him. His obedience is to something other than God and his worship is outside the satisfaction of God. He has not grasped the rope of God; he is in doubt concerning God and associates partners with Him.

God, glorified is He, says: "God—there is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills. His Kursī encompasses the heavens and the earth, and preserving them does not weary Him; He is the Most High, the Great." Then He says: "There is no compulsion in religion. Right guidance has become clear from error. Whoever rejects the ṭāghūt and believes in God has grasped the firmest handhold, which never breaks. God is Hearing, Knowing. God is the walī of those who believe; He brings them out of darknesses into light. As for those who disbelieve, their awliyāʾ are the ṭāghūt; they bring them out of light into darknesses. Those are the companions of the Fire; therein they abide forever."

These verses manifest both negation and affirmation. He negated all likeness from the Living and Self-Subsisting, because life is His attribute; He negated slumber and sleep from Him and called Him the Most High, the Great, after saying that His Kursī encompasses the heavens and earth—His Kursī being His knowledge. Then He said of those who believe that He brings them out of darknesses into light. None brought the community out of doubt and bewilderment—meaning especially the awliyāʾ—other than ʿAlī. And He attributed the disbelievers to the ṭāghūt, who brings them out from the light—which is the walāya and knowledge of ʿAlī—into the darknesses of doubts. Where then may piercing intellects reach? To what may the questioner aspire in asking?

The Sage—peace be upon him—said: "God is just in His decree and perpetual in His justice. Just as He dealt justly with the first creation and the first world by making Himself known to them and drawing near to them through His chosen angelic ranks, so He deals justly with the children of Adam. However He manifested Himself to the first creation, He manifests Himself to the last of them, and His action among the middle of them is the same. He is the Witness who is never absent. Whoever denies His manifestation, rejects one of His forms, or rejects one of His

Names does not know God. Whoever does not know God through His veil and His station is bewildered regarding knowledge of Him."

God, glorified is He, says: "And when your Lord took from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants." That is, every manifest one who appears under the name of the Imamate is the progeny of the First Manifest One. They are a luminous temple and a spiritual house for the great source. Understand this and you will be rightly guided, if God Most High wills.

He also said: "What appears to you of nāsūt is not different from the lāhūt; rather, it is a power He manifested." In like manner al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—was asked about the age of the Lord. He said: "Five words: God is One." The saying of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—is an allusion to their lāhūt. As for their human forms, they are different. Al-Ṣādiq appeared to Jābir in the form of the full moon shining in the sky, then appeared in the form of Fāṭima, then in the form of Muḥammad. Then he turned to his right in the form of al-Ḥasan and to his left in the form of al-Ḥusayn and said: "This is all one thing, speaking and taking form however it wishes by the power of God, Lord of the worlds. Have you not heard His saying, 'Then he appeared to her as a well-proportioned human being'?" This indicates that it can take form in luminous and human forms. When that appears, it is the one that was recognized. Thus the Commander of the Believers appeared to Jābir first in the form of the full moon, then in the form of Fāṭima, then in the form of al-Ḥasan, then in the form of al-Ḥusayn, then returned in the recognizable form and said: "O Jābir, can your intellect bear this? This is my garment and my clothing in every time and age." And he said: "Our dead do not die, and our slain are not killed."

The People of the House—peace be upon them—related that the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—said: "O ʿAlī, when you have washed me and wrapped me, seat me upright and ask me concerning everything that will occur until the Day of Resurrection." The Commander of the Believers did so, and the Messenger of God spoke while in his shrouds and perfumes concerning what he wished to reveal of wisdom and miracle.

God's manifestation is only through the manifestations of His signs and attributes, because if God—mighty and majestic—were to manifest Himself to His creation by direct vision so that their hearts could perceive Him and they could look upon Him whenever they wished, His awe would disappear, His majesty would diminish, and His reverence would be reduced. It is commonly known that when people become accustomed to seeing something they fear, their fear of it diminishes. Therefore He is not touched by the confusion of men nor by the defilement of bodies, and heaven is not above Him nor earth beneath Him as it is for created beings. Rather, His signs are such that if He were to manifest without a veil the heavens would be rent at the sight of Him, the earth would quake at His glance, and the sight of creatures would be unable to look upon His essence. A proof of this is that the sun is but one of His signs, yet the eyes of creatures are unable to gaze upon it. How then could they be capable of perceiving its Creator—glorified is He? The face of justice has become unveiled, and truth is visible to the one whom God Most High grants success.

We return to mention the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him. Since he gathered the noble stations that preceded him and they were all parts of him, the Iblīs of the iblīses arose as an opposite to him, contending with him and claiming his station, barring people from his path. To him the Most High and Great alluded in His noble Book: "Who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you, in whatever form He willed He composed you." He denied his excellence, rejected God's blessing, became arrogant within himself, and denied the proof of God over him. Therefore God Most High and Great tested him through his accursed devil who was his companion in the tremendous sin in which they became immersed. The Book says: "It is a wise judgment."

By the principle of justice, excellence must endure in the station of the rightly guiding, directing one who proclaims unity, strips away false attribution, is the best of creation, and the root of the pure, purified progeny. He was therefore the infallible Imam—God's blessings be upon him. He arose striving in the guidance of God's creation, so that people would have no argument against God. He gathered the Qurʾān according to its true form and interpreted it, revealing its hidden jewels and bringing forth its stored meanings. Then he closed his gate, drew around himself its veil and covering, adhered to the cave of taqiyya, and divorced the lowly world for three reasons.

The first was that none of the Companions remained for him as a supporting group except the twelve who remained, six from the Emigrants and six from the Helpers, who had stood up, each one of them, on the day Abū Bakr sought to address the congregation, warning and admonishing him concerning what they knew of the

Commander of the Believers' station and what they had heard from the Prophet regarding him. We have mentioned this in our book known as ʿUyūn al-Akhbār, concerning the excellence of the Chosen Prophet, his legatee, and the pure Imams.

The second reason was that he had no abode of emigration to which he could go and in which he could establish the ḥudūd of God. The third was his desire that Islam remain established so that people would not return to Judaism, Christianity, and the first jāhiliyya.

The Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—had already instructed him concerning this in words known to both elite and common people. He said to him: "Do not unsheathe a sword after me, lest the jāhiliyya return to its former course." And he said to him: "Abū Bakr will take it after me through usurpation and injustice. If you find a group that will support you, then your right is yours; if you remain seated, it is Paradise. After him ʿUmar will take it through usurpation and injustice. If you find a group that will support you, then your right is yours; if you remain seated, it is the Sunna. After him ʿUthmān will take it; if you rise, it is your right, and if you remain seated, it is the Fire."

The meaning is: if you find a party supporting you during the rule of the first two, then the right is yours. If you remain seated, your sitting is a paradise for both supporter and opponent. For the supporter, it is Paradise through your compiling of the Qurʾān, reciting it, and revealing its secret and hidden content; this is the complete Garden and comprehensive blessing. As for the opponent, your sitting is a "garden" for him inasmuch as it preserves him upon the law of the Messenger and reassures him so that he does not return to the first jāhiliyya, thereby causing the rule of Islam to vanish.

As for his saying regarding ʿUthmān, "If you find a party that supports you, then the right is yours; if you remain seated, it is the Fire," that was because the Messenger of God knew that the third would bring something other than what the first two had brought. The first two outwardly preserved Islam, whereas the third, when opportunity came into his hand, altered the Sunna, changed the laws and judgments, restored those expelled by the Messenger, burned Qurʾānic codices, and committed acts by which, according to the justice and wisdom of God operating in every age and time, he deserved killing.

Thus the sitting of ʿAlī—peace be upon him—for the reasons we have mentioned was an establishment of the people upon the law of the Messenger. The right was his right; the Garden was his daʿwa; the caliphate was his caliphate. He was standing in his essence, the elucidator of the signs, the manifester of the clear proofs. His glory shone and his knowledge benefited. He did not sit from incapacity, humiliation, defeat, oppression, or ignorance, nor by admitting that they were fit for what they had taken. His sitting was neither acknowledgment of them nor advancement of them because of any excellence they had deserved, nor did they possess any fruit of merit thereby. Rather, his sitting was to establish Islam, complete the judgments, and turn away from the lowly world and its chaff. His sitting—peace be upon him—was the universal standing, known only to the people of knowledge.

He did not seek a rank above his rank or a station above his station. When he and Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—appeared, Muḥammad came first in the outward order and the call to him. Their joining was like the joining of two letters of the alphabet: when the two letters come together the meaning appears, whereas with a single letter it does not appear. They are the two fathers of the community and the meaning of mercy and blessing.

Thus his restraint from seeking his right during the days of darkness, when they sat in his seat and claimed a station to which they were not entitled, was only so that the sharīʿa would not be annulled when those people left religion because of their recent proximity to polytheism and because of the doubt in their hearts, inflamed as those hearts were by the killing of beloved ones, fathers, children, and close companions. Yet the Messenger had already made known to them the station of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, guided them to him by inspiration and proclamation, symbol and explicit statement, and by sound explanation.

The Messenger of God used to say: "ʿAmmār is with the truth and the truth is with ʿAmmār," and ʿAmmār was with ʿAlī; thus ʿAlī is the truth with which ʿAmmār was. Successful indeed is the one who believes in him and obeys him.

The Messenger of God said: "Salmān is one of us, the People of the House." Salmān did not depart from the truth while he remained with ʿAlī. And he said: "The green canopy has not shaded, nor has the dusty earth carried, a

possessor of a truthful tongue more truthful than Abū Dharr." Abū Dharr testified that Abū Bakr was oppressive and transgressing; for that he was belied, exiled, removed, and harmed.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: "I am pleased for my community with what Ibn Masʿūd is pleased with." Ibn Masʿūd was not pleased with any Imam other than ʿAlī and did not take after the Messenger any walī other than him. It is sufficient to mention what was revealed concerning ʿAlī—peace be upon him—on the day of Ghadīr of tremendous designation and renowned excellence.

God Most High said: "Today I have perfected for you your religion, completed My blessing upon you, and approved Islam for you as religion." After this verse, is there any blessing other than knowledge of ʿAlī—peace be upon him—obedience to him, following him, his walāya, and submission to him and his progeny? The Messenger—may God bless him and his family—made clear the six pillars of Islam and made their meaning, spirit, and light to be walāya, the seventh of the obligations, their seal, their goal, and the spirit without which they are not accepted. It was also the first of the obligations, for the Messenger gathered Banū ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and made his walāya known to them and urged them to obey him.

The Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—once delivered a sermon in Kūfa. A man from among the Shīʿa came forward to him and asked him what he had suffered from this community. He said: "By the One who split the seed and created the living soul, what I suffered from the former communities was greater than what I suffered from this community." His saying indicates that he is the First and the Last. He also said: "The legatees are from me and I am from them. We sweep away by ourselves and sweep our enemy into the abyss." That is the sword of the Qāʾim.

Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—complained of his people in His saying: "Indeed my people have taken this Qurʾān as abandoned." ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is the abandoned Qurʾān while he is among them. The silent book was in their hands; they magnified the written leaves but did not perceive the meaning of the Book, which is the manifest command of God. They turned away from the kernel toward the shell and left the shade for the scorching heat.

ʿAlī—peace be upon him—manifested tremendous miracles and clear signs during the age of the Messenger and afterward: among them the return of the sun for him; the stone of the catapult that reached an immense height and which he brought down by divine support; the verse was revealed, "They thought that their fortresses would protect them from God, but God came upon them from where they did not expect." Among them was his killing of the jinn at Biʾr Dhāt al-ʿAlam. Among them was his planting of the palm with the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—when Christians asked him for a miracle if he were a prophet like Moses and Jesus. He sent ʿAlī with them to revive the dead; when the graves split open, the ten accepted Islam.

Among them was his confronting Abū Bakr in the mosque of Qubāʾ. He said to Abū Bakr: "You have opposed the Messenger of God regarding what he commanded you, denied the blessing of God Most High, transgressed your limit, seized my right, and sat in a place other than your place." Abū Bakr said: "Where is the possessor of the command?" He said: "Would you like to see him?" He said, "Yes." ʿAlī said: "If he commands you to return to the truth, will you return the command?" He said: "I will return it." ʿAlī took covenants and oaths from him concerning that, then took him by the hand and went with him to the mosque. There was the Messenger—may God bless him and his family—wearing white garments. When Abū Bakr saw him, he bit his fingers and sat before him, overcome. He withheld his greeting. The Messenger reminded him of what he had been commanded, warned him, and ordered him to return the matter to the Commander of the Believers. Terror seized him. He went out frightened and encountered his misleading devil. He told him what had occurred and related the story. The other said to him: "This is a little of the magic of Abū Kabsha. Beware of mentioning this to any of the Companions, lest your grave be stoned until the Day of Resurrection." The accursed one concealed it and kept silent, for he was the compass-point of darkness, while the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—was the compass-point of light.

As one of the excellent speakers said: "Thus We have appointed for every prophet an enemy from among the criminals." Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—thus manifested life after disappearance, as Jesus—peace be upon him—had done.

These are the manifest miracles and evident wonders, which none can bring except the one joined to the depositary rank through divine support. Thus ʿAlī's sitting back from seeking his right and taking it from those who wronged him was mercy toward the community and a means of drawing them near, until he could extract the trusts

that belonged to him among the Muslims and guide those who followed him toward the inner knowledge of religion. They then knew his station and the error of the misleaders that had overtaken them disappeared.

There remained only the black, dark, obstinate, arrogant point. He fought it. This was his battle against ʿĀʾisha and her followers, after God had killed ʿUthmān, and his battle against the accursed son of the accursed, Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān. In all of this the Commander of the Believers was calling to the tawḥīd of God and the completion of the law of the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family. The four qualities were gathered in him: the rank of prophecy, messengerhood, legateship, and Imamate. He informed of the stories of the earlier ones and warned like the messengers; he carried out the taʾwīl entrusted to him and explained it, and he established its clear proof and demonstration. The earth of the daʿwa shone with the light of its Lord; meanings hidden within its books came forth.

He remained upon this until the rule of the accursed Umayyad. The third had committed what required his death by sheltering those expelled by the Messenger of God, altering the Qurʾān while claiming what the earlier two had claimed, and persisting in error and falsehood. The Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—therefore stood striving and fighting until the Book reached its appointed term.

In his time events occurred resembling what had occurred in the age of Adam and Moses—peace be upon them—corresponding to the ascendant and the fourth angle. He migrated from Medina to Kūfa and fought ʿĀʾisha when she rose against him, just as Ṣafrāʾ had risen against the legatee of Shuʿayb and ʿAnāq against Seth, the legatee of Adam, and as the calf arose against Moses. Thus the walāya of the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—and his evident excellence were established by clear demonstrations, despite the Companions' denial of him and their injustice toward him. The firm root that remained was the judgment and will of God.

Chapter Sixteen

On Fāṭima al-Batūl and the two grandsons; and on how the Imamate, after al-Ḥasan, returned to the settled line and did not leave the descendants of al-Ḥusayn

We say, and from God is success and trust; to Him belong power and strength, and from the blessings of His friends—peace be upon them—comes aid. We have mentioned in this book meanings that are the quintessence of what the ḥudūd set down, and from the springs of what they expounded. We have also mentioned the excellence of Muḥammad and ʿAlī—peace be upon them—through what was transmitted in direct teaching and through the proofs that bring the eyes of the Imams of truth out of the darkness of doubt into the light. We now wish to mention what we promised concerning Fāṭima al-Batūl and al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, who were the delight of the eye of the Messenger.

We say: they possess a manifest excellence and a tremendous glory that cannot be comprehended or encompassed; only a flash of their light can be seen by one who has sight. God's blessings be upon them. They are the chosen essence of created existence, the light of explanation, the best thing drawn from the world in every time and age, the place upon which revelation and taʾyīd descend, and the treasury of the knowledge of God that neither diminishes nor perishes. Creation has fallen short of knowing them, and the most eloquent knowers are unable to encompass their description.

Fāṭima—God's blessings be upon her—is the one who was joined to the waṣī in both the spiritual and bodily senses. From the two of them the light of the Imamate arose, clear and manifest. She is the niche of the lights, the quintessence of the mysteries, the shining light of God for the people of insight, and the tree from which the Imams were sent forth. She is a jewel from which the noble lights radiated.

She is the one referred to as Laylat al-Qadr, the Night of Power, because of the greatness of her measure, the loftiness of her honor, and the exaltedness of her remembrance. She is the proof of the waṣī—peace be upon him—who is "better than a thousand months," meaning better than a thousand hujjas who rise in the daʿwa under the possessors of the command. "The angels and the Spirit descend therein by the permission of their Lord." That is: in her daʿwa there arise the Imams, who are the ones who possess sovereignty over the world, and the spirits descend—that is, the true sciences by which what was and what will be is known—by the permission of their Lord, the treasury of the knowledge of the possessor of the cycle and his successor, the one entrusted with the mysteries of knowledge.

He is the Lord of the ḥudūd, their higher and their lower ranks, the one whom God ennobled through knowledge of the reality of his walāya and by which He distinguished them in every command. The "command" is taʾyīd. From it the world of command is named: the world of subtlety in which the command of their Originator became joined to them, so that they were attributed to His command, since there was no intermediary between them and their Originator except the command by whose light their essences were illuminated.

His saying "Peace" refers to the soundness of the breasts and the safety of the souls from the bewilderment through which there comes decay and destruction. From this the Abode of Peace is named, because its people are safe from defects and remain in the abode of reward, never perishing and never being touched by afflictions. His saying, "until the rising of the dawn," means until the rising of the Qāʾim, at whose hands the gathering and resurrection will occur.

Thus the Imamate remained connected in the descendants of Fāṭima—peace be upon her—until the known day, and her daʿwa extended until the day when the springs of knowledge are opened. Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—was asked concerning the interpretation of the saying of God Most High, "Lord of the two easts and Lord of the two wests." He said: "Abū Ṭālib and Fāṭima bt. Asad rose and shone; in al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn they set and went down."

Fāṭima is the jewel of the letter mīm, its secret and its public aspect. He manifested her so that the Imams would be attributed to her and would be called the Fāṭimids. Whoever knows her and knows her reality is among those upon whom there is no fear and who do not grieve. The limit of her knowledge is that everything in the heavens and the earth is within her grasp. Whoever knows her with this description has attained the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and has become among those in ʿIlliyyīn.

She is the Night of Power from whose knowledge the deniers were cut off, because the inverted world imagines that she was merely a female who emerged from the ordinary place of birth. Yet her reality is otherwise. God Most

High asks in wonder, “And what will make you know what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.” That is, better than a thousand hujjas. “The angels and the Spirit descend therein, by the permission of their Lord, from every command. Peace it is until the rising of dawn.” The angels are those who possess knowledge of her reality and point to her and to her progeny. The Spirit is the one who is chained to magnifying her, calling to knowledge of her, obedience to her, and recognition of her excellence, by the permission of their Lord—that is, the possessor of the cycle, may God bless him and his family. “From every command, peace”—that is, every Imam attributed to her—and the rising of dawn is the Qāʾim, possessor of unveiling and explanation.

God Most High said regarding this blessed night: “Indeed We sent it down in a blessed night; indeed We were warners. Therein every wise command is distinguished.” The wise command runs through the stations of the Imams. The Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—said: “I am the warner and ʿAlī is the guide.” ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is the speaker and truthful one in his saying: “I am the one who gave birth to Jesus in his mother’s womb; I am the one who fed Mary fresh ripe dates; I am the one before whose worship the Messiah does not disdain, nor the angels brought near; I am the one who spoke intimately to Moses from the tree.”

Thus ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn cannot be encompassed by a describer. The essence is one and the power bears witness. God, glorified is He, promised to unveil their reality after concealment and secrecy in His saying that He would make it prevail over every religion, even though the associators dislike it. The Qāʾim—peace be upon him—will do this when he rises with the sword and cuts off the root of the unbelievers and hypocrites. When he reaches the grave of the Messenger he will demolish the wall until the grave is left alone, because he will come to the two graves of Hārūt and Mārūt and ask, “Who is here?” Their two graves will split and they will appear; he will command that they be crucified. There the followers of falsehood will lose, and this will be among the first miracles of the Qāʾim, for he will not be recognized except through signs.

Then the wrongdoer will say, “Would that I had taken a path with the Messenger.”

Fāṭima—peace be upon her—is also the gathering of those who, during the time of the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—were people of piety, excellence, and striving, established upon the outward practice of Islam, neither opposing, nor arrogant, nor denying: the people of righteous works, piety, religion, and trust. She is that Islamic gathering because she is a noble station whose outward aspect is nāsūt and whose inward aspect is subtle lāhūt.

The Prophet used to kiss her and smell her. When he was asked about it, he said: “When I was taken on the Night Journey, Gabriel brought me fruit from Paradise. I ate it, then I approached Khadīja, and Fāṭima came from it. I smell in her the scent of Paradise.” Paradise here means the noble chosen gathering consisting of the meaning of the two earlier subtle daʿwas, the daʿwa of Abū Ṭālib and that of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. Fāṭima—peace be upon her—was from the essence of that fruit and appeared from the daʿwa of Muḥammad. Whoever wishes to smell the scent of Paradise should connect himself to her and to what she reveals of the command of her walī that is hidden with her, for she is the clear proof of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the one standing through the inner knowledge of his daʿwa and guiding those who connect themselves to him. Through her Paradise is smelled and the reality of the daʿwa is known.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—made clear the excellence of ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon them—when he gathered them beneath the cloak and singled them out by that to the exclusion of others. The cloak is what covers their knowledge and veils their excellence and station, for they are the veils of God brought near, wrapped in the cloak of the sharīʿa and veiled from those who look. In them is the manifest meaning.

Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī related: We were with the Messenger of God when his uncle al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib entered and said: “O Messenger of God, tell me: by what has God preferred you, the People of the House, over us, while the mines from which we come are one?” The Prophet said three times, “Leave me, uncle.” Then he said, “Ask, uncle, about what you wish.” He said: “Tell me, Messenger of God, by what have you, the People of the House, been preferred over us while the origins are one?”

He said: “God created me and created my brother ʿAlī when there was no heaven, no earth, no Paradise, no Fire, no Tablet, and no Pen. Our Lord spoke a word, and it became light and spirit. He mingled the two, and from them created me and ʿAlī. From my light He created the Throne, and I am more exalted than the Throne. From the light of ʿAlī He created the light of the heavens, and ʿAlī is more exalted than the heavens. From the light of al-Ḥasan He

created the light of the moon, and from the light of al-Ḥusayn He created the light of the sun and made it illumination for the people of the earth. He created the angels from our light and settled them in His heavens. The angels used to glorify God, mighty and majestic, saying in their glorification: 'All-glorious, All-holy! How noble are these forms before God, mighty and majestic!'

"God Most High wished to test the angels with a trial, so He sent upon them a cloud of darkness in which they could see neither beginning nor end. They glorified and sanctified God and said in their glorification: 'All-glorious, All-holy! We have never seen anything like what we are in through the power of these forms. If You remove from us what we dislike, we shall never desire anything but what You desire.' God Most High said: 'I desire it.'

"God Most High then created from the light of Fāṭima something like a lamp and suspended it at the earring of the Throne. The heavens and the earth shone from it, and for this reason Fāṭima was called al-Zahrāʾ, the Radiant. God Most High said to the angels: 'I shall make the reward of your glorification, praise, and sanctification to be this maiden, her father, her husband, her two sons, her Shīʿa, and those who love her.'"

This is the tremendous excellence God placed in them, and in its highest summit He settled them. It is the tremendous excellence and noble station.

In another report, from Jābir b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī from al-Bāqir Muḥammad b. ʿAlī—peace be upon them—he said: "The knowledge of Fāṭima is something that none knows except God, the Messenger of God, the Commander of the Believers, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn." The Messenger said: "When I was taken up to heaven and entered Paradise, I ate a quince. When I descended from Paradise I approached Khadīja, and she conceived Fāṭima—peace be upon them all."

The meaning of the quince is that the divine will took a form from the will so that there would be for it on earth an image and a will. This was from the support of the Preceder, the will of the First, and the carrying out of the command of the Second. Fāṭima—peace be upon her—thus became formed from the two ancient lights. They are two ranks in heaven and four on earth. For this reason the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said that Fāṭima has two names in heaven and four names on earth, according to what she contains of the ḥudūd on earth and what they contain in heaven.

Consider this section of his words—peace be upon him. His saying that none knows her knowledge except the two higher ranks is an allusion to the Prophet and the waṣī—peace be upon them—whose station in the world is the station of Intellect and Soul, when the dense coverings are removed and their station is known from the standpoint of intellectual subtlety that differs from the senses.

His saying, "When I was taken up to heaven," refers to what he attained of completion of the knowledge of the seven speaking-prophets, whose laws, acts, and duties had preceded him and whose sharāʾiʿ were completed. His entering Paradise is his encompassing the noble spiritual ḥudūd and being shown what they contain of elevated and holy ranks.

When he knew this with purified knowledge, there was purified for him the praised excellence from which he knew Fāṭima al-Batūl to be the daughter of the waṣī and the daughter of the Messenger, and he knew that the Imamate, prophethood, messengerhood, and legateship were stored within them. They were in her pure progeny and household, and she was from the purest essence of what was in the Garden, which was the quintessence of the people of the cycle before him: the cycle of Abū Ṭālib and ʿAbd Allāh through the support of the Preceder, who was ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, so that there would be for them an image on earth standing in their place.

Thus in one time He made Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn, who are the images of those earlier ranks. His saying, "Fāṭima became formed from the two ancient lights," means what we have mentioned of Abū Ṭālib and ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. They are the two first divine lights; Muḥammad and ʿAlī—peace be upon them—are the two later lights. His saying, "In heaven are two ranks," means her grandmother Āmina and her mother Khadīja, the two hujjas of the first station and the noble master. "And on earth four" means Fāṭima bt. Asad, Āmina bt. Wahb, Khadīja, and the mother of her two grandfathers ʿAbd Allāh and Abū Ṭālib. The mother of ʿAbd Allāh and Abū Ṭālib was named Fāṭima bt. ʿAmr al-Makhzūmiyya.

Or the two images may refer to what is in Intellect and Soul, the two subtle ones, and the four on earth are the Bāb, the ḥujja, the dāʿī, and the maʾdhūn. From Intellect and Soul comes the manifestation of the spiritual intellects; from ʿAlī and Fāṭima comes the establishment of the Qāʾim of the Imams, people of the noble luminous ranks; and

from the Bāb, the ḥujja, the dāʿī, and the maʾdhūn come the manifestation of religion and the growth of teachers and students, those who benefit and those who receive benefit. Understand these allusions and discern these signs.

Khālid b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī—may God have mercy on him—then said: I said, "My master, I ask you by her right over you, by the right of the one who gave you this station, and by the right of what you are favored with forever, tell me the reality of knowledge concerning her, and tell me concerning al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon them—how their affair began."

Al-Bāqir Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—God's blessings be upon them—said: "As for the Messenger, O Khālid, his station is like the station of the fish in the sea." The likeness of the Messenger was like ʿAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥa—may God have mercy on him—upon whom the command fell. He was the one whose incisor was broken and who was struck in battle. As for the person of Muḥammad in truth, he did not disappear, hide, flee, or suffer harm; rather, resemblance was made to occur. Understand, brother, the meaning of this section, so that you may be among the successful and saved who reach the lofty degrees and do not become confused.

Know that the Messenger—may God bless him and his family—from the standpoint of his subtlety, the purity of his form, the radiance of his substance, and the loftiness of his element was not reached by any of these accidents, nor did the eyes of the people perceive him in the way in which they perceived what they perceived. God Most High says: "You see them looking toward you, but they do not perceive." If he is not perceived by sight, how could swords and stones reach him?

As for his noble nāsūt, pains encountered it and what occurs to bodies occurred to it, because the friends of God—peace be upon them—are among stones like the red ruby: although there is purity, light, and brilliance in it and it possesses a tremendous excellence and great worth above ordinary stones, it is still classified among stones. What fell upon the nāsūt of the Prophet fell upon his "airy" or bodily form, like ʿAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥa among the ḥudūd whose spiritual residues became joined to that noble nāsūt, while their subtleties had risen into the subtle lāhūt.

Al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—continued: "Likewise with Fāṭima—peace be upon her. Everything that descended of afflictions and reprehensible events fell upon the image, which is the covering, and upon every garment and veil." Whatever pains befell them—God's blessings be upon them—did not fall upon their noble nāsūt insofar as it is the best of bodies, much less upon the lāhūt that cannot be reached. For this reason God Most High said concerning the Messiah—peace be upon him: "They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it was made to appear so to them." They perceived only the visible resemblance, not the subtle reality that imaginations and conjectures cannot reach. This applies to every prophet, waṣī, and Imam. Their noble bodies are touched by pains and retribution occurs upon them so that the residues produced by those events may be purified and so that they may attain reward and deliverance.

What occurs to the bodies of the friends of God of calamity, adversity, or trial occurs upon the material form. Punishments occur in this way because the enemies intended those actions against the Imams—peace be upon them. Thus he—peace be upon him—made clear to us the accident that occurs to the covering, which is the bodily image that comes from the airy residue.

He said: "Know, Khālid b. Yazīd, that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, the sons of Fāṭima—peace be upon them—were born from the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon them all—but they came forth otherwise than ordinary children come forth. Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan came forth from the left side, and al-Ḥusayn Abū ʿAbd Allāh came forth from the right side, without any of the states of women or any cause that Fāṭima—peace be upon her—disliked." This is the saying of al-Bāqir—peace be upon him.

Know, brother—may God make us and you firm upon the path and give us abundant water from the knowledge of reality—that this is among the secrets concerning which it is said, "Our affair is difficult and made difficult; none bears it except a sent prophet, an angel brought near, or a believer whose heart God has tested for faith."

His saying—peace be upon him—that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn were born from Fāṭima by the Commander of the Believers is the true statement in which there is no doubt, for the two are their children in both corporeal and spiritual creation, because she is the hujja of the waṣī and the hujja of the Greatest Station, which is exalted beyond likeness and comparison.

His saying that they came forth otherwise than ordinary children come forth means other than the outlets of the dense body made of blood and flesh. His statement, “because the rank obtained by them was neither begotten nor giving birth,” refers to the rank of deposit for our master al-Ḥasan and the rank of settlement for our master al-Ḥusayn. That light was divided between them into two halves. Those noble ranks were not contained by wombs and did not require nourishment from fruits and food.

The left side from which our master al-Ḥasan came forth is the outward aspect and the meanings of the sharīʿa and the first wilāya to which those who act by it and know it ascend. Walāya precedes the seven supports of the daʿwa. From that al-Ḥasan—peace be upon him—was formed from the forms of those pillars who answered the Messenger with purity, fidelity, obedience, sincerity, intention, unity, certainty, and truthful inward purpose. This was at the beginning of his rising and before he stood with the sword, rather with command and prohibition, strengthening and endurance, and what resembles that. Therefore the retribution upon him was only the hidden poison, without public visibility or fame.

As for our master al-Ḥusayn, his emergence and origin were from the right side, which is taʾwīl, reality, and the manifest sciences. It is the living air settled in the resting-place of the visible benefits from him, like the seeds of religion and the high, holy, noble forms. This is the justice of God Most High, for He does not cause the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost. It is the right side of religion, the station upon him and his progeny through the persistence of the Word in them until the Day of Judgment.

These two ranks were neither begotten nor giving birth; they were not nourished with menstrual blood, did not emerge from a womb, were not enclosed by a body, and none of the states of women accompanying childbirth reached them. They did not come through any cause disliked by Fāṭima—peace be upon her. Rather they appeared according to what the Possessor of the Will decreed for them.

Thus it is established that the left side is the rank of deposit and the right side the rank of settlement, and the certain truth has become manifest to those who possess understanding and insight.

Then he—peace be upon him—said: “Thus al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are the first two, the two children of the Will; they are two earthly likenesses—indeed, they are upon the station of the Commander of the Believers.” This is his saying—peace be upon him.

Al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon them—were the first among the noble imamic stations to arise in the Muḥammadan and ʿAlid daʿwa. They are attributed to the Will, which is Fāṭima, who in her excellence and the loftiness of her measure is like the Universal Soul, and because she is the hujja of the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—toward whom the intellectual daʿwa turned.

As for his saying that they are two earthly likenesses, that is because they appeared in their human forms upon earth to guide those who connected themselves to them from among the followers of the Messenger, those established upon the Sunna and obligation. The friends of God appeared in bodies and human forms for the sake of the world so that people could look upon them and follow them. The awliyāʾ behold the forms of their subtle, radiant, noble realities according to the purity of their forms and the illumination of their substance, while the deficient see only the bodies corresponding to their deficiency and bewilderment, perceive their shapes, and see their own likenesses.

As one of the awliyāʾ—may God sanctify his spirit—said: “The person sees of them in the mirror only his own form, not what he imagines of light, because the face has been covered by the rust of his sins and he is blind in the heart, cut off.”

Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: “Our dense forms are the subtleties of our Shīʿa.” Our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—said concerning our master al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him: “Your bodies are formed from the clay from which the hearts among us were purified. You were created from one clay and we were created from it, though in differing order.”

It is also said concerning some of the noble stations—God’s blessings be upon them—that God created their bodies from the clay of ʿIlliyyīn and created the hearts of their Shīʿa from the remnants of that clay. Their bodies are the refined essence of the remorseful one who seeks forgiveness, the one who hastens to turn back and to answer when the Administrator calls. The hearts of their Shīʿa are from that subtle remnant and noble chosen essence.

Thus al-Ḥasan—peace be upon him—was the first of the noble stations arising from the progeny of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. He stood in the rank of deposit, surrendering to al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—what belonged to him of the rank of settlement, recognizing his excellence and explaining to the elect of his Shīʿa the greatness of his gift. It is said that al-Ḥasan resembled his grandfather, the Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—from his head to his navel, while al-Ḥusayn resembled him from his navel to his feet. This was because al-Ḥasan—peace be upon him—stood through the outward daʿwa brought by the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—calling its followers to it and guiding them toward it.

The lowest rank of settlement is joined to the highest rank of deposit: they submit without disdain or arrogance. The inward aspect of the people of deposit is the outward aspect of the people of settlement, and the latter are to the former like the meaning to the word, which is the secret of secrets.

When the command came to our master al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—God's blessings be upon him—he rose through the designation of his father and grandfather and their delivery of the command to him. The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: "Al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are two Imams, whether they rise or remain seated, and their father is better than they are."

Al-Ḥasan followed the path of concealment and taqiyya because, in the beginning of spirituality, he represented the extract corresponding to Adam and the beginning of concealment and law. Thus he adhered to the cave of taqiyya. Muʿāwiya usurped his right, and he endured as the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—had endured before him. He stood with prophecy and messengerhood in the place of God's chosen Prophet, his grandfather—peace be upon him. He guided to the sharīʿa of Islam, guarded its deposit, and fulfilled its trust until Muʿāwiya sent the daughter of al-Ashʿath—may God curse them both—and she gave him poison.

He then summoned the elders of the people of his daʿwa and the elect of his Shīʿa and informed them of the station of his brother al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—and his lofty degree. He delivered to him what had been entrusted to him of the deposit and handed over to him prophecy and messengerhood. Thus the four ranks became gathered in al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him: prophecy, messengerhood, legateship, and Imamate.

The Imamate became settled in his descendants until the Day of Resurrection and turned away from the descendants of al-Ḥasan—peace be upon him. Al-Ḥasan is the symbolized counterpart of Abel, from whose progeny the Imamate turned away, while it became settled in God's gift Seth. Likewise it did not remain in the descendants of al-Ḥasan but became settled in al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him.

Al-Ḥusayn—God's blessings be upon him—in the first spiritual cycle represented the drop and is the first of those possessing firm resolve, corresponding to Noah—peace be upon him. He rose in secrecy and concealment, sent out his dāʿīs, spread his knowledge among those who followed him, and stood striving in the religion of God until the appointed time arrived, whose prior knowledge was with God, His Messenger, and the Commander of the Believers. The Messenger had left soil in a glass vessel and said: "On the day when you see this soil become blood, my son al-Ḥusayn will be martyred at Karbalāʾ."

When al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—desired concealment through what God had decreed for him, he did not shrink from traveling and did not turn aside because of the advice of advisers. Rather he hastened toward what God, mighty and majestic, had judged and decreed for him, to the place of his destination. His advance toward the people of Kūfa and his answering their request were not out of a desire for this world, nor out of ignorance of what would happen to him, nor because he did not know that they would deceive him and withdraw from supporting him. Rather, he hastened so that he might attain the excellence of martyrdom and rise to what his father and grandfather had risen to in the abode of permanence, which no describer can describe and no knower can encompass except the Imams—peace be upon them—whom God informed of the inward part of His unseen and who drew out what He revealed to His Messenger. He advanced, and what happened occurred as is famous and well known.

He—peace be upon him—manifested miracles at the place of his martyrdom known both to supporter and opponent. The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: "Blessed is my son al-Ḥusayn: his offspring, his grave, and his shrine."

As for his offspring, the Imamate flowed through them and its true reality was cut off from everyone else. It continued in his pure descendants, inherited by the first from the next. As for his grave, the tremendous and famous excellence and stored noble reward of visiting it is known among both elite and common people. The people of

knowledge mention that if some of its soil is taken and placed in a house, or in a piece of cloth carried by a traveler, and the contents are lost or stolen, then what is lost returns to its owner.

If someone has children who do not survive and he takes from that soil the weight of a grain and gives it with water to the newborn for three days, the child lives. As for his shrine, it gathered all of them because none remained from his descendants except ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn—peace be upon him—the proof of God and His word. The oppressors—may God curse them—wished to kill him after his father together with all of them, while he was severely ill; God protected him from their evil, repelled their plot from him, guarded him so they could not reach him or intend harm against him. This was by the will of God Most High, because God does not sever His command and does not leave His proof on earth removed from the world or prevented.

Thus ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—became unique, without peer or equal, and none remained resembling him in his manifest excellence. Among the miracles of al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—at his shrine was also that blood appeared beneath every stone and tree for forty days. Earth and heaven wept for him, the jinn mourned him, and many other miracles and tremendous famous signs occurred that neither friend nor obstinate opponent can deny.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—had appointed [a guardian] over his child ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn and entrusted him to him until he reached maturity. Among the first miracles of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—was that when the oppressors seized him and the women of the pure Imams and abused them, mounting them upon rough saddles and taking them to Yazīd—may God curse the wrongdoers—God protected him from their plot and turned their violence away from him.

The death of al-Ḥasan—peace be upon him—was by poison because he was the gathering of those who had been with the speaking-prophet—peace be upon him—before the command to wage jihād and kill the opponents. The killing of al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—was because he was the gathering of the excellent strivers who fought beside his father and grandfather against disbelieving and hypocritical opponents. The law of retaliation therefore fell upon him by the justice of God Most High, so that those consequences would be purified and so that he would rise thereby in excellence and honor in his return to the highest ranks with the Sovereign All-Powerful, in the seat of truth.

Among the accursed opponents were those whom the friends had killed while striving in the path of God and beside the friends of God. When those awliyāʾ gather in the collective form of the Imam and Imamate and their noble residues become joined to his luminous body, retaliation falls upon them so that justice may be completed, judgment and separation established, and no liabilities remain upon the awliyāʾ, in order that God may honor them through His walī with whom those noble residues have gathered and whose bodily form they have become.

The dark and malignant forms of the enemies of the Imams become a kind of magnet of opposition. Some of their residue descends into plants and produces poisonous substances, because of what those oppositional figures had done of indecency and evil, by which they were driven toward the perception of Fire and ultimately toward the two dark nodes, the gathering-place of darkness and magnet of the enemies of the Imams. Some of it descends into vegetation and becomes lethal poisons, which are consumed by those stations upon whom—peace and blessings—the law of correspondence falls. From this sort came what destroyed the speaking-prophet of a cycle, what caused the death of our master al-Ḥasan, and likewise what affected our master al-Mustanṣir—peace be upon him.

Some of it becomes minerals from which swords and knives are made, and some becomes other things by which the noble stations are killed, because those objects fall upon their counterparts among the dark, impure minerals and plants that descend downward. Everything is preserved by the principle corresponding to it, the dark substance of the two nodes, by the will of the Administrator and the demand of wisdom. The scale of justice is established by God Most High.

Chapter Seventeen

On the Imams from the progeny of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—the loftiness of their excellence, the sublimity of their honor, and the greatness of their station

We say: in this book we have mentioned what has already been mentioned of the excellence of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—his brother and vizier, and the excellence of Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn, the Imams of his cycle—God's blessings be upon them—of that which is the secret of the secret, and through whose knowledge insights become illuminated and intellects become clear. Now we mention the Imams of his cycle—peace be upon him—their stories and their weeks, and what God singled them out with of tremendous excellence and noble station, for they are the signs of the Wise Reminder, the children of the Great Announcement, the chosen essence of the first and the last.

The first in whom the ranks were gathered and the virtues and noble qualities were completed—so that in the Muḥammadan cycle he gathered the four ranks and attained the most excellent and exalted honor—was the Imam ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, exemplar of those who bow and prostrate. The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—had foretold him, pointed him out, and informed his waṣī and his two grandsons of his noble station. He said: "The settled Imam, in whose progeny the word of God continues, is the one whose mother has a single breast in her chest."

Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī frequently sought women in marriage, hoping to encounter that sign, but the woman who possessed it was stored away for his brother, our master al-Ḥusayn, protected and guarded from anyone else. During the time of the Commander of the Believers, when victory was gained over the opponents and captives came from among the daughters of Kisrā, king of the Persians, there fell to the share of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—a daughter of Kisrā, the best of the women in beauty and the most complete of them in intellect. He called her to Islam and she accepted Islam; he called her to faith and she believed and confirmed. He gave her in marriage to his son al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—and from her was our master ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn. Thus he combined the nobility of the two lineages and possessed both excellences: the excellence of the Arabs and Persians, together with his lofty honor and high root among Banū ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, and his being from the chosen descendants of the Messenger and the best of the children of the waṣī and al-Batūl.

When the calamity of the killing of al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—occurred, he did not depart this abode until he had established him in his noble station and delivered to him the inheritance of his grandfather and father, complete and entire. He made his uncle Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, possessor of pleasing deeds, a hujja for him, a veil and covering before him, a gate for him, and his guardian, and he appointed and established him for guidance toward him. Thus most of the Shīʿa went to Muḥammad on account of this arrangement. He called to the walāya of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon them—whoever among his followers was purified and sincere, and he remained in this state for the rest of his life.

When ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon them—was taken captive and was in the presence of Yazīd—may God curse him—God protected him from his violence and did not allow him to achieve any purpose against him. On a Friday he asked Yazīd for permission to address the people. Yazīd imagined that he was incapable of speech because of the humility he saw upon him and the illness from which he had only recently recovered. He wanted him to be unable to speak before the people of Syria. The enemy of God did not know that truth would speak upon his tongue and that the light of his proof would become manifest through him. Some of Yazīd's companions said: "Do not permit it, for he is the son of the breaker of pulpits and the breaker of armies."

The walī of God ascended the pulpit, praised God and extolled Him, and blessed his grandfather the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—with eloquent speech and a sharp tongue, so that it seemed he possessed two tongues because of the force and abundance of his eloquence.

When Yazīd—may God curse him—heard this from the walī of God, he silenced him and said: "Descend, and you shall have what you wish." He said: "I have three needs: release me and those with me from your fetters; return us to our Prophet, for we have more right to that than anyone else; and [grant what is due to us]." He answered what he asked. God protected His walī from being humiliated or abased.

He preserved His word in his descendants and revived what the wrongdoers had put to death of the Sunna of His Messenger. He lived in concealment from the neighbors of the people and their oppression and remained under the

protection of his uncle Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya. When he reached his uncle he said to him: “Deliver to me my deposit.” He said: “What is it?” He said: “An empty flask in which there is a white sheet.” Muḥammad searched for the flask and found it in his possession. He gathered the naqībs, delivered the deposit, and gave the trust to the walī of God. He was the first of those who pledged allegiance to him, believed in him, and followed him. The flask was a symbol of Muḥammad and indicated that he was empty of the Imamate; the white paper inside it was a symbol of the Imam ʿAlī and evidence of his lofty rank: that he was the settled Imam beneath the protection of his uncle, who acted as guardian and veil for him and for his noble knowledge.

What appeared of the miracles of al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—and what occurred to him and to Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, who stood with him in the noble station, corresponded to the ordering of the sacred ranks. ʿAlī is the tenth in one reckoning, while Muḥammad is the sixth of the speaking-prophets; ʿAlī is his seventh, al-Ḥasan his eighth, al-Ḥusayn his ninth, and ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn his tenth. From the seventh he corresponds to the fourth from the ascendant. Thus events occurred as a witness to him just as they occurred for those before him, step for step and likeness for likeness. Among the Imams he is the third, corresponding to the clot in the spiritual order.

The author then returns to the doctrine of the divinely appointed form. It is said of the Messiah—peace be upon him—that the Word is with God. That Word is the great source that the ḥudūd intended, the one to which the awliyāʾ alluded and toward which the chosen ones pointed. It is the pure form stripped from density, united with subtlety, appearing through the stations, and to it belongs the allusion.

The dāʿī Aḥmad—may God sanctify his spirit—said: the pure form is the form of the Essence by which God called creation to faith in Him and to acknowledgment that He is the Creator, the Originator, the Fashioner, and the Provider. The believer is a believer through that form, while the disbeliever is a disbeliever through denying it. The believer in that form must strip it of limitation, outline, change, transfer, and alteration from one condition to another, and hold that it is the ancient sign by which He—glorified is He—appeared to creation in former communities and past cycles. God, glorified and exalted, made it His ancient Name, never separated from Him, calling toward Him in every time, people, age, and period.

He manifests His Name to His creation as a person who calls creation toward Him so that recognition may be easier, for the divine reality is known only through His Name and attribute. He therefore manifests His Name as one calling creation toward His meaning—exalted is He who is never absent—then makes manifest for them the form of His Essence in confirmation of what He has called them to, as a favor from Him toward His creation. From the form He makes manifest the overwhelming power and names it for them through the waṣiyya and Imamate. Thus every waṣī in every age to whom a prophet pointed, or to whom a people were called after the disappearance of the prophetic mission, is a Name or an Attribute.

Therefore the obligation is as our master ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—said: “Do not deny a Name of mine, and do not reject a form of mine.” This is part of a long discourse. This is what God Most High intended and indicated by the Word. It is the rank of the spiritual ḥudūd in the world of subtlety, and from it all the intellects of the world of origination receive support. The tree that is the likeness of that Word is Muḥammad the Messenger of God, the chosen essence of God among the worlds and His messenger to the children of Adam, united with the Intellect that accompanied him, from which he received and by whose support he was strengthened.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: “I am a tree; Fāṭima is its fruit-bearing branch; ʿAlī is its pollination; al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are its fruits; and those who love us, the People of the House, are its leaves. Truly, truly, they shall be with us in Paradise.” What a tree it is! Its fruits are sweet, its lights radiant, corresponding to the exalted Word of God in the intellectual worlds. Banū Umayya, the opponents of those noble stations, were the accursed tree in the Qurʾān, established after the tree that had been uprooted from above the earth and had no stability. They were the first two who denied their Lord and disbelieved in His blessing, and the Imamate was cut off from their descendants and left their line.

The Imam al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—endured what he endured from the evil Umayyad tree. God manifested through him His highest Word and made him one of the holy channels of His knowledge. God’s blessings be upon him, his father, and the pure Imams from his descendants as long as ages follow one another and progenies succeed one another, and may God’s curse be upon the wrongdoers who were blind to their shining lights and denied their prophetic virtues.

When the appointed term came to al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—and his period ended and his work was completed, he designated his son, the truthful Imam Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad—God's blessings be upon him—by the command of God and the revelation cast to him. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq—God's blessings be upon him—then arose. He was the fifth among the Imams, corresponding to the bones in the spiritual order, and corresponding to Jesus the Spirit of God.

He manifested wonders in the religion of truth and miraculous signs greater in spiritual meaning than what Jesus—peace be upon him—manifested of raising the dead, healing the blind from birth, the leper, and the blind, and creating a bird from clay that moved by his exalted breath. Likewise, step by step, al-Ṣādiq revived the dead from ignorance and error whom God described in His saying: "Dead, not alive, and they do not perceive." He guided them to the path and breathed into them the spirit of the enduring reality after creation, through which there is ascent into the world of light.

God Most High said concerning this in clarification: "O you who believe, respond to God and the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life." In this is a clear allusion to the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—through whose daʿwa the spirits live and endure by what they receive from the knowledge of his reality, for he is the Holy Spirit that God breathed into the sanctified Intellect and gave it life. He is connected to the Station of Majesty in every time and age. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—was the locus of that spirit and its place.

The followers of the Messiah—peace be upon him—were gathered around him, and likewise the blind one is the one who is blind to the light while the awliyāʾ of God give sight. God Most High said: "It is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts within the breasts that are blind." Likewise, the leper is purified by them from what has afflicted him, and they uncover what has overwhelmed and harmed him. This is true knowledge, through which are salvation and life.

The birds are their hujjas and dāʿīs, veiled by knowledge and action. Their creation from clay is their elevation from the rank of respondents. When the awliyāʾ breathe into them the spirit of the holy reality and support them with what the human jewel receives, they become angels in actuality, purified from bodily density, connected through majesty and exaltation; they fly in the kingdom of the sciences and govern the affairs of the Living, Self-Subsisting One.

Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: "Conceal our knowledge and cover our affair, and We shall make you the chosen and the successors, just as We chose from the nations before you those who carried Our trust, concealed Our secret, and acted according to Our commands. We made them prophets and messengers and made some of them angels brought near. They used to walk in the markets as you walk and eat as you eat, but We purified them and made them Our messengers to the prophets."

He was asked: "Who are these, O Commander of the Believers?" He said: "The one named Gabriel, the one named Michael, and the one named Isrāfīl."

The dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God illumine his face—said: Whoever conceals the affair of the friends of God, hides it, does not proclaim it or reveal it, reserves their wisdom from those unworthy of it, and is of their chosen and elect, attains the rank of the angels who are named by reason of their being entrusted with the sciences of religion, informed of the wisdom of the friends of God, standing upon their secrets, and encompassing their hidden knowledge. God has called people possessing this attribute "angels." He says: "You will see the angels surrounding the Throne, glorifying with the praise of their Lord."

The Throne is the knowledge of God of which He informed His prophets and those among His servants whom He approved and chose for the Imamate. It is His unseen knowledge that He entrusted to them and made secret with them, withholding it from the rest of His creation. Thus He made them angels and lords by an excellence with which He singled them out and a station He bestowed upon them, pure for them. This is the Imamate, a condition that neither changes nor moves, flowing through the ages and epochs. This is part of a long discourse which we have abbreviated.

We return to the mention of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him. He made the sciences, miracles, and jurisprudence manifest until his fame spread among creation. The sciences were copied from him and everyone took from him what he was fit to receive. Shaykhs and scholars of the people of the outward forms studied under him in their

outward rulings, such as Abū Ḥanīfa, al-Shāfiʿī, and Mālik b. Anas, who learned from him, and he allowed them what was appropriate to them. For this reason in some of their judgments they agreed with the People of the House—peace be upon them—on such matters as the prohibition of wine and the cutting punishment, and in certain other matters. Mālik would say: “What I narrate from the People of the House is such-and-such.” As for the ruler’s punishments against the fornicator and the adulteress and similar matters, those belonged to the walī of the command, while the command was in the hands of oppressors.

Many of the scholars of the outward forms studied under al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him. Elite and common people acknowledged his excellence. His blessing became manifest and his word rose. He sent the dāʿīs and ḥudūd of religion into the islands, took covenants, and unveiled realities.

His opponent, the accursed descendant of Jaʿfar [i.e. the Abbasid ruler], would send people to him to spy out his secrets and to find one who might [report on] him. The narrative now turns to the tests and persecutions surrounding his Imamate and to his designation of the Imam who would follow him.

The accursed ruler continued to send spies against al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—and against his sons. On one occasion he seized him and imprisoned him, but God delivered His walī, repelled the oppressor’s plot, and saved him from tremendous distress.

It is related that a man among al-Ṣādiq’s Shīʿa was a vizier to Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr. He came into the presence of the opponent—may God curse him—and saw him sighing deeply. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad was then visiting him. The man asked al-Manṣūr about his condition. He said: “I have killed a thousand of the descendants of ʿAlī, perhaps more, and their master and most noble one remains. I have sworn to myself that he will not see the evening of this day.” The man said: “He is an old man. Worship has emaciated him and weakened his body. He does not seek the goods of this world.” Al-Manṣūr said: “You believe in his Imamate, and I too know that he is your Imam, my Imam, and the Imam of all creation—but kingship is barren.”

He then commanded his executioner: “When Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad enters behind me, I will remove my cap from my head. Strike off his head.” In the last hour he ordered al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—to be brought. When he entered, the vizier looked at Jaʿfar—peace be upon him—and saw him moving his lips. Al-Manṣūr was pacing in the house. When he looked upon al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—he suddenly came running before him barefoot, with his hood in his hand and his head uncovered, until he entered his chamber. He seated him in his own place of honor and sat before him like a slave before his master. He said: “O Abā ʿAbd Allāh, do you have a need that I may fulfill for you?” He said: “I have no need except that your messenger reached me asking me to come to you.” Al-Manṣūr said: “I summoned you only so that I might fulfill a need of yours.” Al-Ṣādiq said: “My need is that you do not summon me; if a need arises for me, I shall come to you of my own accord.”

Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—left for his guest-house. The vizier approached Ibn al-Dawānīq and asked him about his condition. He said: “Woe to you! I saw a dragon open its mouth and place one jaw over this palace and the other under it, and it said: ‘If you do anything to Jaʿfar, I will make you an example to those before and after you.’” In this way the Imam manifested this miracle—peace be upon him.

A group of the companions of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—were standing before him while he reproached them regarding a statement he had heard from them concerning one of his ḥudūd. He had unveiled to them something of his rank, but they denied it. Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: “What do you say concerning that?” They said: “We say of you only what you yourself say concerning your excellence, and we do not say lordship of you.” He moved his lips while moving two of his fingers against one another, and from between them there emerged a bird. It flew and landed upon the head of one of them who was wearing a hood. It seized the tassel of the hood with a thread and flew with it like a fly. The man rose to recover it, but could not reach it in the air. Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: “Sit.” He sat, and the bird returned the hood to his head.

Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—then recited the verse: “If the fly snatches something away from them, they cannot recover it from it. Weak are the seeker and the sought. They have not measured God with His true measure. Indeed God is Strong, Mighty.” They acknowledged the miracle and accepted from the one among them who had denied the reality.

It was also for this reason that Abū al-Dawānīq once ordered one of his men to go to al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—and flatter him so that he could take the covenant from him and learn what was concealed. The man did so,

and al-Ṣādiq was not ignorant of what he intended. Rather, he wished to manifest miracles so that people would have no argument against God regarding His proof. The man attended al-Ṣādiq's assembly and memorized some of the wisdom he heard. He became certain that the one to whom al-Ṣādiq pointed was Ismāʿīl—peace be upon him. He then went to Abū al-Dawānīq and informed him of all this. The ruler was filled with rage and hatred toward the walī of God and immediately sent for al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him.

When he stood before him, each asked the other about his condition. The ruler had hidden the informer behind a curtain to hear the conversation. He reproached al-Ṣādiq and said: "You possess knowledge that you conceal and hide, and you have appointed your son Ismāʿīl and indicated that the Imamate is in him. You were obligated to make the truth manifest if it is with you." Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: "The one who conveyed that to you lied." The man then emerged from behind the curtain and said: "Did you not say such-and-such, and point to Ismāʿīl?" Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: "Swear by God that this statement of yours is true." He said, "Yes," and al-Ṣādiq made him take the well-known oath. When he finished it, al-Ṣādiq said to him, "Stand." The man rose only to twist backward, fall upon his back, and die instantly. The unbeliever was confounded, and the opponent turned back from his intention after seeing the proof of his Lord.

Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—was ordered to the House of Honor; he was honored, given gifts, and equipped with the best provisions for his journey. He returned to his abode of residence.

Likewise, when Yaḥyā b. Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn intended to rise against Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik, Jaʿfar—peace be upon him—sent one of his companions to forbid him from doing so. When the man reached Yaḥyā, he greeted him and said: "Your cousin conveys peace to you and says: do not rise and do not move, for you will only tire yourself and your rising will not succeed." Yaḥyā said: "What did he say would happen to me if I rose?" The man told him. Yaḥyā said: "O son of the daughter of the Messenger of God, do you not know the knowledge of your cousin?" He said: "The sons of my uncle know our knowledge and their knowledge, while we know our knowledge and theirs."

The man said: "I heard him say: if you rise you will be killed and crucified, and your father did likewise when he was killed and crucified; afterward you will be burned in the fire." Yaḥyā wept at that, took out a written document, and said: "Take this scroll and deliver it to my cousin as a deposit with him for my son, for I have no excuse to abandon my rising." The man said to him: "I see that the Shīʿa have answered your cousin and that those who love you are few." Yaḥyā said: "Because my cousin called them to life and they answered him, while I call them to death and they turn away from me."

The man returned to al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—and delivered the scroll to him. Yaḥyā b. Zayd rose with his sword; he was killed, crucified, and burned just as al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—had said. Al-Ṣādiq called them to life while Yaḥyā called them to death. The miracles of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—are many; if we sought to enumerate them all, the explanation would grow long. Our aim is only to establish proof for what we have set down.

Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—had designated his son Ismāʿīl and established him as Imam in his presence. The ḥudūd took knowledge from him, and al-Ṣādiq commanded them, by God's command to him, to follow him. Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar—God's blessings be upon him, the blessed and auspicious one—therefore stood under the protection of his father. He was the sixth among the Imams, corresponding to the flesh in the spiritual order and to his grandfather, the Prophet of guidance—may God bless him and his family—the sixth of the speaking-prophets and Seal of the prophets. ʿAlī, Commander of the Believers, is the other creation, the soul that produces movement and life, and the universal spirit. Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar is the seal of the Imams in this first sequence, and the other creation, while his son Muḥammad follows him.

His person had appeared and his mark was known, while in rank he corresponded to the Qāʾim, the seventh of the speaking-prophets and the spirit of life. When the appointed term of Ismāʿīl drew near, a concealment was arranged against the opponent because of the intensity of his envy, rebellion, and eagerness to extinguish the light of God—while God completes His light by His action, if He wills.

Ismāʿīl and his father al-Ṣādiq al-Amīn—God's blessings be upon them all—therefore instructed that a guardian be established over his son as a veil and depositary, just as Aaron instructed Moses that a guardian be appointed over his son. They established as a veil over him and a protector one from the line of Salmān, namely Maymūn b. Ghaylān b. Bidr b. Mihrān b. Salmān al-Fārisī—may God sanctify his spirit. They entrusted to him Muḥammad b.

Ismāʿīl when he was three years old. Maymūn al-Qaddāḥ raised him and concealed his person. He was his guardian and the depositary of his command.

The descendants of Isḥāq were people of deposit and those who stood with proclamation, while the descendants of Ismāʿīl bore the settled line of the Imamate. Ismāʿīl remained under the protection of his father just as his grandfather Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—had remained under the protection of the possessor of the age and proclamation, Abū Ṭālib—God's blessings be upon him.

Ismāʿīl then manifested an illness. Visitors from town and journey came to visit him during it, and his father took testimony from everyone who reached him concerning his condition and wrote down their testimony. When he manifested his departure, he was shrouded for three days, while testimony was taken from every visitor, especially members of Banū Hāshim and others. On the third day al-Ṣādiq ordered that he be carried to the grave. He uncovered his face and said to those present: "Is this not my son Ismāʿīl?" They said, "Yes." He renewed their testimony concerning that, and he was buried.

News of this was written to Abū al-Dawānīq. It pleased him and cut off his expectation concerning what he had intended to do. May God curse him and those who strive through corruption on earth and manifest hostility toward the friends of God.

After that, however, Ismāʿīl—peace be upon him—appeared again in Baṣra, and people began rushing toward him, saying: "This is Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar; he has returned alive." An old man sat upon his shop; he was one of those loyal to his father. He said: "O son of the daughter of the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—take my hand; may God take your hand." Ismāʿīl came to him and passed his blessed hand over his back. The old man's back became straight and he was cured of his affliction. Creation witnessed this, and Ismāʿīl then disappeared from them.

When Abū al-Dawānīq heard of this he said: "The magic of the sons of Abū Kabsha is indeed mighty." He ordered that Jaʿfar be brought. When al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—reached him, he reproached him regarding what had occurred. Al-Ṣādiq produced the written testimony of the witnesses. Many of those who had testified were present in the ruler's assembly, and they testified again. His rage against al-Ṣādiq subsided, and al-Ṣādiq—God's peace be upon him—departed.

Thus Ismāʿīl—peace be upon him—manifested concealment and then appearance just as his grandfather, the speaking and sent Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—had manifested concealment and appearance in his own manner. The doctrine is that the Imamate is a lasting condition that does not change or alter through the passing of times and ages, because the successor stands in place of the predecessor. Children are attributed to their fathers only through obedience, following, walking in their path, and fulfilling what is due to them.

The author cites the saying of God to the son of Noah. Noah said, "My son is of my family," but God answered him: "He is not of your family; indeed he is an unrighteous deed." Whoever among the natural descendants of the Imams claims their noble stations without true designation and without divine light has failed and lost; his bond with them is cut off and God has declared them innocent of him, while he in turn has declared himself cut off from them.

Whoever obeys his Imam, follows the Sunna of God and His judgments in following him, and holds fast to the command of his walī is connected to them by a true bond. When the line was cut off from Mūsā and his descendants, the proof against them remained standing even though they were stripped of the garment of that exalted rank, because the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: "I leave among you that which, if you hold fast to it, you will never go astray after me: the Book of God and my progeny, the People of my House. The two will never separate until they return to me at the Pond."

The Pond is the Qāʾim to whom the Imamate remains connected. For this reason the Commander of the Believers is said to give drink from that Pond to the community of the Messenger of God until the Day of Resurrection. He distinguishes every walī through his true knowledge and heals the thirst of his soul. It is the Pond of prophecy, messengerhood, legateship, and Imamate, the gathering-place of the people of excellence whom God has honored: the possessor of the realities and manifest sciences that become visible to the people of his cycle at his rising after they had been concealed.

These signs and allusions became manifest, unveiled, in the possessors of the command, inherited by successor from predecessor: through the manifestation of miracles, the unveiling of clear sciences, and the bringing of

followers from darkness into light, saving them from drowning in the flood of error and doubts. “Whoever wishes, let him believe; and whoever wishes, let him disbelieve.”

Thus the Imamate of Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar is established, and the word of God remained in his progeny and in every Imam descended from him. The truth became clear and falsehood vanished; the wretched followers of falsehood failed. God desires to complete His light even though the disbelievers hate it.

After Ismāʿīl, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl—God’s blessings be upon him—arose. He was the seventh among the Imams and their Qāʾim, corresponding to his grandfather ʿAlī, Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—the completion of the spiritual cycle and the “other creation,” which is the soul of the thing, its spirit, and its meaning. He completed the first spiritual cycle and from him began the second cycle.

He was in Medina. He rose with the religion of God, glorified is He, sent out the dāʿīs, spread the sciences, and ordered his dāʿīs to seek an abode of emigration, according to the established custom of the friends of God, because every ascendant, fourth, and seventh must have an abode of emigration to which he can resort.

He lived in the age of al-Rashīd—may God curse him. When news of Muḥammad’s knowledge and the spread of his daʿwa reached al-Rashīd, he ordered that Muḥammad be arrested and delivered to him. The Imam—peace be upon him—had prepared in his house a subterranean chamber in which he could hide from the opponent. When al-Rashīd’s envoy reached Medina, the Imam entered that chamber and hid. They searched for him but did not find him and were unable to seize him. They returned to al-Rashīd and informed him, while the search continued without ceasing.

The Imam—peace be upon him—then traveled seeking an abode of emigration. He left in Medina two sons, one of whom was the successor of the Imamate, while the other served in concealment, and he himself went to Nīshāpūr, hiding his identity from his opponent. He moved between Nīshāpūr and Daylam. In Nīshāpūr he married a woman who bore him a son whom he named ʿAbd Allāh and whose kunya was al-Riḍā. ʿAbd Allāh became known as “the Perfumer” in order to conceal his station and protect him.

The Imam established veils for him and ordered each of the veils and hujjas to be called by the name of the Imam. When one of them took the covenant from a respondent, he named for him one of those veils so that the respondent would imagine him to be the possessor of the command—peace be upon him. This became the established practice among the three concealed Imams. Because of that, the dāʿīs in their islands called those Imams by varying names, so much so that sometimes two names became attached to one Imam.

Muḥammad—may God’s blessings be upon him—was protected from the sword until the Book reached its appointed term. He manifested the sciences, explained the realities, and unveiled to his elect the concealed secret. Through him appeared realities, signs, and proofs unlike what had appeared among the Imams before him, because he was the seventh, possessor of strength and manifestation, radiance and light, the one who explains the hidden science.

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl was among the ranks at which the goal of the sharāʾiʿ terminated, the one through whom they were sealed, encompassing the ranks of their ḥudūd and the sciences of those who bore them. He is the Qāʾim in potentiality, possessor of the first unveiling. The Qāʾim in actuality is the universal Qāʾim, possessor of the other unveiling and the greatest seizure, the Qāʾim of the Great Resurrection. There are many “resurrections”: first the maʾdhūn al-makfūf, then the unrestricted maʾdhūn, then the restricted dāʿī, then the unrestricted dāʿī, then the dāʿī al-balāgh, then the hujja, and at their summit the Bāb.

These ḥudūd are all “resurrections” because each of them rises for the spiritual forms that connect themselves to him, stripped from bodies, proceeding to his horizon and known through him. After these stations comes a noble Resurrection: the station of the Imam—peace be upon him—the Qāʾim of the Resurrection and the end of ends. Every rank is a qāʾim in relation to the rank beneath it. Beyond all of them is the Qāʾim of the Great Resurrection, possessor of the Greatest Seizure, in whom all stations are gathered. He is the goal of the noble goals, gathering within himself the stations of all the cycles from the beginning of the three thousand years that constitute the final great cycle until the end of the cycle of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family.

Our master the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—alluded to this in his saying: “Every ten thousand years a Form stands.” It is an allusion to this tremendous station, gathering the stations of the cycles within the thread of his mighty knowledge.

The tenth, after his departure, will succeed him, and a substitute will arise in his rank. He is called the seventh speaking-prophet because he speaks with the divine command and gathers the excellence that pertains to him. He is not the Seal of Muḥammad's nubuwwa in the same sense, nor is he a messenger; rather, he is unique in the rank of unity, and through him completion is completed and the order is made harmonious.

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl was singled out with this because of his position within the chain of the stations of the cycle of concealment. If you count Adam, his waṣī, and the Imams of his cycle, their last is the speaking-prophet Noah—peace be upon him. If you count Noah, his waṣī, and the Imams of his cycle, their last is Abraham. If you count Abraham, his waṣī, and the Imams of his cycle, their last is Moses—peace be upon him. If you count Moses, his waṣī, and the Imams of his cycle, their last is Jesus—peace be upon him. If you count Jesus, his waṣī, and the Imams of his cycle, Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—completes their ranks as the speaking Seal of the speaking-prophets, while his waṣī—peace be upon him—is unique in excellence. If you then count the Imams of Muḥammad's cycle, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl is their seventh, and the seventh possesses power over those who precede him. Therefore he is called a speaking one, a seal of the sevenfold sequence, and a qāʾim. He abrogates the law of the possessor of the sixth cycle by explaining its meanings and making manifest the inner meaning concealed within it.

Our master the Imam al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh—peace be upon him—spoke of this in the supplication for Saturday, saying of the Qāʾim by truth, the speaker with truth: "The ninth from his grandfather the Messenger, the eighth from his father, al-Kawthar; the seventh of his sons, the Imams; the seventh of the messengers from Adam; and the seventh of the Imams from ʿAlī"—God's peace and blessings be upon them all. He continued: "The one whom You ennobled, magnified, and honored; through whom You sealed the world of natures; through whose rising You suspended the outward aspect of the sharīʿa of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family; through whom You fill the earth with justice and equity just as it had been filled with tyranny, injustice, and confusion."

This is as the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: "The Mahdī is from us, the People of the House, a man with a high nose and broad forehead; he will fill the earth with justice as it had been filled with oppression and injustice."

He is the translator of the Qurʾān and its interpreter, the one who makes its explanation and light manifest, and the one who rises on the Day of Resurrection, Judgment, distinction, resurrection, and mutual loss and gain. This is his saying—may blessings be upon him—concerning the excellence of Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, his noble rank, because he is the seventh of the Imams, the one who clarifies the meaning. The seventh possesses a strength that those before him do not possess.

Likewise, the power of the final Qāʾim comes from his being the seventh of the speaking-prophets. The power possessed by the Imam Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl was also possessed by the seventh of the caliphs, our master al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh—peace be upon him—who was the seventh of two cycles and the fourth of four. The same applies to our master the Imam al-Ṭayyib—God's blessings be upon him—and to others whose time comes after. "What has been will be again," and "there is nothing new beneath the sun."

The repetition of sevenfold cycles does not cease. The seventh of the Imams—God's blessings be upon them—is stronger than those before him, more comprehensive in the sciences, more abundant in blessings, and clearer in proof, until the matter reaches the final Qāʾim, possessor of unveiling and manifestation and clarifier of the hidden science.

Unveiling is the disclosure of meanings from their coverings and their explanation to those worthy of them. Whoever reaches that stage is among the people of the cycle of unveiling. He knows the Qāʾim, his excellence and recompense become manifest to him, he reaches the promised time, and he witnesses the people of that cycle through intellectual vision, not through physical sensation, and through unveiled disclosure rather than by mere covering.

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl—peace be upon him—did not invalidate anything of the outward sharīʿa of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. Rather he confirmed it and commanded action according to it. The pure Imams from his descendants—peace be upon them—continued this practice, standing with the religious obligations and guarding the prescribed duties without concession, negligence, abandonment, or annulment.

When our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—said, "Through his rising You suspended the outward sharīʿa of Muḥammad," he meant that because he clarifies its meanings and unveils and makes clear its mysteries, he removes from his followers and Shīʿa the belief that the outward forms should be understood in the literal way in

which the people of taʿṭīl and tashbīh understand them—likening the true Originator to His creatures, imagining forms for the spiritual angels, and believing of the hereafter what is like what exists in this abode. He suspends that belief and explains what is intended by it, unveiling the realities and making the explanation manifest, while establishing the taʾwīl through which tawḥīd is known in its reality, the Originator is declared transcendent above the attributes of His creation, and the angels are known in their subtle substance.

He likewise explains reward and punishment not in the manner believed by the people of corporealization and qualification. This is like the act of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—for he was the first Qāʾim to unveil the meaning and explain the noble inner aspect, and the pure Imams—God's blessings be upon them all—continued in the same way. They preserved the outward forms for the deficient, for whom the explanation of the meaning remained hidden and veiled, while they stood in actuality for the people of realities and knowledge, unveiling for them what they had previously been unable to know.

So, brother, understand the wisdom of the Imams, the excellence of the friends of God, and receive with gratitude what you have been given. Hold fast to the firmest handhold and the strong rope.

When our master Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl—peace be upon him—reached the time of his departure and his concealment drew near, he delivered the command to his son ʿAbd Allāh al-Raḍī and made him his successor and waṣī. Thus ʿAbd Allāh al-Raḍī—God's blessings be upon him—arose as the first of the three concealed Imams by the command of God and His revelation. He received the rank from his father and succeeded him in his noble station. He corresponded to the extract in their cycle and to Adam—peace be upon him—the first of the speaking-prophets, and he was the first of the successors in that concealed sequence, just as al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī—peace be upon him—was the first of the Imams in the first sequence.

He concealed himself, veiled his hujjas and ḥudūd, and his hujja and veil was ʿAbd Allāh b. Maymūn—may God be pleased with him. He did not reveal his knowledge to anyone and did not inform anyone of it except the bearers of the Throne, those who stood by the command of God, the trustees of His khalīfa, and the excellent ones among the hujjas appointed in his daʿwa.

His concealment was caused by the darkness of the intensely dark night, by the dominance of falsehood over truth, and by the strength of the rule of darkness over the people and the greatness of doubt and whispering. Because the Imam—peace be upon him—was so intensely concealed, when one of the ḥudūd of his religion took the covenant from respondents entering the daʿwa, he would say: "You owe hearing and obedience to the walī of the age," without uttering his name. When the respondent advanced in knowledge, rose in degree, and his station was elevated, the name of the Imam would be written for him through a veil, and the Imam would not be explained to him by direct allusion or explicit wording until his rank made him deserving and worthy.

This remained the practice throughout the period of the concealed Imams until the sun of truth rose from the West and illuminated the horizons of religion for everyone who held fast to the firmest handhold and took refuge in it.

The Imam ʿAbd Allāh spent this period with the ḥudūd calling to God and His tawḥīd while his person remained hidden from them, just as the rays of the sun flow through the stars. They remained connected to him by the materials of the Living, Self-Subsisting One. This operates in every time and age, moment and season: whether the Imam—peace be upon him—appears or is concealed, the rays of his light reach his ḥudūd, according to their degrees and the measures of their purification and proximity in the ranks of causes.

That light flowing from the Imam—peace be upon him—is the light of God by which he is connected to the Intellect, the First Originated One created by Him. Through it the existent beings below the Imam come into being according to their ranks. From the Imam that noble, high, subtle material flows to the noblest station in the natural world, and from it to those below it among his ḥudūd connected to the circle of his existence.

He is the magnet drawing them upward and raising them through the degrees of felicity. Each one rises to the rank above him and each higher rank is succeeded by the one below it. The respondent returns to the mukāsir; the mukāsir to the maʾdhūn; the maʾdhūn to the dāʿī of initiation; he rises to the unrestricted dāʿī, then to the dāʿī al-balāgh whose degree is elevated above him according to merit. The return of all of them is to the hujja, who is the noble Gate and the best path. When they gather at the Gate, they are raised through him to the highest ranks and

noblest causes: the station of the greatest Imam, gathering those who came earlier and later among the ḥudūd of his daʿwa.

This does not occur until after separation from bodies and ascent within the company of the people of the noble ranks to that station. Each of the ḥudūd and ranks is joined in the place to which his rank has ended, by the necessary judgment of truth. No one rises beyond his due station except the rare individuals who deserve elevation to the loftiest ranks and ascent. Thus one is first a respondent, then a believer, then a mukāsir, then a noble maʾdhūn, then a dāʿī of initiation, then an unrestricted dāʿī, then a dāʿī al-balāgh, then a hujja, and finally a Bāb, according to necessary merit.

The dāʿī Muḥammad b. Zayd—may God sanctify his spirit—explained this in the book al-Balāgh al-Asnā, relating that al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said to his elect: "Follow in the heavens a ladder and you will find what you desire." One of his ḥudūd said: "What is that ladder, my master?" He said: "The ranks of knowledge by which the believer ascends through knowledge and turns toward them through recognition and understanding."

The believer who knows the ranks of faith, when his faith becomes complete, reaches sincerity. Then he rises to being specially selected. At that point there is a rank that no one attains by action alone, but only by the favor of God Most High upon His servants.

If his Originator favors him and His Chosen One selects him, He strips from him the garment of humanity and refines him beyond the rank of bodily form. Then he rises to spirituality, then to substantiality, then to the rank of glorification, then holiness, then shadow, then radiance, then the created circular rank, and finally to the Universal Light.

These are eight higher ranks, and that is the tremendous success. One of the fortunate dāʿīs—may God exalt their degrees—said: Reflect, noble brother, upon the meaning of his saying that the believer who knows the ranks of faith, when his faith becomes complete, reaches sincerity—meaning pure walāya toward the possessors of the command. Then he rises to special selection, meaning his Originator singles him out with the knowledge that is bestowed upon him because of the soundness of his inner nature.

When God favors him with the rank that cannot be attained by action alone, He strips him of the garment of humanity—that is, He unveils to him the outward forms of the command—and refines him beyond the rank of bodily form—that is, frees him from captivity to matter and form. He raises him to spirituality as a true believer, then to substantiality as a perfected believer, then to the rank of glorification as an unrestricted maʾdhūn, then holiness as an unrestricted dāʿī, then shadow as a dāʿī al-balāgh, then radiance as the Gate, and then to the Universal Light, the Great Source.

Some of the purified elect once asked al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—about the meaning of balāgh, conveyance. He said: "Balāgh is of two kinds: partial and universal. Partial conveyance is from one degree to another and the ascent of one rank. Universal conveyance is the completion of all the ranks and their conveyance to their ends. It is reaching the end of the appointed times and crescents. Through this one becomes an Imam after having been a servant; the light rises through him and truth becomes manifest through him at appearance. When the subject reaches this, humanity no longer remains upon him and he is no longer described by bodily form. Rather, he sees all the forms within himself."

God Most High says: "No! I swear by the retreating stars, those that run and disappear." They asked him: "O son of the Messenger of God, what are the retreating and disappearing stars?" He said: "They are the persons who have reached the lofty end and the goal in knowledge. They retreat from sight: they see but are not seen. The ones that 'disappear' are the striving awliyāʾ who have not yet reached the end and who continue running in pursuit of balāgh, sweeping away from themselves the attributes of density out of eagerness to arrive."

As the Real says regarding them: "No! I swear by what you see and what you do not see." What the eyes see are those below universal balāgh; what you do not see are the people of the highest balāgh who are hidden from sight.

Thus he—peace be upon him—made clear the path of return and the transfer of ranks in ascent and elevation: every subject returns as a lord, every follower returns as an Imam, and the forms continue rising until they reach the Gate, who is the purest of the pure and the kernel of kernels, to whom rises the possessor of the rank of unity. In the final instant he receives from the one who delivers to him, the Great Source. He then receives the succession and becomes a subtle luminous form until he is completed and his term draws near. He brings forth a believer like

himself, then retreats from sight and joins those lights that preceded him. In this is clear guidance for the people of insight.

We now return to the account of the first of the concealed successors, ʿAbd Allāh al-Raḍī—peace be upon him. When his period came to an end and his daʿwa was completed, he established his son Aḥmad al-Taqī. He ascended to the noble stations that rise within the world of the Kingdom.

The Imam Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Taqī—God's prayers and peace be upon him—arose by God's command and revelation. He was the second of the concealed successors. His hujja was ʿAbd Allāh b. Maymūn. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh—peace be upon him—corresponded to the drop within their cycle, to the third light among the speaking-prophets, and to his grandfather al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī—peace be upon him—the second among the Imams.

He spread sciences, outward and inward, and composed the Epistles. He arranged them according to four branches of knowledge: the first mathematical sciences, the second natural sciences, the third sciences of the soul, and the fourth nomic and divine sciences.

He made them fifty-three epistles, bearing witness to him and pointing toward him, because his name according to numerical calculation totals fifty-three. He spread his dāʿīs, who made manifest from these Epistles the science of number, geometry, measurement, astronomy, medicine, and what they gathered of the science of bodies, the science of language, and the science of religions. He strengthened the pillars of the sharīʿa and established its foundations by correspondences between horizons and souls that astonished Arab and non-Arab alike, until the community began turning to the ḥudūd of the religion and studying these sciences under them, while the walī of truth remained concealed from them.

The reason for this was that al-Maʾmūn gathered astronomers and spent vast sums upon them to construct the astronomical tables known by his name, while the possessors of the command remained hidden within the cave of taqiyya. Al-Maʾmūn, because of his arrogance and pride, imagined that the Fāṭimids had exhausted what remained to the sharīʿa of those who could establish its pillars and clarify its rites. He hoped to abolish the sharīʿa of Muḥammad —may God bless him and his family—and to make astronomy manifest and turn knowledge of it into "religion," and to make the knowledge of the beginning and return depend upon its calculations of punishment, reward, and recompense.

His aim was to make creation think that what Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—had brought had no foundation, that the Companions who acted as they did toward ʿAlī—peace be upon him—had acted correctly, that no sin or blame belonged to them, and that thereby he might justify the killing of the prophetic progeny in retaliation for the blood of Quraysh.

When the walī of truth knew this, he composed the Epistles and manifested within them what he manifested of the four branches of philosophy together with what he stored within them of religion. He strengthened the sharīʿa and established its laws by correspondences and witnesses that neither fail nor change from their meanings.

When the Epistles were completed and the ḥudūd spread them, they became famous and widely known. Al-Maʾmūn looked into them and found what astonished, defeated, and bewildered him. He confronted the astronomers with their contents and they were unable to answer. The Epistles alerted them to matters that had escaped them and guided them to the science of the Almagest. He questioned them and found that they knew nothing of it. At that point al-Maʾmūn knew that the walī of the command was concealed and that those men had a proof beyond what they had shown.

He therefore turned from his earlier purpose and began attaching himself outwardly to the walī of the command and to the descendants of Fāṭima. He sent to the judges and jurists of the provinces, restored Fadak and al-ʿAwālī to the Fāṭimids, and issued proclamations throughout the lands that whoever was from the progeny of Fāṭima should come to al-Maʾmūn for his share of Fadak and al-ʿAwālī. He debated whoever disputed him concerning this and made the proof clear that Fadak and al-ʿAwālī had been a gift from the Messenger of God to Fāṭima—peace be upon her—and that Abū Bakr and ʿUmar had wronged her concerning it.

A group of Fāṭimids reached him. Among them was ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, one of the Imams recognized by the Twelver community. When he arrived, al-Maʾmūn became aware of certain taʾwīls and wisdom with him and sought from him some of the Epistles that had become famous. He asked him whether he had composed them, but did not find from him what would answer that claim. He nevertheless manifested acceptance toward al-Riḍā, wrote his name

beside his own upon dinars and dirhams, and promised him the caliphate after him. In this way the ʿAlids became associated with him.

When al-Maʾmūn reached the dāʿī who had been ordered to spread the Epistles in al-Maʾmūn's territories, he believed the dāʿī to be loyal to him. The dāʿī was from the Holy Land. He went to the walī of the age and informed him of what had occurred with al-Maʾmūn and asked permission to go to him so that people would not increase in error concerning ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā as they had increased in error concerning Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.

When this was presented to the walī of his age, he said to the dāʿī: "He has only manifested this as a trick against me, intending to kill me. Go to him, but reveal nothing of my affair. Be cautious in all your dealings and do not disclose my secret, for he is an enemy of God and His friends."

The dāʿī went to al-Maʾmūn. He was eloquent in expression, subtle in indication, learned in the Epistles, and had memorized most of them. It was al-Maʾmūn's custom to sit with those who came to him and with visiting scholars. When the dāʿī reached him, al-Maʾmūn conversed with him, gave him security, and cleared the assembly for him. When he saw what the man possessed of excellent speech in the various sciences, he said: "Are you the walī of the blessing?" The dāʿī said: "No. I am only the Gate toward him and the guide to him."

Al-Maʾmūn took the covenant from him and manifested walāya, acceptance, and sincerity. He continued regularly learning from him and asking him questions while the dāʿī would inquire concerning his Imam. The dāʿī would evade and not disclose the name, saying: "I will not tell you his name except with his permission and knowledge."

Al-Maʾmūn said: "I have learned that we and those who preceded us wronged the friends of God. I wish to absolve myself of this kingdom and command and surrender all of it to the possessor of the command and his walī. Go to him, inform him of what I have learned, and urge him to rise, so that I may surrender what is in my hands and stand with him striving until the truth appears and sincerity becomes clear."

The dāʿī believed him and went to the walī of God—peace be upon him. Al-Maʾmūn equipped him and gave him gifts and provisions. He traveled toward the Holy Land and then went to the walī of God and informed him of al-Maʾmūn's professed loyalty and acceptance of what was conveyed to him.

The Imam said to him: "He lies to you in what he says. He is an enemy of God and the Messenger. Beware his plot and do not trust his deception." The dāʿī said: "My master, he has already told me that you are the Imam. If he delivers to you what is in his hand, you know better than I; and if he strikes off your neck, I know better than you."

He returned to al-Maʾmūn. When he arrived, al-Maʾmūn honored him, gave him gifts, brought him close, treated him fairly, and began questioning him about what had occurred. The dāʿī then said to him: "I am the Imam. I only concealed myself from you as a test and trial until I knew the sincerity and acceptance within you. Now that I have seen your walāya and pure devotion, I have disclosed my affair to you and shown you my secret."

When al-Maʾmūn heard this, believing the dāʿī to be the Imam, he ordered his executioner to strike off his neck. The dāʿī said: "He—peace be upon him—spoke the truth, for he informed me of what was within your soul and of what you intended." Al-Maʾmūn said: "And now you wish to save him from me? Strike his neck, boy." The dāʿī was killed as a martyr.

ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā heard of what had happened and departed. Letters from the walī of the age became manifest concerning these events and the wrongdoing of the people of oppression and tyranny. Al-Maʾmūn—may God curse him—then abandoned the thought of abolishing the sharīʿa because of what had overwhelmed him of the Epistles and their marvelous wisdom.

He had studied the three sciences: the science of language, bodies, and times. These are among the sciences of the jinn, through which they become hidden from the people of the outward forms and, through their subtlety, appear to the people of the fourth rank, who are the angels, people of the true sciences. The science of the kingdom restrained al-Maʾmūn and made him realize that this command had people who preserved it, while he was incapable of reaching them.

Thus the miracle of the walī of God, the second of the concealed successors, was intellectual and his proofs were real. The people of error and ignorance drowned in his knowledge and wandered bewildered in what he set down in his Epistles. They resorted to their scholars seeking the reality of their science, but found no refuge from

disobedience and none was saved except the one who took refuge in the Ark of Salvation, the People of the House of Prophethood, those who know the realities of the sciences and understand the meaning stored within the comprehensive Epistles.

His miracle was like the miracle of the second of the speaking-prophets and like the flood of his age that destroyed the people of aggression and brought them to the abode of humiliation. The miracles of the friends of God —peace be upon them—are tremendous and their signs noble and holy, because their light is from the First Light from which all lights received. Before knowledge of that First Light the paths of the intellects are blocked. The utmost reach of people of intellect is to stop before knowledge of the Veil, the nearest of veils and highest of ranks: the Gate before whom the ḥudūd stop. Yet even that is below the rank of the Greatest Hujja, which is the end and goal of the ranks, the high, universal chain-like rank.

Jābir b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī related from al-Bāqir—peace be upon him: "I entered upon our master Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn while he held the mirror in his hand. He was saying: 'Glory be to the One from whom, every time a veil is raised, another gate is unveiled to me; and every time I knock upon a gate, another veil appears. Glory be to the One whose seekers end at Him and whose seekers' destination is His light.'"

Jābir said: I said within myself, "This is tremendous." He raised his head toward me and said: "The tremendous one is the one through whom I am tremendous; the knowing one is the one through whom I am knowing. I am only a servant of God to whom it is revealed: worship none but God, mighty and high." I said within myself: "Then what is this veil?" He raised his head toward me and I saw a tremendous radiance and shining light upon which my sight could hardly settle and which my intellect could not encompass. He was saying: "This is only one of your honored awliyāʾ."

He said to me: "Shall I show you more?" I said: "This is sufficient." He said: "O Jābir, rejoice in God's purification of you, in His shade descending upon you, and in His Gate appearing through you, the Generous, the Merciful. O Jābir, Salmān is one of us, the People of the House. His outward aspect is like the outward aspect of a gate and his inward aspect is from the light of a veil. If the veil were removed from your sight and you were singled out from among His servants by its radiance, you would see from it what you were able to bear, while creation would see from it only what corresponded to what was in you. It would speak through what spoke within you and say through you what was said by you. We are its inward reality and it is our outward manifestation. When you carry from it what belongs to us, we are through you as we are through it. So hasten to unveil what lies between us and you; that is not difficult for God."

In this discourse al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—made clear knowledge of the Greatest Veil, the loftiest, noblest, highest, and nearest of the veils. If this is the Veil, then what of the One veiled by it? Sight is wholly unable to behold Him and intellects are too short to encompass His knowledge.

For this reason it was said: wherever the light appears to you, prostrate. If the awliyāʾ are of this station, it is no wonder that their knowledge—peace be upon them—should contain what astonishes intellects and bewilders minds whenever those meanings are joined to their causes. Thus the miracle of the second of the concealed successors was tremendous and the path to knowing him strong.

That is Aḥmad the Praised One, through what the Great One disclosed from what He had concealed and hidden. From his light the lights became manifest; through knowledge of him are known the Peace, the Believer, the Guardian, the Mighty, the Compeller.

When his departure came and his days in the abode of elevation reached their end, he delivered the command to his son al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad and made him the house of his noble, glorified light.

Thus al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Muqtadī al-Hādī—God's blessings be upon him—arose. He was the third of the concealed successors, corresponding to the clot in their cycle, to Abraham the Friend among the speaking-prophets, and to Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn among the Imams. Events and disguises in the manifestation of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—were repeated in his own cycle by correspondence.

He received his rank from ʿAbd Allāh b. Maymūn, the hujja of majestic worth and tremendous station, the loftiest of veils and the highest, subtlest, and most exalted of them. Through him that which had appeared to the awliyāʾ and elect became manifest, just as Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn had appeared to Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī in the

forms symbolized by the letters mīm, fāʾ, jīm, and sīn, and then called him toward the form of the ʿayn, saying: “Can your intellect bear this, O Jābir? These are garments of mine in every time and age, changing...”

The total light is that by which truth becomes manifest through them at appearance. The prophets and Imams are signs pointing toward it. The dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity—said in Kitāb al-Kashf: “The Great Source is a sublime, most exalted end by which reference is made to the Great Originator, who is exalted above the attributes of creation. There is no time for Him, no succession of time, and no alteration of time. He is the meaning of every age and epoch, the abiding one in every era, the judge over the inner realities of tremendous affairs. He does not cease throughout ages and times to be described through all His houses, distinct from all their forms, unique in the perfection of His judgment, one to whoever knows Him, far above whatever anyone imagines of Him.”

“Whoever knows the Veil has put on radiance and perfection, reached the utmost of hopes and the end of causes. God Most High is free from anyone who associates another with Him, takes a god beneath Him, worships a person who does not stand by His command, or goes beyond the rank in which He has established him.”

This is his saying—may God exalt his sanctity. The Great Source is the First Intellect and the most excellent ibdāʿ, outward through the radiance of the veils and inward through the unseen of its Originator, whom none can encompass. The highest Great Source is what God Most High meant in His saying: “Indeed, it is in the Mother of the Book with Us, exalted and wise.” Whoever inherits its station, which is the station of unity, that Name applies to him.

Every station must have noble veils. The highest and most exalted among them is its hujja, the loftiest of the hujjas, below the Greatest Imamate, which is the goal of the ḥudūd, the end of existence, and the locus of receiving and giving. Understand this, brother, and you will be among the successful. Enter with the friends of God into the secure sanctuary.

We now return to the account of the Imam al-Muqtadī—peace be upon him. He stood through the sciences and judgments of his father and summarized from the Epistles the Book of the Comprehensive Epistle, containing useful benefits. He sent forth his dāʿīs, and response to the true religion of God multiplied because the appearance of the Mahdī—peace be upon him—was near.

He sent al-Ḥasan b. Faraj b. Ḥawshab al-Manṣūr to Yemen. The people of astronomy and calculation were speaking of the appearance of al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—and giving glad tidings of his state. Kings and opponents became certain of this, so that many of them withdrew from the matter, including the king of Ṣafāʾ and many others.

Then the Imam, possessor of the age, advanced for emigration toward the Maghrib. In Kūfa he manifested departure in concealment and appointed Saʿīd as the outward figure. Saʿīd took the title of Imam by command of the one who had designated him, as a covering for the walī of God and to conceal his station from the people of his daʿwa until the time of his appearance and the rising of his light.

He ordered the ḥudūd to do likewise and to bring forward “the rising sun” as a veil over the walī of God. The future Qāʾim was not disclosed to anyone, nor was the divine secret concerning him made known except to the purified righteous and the chosen excellent ones who knew the secrets of God among His awliyāʾ and understood what He had manifested to them through His elect. When the appointed time arrived, the daʿwa and the dāʿīs appeared. They pointed to the walī of their command whom they had been ordered to indicate, clarified his excellence to their followers, guided them toward him, gave glad tidings of the rising of the sun from its west, and promised the nearness of the appointed time when it would emerge from behind the coverings of its veils.

Al-Mahdī bi-llāh—God’s blessings be upon him—then arose, his daʿwa having spread through the horizons. The people of disagreement were guided by the clarity of his proofs and returned to accord. He migrated from Salāmiyya to the Maghrib through the work of his dāʿī Abū ʿAbd Allāh, possessor of the daʿwa in the Maghrib—may God sanctify his spirit. With him was the Imam al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh, the one entitled after him to the succession and toward whom the daʿwa of all the awliyāʾ was directed. Al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was his guardian in his guardianship and the people of his daʿwa ascended toward his station.

Al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was the fourth among the concealed and manifest successors in this sequence, corresponding to the lump in the cycle, to his grandfather al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—and to Moses,

the one spoken to by God—peace be upon him—possessor of the staff and manifester of signs and clear proofs. His miracles were overwhelming and his signs manifest. In the natural creation he corresponded to the sun, the fourth of the planets that have the power of extending influence to what is above and below in the natural world.

He stood with what his grandfather Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—the Seal of the prophets and master of the chosen ones—had stood with. They had announced the appearance of his command through many stations and numerous allusions. The Prophet said: “At the completion of three hundred years from my hijra, the sun will rise from its west.”

He was the rising Sun of God and His shining sign, the Greatest Veil and the noblest, most honored Gate, bearer of God’s trust and deposit, and the one who would deliver it to al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh, his son, who was connected to him through his instruction and teaching. He was his successor standing from him, like ʿAlī, his grandfather, before the trustworthy Messenger of God—God’s blessings, benedictions, and greetings be upon them all.

His miracles multiplied, his signs stood, and his dāʿīs made his excellence clear. His daʿwa became manifest in Yemen and the Maghrib. When the believers learned that his appearance had drawn near, the severity of distress was lifted from them.

When he reached Egypt on his journey toward the Maghrib and strove in his travel, news of him and his report reached the rulers. Some astrologers came to the ruler of Egypt, who ordered them to divide the lands astrologically so that they might know in which region the expected Mahdī was. They used a yellow basin and placed a pulpit in the water of that basin. The astrologer said: “He is in a city whose walls are yellow.” They placed a representation around the water and named the city until it became apparent. The ruler seized him and al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh—God’s blessings be upon them—and imprisoned them.

When they entered the prison there were people who had been confined there for a long time. He said to them: “Would you like to leave the prison with me?” They mocked him and said: “They intend to take us east toward Syria, while he imagines himself able to rise up with us.” He went to one of the prison doors, tore it out, took a piece of charcoal, and drew upon the door the image of a ship. When he completed the image he said: “Who among you wishes to leave, let him sit with me upon the door.” He and his son sat upon it and all the prisoners sat with them except one who denied what he said.

When that man saw the door rise into the air, he clung to it but fell, breaking his leg. The door descended upon the Nile. News spread, people were bewildered, and they saw the door traveling upon the river. They became certain that he was the expected Mahdī of whom glad tidings had been given. Reports spread and the opponents turned away from him.

He went out toward Sijilmāsa, then to Qayrawān and Raqqāda. He took covenants and oaths, and response to the religion of truth multiplied. His emergence from Sijilmāsa was by the hand of his dāʿī Abū ʿAbd Allāh—may God have mercy upon him.

He remained for a time until doubt entered the mind of Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī’s brother, al-ʿAbbās. He whispered to him and said: “This is not the Mahdī.” The Shīʿī began entering upon the walī of God with a troubled heart and remained in that state for three days, scarcely understanding whether his garment itself had turned against the walī of God. We seek refuge in God from reversal after uprightness, doubt after certainty, and retreat after faith. We ask God to make us among those who hold fast to His rope and cling to the handhold of submission to those whom God Most High commanded us to obey, not disdaining, not acting arrogantly, not turning away from the qibla of truth, and not retreating, by the right of Muḥammad and his pure family.

The walī of God—peace be upon him—ordered that Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī be brought. He was purified through killing; the Imam prayed over him and asked mercy for him, and did not invalidate his righteous work because of the lapse that had occurred. His brother Abū al-ʿAbbās, however, who persisted in pride and despair, denied the daʿwa and dissociated himself from it openly before all people. He therefore incurred manifest loss, losing this world and religion, while praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds.

The walī of God—peace be upon him—then ordered the construction of al-Mahdiyya. When he completed and perfected it, he moved there and made it the abode of emigration of the Imam al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh, Commander of the Believers. He commanded someone to shoot an arrow. It fell in a place to which he had already pointed. He ordered a mosque to be built at the place reached by the arrow and said: “To here will the Dajjāl, Makhlad b. Kaydād

—may God curse him—reach." To one of his Shīʿa, a man named Mūsā b. Ḥabīb, he said: "O Mūsā, today you are entrusted with the Fāṭimid women." The accursed opponent Makhlad b. Kaydād had been born in the land of the Blacks at a place called Kawkawā.

Al-Mahdī—peace be upon him—carried out his daʿwa in the best manner and supported his dāʿīs throughout the lands. The earth shone with the light of its Lord and the lights of God became manifest from behind their veils. Al-Mahdī bi-llāh pointed to Muḥammad b. al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh, Commander of the Believers, proclaimed his clear excellence to the people of his daʿwa, delivered to him his trust, handed over his rank, and gave him the deposit God had entrusted to him for his sake and for the sake of all his descendants in it. He did not turn away from the truth in its proper place, but established it in its settled locus, proclaiming the unity of the walī of God and making known his noble station, as his grandfather Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—had done for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib on the day of Ghadīr when he announced his own approaching departure and openly established his successor.

Al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh was the light of God that manifested from the greatest of the veils and His proof through whom acknowledgment of excellence began. The ḥudūd of the daʿwa submitted to him and recognized that al-Mahdī bi-llāh was the best exemplar for them in relation to him. God's blessings be upon them both and upon their descendants and the chosen among their awliyāʾ.

Al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—had gathered abundant grain in al-Mahdiyya, fortified it, and filled it with wealth and men. Among those in whose hands were his funds and affairs was the servant Jawdhar, who had grown up upon purity and excellence, following his masters, guided by them, walking in their way without disdain for their walāya. Al-Mahdī and his son entrusted to him all of that because of what they knew of his excellent qualities and because in obedience to them he sought the face of God in rest and movement.

It is related that one day Jawdhar was sitting while a servant of the palace entered upon the master—peace be upon him—and came out, conveying to him the needs of people whom the Imam had ordered him to assist. The master—peace be upon him—said to that servant: "Go; may God bless you." The man went out frowning. Jawdhar looked at him and disliked his state. He asked him the reason. The man said: "I hoped our master would give me something by which I might improve the condition of my family, but he did not give me what I had hoped." Jawdhar said: "The blessing he invoked for you is greater than all the goods upon the earth." The man said: "What I hoped for would have pleased me more than that blessing."

Jawdhar said: "Would you sell me the blessing he invoked for you for ten mithqāls?" He said, "Yes." Jawdhar counted out ten mithqāls for him and required him to surrender the blessing through a valid and binding sale from which there would be no return, with no hidden intention or reservation. Jawdhar accepted what he had purchased and the two parted by mutual satisfaction.

The next day al-Mahdī—peace be upon him—summoned Jawdhar and asked him about what had happened. Jawdhar told him. The Imam said to him: "May God bless you and what is yours," and gave him one hundred mithqāls, for a good deed is repaid tenfold. That invocation and blessing remained with Jawdhar until after al-Mahdī he served al-Qāʾim, al-Manṣūr, and al-Muʿizz—God's blessings be upon them. He traveled with al-Muʿizz when he emigrated eastward and died on the road—may God sanctify his spirit.

When the foundations of the Mahdian daʿwa were firmly established—God's peace and blessings upon it—when the People of the Cave emerged from the cave of taqiyya, the appointed term came and the period ended. The Imam al-Mahdī bi-llāh delivered to his son al-Qāʾim his rank, gave him his deposit and trust, manifested his departure, and moved to the neighborhood of his Lord and to arrival before Him.

When al-Qāʾim—peace be upon him—wished to bury him beside the palace, no one was present with him at the edge of the grave when he intended to lower al-Mahdī bi-llāh—may God sanctify his spirit and bless him—except Jawdhar. He said: "O Jawdhar, it is not lawful that the Imam be buried by the Imam who follows him until the latter establishes a proof for himself. It is not lawful for me to entrust you with the trust to the exclusion of all creation until I have established my proof. God Most High says, 'Indeed We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains…'" He recited the verse.

Then he said to Jawdhar: "Come near me." He approached. The Imam said: "Give me your hand." He extended it. Al-Qāʾim said: "I take from you the covenant of God and His binding oath that you will conceal from me what I reveal and disclose to you." Jawdhar said: "Yes, my master—may God bless you." He said: "My son Ismāʿīl al-

Manṣūr is my hujja and my heir. Know his right and rank, conceal his affair and secret until I make it manifest, for there are those who intend wrongdoing toward him."

Jawdhar possessed tremendous service and fidelity to them, some of which is recorded in the book known as Sīrat Jawdhar concerning the four Imams—peace be upon them. Whoever wishes to know it may consult that well-known work. There is no power and no strength except through God; there is no Imam and no hujja except through divine support; there is no majesty and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Great.

Thus the Imam al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Mahdī—God's blessings, benedictions, and noblest greetings be upon him—arose. He was the fifth of the successors, corresponding to the bones among them, to his grandfather al-Ṣādiq, the seal of the Imams in that earlier sequence, and to the Messiah Jesus b. Mary—peace be upon him—the Spirit of God who raises the dead and heals the blind from birth and the leper. He was the root of light and the second of the manifest Imams, corresponding to the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in his station after the Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—and closely resembling him step for step. God placed the enduring Word in his descendants until the Day of Resurrection.

The Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—was the first Qāʾim in the Greatest Station during the cycle of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. The Imam al-Qāʾim bi-llāh was the first Qāʾim after al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him. He therefore possessed tremendous excellence and a noble station that most of the world was unable to comprehend. None truly knew him in his reality except the Imam al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—and the Imams among his descendants, just as none knew the Commander of the Believers in the reality of his knowledge except the Messenger of God and the Imams from his progeny.

Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī related to our master Imam Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn—peace be upon him—after he had commanded him to mention the appearance of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—to him in luminosity. He said: I was sitting one day with the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib when Salmān and Jundab—may God be pleased with them—entered. They greeted and sat. ʿAlī—peace be upon him—said: "Welcome to you both, two sincere friends who keep the covenant of our walāya. By my life, this knowledge is obligatory upon every believer, for no one completes true faith in me until he knows me with the reality of my luminosity. When he knows me through this description, God has tested his heart for faith, expanded his breast, and he has become a knowing one with insight. Whoever falls short of this is doubting and uncertain."

"O Salmān," he said, "Jundab said to you at this very hour: 'Come with me so that we may ask him about his knowledge in luminosity.'" Salmān said: "It happened exactly as you say."

ʿAlī—peace be upon him—said: "Knowledge of me in luminosity is knowledge of God. God says: 'They were commanded only to worship God, making the religion sincerely His, as ḥunafāʾ, to establish prayer, and to give zakāt; that is the upright religion.' He says: they were commanded only with tawḥīd, which is the purification of worship. 'Ḥunafāʾ' means acknowledgment of the prophethood of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. 'Establish prayer' means my walāya, for God says: 'Seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed it is burdensome except upon the humble.' The two are burdensome, because most people acknowledge the prophethood of Muḥammad, while few acknowledge my walāya except those who are humble."

"He likewise says: 'A deserted well and a lofty palace.' The palace is the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—and the well is I. They left my walāya deserted, by God. 'They give zakāt' means acknowledgment of the Imams from my progeny; they are the zakāt. Whoever completes this is upon the religion of the Qāʾim."

"I shall explain to you, Salmān and Jundab, with God's help. Muḥammad and I are one light from the light of God and one command from God. That light split into two halves. To the first half He said: 'Be Muḥammad'; to the second He said: 'Be ʿAlī.' Therefore the Messenger of God said: 'ʿAlī is from me and I am from him, and none conveys on my behalf except ʿAlī.'

"O Salmān and O Jundab, Muḥammad became the chosen Prophet of God and I became the waṣī of Muḥammad, the approved one. Muḥammad became the speaker and I became the silent one. Muḥammad became the warner and I became the guide. Muḥammad became the possessor of the Garden and I became the possessor of the Fire; I say to the Fire: this one is yours and this one is mine. Muḥammad became the possessor of mercy and I became the

possessor of the earthquake. Muḥammad became the possessor of indications and I became the possessor of signs. Muḥammad became the Seal of the Prophets and I became the Seal of the legatees."

"I destroyed the former generations. I am the Great Announcement concerning which they differ. Muḥammad became the possessor of the daʿwa and I became the possessor of the sword. I am the command from God who casts the Spirit from His command upon whomever He wills among His servants. The command is from the Spirit of God and that is not given except to a prophet and a waṣī. Whoever God gives from His Spirit, He distinguishes him from the people, raises him above ordinary life, and delegates power to him. He gives life and causes death, knows what was and what will be through that Spirit, knows what is in heaven, and descends to earth."

"O Salmān and O Jundab, Muḥammad became the Reminder and I became the Book, as God, mighty and majestic, says: 'God has sent down to you a Reminder, a Messenger.' And He says: 'We have sent down to you a Book.' God gave no one a command like His command when He said: 'O Messenger, convey what has been sent down to you from your Lord; if you do not, you have not conveyed His message, and God will protect you from the people.' He entrusted me and took my covenant. I am the Preserved Tablet, and God informed me of what is in it.

"O Salmān and O Jundab, Muḥammad is Yā-Sīn and I am the Wise Qurʾān. Muḥammad is Nūn and I am the Pen. Muḥammad is Ṭā-Hā and I am the Qurʾān; Muḥammad is the yellow ruby and I am the red ruby. There is no separation between me and Muḥammad. I am Muḥammad and Muḥammad is I; I am from him and he is from me, as in His saying: 'He let loose the two seas meeting together; between them is a barrier they do not transgress.' Muḥammad is 'God is Greater' and I am 'There is no god but God, the Greatest.' 'Which of the favors of your Lord will you two deny?'

"O Jundab and O Salmān, our dead do not die, our slain are not killed, we do not beget and are not begotten."

Jābir said: I kissed the ground before him out of reverence for what I heard and said: "My master, what I have heard you say has become difficult for us: your saying 'I destroyed the former generations,' and your saying, 'Our dead do not die and our slain are not killed.'"

He said: "O Jābir, the command is from God. God, mighty and majestic, says: 'He casts the Spirit from His command upon whomever He wills among His servants.' God commanded me to save Noah—peace be upon him—in His saying: 'When Our command came and the oven overflowed…' I saved him. And in His saying concerning the people of Lot: 'When Our command came, We turned it upside down…'

"As for my saying that our dead do not die, it is because they are from the Spirit of God; and our slain are not killed. I am the master of every believing man and believing woman among those who passed and those who remain, O Salmān and O Jundab. I was supported with the same Spirit by which the prophets were supported. I spoke upon the tongue of Jesus b. Mary in the cradle. Adam, Seth, Noah, Sām, Abraham, Ismāʿīl, Moses, Joshua, Jesus, Simon, and I are all one. Whoever sees me has seen them all."

"I am a servant among the servants of God, so do not call us lords. Say concerning our excellence whatever you wish, for we are the gates of God, His proofs, His trustees over His creation, His successors, the Imams of His religion, the face of God, His side, His command, and His path. Through us He punishes and through us He rewards. He chose us from among His creation, purified us, and selected us. If anyone were to say concerning this, 'Why? How? When? In what?' he would disbelieve, for He is not questioned concerning what He does, while they are questioned."

"O Salmān and O Jundab, whoever believes what I have said, explained, clarified, and interpreted is a believer whose heart God has tested for faith. If he distinguishes the outward and inward meanings of my speech, he is a knower with insight, mature and complete. Whoever doubts, becomes uncertain, denies, or stops is astray and deficient."

"O Salmān and O Jundab, I give life and cause death; I create and provide; I heal the blind from birth and the leper; and I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses, by permission of my Lord. Likewise the rightful Imams from my descendants, for we are all one thing appearing in every age. When God wills, we will; when God dislikes, we dislike. God has preferred us above many of His creation and has given us His messages so that His power and will may be magnified through us."

"He has given us what is higher, greater, and more immense than all this: He has given us the Greatest Name. If we wished through it, we could ascend to heaven; the sun, moon, stars, and beasts would obey us. Yet despite this we

eat and drink, walk in the markets, and do what we wish only by the command of God our Lord. We are honored servants who do not precede Him in speech and who act by His command."

"This is knowledge of me in luminosity. Hold fast to it with guidance and felicity, if God Most High wills."

This is his saying—peace be upon him. We have transmitted it so that knowers may understand his standing with the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—and that it is like the standing of the Imam al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh with al-Mahdī bi-llāh—God's blessings be upon them all. Light is one and manifestation is one; the essence is one; the signs bear witness to that. "The word of your Lord has been completed in truth and justice."

Since al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh resembled the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in the cycle of manifestation, his state was mixed with distress because of the appearance of the accursed opponent Makhlad b. Kaydād, Abū Yazīd the Dajjāl—may God curse him—just as opponents had appeared in the time of the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him.

The one who assisted the crooked Abū Yazīd—may God curse him—in his rising was Abū ʿAmmār the blind teacher. The accursed man held the doctrine of the Khawārij and was from the Ḥarūrīs. He took control over people, spread corruption in the earth, and his darkness, might, and power continued to appear until he reached the vicinity of al-Mahdiyya, to the very point where al-Mahdī's arrow—peace be upon him—had fallen when he had indicated how far the enemy of God would reach.

Abū Yazīd was an accursed Ibāḍī who dissociated himself from the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—and considered lawful the shedding of the blood of his descendants and the captivity of their women and children. He encamped with his armies around al-Mahdiyya and besieged it. Al-Qāʾim—peace be upon him—ordered the gates closed. War became severe, sedition blazed, and the trial grew tremendous.

Al-Qāʾim—peace be upon him—brought forth the stores of food that he and al-Mahdī—peace be upon him—had prepared and spent them upon the army and the weak among the people of the city. The accursed opponent ordered his army, most of whom were Berbers, to press the siege. What followed became among the greatest trials of the manifest Imams and a sign of the succession of opposition that had accompanied the friends of God in every age.

The armies of the accursed opponent guarded the roads. Whoever fell into their hands they killed and plundered, and they took captive his household. Their excess reached such a point that they slit open the bellies of men and the wombs of women searching for hidden gold and pearls. They sank into every form of enormity and unlawful practice. The filthy accursed man then became ever more extreme, corrupt, and rebellious. Among the practices attributed to him was that, within a single hour, he would contract unions with two or three virgin sisters. His power increased until he held much of the Maghrib.

He thus stood in the position of the opponents of al-Ṣādiq, the opponents of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—and the opponents of Jesus, the Spirit of God. When the appointed term approached and the respite drew to its end, our master al-Qāʾim entrusted his obedient and devoted servant Jawdhar with the covenant of al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him. Jawdhar delivered it to the elders of the daʿwa, and Ṣalawāt read it to them, for he was a possessor of rank. Ṣalawāt then returned it to Jawdhar, and Jawdhar returned it to our master. A second time his master ordered him to bring it to them, and Ṣalawāt again read it and returned it. They did not know our master's purpose in this, nor the secret that he had entrusted to Jawdhar on the day al-Mahdī—peace be upon him—was buried and on which he had covenanted with him concerning the rank of his son al-Manṣūr and his designation.

Jawdhar had thus been entrusted with the secret of al-Manṣūr. For this reason the covenant could not be disclosed to the ḥudūd except through Jawdhar. On the third occasion he brought it to them and asked them how they regarded his own standing with his masters, what they believed concerning him, and how greatly they trusted him. They told him what they knew of the right he possessed with his masters. He then said to them: "Our master commanded me to bring this covenant so that Ṣalawāt might read it to you concerning his son Ismāʿīl. Our master al-Qāʾim has appointed our master al-Manṣūr Ismāʿīl." They prostrated and obeyed. Al-Qāʾim designated him and ordered him to confront Abū Yazīd, the accursed Dajjāl.

Al-Manṣūr bi-llāh—peace be upon him—appeared with the blessed army and encamped in al-Shaʿb. He drove Abū Yazīd away from the prayer-ground. Thus arose al-Manṣūr bi-llāh Ismāʿīl b. Muḥammad Abī al-Qāsim—God's blessings be upon him, his fathers, and the chosen ones among his descendants—by the command and revelation of

God. He was the sixth of the caliphs, corresponding in the bodily analogy to flesh; he corresponded to his ancestor Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar, the sixth of the atimmāʾ, and to his ancestor Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—the sixth of the lawgiving speakers. It was his prerogative to manifest against every opponent who fought him, warred against him, separated from him, or set himself against him the dazzling miracle and manifest power that had been manifested through his predecessors. He was strengthened by victory and by the support of his grandfather Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā—may God bless him and his family.

The Muslim heir and al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh remained in al-Mahdiyya. Al-Manṣūr—peace be upon him—drove Abū Yazīd toward Qayrawān and encamped at one side of the city, while the opponent encamped on the other. Letters went from al-Qāʾim to his son al-Manṣūr, and letters containing the news returned from al-Manṣūr to al-Qāʾim.

On a Friday the opponent advanced with a vast and noisy army that he had gathered and prepared, intending to fall suddenly upon al-Manṣūr's encampment. They came near enough that the two armies could see one another. Al-Manṣūr—peace be upon him—was seated upon a pulpit in the middle of the camp. His soldiers pressed him to mount, saying that the enemy had come close. He ordered that his horses be watered. He then ordered that his mount be saddled, without agitation or haste. He mounted and the two forces met. Many were slain between them. The battle of that day was tremendous. Al-Manṣūr attacked them like an enraged lion with Dhū l-Fiqār, striking them as his grandfather ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—had struck the unbelievers.

The army of the Dajjāl was numerous. The army of our master—peace be upon him—gave way until only about fifty horsemen remained with him, while the defeated men of his army went toward Qayrawān. He and those who remained with him continued to charge the enemy until they were exhausted and few in number. Then the bearer of the parasol, fearing for al-Manṣūr, lowered it. Al-Manṣūr ordered him to raise it again. Al-Manṣūr then charged the unbelievers, broke them, and turned their first ranks upon their last. They fled. His troops returned from Qayrawān, and a great multitude of the accursed one's army was killed.

The report of the victory was written and sent. Meanwhile Jawdhar's replies came secretly, informing al-Manṣūr that our master al-Qāʾim—peace be upon him—had formally placed Jawdhar in charge of the people of al-Mahdiyya and of the inhabitants of the two palaces. Jawdhar kept concealed from them the fact that al-Qāʾim had departed this world. No one knew of it except Jawdhar. Al-Manṣūr wrote to him that he should continue concealing it and commanded him to exercise the utmost prudence. The headings of the letters continued to bear the name of al-Qāʾim—peace be upon him—and letters were issued by Jawdhar in the name of al-Qāʾim, while those from al-Manṣūr were likewise written under that name.

Then al-Manṣūr pursued the accursed man, destroyed his armies, and God gave him power over the accursed one. We have recounted those events elsewhere in this book. Al-Manṣūr—peace be upon him—returned to his settled residence. During the time that remained to him he sent his armies against the lands of the Byzantines and throughout the Maghrib. He opened cities; necks were humbled and obeyed. After he had returned from the war against the Dajjāl, whom God caused him to overcome on a Friday, he publicly announced the departure of his father—peace be upon him—and established the daʿwa in his own name.

He singled out Jawdhar, the servant of himself and his fathers, and brought him to the furthest limit of knowledge. He placed him over al-Mahdiyya and over the princes from among the descendants of al-Mahdī, al-Qāʾim, and others. All of them were beneath his authority. The guiding daʿwa became firmly established through the Imam al-Manṣūr. He disseminated the sciences, restored the ḥudūd of the daʿwa and its ordinances after God had delivered the believers from the devils of the lawgiving speakers and from the people of the great conflicts.

Our master al-Manṣūr possessed miracles that were famous, by which the daʿwa was established and by which people were guided. Through him the proofs were set up, the sharīʿa and the religion were upheld, and his radiant lights confronted falsehood. He is the greatest light of God, and his station is the most noble and generous station. That light does not cease to move through the ages, appearing through human veils and disclosing from them its lights.

Al-Imam al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said to al-Mufaḍḍal: "O Mufaḍḍal, make your thoughts sound and your sight will become sound. Whatever you say concerning God applies to the subtleties of His veils, and whatever you say concerning us applies to the eloquent ones among our Shīʿa. It does not harm you, when you know God and His stations, not to know the people and not to be known by them. We are the utmost goal of whoever reflects among

you and the meaning sought by whoever thinks. O Mufaḍḍal, whoever knows the sites of the Attribute reaches the resting-place of knowledge. The Attribute is His illuminating light leading to knowledge of Him and to the stations of His prophecy among His creation. Those are His dwellings in which His lamps rise with their light."

He then recited: "The likeness of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp…" He said: "O Mufaḍḍal, do you know the niche? It is the human form through which He veils Himself from creation and through whose speaking Attribute He addresses them. The lamp is the shadow-veiled form through which that walī is veiled because of the gentleness and compassion of the exalted rank for humanity. He is the discloser of the light while being in human form. As for the exalted veil, it is above the shadow-veiled form, and the shadow-veiled form is beneath it. The star that is kindled from the blessed tree is the light of the Essence, a meaning receiving supply from the tree that is the light of unity."

The meaning of the blessed tree, neither eastern nor western, is that it is not confined to one of the directions by which bodies are bounded. Its oil almost gives light even though no fire touches it: taʾyīd reaches the chosen one before outward teaching touches him. "Light upon light": the light of the nāṣṣ is joined to the light of the manṣūṣ, and the guidance is continuous from one rank to the one following it. Thus the words of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—show how the Imam appears through veils while the light is one and uninterrupted.

Al-Manṣūr—peace be upon him—then designated his son, the Imam al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, and delivered the command to him. Al-Muʿizz was the seventh of the successors, the seventh of two heptads, and the fourth of a sequence of four. The dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God sanctify his spirit—explained that in the cycles there are two foundations and one completer in each set of five eras, and that each order is fulfilled by the one in whom the preceding meanings are gathered.

Among those eras are the era of Abraham, then that of Moses, then that of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—then the era of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, and then the era of al-Muʿizz. In each, what had been dispersed before it was gathered and made manifest in a more complete way. Al-Muʿizz therefore manifested the sciences of tanzīl and taʾwīl, clarified the ranks and their relations, and disclosed more of the hidden knowledge because his age was nearer to the latter time and to the great unveiling.

Among the gates of al-Muʿizz was al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān. Al-Muʿizz commanded him to compose Daʿāʾim al-Islām and the books in which the outward prescriptions of the sharīʿa were gathered and ordered. The scholars of the outward law acknowledged the force of his knowledge, while those of the daʿwa received through him the ordinances together with their inner correspondences.

Al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—resolved to migrate toward the East after the state had become firmly established in the Maghrib. He wrote to Kāfūr in Egypt commanding that a palace be prepared for him. He sent one of his Shīʿa on a mule and instructed him that wherever the mule stopped would be the place of the palace. The animal stopped at the chosen place. When the workmen began digging, they found foundations that had already been laid and remains indicating that the site had long before been prepared for what was now to be built upon it. Thus the palace was erected there.

The matter resembled what had occurred to the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—when he entered Medina and allowed his she-camel to go where she had been commanded, and at the place where she knelt the Prophet's mosque and dwelling were established. The outward occurrence followed the inner decree.

Kāfūr died while the palace was still being completed. Al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—then gathered the leading men of Egypt, its soldiers, merchants, and notables, and addressed them from the exalted presence. Among what he said to them was: "Whoever knows me knows me; whoever does not know me, let him know that I am the first and I am the last, I am the manifest and I am the hidden—not by separation from my forefathers nor by a claim independent of them, but because the light is one, the command is one, and the succession is one."

He continued to admonish them regarding obedience and walāya, and to warn them against opposition. He said in meaning: "The first belongs to us and the last belongs to us. Where then will you go? Will you worship another lord? Or will you treat as equals those who are beneath the appointed ranks? Know that My stratagem is firm." He told them that the appointed term would come, that respite should not deceive them, and that the most excellent speech and most effective admonition were obedience to him, walāya for him, following his command, and holding fast to the firm handhold that does not break.

He then said: “God knows my walāya and the people of my obedience, among those already mentioned of the friends and among those who accompanied me and those who preceded them. Your enemy is before you, and I am setting out with you toward the land of the East. Their common people are better than their rulers. Do not take intimate companionship with the people of opposition; do not eat with them, drink with them, greet them, or leave among them young or old when open war is imposed. Their blood and wealth have become permitted because of what their hands have sent ahead, and I am not unjust to the servants.”

He then departed carrying with him three hundred camel-loads of gold. For that reason one of the gates became known as the Gate of Gold. Jawdhar, the servant of our master al-Mahdī bi-llāh and of the Imams—peace be upon them—died on the journey. Our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—prayed over him and invoked mercy upon him.

Al-Muʿizz reached Egypt after the death of Kāfūr. He visited Kāfūr’s grave and invoked mercy upon him because of his obedience. Is walāya anything other than obedience? When he reached the exalted palace and entered it, the man whom he had previously sent showed him the ancient traces that had been found and told him that Kāfūr had ordered the builders to construct upon what they found without changing the foundations. Al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—said: “That is correct. We have dwelt here for a very long time.”

He settled in the exalted palace, opened the lands, brought the regions into obedience, and spread the daʿwa and disseminated it. He acted as those before him had acted in their migrations, for every seventh, every fourth, and every tenth has a place of migration in which he takes refuge and from which he establishes the ḥudūd. Al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—did not fall short of the duty. He had enjoyed a tranquil state in the Maghrib, free of major opponents, seditions, evils, and trials; but in the East divine secrets unfolded whose wisdom is known only to the Imams—God’s blessings be upon them all.

Affairs proceeded in their accustomed course until the opponent known as “the renegade”—may God curse him—appeared in the East, in the land of Persia. He advanced to Cairo and besieged it. The walī of God ordered the gates of Cairo closed. The siege lasted forty days. Each night the walī of God ordered that one thousand mithqāls be given for hospitality.

On the last evening of the forty, he again ordered one thousand dinars to be sent and commanded that they observe what became of the one for whom this hospitality was being given. He then said that the opponent would die after two hours of the night had passed, while ten hours of the night remained. The opponent instructed his son that when his final hour came he should place him in his litter and carry him away. Exactly as the Imam had said, he died; his son carried his corpse toward Syria.

Our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—had previously designated his son, the Imam al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh Nizār b. Maʿadd, and delivered his command to him. He informed him that he himself would depart on the following evening at Tinnīs, for he had intended to pursue the opponent after his removal, and he instructed al-ʿAzīz—peace be upon him—to carry his body to al-Qāhira al-Muʿizziyya.

When the renegade opponent—may God curse him—died and his son carried him in his litter toward Syria, al-Muʿizz and his son al-ʿAzīz—peace be upon them—continued their journey for the remainder of that night and the next day. When evening came at Tinnīs, al-Muʿizz entered the mosque to perform the sunset prayer. For a brief time those around him were occupied away from him. When they returned to him, he had manifested concealment in the miḥrāb. Al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh—peace be upon him—carried him in his litter to Cairo.

The Imam ordered that those present bear witness from first to last, so that both incapacity and miracle might be manifested. When the Imams manifest incapacity, that belongs to the nāsūt through which they appear and which is bounded by bodily limits. When they manifest miracle, that is the act of the one united with them in support—the First Intellect, from which the lights are manifested. May God keep us firm in obedience to them and make us among those who fulfill their commands according to their capacity.

Then arose the Imam al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh Nizār—God’s blessings be upon him and upon the pure members of his family before and after him. He was the first of the third heptad, called the luminous cycle; the first of its witnesses, corresponding to the seminal extract. He corresponded to his ancestor ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, the first of the concealed successors, to al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, the first of the atimmāʾ in that sequence, and to Adam, the first of the lawgiving speakers—God’s blessings be upon them all.

This third cycle is nobler in degree and more manifest in command, sciences, miracles, and ordinances than the cycles before it because of its nearness to the Last Day and to the possessor of the Resurrection—peace be upon his mention. Whenever a great station from among the noble stations arises, its manifestation becomes more actual because of its nearness to him.

The Imam al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh—peace be upon him—therefore stood with the religion of truth in the finest manner. He made the sciences clear and established the ordinances. His standards and banners were spread. The days of his caliphate proceeded in the finest order and fullest completion. The memory of his opponents was abased while the command of his daʿwa was exalted. He clarified the path of right guidance and delivered his friends from the injustice of the people of obstinacy. He established his ḥudūd and made manifest his taʾyīd. His word rose, his daʿwa became mighty, his wisdom became manifest, and his glory shone with the lights of wisdom.

His governor in Damascus rebelled against him, so he went out against him in person, seized control over him, and later pardoned him. His justice appeared throughout the kingdom. He repelled the Frankish unbelievers from the lands of Islam and protected the domains of the religion from being violated. His excellence became evident, his justice spread, the religion and its people were strengthened through him, and through him the manifest excellence became clear to the knowers.

It is related that a group of his dāʿīs once gathered before him and prostrated between his hands except for one man among them, a Sindī. Al-ʿAzīz said to him: “Why do you not do as your companions have done?” The Sindī replied: “Through what came from you I knew you, and by a light from you I prostrated. Glory be to me, glory be to me! I am you and you are I; there is no difference except the precedence of rank.”

Al-ʿAzīz—peace be upon him—said: “O Sindī, the people are like a hundred camels among which you can scarcely find one fit to be ridden.” Let no one imagine or believe that the Sindī was claiming the station of his master or claiming the excellence which belonged to him. Rather, the Sindī meant the veil through which his master had manifested himself to him. He saw him according to the measure of knowledge he had attained. He saw in that veil what was like himself in the level of indication and expression, at the point his own understanding had reached, just as one of the dāʿīs said in explanation of such matters.

May God grant us success in following His guidance. When a person looks into a mirror, does he see there anything except his own form? Thus that Sindī saw only the form corresponding to his own degree, and described only what was like it. Had the hidden essence of his master and his dazzling lights been manifested to him, had the first light united with pre-eternity appeared to him without veil, his incapacity to look upon it would have overwhelmed him and he would have stood halted and bewildered before it.

Our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—said in a noble rescript addressed to the Qarmaṭian: “O people, when God—mighty and majestic—wills a matter, He decrees it; and when He decrees it, He brings it to completion. Among what He decreed before formation was that He made us specters and lights, spirits possessing authority and powers in potentiality, at a time when there was no built heaven, no spread earth, no shining sun, no traveling moon, no covering night, no horizon of habitation, no revolving sphere, and no moving star. We are the first of the thought and the last of the work, according to a measured decree and a command established in pre-eternity.

“When the affair reached completion and the determination became sound, and when God willed the arising of originated things, the bringing forth of the mothers from the prime matters, and the establishing of nature, shadow, motion, and rest, there came to be—according to the wisdom that preceded in His knowledge—what you see of revolving spheres, moving stars, night and day, signs and astonishing powers in the horizons, and what is found in the regions and in souls of genera, forms, and species: dense and subtle, existing and absent, manifest and hidden, sensed and touched, near and distant, descending and ascending.

“All of that was for us and on our account, and an indication toward us. He brought forth from the treasury of hidden knowledge and stored wisdom Adam and Eve, male and female, as two parents for the establishment of human progeny and as a sign of His mighty power. He joined them, and offspring were born and numbers multiplied. We passed through pure loins and purified wombs; whenever one of us appeared, power and knowledge became manifest, until the matter reached the final ancestor and the most excellent father, the master of the messengers and Imam of the Godfearing, Aḥmad and Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. Through him guidance was completed, the favors of God became beautiful and manifest, the polytheists were destroyed, the people of error were

broken, truth was made manifest, truthfulness was established, unity was proclaimed, and the One was worshiped as the Self-Sufficient."

"At that time the idols fell, Islam was firmly established, faith spread, magic and sacrifice to false gods were abolished, tyranny and unbelief were defeated, and the Qurʾan was brought as a witness with truth and proof. In it is the report of what was and the news of what will be until the appointed time. It clarifies what had been contained in earlier books and scrolls, as an explanation of every thing, guidance, mercy, light, and an illuminating lamp.

"All of that is among our signs and the things placed before us, causes for the manifestation of our command, guidances, signs, testimonies, holy felicities, divine and timeless realities, individual and pre-existent indications. No lawgiving speaker spoke and no prophet was sent without indicating us, alluding to us, and directing toward us in his book, in the purport of his discourse, in the beacons of his signs, and in the symbols of his speech. There is no existent and no non-existent, no manifest and no hidden, except that its meaning is known by one who hears the call, witnesses, and sees from the Highest Assembly.

"Whoever among you is heedless or forgetful, whoever goes astray or is led astray, let him look into the earlier books and the revealed scrolls, let him contemplate the Qurʾan and what it contains of explanation, and let him ask the People of Remembrance if he does not know. God—mighty and majestic—has commanded asking: 'Ask the People of Remembrance if you do not know.' He also said: 'Why does not a group from every party go forth to gain understanding in religion and warn their people when they return to them, so that perhaps they may beware?' And He said: 'He made it a word enduring in his progeny, so that perhaps they may return.' And He said: 'Some of them are descendants of others.' And He said: 'He has prescribed for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah, and what We revealed to you, and what We enjoined upon Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: establish the religion and do not be divided concerning it.' There are many examples of this in the Book of God; were it not for length, we would cite many of them.

"He indicated us and informed concerning us in His saying concerning the Light: 'The likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass; the glass is as though it were a glittering star, kindled from a blessed tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil almost gives light even though no fire touches it—light upon light; God guides to His light whom He wills; and God sets forth similitudes for mankind so that perhaps they may remember.' He also said, concerning the excellence of the excellent grandfather and complete father, Muḥammad and ʿAlī, indicating our exalted degree and lofty command: 'We have given you seven of the oft-repeated and the mighty Qurʾan.' Thus He indicated, alluded, explained, and made clear, in secret and in open declaration.

"He set forth similitudes for mankind that perhaps they might remember. He said: 'Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are signs for people of understanding.' And He said: 'We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.' If one would reflect and compare what is in the horizons and what is within the souls—composed forms, signs and marks, the precision of the invention of genera and species, the human forms in the world of origination, and the higher traces—he would find testimony everywhere.

"The letters of the alphabet bear witness; measured calculation bears witness; what the years gather of seasons, days, and months bears witness; the arrangement of the Qurʾan in its portions, sevenths, meanings, and structures bears witness; the places of the earlier laws and firmly established sunnas bear witness; the word of sincerity, in its divisions, articulations, and letters, bears witness; and what is in the earth of regions and islands, land and sea, plain and mountain, length and breadth, above and below, bears witness. The seven governing stars, the seven days, the lawgiving speakers and their legatees, the emergence of the religious laws and the sunnas and ḥudūd, and the remaining numerical orders—units and odd numbers, threes, fours, sevens, twelves, tens, hundreds, and thousands—all gather and encompass what they encompass as a just witness, a decisive speech, a wisdom of the Wise, and an ordering of the Knowing.

"There is no god but He. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names and the highest similitudes. 'If you count the favor of God, you will not enumerate it.' 'If all the trees upon the earth were pens and the sea, with seven seas after it, supplied the ink, the words of God would not be exhausted.' Know, O people—whoever has a heart or gives ear while witnessing—that the timeless words of God, His complete mysteries, His named originated beings, His dazzling lights, His radiant signs, and His effective decrees do not depart from any age, nor is any age empty of them.

“God says that there is no secret counsel of three but He is their fourth, nor of five but He is their sixth, nor less than that nor more but He is with them wherever they are; then on the Day of Resurrection He will inform them of what they did. God knows all things. The trumpet has sounded, the oven has overflowed, and the warner has come before a severe punishment. Whoever wishes, let him see; whoever wishes, let him reflect. Nothing is incumbent upon the Messenger except clear conveyance.”

This is the end of what our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—said in his noble rescript. That Sindī—may God sanctify his spirit—even though his degree was high and he was counted among the excellent and elevated men, had seen only what his master manifested to him through one of his veils. Knowledge of what lay beyond that veil of the lights of the unseen was hidden from him. Imaginations cannot even knock upon the door of perceiving that farthest station. Whoever has outwardly reached the degree of taʾyīd still finds before him a farther station and a more distant place, while what is beneath the Imam’s encompassing knowledge is nearer than the jugular vein. Glory be to the Originator, to whom imaginations cannot ascend. There is no god but He, exalted above the perception of intellects and understandings.

When the term of al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was fulfilled and the appointed time came, he surrendered the command to the walī of God, al-Manṣūr al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh, and designated him by the command of God Most High. Thus arose the Imam al-Manṣūr al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh—peace be upon him—by God’s command and revelation. He was the second of the witnesses in the third spiritual cycle, corresponding to the drop of seed; he corresponded to the second of the concealed successors, to the second of the Imams in the corresponding sequence, and to Noah, the second of the lawgiving speakers.

His age therefore resembled the cycle of Noah in trial, testing, and the flood of perplexity. Extraordinary actions appeared from him which bewildered minds and confused those who looked only at the outward form of matters. Some people were established through submission; others were shaken because they measured the Imam by their own imaginations rather than receiving the meaning from the appointed ḥudūd.

Among the reports transmitted from his time is that a group of opponents used to gather in a mosque and revile the people of the daʿwa with the harshest insults, slandering them continually. Their greatest hatred was directed toward the Imam al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh—peace be upon him. A believer heard them and was inflamed with grief as though standing upon burning coals. He possessed no power against them except supplication to his master. They continued until they had performed the night prayer and remained for some time in conversation, returning again and again to their abuse. Then they went to their homes, while that believer remained in the mosque.

At dawn they came again, prayed, and returned to their insults and slanders. The believer did not cease calling upon God against them and supplicating his master to bring humiliation upon them and to cause the curse to descend upon them. He grieved that he had no strength to defeat them and no power to take vengeance upon them. While he was in that state, the noble person of the Imam al-Ḥākim appeared. None of them failed to recognize him. He entered the mosque.

The opponents were twelve men. Each rose with his knife, and each began striking the man beside him, imagining that he was striking the Imam. They stabbed one another until they had killed one another and lay fallen in the mosque—may God curse them. The believer went out from the mosque and found the walī of God—peace be upon him—standing there holding the reins of a dark horse. He said: “My master, what is this?” He replied: “You called us, and we answered you.” Then he mounted and departed.

Another of the wonders related from him concerned a man from Egypt who intended to perform the pilgrimage. He possessed a thousand mithqāls of gold, counted, weighed, and sealed in a purse of brocade which he had sewn with his own hand, marked with his sign, and closed with his seal. He deposited it in trust with a judge in Egypt whose outward appearance was one of piety, asceticism, and chastity, and then departed upon the pilgrimage.

The judge flattened the purse carefully, removed the gold mithqāls, and replaced them with silver equal to them in number and weight. He summoned a skillful mender and ordered him to sew up the place where the purse had been opened with the finest stitching possible, paying him generously. The mender did so, and the judge returned the purse to the condition in which its owner had entrusted it to him.

When the pilgrim returned from the pilgrimage, he came to the judge seeking his deposit. The judge brought him into his house, gave the purse to him, and said: “Do you recognize your seal and mark?” He said: “Yes.” He thanked

the judge and praised him. He took the purse home; when need led him to open it, he found all the mithqāls to be silver. He cried out in distress, and the matter became grave in his eyes. He said: “If I demand it from him, he will demand two witnesses to testify that I deposited gold with him. He will certainly say: ‘You left with me nothing but a sealed purse, whose contents I did not know, and I returned it to you exactly as it was.’”

He resolved to complain to the walī of God—peace be upon him. It was among the noble customs of the Imam to sit at one of the palace windows until a quarter of the night had passed and distribute alms to whoever cried out to him, each according to what he knew of that person’s entitlement. That night the man went forward and stood among those seeking charity. He cried: “I seek aid through God and through you, O refuge of those seeking protection!” He threw up to him a purse containing mithqāls and said: “I have been wronged; give me victory.” He was told: “Return in the morning, if God wills.”

At dawn he went to the Gate of the Imamate and found that the Imam—peace be upon him—had ordered someone to await his arrival. The attendant asked: “Are you the wronged man?” He said: “Yes.” He was admitted to the walī of God and kissed the ground before him. The walī of God ordered the purse to be taken up and told him to go home, promising to give him what was his, if God willed.

When night came, the walī of God entered the place where he slept. It was the custom that three chamber-servants divided the night among themselves. When the master removed his garments to sleep, he left his handkerchief spread upon one corner of his chair. The chamber-servant closed the doors and inner doors, lowered the curtains, and the candles remained burning. Suddenly a wind moved through the Imam’s chamber and lifted the handkerchief. One edge fell into the flame of a candle and burned. The servant rushed to it and extinguished it, but a portion had already been consumed. He became terrified and resolved to flee because of his fear and shame before his master.

At the beginning of the second watch he came out of the gate of the exalted palace carrying the damaged handkerchief and intending to throw himself into the Nile. In one of the streets he met a friend who saw him anxious and terrified and asked him what had happened. He told him the story. His friend said: “Do not be troubled. Give me the handkerchief. I shall give it to a neighbor of ours who mends garments. He will restore it for you exactly as required, if God wills, and will bring it to you in the last third of the night. Do not tell him where the damage occurred.” He gave it to him together with the payment and returned.

At the appointed time the servant waited at the gate until his friend came with the handkerchief. He took it and examined it. So subtle was the workmanship that he could not tell where the tear had been. He went back into the palace and placed it where his master had left it. In the morning the walī of God dressed. He sent for the chamber-servant and said: “You have no sin and no offense. You are safe. Tell me: who mended this handkerchief?” The servant related the story. The Imam said: “Do not relate what we have learned and do not tell what we have done. Ours is the command before and after. Tell me where the mender is.”

The servant said that his friend had given it to a neighbor. The Imam ordered that the mender be brought. When he arrived, the Imam ordered that the stolen purse be produced and said to the mender: “This purse was opened, the gold was taken from it, and silver was placed in it, and you repaired it. Tell me who gave it to you.” The mender became afraid and informed him that the owner of the silver was the judge who had held the deposit. The judge was summoned.

When the judge arrived, the Imam said to him: “By the truth We have seized you, and by witnesses We have brought the proof against you. It is the same to Us whether one of you conceals his speech or proclaims it, whether he hides by night or goes forth by day. What led you to consume the wealth of the Muslims?” When the judge saw the mender, he knew that the matter had been established against him. He begged for safety. He went away and brought the same gold mithqāls, complete in number and weight, and took back the silver. The Imam removed him from the judgeship.

The walī of God gave the pilgrim his property in full. Everyone departed from his presence, and the Imam forbade the mender from ever again participating in anything similar. This affair became famous and the miracle became manifest. The friends understood from it the hidden secret, while the common people understood according to what they could grasp. Had the Imam taken the judge’s property without proof, the ignorant would have said that this was contrary to the truth. Instead, he conducted the matter by the form of truthfulness, established justice, and judged according to the sharīʿa, while causing the wind to carry the handkerchief to the flame, causing the chamber-

servant to flee with it, and causing the friend to lead him to the mender. Thus the wisdom was completed, the favor became manifest, the proof was established, justice encompassed all, excellence appeared, and decisive judgment was carried out: “Your Lord is not unjust to the servants.”

In his age there occurred a flood in which many people were destroyed because they turned aside from the path of faith. He manifested the sword, stood by it, destroyed his enemies, and caused his friends to become manifest. His miracles and signs were established.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—described the meaning of this in his Epistle of the Smiles of Glad Tidings. He said in substance: “When I came as an emigrant to the thresholds of the Prophetic Presence and as a visitor to the ʿAlid court, I saw the sky covered by an encompassing cloud and the people beneath a tremendous trial. The covenant regarding the earlier ordinances had been broken, and because of what their hands had earned they had turned away from the friends of God. The custom of convening the assemblies of wisdom, which had flowed through beneficence in former times, had been abandoned. The high among them had become confused and the low had fallen into perplexity.

“I saw among the friends of the guiding daʿwa—may God spread its lights—and among those who had grown under the protection of the Imamate and were people of its walāya conditions that would turn the forelocks white. Their perplexity at the causes that had taken bodily form before them was something from which only the people of hypocrisy and disobedience are destroyed. On that day they surged against one another. Each considered his companion to be in error; corrupted thoughts played with some of them and destructive whisperings assailed them. They did not know what clear smoke had overshadowed them or what manifest trial had befallen them. Some of them went far into exaggeration, while others turned back upon their heels, abandoning the protection of religion and its firm handhold. The pillars of the belief of a few were shaken, although they had originally accepted the religion by choice and deliberate seeking.”

He continued: “Which Imam has ever appeared without actions appearing from him that bewilder minds and make purposes obscure because their wisdom is hidden? What flood could be greater than what overwhelmed the believers? Is it anything other than a trial through which the sinner is destroyed and the truthful person is made to grow? The occurrence of what had been foretold and its agreement with the earlier witnesses is itself the standing of truth and the harmony of the signs of truth. May God preserve us and the community of believers upon obedience and submission. He is Compassionate and Merciful.”

This is his statement—may God exalt his sanctity. What flood could be greater than the flood manifested by the second of the witnesses, whose age corresponded to the cycle of Noah, the second of the lawgiving speakers? What ark, when that flood occurred, could be more saving than adherence to the dāʿīs and ḥudūd raised within his daʿwa, who established souls upon a sound belief in his walāya without exaggeration and without deficiency, and gave them drink from the spring of reality in which there is neither bitterness nor muddiness? Such was what our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—set forth in The Smiles of Glad Tidings and in his other books, by which souls are made upright upon the straight path of walāya and firmness.

The friends of God—peace be upon them—manifest miracles, disclose signs, and clarify proofs. At times they bring dazzling miracles which are the act of the Creator through what He has joined to His originated being; the ignorant person is overwhelmed and the one inclined toward exaggeration speaks beyond the proper limit. At other times they manifest incapacity before people through their bodily condition and their participation in natural creation, so that those inclined toward deficiency fall short and become perplexed. Whoever among their friends knows them with true knowledge understands the intended meaning: he looks at their human forms, which resemble bodies subject to decay, and he transcends them beyond what belongs to perishability, pointing instead to the Intellect united with them in taʾyīd, from which radiance and light appear.

We have already mentioned Salmān al-Fārisī’s prostration before the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—and that his prostration was because of the light he saw between the Prophet’s eyes. May God make us firm in obedience to them with the finest firmness and not make us among the people of exaggeration and deficiency, who come to an evil end and are returned because of that to the lowest state. He is the Protector and has power over it.

Among the innumerable miracles manifested by the Imam al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh was the affair of Abū Rakwa, the accursed opponent from the Maghrib, who arrived with a great host around al-Qāhira al-Muʿizziyya. The walī of God ordered the gates to remain closed for several days. He then ordered the commander of the armies to go out

against him with twelve thousand cavalrymen. He instructed him not to alarm the enemy, for the enemy would withdraw from Cairo when the victorious army came out and would encamp at Biʾr al-Daraj. When the enemy encamped there, the commander was to make his own camp at Biʾr al-Rifāq. The commander did so. He encamped at Biʾr al-Rifāq, while the opponent withdrew from him until he encamped at Biʾr al-Daraj.

The walī of God—peace be upon him—had said to the commander of the armies: "Do not be deceived. When a black and violent wind arises and then clears, send scouts to the camp of the people to look at the palm tree beside Biʾr al-Daraj. If the wind has broken it into three pieces and its crown lies toward the west, pursue the people and kill them before the deserts scatter them and the seas drown them. If the palm tree has broken into two pieces and its crown lies toward the east, then go back to Cairo and enter it."

The commander waited until a violent wind arose, uprooting trees and darkening the horizons until a man could scarcely see his own hand when he extended it. When it cleared, he sent someone to inspect the palm tree in the enemy encampment. It had broken into three pieces and its crown lay toward the west. When his scout returned with this information, the victorious army mounted and fell upon the camp of the opponents, who numbered one hundred thousand or more. They killed, took booty, and stripped them over the distance of many days' journey. They pursued Abū Rakwa, the accursed one.

The walī of God—peace be upon him—remained in a flourishing state whose borders were illuminated. He manifested miracles and clarified signs until the appointed term came and the respite ended. He designated his son, the Imam al-Ẓāhir ʿAlī b. al-Manṣūr—God's blessings be upon him—and delivered the command to him. Then he manifested concealment—God's blessings be upon him.

Thus arose the Imam al-Ẓāhir li-Iʿzāz Dīn Allāh ʿAlī b. al-Manṣūr—God's blessings be upon him, his fathers, and the chosen ones among his descendants—by the designation of his father and his delivery of the command to him. He was the third of the witnesses, corresponding to the clot, and corresponding to the third of the concealed successors; to ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, the third of the atimmāʾ in the corresponding sequence; and to Abraham the Friend, the third of the lawgiving speakers—God's blessings and peace be upon them all.

He stood with the Imamate in the finest manner, and fortunate nights and days accompanied him. He disseminated the sciences and made them manifest, purified and illuminated souls and intellects, established the ḥudūd, and brought people forth from nonexistence into existence in the religious sense. The opponent was subdued and humiliated, while the religion was exalted through radiance and manifestation. Through him the noble daʿwa stood upon the finest order and harmony, and its light shone throughout the regions and horizons of the earth.

The holy taʾyīd connected to him from the unseen continued to reach every station, and through him there reached his friends whatever the wisdom of God required according to the measure of each one's capacity, excellence, and subtlety of soul. To this the dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God brighten his face—referred in his Book of the Taʾwīl of Zakāt, saying: "Among them are the chosen servants, specially endowed with the knowledge of the unseen and the life-giving nourishment by which they guide to the truth and call to that which is most upright. They are the honored servants: the hujjas, the lāḥiqs, the wings, and the maʾdhūns. Each one receives from knowledge of the unseen according to his limit and allotted share."

He explained that the saying of God, "He is not grudging concerning the unseen," refers to the Imam whose obedience is obligatory upon the people of his age. The Imam's "unseen," from which he informs his ḥudūd by what he discloses to them, is the flow of taʾyīd connected to him from wisdom through the mediation of the current of the lawgiving speaker. Each rank obtains of it according to its allotted portion and its capacity. Knowledge is the spirit of life in the speaking guide, while in relation to the silent recipient it is the hidden treasure guarded by God through His friends. They conceal it and hide it from all except the one who rightly seeks and requests it.

The "degree" is likewise the knowledge of the unseen whose science has been arranged in degrees for the servants. It is not exposed to everyone in one measure. What is unveiled and outward is shared, while the inner and concealed science is reserved for those appointed to its stations and ranks. That is the praiseworthy wisdom through which beginning and return are known, and the pure allotted portion with which the guardians are singled out. The people are commanded to seek it and investigate it through its proper doors.

This is what he said—may God exalt his sanctity—clarifying the knowledge of the unseen which God discloses to His friends and with which He singles out His chosen ones. For the unseen is the Imam, whose true knowledge is

absent from the imaginations. No bodily limit or merely rational faculty encompasses him. We have already cited the saying of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him: “Our outward is Imamate and our inward is an unseen that is not perceived.” And we cited the saying of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him: “I have a station that has never occurred to the heart of any human being, and no one has reached knowledge of it.”

Divine lordship and godhead themselves occur to the hearts of human beings according to outward knowledge, yet the people of realities recognize that their true reality is beyond this. Likewise creation knows ʿAlī through outward recognition and through the proofs and miracles that were repeatedly manifested through him, while in complete and unrestricted form no one knows him except the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—and the Imams from his descendants. The people of realities know him through the outward indications that establish his rank, but the full reality of that rank is beyond them.

Some of the Imams—peace be upon them—said: “What occurred to our first occurs to our last.” And some said: “Whatever is said concerning God applies to us, and whatever is said concerning us applies to the eloquent ones among our Shīʿa.” The meaning is that the divine Names, insofar as they are applied within creation, are manifested through them, because they are the Most Beautiful Names by which God commanded that He be called. The attributes that belong to the First Intellect, which the Originator created and made the bearer of His word, become manifest through them according to the hierarchy.

Those who look only at what appears from the Imams and who fail to distinguish the level of the originating Cause from the level of the created veil fall into two opposing errors. Some suppose that creation proceeds from their bodily persons and thus fall into exaggeration, likening them to corporeal causes. Others look only at their bodies, the occurrence of ordinary human states upon them, and the obligations imposed upon them, and therefore deny their excellence and accuse their followers of falsehood. Between these stands the knower who looks at the religious creation and the formal structure of the hierarchy, affirms unity and transcendence without associating anything with God, recognizes the outward form as a sign pointing to the meaning, and thereby reaches the intended goal. Such a person has faith, is guided, attains knowledge of the master, and gains the highest share.

When the time of our master al-Ẓāhir approached its completion and his ascent from the world and concealment drew near, he delivered the command to his son, the Imam al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—God’s blessings be upon him—and explicitly designated him. Thus arose the Imam al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh, the Commander of the Believers Maʿadd b. ʿAlī—God’s blessings be upon him—by the command of God, the designation of his father, and his delivery of authority to him. He was the fourth of the witnesses, corresponding to the formed lump, and corresponding to his ancestor al-Mahdī bi-llāh, the fourth of the manifest caliphs; to al-Bāqir, the fourth of the atimmāʾ; and to Moses, the fourth of the lawgiving speakers—God’s blessings be upon them all.

These fourth figures are distinguished by a manifestation of signs and miracles beyond what appears through many of the other ranks, like the fourth great luminous body among the stars which governs the ascendants and through which the life of material existence is carried to the various genera until each reaches its completion. Through our master al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—there appeared of divine power and creative wisdom what is famous and established. Through him God revived His creation, extended their provision, strengthened the religion, and clarified the path of guidance for the people of tawḥīd. Through him the eyes of corruption were obscured and the command of God appeared in lowlands and highlands.

He dispatched dāʿīs throughout the islands and established the manifest and inward religion of God. His excellence encompassed the lands and his generosity and justice reached them. This was particularly so in the island of Yemen, toward which he turned a complete spiritual attention and in which he made the proof brilliantly clear. The lights of his command shone in the depths of that region. He entrusted noble treasures to the Yemeni island and revived there the true ordinances of religion through his dāʿī Lamak b. Mālik and through his hujja, the noble free lady, the Ṣulayḥid queen.

He placed with the two of them the rank of deposit because a period of interruption and an age of taqiyya were approaching. He deposited with them the renewed command and manifested through those who succeeded them the lights of taʾyīd. Glory be to God, the one who brings forth, initiates, and grants benefit. He commanded his Gate and Hujja, the dāʿī al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, pillar of the people of tawḥīd. Al-Muʾayyad spread the realities with clear explanation and brought forth into open view what had been concealed. After him his hujja arose and clarified the

meanings that had reached him from the straight path of the Imam's proof. He possessed tremendous spiritual strength and manifest noble signs.

Al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—was also, in spiritual lineage and natural lineage, connected to the Hujja of our master al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh. When he traced his lineage, he belonged to the House through Salmān. He clarified his rank, which was the rank of Salmān, and explained that he stood in his age with the meaning that Salmān had borne. He said: "Had I lived in the age of the Prophet Muḥammad, I would not have fallen short of Salmān's station, and he would have said of me, 'You are of us, the People of the House.'" His statement reveals the reality of the dāʿīs appointed in the Yemeni island, all of whom are connected to him by knowledge.

He delivered what he had received to the dāʿī Lamak b. Mālik, who delivered it to his son, and thus the noble ranks proceeded in succession from him and from the Queen-Hujja who stood with the daʿwa of her master, thanking Him for what He bestowed upon her. She became the mother of the blessed dāʿīs and the support of the people of the right. May God include us among those who drink from the spring of their excellence and are intimate with their light.

Al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—possessed clear miracles and signs that displayed his excellence and the excellence of his fathers and clarified what God manifested through them of the unseen. Our master, the dāʿī al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, the protection of the people of tawḥīd, Hibat Allāh b. Mūsā, came to him from the land of Shīrāz. The Imam raised him from the degree of the dāʿīs to the ranks of the Bābiyya and made him one of the nearest luminous veils to himself.

This came after a tremendous trial and testing that none could endure except one whom God had prepared for the noble station. When al-Muʾayyad was admitted to the exalted presence and represented himself before the Imam, he rejoiced at beholding him. The noble Imamic command had come to him that he should confront the Turks and the groups of Arabs and Persians who followed the ʿAbbāsid daʿwa. Among what he said to his master was: "O my master—God's blessings be upon you—my likeness is that of a Bedouin who, as I have been told, used to supplicate his Lord saying: 'O God, forgive me, for I find none to forgive me except You; and You find others besides me whom You can punish.'

"This journey upon which I am setting out is in obedience to you. In the direction toward which I am going you may find someone who can perform what I perform, someone like me or above me or below me. But you will not find among those dwelling near your noble palace one who has each day his recitation of the Qurʾan once or twice, supplication for you, glorification of your Prophet, and service in this daʿwa in the manner I perform it. I am an old man, and in this daʿwa I do not know anyone who exactly resembles me."

The answer of the Imam to this and to what preceded it caused the pearls of his noble teeth to become visible in a smile and joy to shine upon his generous face. He nevertheless ordered him to go forth upon that mission. Al-Muʾayyad continued to call with eloquent speech and to indicate with clear exposition until many groups from those nations responded to him. Calamity fell upon the ʿAbbāsid opponent who had falsely claimed the caliphate and upon his followers, until the opponent was seized. The miracle of the walī of God—peace be upon him—became manifest through the hands of one of his most excellent friends and veils.

Whenever our master al-Muʾayyad—may God sanctify his spirit—entered upon our master al-Mustanṣir—God's blessings be upon him—he would say: "God's blessings be upon you, O proof of God upon His earth and reviver of the bones when they are decayed. God's blessings be upon you, O possessor of bliss and abundant excellence. God's blessings be upon you, O separator between the obedient good and the blameworthy opponent. God's blessings be upon you, O one who is compassionate and merciful toward the believers. I bear witness that you are the true Imam. Whoever obeys you is guided through you; whoever opposes you in religion is astray and seduced; and whoever follows a religion other than obedience to you is upon ignorance.

"I call God and His angels to witness that through you and through obedience to you I am guided, and that I am free in this world and the hereafter from whoever opposes you. In the hereafter you are a pleasing witness for those who possess walāya for you; you are a mighty and trustworthy guardian over the treasuries of the sciences of the prophets; you are faithful in delivering their trusts to the people of the world; you are perfect and fully qualified in preserving Islam and delivering it. You have authority over the sciences of your two grandfathers Muḥammad and ʿAlī. Whoever drinks from a sea other than your sea, O Commander of the Believers, is wretched.

“I draw support, O my master—God’s blessings be upon you—from the blessings of your beneficence and from the overflowing of your bounty in whatever I speak on your behalf and on behalf of your forefathers. I take dictation from the abundance of your sea and the excellence of your gaze in making upright what I dictate to your servants. Whatever is correct in what forms in my heart is from you; whatever I err in is from myself. Through you I seek aid over whoever is below you, by your forefathers, O walī of God, son of His Prophet, and His proof over the worlds. God’s blessings, mercy, and favor be upon you, O Imams of the believers, all together.”

Our master Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī—may God sanctify his spirit—said: “It is incumbent upon every walī whom God grants the success of standing before the Imam of his age that this be his speech, the key to his greeting, and the meaning of what he preserves between his hands.”

Among the miracles transmitted of al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—is the following. There was a king among the kings of the Byzantines who possessed a hand fashioned of gold. He had made it his qibla, magnified it, and named it “the Holy Spirit.” It was an image of extraordinary perfection. He kept it in a protected, furnished chamber. Whenever something occurred that pleased him, or whenever he wished to supplicate God, he would go to that image, prostrate before it, rub his cheeks upon the ground, and seek by it a means of approach to God. Many of his prayers were answered because he believed in its blessing and revered what it represented.

A Muslim man from the lands of Egypt had become connected to that king. The king loved him, drew him near, and made him one of his ministers and keepers of his secrets. The Muslim learned of the image and often wondered at it. One day a conquest occurred for the king. He rose together with his ministers, humbled himself, prostrated before the image, rubbed his cheeks on the ground, praised God, and thanked Him. The Muslim asked: “What is this image before which you prostrate?” He replied: “It is the image of the Holy Spirit.” The Muslim said: “It is the image of the Mighty One of Egypt.” He concealed from him the secret of God, for he meant the walī of God—peace be upon him.

This became a prelude to the king’s felicity and a cause for the manifestation of miracles because of the good that God willed for him, knowing the sincerity of his intention and his love for the Greatest Name, which he called the Holy Spirit. A long debate occurred between the Muslim and the king. At last they agreed that the king should send ten men from among the people of wisdom, men trustworthy in their testimony, to the holy Mustanṣirī Presence. The king dispatched them and sent with them a noble gift of the sort offered to the exalted Prophetic Presence.

They arrived at the holy court and requested permission to perform the obligatory greeting. The Imam—peace be upon him—admitted them. When they entered and stood before him, he dismissed those who had been present in his assembly and began addressing them. He said: “Carry out what you were commanded to do.” His knowledge of the matter became manifest to them. They prostrated submissively and humbly. He ordered them to raise their heads. Each returned to what he had prepared in order to draw and record the Imam’s appearance. When they had finished they were taken to the lodging prepared for their hospitality. Each examined what he had drawn and described. Their drawings differed greatly from one another.

They therefore agreed to return the second day. They did so, but their images and descriptions again differed. They resolved to begin the drawing and depiction again. On the third day they entered before him, contemplated him, and drew. When they had finished and returned to their lodging, the images they had made on the third day agreed. Their hearts became tranquil. They asked permission to depart, were furnished with the finest provisions, and returned to their king.

They displayed the sheets on which they had depicted the Imam during the first two days. When the king compared them, what had seemed different to each observer revealed correspondences that made clear the alteration had not been in the Imam but in the veil of perception. Then he took the image of the third day and compared it with the golden image he possessed from the beginning. It was exactly the same image. He was astonished and became certain that the divine proof had become manifest to him.

He sent the ambassadors back to the Imam requesting that one of the Imam’s dāʿīs be sent to him to take the covenant from him. The walī of God sent a dāʿī who took the covenant from the king. His faith became excellent. God removed from him the harm he had feared from his Frankish opponents. The man became one of the faces turned toward the exalted Presence.

This is a similitude beneath which lies an astonishing meaning of wisdom. The king possessed knowledge and had looked into wisdom. He magnified one of the religious laws of the prophets, exerted himself seriously in following it, and acknowledged its excellence. The Muslim showed him that the law had been set as a similitude of the walī of God and that the prophets—may God bless them—had called toward him through their laws and cycles and had indicated his excellence. The walī is the meaning of their laws and the quintessence of their institutions. Whoever clings only to the outward command without knowing its meaning worships a body in which there is no spirit or meaning.

When the Muslim had shown him these proofs and clarified what would bring him out of the path of ignorance, the king sent people of knowledge and experience so that they might recognize what had been indicated to him in the symbolic breaking and proof and distinguish it correctly. The straight road and clear path then became manifest. On the first day al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—appeared to them in ten noble forms. These correspond to the outward daʿwa of the Prophet in which there are differences, likenesses, and apparent contradictions. For this reason the images differed among them.

On the second day he appeared to them in the forms of the ten domes of light, the people of manifestation—God's blessings be upon them—who establish the limit of taʾwīl and demonstrate it to those of understanding and intellect in its varied meanings, numerous aspects, and structures. One of the Imams—peace be upon them—once answered a questioner concerning a single matter in seven different ways. The questioner, finding this excessive, said: "Seven, O son of the Messenger of God?" The Imam replied in meaning that the sea of divine wisdom is not exhausted by a single expression.

On the third day he appeared to them in the form of the twentieth limit, the Holy Spirit, the possessor of the daʿwa of reality in which there is no contradiction and no divergence of meanings. They therefore saw one form gathering all the forms, without difference, once they had been supported by the light of reality and had perceived. The true indication then stood before them; they recognized the meaning of the possessor of the religious law and the divine wisdom; and the king responded when the pure reality in which there is no doubt became manifest to him and he understood the meaning of the beginning and what that daʿwa contained within its folds.

The manifestation of our master al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—through these noble veils resembles the manifestation of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—to Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh in the form of mīm, the form of fāʾ, and the form of the two ḥāʾs, after which he returned to the form of ʿayn. That is the great and noble form appearing through veils by which the meanings of the Books are established. He said: "O Jābir, these are my proofs and my garments. I manifest them in every time and age."

It is related that one of the companions of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—entered upon him. Al-Ṣādiq said: "Scratch my back for me." The man put his hand upon his back and found it completely covered with wounds. He said: "My master, you are too exalted and too high for this." On the second day he entered again. Al-Ṣādiq said: "Scratch my back," and the man found it sound with no wound upon it. On the third day he said again: "Scratch my back." The man reached inside the garments but found nothing at all.

On the first day the Imam had addressed him through the degree of the outward form, where doubt and confusion can arise, and the wounds resembled the distorted beliefs held by those who remain at the level of bodily imagination without referring their meanings to the friends of God. On the second day he manifested to him the degree of taʾwīl, which only the chosen among the people of interpretation attain; it was sound, with no wound, no similitude, and no anthropomorphism. Then on the third day he manifested to him the degree of reality in knowledge of him, and the man could not perceive the meaning of his knowledge or reach the limit of his attribute: he found nothing, for that station was absent from him and knowledge of it was distant.

As one of the Imams—peace be upon them—said: "Our outward is Imamate, and our inward is an unseen that is not perceived." Our master al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—appeared to those painters each day in ten forms. When he appeared to them in the human forms, each one perceived a form different from the other, just as a group looks into a mirror and each sees his own image and shape and sees only an appearance rather than the full reality. On the third day he manifested the form of reality, which is one and contains no difference.

In the age of the walī of God, al-Imam al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—God's blessings, favors, and greetings be upon him—there arose seven men of the powerful ones of the state. They supported one another in misleading the servants, manifesting obstinacy, and diminishing the exalted palace until the Imam—peace be upon him—had almost nothing

left before him except the sword and armor. They ordered his sons to leave and disperse in the lands: Nizār, ʿAbd Allāh, and Abū al-Qāsim Aḥmad al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—and others whose circumstances God knew.

When oppression became excessive and the men of tyranny reached the walī of God and his companions demanding the surrender of the sword and armor, he brought them forth and said: “I do not deny them to any one of you. Whoever can put on the armor and rise beneath it, and draw the sword from its sheath, let him take them.” They tried, but none of them was able. They went out in confusion.

There was a military man called Baldakūr who had married his daughter to Nāṣir, one of the princes of oppression—may God curse him. Because of his relationship to him he had acquired rank and prestige and considerable wealth. Baldakūr entered upon the walī of God—peace be upon him—and found him seated with nothing beneath him except a mat. Jealous concern for the Imam seized him and he wept before him, saying: “My master, has your condition reached this point?” The Imam said: “If you wished, you could remove this.” Those words remained in his heart and he returned home distressed.

His wife entered upon him and saw that his color had changed. She asked what had happened. He told her what he had seen with the walī of God and what had been disclosed to him. The woman was a believer. She became agitated and said: “Yes. As our master told you, if you wished you could remove this condition. Why did you not accept the command, act, and obtain the good of this world and the hereafter?” He asked: “What am I to do?” She said—may God have mercy upon her—“Kill your son-in-law and his companions.” He said: “Your daughter will be harmed.” She replied: “Begin by killing her and free us from her evil.”

When he saw the firmness of her resolve, his own determination became strong. He made arrangements with his trusted retainers and servants, assigning them their men. That night a maidservant had entered upon the Commander of the Believers al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—and said: “My master, I have longed for a loaf of wheat bread and harīsa,” because of the poverty that had reached them. He said to her: “You shall eat it tomorrow, if God wills.”

The next morning Baldakūr ordered his companions to divide into seven groups. Each group went against one of the seven opponents so that none might escape. Baldakūr himself went with the seventh group to the house of his son-in-law. He killed him, killed his wife—who was Baldakūr’s own daughter—and the seven opponents were all killed. Their heads were raised upon spears. God relieved the believers of them and delivered His friends from their evil.

Thus trials continually come upon the friends of God—peace be upon them—from their opponents and the people of obstinacy. The friends of God sometimes manifest incapacity in submission to the power of God Most High even though they possess miracles, clear signs, and manifest proofs which bewilder intellects and confound both questioner and questioned. They manifest incapacity together with power over miracles so that the community will not be tempted concerning them and fall into exaggeration.

They mix the manifestation of incapacity with the manifestation of miracle as an acknowledgment of God’s lordship, power, and unity, so that creation may know that they are the originated beings of God, unable in themselves to encompass their Originator. They are honored servants who do not precede Him in speech and who act by His command.

Since al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was the fourth of the witnesses, corresponding to al-Mahdī bi-llāh, the fourth of the caliphs, to al-Bāqir, the fourth of the atimmāʾ, and to Moses, the fourth of the lawgiving speakers, he knew that disagreement would necessarily arise after him and that confusion would be cast upon the walī al-amr after him. Nizār and ʿAbd Allāh had disputed over which of them was more entitled to the Imamate. He said to them: “Do not dispute concerning something whose possessor is here,” and he pointed toward his own noble loins. This was before the appearance of the Imam al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—from the purest loins and his emergence to his mother, who was among the purified women.

He had named one of his sons Nizār, another Abū Manṣūr, another ʿAbd Allāh, another Dāwūd, and another by other names, while the walī al-amr al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was named Aḥmad and given the kunyā Abū al-Manṣūr bi-llāh. Ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ was among his dāʿīs. He once asked the Imam who the possessor of the command would be. The Imam replied: “Abū al-Manṣūr.” Ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ thought he meant Nizār and therefore

attached himself to him and obstinately supported him, not realizing that the symbols of the friends of God are true and their indications truthful, and that their secrets remain concealed from one who asks before the proper time.

When the proper time arrived and al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was born, his father explicitly designated him and wrote to the islands informing them of him and establishing the truth of the matter. A noble and honored rescript announcing al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh reached the dāʿī al-Mukarram Aḥmad b. ʿAlī—may God sanctify his spirit. In it the Imam designated his son, al-Imam al-Mustaʿlī, and declared that the Imamate would remain in his progeny until the Day of Resurrection.

Thus arose the Imam al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh, Commander of the Believers, Aḥmad b. Maʿadd—God's blessings be upon him—by the command and revelation of God, by the designation of his father, and by his delivery of the command to him. He was the fifth of the witnesses, corresponding to the bones; he corresponded to his ancestor Muḥammad al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh, the fifth of the manifest caliphs; to his ancestor Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the fifth of the atimmāʾ; and to the Spirit of God, Jesus, the fifth of the lawgiving speakers—God's blessings be upon them.

He manifested signs, proofs, and miracles beyond enumeration and description. Disagreement arose in his state among his brothers and others, just as disagreement had arisen at every corresponding fifth station: like the opposition of the Dajjāl Makhlad b. Kaydād to al-Qāʾim bi-llāh—peace be upon him; like the disagreement among the descendants of al-Ṣādiq Jaʿfar—peace be upon him—in his time; and like the opposition raised against Jesus b. Mary—peace be upon him—until one of those close to him betrayed him and sought his death. In the same way the fourth, al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—had spoken in symbolic language to Ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ and others before the proof became manifest, saying: "The Imam is Abū al-Manṣūr," meaning al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh before the command appeared and giving him his son's kunyā before the son himself was known publicly. Those who lacked insight applied that indication to Nizār, who was already present and also bore a similar kunyā, and they drove him into opposition, imagining that the designation had been for him.

The matter had not been hidden from the walī of God al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—for what was to occur belonged to his stored knowledge. The people of realities followed the manifest truth and what had come in the noble rescript giving glad tidings of our master al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh, where it stated that God had established the Imamate and made it a lasting word in his descendants until the Day of Resurrection. His descendant, the victorious al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh—peace be upon him—was also symbolically indicated in those words.

When the walī of God al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—arose, his brother Nizār went among a group of the Shīʿa, corrupting them, planting intrigues, and raising devils of opposition. The walī of God admonished him and sought to guide and reform him out of compassion and mercy. He did not turn back from his error; rather, this increased him in ignorance and misguidance, and he supposed that the gentleness shown toward him by the walī of God was weakness.

When the walī of God saw that he persisted in corruption and would not turn away from error and obstinacy, he brought him and his brothers ʿAbd Allāh and Abū al-Qāsim before him and said: "The Imamate possesses known limits and described signs. Here is Dhū l-Fiqār. No one rises wearing this armor and draws this sword except the Imam. Whoever among us is able to do so is the Imam; let us follow him and obey him." Nizār, ʿAbd Allāh, and Abū al-Qāsim attempted it, but none of them was able to rise beneath the armor and draw the sword. The walī of God put on the armor, stood beneath it, and drew the sword. Nizār and ʿAbd Allāh did not accept this, but Abū al-Qāsim testified for the walī of his command and entered his covenant and allegiance.

Nizār said: "This command is not obtained by drawing a sword and lifting armor. That is merely bodily strength." The Imam—peace be upon him—said: "If that is so, then let us proceed from the miracle to the establishment of excellence. There is a lion in the palace. I shall have it brought. If you are the Imam, command it and it will obey you; otherwise I shall command it." Nizār replied: "As long as it is your lion, it knows you. I also have a lion that knows me; if I brought it, it would devour me if the Imamate were in you." The walī of God—peace be upon him—said: "Do it."

Nizār ordered the lion's keeper to bring the animal. When it was brought, the walī of God said: "I shall go to it. Order it to devour me. If it does not do so, I shall command it concerning you, so beware of it." The walī of God approached the lion after its keeper released it. When it saw him, it moved its tail, lowered its ears in submission, and rubbed itself at his feet. Nizār urged it against the walī of God, but it continued to cling to him. The walī of God said: "Beware of it, for now I shall order it against you." Nizār fled behind the door of the assembly. The lion sprang

toward the door, and Nizār shut it between himself and the animal. The keeper then restrained the lion and took it away.

ʿAbd Allāh and Nizār departed, refusing to surrender the command to its rightful possessor. When the walī of God saw their persistence in rebellion, departure from obedience, and arrogance, he ordered that ʿAbd Allāh be seized. When news of this reached Nizār, he fled to Alexandria and entered into alliance with its people, calling them to rise with him. He openly displayed opposition, obstinacy, deceit, and corruption. The walī of God ordered al-Afḍal, commander of the armies, to march against him with the victorious and divinely aided forces.

The two armies met after severe fighting. At first al-Afḍal's army was broken and Nizār pursued them with those who accompanied him until they reached the gates of Cairo. Al-Afḍal sent word to the walī of God saying: "Remain where you are; the army has been defeated and scattered. Nizār and his followers are upon us at the gates." The people of the city were shaken and afraid; tongues began speaking against the walī of God.

When Nizār and those with him drew near, the walī of God—God's blessings be upon him—appeared from the Gate of Gold accompanied by twenty-five Kurdish horsemen. When he placed his left foot in the stirrup and raised his right, he said: "Kill them—may God kill them!" His horsemen charged. Nizār and his followers were routed, a cry rose against them, and people pursued, killed, and plundered them. They fled all the way to Alexandria over a journey of three days. Nizār was captured and brought to the walī of God—peace be upon him.

When this occurred, many of the people of the daʿwa who had inclined toward him returned to obedience; but others continued in error. Ignorance became widespread and the Nizāriyya divided into two parties. One group claimed that Nizār was alive and would not die, that he remained in the palace until he should appear and fill the earth with justice. The other admitted his death but claimed that he had been wronged and that he left a son whose coming they awaited. They wandered through valleys of error, rode the mount of ignorance, and increased in seduction and blindness.

When God gave His walī al-Mustaʿlī victory over the one who had rebelled against him, he later ordered that ʿAbd Allāh be brought out from Dār al-Faḍl, for his opposition had been less severe than Nizār's. ʿAbd Allāh entered the covenant of the walī of God, acknowledged his excellence, and did not persist in rebellion and ignorance as Nizār had persisted.

After this there arose the accursed Armenian opponent Aftakīn, who advanced with armies toward the gates of Cairo. God returned him in disgrace and destroyed him by the sword of His walī. Then al-Afḍal, who had been commander of the armies, grew tyrannical over the believers after he gained control of the state. He openly displayed the religion of opposition, instituted practices contrary to the daʿwa, and caused innovations to become public. He performed the tarāwīḥ prayer in the mosque of ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ and revived practices the author condemns. He imagined that he could extinguish the light of God.

God therefore set against them the Byzantines, who were of his own kind in outward opposition. Their army was broken in Palestine in Syria; his men were killed, their wealth was taken, and he returned blamed, rejected, defeated, and broken. The Byzantines took many cities of Syria and many Muslims submitted to them. This occurred, in the author's account, because of what their own hands had earned through denial of God's signs and obstinacy toward the Imam. God set against them the worst of His creation because the walī of God was the true possessor of religion.

Then the yellow banners of truth appeared, the Byzantine forces were defeated, Islam became strong through the walī of God, justice and tawḥīd spread, and the religion returned wholly and sincerely to God. The walī of God disseminated the sciences, revealed the religion of the Living and Self-Subsisting, and stood in the station of his fathers, manifesting dazzling miracles and inward and outward signs. God made power manifest through him.

When the time of his transfer approached and his ascent toward the neighborhood of the holy abode drew near, he delivered his command to his son al-Manṣūr Abū ʿAlī al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh and proclaimed his designation, raising his remembrance.

Thus arose the Imam al-Manṣūr Abū ʿAlī al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh, Commander of the Believers—God's blessings be upon him, his fathers, and the pure Imams from his descendants. He was the sixth of the witnesses, corresponding to flesh and completing the bodily form within the third cycle. He corresponded to his ancestor al-Manṣūr, the sixth of the manifest caliphs; to Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar, the sixth of the atimmāʾ; and to his ancestor Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh, the sixth of the lawgiving speakers and Seal of the Prophets—God's blessings be upon

them all. In his age the manifestation of signs and miracles and the excellence and virtue belonging to the sixth degree were multiplied because this was the sixth of the third cycle.

To him, to his father al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh, and to his son, the Imam al-Ṭayyib—God's blessings be upon them—our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—had alluded in his discourse on the month of Ramaḍān and on the excellence of its nineteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-third nights. He said that a person should remain during these three nights in illumination, purity, vigil, prayer, and supplication, for the Night of Power will not fail to be found among them. Al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—may God brighten his face—also indicated that it is among the final ten nights of the month and connected it with the twenty-first night. The ḥudūd—peace be upon them—likewise transmitted symbolic correspondences in which the last ten signify the level of reality. This is a hidden quintessence among the concealed secrets, clear to one of insight who reflects upon it.

Because al-Imam al-Manṣūr al-Āmir—peace be upon him—was the sixth of the witnesses, corresponding to every sixth in the cycles, the people of victory and taʾyīd raised his standards, his signs became manifest, and opponents were subdued in the lands. The people of his age submitted to his authority. Among the signs of the strength of his exalted command was that fifty horsemen went to Damascus, killed Bahrām and his entourage, and were assisted by the people of Damascus. They returned safe and with victory.

A noble order came to the nephew of Ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ commanding him to kill his maternal uncle. He killed him, although the two had been Nizārī opponents. Thus he did not depart from obedience when the command reached him. Our walī also had campaigns in the lands of the Byzantines which, were we to recount them in detail, would make the explanation long.

Among the dazzling miracles related from him is that a certain man came to al-Afḍal and remained with him. Whenever food was brought, every dish upon the table would rise into the air about a cubit. Al-Afḍal was astonished at this and entered upon the walī of God—peace be upon him—telling him of what he had seen and expressing his amazement. The Imam said: "Bring him to us tomorrow."

At the time of the meal the man entered with al-Afḍal and performed what he had been doing. The walī of God said: "Does this astonish you?" They said: "Yes, O Commander of the Believers." He said: "Would you like to see something more astonishing?" The noble assembly was covered with curtains, and upon one of them was the image of a lion. The Imam—peace be upon him—turned toward the image of the lion, pointed with his glorifying finger, and said: "Eat him." The people present saw the curtain move, the image become active, and the man disappear among them as though the lion had swallowed him. They searched behind the curtains but did not find him. Al-Afḍal and those with him were stupefied.

This is among the miracles of the walī of God—peace be upon him—whereby an image possessing no ordinary life was moved and consumed the one who had astonished them. Similar things are seen in the manifest sciences of the friends of God, in which there is exposition like a spirit: it encompasses thoughts and absorbs the pretensions of one who imagines that he has penetrated deeply into meaning and possesses the true explanation. God manifests the miracles of His friends and their wonders however He wills. None turns back His judgment and none reverses His command.

Among those who rebelled in his time was an opponent named Sinīr, one of those who manifested corruption in the earth. His power and opposition to the walī of God became strong and common people gathered around him. He advanced until his army reached the gates of Cairo. The gates were shut. He remained there for days. There was an Armenian man with a group of companions guarding one of the gates of Cairo. One night, while the opposing forces remained in their positions and the victorious army had gone out to confront them, fear entered the hearts of the believers.

The Armenian and those with him saw one of the gates of Cairo open during the night and saw a single rider come out, with no one accompanying him. They followed in secret to discover who he was and found that it was al-Imam al-Āmir—God's blessings be upon him—riding alone. Soon another rider met him, greeted him, and each asked the other about his condition. They dismounted from their horses. The man who had met him asked: "Where do you intend to go?" The Imam replied: "I intend to give victory to my army over the people of opposition and to bring them to destruction." The man said: "We will suffice you in that, O walī of God. Return to your place."

Each of the two spread his garment upon the ground and prayed two rakʿas. Then they mounted. The Imam—peace be upon him—returned after the man said: “We shall suffice you against meeting the enemy tomorrow, if God wills.” They bade one another farewell. In the morning the soldiers came galloping with the glad tidings that the enemy had been routed and Sinīr—may God curse him—had been killed. The Armenian became certain of the excellence of the walī of God and that the truth was with him. He accepted Islam, his Islam became excellent, he raised himself above what he had previously followed, and he entered the Imam’s covenant when the sign and miracle had become manifest to him.

The miracles of the friends of God—peace be upon them—are manifest and hidden, just as their weapons are manifest and hidden. Some are seen by ordinary eyes; others are perceived by the intellect as guidance for the people of knowledge and insight. Opposition and obstinacy also continue in every time, age, and cycle, especially at the time of a sixth approaching the appearance of a seventh. The strength of the devils becomes great according to the strength of the possessor of the cycle; their darkness becomes intense according to the brightness of the light.

The devils became strong in the time of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—and opposed his waṣī, the seventh of the prophetic cycle, concerning whom the Prophet said in meaning that the Hour almost overtook him but he preceded it. The Hour is the seventh, the Qāʾim of the people of the settled Imamate, in whom the ranks of prophecy and Imamate are gathered. His devils became powerful against him and against his two grandsons. They sought to extinguish the light of God in him and in the Imams among his descendants, but God willed to complete His light and make manifest the command of His friends.

God says: “God commands justice, excellence, and giving to the near of kin, and forbids indecency, wrongdoing, and transgression.” Justice is Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—the balance of religion. He established the outward and set over it its inward counterpart, making the two correspond, and he indicated his waṣī ʿAlī—peace be upon him—when the command came to turn toward the Sacred Mosque. ʿAlī is the other half of his daʿwa and the one appointed to explain the inward meaning of his sharīʿa. Excellence is the Commander of the Believers and love for him, the good deed with which no evil can coexist in the way opposition does. “Giving to the near of kin” is the delivery of the Imamate to the two grandsons and its permanence in the progeny of al-Ḥusayn.

Then the verse forbids indecency, wrongdoing, and transgression, which the author applies polemically to those who opposed the Commander of the Believers and to those who altered the order of walāya. The author interprets the successive adversaries of ʿAlī as embodiments of these three forms of deviation. They bear their own burdens and the burdens of those whom they misled without knowledge, and they are arrogant toward God and His friends while outwardly displaying asceticism and piety and inwardly concealing denial.

The devil does not always appear in the ugliness of his true distorted form. Were his deformity and blindness displayed openly, the very sight of him would prevent people from following him. Rather, he assumes other forms and wears likenesses unlike his reality, riding through them the mount of seduction and deception. Thus the trial and affliction become severe. The pure progeny may be overcome outwardly, and darkness may cover the shining sun for a time, even though the light itself has not ceased.

A similar trial occurred in the time of Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar, until his son was concealed, and disagreement arose among the children of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him. Likewise, in the time of the sixth of the witnesses, opponents rose until the event of the killing and concealment of the walī of God occurred and the faction associated with ʿAbd al-Majīd turned back from the truth.

Yet the opponents do not cease to be ultimately subdued, and the friends of God return to strength. At the time of the seventh, as at the time of al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, the seventh of the caliphs, the enemies of religion were broken and the signs of God became manifest. This indicates what will occur in the age of the Qāʾim: the suppression of the opponents, the destruction of those who spread corruption in the earth, the vanishing of the wicked, and the manifestation of the lights. At that time there is no veil between Paradise and Hell when doubts and ambiguities are cut off and clear realities and meanings are reached. The state of Iblīs ends and the trial of confusion is brought to completion.

When the walī of God al-Āmir—peace be upon him—knew that the event was approaching, he hastened to send the noble rescript of the Imamate and the designation of his successor to his Hujja, the noble free lady al-Sayyida al-Ṣulayḥiyya, who stood over the dāʿīs and friends in the Yemeni island. Her master commanded her to treat far and near equally in communicating this knowledge, to inform the connected ḥudūd, the near and the distant, so that no

one in the hierarchy would remain ignorant of it. She thanked her master for this favor and stood proclaiming what he had bestowed upon her, calling openly and without fear or taqiyya to the Imam al-Ṭayyib—God's blessings be upon him.

The same command proceeded through the dāʿīs in the Yemeni island. The spiritual supplies of their masters watched over them, and divine care guarded them from the obstinate opponents. The Imam—God's blessings be upon him—had also indicated to the chosen ones of his daʿwa that the time of his departure was near. He once brought citrons before them and ordered them to choose one, while saying: "Poor, poor is the one slain by the knife."

He sent to his Hujja, the Sayyida in the Yemeni island, a worn handkerchief. When she looked at it she wept and said: "Our master has informed me that his transfer has drawn near, his concealment has come, and he has announced his own death to me." Soon after this report came the event of the attack of the accursed assassins upon the Imam—peace be upon him—and what they did to the noble body and nāsūt through which he had appeared. Yet "they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it was made to appear so to them" in the esoteric sense already explained.

ʿAbd al-Majīd, the son of his paternal uncle, then stood as a depositary over the palace and outward kingdom, corresponding to the depositary functions of earlier cycles. The dāʿīs of the Yemeni island, whom the guardians had appointed to preserve the noble Ṭayyibī daʿwa, stood with the rank of deposit in service to the friends of God who possessed the settled Imamate by right. Every one of these servants is in the religious sense an "ʿabd al-majīd," a servant of the Glorious, for al-Majīd is among the Names of God applied in creation through His friends, while their servants and dāʿīs indicate them.

But the historical ʿAbd al-Majīd who bore that name became arrogant, opposed the command of the walī of God—peace be upon him—and persisted in misguidance and opposition. His letters came to the noble free lady al-Sayyida al-Ṣulayḥiyya demanding that she acknowledge his claim to the command of the believers. He called himself Commander of the Believers after previously being called only Heir Apparent of the Muslims. The noble lady—may God sanctify her spirit—became angry for God and the religion and said in meaning: "Yesterday he was the son of Aḥmad, the heir apparent of the Muslims, and today he is Commander of the Believers? This is manifest error."

She informed the people of her daʿwa of his falsehood, made public the misguidance and hostility in which he stood, and obligated the dāʿī Dhuʾayb b. Mūsā—who had received from Yaḥyā b. Lamak what he had received from his father, from al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, from al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh, Commander of the Believers—to stand with the Ṭayyibī daʿwa and clarify the difficult matters so that the responders would not die the death of ignorance.

Dhuʾayb stood calling to his master—peace be upon him—with the finest discourse. Our master, the descendant of al-Ḥasan, al-Khaṭṭāb, assisted and strengthened him. May God exalt their sanctity and grant us their intercession and intimacy. They stood in the finest manner. After them came Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī, Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm, ʿAlī b. Ḥātim, Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, and others who stood establishing and confirming the command of the friends of God.

The station did not disappear while they were speaking on behalf of the one to whom they called. The walī of God did not become absent while they were rising with the lights of his taʾyīd. The horizon of religion did not become dark while they shone with the lights of demonstrations. Through them the religion of truth stood, the proof from creation to the Creator was made manifest, and walāya for the One True God stood firm. They called to the walī of God by the supplies that reached them from him and clarified the rank of Imamate and waṣāya after recognition of messengerhood and prophecy. What moons and stars these were, by whom the darknesses became illuminated and through whose right guidance every hopeful seeker attained his hope.

The Imam al-Āmir—peace be upon him—did not disappear without first establishing his son al-Ṭayyib—peace be upon him—in his place. The daʿwa of God continues through the pure progeny until the Day of Resurrection. Thus arose the Imam al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Qāsim, son of the Imam al-Manṣūr al-Āmir—God's blessings be upon them, upon their fathers, and upon their descendants—from behind the veils of concealment by the command, revelation, and knowledge of God, through the designation that ended in one chain from the waṣī and the Prophet and from those before them—God's blessings be upon them all.

He is like the “other creation,” the seventh of the witnesses. He corresponds to al-Imam al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, the seventh of the manifest caliphs; to our master Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, the seventh of the atimmāʾ; and to the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the seventh in the cycle of the lawgiving speakers in the sense already explained. When the concealment of his father occurred and the people of oppression and obstinacy seized the kingdom of his fathers, he—peace be upon him—departed together with his Gates, Hujjas, and Dāʿīs al-Balāgh. He left Egypt and wrapped himself in the veils of concealment, as his ancestor Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl had done and as the descendants of Abraham had done when the exalted command of God concerning concealment descended among them.

Darkness became widespread because the oppressors gained control, and the eyes were prevented from looking upon the shining sun. Yet we know with truth and are certain with true certainty that even if the noble person of the Imam—peace be upon him—is absent from the eyes and concealed according to the stored and hidden knowledge of God, so that the impure may be distinguished from the pure and the believing seeker of forgiveness from the obstinate sinner, the earth is never empty of one who stands for God with a proof. This is so in every time and age, with a clear path and manifest highway.

The Imamate is an Imam after an Imam, inherited by son from father, transmitted to one after another as both religious cause and natural lineage. One who understands this knows that even when night falls, the sun is absent from sight, the horizon darkens, and the stars appear, the sun still exists within God’s creation. The celestial sphere is not empty of it; its lights continue to shine, and its influence remains the cause of the light seen through night and day.

The sun remains so throughout the ages as long as the seven strong heavens and the spread earth remain. If it is veiled from the eyes and the night becomes dark so that darkness prevents the seeing people from perceiving it, the sun itself remains luminous and free of darkness, shining and manifest in itself. The obstruction lies between it and the eyes, while it remains what it is in radiance and light. Its supplies of light continue to reach the moon and stars by the command of God, the Living and Self-Subsisting.

So too is the Imam—peace be upon him. Even if he is absent and concealed, God never leaves His lands empty of him, nor does He withhold from His servants the guidance that proceeds through him. Divine mercy encompasses all creation. The lights of his taʾyīd remain connected and uninterrupted, never cut off for even the blink of an eye from his friends and ḥudūd in East and West. His dāʿīs and ḥudūd remain manifest like the moon and stars when the sun is hidden, indicating the walī of God—God’s peace and blessings be upon him. The dāʿīs of God—peace be upon them—have clarified this with proofs, demonstrations, and evident signs as long as the indication remains, its signposts are clear, its proofs are manifest, and its rites endure.

The walī of God—peace be upon him—had informed his chosen followers beforehand of the trial and had told the eloquent ranks of the coming test. He spoke to Ibn Madīn, the possessor of the noble rank of the Bābiyya, and to trusted men called Ruslān, al-ʿAzīzī, another Ruslān, and Qūnaṣ. Ibn Madīn—may God sanctify his spirit—remained in his station, while these four remained in the Imam’s presence. The Imam—peace be upon him—used to say: “None of these four will break away from me.” Whenever they heard from the Imam words whose inner meaning they did not understand, they would go to their shaykh Ibn Madīn, ask him, and he would say: “Our master spoke to you and said such and such; his indication refers to this and this, and its meaning is such and such.” This was their custom and the path they followed.

When they came to Ibn Madīn and asked him about the Imam’s saying that none of the four would break away, he said to them: “The Imam will manifest concealment through killing. When his concealment appears, disagreement will arise in the land. The son of al-Afḍal will seize power, rebel, and openly proclaim the religion of opposition. The walī of God Abū al-Qāsim will become concealed. The son of al-Afḍal will kill the friends and drive away the sanctuary. When his power becomes strong, he will send for you four and say: ‘Will you not dissociate yourselves from the Imam and his religion?’ You will refuse and curse Satan. Al-ʿAzīzī and Ruslān will be killed. Qūnaṣ, you will flee to Yemen. Later you will return and killing will overtake you. As for me, O ʿAzīzī, I shall be staying in your house. They will seize me afterward and offer me what they offered you. I shall not choose this world over religion, and they will kill me in testimony.”

They asked: “Who is the Imam after al-Manṣūr manifests concealment through killing?” He said: “He is the seventh Qāʾim, al-Imam al-Ṭayyib—God’s blessings be upon him. He is concealed and hidden.” They asked: “Who

will possess the rank after you?" He replied: "My son-in-law, the qāḍī Ibn ʿAlī. He will become concealed with the concealment of his master and appear with his appearance."

When the event occurred, the son of al-Afḍal arose and ordered the four men to choose safety by dissociating themselves from al-Manṣūr and his religion, otherwise he would kill them. Qūnaṣ fled to one of the distant places. The others said: "We believe in God and His walī; we will not obey Satan." They were killed, and many believers were killed with them. Ibn Madīn, the possessor of rank, was seized from the house of al-ʿAzīzī and killed the next day. Qūnaṣ went out to Yemen and later returned and was killed.

The qāḍī Abū ʿAlī, whom Ibn Madīn had established in the degree of those attached to the walī al-amr after his concealment, also disappeared. The Imam al-Ṭayyib—peace be upon him—was no longer seen openly in Egypt. The houses became empty because the believers emigrated with him and his sincere friends concealed themselves. Only those who were prevented from travel by a valid excuse remained, according to the judgment and decree of God.

The noble command reached the Yemeni daʿwa through Muḥammad b. Ḥaydara and others, and it was clarified to the noble free queen and to those who stood through her toward the walī of God. Meanwhile the outward kingdom passed at times to ʿAbd al-Majīd and his descendants and at times to other usurpers among the enemies of God until his line and political claim came to an end: his progeny perished, his followers and adherents lost, his proof vanished, and his path was obliterated.

We shall mention that elsewhere in this book. God is the helper, and from Him we seek success and beneficence. Some ignorant and foolish people whose abode is Hell, the dwelling of ruin, have claimed that the Imamate has been cut off from the noble progeny. We seek refuge in God and in His friends and dissociate ourselves before Him and before them from whoever says or believes this. Whoever holds it nullifies the wisdom of God in His creation and command and the wisdom of His Prophet; he denies origination and the Originator and imagines an impossible absurdity.

God Most High did not bring forth natural creation and its generated beings except so that from among them the living, speaking human being who proclaims tawḥīd might appear. The quintessence of humanity is the friends of God—peace be upon them—in the other creation, and through them the circles of existence are completed. Whoever denies this denies the purpose of creation and nullifies the order established by God. Just as if the other creation were removed from the human being the human would not possess its intended completion, and if the human being were removed from the world its highest light would be missing, so the world cannot be without the Imam.

Our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, pillar of the people of tawḥīd, Hibat Allāh b. Mūsā—may God sanctify his spirit—clarified tawḥīd of the Originator and the permanence of the rank of Imamate in every time and age, throughout the succession of epochs and years. He said in one of his intimate supplications: "Glory be to the Ancient, the Pre-eternal, mighty in His grasp, Light of lights in every dwelling and place, Creator of things and Originator of them, Cause of causes. Holy, holy, holy! O You whom I acknowledge, for I have testified that You were worshiped throughout the ages and existent in the times that have passed. The higher lights and timeless elements testify to the self-sufficient singularity. He is the one whose Essence is beyond all attributes, prior to creation without temporal priority."

He continued in meaning: "The One who judges has judged by truth and has not called toward nonexistence. He is manifest for establishing the proof upon creation and hidden beyond the senses. He stands in the world He brought forth so that each sees according to the measure of his purity, like one looking at his face in a mirror. Glory be to Him! He brought forth their creation through His subtlety and manifested to them so that faith in Him might become true and certain. Then He made them familiar with the manifestation in order to establish the proof upon them, for they are unable to perceive His modality and cannot through the power of their intellects reach knowledge of His quiddity. True knowledge belongs to one for whom existence and the ḥudūd have been made sound."

"He established Himself in the human veil at one time and through power at another, communicating His command to every effect and assigning to every cause a known station and established ordinance. Glory be to Him, exalted above opposite and rival; glory be to Him whom no description encompasses, no name fully expresses, no image represents, and no knowledge contains. The creature reaches only what corresponds to its own form. Can one look at light except through a likeness proportioned to the density within him? Can the dense perceive the subtle except through a supply from subtlety?"

This is what he said—may God be pleased with him—clarifying tawḥīd and glorification of the Most High and Majestic, and clarifying the station of greatness that is not confined within a nāsūt. He explained that the knowledge of the malakūt does not become absent from Him, that His manifestation is without departure and His concealment without movement. The station of greatness becomes manifest through a nāsūt in every age, while the nāsūt changes from time to time; the spiritual reality itself is not absent and does not change.

As our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr said in The Taʾwīl of Zakāt: "The Imamate is one condition that does not change and does not move from one abode to another despite the passing of the ages. The Imams—peace be upon them—move on and pass to the abode of God's generosity and the place of His pleasure when their persons become hidden, while the successor from among them stands in the station of the predecessor through connection with the Imamate. For the Imamate itself does not move and does not cease. Rather, the Imams inherit it by transmission and connection, successor after predecessor, just as the Throne of God is one condition that does not cease, while those who circle around it are its angels and those who act beneath them are attached to their lords through the supplies that reach them."

Thus he clarified—may God sanctify his spirit—that the Imamate is one condition that does not move, change, perish, or become altered. What changes are the nāsūt forms through which the spiritual realities appear. The unseen command speaks through them and is united with them in the sense of support, hidden from eyes and from ordinary insight. Exalted is God; there is no god besides Him, the Originator of the complete and the perfected, Creator of both follower and Imam.

When the Imams—peace be upon them—stand through the command of God connected with them in taʾyīd, the angels are beneath them. The "angels" are those entrusted with their daʿwa, those who stand to reform creation and guide it. Our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr—may God exalt his sanctity—said in The Taʾwīl of Zakāt: "Every Imam in his age is the Name of God among the people of his era. Whoever sees the Imam of his age, takes his covenant, submits to him in all his affairs, recognizes his ḥudūd, acknowledges them, gives every rank its right, and does not transgress the rank has known God with true knowledge and has proclaimed His unity."

"Whoever sees the Imam of his age otherwise, ignores the stations of the ḥudūd, does not know God or proclaim His unity, does not obey Him or worship Him, does not hold fast to His rope, and directs obedience outside the pleasure of God is inwardly doubtful concerning God, transgresses His limits, deviates concerning Him, associates partners with Him, and takes another beside Him."

The Commander of the Believers ʿAlī—peace be upon him—clarified this in one of his sayings: "Association among you is more hidden than the crawling of a black ant on a black stone in a dark night." God says: "Whoever transgresses the limits of God has wronged himself." Knowledge of the Imam of the age and establishment of his ḥudūd are knowledge of God Most High and of His signs; ignorance of the Imam and transgression against his ḥudūd are ignorance of God, unbelief in Him and in His signs, association concerning Him, and setting up a partner beside Him. Whoever is ignorant of the station established by God and doubts His chosen one has incurred the anger of God and the curse has descended upon him.

It is related from the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—that he said: "Whoever dies without knowing the living Imam of his age dies a death of ignorance." Ignorance is the opposite of knowledge, and the ignorant are those who associate partners in the religious sense. Exalted is God above their ignorance and association. Were there in the heavens and earth gods other than God, they would both be corrupted—meaning, in the esoteric exposition, that the order of the Imamate cannot be divided among independent claimants.

This statement—may God sanctify the spirit of its transmitter—makes clear that knowledge of God Most High is through knowledge of the existent Imam and knowledge of the ḥudūd, and that this is the reality of tawḥīd. It is therefore necessary for a person to know his true and intellectual limit, so that his limit may lead him to knowledge of the Imam and he may not remain ignorant, associate partners, and die the death of ignorance.

We have known our ḥudūd and through them found indication toward knowledge of the Imam of our age. We have seen him—praise be to God—with true seeing and known him through intellectual knowledge. Knowledge through the eyes does not avail in place of knowledge of the hearts and disclosure of the secret of God that is veiled. God Most High says: "It is not the eyes that become blind, but the hearts within the breasts become blind." And He said to His Prophet—may God bless him and his family—concerning those who look without insight: "You see them looking toward you, but they do not see."

The matter has become clear, the caller has proclaimed it, spoken plainly, and explained. We know that al-Imam al-Ṭayyib—peace be upon him—is the Qāʾim of the witnesses. After him are the abdāl, changing their human veils, concealed because of the domination of their tyrants. They supply the dāʿīs who call toward them and indicate them according to what the appointed times of their ages require. Through them they appear and through them their meanings are expressed.

When the cycle of the abdāl is completed, the fifth great cycle through which the cycles of the five lawgiving speakers possessing firm resolve are completed will come to its end, and the Qāʾim will arise. Deeds will be raised and the matter will return to God, the Great and Most High. “Your Lord will come in shades of clouds and the angels,” in the inner sense, through the manifestation of the Meaning of Meanings and their disclosure in the luminous form. At that time the veil will be raised and doubt and uncertainty will disappear.

The Imamate is therefore neither changing nor transformed nor moved from one reality to another. Rather, it is ordered through the luminous forms and becomes manifest through them in concealment and manifestation. The cycles revolve upon this: after every concealment comes manifestation, darkness is followed by light, and relief comes after hardship.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: “My community is like rain: it is not known whether its beginning or its end is better.” The bodily forms of the Imams are subject to the events of the world and to transfer; killing may outwardly fall upon them, as we witness in the histories. But the rank of the Imamate and the light by which it is upheld do not perish through those events. Thus we have explained the succession from one Imam to another and the permanence of the divine proof through appearance and concealment.

As our master al-Muʾayyad—may God exalt his sanctity—said: “Know them according to the aspect from which they are bodies: they are compounded from the clay of the earth and bound to generation and corruption. They eat food; pains and illnesses descend upon them; the appointed term of death comes upon them and the decree of the fixed period reaches them. But according to the aspect from which they are what they truly are—peace be upon them—beneath them stand the complete and the perfected, and from them proceeds the existence of those below. Above them is only their Originator, who cannot be expressed by speech, contained by imagination, or reached by thoughts and aspirations.”

How then could intellects encompass that station or dreams reach it? May God make us among those who remain attached to them, who hold fast to them, and may He not cut us off from their walāya, through which righteous deeds attain their order and completion.

In the age of our master al-Imam al-Ṭayyib—peace be upon him—there appeared an intellectual power and signs of wisdom that confirmed what the ḥudūd had indicated and spoken after taking the covenants and pledges: the power of the seventh, his manifestation, the loftiness of his degree, and the clarification of his light. Among what our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, protection of the people of tawḥīd, stated concerning this is what appears in the Book of Beginning and End.

Likewise, reports came from our master al-Nuʿmān—may God exalt his sanctity—in what he transmitted from our master al-Manṣūr and our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon them—concerning the seventh and the seventh from the descendants of al-Muʿizz—God’s blessings be upon them. What appeared in this age appeared as knowledge and as a clear exposition of wisdom. What his dāʿīs manifested from his hidden knowledge and stored secret, through the support and taʾyīd he gave them, became illumination for the hearts of those possessing insight and light for the sight of the discerning knowers.

Thus he became concealed in his noble person while becoming manifest through his knowledge, which is the reality of bliss. What has been described of his manifestation may also be fulfilled through one who arises from among his pure descendants and from the progeny that commands justice and beneficence. What was in the first will also be in the last, and what appeared in an earlier age will appear in a later one. God will complete His light even though the unbelievers hate it, and He will make the Imamate remain in the noble Prophetic progeny until the Day they are raised.

May God make us among those who hold firmly to the walāya of the walī and who acknowledge the one whom God has established in the station of Muḥammad and ʿAlī. Praise be to God with the praise of grateful people of

insight. May God bless Muḥammad and ʿAlī, their pure progeny, and those among their descendants who are awaited.

— End of Chapter Seventeen —

Chapter Fifteen

On ʿAlī, the legatee of Muḥammad and his successor; on the loftiness of his excellence; and on the noble rank and exalted station with which God Most High singled him out

When the Messenger departed from this abode and ascended to the world of the kingdom and the abode of permanence, the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—stood in his place by the command of God, glorified is He, and by His revelation. He—peace be upon him—was the gatherer of the four ranks: prophecy and messengerhood, through the Prophet's surrendering that to him and his explicit designation of him; and the legateship and the Imamate, because he was the gathering-place of the settled ranks from the beginning of the three speakers, the quintessence of the ages, the settled center of the inner meaning, and the foundation of religion.

Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—was his guardian until he discharged the guardianship to him and delivered the trust to him. After him he was the station of the Light, the renowned veil, and the hidden gate whose name was concealed through ages and epochs: the end of ends, the goal of goals, and the sign of signs, whose meaning ran through the first of the lawful lineages until the appearance of the stage represented by flesh. He was the first to Islam, and this was his submission to Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—because of what he had been given of guardianship and his satisfaction with what was in it, having been established in prophecy and messengerhood.

He therefore rose as his helper, striving and fighting in his religion. God strengthened His Prophet through him, made His word manifest through him, gave Islam victory through him, and through him the judgments and rulings became manifest and the lawful was distinguished from the unlawful. By him God cut off the roots of the obstinate. Adam and his legatee, among the lawgiving cycles, occupied the station of the extract; Noah and his legatee the station of the drop; Abraham and his legatee the station of the clot; Moses and his legatee the station of the lump; Jesus and his legatee the station of the bones; and Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—occupied the station of the flesh, completing the bodily creation and bringing the legal acts to their end. Then the Commander of the Believers appeared through divine providence from potentiality into actuality, from concealment into manifestation, and from non-being into existence.

In relation to all the laws and ordinances from the age of Adam to Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—he—peace be upon him—stood in the place of the life that gives life and growth, the sensing, perceiving, speaking, knowing soul: the proof of God, His power, His sign, and His miracle; the sword of His vengeance against His enemies and His blessing upon His friends. Through him the revolving spheres revolved; through him the angels moving through their constellations were ordered; through him the natures and the mothers were brought to labor; and what had been contained in minerals, plants, and animals emerged. Through him appeared the chosen essence that gathers the quintessence of humanity. He is the "attentive ear" of God Most High, His outstretched hand, the Commander of the Believers, the qibla of those who proclaim divine unity, and the light of the Lord of the worlds, bringing His friends from the darkness of unbelief and deception into radiance and light, and substituting for them, through his shade, protection from scorching heat. Whoever acknowledges him gains peace and profit; whoever denies him is forbidden and deprived.

Our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God sanctify his spirit—said: It is mentioned in the chronicles and biographies that God does not accept the repentance of a prophet, nor the choosing of a legatee, nor the walāya of a saint, nor any act of obedience performed by anyone, even if he devoted himself completely to worship and strove in it, except through the walāya of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him. Whoever is without the walāya of ʿAlī loses his prophecy, his legateship, his sainthood, and his righteous deed; God accepts none of it from him and does not purify his act. ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is from the descendants of Ismāʿīl b. Abraham—peace be upon him. What excellence could be greater than this, in which he has no partner, but rather is uniquely singled out? Just as God is One, Single, Everlasting, with no partner in His dominion, no consort and no child, so ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is one in his excellence, unique and singular in it, with no partner in it and none comparable to him.

He said in another section: God Most High says, "A wall was set between them, having a gate; within it is mercy, and outside it, before it, is punishment." He caused the Gate to exist before them openly and made it known to them clearly. He established the proofs and demonstrations concerning it by symbols and allusions, intimations and the

unveiling of stations. He placed His Gate beneath allusion throughout all the cycles, by pointing toward him and turning toward him, and He manifested him and made him plain in the final cycle and the seal of the great cycle.

He made its explanation flow upon the tongue of the Seal of His prophets and messengers, Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—His chosen one and elect. He said, "I am the city of knowledge and ʿAlī is its gate." And He, glorified is He, said, "Righteousness is not that you enter houses from their backs; rather righteousness belongs to one who is God-fearing, and enter houses through their doors." This is an announcement that the outward aspect of the gate is that which the people of doubt and suspicion cling to—those far from taʾwīl, who stop at the sensible and abandon the intelligible. He made mercy and reward obligatory for the people of the inner aspect of the Gate, and vengeance and punishment for the people who stop at its outward aspect.

The inner aspect of the Gate is the walāya of the Commander of the Believers, attachment to him, uprightness in following him, fidelity to him, and the fulfillment of the covenant: "And fulfill the covenant, for the covenant will be questioned." The speaking-prophets alluded to him through symbols: Adam through the Ark of the Shekinah, Noah through the ship, Abraham through the House, Moses through the staff, and Jesus through the cross.

Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—said, "I am the city of knowledge and ʿAlī is its gate," a clear designation, explicit in wording and meaning. Muḥammad's miracle was the Qurʾān, before which creation was unable to bring even a single sūra like it, while the power that is his legatee, the possessor of taʾwīl, established his miracle and made his truth manifest.

Our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity—said that our master al-Ṣādiq—God's blessings be upon him—related from our master ʿAlī—peace be upon him—that he said: "I have a station that has never occurred to the heart of any human being, and a degree whose true knowledge none has attained. Divine lordship itself does not occur to the hearts of human beings as they imagine it; only the people of realities among them know it."

All creation knows God by acknowledging what the outward signs of knowledge establish, while the people of realities know God with the reality of His knowledge and proclaim His unity from the proper aspect of His tawḥīd. Likewise, no one has known ʿAlī—peace be upon him—in the complete reality of his knowledge except the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—and the Imams from his descendants—peace be upon them. The people of certainty know him through the outward aspect of knowledge and through the establishment of the signs, proofs, and miracles that God Most High manifested through them time after time.

In this section he made clear that creation knows God Most High through the establishment of His workmanship, while the people of realities proclaim His unity with the tongue of His unity. As the sage said, "Wherever the miracle appears, prostrate." Salmān al-Fārisī entered upon the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—and prostrated to him. It was said to him: "Salmān, do you prostrate to a human being like yourself?" He said: "I prostrated only to the light between his eyes." That light was the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him. His prostration was because he recognized what others had fallen short of recognizing. The miracle became manifest to him, so he submitted and obeyed. He did not reject the excellence of his master, nor did he disdain obedience to him, nor deny what had been bestowed upon him.

No one was made manifest with miracles like those manifested for our Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. Knowledge of the Messenger and of the Imams from his progeny is through the second end-point, and he deserves the attributes that terminate in him by reason of what the First End deserves, and because he is its veil, its gate, its truthful tongue, and its proof. Therefore he said: "I am the First and the Last; I am the Manifest and I am the Hidden; and I know all things. I am the one who raised its heaven, spread its earth, made its rivers flow, and caused its trees to grow."

The First End is the Intellect, and the Second End is the walī. He deserves the same sort of predicates: he is first in Islam and faith; he is first by union with that which is united with him; he is last because he is the Second End that became manifest in actuality after being in potentiality; and he is hidden because of what is hidden within him of knowledge, wisdom, lights, and mysteries. He is the one who "raised its heaven," that is, he established its speaking-prophet, who is like heaven, until his proof stood and his affair became manifest. He "spread its earth" by establishing the ranks and extending the daʿwa from which the second creation comes into existence. He "made its rivers flow" by making the sciences manifest from each rank to the one beneath it, and from every superior to the one below. He "caused its trees to grow" through what he extended to the believers, forming them in the form of

knowledge and religion and guiding them to clarification and understanding. He is a Second End corresponding to the First End to which we have pointed, because the creator, fashioner, and giver of form to what is lower and higher in the heavens above and the earths below, and what lies between them and beneath the soil, is the Commander of the Believers in the religious creation—the one about whose reality souls became bewildered and intellects fell short, and through whose support miracles became manifest.

He is the creator of the forms of religion by which souls take form and reach their second perfection through what is cast upon them from his spiritual current of knowledge. He is the supreme elixir that does not become corrupted, through which souls attain the noble and majestic station: their deficiency returns to completeness, and they become angels after having been like the souls of beasts.

His appearance together with Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—was, in comparison and analogy, like the appearance of soul and body together. The body is the outward forms of the sharīʿa, restricted to the degree of density. The soul is the degree of taʾwīl, which transforms whoever receives it through the subtlety it contains. Thus ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is the soul of the laws, the fruit hidden within their branches and breathed into them when they were formed. He is the one who gives the laws life, strengthens them, brings them together, and completes them, just as the subtle soul gives life to the body, establishes it, and completes it by being breathed into it. The Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—used to magnify him, honor him, and ennoble him.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: “None has known me with the reality of my knowledge except the Messenger of God and the pure Imams from my descendants and progeny.” The Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—was the most perfect of the speaking-prophets in perfection, the greatest of them in loftiness and majesty, the greatest of them in knowledge, the soundest of them in judgment, and the best of them in character, as God Most High said in describing him: “Indeed, you are upon a tremendous character.” God praised him in Sūrat al-Najm because the light of majesty became manifest through him until he saw Him another time and saw the greatest signs of his Lord. Likewise He manifested this through Abraham—peace be upon him—when He showed him the kingdom of the heavens and earth. Muḥammad and ʿAlī are the chosen essence of God among His creation and His gift to Abraham His friend, answering his supplication when God Most High said: “And when Abraham and Ismāʿīl raised the foundations of the House: Our Lord, accept from us; indeed You are the Hearing, the Knowing. Our Lord, make us submissive to You and from our progeny a community submissive to You; show us our rites and turn toward us; indeed You are the Relenting, the Merciful. Our Lord, raise among them a messenger from themselves who will recite Your signs to them, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them; indeed You are the Mighty, the Wise.”

Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—is the answer to Abraham’s supplication, and ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is the light that was sent down with him: “Those are the successful.”

It is related that the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—was once sitting among his companions when the Commander of the Believers approached. He said to them: “Who among you would like to look upon Adam in his knowledge, Noah in his understanding, Abraham in his wisdom, Moses in his intimate discourse, Jesus in his miracles and his practice, and Muḥammad in his excellence and perfection? Then let him look at this man who is approaching.” This was an allusion and explanation, a clarification and designation, that ʿAlī—peace be upon him—gathered all those noble stations, completed their ordinances, and clarified the taʾwīl of their laws. He is the possessor of proof and explanation, the universal taʾwīl made manifest to sight. To him belong the parables that were struck and the mysteries that were veiled.

God Most High said: “He is the One who is God in heaven and God on earth.” This means the Commander of the Believers insofar as he stands in the earth of religion as the substitute of God by His command, while the intellects of creation stop in bewilderment before the One who is above all. In relation to the settled Imams before him, whom he gathered into his noble collective form, he is their universal Qāʾim and the manifestation of their proof. Yet in relation to the Qāʾim of the Resurrection, he is partial because of his manifestation within the daʿwa and his appearing in the garment of the sharīʿa, whereas the sharīʿa of the Qāʾim is intellectual and his daʿwa universal, not divided, because the stations are gathered within his call.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—established Ubayy b. Kaʿb in the rank of breaking opposition and instruction in the outward sciences; he stood in relation to Muḥammad as Joshua stood to Moses, because he began his instruction and established the construction of his form. The Prophet used to say, “The best reciter among

you is Ubayy." Thus he held the place of Joshua b. Nūn in preserving the outward sharīʿa. But the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, held the supreme station and majestic rank, exalted and sanctified above the legatees. After the station of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—he stood to interpret the symbols and hidden matters of the law and to disclose the realities of its secret meanings.

He is the possessor of unveiling because he disclosed what the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—had veiled within the outward form of his law, revealing it to his friends and elect without diminishing the station of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—or adopting the claims of the misguided extremists and false exaggerators. Rather, we say of him that he attained true speech, rose above all ranks, possessed the highest stations, and stood in the world of religion in the place of the First Intellect, above which there is nothing except its Originator and Maker. The Prophet accepted Ubayy b. Kaʿb as a foundation only because of the appearance through human form and the manifestation through a veil. When inquiry reaches the understanding of his station and the height of his honor, whoever studies these sciences must investigate carefully and truly, neither reducing one rank from its rank nor raising it beyond its station, so that knowledge of the ranks may lead him to knowledge of the Originator of existence, the Creator who brought it forth from no pre-existing thing. Understand what we have explained and discern what we have made clear.

It is related that a man named Sunān asked al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—about the meaning of divinity and the walī. He said to him: "O Ibn Sunān, Muḥammad pointed to ʿAlī when he said, 'Whomever I am his master, ʿAlī is his master.' God is the master of ʿAlī, and this outward human manifestation has a special relation to Him. As for the hidden meaning, this is a power that He manifested from Himself; and there is no power greater than the manifestation of the form through which He made Himself known to His creation. He made some people rightly guided through it and others go astray. The name ʿAlī falls upon the manifest form, while the name Allāh Most High falls upon the hidden meaning. Thus ʿAlī is the walī of God and God is the walī of ʿAlī. Yet that human form was known by its name, just as the human forms of the world are known by their names. Were you not to call them by their names, they would not be known, nor would people know one another. So when you say 'ʿAlī', you know the name of the form through which a power appeared and creation was guided. God is manifest in its inward aspect within His creation, because the divine meaning is not perceived by you, while His walī is a human form perceived by you."

Al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—said: "You see Me through another than Me, yet I show you the One who is my Lord." And he said: "When you have known me, there is nothing upon you regarding knowledge of what lies beyond that. He established the human forms only because of the infirmity of your bodies, so that you might see the sign of knowledge and power in a form similar to your human form. For knowledge of the heart alone, being without visible existence, was inaccessible to you; so the existence of knowledge was placed in a human form, but they were ignorant of it. May God protect us from that."

This is the speech of the truthful and trustworthy one, the one who split open the knowledge of religion. The Messenger said, "God created Adam upon His form," and said, "I saw my Lord in the form of a young man of abundant hair," while he was a young man in the prime of youth, his hair falling toward his ears. He did not point thereby to God Most High, the transcendent Originator.

It is related from Rashīd al-Hijrī—may God have mercy on him—that he said: I heard the Commander of the Believers say concerning one of his particular companions: "By God, by the prophethood of His Messenger, by my walāya, and by obedience to my command—true obedience to me—there was the likeness of Solomon b. David—peace be upon him—when he asked God to grant him a kingdom that would belong to no one after him. God answered his request, subjected to him the jinn, humans, and winds, taught him the speech of birds, and gave him of everything. He marveled at his kingdom and at what had been given him. My walāya was presented to him, but he hesitated before it, so God stripped him of his kingdom and afflicted him with the body that was cast upon his throne; his prophethood was suspended for forty days until he acknowledged my walāya. Then God returned to him what had been taken, removed the affliction that had struck him, and he again judged among the people."

"Likewise David—peace be upon him—marveled at what had come to him. My walāya was presented to him, but he hesitated concerning it, so God afflicted him with what passed through his heart until he acknowledged my walāya, returned to obedience to me, turned back, and repented. Likewise Job—peace be upon him—my walāya was presented to him, but he hesitated. God afflicted him with the affliction that has been mentioned and tested him with a tremendous test. God found him patient in affliction until he acknowledged my walāya; then God healed him of

what He had afflicted him with and removed his harm. Likewise Jonah—peace be upon him—my walāya was presented to him and he hesitated, so God afflicted him with the fish that swallowed him; when he acknowledged my walāya, he was delivered and healed.

"Likewise our Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—my walāya was presented to him and he hesitated concerning it, and trials resembling those descended. Whoever hastened to answer with walāya was among the messengers, and whoever delayed the answer and acknowledgment of me was among those who were not messengers. Behold, my walāya is the walāya of God. 'There, the walāya belongs to God, the Real'—and by God, that is my walāya. Whoever acknowledges it acknowledges God; whoever denies it has disbelieved in God, denied Him, and disbelieved in His Messenger."

It is related from Abū Dharr—may God be pleased with him—that he said: I heard the Commander of the Believers say to a group of his elect: "I am the true religion of God. I am the true satisfaction of God. I am the true tawḥīd of God." No denier can say it and no claimant can falsely claim it. "I am the one whom God magnified in His oath when He said: 'No! I swear by the positions of the stars—and indeed it is a tremendous oath, if you but knew.' I am the Most High, the Great. I am that side of God that He mentioned in His Book when He said, 'Alas for me for what I neglected concerning the side of God.' I am the face of God of which He said, 'Wherever you turn, there is the face of God.' My name is gathered in the Qurʾān; in the Torah it is complete; in the Gospel it is fixed; in the Psalms it is widespread; and in the first scrolls of Abraham. I know what was; I know what will be; in the worlds I am ancient in rank; in the heavens I behold; and on earth I know."

The dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God illumine his face—said in the Book of the Taʾwīl of Zakāt: True knowledge does not perish and is not annihilated, and the knower never dies. The persistence of his knowledge in the world is his persistence. When he departs this world his knowledge departs with him, yet after him it remains and people transmit it. By the persistence of his knowledge, he remains among people forever. Thus every Imam in his age is the Name of God among the people of his era. Their obedience to him is the face of worship toward God. Whoever recognizes the Imam of his time, takes his covenant, submits to him in all his affairs, recognizes his ḥudūd and acknowledges them, and gives each rank its due, has known God with true knowledge and proclaimed His unity from the proper aspect of tawḥīd. Whoever sees the Imam of his time otherwise than through this form and is ignorant of the stations of the ḥudūd has neither known him, nor known God, nor proclaimed His unity, obeyed Him, or worshiped Him. His obedience is to something other than God and his worship is outside the satisfaction of God. He has not grasped the rope of God; he is in doubt concerning God and associates partners with Him.

God, glorified is He, says: "God—there is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills. His Kursī encompasses the heavens and the earth, and preserving them does not weary Him; He is the Most High, the Great." Then He says: "There is no compulsion in religion. Right guidance has become clear from error. Whoever rejects the ṭāghūt and believes in God has grasped the firmest handhold, which never breaks. God is Hearing, Knowing. God is the walī of those who believe; He brings them out of darknesses into light. As for those who disbelieve, their awliyāʾ are the ṭāghūt; they bring them out of light into darknesses. Those are the companions of the Fire; therein they abide forever."

These verses manifest both negation and affirmation. He negated all likeness from the Living and Self-Subsisting, because life is His attribute; He negated slumber and sleep from Him and called Him the Most High, the Great, after saying that His Kursī encompasses the heavens and earth—His Kursī being His knowledge. Then He said of those who believe that He brings them out of darknesses into light. None brought the community out of doubt and bewilderment—meaning especially the awliyāʾ—other than ʿAlī. And He attributed the disbelievers to the ṭāghūt, who brings them out from the light—which is the walāya and knowledge of ʿAlī—into the darknesses of doubts. Where then may piercing intellects reach? To what may the questioner aspire in asking?

The Sage—peace be upon him—said: "God is just in His decree and perpetual in His justice. Just as He dealt justly with the first creation and the first world by making Himself known to them and drawing near to them through His chosen angelic ranks, so He deals justly with the children of Adam. However He manifested Himself to the first creation, He manifests Himself to the last of them, and His action among the middle of them is the same. He is the Witness who is never absent. Whoever denies His manifestation, rejects one of His forms, or rejects one of His

Names does not know God. Whoever does not know God through His veil and His station is bewildered regarding knowledge of Him."

God, glorified is He, says: "And when your Lord took from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants." That is, every manifest one who appears under the name of the Imamate is the progeny of the First Manifest One. They are a luminous temple and a spiritual house for the great source. Understand this and you will be rightly guided, if God Most High wills.

He also said: "What appears to you of nāsūt is not different from the lāhūt; rather, it is a power He manifested." In like manner al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—was asked about the age of the Lord. He said: "Five words: God is One." The saying of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—is an allusion to their lāhūt. As for their human forms, they are different. Al-Ṣādiq appeared to Jābir in the form of the full moon shining in the sky, then appeared in the form of Fāṭima, then in the form of Muḥammad. Then he turned to his right in the form of al-Ḥasan and to his left in the form of al-Ḥusayn and said: "This is all one thing, speaking and taking form however it wishes by the power of God, Lord of the worlds. Have you not heard His saying, 'Then he appeared to her as a well-proportioned human being'?" This indicates that it can take form in luminous and human forms. When that appears, it is the one that was recognized. Thus the Commander of the Believers appeared to Jābir first in the form of the full moon, then in the form of Fāṭima, then in the form of al-Ḥasan, then in the form of al-Ḥusayn, then returned in the recognizable form and said: "O Jābir, can your intellect bear this? This is my garment and my clothing in every time and age." And he said: "Our dead do not die, and our slain are not killed."

The People of the House—peace be upon them—related that the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—said: "O ʿAlī, when you have washed me and wrapped me, seat me upright and ask me concerning everything that will occur until the Day of Resurrection." The Commander of the Believers did so, and the Messenger of God spoke while in his shrouds and perfumes concerning what he wished to reveal of wisdom and miracle.

God's manifestation is only through the manifestations of His signs and attributes, because if God—mighty and majestic—were to manifest Himself to His creation by direct vision so that their hearts could perceive Him and they could look upon Him whenever they wished, His awe would disappear, His majesty would diminish, and His reverence would be reduced. It is commonly known that when people become accustomed to seeing something they fear, their fear of it diminishes. Therefore He is not touched by the confusion of men nor by the defilement of bodies, and heaven is not above Him nor earth beneath Him as it is for created beings. Rather, His signs are such that if He were to manifest without a veil the heavens would be rent at the sight of Him, the earth would quake at His glance, and the sight of creatures would be unable to look upon His essence. A proof of this is that the sun is but one of His signs, yet the eyes of creatures are unable to gaze upon it. How then could they be capable of perceiving its Creator—glorified is He? The face of justice has become unveiled, and truth is visible to the one whom God Most High grants success.

We return to mention the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him. Since he gathered the noble stations that preceded him and they were all parts of him, the Iblīs of the iblīses arose as an opposite to him, contending with him and claiming his station, barring people from his path. To him the Most High and Great alluded in His noble Book: "Who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you, in whatever form He willed He composed you." He denied his excellence, rejected God's blessing, became arrogant within himself, and denied the proof of God over him. Therefore God Most High and Great tested him through his accursed devil who was his companion in the tremendous sin in which they became immersed. The Book says: "It is a wise judgment."

By the principle of justice, excellence must endure in the station of the rightly guiding, directing one who proclaims unity, strips away false attribution, is the best of creation, and the root of the pure, purified progeny. He was therefore the infallible Imam—God's blessings be upon him. He arose striving in the guidance of God's creation, so that people would have no argument against God. He gathered the Qurʾān according to its true form and interpreted it, revealing its hidden jewels and bringing forth its stored meanings. Then he closed his gate, drew around himself its veil and covering, adhered to the cave of taqiyya, and divorced the lowly world for three reasons.

The first was that none of the Companions remained for him as a supporting group except the twelve who remained, six from the Emigrants and six from the Helpers, who had stood up, each one of them, on the day Abū Bakr sought to address the congregation, warning and admonishing him concerning what they knew of the

Commander of the Believers' station and what they had heard from the Prophet regarding him. We have mentioned this in our book known as ʿUyūn al-Akhbār, concerning the excellence of the Chosen Prophet, his legatee, and the pure Imams.

The second reason was that he had no abode of emigration to which he could go and in which he could establish the ḥudūd of God. The third was his desire that Islam remain established so that people would not return to Judaism, Christianity, and the first jāhiliyya.

The Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—had already instructed him concerning this in words known to both elite and common people. He said to him: "Do not unsheathe a sword after me, lest the jāhiliyya return to its former course." And he said to him: "Abū Bakr will take it after me through usurpation and injustice. If you find a group that will support you, then your right is yours; if you remain seated, it is Paradise. After him ʿUmar will take it through usurpation and injustice. If you find a group that will support you, then your right is yours; if you remain seated, it is the Sunna. After him ʿUthmān will take it; if you rise, it is your right, and if you remain seated, it is the Fire."

The meaning is: if you find a party supporting you during the rule of the first two, then the right is yours. If you remain seated, your sitting is a paradise for both supporter and opponent. For the supporter, it is Paradise through your compiling of the Qurʾān, reciting it, and revealing its secret and hidden content; this is the complete Garden and comprehensive blessing. As for the opponent, your sitting is a "garden" for him inasmuch as it preserves him upon the law of the Messenger and reassures him so that he does not return to the first jāhiliyya, thereby causing the rule of Islam to vanish.

As for his saying regarding ʿUthmān, "If you find a party that supports you, then the right is yours; if you remain seated, it is the Fire," that was because the Messenger of God knew that the third would bring something other than what the first two had brought. The first two outwardly preserved Islam, whereas the third, when opportunity came into his hand, altered the Sunna, changed the laws and judgments, restored those expelled by the Messenger, burned Qurʾānic codices, and committed acts by which, according to the justice and wisdom of God operating in every age and time, he deserved killing.

Thus the sitting of ʿAlī—peace be upon him—for the reasons we have mentioned was an establishment of the people upon the law of the Messenger. The right was his right; the Garden was his daʿwa; the caliphate was his caliphate. He was standing in his essence, the elucidator of the signs, the manifester of the clear proofs. His glory shone and his knowledge benefited. He did not sit from incapacity, humiliation, defeat, oppression, or ignorance, nor by admitting that they were fit for what they had taken. His sitting was neither acknowledgment of them nor advancement of them because of any excellence they had deserved, nor did they possess any fruit of merit thereby. Rather, his sitting was to establish Islam, complete the judgments, and turn away from the lowly world and its chaff. His sitting—peace be upon him—was the universal standing, known only to the people of knowledge.

He did not seek a rank above his rank or a station above his station. When he and Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—appeared, Muḥammad came first in the outward order and the call to him. Their joining was like the joining of two letters of the alphabet: when the two letters come together the meaning appears, whereas with a single letter it does not appear. They are the two fathers of the community and the meaning of mercy and blessing.

Thus his restraint from seeking his right during the days of darkness, when they sat in his seat and claimed a station to which they were not entitled, was only so that the sharīʿa would not be annulled when those people left religion because of their recent proximity to polytheism and because of the doubt in their hearts, inflamed as those hearts were by the killing of beloved ones, fathers, children, and close companions. Yet the Messenger had already made known to them the station of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, guided them to him by inspiration and proclamation, symbol and explicit statement, and by sound explanation.

The Messenger of God used to say: "ʿAmmār is with the truth and the truth is with ʿAmmār," and ʿAmmār was with ʿAlī; thus ʿAlī is the truth with which ʿAmmār was. Successful indeed is the one who believes in him and obeys him.

The Messenger of God said: "Salmān is one of us, the People of the House." Salmān did not depart from the truth while he remained with ʿAlī. And he said: "The green canopy has not shaded, nor has the dusty earth carried, a

possessor of a truthful tongue more truthful than Abū Dharr." Abū Dharr testified that Abū Bakr was oppressive and transgressing; for that he was belied, exiled, removed, and harmed.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: "I am pleased for my community with what Ibn Masʿūd is pleased with." Ibn Masʿūd was not pleased with any Imam other than ʿAlī and did not take after the Messenger any walī other than him. It is sufficient to mention what was revealed concerning ʿAlī—peace be upon him—on the day of Ghadīr of tremendous designation and renowned excellence.

God Most High said: "Today I have perfected for you your religion, completed My blessing upon you, and approved Islam for you as religion." After this verse, is there any blessing other than knowledge of ʿAlī—peace be upon him—obedience to him, following him, his walāya, and submission to him and his progeny? The Messenger—may God bless him and his family—made clear the six pillars of Islam and made their meaning, spirit, and light to be walāya, the seventh of the obligations, their seal, their goal, and the spirit without which they are not accepted. It was also the first of the obligations, for the Messenger gathered Banū ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and made his walāya known to them and urged them to obey him.

The Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—once delivered a sermon in Kūfa. A man from among the Shīʿa came forward to him and asked him what he had suffered from this community. He said: "By the One who split the seed and created the living soul, what I suffered from the former communities was greater than what I suffered from this community." His saying indicates that he is the First and the Last. He also said: "The legatees are from me and I am from them. We sweep away by ourselves and sweep our enemy into the abyss." That is the sword of the Qāʾim.

Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—complained of his people in His saying: "Indeed my people have taken this Qurʾān as abandoned." ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is the abandoned Qurʾān while he is among them. The silent book was in their hands; they magnified the written leaves but did not perceive the meaning of the Book, which is the manifest command of God. They turned away from the kernel toward the shell and left the shade for the scorching heat.

ʿAlī—peace be upon him—manifested tremendous miracles and clear signs during the age of the Messenger and afterward: among them the return of the sun for him; the stone of the catapult that reached an immense height and which he brought down by divine support; the verse was revealed, "They thought that their fortresses would protect them from God, but God came upon them from where they did not expect." Among them was his killing of the jinn at Biʾr Dhāt al-ʿAlam. Among them was his planting of the palm with the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—when Christians asked him for a miracle if he were a prophet like Moses and Jesus. He sent ʿAlī with them to revive the dead; when the graves split open, the ten accepted Islam.

Among them was his confronting Abū Bakr in the mosque of Qubāʾ. He said to Abū Bakr: "You have opposed the Messenger of God regarding what he commanded you, denied the blessing of God Most High, transgressed your limit, seized my right, and sat in a place other than your place." Abū Bakr said: "Where is the possessor of the command?" He said: "Would you like to see him?" He said, "Yes." ʿAlī said: "If he commands you to return to the truth, will you return the command?" He said: "I will return it." ʿAlī took covenants and oaths from him concerning that, then took him by the hand and went with him to the mosque. There was the Messenger—may God bless him and his family—wearing white garments. When Abū Bakr saw him, he bit his fingers and sat before him, overcome. He withheld his greeting. The Messenger reminded him of what he had been commanded, warned him, and ordered him to return the matter to the Commander of the Believers. Terror seized him. He went out frightened and encountered his misleading devil. He told him what had occurred and related the story. The other said to him: "This is a little of the magic of Abū Kabsha. Beware of mentioning this to any of the Companions, lest your grave be stoned until the Day of Resurrection." The accursed one concealed it and kept silent, for he was the compass-point of darkness, while the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—was the compass-point of light.

As one of the excellent speakers said: "Thus We have appointed for every prophet an enemy from among the criminals." Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—thus manifested life after disappearance, as Jesus—peace be upon him—had done.

These are the manifest miracles and evident wonders, which none can bring except the one joined to the depositary rank through divine support. Thus ʿAlī's sitting back from seeking his right and taking it from those who wronged him was mercy toward the community and a means of drawing them near, until he could extract the trusts

that belonged to him among the Muslims and guide those who followed him toward the inner knowledge of religion. They then knew his station and the error of the misleaders that had overtaken them disappeared.

There remained only the black, dark, obstinate, arrogant point. He fought it. This was his battle against ʿĀʾisha and her followers, after God had killed ʿUthmān, and his battle against the accursed son of the accursed, Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān. In all of this the Commander of the Believers was calling to the tawḥīd of God and the completion of the law of the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family. The four qualities were gathered in him: the rank of prophecy, messengerhood, legateship, and Imamate. He informed of the stories of the earlier ones and warned like the messengers; he carried out the taʾwīl entrusted to him and explained it, and he established its clear proof and demonstration. The earth of the daʿwa shone with the light of its Lord; meanings hidden within its books came forth.

He remained upon this until the rule of the accursed Umayyad. The third had committed what required his death by sheltering those expelled by the Messenger of God, altering the Qurʾān while claiming what the earlier two had claimed, and persisting in error and falsehood. The Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—therefore stood striving and fighting until the Book reached its appointed term.

In his time events occurred resembling what had occurred in the age of Adam and Moses—peace be upon them—corresponding to the ascendant and the fourth angle. He migrated from Medina to Kūfa and fought ʿĀʾisha when she rose against him, just as Ṣafrāʾ had risen against the legatee of Shuʿayb and ʿAnāq against Seth, the legatee of Adam, and as the calf arose against Moses. Thus the walāya of the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—and his evident excellence were established by clear demonstrations, despite the Companions' denial of him and their injustice toward him. The firm root that remained was the judgment and will of God.

Chapter Sixteen

On Fāṭima al-Batūl and the two grandsons; and on how the Imamate, after al-Ḥasan, returned to the settled line and did not leave the descendants of al-Ḥusayn

We say, and from God is success and trust; to Him belong power and strength, and from the blessings of His friends—peace be upon them—comes aid. We have mentioned in this book meanings that are the quintessence of what the ḥudūd set down, and from the springs of what they expounded. We have also mentioned the excellence of Muḥammad and ʿAlī—peace be upon them—through what was transmitted in direct teaching and through the proofs that bring the eyes of the Imams of truth out of the darkness of doubt into the light. We now wish to mention what we promised concerning Fāṭima al-Batūl and al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, who were the delight of the eye of the Messenger.

We say: they possess a manifest excellence and a tremendous glory that cannot be comprehended or encompassed; only a flash of their light can be seen by one who has sight. God's blessings be upon them. They are the chosen essence of created existence, the light of explanation, the best thing drawn from the world in every time and age, the place upon which revelation and taʾyīd descend, and the treasury of the knowledge of God that neither diminishes nor perishes. Creation has fallen short of knowing them, and the most eloquent knowers are unable to encompass their description.

Fāṭima—God's blessings be upon her—is the one who was joined to the waṣī in both the spiritual and bodily senses. From the two of them the light of the Imamate arose, clear and manifest. She is the niche of the lights, the quintessence of the mysteries, the shining light of God for the people of insight, and the tree from which the Imams were sent forth. She is a jewel from which the noble lights radiated.

She is the one referred to as Laylat al-Qadr, the Night of Power, because of the greatness of her measure, the loftiness of her honor, and the exaltedness of her remembrance. She is the proof of the waṣī—peace be upon him—who is "better than a thousand months," meaning better than a thousand hujjas who rise in the daʿwa under the possessors of the command. "The angels and the Spirit descend therein by the permission of their Lord." That is: in her daʿwa there arise the Imams, who are the ones who possess sovereignty over the world, and the spirits descend—that is, the true sciences by which what was and what will be is known—by the permission of their Lord, the treasury of the knowledge of the possessor of the cycle and his successor, the one entrusted with the mysteries of knowledge.

He is the Lord of the ḥudūd, their higher and their lower ranks, the one whom God ennobled through knowledge of the reality of his walāya and by which He distinguished them in every command. The "command" is taʾyīd. From it the world of command is named: the world of subtlety in which the command of their Originator became joined to them, so that they were attributed to His command, since there was no intermediary between them and their Originator except the command by whose light their essences were illuminated.

His saying "Peace" refers to the soundness of the breasts and the safety of the souls from the bewilderment through which there comes decay and destruction. From this the Abode of Peace is named, because its people are safe from defects and remain in the abode of reward, never perishing and never being touched by afflictions. His saying, "until the rising of the dawn," means until the rising of the Qāʾim, at whose hands the gathering and resurrection will occur.

Thus the Imamate remained connected in the descendants of Fāṭima—peace be upon her—until the known day, and her daʿwa extended until the day when the springs of knowledge are opened. Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—was asked concerning the interpretation of the saying of God Most High, "Lord of the two easts and Lord of the two wests." He said: "Abū Ṭālib and Fāṭima bt. Asad rose and shone; in al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn they set and went down."

Fāṭima is the jewel of the letter mīm, its secret and its public aspect. He manifested her so that the Imams would be attributed to her and would be called the Fāṭimids. Whoever knows her and knows her reality is among those upon whom there is no fear and who do not grieve. The limit of her knowledge is that everything in the heavens and the earth is within her grasp. Whoever knows her with this description has attained the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and has become among those in ʿIlliyyīn.

She is the Night of Power from whose knowledge the deniers were cut off, because the inverted world imagines that she was merely a female who emerged from the ordinary place of birth. Yet her reality is otherwise. God Most

High asks in wonder, “And what will make you know what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.” That is, better than a thousand hujjas. “The angels and the Spirit descend therein, by the permission of their Lord, from every command. Peace it is until the rising of dawn.” The angels are those who possess knowledge of her reality and point to her and to her progeny. The Spirit is the one who is chained to magnifying her, calling to knowledge of her, obedience to her, and recognition of her excellence, by the permission of their Lord—that is, the possessor of the cycle, may God bless him and his family. “From every command, peace”—that is, every Imam attributed to her—and the rising of dawn is the Qāʾim, possessor of unveiling and explanation.

God Most High said regarding this blessed night: “Indeed We sent it down in a blessed night; indeed We were warners. Therein every wise command is distinguished.” The wise command runs through the stations of the Imams. The Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—said: “I am the warner and ʿAlī is the guide.” ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is the speaker and truthful one in his saying: “I am the one who gave birth to Jesus in his mother’s womb; I am the one who fed Mary fresh ripe dates; I am the one before whose worship the Messiah does not disdain, nor the angels brought near; I am the one who spoke intimately to Moses from the tree.”

Thus ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn cannot be encompassed by a describer. The essence is one and the power bears witness. God, glorified is He, promised to unveil their reality after concealment and secrecy in His saying that He would make it prevail over every religion, even though the associators dislike it. The Qāʾim—peace be upon him—will do this when he rises with the sword and cuts off the root of the unbelievers and hypocrites. When he reaches the grave of the Messenger he will demolish the wall until the grave is left alone, because he will come to the two graves of Hārūt and Mārūt and ask, “Who is here?” Their two graves will split and they will appear; he will command that they be crucified. There the followers of falsehood will lose, and this will be among the first miracles of the Qāʾim, for he will not be recognized except through signs.

Then the wrongdoer will say, “Would that I had taken a path with the Messenger.”

Fāṭima—peace be upon her—is also the gathering of those who, during the time of the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—were people of piety, excellence, and striving, established upon the outward practice of Islam, neither opposing, nor arrogant, nor denying: the people of righteous works, piety, religion, and trust. She is that Islamic gathering because she is a noble station whose outward aspect is nāsūt and whose inward aspect is subtle lāhūt.

The Prophet used to kiss her and smell her. When he was asked about it, he said: “When I was taken on the Night Journey, Gabriel brought me fruit from Paradise. I ate it, then I approached Khadīja, and Fāṭima came from it. I smell in her the scent of Paradise.” Paradise here means the noble chosen gathering consisting of the meaning of the two earlier subtle daʿwas, the daʿwa of Abū Ṭālib and that of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. Fāṭima—peace be upon her—was from the essence of that fruit and appeared from the daʿwa of Muḥammad. Whoever wishes to smell the scent of Paradise should connect himself to her and to what she reveals of the command of her walī that is hidden with her, for she is the clear proof of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the one standing through the inner knowledge of his daʿwa and guiding those who connect themselves to him. Through her Paradise is smelled and the reality of the daʿwa is known.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—made clear the excellence of ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon them—when he gathered them beneath the cloak and singled them out by that to the exclusion of others. The cloak is what covers their knowledge and veils their excellence and station, for they are the veils of God brought near, wrapped in the cloak of the sharīʿa and veiled from those who look. In them is the manifest meaning.

Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī related: We were with the Messenger of God when his uncle al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib entered and said: “O Messenger of God, tell me: by what has God preferred you, the People of the House, over us, while the mines from which we come are one?” The Prophet said three times, “Leave me, uncle.” Then he said, “Ask, uncle, about what you wish.” He said: “Tell me, Messenger of God, by what have you, the People of the House, been preferred over us while the origins are one?”

He said: “God created me and created my brother ʿAlī when there was no heaven, no earth, no Paradise, no Fire, no Tablet, and no Pen. Our Lord spoke a word, and it became light and spirit. He mingled the two, and from them created me and ʿAlī. From my light He created the Throne, and I am more exalted than the Throne. From the light of ʿAlī He created the light of the heavens, and ʿAlī is more exalted than the heavens. From the light of al-Ḥasan He

created the light of the moon, and from the light of al-Ḥusayn He created the light of the sun and made it illumination for the people of the earth. He created the angels from our light and settled them in His heavens. The angels used to glorify God, mighty and majestic, saying in their glorification: 'All-glorious, All-holy! How noble are these forms before God, mighty and majestic!'

"God Most High wished to test the angels with a trial, so He sent upon them a cloud of darkness in which they could see neither beginning nor end. They glorified and sanctified God and said in their glorification: 'All-glorious, All-holy! We have never seen anything like what we are in through the power of these forms. If You remove from us what we dislike, we shall never desire anything but what You desire.' God Most High said: 'I desire it.'

"God Most High then created from the light of Fāṭima something like a lamp and suspended it at the earring of the Throne. The heavens and the earth shone from it, and for this reason Fāṭima was called al-Zahrāʾ, the Radiant. God Most High said to the angels: 'I shall make the reward of your glorification, praise, and sanctification to be this maiden, her father, her husband, her two sons, her Shīʿa, and those who love her.'"

This is the tremendous excellence God placed in them, and in its highest summit He settled them. It is the tremendous excellence and noble station.

In another report, from Jābir b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī from al-Bāqir Muḥammad b. ʿAlī—peace be upon them—he said: "The knowledge of Fāṭima is something that none knows except God, the Messenger of God, the Commander of the Believers, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn." The Messenger said: "When I was taken up to heaven and entered Paradise, I ate a quince. When I descended from Paradise I approached Khadīja, and she conceived Fāṭima—peace be upon them all."

The meaning of the quince is that the divine will took a form from the will so that there would be for it on earth an image and a will. This was from the support of the Preceder, the will of the First, and the carrying out of the command of the Second. Fāṭima—peace be upon her—thus became formed from the two ancient lights. They are two ranks in heaven and four on earth. For this reason the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said that Fāṭima has two names in heaven and four names on earth, according to what she contains of the ḥudūd on earth and what they contain in heaven.

Consider this section of his words—peace be upon him. His saying that none knows her knowledge except the two higher ranks is an allusion to the Prophet and the waṣī—peace be upon them—whose station in the world is the station of Intellect and Soul, when the dense coverings are removed and their station is known from the standpoint of intellectual subtlety that differs from the senses.

His saying, "When I was taken up to heaven," refers to what he attained of completion of the knowledge of the seven speaking-prophets, whose laws, acts, and duties had preceded him and whose sharāʾiʿ were completed. His entering Paradise is his encompassing the noble spiritual ḥudūd and being shown what they contain of elevated and holy ranks.

When he knew this with purified knowledge, there was purified for him the praised excellence from which he knew Fāṭima al-Batūl to be the daughter of the waṣī and the daughter of the Messenger, and he knew that the Imamate, prophethood, messengerhood, and legateship were stored within them. They were in her pure progeny and household, and she was from the purest essence of what was in the Garden, which was the quintessence of the people of the cycle before him: the cycle of Abū Ṭālib and ʿAbd Allāh through the support of the Preceder, who was ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, so that there would be for them an image on earth standing in their place.

Thus in one time He made Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn, who are the images of those earlier ranks. His saying, "Fāṭima became formed from the two ancient lights," means what we have mentioned of Abū Ṭālib and ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. They are the two first divine lights; Muḥammad and ʿAlī—peace be upon them—are the two later lights. His saying, "In heaven are two ranks," means her grandmother Āmina and her mother Khadīja, the two hujjas of the first station and the noble master. "And on earth four" means Fāṭima bt. Asad, Āmina bt. Wahb, Khadīja, and the mother of her two grandfathers ʿAbd Allāh and Abū Ṭālib. The mother of ʿAbd Allāh and Abū Ṭālib was named Fāṭima bt. ʿAmr al-Makhzūmiyya.

Or the two images may refer to what is in Intellect and Soul, the two subtle ones, and the four on earth are the Bāb, the ḥujja, the dāʿī, and the maʾdhūn. From Intellect and Soul comes the manifestation of the spiritual intellects; from ʿAlī and Fāṭima comes the establishment of the Qāʾim of the Imams, people of the noble luminous ranks; and

from the Bāb, the ḥujja, the dāʿī, and the maʾdhūn come the manifestation of religion and the growth of teachers and students, those who benefit and those who receive benefit. Understand these allusions and discern these signs.

Khālid b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī—may God have mercy on him—then said: I said, "My master, I ask you by her right over you, by the right of the one who gave you this station, and by the right of what you are favored with forever, tell me the reality of knowledge concerning her, and tell me concerning al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon them—how their affair began."

Al-Bāqir Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—God's blessings be upon them—said: "As for the Messenger, O Khālid, his station is like the station of the fish in the sea." The likeness of the Messenger was like ʿAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥa—may God have mercy on him—upon whom the command fell. He was the one whose incisor was broken and who was struck in battle. As for the person of Muḥammad in truth, he did not disappear, hide, flee, or suffer harm; rather, resemblance was made to occur. Understand, brother, the meaning of this section, so that you may be among the successful and saved who reach the lofty degrees and do not become confused.

Know that the Messenger—may God bless him and his family—from the standpoint of his subtlety, the purity of his form, the radiance of his substance, and the loftiness of his element was not reached by any of these accidents, nor did the eyes of the people perceive him in the way in which they perceived what they perceived. God Most High says: "You see them looking toward you, but they do not perceive." If he is not perceived by sight, how could swords and stones reach him?

As for his noble nāsūt, pains encountered it and what occurs to bodies occurred to it, because the friends of God—peace be upon them—are among stones like the red ruby: although there is purity, light, and brilliance in it and it possesses a tremendous excellence and great worth above ordinary stones, it is still classified among stones. What fell upon the nāsūt of the Prophet fell upon his "airy" or bodily form, like ʿAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥa among the ḥudūd whose spiritual residues became joined to that noble nāsūt, while their subtleties had risen into the subtle lāhūt.

Al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—continued: "Likewise with Fāṭima—peace be upon her. Everything that descended of afflictions and reprehensible events fell upon the image, which is the covering, and upon every garment and veil." Whatever pains befell them—God's blessings be upon them—did not fall upon their noble nāsūt insofar as it is the best of bodies, much less upon the lāhūt that cannot be reached. For this reason God Most High said concerning the Messiah—peace be upon him: "They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it was made to appear so to them." They perceived only the visible resemblance, not the subtle reality that imaginations and conjectures cannot reach. This applies to every prophet, waṣī, and Imam. Their noble bodies are touched by pains and retribution occurs upon them so that the residues produced by those events may be purified and so that they may attain reward and deliverance.

What occurs to the bodies of the friends of God of calamity, adversity, or trial occurs upon the material form. Punishments occur in this way because the enemies intended those actions against the Imams—peace be upon them. Thus he—peace be upon him—made clear to us the accident that occurs to the covering, which is the bodily image that comes from the airy residue.

He said: "Know, Khālid b. Yazīd, that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, the sons of Fāṭima—peace be upon them—were born from the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon them all—but they came forth otherwise than ordinary children come forth. Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan came forth from the left side, and al-Ḥusayn Abū ʿAbd Allāh came forth from the right side, without any of the states of women or any cause that Fāṭima—peace be upon her—disliked." This is the saying of al-Bāqir—peace be upon him.

Know, brother—may God make us and you firm upon the path and give us abundant water from the knowledge of reality—that this is among the secrets concerning which it is said, "Our affair is difficult and made difficult; none bears it except a sent prophet, an angel brought near, or a believer whose heart God has tested for faith."

His saying—peace be upon him—that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn were born from Fāṭima by the Commander of the Believers is the true statement in which there is no doubt, for the two are their children in both corporeal and spiritual creation, because she is the hujja of the waṣī and the hujja of the Greatest Station, which is exalted beyond likeness and comparison.

His saying that they came forth otherwise than ordinary children come forth means other than the outlets of the dense body made of blood and flesh. His statement, “because the rank obtained by them was neither begotten nor giving birth,” refers to the rank of deposit for our master al-Ḥasan and the rank of settlement for our master al-Ḥusayn. That light was divided between them into two halves. Those noble ranks were not contained by wombs and did not require nourishment from fruits and food.

The left side from which our master al-Ḥasan came forth is the outward aspect and the meanings of the sharīʿa and the first wilāya to which those who act by it and know it ascend. Walāya precedes the seven supports of the daʿwa. From that al-Ḥasan—peace be upon him—was formed from the forms of those pillars who answered the Messenger with purity, fidelity, obedience, sincerity, intention, unity, certainty, and truthful inward purpose. This was at the beginning of his rising and before he stood with the sword, rather with command and prohibition, strengthening and endurance, and what resembles that. Therefore the retribution upon him was only the hidden poison, without public visibility or fame.

As for our master al-Ḥusayn, his emergence and origin were from the right side, which is taʾwīl, reality, and the manifest sciences. It is the living air settled in the resting-place of the visible benefits from him, like the seeds of religion and the high, holy, noble forms. This is the justice of God Most High, for He does not cause the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost. It is the right side of religion, the station upon him and his progeny through the persistence of the Word in them until the Day of Judgment.

These two ranks were neither begotten nor giving birth; they were not nourished with menstrual blood, did not emerge from a womb, were not enclosed by a body, and none of the states of women accompanying childbirth reached them. They did not come through any cause disliked by Fāṭima—peace be upon her. Rather they appeared according to what the Possessor of the Will decreed for them.

Thus it is established that the left side is the rank of deposit and the right side the rank of settlement, and the certain truth has become manifest to those who possess understanding and insight.

Then he—peace be upon him—said: “Thus al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are the first two, the two children of the Will; they are two earthly likenesses—indeed, they are upon the station of the Commander of the Believers.” This is his saying—peace be upon him.

Al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon them—were the first among the noble imamic stations to arise in the Muḥammadan and ʿAlid daʿwa. They are attributed to the Will, which is Fāṭima, who in her excellence and the loftiness of her measure is like the Universal Soul, and because she is the hujja of the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—toward whom the intellectual daʿwa turned.

As for his saying that they are two earthly likenesses, that is because they appeared in their human forms upon earth to guide those who connected themselves to them from among the followers of the Messenger, those established upon the Sunna and obligation. The friends of God appeared in bodies and human forms for the sake of the world so that people could look upon them and follow them. The awliyāʾ behold the forms of their subtle, radiant, noble realities according to the purity of their forms and the illumination of their substance, while the deficient see only the bodies corresponding to their deficiency and bewilderment, perceive their shapes, and see their own likenesses.

As one of the awliyāʾ—may God sanctify his spirit—said: “The person sees of them in the mirror only his own form, not what he imagines of light, because the face has been covered by the rust of his sins and he is blind in the heart, cut off.”

Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: “Our dense forms are the subtleties of our Shīʿa.” Our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—said concerning our master al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him: “Your bodies are formed from the clay from which the hearts among us were purified. You were created from one clay and we were created from it, though in differing order.”

It is also said concerning some of the noble stations—God’s blessings be upon them—that God created their bodies from the clay of ʿIlliyyīn and created the hearts of their Shīʿa from the remnants of that clay. Their bodies are the refined essence of the remorseful one who seeks forgiveness, the one who hastens to turn back and to answer when the Administrator calls. The hearts of their Shīʿa are from that subtle remnant and noble chosen essence.

Thus al-Ḥasan—peace be upon him—was the first of the noble stations arising from the progeny of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. He stood in the rank of deposit, surrendering to al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—what belonged to him of the rank of settlement, recognizing his excellence and explaining to the elect of his Shīʿa the greatness of his gift. It is said that al-Ḥasan resembled his grandfather, the Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—from his head to his navel, while al-Ḥusayn resembled him from his navel to his feet. This was because al-Ḥasan—peace be upon him—stood through the outward daʿwa brought by the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—calling its followers to it and guiding them toward it.

The lowest rank of settlement is joined to the highest rank of deposit: they submit without disdain or arrogance. The inward aspect of the people of deposit is the outward aspect of the people of settlement, and the latter are to the former like the meaning to the word, which is the secret of secrets.

When the command came to our master al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—God's blessings be upon him—he rose through the designation of his father and grandfather and their delivery of the command to him. The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: "Al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are two Imams, whether they rise or remain seated, and their father is better than they are."

Al-Ḥasan followed the path of concealment and taqiyya because, in the beginning of spirituality, he represented the extract corresponding to Adam and the beginning of concealment and law. Thus he adhered to the cave of taqiyya. Muʿāwiya usurped his right, and he endured as the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—had endured before him. He stood with prophecy and messengerhood in the place of God's chosen Prophet, his grandfather—peace be upon him. He guided to the sharīʿa of Islam, guarded its deposit, and fulfilled its trust until Muʿāwiya sent the daughter of al-Ashʿath—may God curse them both—and she gave him poison.

He then summoned the elders of the people of his daʿwa and the elect of his Shīʿa and informed them of the station of his brother al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—and his lofty degree. He delivered to him what had been entrusted to him of the deposit and handed over to him prophecy and messengerhood. Thus the four ranks became gathered in al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him: prophecy, messengerhood, legateship, and Imamate.

The Imamate became settled in his descendants until the Day of Resurrection and turned away from the descendants of al-Ḥasan—peace be upon him. Al-Ḥasan is the symbolized counterpart of Abel, from whose progeny the Imamate turned away, while it became settled in God's gift Seth. Likewise it did not remain in the descendants of al-Ḥasan but became settled in al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him.

Al-Ḥusayn—God's blessings be upon him—in the first spiritual cycle represented the drop and is the first of those possessing firm resolve, corresponding to Noah—peace be upon him. He rose in secrecy and concealment, sent out his dāʿīs, spread his knowledge among those who followed him, and stood striving in the religion of God until the appointed time arrived, whose prior knowledge was with God, His Messenger, and the Commander of the Believers. The Messenger had left soil in a glass vessel and said: "On the day when you see this soil become blood, my son al-Ḥusayn will be martyred at Karbalāʾ."

When al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—desired concealment through what God had decreed for him, he did not shrink from traveling and did not turn aside because of the advice of advisers. Rather he hastened toward what God, mighty and majestic, had judged and decreed for him, to the place of his destination. His advance toward the people of Kūfa and his answering their request were not out of a desire for this world, nor out of ignorance of what would happen to him, nor because he did not know that they would deceive him and withdraw from supporting him. Rather, he hastened so that he might attain the excellence of martyrdom and rise to what his father and grandfather had risen to in the abode of permanence, which no describer can describe and no knower can encompass except the Imams—peace be upon them—whom God informed of the inward part of His unseen and who drew out what He revealed to His Messenger. He advanced, and what happened occurred as is famous and well known.

He—peace be upon him—manifested miracles at the place of his martyrdom known both to supporter and opponent. The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: "Blessed is my son al-Ḥusayn: his offspring, his grave, and his shrine."

As for his offspring, the Imamate flowed through them and its true reality was cut off from everyone else. It continued in his pure descendants, inherited by the first from the next. As for his grave, the tremendous and famous excellence and stored noble reward of visiting it is known among both elite and common people. The people of

knowledge mention that if some of its soil is taken and placed in a house, or in a piece of cloth carried by a traveler, and the contents are lost or stolen, then what is lost returns to its owner.

If someone has children who do not survive and he takes from that soil the weight of a grain and gives it with water to the newborn for three days, the child lives. As for his shrine, it gathered all of them because none remained from his descendants except ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn—peace be upon him—the proof of God and His word. The oppressors—may God curse them—wished to kill him after his father together with all of them, while he was severely ill; God protected him from their evil, repelled their plot from him, guarded him so they could not reach him or intend harm against him. This was by the will of God Most High, because God does not sever His command and does not leave His proof on earth removed from the world or prevented.

Thus ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—became unique, without peer or equal, and none remained resembling him in his manifest excellence. Among the miracles of al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—at his shrine was also that blood appeared beneath every stone and tree for forty days. Earth and heaven wept for him, the jinn mourned him, and many other miracles and tremendous famous signs occurred that neither friend nor obstinate opponent can deny.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—had appointed [a guardian] over his child ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn and entrusted him to him until he reached maturity. Among the first miracles of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—was that when the oppressors seized him and the women of the pure Imams and abused them, mounting them upon rough saddles and taking them to Yazīd—may God curse the wrongdoers—God protected him from their plot and turned their violence away from him.

The death of al-Ḥasan—peace be upon him—was by poison because he was the gathering of those who had been with the speaking-prophet—peace be upon him—before the command to wage jihād and kill the opponents. The killing of al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—was because he was the gathering of the excellent strivers who fought beside his father and grandfather against disbelieving and hypocritical opponents. The law of retaliation therefore fell upon him by the justice of God Most High, so that those consequences would be purified and so that he would rise thereby in excellence and honor in his return to the highest ranks with the Sovereign All-Powerful, in the seat of truth.

Among the accursed opponents were those whom the friends had killed while striving in the path of God and beside the friends of God. When those awliyāʾ gather in the collective form of the Imam and Imamate and their noble residues become joined to his luminous body, retaliation falls upon them so that justice may be completed, judgment and separation established, and no liabilities remain upon the awliyāʾ, in order that God may honor them through His walī with whom those noble residues have gathered and whose bodily form they have become.

The dark and malignant forms of the enemies of the Imams become a kind of magnet of opposition. Some of their residue descends into plants and produces poisonous substances, because of what those oppositional figures had done of indecency and evil, by which they were driven toward the perception of Fire and ultimately toward the two dark nodes, the gathering-place of darkness and magnet of the enemies of the Imams. Some of it descends into vegetation and becomes lethal poisons, which are consumed by those stations upon whom—peace and blessings—the law of correspondence falls. From this sort came what destroyed the speaking-prophet of a cycle, what caused the death of our master al-Ḥasan, and likewise what affected our master al-Mustanṣir—peace be upon him.

Some of it becomes minerals from which swords and knives are made, and some becomes other things by which the noble stations are killed, because those objects fall upon their counterparts among the dark, impure minerals and plants that descend downward. Everything is preserved by the principle corresponding to it, the dark substance of the two nodes, by the will of the Administrator and the demand of wisdom. The scale of justice is established by God Most High.

Chapter Seventeen

On the Imams from the progeny of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—the loftiness of their excellence, the sublimity of their honor, and the greatness of their station

We say: in this book we have mentioned what has already been mentioned of the excellence of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—his brother and vizier, and the excellence of Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn, the Imams of his cycle—God's blessings be upon them—of that which is the secret of the secret, and through whose knowledge insights become illuminated and intellects become clear. Now we mention the Imams of his cycle—peace be upon him—their stories and their weeks, and what God singled them out with of tremendous excellence and noble station, for they are the signs of the Wise Reminder, the children of the Great Announcement, the chosen essence of the first and the last.

The first in whom the ranks were gathered and the virtues and noble qualities were completed—so that in the Muḥammadan cycle he gathered the four ranks and attained the most excellent and exalted honor—was the Imam ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, exemplar of those who bow and prostrate. The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—had foretold him, pointed him out, and informed his waṣī and his two grandsons of his noble station. He said: "The settled Imam, in whose progeny the word of God continues, is the one whose mother has a single breast in her chest."

Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī frequently sought women in marriage, hoping to encounter that sign, but the woman who possessed it was stored away for his brother, our master al-Ḥusayn, protected and guarded from anyone else. During the time of the Commander of the Believers, when victory was gained over the opponents and captives came from among the daughters of Kisrā, king of the Persians, there fell to the share of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—a daughter of Kisrā, the best of the women in beauty and the most complete of them in intellect. He called her to Islam and she accepted Islam; he called her to faith and she believed and confirmed. He gave her in marriage to his son al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—and from her was our master ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn. Thus he combined the nobility of the two lineages and possessed both excellences: the excellence of the Arabs and Persians, together with his lofty honor and high root among Banū ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, and his being from the chosen descendants of the Messenger and the best of the children of the waṣī and al-Batūl.

When the calamity of the killing of al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—occurred, he did not depart this abode until he had established him in his noble station and delivered to him the inheritance of his grandfather and father, complete and entire. He made his uncle Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, possessor of pleasing deeds, a hujja for him, a veil and covering before him, a gate for him, and his guardian, and he appointed and established him for guidance toward him. Thus most of the Shīʿa went to Muḥammad on account of this arrangement. He called to the walāya of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon them—whoever among his followers was purified and sincere, and he remained in this state for the rest of his life.

When ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon them—was taken captive and was in the presence of Yazīd—may God curse him—God protected him from his violence and did not allow him to achieve any purpose against him. On a Friday he asked Yazīd for permission to address the people. Yazīd imagined that he was incapable of speech because of the humility he saw upon him and the illness from which he had only recently recovered. He wanted him to be unable to speak before the people of Syria. The enemy of God did not know that truth would speak upon his tongue and that the light of his proof would become manifest through him. Some of Yazīd's companions said: "Do not permit it, for he is the son of the breaker of pulpits and the breaker of armies."

The walī of God ascended the pulpit, praised God and extolled Him, and blessed his grandfather the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—with eloquent speech and a sharp tongue, so that it seemed he possessed two tongues because of the force and abundance of his eloquence.

When Yazīd—may God curse him—heard this from the walī of God, he silenced him and said: "Descend, and you shall have what you wish." He said: "I have three needs: release me and those with me from your fetters; return us to our Prophet, for we have more right to that than anyone else; and [grant what is due to us]." He answered what he asked. God protected His walī from being humiliated or abased.

He preserved His word in his descendants and revived what the wrongdoers had put to death of the Sunna of His Messenger. He lived in concealment from the neighbors of the people and their oppression and remained under the

protection of his uncle Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya. When he reached his uncle he said to him: “Deliver to me my deposit.” He said: “What is it?” He said: “An empty flask in which there is a white sheet.” Muḥammad searched for the flask and found it in his possession. He gathered the naqībs, delivered the deposit, and gave the trust to the walī of God. He was the first of those who pledged allegiance to him, believed in him, and followed him. The flask was a symbol of Muḥammad and indicated that he was empty of the Imamate; the white paper inside it was a symbol of the Imam ʿAlī and evidence of his lofty rank: that he was the settled Imam beneath the protection of his uncle, who acted as guardian and veil for him and for his noble knowledge.

What appeared of the miracles of al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—and what occurred to him and to Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, who stood with him in the noble station, corresponded to the ordering of the sacred ranks. ʿAlī is the tenth in one reckoning, while Muḥammad is the sixth of the speaking-prophets; ʿAlī is his seventh, al-Ḥasan his eighth, al-Ḥusayn his ninth, and ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn his tenth. From the seventh he corresponds to the fourth from the ascendant. Thus events occurred as a witness to him just as they occurred for those before him, step for step and likeness for likeness. Among the Imams he is the third, corresponding to the clot in the spiritual order.

The author then returns to the doctrine of the divinely appointed form. It is said of the Messiah—peace be upon him—that the Word is with God. That Word is the great source that the ḥudūd intended, the one to which the awliyāʾ alluded and toward which the chosen ones pointed. It is the pure form stripped from density, united with subtlety, appearing through the stations, and to it belongs the allusion.

The dāʿī Aḥmad—may God sanctify his spirit—said: the pure form is the form of the Essence by which God called creation to faith in Him and to acknowledgment that He is the Creator, the Originator, the Fashioner, and the Provider. The believer is a believer through that form, while the disbeliever is a disbeliever through denying it. The believer in that form must strip it of limitation, outline, change, transfer, and alteration from one condition to another, and hold that it is the ancient sign by which He—glorified is He—appeared to creation in former communities and past cycles. God, glorified and exalted, made it His ancient Name, never separated from Him, calling toward Him in every time, people, age, and period.

He manifests His Name to His creation as a person who calls creation toward Him so that recognition may be easier, for the divine reality is known only through His Name and attribute. He therefore manifests His Name as one calling creation toward His meaning—exalted is He who is never absent—then makes manifest for them the form of His Essence in confirmation of what He has called them to, as a favor from Him toward His creation. From the form He makes manifest the overwhelming power and names it for them through the waṣiyya and Imamate. Thus every waṣī in every age to whom a prophet pointed, or to whom a people were called after the disappearance of the prophetic mission, is a Name or an Attribute.

Therefore the obligation is as our master ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—said: “Do not deny a Name of mine, and do not reject a form of mine.” This is part of a long discourse. This is what God Most High intended and indicated by the Word. It is the rank of the spiritual ḥudūd in the world of subtlety, and from it all the intellects of the world of origination receive support. The tree that is the likeness of that Word is Muḥammad the Messenger of God, the chosen essence of God among the worlds and His messenger to the children of Adam, united with the Intellect that accompanied him, from which he received and by whose support he was strengthened.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: “I am a tree; Fāṭima is its fruit-bearing branch; ʿAlī is its pollination; al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are its fruits; and those who love us, the People of the House, are its leaves. Truly, truly, they shall be with us in Paradise.” What a tree it is! Its fruits are sweet, its lights radiant, corresponding to the exalted Word of God in the intellectual worlds. Banū Umayya, the opponents of those noble stations, were the accursed tree in the Qurʾān, established after the tree that had been uprooted from above the earth and had no stability. They were the first two who denied their Lord and disbelieved in His blessing, and the Imamate was cut off from their descendants and left their line.

The Imam al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—endured what he endured from the evil Umayyad tree. God manifested through him His highest Word and made him one of the holy channels of His knowledge. God’s blessings be upon him, his father, and the pure Imams from his descendants as long as ages follow one another and progenies succeed one another, and may God’s curse be upon the wrongdoers who were blind to their shining lights and denied their prophetic virtues.

When the appointed term came to al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—and his period ended and his work was completed, he designated his son, the truthful Imam Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad—God's blessings be upon him—by the command of God and the revelation cast to him. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq—God's blessings be upon him—then arose. He was the fifth among the Imams, corresponding to the bones in the spiritual order, and corresponding to Jesus the Spirit of God.

He manifested wonders in the religion of truth and miraculous signs greater in spiritual meaning than what Jesus—peace be upon him—manifested of raising the dead, healing the blind from birth, the leper, and the blind, and creating a bird from clay that moved by his exalted breath. Likewise, step by step, al-Ṣādiq revived the dead from ignorance and error whom God described in His saying: "Dead, not alive, and they do not perceive." He guided them to the path and breathed into them the spirit of the enduring reality after creation, through which there is ascent into the world of light.

God Most High said concerning this in clarification: "O you who believe, respond to God and the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life." In this is a clear allusion to the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—through whose daʿwa the spirits live and endure by what they receive from the knowledge of his reality, for he is the Holy Spirit that God breathed into the sanctified Intellect and gave it life. He is connected to the Station of Majesty in every time and age. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—was the locus of that spirit and its place.

The followers of the Messiah—peace be upon him—were gathered around him, and likewise the blind one is the one who is blind to the light while the awliyāʾ of God give sight. God Most High said: "It is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts within the breasts that are blind." Likewise, the leper is purified by them from what has afflicted him, and they uncover what has overwhelmed and harmed him. This is true knowledge, through which are salvation and life.

The birds are their hujjas and dāʿīs, veiled by knowledge and action. Their creation from clay is their elevation from the rank of respondents. When the awliyāʾ breathe into them the spirit of the holy reality and support them with what the human jewel receives, they become angels in actuality, purified from bodily density, connected through majesty and exaltation; they fly in the kingdom of the sciences and govern the affairs of the Living, Self-Subsisting One.

Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: "Conceal our knowledge and cover our affair, and We shall make you the chosen and the successors, just as We chose from the nations before you those who carried Our trust, concealed Our secret, and acted according to Our commands. We made them prophets and messengers and made some of them angels brought near. They used to walk in the markets as you walk and eat as you eat, but We purified them and made them Our messengers to the prophets."

He was asked: "Who are these, O Commander of the Believers?" He said: "The one named Gabriel, the one named Michael, and the one named Isrāfīl."

The dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God illumine his face—said: Whoever conceals the affair of the friends of God, hides it, does not proclaim it or reveal it, reserves their wisdom from those unworthy of it, and is of their chosen and elect, attains the rank of the angels who are named by reason of their being entrusted with the sciences of religion, informed of the wisdom of the friends of God, standing upon their secrets, and encompassing their hidden knowledge. God has called people possessing this attribute "angels." He says: "You will see the angels surrounding the Throne, glorifying with the praise of their Lord."

The Throne is the knowledge of God of which He informed His prophets and those among His servants whom He approved and chose for the Imamate. It is His unseen knowledge that He entrusted to them and made secret with them, withholding it from the rest of His creation. Thus He made them angels and lords by an excellence with which He singled them out and a station He bestowed upon them, pure for them. This is the Imamate, a condition that neither changes nor moves, flowing through the ages and epochs. This is part of a long discourse which we have abbreviated.

We return to the mention of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him. He made the sciences, miracles, and jurisprudence manifest until his fame spread among creation. The sciences were copied from him and everyone took from him what he was fit to receive. Shaykhs and scholars of the people of the outward forms studied under him in their

outward rulings, such as Abū Ḥanīfa, al-Shāfiʿī, and Mālik b. Anas, who learned from him, and he allowed them what was appropriate to them. For this reason in some of their judgments they agreed with the People of the House—peace be upon them—on such matters as the prohibition of wine and the cutting punishment, and in certain other matters. Mālik would say: “What I narrate from the People of the House is such-and-such.” As for the ruler’s punishments against the fornicator and the adulteress and similar matters, those belonged to the walī of the command, while the command was in the hands of oppressors.

Many of the scholars of the outward forms studied under al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him. Elite and common people acknowledged his excellence. His blessing became manifest and his word rose. He sent the dāʿīs and ḥudūd of religion into the islands, took covenants, and unveiled realities.

His opponent, the accursed descendant of Jaʿfar [i.e. the Abbasid ruler], would send people to him to spy out his secrets and to find one who might [report on] him. The narrative now turns to the tests and persecutions surrounding his Imamate and to his designation of the Imam who would follow him.

The accursed ruler continued to send spies against al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—and against his sons. On one occasion he seized him and imprisoned him, but God delivered His walī, repelled the oppressor’s plot, and saved him from tremendous distress.

It is related that a man among al-Ṣādiq’s Shīʿa was a vizier to Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr. He came into the presence of the opponent—may God curse him—and saw him sighing deeply. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad was then visiting him. The man asked al-Manṣūr about his condition. He said: “I have killed a thousand of the descendants of ʿAlī, perhaps more, and their master and most noble one remains. I have sworn to myself that he will not see the evening of this day.” The man said: “He is an old man. Worship has emaciated him and weakened his body. He does not seek the goods of this world.” Al-Manṣūr said: “You believe in his Imamate, and I too know that he is your Imam, my Imam, and the Imam of all creation—but kingship is barren.”

He then commanded his executioner: “When Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad enters behind me, I will remove my cap from my head. Strike off his head.” In the last hour he ordered al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—to be brought. When he entered, the vizier looked at Jaʿfar—peace be upon him—and saw him moving his lips. Al-Manṣūr was pacing in the house. When he looked upon al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—he suddenly came running before him barefoot, with his hood in his hand and his head uncovered, until he entered his chamber. He seated him in his own place of honor and sat before him like a slave before his master. He said: “O Abā ʿAbd Allāh, do you have a need that I may fulfill for you?” He said: “I have no need except that your messenger reached me asking me to come to you.” Al-Manṣūr said: “I summoned you only so that I might fulfill a need of yours.” Al-Ṣādiq said: “My need is that you do not summon me; if a need arises for me, I shall come to you of my own accord.”

Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—left for his guest-house. The vizier approached Ibn al-Dawānīq and asked him about his condition. He said: “Woe to you! I saw a dragon open its mouth and place one jaw over this palace and the other under it, and it said: ‘If you do anything to Jaʿfar, I will make you an example to those before and after you.’” In this way the Imam manifested this miracle—peace be upon him.

A group of the companions of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—were standing before him while he reproached them regarding a statement he had heard from them concerning one of his ḥudūd. He had unveiled to them something of his rank, but they denied it. Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: “What do you say concerning that?” They said: “We say of you only what you yourself say concerning your excellence, and we do not say lordship of you.” He moved his lips while moving two of his fingers against one another, and from between them there emerged a bird. It flew and landed upon the head of one of them who was wearing a hood. It seized the tassel of the hood with a thread and flew with it like a fly. The man rose to recover it, but could not reach it in the air. Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: “Sit.” He sat, and the bird returned the hood to his head.

Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—then recited the verse: “If the fly snatches something away from them, they cannot recover it from it. Weak are the seeker and the sought. They have not measured God with His true measure. Indeed God is Strong, Mighty.” They acknowledged the miracle and accepted from the one among them who had denied the reality.

It was also for this reason that Abū al-Dawānīq once ordered one of his men to go to al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—and flatter him so that he could take the covenant from him and learn what was concealed. The man did so,

and al-Ṣādiq was not ignorant of what he intended. Rather, he wished to manifest miracles so that people would have no argument against God regarding His proof. The man attended al-Ṣādiq's assembly and memorized some of the wisdom he heard. He became certain that the one to whom al-Ṣādiq pointed was Ismāʿīl—peace be upon him. He then went to Abū al-Dawānīq and informed him of all this. The ruler was filled with rage and hatred toward the walī of God and immediately sent for al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him.

When he stood before him, each asked the other about his condition. The ruler had hidden the informer behind a curtain to hear the conversation. He reproached al-Ṣādiq and said: "You possess knowledge that you conceal and hide, and you have appointed your son Ismāʿīl and indicated that the Imamate is in him. You were obligated to make the truth manifest if it is with you." Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: "The one who conveyed that to you lied." The man then emerged from behind the curtain and said: "Did you not say such-and-such, and point to Ismāʿīl?" Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said: "Swear by God that this statement of yours is true." He said, "Yes," and al-Ṣādiq made him take the well-known oath. When he finished it, al-Ṣādiq said to him, "Stand." The man rose only to twist backward, fall upon his back, and die instantly. The unbeliever was confounded, and the opponent turned back from his intention after seeing the proof of his Lord.

Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—was ordered to the House of Honor; he was honored, given gifts, and equipped with the best provisions for his journey. He returned to his abode of residence.

Likewise, when Yaḥyā b. Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn intended to rise against Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik, Jaʿfar—peace be upon him—sent one of his companions to forbid him from doing so. When the man reached Yaḥyā, he greeted him and said: "Your cousin conveys peace to you and says: do not rise and do not move, for you will only tire yourself and your rising will not succeed." Yaḥyā said: "What did he say would happen to me if I rose?" The man told him. Yaḥyā said: "O son of the daughter of the Messenger of God, do you not know the knowledge of your cousin?" He said: "The sons of my uncle know our knowledge and their knowledge, while we know our knowledge and theirs."

The man said: "I heard him say: if you rise you will be killed and crucified, and your father did likewise when he was killed and crucified; afterward you will be burned in the fire." Yaḥyā wept at that, took out a written document, and said: "Take this scroll and deliver it to my cousin as a deposit with him for my son, for I have no excuse to abandon my rising." The man said to him: "I see that the Shīʿa have answered your cousin and that those who love you are few." Yaḥyā said: "Because my cousin called them to life and they answered him, while I call them to death and they turn away from me."

The man returned to al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—and delivered the scroll to him. Yaḥyā b. Zayd rose with his sword; he was killed, crucified, and burned just as al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—had said. Al-Ṣādiq called them to life while Yaḥyā called them to death. The miracles of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—are many; if we sought to enumerate them all, the explanation would grow long. Our aim is only to establish proof for what we have set down.

Al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—had designated his son Ismāʿīl and established him as Imam in his presence. The ḥudūd took knowledge from him, and al-Ṣādiq commanded them, by God's command to him, to follow him. Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar—God's blessings be upon him, the blessed and auspicious one—therefore stood under the protection of his father. He was the sixth among the Imams, corresponding to the flesh in the spiritual order and to his grandfather, the Prophet of guidance—may God bless him and his family—the sixth of the speaking-prophets and Seal of the prophets. ʿAlī, Commander of the Believers, is the other creation, the soul that produces movement and life, and the universal spirit. Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar is the seal of the Imams in this first sequence, and the other creation, while his son Muḥammad follows him.

His person had appeared and his mark was known, while in rank he corresponded to the Qāʾim, the seventh of the speaking-prophets and the spirit of life. When the appointed term of Ismāʿīl drew near, a concealment was arranged against the opponent because of the intensity of his envy, rebellion, and eagerness to extinguish the light of God—while God completes His light by His action, if He wills.

Ismāʿīl and his father al-Ṣādiq al-Amīn—God's blessings be upon them all—therefore instructed that a guardian be established over his son as a veil and depositary, just as Aaron instructed Moses that a guardian be appointed over his son. They established as a veil over him and a protector one from the line of Salmān, namely Maymūn b. Ghaylān b. Bidr b. Mihrān b. Salmān al-Fārisī—may God sanctify his spirit. They entrusted to him Muḥammad b.

Ismāʿīl when he was three years old. Maymūn al-Qaddāḥ raised him and concealed his person. He was his guardian and the depositary of his command.

The descendants of Isḥāq were people of deposit and those who stood with proclamation, while the descendants of Ismāʿīl bore the settled line of the Imamate. Ismāʿīl remained under the protection of his father just as his grandfather Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—had remained under the protection of the possessor of the age and proclamation, Abū Ṭālib—God's blessings be upon him.

Ismāʿīl then manifested an illness. Visitors from town and journey came to visit him during it, and his father took testimony from everyone who reached him concerning his condition and wrote down their testimony. When he manifested his departure, he was shrouded for three days, while testimony was taken from every visitor, especially members of Banū Hāshim and others. On the third day al-Ṣādiq ordered that he be carried to the grave. He uncovered his face and said to those present: "Is this not my son Ismāʿīl?" They said, "Yes." He renewed their testimony concerning that, and he was buried.

News of this was written to Abū al-Dawānīq. It pleased him and cut off his expectation concerning what he had intended to do. May God curse him and those who strive through corruption on earth and manifest hostility toward the friends of God.

After that, however, Ismāʿīl—peace be upon him—appeared again in Baṣra, and people began rushing toward him, saying: "This is Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar; he has returned alive." An old man sat upon his shop; he was one of those loyal to his father. He said: "O son of the daughter of the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—take my hand; may God take your hand." Ismāʿīl came to him and passed his blessed hand over his back. The old man's back became straight and he was cured of his affliction. Creation witnessed this, and Ismāʿīl then disappeared from them.

When Abū al-Dawānīq heard of this he said: "The magic of the sons of Abū Kabsha is indeed mighty." He ordered that Jaʿfar be brought. When al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—reached him, he reproached him regarding what had occurred. Al-Ṣādiq produced the written testimony of the witnesses. Many of those who had testified were present in the ruler's assembly, and they testified again. His rage against al-Ṣādiq subsided, and al-Ṣādiq—God's peace be upon him—departed.

Thus Ismāʿīl—peace be upon him—manifested concealment and then appearance just as his grandfather, the speaking and sent Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—had manifested concealment and appearance in his own manner. The doctrine is that the Imamate is a lasting condition that does not change or alter through the passing of times and ages, because the successor stands in place of the predecessor. Children are attributed to their fathers only through obedience, following, walking in their path, and fulfilling what is due to them.

The author cites the saying of God to the son of Noah. Noah said, "My son is of my family," but God answered him: "He is not of your family; indeed he is an unrighteous deed." Whoever among the natural descendants of the Imams claims their noble stations without true designation and without divine light has failed and lost; his bond with them is cut off and God has declared them innocent of him, while he in turn has declared himself cut off from them.

Whoever obeys his Imam, follows the Sunna of God and His judgments in following him, and holds fast to the command of his walī is connected to them by a true bond. When the line was cut off from Mūsā and his descendants, the proof against them remained standing even though they were stripped of the garment of that exalted rank, because the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: "I leave among you that which, if you hold fast to it, you will never go astray after me: the Book of God and my progeny, the People of my House. The two will never separate until they return to me at the Pond."

The Pond is the Qāʾim to whom the Imamate remains connected. For this reason the Commander of the Believers is said to give drink from that Pond to the community of the Messenger of God until the Day of Resurrection. He distinguishes every walī through his true knowledge and heals the thirst of his soul. It is the Pond of prophecy, messengerhood, legateship, and Imamate, the gathering-place of the people of excellence whom God has honored: the possessor of the realities and manifest sciences that become visible to the people of his cycle at his rising after they had been concealed.

These signs and allusions became manifest, unveiled, in the possessors of the command, inherited by successor from predecessor: through the manifestation of miracles, the unveiling of clear sciences, and the bringing of

followers from darkness into light, saving them from drowning in the flood of error and doubts. “Whoever wishes, let him believe; and whoever wishes, let him disbelieve.”

Thus the Imamate of Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar is established, and the word of God remained in his progeny and in every Imam descended from him. The truth became clear and falsehood vanished; the wretched followers of falsehood failed. God desires to complete His light even though the disbelievers hate it.

After Ismāʿīl, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl—God’s blessings be upon him—arose. He was the seventh among the Imams and their Qāʾim, corresponding to his grandfather ʿAlī, Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him—the completion of the spiritual cycle and the “other creation,” which is the soul of the thing, its spirit, and its meaning. He completed the first spiritual cycle and from him began the second cycle.

He was in Medina. He rose with the religion of God, glorified is He, sent out the dāʿīs, spread the sciences, and ordered his dāʿīs to seek an abode of emigration, according to the established custom of the friends of God, because every ascendant, fourth, and seventh must have an abode of emigration to which he can resort.

He lived in the age of al-Rashīd—may God curse him. When news of Muḥammad’s knowledge and the spread of his daʿwa reached al-Rashīd, he ordered that Muḥammad be arrested and delivered to him. The Imam—peace be upon him—had prepared in his house a subterranean chamber in which he could hide from the opponent. When al-Rashīd’s envoy reached Medina, the Imam entered that chamber and hid. They searched for him but did not find him and were unable to seize him. They returned to al-Rashīd and informed him, while the search continued without ceasing.

The Imam—peace be upon him—then traveled seeking an abode of emigration. He left in Medina two sons, one of whom was the successor of the Imamate, while the other served in concealment, and he himself went to Nīshāpūr, hiding his identity from his opponent. He moved between Nīshāpūr and Daylam. In Nīshāpūr he married a woman who bore him a son whom he named ʿAbd Allāh and whose kunya was al-Riḍā. ʿAbd Allāh became known as “the Perfumer” in order to conceal his station and protect him.

The Imam established veils for him and ordered each of the veils and hujjas to be called by the name of the Imam. When one of them took the covenant from a respondent, he named for him one of those veils so that the respondent would imagine him to be the possessor of the command—peace be upon him. This became the established practice among the three concealed Imams. Because of that, the dāʿīs in their islands called those Imams by varying names, so much so that sometimes two names became attached to one Imam.

Muḥammad—may God’s blessings be upon him—was protected from the sword until the Book reached its appointed term. He manifested the sciences, explained the realities, and unveiled to his elect the concealed secret. Through him appeared realities, signs, and proofs unlike what had appeared among the Imams before him, because he was the seventh, possessor of strength and manifestation, radiance and light, the one who explains the hidden science.

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl was among the ranks at which the goal of the sharāʾiʿ terminated, the one through whom they were sealed, encompassing the ranks of their ḥudūd and the sciences of those who bore them. He is the Qāʾim in potentiality, possessor of the first unveiling. The Qāʾim in actuality is the universal Qāʾim, possessor of the other unveiling and the greatest seizure, the Qāʾim of the Great Resurrection. There are many “resurrections”: first the maʾdhūn al-makfūf, then the unrestricted maʾdhūn, then the restricted dāʿī, then the unrestricted dāʿī, then the dāʿī al-balāgh, then the hujja, and at their summit the Bāb.

These ḥudūd are all “resurrections” because each of them rises for the spiritual forms that connect themselves to him, stripped from bodies, proceeding to his horizon and known through him. After these stations comes a noble Resurrection: the station of the Imam—peace be upon him—the Qāʾim of the Resurrection and the end of ends. Every rank is a qāʾim in relation to the rank beneath it. Beyond all of them is the Qāʾim of the Great Resurrection, possessor of the Greatest Seizure, in whom all stations are gathered. He is the goal of the noble goals, gathering within himself the stations of all the cycles from the beginning of the three thousand years that constitute the final great cycle until the end of the cycle of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family.

Our master the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—alluded to this in his saying: “Every ten thousand years a Form stands.” It is an allusion to this tremendous station, gathering the stations of the cycles within the thread of his mighty knowledge.

The tenth, after his departure, will succeed him, and a substitute will arise in his rank. He is called the seventh speaking-prophet because he speaks with the divine command and gathers the excellence that pertains to him. He is not the Seal of Muḥammad's nubuwwa in the same sense, nor is he a messenger; rather, he is unique in the rank of unity, and through him completion is completed and the order is made harmonious.

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl was singled out with this because of his position within the chain of the stations of the cycle of concealment. If you count Adam, his waṣī, and the Imams of his cycle, their last is the speaking-prophet Noah—peace be upon him. If you count Noah, his waṣī, and the Imams of his cycle, their last is Abraham. If you count Abraham, his waṣī, and the Imams of his cycle, their last is Moses—peace be upon him. If you count Moses, his waṣī, and the Imams of his cycle, their last is Jesus—peace be upon him. If you count Jesus, his waṣī, and the Imams of his cycle, Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—completes their ranks as the speaking Seal of the speaking-prophets, while his waṣī—peace be upon him—is unique in excellence. If you then count the Imams of Muḥammad's cycle, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl is their seventh, and the seventh possesses power over those who precede him. Therefore he is called a speaking one, a seal of the sevenfold sequence, and a qāʾim. He abrogates the law of the possessor of the sixth cycle by explaining its meanings and making manifest the inner meaning concealed within it.

Our master the Imam al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh—peace be upon him—spoke of this in the supplication for Saturday, saying of the Qāʾim by truth, the speaker with truth: "The ninth from his grandfather the Messenger, the eighth from his father, al-Kawthar; the seventh of his sons, the Imams; the seventh of the messengers from Adam; and the seventh of the Imams from ʿAlī"—God's peace and blessings be upon them all. He continued: "The one whom You ennobled, magnified, and honored; through whom You sealed the world of natures; through whose rising You suspended the outward aspect of the sharīʿa of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family; through whom You fill the earth with justice and equity just as it had been filled with tyranny, injustice, and confusion."

This is as the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: "The Mahdī is from us, the People of the House, a man with a high nose and broad forehead; he will fill the earth with justice as it had been filled with oppression and injustice."

He is the translator of the Qurʾān and its interpreter, the one who makes its explanation and light manifest, and the one who rises on the Day of Resurrection, Judgment, distinction, resurrection, and mutual loss and gain. This is his saying—may blessings be upon him—concerning the excellence of Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, his noble rank, because he is the seventh of the Imams, the one who clarifies the meaning. The seventh possesses a strength that those before him do not possess.

Likewise, the power of the final Qāʾim comes from his being the seventh of the speaking-prophets. The power possessed by the Imam Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl was also possessed by the seventh of the caliphs, our master al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh—peace be upon him—who was the seventh of two cycles and the fourth of four. The same applies to our master the Imam al-Ṭayyib—God's blessings be upon him—and to others whose time comes after. "What has been will be again," and "there is nothing new beneath the sun."

The repetition of sevenfold cycles does not cease. The seventh of the Imams—God's blessings be upon them—is stronger than those before him, more comprehensive in the sciences, more abundant in blessings, and clearer in proof, until the matter reaches the final Qāʾim, possessor of unveiling and manifestation and clarifier of the hidden science.

Unveiling is the disclosure of meanings from their coverings and their explanation to those worthy of them. Whoever reaches that stage is among the people of the cycle of unveiling. He knows the Qāʾim, his excellence and recompense become manifest to him, he reaches the promised time, and he witnesses the people of that cycle through intellectual vision, not through physical sensation, and through unveiled disclosure rather than by mere covering.

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl—peace be upon him—did not invalidate anything of the outward sharīʿa of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. Rather he confirmed it and commanded action according to it. The pure Imams from his descendants—peace be upon them—continued this practice, standing with the religious obligations and guarding the prescribed duties without concession, negligence, abandonment, or annulment.

When our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—said, "Through his rising You suspended the outward sharīʿa of Muḥammad," he meant that because he clarifies its meanings and unveils and makes clear its mysteries, he removes from his followers and Shīʿa the belief that the outward forms should be understood in the literal way in

which the people of taʿṭīl and tashbīh understand them—likening the true Originator to His creatures, imagining forms for the spiritual angels, and believing of the hereafter what is like what exists in this abode. He suspends that belief and explains what is intended by it, unveiling the realities and making the explanation manifest, while establishing the taʾwīl through which tawḥīd is known in its reality, the Originator is declared transcendent above the attributes of His creation, and the angels are known in their subtle substance.

He likewise explains reward and punishment not in the manner believed by the people of corporealization and qualification. This is like the act of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—for he was the first Qāʾim to unveil the meaning and explain the noble inner aspect, and the pure Imams—God's blessings be upon them all—continued in the same way. They preserved the outward forms for the deficient, for whom the explanation of the meaning remained hidden and veiled, while they stood in actuality for the people of realities and knowledge, unveiling for them what they had previously been unable to know.

So, brother, understand the wisdom of the Imams, the excellence of the friends of God, and receive with gratitude what you have been given. Hold fast to the firmest handhold and the strong rope.

When our master Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl—peace be upon him—reached the time of his departure and his concealment drew near, he delivered the command to his son ʿAbd Allāh al-Raḍī and made him his successor and waṣī. Thus ʿAbd Allāh al-Raḍī—God's blessings be upon him—arose as the first of the three concealed Imams by the command of God and His revelation. He received the rank from his father and succeeded him in his noble station. He corresponded to the extract in their cycle and to Adam—peace be upon him—the first of the speaking-prophets, and he was the first of the successors in that concealed sequence, just as al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī—peace be upon him—was the first of the Imams in the first sequence.

He concealed himself, veiled his hujjas and ḥudūd, and his hujja and veil was ʿAbd Allāh b. Maymūn—may God be pleased with him. He did not reveal his knowledge to anyone and did not inform anyone of it except the bearers of the Throne, those who stood by the command of God, the trustees of His khalīfa, and the excellent ones among the hujjas appointed in his daʿwa.

His concealment was caused by the darkness of the intensely dark night, by the dominance of falsehood over truth, and by the strength of the rule of darkness over the people and the greatness of doubt and whispering. Because the Imam—peace be upon him—was so intensely concealed, when one of the ḥudūd of his religion took the covenant from respondents entering the daʿwa, he would say: "You owe hearing and obedience to the walī of the age," without uttering his name. When the respondent advanced in knowledge, rose in degree, and his station was elevated, the name of the Imam would be written for him through a veil, and the Imam would not be explained to him by direct allusion or explicit wording until his rank made him deserving and worthy.

This remained the practice throughout the period of the concealed Imams until the sun of truth rose from the West and illuminated the horizons of religion for everyone who held fast to the firmest handhold and took refuge in it.

The Imam ʿAbd Allāh spent this period with the ḥudūd calling to God and His tawḥīd while his person remained hidden from them, just as the rays of the sun flow through the stars. They remained connected to him by the materials of the Living, Self-Subsisting One. This operates in every time and age, moment and season: whether the Imam—peace be upon him—appears or is concealed, the rays of his light reach his ḥudūd, according to their degrees and the measures of their purification and proximity in the ranks of causes.

That light flowing from the Imam—peace be upon him—is the light of God by which he is connected to the Intellect, the First Originated One created by Him. Through it the existent beings below the Imam come into being according to their ranks. From the Imam that noble, high, subtle material flows to the noblest station in the natural world, and from it to those below it among his ḥudūd connected to the circle of his existence.

He is the magnet drawing them upward and raising them through the degrees of felicity. Each one rises to the rank above him and each higher rank is succeeded by the one below it. The respondent returns to the mukāsir; the mukāsir to the maʾdhūn; the maʾdhūn to the dāʿī of initiation; he rises to the unrestricted dāʿī, then to the dāʿī al-balāgh whose degree is elevated above him according to merit. The return of all of them is to the hujja, who is the noble Gate and the best path. When they gather at the Gate, they are raised through him to the highest ranks and

noblest causes: the station of the greatest Imam, gathering those who came earlier and later among the ḥudūd of his daʿwa.

This does not occur until after separation from bodies and ascent within the company of the people of the noble ranks to that station. Each of the ḥudūd and ranks is joined in the place to which his rank has ended, by the necessary judgment of truth. No one rises beyond his due station except the rare individuals who deserve elevation to the loftiest ranks and ascent. Thus one is first a respondent, then a believer, then a mukāsir, then a noble maʾdhūn, then a dāʿī of initiation, then an unrestricted dāʿī, then a dāʿī al-balāgh, then a hujja, and finally a Bāb, according to necessary merit.

The dāʿī Muḥammad b. Zayd—may God sanctify his spirit—explained this in the book al-Balāgh al-Asnā, relating that al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said to his elect: "Follow in the heavens a ladder and you will find what you desire." One of his ḥudūd said: "What is that ladder, my master?" He said: "The ranks of knowledge by which the believer ascends through knowledge and turns toward them through recognition and understanding."

The believer who knows the ranks of faith, when his faith becomes complete, reaches sincerity. Then he rises to being specially selected. At that point there is a rank that no one attains by action alone, but only by the favor of God Most High upon His servants.

If his Originator favors him and His Chosen One selects him, He strips from him the garment of humanity and refines him beyond the rank of bodily form. Then he rises to spirituality, then to substantiality, then to the rank of glorification, then holiness, then shadow, then radiance, then the created circular rank, and finally to the Universal Light.

These are eight higher ranks, and that is the tremendous success. One of the fortunate dāʿīs—may God exalt their degrees—said: Reflect, noble brother, upon the meaning of his saying that the believer who knows the ranks of faith, when his faith becomes complete, reaches sincerity—meaning pure walāya toward the possessors of the command. Then he rises to special selection, meaning his Originator singles him out with the knowledge that is bestowed upon him because of the soundness of his inner nature.

When God favors him with the rank that cannot be attained by action alone, He strips him of the garment of humanity—that is, He unveils to him the outward forms of the command—and refines him beyond the rank of bodily form—that is, frees him from captivity to matter and form. He raises him to spirituality as a true believer, then to substantiality as a perfected believer, then to the rank of glorification as an unrestricted maʾdhūn, then holiness as an unrestricted dāʿī, then shadow as a dāʿī al-balāgh, then radiance as the Gate, and then to the Universal Light, the Great Source.

Some of the purified elect once asked al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—about the meaning of balāgh, conveyance. He said: "Balāgh is of two kinds: partial and universal. Partial conveyance is from one degree to another and the ascent of one rank. Universal conveyance is the completion of all the ranks and their conveyance to their ends. It is reaching the end of the appointed times and crescents. Through this one becomes an Imam after having been a servant; the light rises through him and truth becomes manifest through him at appearance. When the subject reaches this, humanity no longer remains upon him and he is no longer described by bodily form. Rather, he sees all the forms within himself."

God Most High says: "No! I swear by the retreating stars, those that run and disappear." They asked him: "O son of the Messenger of God, what are the retreating and disappearing stars?" He said: "They are the persons who have reached the lofty end and the goal in knowledge. They retreat from sight: they see but are not seen. The ones that 'disappear' are the striving awliyāʾ who have not yet reached the end and who continue running in pursuit of balāgh, sweeping away from themselves the attributes of density out of eagerness to arrive."

As the Real says regarding them: "No! I swear by what you see and what you do not see." What the eyes see are those below universal balāgh; what you do not see are the people of the highest balāgh who are hidden from sight.

Thus he—peace be upon him—made clear the path of return and the transfer of ranks in ascent and elevation: every subject returns as a lord, every follower returns as an Imam, and the forms continue rising until they reach the Gate, who is the purest of the pure and the kernel of kernels, to whom rises the possessor of the rank of unity. In the final instant he receives from the one who delivers to him, the Great Source. He then receives the succession and becomes a subtle luminous form until he is completed and his term draws near. He brings forth a believer like

himself, then retreats from sight and joins those lights that preceded him. In this is clear guidance for the people of insight.

We now return to the account of the first of the concealed successors, ʿAbd Allāh al-Raḍī—peace be upon him. When his period came to an end and his daʿwa was completed, he established his son Aḥmad al-Taqī. He ascended to the noble stations that rise within the world of the Kingdom.

The Imam Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Taqī—God's prayers and peace be upon him—arose by God's command and revelation. He was the second of the concealed successors. His hujja was ʿAbd Allāh b. Maymūn. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh—peace be upon him—corresponded to the drop within their cycle, to the third light among the speaking-prophets, and to his grandfather al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī—peace be upon him—the second among the Imams.

He spread sciences, outward and inward, and composed the Epistles. He arranged them according to four branches of knowledge: the first mathematical sciences, the second natural sciences, the third sciences of the soul, and the fourth nomic and divine sciences.

He made them fifty-three epistles, bearing witness to him and pointing toward him, because his name according to numerical calculation totals fifty-three. He spread his dāʿīs, who made manifest from these Epistles the science of number, geometry, measurement, astronomy, medicine, and what they gathered of the science of bodies, the science of language, and the science of religions. He strengthened the pillars of the sharīʿa and established its foundations by correspondences between horizons and souls that astonished Arab and non-Arab alike, until the community began turning to the ḥudūd of the religion and studying these sciences under them, while the walī of truth remained concealed from them.

The reason for this was that al-Maʾmūn gathered astronomers and spent vast sums upon them to construct the astronomical tables known by his name, while the possessors of the command remained hidden within the cave of taqiyya. Al-Maʾmūn, because of his arrogance and pride, imagined that the Fāṭimids had exhausted what remained to the sharīʿa of those who could establish its pillars and clarify its rites. He hoped to abolish the sharīʿa of Muḥammad —may God bless him and his family—and to make astronomy manifest and turn knowledge of it into "religion," and to make the knowledge of the beginning and return depend upon its calculations of punishment, reward, and recompense.

His aim was to make creation think that what Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—had brought had no foundation, that the Companions who acted as they did toward ʿAlī—peace be upon him—had acted correctly, that no sin or blame belonged to them, and that thereby he might justify the killing of the prophetic progeny in retaliation for the blood of Quraysh.

When the walī of truth knew this, he composed the Epistles and manifested within them what he manifested of the four branches of philosophy together with what he stored within them of religion. He strengthened the sharīʿa and established its laws by correspondences and witnesses that neither fail nor change from their meanings.

When the Epistles were completed and the ḥudūd spread them, they became famous and widely known. Al-Maʾmūn looked into them and found what astonished, defeated, and bewildered him. He confronted the astronomers with their contents and they were unable to answer. The Epistles alerted them to matters that had escaped them and guided them to the science of the Almagest. He questioned them and found that they knew nothing of it. At that point al-Maʾmūn knew that the walī of the command was concealed and that those men had a proof beyond what they had shown.

He therefore turned from his earlier purpose and began attaching himself outwardly to the walī of the command and to the descendants of Fāṭima. He sent to the judges and jurists of the provinces, restored Fadak and al-ʿAwālī to the Fāṭimids, and issued proclamations throughout the lands that whoever was from the progeny of Fāṭima should come to al-Maʾmūn for his share of Fadak and al-ʿAwālī. He debated whoever disputed him concerning this and made the proof clear that Fadak and al-ʿAwālī had been a gift from the Messenger of God to Fāṭima—peace be upon her—and that Abū Bakr and ʿUmar had wronged her concerning it.

A group of Fāṭimids reached him. Among them was ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, one of the Imams recognized by the Twelver community. When he arrived, al-Maʾmūn became aware of certain taʾwīls and wisdom with him and sought from him some of the Epistles that had become famous. He asked him whether he had composed them, but did not find from him what would answer that claim. He nevertheless manifested acceptance toward al-Riḍā, wrote his name

beside his own upon dinars and dirhams, and promised him the caliphate after him. In this way the ʿAlids became associated with him.

When al-Maʾmūn reached the dāʿī who had been ordered to spread the Epistles in al-Maʾmūn's territories, he believed the dāʿī to be loyal to him. The dāʿī was from the Holy Land. He went to the walī of the age and informed him of what had occurred with al-Maʾmūn and asked permission to go to him so that people would not increase in error concerning ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā as they had increased in error concerning Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.

When this was presented to the walī of his age, he said to the dāʿī: "He has only manifested this as a trick against me, intending to kill me. Go to him, but reveal nothing of my affair. Be cautious in all your dealings and do not disclose my secret, for he is an enemy of God and His friends."

The dāʿī went to al-Maʾmūn. He was eloquent in expression, subtle in indication, learned in the Epistles, and had memorized most of them. It was al-Maʾmūn's custom to sit with those who came to him and with visiting scholars. When the dāʿī reached him, al-Maʾmūn conversed with him, gave him security, and cleared the assembly for him. When he saw what the man possessed of excellent speech in the various sciences, he said: "Are you the walī of the blessing?" The dāʿī said: "No. I am only the Gate toward him and the guide to him."

Al-Maʾmūn took the covenant from him and manifested walāya, acceptance, and sincerity. He continued regularly learning from him and asking him questions while the dāʿī would inquire concerning his Imam. The dāʿī would evade and not disclose the name, saying: "I will not tell you his name except with his permission and knowledge."

Al-Maʾmūn said: "I have learned that we and those who preceded us wronged the friends of God. I wish to absolve myself of this kingdom and command and surrender all of it to the possessor of the command and his walī. Go to him, inform him of what I have learned, and urge him to rise, so that I may surrender what is in my hands and stand with him striving until the truth appears and sincerity becomes clear."

The dāʿī believed him and went to the walī of God—peace be upon him. Al-Maʾmūn equipped him and gave him gifts and provisions. He traveled toward the Holy Land and then went to the walī of God and informed him of al-Maʾmūn's professed loyalty and acceptance of what was conveyed to him.

The Imam said to him: "He lies to you in what he says. He is an enemy of God and the Messenger. Beware his plot and do not trust his deception." The dāʿī said: "My master, he has already told me that you are the Imam. If he delivers to you what is in his hand, you know better than I; and if he strikes off your neck, I know better than you."

He returned to al-Maʾmūn. When he arrived, al-Maʾmūn honored him, gave him gifts, brought him close, treated him fairly, and began questioning him about what had occurred. The dāʿī then said to him: "I am the Imam. I only concealed myself from you as a test and trial until I knew the sincerity and acceptance within you. Now that I have seen your walāya and pure devotion, I have disclosed my affair to you and shown you my secret."

When al-Maʾmūn heard this, believing the dāʿī to be the Imam, he ordered his executioner to strike off his neck. The dāʿī said: "He—peace be upon him—spoke the truth, for he informed me of what was within your soul and of what you intended." Al-Maʾmūn said: "And now you wish to save him from me? Strike his neck, boy." The dāʿī was killed as a martyr.

ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā heard of what had happened and departed. Letters from the walī of the age became manifest concerning these events and the wrongdoing of the people of oppression and tyranny. Al-Maʾmūn—may God curse him—then abandoned the thought of abolishing the sharīʿa because of what had overwhelmed him of the Epistles and their marvelous wisdom.

He had studied the three sciences: the science of language, bodies, and times. These are among the sciences of the jinn, through which they become hidden from the people of the outward forms and, through their subtlety, appear to the people of the fourth rank, who are the angels, people of the true sciences. The science of the kingdom restrained al-Maʾmūn and made him realize that this command had people who preserved it, while he was incapable of reaching them.

Thus the miracle of the walī of God, the second of the concealed successors, was intellectual and his proofs were real. The people of error and ignorance drowned in his knowledge and wandered bewildered in what he set down in his Epistles. They resorted to their scholars seeking the reality of their science, but found no refuge from

disobedience and none was saved except the one who took refuge in the Ark of Salvation, the People of the House of Prophethood, those who know the realities of the sciences and understand the meaning stored within the comprehensive Epistles.

His miracle was like the miracle of the second of the speaking-prophets and like the flood of his age that destroyed the people of aggression and brought them to the abode of humiliation. The miracles of the friends of God —peace be upon them—are tremendous and their signs noble and holy, because their light is from the First Light from which all lights received. Before knowledge of that First Light the paths of the intellects are blocked. The utmost reach of people of intellect is to stop before knowledge of the Veil, the nearest of veils and highest of ranks: the Gate before whom the ḥudūd stop. Yet even that is below the rank of the Greatest Hujja, which is the end and goal of the ranks, the high, universal chain-like rank.

Jābir b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī related from al-Bāqir—peace be upon him: "I entered upon our master Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn while he held the mirror in his hand. He was saying: 'Glory be to the One from whom, every time a veil is raised, another gate is unveiled to me; and every time I knock upon a gate, another veil appears. Glory be to the One whose seekers end at Him and whose seekers' destination is His light.'"

Jābir said: I said within myself, "This is tremendous." He raised his head toward me and said: "The tremendous one is the one through whom I am tremendous; the knowing one is the one through whom I am knowing. I am only a servant of God to whom it is revealed: worship none but God, mighty and high." I said within myself: "Then what is this veil?" He raised his head toward me and I saw a tremendous radiance and shining light upon which my sight could hardly settle and which my intellect could not encompass. He was saying: "This is only one of your honored awliyāʾ."

He said to me: "Shall I show you more?" I said: "This is sufficient." He said: "O Jābir, rejoice in God's purification of you, in His shade descending upon you, and in His Gate appearing through you, the Generous, the Merciful. O Jābir, Salmān is one of us, the People of the House. His outward aspect is like the outward aspect of a gate and his inward aspect is from the light of a veil. If the veil were removed from your sight and you were singled out from among His servants by its radiance, you would see from it what you were able to bear, while creation would see from it only what corresponded to what was in you. It would speak through what spoke within you and say through you what was said by you. We are its inward reality and it is our outward manifestation. When you carry from it what belongs to us, we are through you as we are through it. So hasten to unveil what lies between us and you; that is not difficult for God."

In this discourse al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—made clear knowledge of the Greatest Veil, the loftiest, noblest, highest, and nearest of the veils. If this is the Veil, then what of the One veiled by it? Sight is wholly unable to behold Him and intellects are too short to encompass His knowledge.

For this reason it was said: wherever the light appears to you, prostrate. If the awliyāʾ are of this station, it is no wonder that their knowledge—peace be upon them—should contain what astonishes intellects and bewilders minds whenever those meanings are joined to their causes. Thus the miracle of the second of the concealed successors was tremendous and the path to knowing him strong.

That is Aḥmad the Praised One, through what the Great One disclosed from what He had concealed and hidden. From his light the lights became manifest; through knowledge of him are known the Peace, the Believer, the Guardian, the Mighty, the Compeller.

When his departure came and his days in the abode of elevation reached their end, he delivered the command to his son al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad and made him the house of his noble, glorified light.

Thus al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Muqtadī al-Hādī—God's blessings be upon him—arose. He was the third of the concealed successors, corresponding to the clot in their cycle, to Abraham the Friend among the speaking-prophets, and to Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn among the Imams. Events and disguises in the manifestation of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—were repeated in his own cycle by correspondence.

He received his rank from ʿAbd Allāh b. Maymūn, the hujja of majestic worth and tremendous station, the loftiest of veils and the highest, subtlest, and most exalted of them. Through him that which had appeared to the awliyāʾ and elect became manifest, just as Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn had appeared to Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī in the

forms symbolized by the letters mīm, fāʾ, jīm, and sīn, and then called him toward the form of the ʿayn, saying: “Can your intellect bear this, O Jābir? These are garments of mine in every time and age, changing...”

The total light is that by which truth becomes manifest through them at appearance. The prophets and Imams are signs pointing toward it. The dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God exalt his sanctity—said in Kitāb al-Kashf: “The Great Source is a sublime, most exalted end by which reference is made to the Great Originator, who is exalted above the attributes of creation. There is no time for Him, no succession of time, and no alteration of time. He is the meaning of every age and epoch, the abiding one in every era, the judge over the inner realities of tremendous affairs. He does not cease throughout ages and times to be described through all His houses, distinct from all their forms, unique in the perfection of His judgment, one to whoever knows Him, far above whatever anyone imagines of Him.”

“Whoever knows the Veil has put on radiance and perfection, reached the utmost of hopes and the end of causes. God Most High is free from anyone who associates another with Him, takes a god beneath Him, worships a person who does not stand by His command, or goes beyond the rank in which He has established him.”

This is his saying—may God exalt his sanctity. The Great Source is the First Intellect and the most excellent ibdāʿ, outward through the radiance of the veils and inward through the unseen of its Originator, whom none can encompass. The highest Great Source is what God Most High meant in His saying: “Indeed, it is in the Mother of the Book with Us, exalted and wise.” Whoever inherits its station, which is the station of unity, that Name applies to him.

Every station must have noble veils. The highest and most exalted among them is its hujja, the loftiest of the hujjas, below the Greatest Imamate, which is the goal of the ḥudūd, the end of existence, and the locus of receiving and giving. Understand this, brother, and you will be among the successful. Enter with the friends of God into the secure sanctuary.

We now return to the account of the Imam al-Muqtadī—peace be upon him. He stood through the sciences and judgments of his father and summarized from the Epistles the Book of the Comprehensive Epistle, containing useful benefits. He sent forth his dāʿīs, and response to the true religion of God multiplied because the appearance of the Mahdī—peace be upon him—was near.

He sent al-Ḥasan b. Faraj b. Ḥawshab al-Manṣūr to Yemen. The people of astronomy and calculation were speaking of the appearance of al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—and giving glad tidings of his state. Kings and opponents became certain of this, so that many of them withdrew from the matter, including the king of Ṣafāʾ and many others.

Then the Imam, possessor of the age, advanced for emigration toward the Maghrib. In Kūfa he manifested departure in concealment and appointed Saʿīd as the outward figure. Saʿīd took the title of Imam by command of the one who had designated him, as a covering for the walī of God and to conceal his station from the people of his daʿwa until the time of his appearance and the rising of his light.

He ordered the ḥudūd to do likewise and to bring forward “the rising sun” as a veil over the walī of God. The future Qāʾim was not disclosed to anyone, nor was the divine secret concerning him made known except to the purified righteous and the chosen excellent ones who knew the secrets of God among His awliyāʾ and understood what He had manifested to them through His elect. When the appointed time arrived, the daʿwa and the dāʿīs appeared. They pointed to the walī of their command whom they had been ordered to indicate, clarified his excellence to their followers, guided them toward him, gave glad tidings of the rising of the sun from its west, and promised the nearness of the appointed time when it would emerge from behind the coverings of its veils.

Al-Mahdī bi-llāh—God’s blessings be upon him—then arose, his daʿwa having spread through the horizons. The people of disagreement were guided by the clarity of his proofs and returned to accord. He migrated from Salāmiyya to the Maghrib through the work of his dāʿī Abū ʿAbd Allāh, possessor of the daʿwa in the Maghrib—may God sanctify his spirit. With him was the Imam al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh, the one entitled after him to the succession and toward whom the daʿwa of all the awliyāʾ was directed. Al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was his guardian in his guardianship and the people of his daʿwa ascended toward his station.

Al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was the fourth among the concealed and manifest successors in this sequence, corresponding to the lump in the cycle, to his grandfather al-Bāqir—peace be upon him—and to Moses,

the one spoken to by God—peace be upon him—possessor of the staff and manifester of signs and clear proofs. His miracles were overwhelming and his signs manifest. In the natural creation he corresponded to the sun, the fourth of the planets that have the power of extending influence to what is above and below in the natural world.

He stood with what his grandfather Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—the Seal of the prophets and master of the chosen ones—had stood with. They had announced the appearance of his command through many stations and numerous allusions. The Prophet said: “At the completion of three hundred years from my hijra, the sun will rise from its west.”

He was the rising Sun of God and His shining sign, the Greatest Veil and the noblest, most honored Gate, bearer of God’s trust and deposit, and the one who would deliver it to al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh, his son, who was connected to him through his instruction and teaching. He was his successor standing from him, like ʿAlī, his grandfather, before the trustworthy Messenger of God—God’s blessings, benedictions, and greetings be upon them all.

His miracles multiplied, his signs stood, and his dāʿīs made his excellence clear. His daʿwa became manifest in Yemen and the Maghrib. When the believers learned that his appearance had drawn near, the severity of distress was lifted from them.

When he reached Egypt on his journey toward the Maghrib and strove in his travel, news of him and his report reached the rulers. Some astrologers came to the ruler of Egypt, who ordered them to divide the lands astrologically so that they might know in which region the expected Mahdī was. They used a yellow basin and placed a pulpit in the water of that basin. The astrologer said: “He is in a city whose walls are yellow.” They placed a representation around the water and named the city until it became apparent. The ruler seized him and al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh—God’s blessings be upon them—and imprisoned them.

When they entered the prison there were people who had been confined there for a long time. He said to them: “Would you like to leave the prison with me?” They mocked him and said: “They intend to take us east toward Syria, while he imagines himself able to rise up with us.” He went to one of the prison doors, tore it out, took a piece of charcoal, and drew upon the door the image of a ship. When he completed the image he said: “Who among you wishes to leave, let him sit with me upon the door.” He and his son sat upon it and all the prisoners sat with them except one who denied what he said.

When that man saw the door rise into the air, he clung to it but fell, breaking his leg. The door descended upon the Nile. News spread, people were bewildered, and they saw the door traveling upon the river. They became certain that he was the expected Mahdī of whom glad tidings had been given. Reports spread and the opponents turned away from him.

He went out toward Sijilmāsa, then to Qayrawān and Raqqāda. He took covenants and oaths, and response to the religion of truth multiplied. His emergence from Sijilmāsa was by the hand of his dāʿī Abū ʿAbd Allāh—may God have mercy upon him.

He remained for a time until doubt entered the mind of Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī’s brother, al-ʿAbbās. He whispered to him and said: “This is not the Mahdī.” The Shīʿī began entering upon the walī of God with a troubled heart and remained in that state for three days, scarcely understanding whether his garment itself had turned against the walī of God. We seek refuge in God from reversal after uprightness, doubt after certainty, and retreat after faith. We ask God to make us among those who hold fast to His rope and cling to the handhold of submission to those whom God Most High commanded us to obey, not disdaining, not acting arrogantly, not turning away from the qibla of truth, and not retreating, by the right of Muḥammad and his pure family.

The walī of God—peace be upon him—ordered that Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī be brought. He was purified through killing; the Imam prayed over him and asked mercy for him, and did not invalidate his righteous work because of the lapse that had occurred. His brother Abū al-ʿAbbās, however, who persisted in pride and despair, denied the daʿwa and dissociated himself from it openly before all people. He therefore incurred manifest loss, losing this world and religion, while praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds.

The walī of God—peace be upon him—then ordered the construction of al-Mahdiyya. When he completed and perfected it, he moved there and made it the abode of emigration of the Imam al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh, Commander of the Believers. He commanded someone to shoot an arrow. It fell in a place to which he had already pointed. He ordered a mosque to be built at the place reached by the arrow and said: “To here will the Dajjāl, Makhlad b. Kaydād

—may God curse him—reach." To one of his Shīʿa, a man named Mūsā b. Ḥabīb, he said: "O Mūsā, today you are entrusted with the Fāṭimid women." The accursed opponent Makhlad b. Kaydād had been born in the land of the Blacks at a place called Kawkawā.

Al-Mahdī—peace be upon him—carried out his daʿwa in the best manner and supported his dāʿīs throughout the lands. The earth shone with the light of its Lord and the lights of God became manifest from behind their veils. Al-Mahdī bi-llāh pointed to Muḥammad b. al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh, Commander of the Believers, proclaimed his clear excellence to the people of his daʿwa, delivered to him his trust, handed over his rank, and gave him the deposit God had entrusted to him for his sake and for the sake of all his descendants in it. He did not turn away from the truth in its proper place, but established it in its settled locus, proclaiming the unity of the walī of God and making known his noble station, as his grandfather Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—had done for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib on the day of Ghadīr when he announced his own approaching departure and openly established his successor.

Al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh was the light of God that manifested from the greatest of the veils and His proof through whom acknowledgment of excellence began. The ḥudūd of the daʿwa submitted to him and recognized that al-Mahdī bi-llāh was the best exemplar for them in relation to him. God's blessings be upon them both and upon their descendants and the chosen among their awliyāʾ.

Al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—had gathered abundant grain in al-Mahdiyya, fortified it, and filled it with wealth and men. Among those in whose hands were his funds and affairs was the servant Jawdhar, who had grown up upon purity and excellence, following his masters, guided by them, walking in their way without disdain for their walāya. Al-Mahdī and his son entrusted to him all of that because of what they knew of his excellent qualities and because in obedience to them he sought the face of God in rest and movement.

It is related that one day Jawdhar was sitting while a servant of the palace entered upon the master—peace be upon him—and came out, conveying to him the needs of people whom the Imam had ordered him to assist. The master—peace be upon him—said to that servant: "Go; may God bless you." The man went out frowning. Jawdhar looked at him and disliked his state. He asked him the reason. The man said: "I hoped our master would give me something by which I might improve the condition of my family, but he did not give me what I had hoped." Jawdhar said: "The blessing he invoked for you is greater than all the goods upon the earth." The man said: "What I hoped for would have pleased me more than that blessing."

Jawdhar said: "Would you sell me the blessing he invoked for you for ten mithqāls?" He said, "Yes." Jawdhar counted out ten mithqāls for him and required him to surrender the blessing through a valid and binding sale from which there would be no return, with no hidden intention or reservation. Jawdhar accepted what he had purchased and the two parted by mutual satisfaction.

The next day al-Mahdī—peace be upon him—summoned Jawdhar and asked him about what had happened. Jawdhar told him. The Imam said to him: "May God bless you and what is yours," and gave him one hundred mithqāls, for a good deed is repaid tenfold. That invocation and blessing remained with Jawdhar until after al-Mahdī he served al-Qāʾim, al-Manṣūr, and al-Muʿizz—God's blessings be upon them. He traveled with al-Muʿizz when he emigrated eastward and died on the road—may God sanctify his spirit.

When the foundations of the Mahdian daʿwa were firmly established—God's peace and blessings upon it—when the People of the Cave emerged from the cave of taqiyya, the appointed term came and the period ended. The Imam al-Mahdī bi-llāh delivered to his son al-Qāʾim his rank, gave him his deposit and trust, manifested his departure, and moved to the neighborhood of his Lord and to arrival before Him.

When al-Qāʾim—peace be upon him—wished to bury him beside the palace, no one was present with him at the edge of the grave when he intended to lower al-Mahdī bi-llāh—may God sanctify his spirit and bless him—except Jawdhar. He said: "O Jawdhar, it is not lawful that the Imam be buried by the Imam who follows him until the latter establishes a proof for himself. It is not lawful for me to entrust you with the trust to the exclusion of all creation until I have established my proof. God Most High says, 'Indeed We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains…'" He recited the verse.

Then he said to Jawdhar: "Come near me." He approached. The Imam said: "Give me your hand." He extended it. Al-Qāʾim said: "I take from you the covenant of God and His binding oath that you will conceal from me what I reveal and disclose to you." Jawdhar said: "Yes, my master—may God bless you." He said: "My son Ismāʿīl al-

Manṣūr is my hujja and my heir. Know his right and rank, conceal his affair and secret until I make it manifest, for there are those who intend wrongdoing toward him."

Jawdhar possessed tremendous service and fidelity to them, some of which is recorded in the book known as Sīrat Jawdhar concerning the four Imams—peace be upon them. Whoever wishes to know it may consult that well-known work. There is no power and no strength except through God; there is no Imam and no hujja except through divine support; there is no majesty and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Great.

Thus the Imam al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Mahdī—God's blessings, benedictions, and noblest greetings be upon him—arose. He was the fifth of the successors, corresponding to the bones among them, to his grandfather al-Ṣādiq, the seal of the Imams in that earlier sequence, and to the Messiah Jesus b. Mary—peace be upon him—the Spirit of God who raises the dead and heals the blind from birth and the leper. He was the root of light and the second of the manifest Imams, corresponding to the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in his station after the Prophet Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—and closely resembling him step for step. God placed the enduring Word in his descendants until the Day of Resurrection.

The Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—was the first Qāʾim in the Greatest Station during the cycle of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. The Imam al-Qāʾim bi-llāh was the first Qāʾim after al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him. He therefore possessed tremendous excellence and a noble station that most of the world was unable to comprehend. None truly knew him in his reality except the Imam al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—and the Imams among his descendants, just as none knew the Commander of the Believers in the reality of his knowledge except the Messenger of God and the Imams from his progeny.

Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī related to our master Imam Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn—peace be upon him—after he had commanded him to mention the appearance of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—to him in luminosity. He said: I was sitting one day with the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib when Salmān and Jundab—may God be pleased with them—entered. They greeted and sat. ʿAlī—peace be upon him—said: "Welcome to you both, two sincere friends who keep the covenant of our walāya. By my life, this knowledge is obligatory upon every believer, for no one completes true faith in me until he knows me with the reality of my luminosity. When he knows me through this description, God has tested his heart for faith, expanded his breast, and he has become a knowing one with insight. Whoever falls short of this is doubting and uncertain."

"O Salmān," he said, "Jundab said to you at this very hour: 'Come with me so that we may ask him about his knowledge in luminosity.'" Salmān said: "It happened exactly as you say."

ʿAlī—peace be upon him—said: "Knowledge of me in luminosity is knowledge of God. God says: 'They were commanded only to worship God, making the religion sincerely His, as ḥunafāʾ, to establish prayer, and to give zakāt; that is the upright religion.' He says: they were commanded only with tawḥīd, which is the purification of worship. 'Ḥunafāʾ' means acknowledgment of the prophethood of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. 'Establish prayer' means my walāya, for God says: 'Seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed it is burdensome except upon the humble.' The two are burdensome, because most people acknowledge the prophethood of Muḥammad, while few acknowledge my walāya except those who are humble."

"He likewise says: 'A deserted well and a lofty palace.' The palace is the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—and the well is I. They left my walāya deserted, by God. 'They give zakāt' means acknowledgment of the Imams from my progeny; they are the zakāt. Whoever completes this is upon the religion of the Qāʾim."

"I shall explain to you, Salmān and Jundab, with God's help. Muḥammad and I are one light from the light of God and one command from God. That light split into two halves. To the first half He said: 'Be Muḥammad'; to the second He said: 'Be ʿAlī.' Therefore the Messenger of God said: 'ʿAlī is from me and I am from him, and none conveys on my behalf except ʿAlī.'

"O Salmān and O Jundab, Muḥammad became the chosen Prophet of God and I became the waṣī of Muḥammad, the approved one. Muḥammad became the speaker and I became the silent one. Muḥammad became the warner and I became the guide. Muḥammad became the possessor of the Garden and I became the possessor of the Fire; I say to the Fire: this one is yours and this one is mine. Muḥammad became the possessor of mercy and I became the

possessor of the earthquake. Muḥammad became the possessor of indications and I became the possessor of signs. Muḥammad became the Seal of the Prophets and I became the Seal of the legatees."

"I destroyed the former generations. I am the Great Announcement concerning which they differ. Muḥammad became the possessor of the daʿwa and I became the possessor of the sword. I am the command from God who casts the Spirit from His command upon whomever He wills among His servants. The command is from the Spirit of God and that is not given except to a prophet and a waṣī. Whoever God gives from His Spirit, He distinguishes him from the people, raises him above ordinary life, and delegates power to him. He gives life and causes death, knows what was and what will be through that Spirit, knows what is in heaven, and descends to earth."

"O Salmān and O Jundab, Muḥammad became the Reminder and I became the Book, as God, mighty and majestic, says: 'God has sent down to you a Reminder, a Messenger.' And He says: 'We have sent down to you a Book.' God gave no one a command like His command when He said: 'O Messenger, convey what has been sent down to you from your Lord; if you do not, you have not conveyed His message, and God will protect you from the people.' He entrusted me and took my covenant. I am the Preserved Tablet, and God informed me of what is in it.

"O Salmān and O Jundab, Muḥammad is Yā-Sīn and I am the Wise Qurʾān. Muḥammad is Nūn and I am the Pen. Muḥammad is Ṭā-Hā and I am the Qurʾān; Muḥammad is the yellow ruby and I am the red ruby. There is no separation between me and Muḥammad. I am Muḥammad and Muḥammad is I; I am from him and he is from me, as in His saying: 'He let loose the two seas meeting together; between them is a barrier they do not transgress.' Muḥammad is 'God is Greater' and I am 'There is no god but God, the Greatest.' 'Which of the favors of your Lord will you two deny?'

"O Jundab and O Salmān, our dead do not die, our slain are not killed, we do not beget and are not begotten."

Jābir said: I kissed the ground before him out of reverence for what I heard and said: "My master, what I have heard you say has become difficult for us: your saying 'I destroyed the former generations,' and your saying, 'Our dead do not die and our slain are not killed.'"

He said: "O Jābir, the command is from God. God, mighty and majestic, says: 'He casts the Spirit from His command upon whomever He wills among His servants.' God commanded me to save Noah—peace be upon him—in His saying: 'When Our command came and the oven overflowed…' I saved him. And in His saying concerning the people of Lot: 'When Our command came, We turned it upside down…'

"As for my saying that our dead do not die, it is because they are from the Spirit of God; and our slain are not killed. I am the master of every believing man and believing woman among those who passed and those who remain, O Salmān and O Jundab. I was supported with the same Spirit by which the prophets were supported. I spoke upon the tongue of Jesus b. Mary in the cradle. Adam, Seth, Noah, Sām, Abraham, Ismāʿīl, Moses, Joshua, Jesus, Simon, and I are all one. Whoever sees me has seen them all."

"I am a servant among the servants of God, so do not call us lords. Say concerning our excellence whatever you wish, for we are the gates of God, His proofs, His trustees over His creation, His successors, the Imams of His religion, the face of God, His side, His command, and His path. Through us He punishes and through us He rewards. He chose us from among His creation, purified us, and selected us. If anyone were to say concerning this, 'Why? How? When? In what?' he would disbelieve, for He is not questioned concerning what He does, while they are questioned."

"O Salmān and O Jundab, whoever believes what I have said, explained, clarified, and interpreted is a believer whose heart God has tested for faith. If he distinguishes the outward and inward meanings of my speech, he is a knower with insight, mature and complete. Whoever doubts, becomes uncertain, denies, or stops is astray and deficient."

"O Salmān and O Jundab, I give life and cause death; I create and provide; I heal the blind from birth and the leper; and I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses, by permission of my Lord. Likewise the rightful Imams from my descendants, for we are all one thing appearing in every age. When God wills, we will; when God dislikes, we dislike. God has preferred us above many of His creation and has given us His messages so that His power and will may be magnified through us."

"He has given us what is higher, greater, and more immense than all this: He has given us the Greatest Name. If we wished through it, we could ascend to heaven; the sun, moon, stars, and beasts would obey us. Yet despite this we

eat and drink, walk in the markets, and do what we wish only by the command of God our Lord. We are honored servants who do not precede Him in speech and who act by His command."

"This is knowledge of me in luminosity. Hold fast to it with guidance and felicity, if God Most High wills."

This is his saying—peace be upon him. We have transmitted it so that knowers may understand his standing with the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—and that it is like the standing of the Imam al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh with al-Mahdī bi-llāh—God's blessings be upon them all. Light is one and manifestation is one; the essence is one; the signs bear witness to that. "The word of your Lord has been completed in truth and justice."

Since al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh resembled the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in the cycle of manifestation, his state was mixed with distress because of the appearance of the accursed opponent Makhlad b. Kaydād, Abū Yazīd the Dajjāl—may God curse him—just as opponents had appeared in the time of the Commander of the Believers—peace be upon him.

The one who assisted the crooked Abū Yazīd—may God curse him—in his rising was Abū ʿAmmār the blind teacher. The accursed man held the doctrine of the Khawārij and was from the Ḥarūrīs. He took control over people, spread corruption in the earth, and his darkness, might, and power continued to appear until he reached the vicinity of al-Mahdiyya, to the very point where al-Mahdī's arrow—peace be upon him—had fallen when he had indicated how far the enemy of God would reach.

Abū Yazīd was an accursed Ibāḍī who dissociated himself from the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—and considered lawful the shedding of the blood of his descendants and the captivity of their women and children. He encamped with his armies around al-Mahdiyya and besieged it. Al-Qāʾim—peace be upon him—ordered the gates closed. War became severe, sedition blazed, and the trial grew tremendous.

Al-Qāʾim—peace be upon him—brought forth the stores of food that he and al-Mahdī—peace be upon him—had prepared and spent them upon the army and the weak among the people of the city. The accursed opponent ordered his army, most of whom were Berbers, to press the siege. What followed became among the greatest trials of the manifest Imams and a sign of the succession of opposition that had accompanied the friends of God in every age.

The armies of the accursed opponent guarded the roads. Whoever fell into their hands they killed and plundered, and they took captive his household. Their excess reached such a point that they slit open the bellies of men and the wombs of women searching for hidden gold and pearls. They sank into every form of enormity and unlawful practice. The filthy accursed man then became ever more extreme, corrupt, and rebellious. Among the practices attributed to him was that, within a single hour, he would contract unions with two or three virgin sisters. His power increased until he held much of the Maghrib.

He thus stood in the position of the opponents of al-Ṣādiq, the opponents of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—and the opponents of Jesus, the Spirit of God. When the appointed term approached and the respite drew to its end, our master al-Qāʾim entrusted his obedient and devoted servant Jawdhar with the covenant of al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him. Jawdhar delivered it to the elders of the daʿwa, and Ṣalawāt read it to them, for he was a possessor of rank. Ṣalawāt then returned it to Jawdhar, and Jawdhar returned it to our master. A second time his master ordered him to bring it to them, and Ṣalawāt again read it and returned it. They did not know our master's purpose in this, nor the secret that he had entrusted to Jawdhar on the day al-Mahdī—peace be upon him—was buried and on which he had covenanted with him concerning the rank of his son al-Manṣūr and his designation.

Jawdhar had thus been entrusted with the secret of al-Manṣūr. For this reason the covenant could not be disclosed to the ḥudūd except through Jawdhar. On the third occasion he brought it to them and asked them how they regarded his own standing with his masters, what they believed concerning him, and how greatly they trusted him. They told him what they knew of the right he possessed with his masters. He then said to them: "Our master commanded me to bring this covenant so that Ṣalawāt might read it to you concerning his son Ismāʿīl. Our master al-Qāʾim has appointed our master al-Manṣūr Ismāʿīl." They prostrated and obeyed. Al-Qāʾim designated him and ordered him to confront Abū Yazīd, the accursed Dajjāl.

Al-Manṣūr bi-llāh—peace be upon him—appeared with the blessed army and encamped in al-Shaʿb. He drove Abū Yazīd away from the prayer-ground. Thus arose al-Manṣūr bi-llāh Ismāʿīl b. Muḥammad Abī al-Qāsim—God's blessings be upon him, his fathers, and the chosen ones among his descendants—by the command and revelation of

God. He was the sixth of the caliphs, corresponding in the bodily analogy to flesh; he corresponded to his ancestor Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar, the sixth of the atimmāʾ, and to his ancestor Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—the sixth of the lawgiving speakers. It was his prerogative to manifest against every opponent who fought him, warred against him, separated from him, or set himself against him the dazzling miracle and manifest power that had been manifested through his predecessors. He was strengthened by victory and by the support of his grandfather Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā—may God bless him and his family.

The Muslim heir and al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh remained in al-Mahdiyya. Al-Manṣūr—peace be upon him—drove Abū Yazīd toward Qayrawān and encamped at one side of the city, while the opponent encamped on the other. Letters went from al-Qāʾim to his son al-Manṣūr, and letters containing the news returned from al-Manṣūr to al-Qāʾim.

On a Friday the opponent advanced with a vast and noisy army that he had gathered and prepared, intending to fall suddenly upon al-Manṣūr's encampment. They came near enough that the two armies could see one another. Al-Manṣūr—peace be upon him—was seated upon a pulpit in the middle of the camp. His soldiers pressed him to mount, saying that the enemy had come close. He ordered that his horses be watered. He then ordered that his mount be saddled, without agitation or haste. He mounted and the two forces met. Many were slain between them. The battle of that day was tremendous. Al-Manṣūr attacked them like an enraged lion with Dhū l-Fiqār, striking them as his grandfather ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—had struck the unbelievers.

The army of the Dajjāl was numerous. The army of our master—peace be upon him—gave way until only about fifty horsemen remained with him, while the defeated men of his army went toward Qayrawān. He and those who remained with him continued to charge the enemy until they were exhausted and few in number. Then the bearer of the parasol, fearing for al-Manṣūr, lowered it. Al-Manṣūr ordered him to raise it again. Al-Manṣūr then charged the unbelievers, broke them, and turned their first ranks upon their last. They fled. His troops returned from Qayrawān, and a great multitude of the accursed one's army was killed.

The report of the victory was written and sent. Meanwhile Jawdhar's replies came secretly, informing al-Manṣūr that our master al-Qāʾim—peace be upon him—had formally placed Jawdhar in charge of the people of al-Mahdiyya and of the inhabitants of the two palaces. Jawdhar kept concealed from them the fact that al-Qāʾim had departed this world. No one knew of it except Jawdhar. Al-Manṣūr wrote to him that he should continue concealing it and commanded him to exercise the utmost prudence. The headings of the letters continued to bear the name of al-Qāʾim—peace be upon him—and letters were issued by Jawdhar in the name of al-Qāʾim, while those from al-Manṣūr were likewise written under that name.

Then al-Manṣūr pursued the accursed man, destroyed his armies, and God gave him power over the accursed one. We have recounted those events elsewhere in this book. Al-Manṣūr—peace be upon him—returned to his settled residence. During the time that remained to him he sent his armies against the lands of the Byzantines and throughout the Maghrib. He opened cities; necks were humbled and obeyed. After he had returned from the war against the Dajjāl, whom God caused him to overcome on a Friday, he publicly announced the departure of his father—peace be upon him—and established the daʿwa in his own name.

He singled out Jawdhar, the servant of himself and his fathers, and brought him to the furthest limit of knowledge. He placed him over al-Mahdiyya and over the princes from among the descendants of al-Mahdī, al-Qāʾim, and others. All of them were beneath his authority. The guiding daʿwa became firmly established through the Imam al-Manṣūr. He disseminated the sciences, restored the ḥudūd of the daʿwa and its ordinances after God had delivered the believers from the devils of the lawgiving speakers and from the people of the great conflicts.

Our master al-Manṣūr possessed miracles that were famous, by which the daʿwa was established and by which people were guided. Through him the proofs were set up, the sharīʿa and the religion were upheld, and his radiant lights confronted falsehood. He is the greatest light of God, and his station is the most noble and generous station. That light does not cease to move through the ages, appearing through human veils and disclosing from them its lights.

Al-Imam al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—said to al-Mufaḍḍal: "O Mufaḍḍal, make your thoughts sound and your sight will become sound. Whatever you say concerning God applies to the subtleties of His veils, and whatever you say concerning us applies to the eloquent ones among our Shīʿa. It does not harm you, when you know God and His stations, not to know the people and not to be known by them. We are the utmost goal of whoever reflects among

you and the meaning sought by whoever thinks. O Mufaḍḍal, whoever knows the sites of the Attribute reaches the resting-place of knowledge. The Attribute is His illuminating light leading to knowledge of Him and to the stations of His prophecy among His creation. Those are His dwellings in which His lamps rise with their light."

He then recited: "The likeness of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp…" He said: "O Mufaḍḍal, do you know the niche? It is the human form through which He veils Himself from creation and through whose speaking Attribute He addresses them. The lamp is the shadow-veiled form through which that walī is veiled because of the gentleness and compassion of the exalted rank for humanity. He is the discloser of the light while being in human form. As for the exalted veil, it is above the shadow-veiled form, and the shadow-veiled form is beneath it. The star that is kindled from the blessed tree is the light of the Essence, a meaning receiving supply from the tree that is the light of unity."

The meaning of the blessed tree, neither eastern nor western, is that it is not confined to one of the directions by which bodies are bounded. Its oil almost gives light even though no fire touches it: taʾyīd reaches the chosen one before outward teaching touches him. "Light upon light": the light of the nāṣṣ is joined to the light of the manṣūṣ, and the guidance is continuous from one rank to the one following it. Thus the words of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—show how the Imam appears through veils while the light is one and uninterrupted.

Al-Manṣūr—peace be upon him—then designated his son, the Imam al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, and delivered the command to him. Al-Muʿizz was the seventh of the successors, the seventh of two heptads, and the fourth of a sequence of four. The dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God sanctify his spirit—explained that in the cycles there are two foundations and one completer in each set of five eras, and that each order is fulfilled by the one in whom the preceding meanings are gathered.

Among those eras are the era of Abraham, then that of Moses, then that of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—then the era of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, and then the era of al-Muʿizz. In each, what had been dispersed before it was gathered and made manifest in a more complete way. Al-Muʿizz therefore manifested the sciences of tanzīl and taʾwīl, clarified the ranks and their relations, and disclosed more of the hidden knowledge because his age was nearer to the latter time and to the great unveiling.

Among the gates of al-Muʿizz was al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān. Al-Muʿizz commanded him to compose Daʿāʾim al-Islām and the books in which the outward prescriptions of the sharīʿa were gathered and ordered. The scholars of the outward law acknowledged the force of his knowledge, while those of the daʿwa received through him the ordinances together with their inner correspondences.

Al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—resolved to migrate toward the East after the state had become firmly established in the Maghrib. He wrote to Kāfūr in Egypt commanding that a palace be prepared for him. He sent one of his Shīʿa on a mule and instructed him that wherever the mule stopped would be the place of the palace. The animal stopped at the chosen place. When the workmen began digging, they found foundations that had already been laid and remains indicating that the site had long before been prepared for what was now to be built upon it. Thus the palace was erected there.

The matter resembled what had occurred to the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—when he entered Medina and allowed his she-camel to go where she had been commanded, and at the place where she knelt the Prophet's mosque and dwelling were established. The outward occurrence followed the inner decree.

Kāfūr died while the palace was still being completed. Al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—then gathered the leading men of Egypt, its soldiers, merchants, and notables, and addressed them from the exalted presence. Among what he said to them was: "Whoever knows me knows me; whoever does not know me, let him know that I am the first and I am the last, I am the manifest and I am the hidden—not by separation from my forefathers nor by a claim independent of them, but because the light is one, the command is one, and the succession is one."

He continued to admonish them regarding obedience and walāya, and to warn them against opposition. He said in meaning: "The first belongs to us and the last belongs to us. Where then will you go? Will you worship another lord? Or will you treat as equals those who are beneath the appointed ranks? Know that My stratagem is firm." He told them that the appointed term would come, that respite should not deceive them, and that the most excellent speech and most effective admonition were obedience to him, walāya for him, following his command, and holding fast to the firm handhold that does not break.

He then said: “God knows my walāya and the people of my obedience, among those already mentioned of the friends and among those who accompanied me and those who preceded them. Your enemy is before you, and I am setting out with you toward the land of the East. Their common people are better than their rulers. Do not take intimate companionship with the people of opposition; do not eat with them, drink with them, greet them, or leave among them young or old when open war is imposed. Their blood and wealth have become permitted because of what their hands have sent ahead, and I am not unjust to the servants.”

He then departed carrying with him three hundred camel-loads of gold. For that reason one of the gates became known as the Gate of Gold. Jawdhar, the servant of our master al-Mahdī bi-llāh and of the Imams—peace be upon them—died on the journey. Our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—prayed over him and invoked mercy upon him.

Al-Muʿizz reached Egypt after the death of Kāfūr. He visited Kāfūr’s grave and invoked mercy upon him because of his obedience. Is walāya anything other than obedience? When he reached the exalted palace and entered it, the man whom he had previously sent showed him the ancient traces that had been found and told him that Kāfūr had ordered the builders to construct upon what they found without changing the foundations. Al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—said: “That is correct. We have dwelt here for a very long time.”

He settled in the exalted palace, opened the lands, brought the regions into obedience, and spread the daʿwa and disseminated it. He acted as those before him had acted in their migrations, for every seventh, every fourth, and every tenth has a place of migration in which he takes refuge and from which he establishes the ḥudūd. Al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—did not fall short of the duty. He had enjoyed a tranquil state in the Maghrib, free of major opponents, seditions, evils, and trials; but in the East divine secrets unfolded whose wisdom is known only to the Imams—God’s blessings be upon them all.

Affairs proceeded in their accustomed course until the opponent known as “the renegade”—may God curse him—appeared in the East, in the land of Persia. He advanced to Cairo and besieged it. The walī of God ordered the gates of Cairo closed. The siege lasted forty days. Each night the walī of God ordered that one thousand mithqāls be given for hospitality.

On the last evening of the forty, he again ordered one thousand dinars to be sent and commanded that they observe what became of the one for whom this hospitality was being given. He then said that the opponent would die after two hours of the night had passed, while ten hours of the night remained. The opponent instructed his son that when his final hour came he should place him in his litter and carry him away. Exactly as the Imam had said, he died; his son carried his corpse toward Syria.

Our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—had previously designated his son, the Imam al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh Nizār b. Maʿadd, and delivered his command to him. He informed him that he himself would depart on the following evening at Tinnīs, for he had intended to pursue the opponent after his removal, and he instructed al-ʿAzīz—peace be upon him—to carry his body to al-Qāhira al-Muʿizziyya.

When the renegade opponent—may God curse him—died and his son carried him in his litter toward Syria, al-Muʿizz and his son al-ʿAzīz—peace be upon them—continued their journey for the remainder of that night and the next day. When evening came at Tinnīs, al-Muʿizz entered the mosque to perform the sunset prayer. For a brief time those around him were occupied away from him. When they returned to him, he had manifested concealment in the miḥrāb. Al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh—peace be upon him—carried him in his litter to Cairo.

The Imam ordered that those present bear witness from first to last, so that both incapacity and miracle might be manifested. When the Imams manifest incapacity, that belongs to the nāsūt through which they appear and which is bounded by bodily limits. When they manifest miracle, that is the act of the one united with them in support—the First Intellect, from which the lights are manifested. May God keep us firm in obedience to them and make us among those who fulfill their commands according to their capacity.

Then arose the Imam al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh Nizār—God’s blessings be upon him and upon the pure members of his family before and after him. He was the first of the third heptad, called the luminous cycle; the first of its witnesses, corresponding to the seminal extract. He corresponded to his ancestor ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, the first of the concealed successors, to al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, the first of the atimmāʾ in that sequence, and to Adam, the first of the lawgiving speakers—God’s blessings be upon them all.

This third cycle is nobler in degree and more manifest in command, sciences, miracles, and ordinances than the cycles before it because of its nearness to the Last Day and to the possessor of the Resurrection—peace be upon his mention. Whenever a great station from among the noble stations arises, its manifestation becomes more actual because of its nearness to him.

The Imam al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh—peace be upon him—therefore stood with the religion of truth in the finest manner. He made the sciences clear and established the ordinances. His standards and banners were spread. The days of his caliphate proceeded in the finest order and fullest completion. The memory of his opponents was abased while the command of his daʿwa was exalted. He clarified the path of right guidance and delivered his friends from the injustice of the people of obstinacy. He established his ḥudūd and made manifest his taʾyīd. His word rose, his daʿwa became mighty, his wisdom became manifest, and his glory shone with the lights of wisdom.

His governor in Damascus rebelled against him, so he went out against him in person, seized control over him, and later pardoned him. His justice appeared throughout the kingdom. He repelled the Frankish unbelievers from the lands of Islam and protected the domains of the religion from being violated. His excellence became evident, his justice spread, the religion and its people were strengthened through him, and through him the manifest excellence became clear to the knowers.

It is related that a group of his dāʿīs once gathered before him and prostrated between his hands except for one man among them, a Sindī. Al-ʿAzīz said to him: “Why do you not do as your companions have done?” The Sindī replied: “Through what came from you I knew you, and by a light from you I prostrated. Glory be to me, glory be to me! I am you and you are I; there is no difference except the precedence of rank.”

Al-ʿAzīz—peace be upon him—said: “O Sindī, the people are like a hundred camels among which you can scarcely find one fit to be ridden.” Let no one imagine or believe that the Sindī was claiming the station of his master or claiming the excellence which belonged to him. Rather, the Sindī meant the veil through which his master had manifested himself to him. He saw him according to the measure of knowledge he had attained. He saw in that veil what was like himself in the level of indication and expression, at the point his own understanding had reached, just as one of the dāʿīs said in explanation of such matters.

May God grant us success in following His guidance. When a person looks into a mirror, does he see there anything except his own form? Thus that Sindī saw only the form corresponding to his own degree, and described only what was like it. Had the hidden essence of his master and his dazzling lights been manifested to him, had the first light united with pre-eternity appeared to him without veil, his incapacity to look upon it would have overwhelmed him and he would have stood halted and bewildered before it.

Our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—said in a noble rescript addressed to the Qarmaṭian: “O people, when God—mighty and majestic—wills a matter, He decrees it; and when He decrees it, He brings it to completion. Among what He decreed before formation was that He made us specters and lights, spirits possessing authority and powers in potentiality, at a time when there was no built heaven, no spread earth, no shining sun, no traveling moon, no covering night, no horizon of habitation, no revolving sphere, and no moving star. We are the first of the thought and the last of the work, according to a measured decree and a command established in pre-eternity.

“When the affair reached completion and the determination became sound, and when God willed the arising of originated things, the bringing forth of the mothers from the prime matters, and the establishing of nature, shadow, motion, and rest, there came to be—according to the wisdom that preceded in His knowledge—what you see of revolving spheres, moving stars, night and day, signs and astonishing powers in the horizons, and what is found in the regions and in souls of genera, forms, and species: dense and subtle, existing and absent, manifest and hidden, sensed and touched, near and distant, descending and ascending.

“All of that was for us and on our account, and an indication toward us. He brought forth from the treasury of hidden knowledge and stored wisdom Adam and Eve, male and female, as two parents for the establishment of human progeny and as a sign of His mighty power. He joined them, and offspring were born and numbers multiplied. We passed through pure loins and purified wombs; whenever one of us appeared, power and knowledge became manifest, until the matter reached the final ancestor and the most excellent father, the master of the messengers and Imam of the Godfearing, Aḥmad and Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family. Through him guidance was completed, the favors of God became beautiful and manifest, the polytheists were destroyed, the people of error were

broken, truth was made manifest, truthfulness was established, unity was proclaimed, and the One was worshiped as the Self-Sufficient."

"At that time the idols fell, Islam was firmly established, faith spread, magic and sacrifice to false gods were abolished, tyranny and unbelief were defeated, and the Qurʾan was brought as a witness with truth and proof. In it is the report of what was and the news of what will be until the appointed time. It clarifies what had been contained in earlier books and scrolls, as an explanation of every thing, guidance, mercy, light, and an illuminating lamp.

"All of that is among our signs and the things placed before us, causes for the manifestation of our command, guidances, signs, testimonies, holy felicities, divine and timeless realities, individual and pre-existent indications. No lawgiving speaker spoke and no prophet was sent without indicating us, alluding to us, and directing toward us in his book, in the purport of his discourse, in the beacons of his signs, and in the symbols of his speech. There is no existent and no non-existent, no manifest and no hidden, except that its meaning is known by one who hears the call, witnesses, and sees from the Highest Assembly.

"Whoever among you is heedless or forgetful, whoever goes astray or is led astray, let him look into the earlier books and the revealed scrolls, let him contemplate the Qurʾan and what it contains of explanation, and let him ask the People of Remembrance if he does not know. God—mighty and majestic—has commanded asking: 'Ask the People of Remembrance if you do not know.' He also said: 'Why does not a group from every party go forth to gain understanding in religion and warn their people when they return to them, so that perhaps they may beware?' And He said: 'He made it a word enduring in his progeny, so that perhaps they may return.' And He said: 'Some of them are descendants of others.' And He said: 'He has prescribed for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah, and what We revealed to you, and what We enjoined upon Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: establish the religion and do not be divided concerning it.' There are many examples of this in the Book of God; were it not for length, we would cite many of them.

"He indicated us and informed concerning us in His saying concerning the Light: 'The likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass; the glass is as though it were a glittering star, kindled from a blessed tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil almost gives light even though no fire touches it—light upon light; God guides to His light whom He wills; and God sets forth similitudes for mankind so that perhaps they may remember.' He also said, concerning the excellence of the excellent grandfather and complete father, Muḥammad and ʿAlī, indicating our exalted degree and lofty command: 'We have given you seven of the oft-repeated and the mighty Qurʾan.' Thus He indicated, alluded, explained, and made clear, in secret and in open declaration.

"He set forth similitudes for mankind that perhaps they might remember. He said: 'Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are signs for people of understanding.' And He said: 'We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.' If one would reflect and compare what is in the horizons and what is within the souls—composed forms, signs and marks, the precision of the invention of genera and species, the human forms in the world of origination, and the higher traces—he would find testimony everywhere.

"The letters of the alphabet bear witness; measured calculation bears witness; what the years gather of seasons, days, and months bears witness; the arrangement of the Qurʾan in its portions, sevenths, meanings, and structures bears witness; the places of the earlier laws and firmly established sunnas bear witness; the word of sincerity, in its divisions, articulations, and letters, bears witness; and what is in the earth of regions and islands, land and sea, plain and mountain, length and breadth, above and below, bears witness. The seven governing stars, the seven days, the lawgiving speakers and their legatees, the emergence of the religious laws and the sunnas and ḥudūd, and the remaining numerical orders—units and odd numbers, threes, fours, sevens, twelves, tens, hundreds, and thousands—all gather and encompass what they encompass as a just witness, a decisive speech, a wisdom of the Wise, and an ordering of the Knowing.

"There is no god but He. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names and the highest similitudes. 'If you count the favor of God, you will not enumerate it.' 'If all the trees upon the earth were pens and the sea, with seven seas after it, supplied the ink, the words of God would not be exhausted.' Know, O people—whoever has a heart or gives ear while witnessing—that the timeless words of God, His complete mysteries, His named originated beings, His dazzling lights, His radiant signs, and His effective decrees do not depart from any age, nor is any age empty of them.

“God says that there is no secret counsel of three but He is their fourth, nor of five but He is their sixth, nor less than that nor more but He is with them wherever they are; then on the Day of Resurrection He will inform them of what they did. God knows all things. The trumpet has sounded, the oven has overflowed, and the warner has come before a severe punishment. Whoever wishes, let him see; whoever wishes, let him reflect. Nothing is incumbent upon the Messenger except clear conveyance.”

This is the end of what our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon him—said in his noble rescript. That Sindī—may God sanctify his spirit—even though his degree was high and he was counted among the excellent and elevated men, had seen only what his master manifested to him through one of his veils. Knowledge of what lay beyond that veil of the lights of the unseen was hidden from him. Imaginations cannot even knock upon the door of perceiving that farthest station. Whoever has outwardly reached the degree of taʾyīd still finds before him a farther station and a more distant place, while what is beneath the Imam’s encompassing knowledge is nearer than the jugular vein. Glory be to the Originator, to whom imaginations cannot ascend. There is no god but He, exalted above the perception of intellects and understandings.

When the term of al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was fulfilled and the appointed time came, he surrendered the command to the walī of God, al-Manṣūr al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh, and designated him by the command of God Most High. Thus arose the Imam al-Manṣūr al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh—peace be upon him—by God’s command and revelation. He was the second of the witnesses in the third spiritual cycle, corresponding to the drop of seed; he corresponded to the second of the concealed successors, to the second of the Imams in the corresponding sequence, and to Noah, the second of the lawgiving speakers.

His age therefore resembled the cycle of Noah in trial, testing, and the flood of perplexity. Extraordinary actions appeared from him which bewildered minds and confused those who looked only at the outward form of matters. Some people were established through submission; others were shaken because they measured the Imam by their own imaginations rather than receiving the meaning from the appointed ḥudūd.

Among the reports transmitted from his time is that a group of opponents used to gather in a mosque and revile the people of the daʿwa with the harshest insults, slandering them continually. Their greatest hatred was directed toward the Imam al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh—peace be upon him. A believer heard them and was inflamed with grief as though standing upon burning coals. He possessed no power against them except supplication to his master. They continued until they had performed the night prayer and remained for some time in conversation, returning again and again to their abuse. Then they went to their homes, while that believer remained in the mosque.

At dawn they came again, prayed, and returned to their insults and slanders. The believer did not cease calling upon God against them and supplicating his master to bring humiliation upon them and to cause the curse to descend upon them. He grieved that he had no strength to defeat them and no power to take vengeance upon them. While he was in that state, the noble person of the Imam al-Ḥākim appeared. None of them failed to recognize him. He entered the mosque.

The opponents were twelve men. Each rose with his knife, and each began striking the man beside him, imagining that he was striking the Imam. They stabbed one another until they had killed one another and lay fallen in the mosque—may God curse them. The believer went out from the mosque and found the walī of God—peace be upon him—standing there holding the reins of a dark horse. He said: “My master, what is this?” He replied: “You called us, and we answered you.” Then he mounted and departed.

Another of the wonders related from him concerned a man from Egypt who intended to perform the pilgrimage. He possessed a thousand mithqāls of gold, counted, weighed, and sealed in a purse of brocade which he had sewn with his own hand, marked with his sign, and closed with his seal. He deposited it in trust with a judge in Egypt whose outward appearance was one of piety, asceticism, and chastity, and then departed upon the pilgrimage.

The judge flattened the purse carefully, removed the gold mithqāls, and replaced them with silver equal to them in number and weight. He summoned a skillful mender and ordered him to sew up the place where the purse had been opened with the finest stitching possible, paying him generously. The mender did so, and the judge returned the purse to the condition in which its owner had entrusted it to him.

When the pilgrim returned from the pilgrimage, he came to the judge seeking his deposit. The judge brought him into his house, gave the purse to him, and said: “Do you recognize your seal and mark?” He said: “Yes.” He thanked

the judge and praised him. He took the purse home; when need led him to open it, he found all the mithqāls to be silver. He cried out in distress, and the matter became grave in his eyes. He said: “If I demand it from him, he will demand two witnesses to testify that I deposited gold with him. He will certainly say: ‘You left with me nothing but a sealed purse, whose contents I did not know, and I returned it to you exactly as it was.’”

He resolved to complain to the walī of God—peace be upon him. It was among the noble customs of the Imam to sit at one of the palace windows until a quarter of the night had passed and distribute alms to whoever cried out to him, each according to what he knew of that person’s entitlement. That night the man went forward and stood among those seeking charity. He cried: “I seek aid through God and through you, O refuge of those seeking protection!” He threw up to him a purse containing mithqāls and said: “I have been wronged; give me victory.” He was told: “Return in the morning, if God wills.”

At dawn he went to the Gate of the Imamate and found that the Imam—peace be upon him—had ordered someone to await his arrival. The attendant asked: “Are you the wronged man?” He said: “Yes.” He was admitted to the walī of God and kissed the ground before him. The walī of God ordered the purse to be taken up and told him to go home, promising to give him what was his, if God willed.

When night came, the walī of God entered the place where he slept. It was the custom that three chamber-servants divided the night among themselves. When the master removed his garments to sleep, he left his handkerchief spread upon one corner of his chair. The chamber-servant closed the doors and inner doors, lowered the curtains, and the candles remained burning. Suddenly a wind moved through the Imam’s chamber and lifted the handkerchief. One edge fell into the flame of a candle and burned. The servant rushed to it and extinguished it, but a portion had already been consumed. He became terrified and resolved to flee because of his fear and shame before his master.

At the beginning of the second watch he came out of the gate of the exalted palace carrying the damaged handkerchief and intending to throw himself into the Nile. In one of the streets he met a friend who saw him anxious and terrified and asked him what had happened. He told him the story. His friend said: “Do not be troubled. Give me the handkerchief. I shall give it to a neighbor of ours who mends garments. He will restore it for you exactly as required, if God wills, and will bring it to you in the last third of the night. Do not tell him where the damage occurred.” He gave it to him together with the payment and returned.

At the appointed time the servant waited at the gate until his friend came with the handkerchief. He took it and examined it. So subtle was the workmanship that he could not tell where the tear had been. He went back into the palace and placed it where his master had left it. In the morning the walī of God dressed. He sent for the chamber-servant and said: “You have no sin and no offense. You are safe. Tell me: who mended this handkerchief?” The servant related the story. The Imam said: “Do not relate what we have learned and do not tell what we have done. Ours is the command before and after. Tell me where the mender is.”

The servant said that his friend had given it to a neighbor. The Imam ordered that the mender be brought. When he arrived, the Imam ordered that the stolen purse be produced and said to the mender: “This purse was opened, the gold was taken from it, and silver was placed in it, and you repaired it. Tell me who gave it to you.” The mender became afraid and informed him that the owner of the silver was the judge who had held the deposit. The judge was summoned.

When the judge arrived, the Imam said to him: “By the truth We have seized you, and by witnesses We have brought the proof against you. It is the same to Us whether one of you conceals his speech or proclaims it, whether he hides by night or goes forth by day. What led you to consume the wealth of the Muslims?” When the judge saw the mender, he knew that the matter had been established against him. He begged for safety. He went away and brought the same gold mithqāls, complete in number and weight, and took back the silver. The Imam removed him from the judgeship.

The walī of God gave the pilgrim his property in full. Everyone departed from his presence, and the Imam forbade the mender from ever again participating in anything similar. This affair became famous and the miracle became manifest. The friends understood from it the hidden secret, while the common people understood according to what they could grasp. Had the Imam taken the judge’s property without proof, the ignorant would have said that this was contrary to the truth. Instead, he conducted the matter by the form of truthfulness, established justice, and judged according to the sharīʿa, while causing the wind to carry the handkerchief to the flame, causing the chamber-

servant to flee with it, and causing the friend to lead him to the mender. Thus the wisdom was completed, the favor became manifest, the proof was established, justice encompassed all, excellence appeared, and decisive judgment was carried out: “Your Lord is not unjust to the servants.”

In his age there occurred a flood in which many people were destroyed because they turned aside from the path of faith. He manifested the sword, stood by it, destroyed his enemies, and caused his friends to become manifest. His miracles and signs were established.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—described the meaning of this in his Epistle of the Smiles of Glad Tidings. He said in substance: “When I came as an emigrant to the thresholds of the Prophetic Presence and as a visitor to the ʿAlid court, I saw the sky covered by an encompassing cloud and the people beneath a tremendous trial. The covenant regarding the earlier ordinances had been broken, and because of what their hands had earned they had turned away from the friends of God. The custom of convening the assemblies of wisdom, which had flowed through beneficence in former times, had been abandoned. The high among them had become confused and the low had fallen into perplexity.

“I saw among the friends of the guiding daʿwa—may God spread its lights—and among those who had grown under the protection of the Imamate and were people of its walāya conditions that would turn the forelocks white. Their perplexity at the causes that had taken bodily form before them was something from which only the people of hypocrisy and disobedience are destroyed. On that day they surged against one another. Each considered his companion to be in error; corrupted thoughts played with some of them and destructive whisperings assailed them. They did not know what clear smoke had overshadowed them or what manifest trial had befallen them. Some of them went far into exaggeration, while others turned back upon their heels, abandoning the protection of religion and its firm handhold. The pillars of the belief of a few were shaken, although they had originally accepted the religion by choice and deliberate seeking.”

He continued: “Which Imam has ever appeared without actions appearing from him that bewilder minds and make purposes obscure because their wisdom is hidden? What flood could be greater than what overwhelmed the believers? Is it anything other than a trial through which the sinner is destroyed and the truthful person is made to grow? The occurrence of what had been foretold and its agreement with the earlier witnesses is itself the standing of truth and the harmony of the signs of truth. May God preserve us and the community of believers upon obedience and submission. He is Compassionate and Merciful.”

This is his statement—may God exalt his sanctity. What flood could be greater than the flood manifested by the second of the witnesses, whose age corresponded to the cycle of Noah, the second of the lawgiving speakers? What ark, when that flood occurred, could be more saving than adherence to the dāʿīs and ḥudūd raised within his daʿwa, who established souls upon a sound belief in his walāya without exaggeration and without deficiency, and gave them drink from the spring of reality in which there is neither bitterness nor muddiness? Such was what our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—set forth in The Smiles of Glad Tidings and in his other books, by which souls are made upright upon the straight path of walāya and firmness.

The friends of God—peace be upon them—manifest miracles, disclose signs, and clarify proofs. At times they bring dazzling miracles which are the act of the Creator through what He has joined to His originated being; the ignorant person is overwhelmed and the one inclined toward exaggeration speaks beyond the proper limit. At other times they manifest incapacity before people through their bodily condition and their participation in natural creation, so that those inclined toward deficiency fall short and become perplexed. Whoever among their friends knows them with true knowledge understands the intended meaning: he looks at their human forms, which resemble bodies subject to decay, and he transcends them beyond what belongs to perishability, pointing instead to the Intellect united with them in taʾyīd, from which radiance and light appear.

We have already mentioned Salmān al-Fārisī’s prostration before the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—and that his prostration was because of the light he saw between the Prophet’s eyes. May God make us firm in obedience to them with the finest firmness and not make us among the people of exaggeration and deficiency, who come to an evil end and are returned because of that to the lowest state. He is the Protector and has power over it.

Among the innumerable miracles manifested by the Imam al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh was the affair of Abū Rakwa, the accursed opponent from the Maghrib, who arrived with a great host around al-Qāhira al-Muʿizziyya. The walī of God ordered the gates to remain closed for several days. He then ordered the commander of the armies to go out

against him with twelve thousand cavalrymen. He instructed him not to alarm the enemy, for the enemy would withdraw from Cairo when the victorious army came out and would encamp at Biʾr al-Daraj. When the enemy encamped there, the commander was to make his own camp at Biʾr al-Rifāq. The commander did so. He encamped at Biʾr al-Rifāq, while the opponent withdrew from him until he encamped at Biʾr al-Daraj.

The walī of God—peace be upon him—had said to the commander of the armies: "Do not be deceived. When a black and violent wind arises and then clears, send scouts to the camp of the people to look at the palm tree beside Biʾr al-Daraj. If the wind has broken it into three pieces and its crown lies toward the west, pursue the people and kill them before the deserts scatter them and the seas drown them. If the palm tree has broken into two pieces and its crown lies toward the east, then go back to Cairo and enter it."

The commander waited until a violent wind arose, uprooting trees and darkening the horizons until a man could scarcely see his own hand when he extended it. When it cleared, he sent someone to inspect the palm tree in the enemy encampment. It had broken into three pieces and its crown lay toward the west. When his scout returned with this information, the victorious army mounted and fell upon the camp of the opponents, who numbered one hundred thousand or more. They killed, took booty, and stripped them over the distance of many days' journey. They pursued Abū Rakwa, the accursed one.

The walī of God—peace be upon him—remained in a flourishing state whose borders were illuminated. He manifested miracles and clarified signs until the appointed term came and the respite ended. He designated his son, the Imam al-Ẓāhir ʿAlī b. al-Manṣūr—God's blessings be upon him—and delivered the command to him. Then he manifested concealment—God's blessings be upon him.

Thus arose the Imam al-Ẓāhir li-Iʿzāz Dīn Allāh ʿAlī b. al-Manṣūr—God's blessings be upon him, his fathers, and the chosen ones among his descendants—by the designation of his father and his delivery of the command to him. He was the third of the witnesses, corresponding to the clot, and corresponding to the third of the concealed successors; to ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, the third of the atimmāʾ in the corresponding sequence; and to Abraham the Friend, the third of the lawgiving speakers—God's blessings and peace be upon them all.

He stood with the Imamate in the finest manner, and fortunate nights and days accompanied him. He disseminated the sciences and made them manifest, purified and illuminated souls and intellects, established the ḥudūd, and brought people forth from nonexistence into existence in the religious sense. The opponent was subdued and humiliated, while the religion was exalted through radiance and manifestation. Through him the noble daʿwa stood upon the finest order and harmony, and its light shone throughout the regions and horizons of the earth.

The holy taʾyīd connected to him from the unseen continued to reach every station, and through him there reached his friends whatever the wisdom of God required according to the measure of each one's capacity, excellence, and subtlety of soul. To this the dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman—may God brighten his face—referred in his Book of the Taʾwīl of Zakāt, saying: "Among them are the chosen servants, specially endowed with the knowledge of the unseen and the life-giving nourishment by which they guide to the truth and call to that which is most upright. They are the honored servants: the hujjas, the lāḥiqs, the wings, and the maʾdhūns. Each one receives from knowledge of the unseen according to his limit and allotted share."

He explained that the saying of God, "He is not grudging concerning the unseen," refers to the Imam whose obedience is obligatory upon the people of his age. The Imam's "unseen," from which he informs his ḥudūd by what he discloses to them, is the flow of taʾyīd connected to him from wisdom through the mediation of the current of the lawgiving speaker. Each rank obtains of it according to its allotted portion and its capacity. Knowledge is the spirit of life in the speaking guide, while in relation to the silent recipient it is the hidden treasure guarded by God through His friends. They conceal it and hide it from all except the one who rightly seeks and requests it.

The "degree" is likewise the knowledge of the unseen whose science has been arranged in degrees for the servants. It is not exposed to everyone in one measure. What is unveiled and outward is shared, while the inner and concealed science is reserved for those appointed to its stations and ranks. That is the praiseworthy wisdom through which beginning and return are known, and the pure allotted portion with which the guardians are singled out. The people are commanded to seek it and investigate it through its proper doors.

This is what he said—may God exalt his sanctity—clarifying the knowledge of the unseen which God discloses to His friends and with which He singles out His chosen ones. For the unseen is the Imam, whose true knowledge is

absent from the imaginations. No bodily limit or merely rational faculty encompasses him. We have already cited the saying of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him: “Our outward is Imamate and our inward is an unseen that is not perceived.” And we cited the saying of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him: “I have a station that has never occurred to the heart of any human being, and no one has reached knowledge of it.”

Divine lordship and godhead themselves occur to the hearts of human beings according to outward knowledge, yet the people of realities recognize that their true reality is beyond this. Likewise creation knows ʿAlī through outward recognition and through the proofs and miracles that were repeatedly manifested through him, while in complete and unrestricted form no one knows him except the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—and the Imams from his descendants. The people of realities know him through the outward indications that establish his rank, but the full reality of that rank is beyond them.

Some of the Imams—peace be upon them—said: “What occurred to our first occurs to our last.” And some said: “Whatever is said concerning God applies to us, and whatever is said concerning us applies to the eloquent ones among our Shīʿa.” The meaning is that the divine Names, insofar as they are applied within creation, are manifested through them, because they are the Most Beautiful Names by which God commanded that He be called. The attributes that belong to the First Intellect, which the Originator created and made the bearer of His word, become manifest through them according to the hierarchy.

Those who look only at what appears from the Imams and who fail to distinguish the level of the originating Cause from the level of the created veil fall into two opposing errors. Some suppose that creation proceeds from their bodily persons and thus fall into exaggeration, likening them to corporeal causes. Others look only at their bodies, the occurrence of ordinary human states upon them, and the obligations imposed upon them, and therefore deny their excellence and accuse their followers of falsehood. Between these stands the knower who looks at the religious creation and the formal structure of the hierarchy, affirms unity and transcendence without associating anything with God, recognizes the outward form as a sign pointing to the meaning, and thereby reaches the intended goal. Such a person has faith, is guided, attains knowledge of the master, and gains the highest share.

When the time of our master al-Ẓāhir approached its completion and his ascent from the world and concealment drew near, he delivered the command to his son, the Imam al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—God’s blessings be upon him—and explicitly designated him. Thus arose the Imam al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh, the Commander of the Believers Maʿadd b. ʿAlī—God’s blessings be upon him—by the command of God, the designation of his father, and his delivery of authority to him. He was the fourth of the witnesses, corresponding to the formed lump, and corresponding to his ancestor al-Mahdī bi-llāh, the fourth of the manifest caliphs; to al-Bāqir, the fourth of the atimmāʾ; and to Moses, the fourth of the lawgiving speakers—God’s blessings be upon them all.

These fourth figures are distinguished by a manifestation of signs and miracles beyond what appears through many of the other ranks, like the fourth great luminous body among the stars which governs the ascendants and through which the life of material existence is carried to the various genera until each reaches its completion. Through our master al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—there appeared of divine power and creative wisdom what is famous and established. Through him God revived His creation, extended their provision, strengthened the religion, and clarified the path of guidance for the people of tawḥīd. Through him the eyes of corruption were obscured and the command of God appeared in lowlands and highlands.

He dispatched dāʿīs throughout the islands and established the manifest and inward religion of God. His excellence encompassed the lands and his generosity and justice reached them. This was particularly so in the island of Yemen, toward which he turned a complete spiritual attention and in which he made the proof brilliantly clear. The lights of his command shone in the depths of that region. He entrusted noble treasures to the Yemeni island and revived there the true ordinances of religion through his dāʿī Lamak b. Mālik and through his hujja, the noble free lady, the Ṣulayḥid queen.

He placed with the two of them the rank of deposit because a period of interruption and an age of taqiyya were approaching. He deposited with them the renewed command and manifested through those who succeeded them the lights of taʾyīd. Glory be to God, the one who brings forth, initiates, and grants benefit. He commanded his Gate and Hujja, the dāʿī al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, pillar of the people of tawḥīd. Al-Muʾayyad spread the realities with clear explanation and brought forth into open view what had been concealed. After him his hujja arose and clarified the

meanings that had reached him from the straight path of the Imam's proof. He possessed tremendous spiritual strength and manifest noble signs.

Al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—may God sanctify his spirit—was also, in spiritual lineage and natural lineage, connected to the Hujja of our master al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh. When he traced his lineage, he belonged to the House through Salmān. He clarified his rank, which was the rank of Salmān, and explained that he stood in his age with the meaning that Salmān had borne. He said: "Had I lived in the age of the Prophet Muḥammad, I would not have fallen short of Salmān's station, and he would have said of me, 'You are of us, the People of the House.'" His statement reveals the reality of the dāʿīs appointed in the Yemeni island, all of whom are connected to him by knowledge.

He delivered what he had received to the dāʿī Lamak b. Mālik, who delivered it to his son, and thus the noble ranks proceeded in succession from him and from the Queen-Hujja who stood with the daʿwa of her master, thanking Him for what He bestowed upon her. She became the mother of the blessed dāʿīs and the support of the people of the right. May God include us among those who drink from the spring of their excellence and are intimate with their light.

Al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—possessed clear miracles and signs that displayed his excellence and the excellence of his fathers and clarified what God manifested through them of the unseen. Our master, the dāʿī al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, the protection of the people of tawḥīd, Hibat Allāh b. Mūsā, came to him from the land of Shīrāz. The Imam raised him from the degree of the dāʿīs to the ranks of the Bābiyya and made him one of the nearest luminous veils to himself.

This came after a tremendous trial and testing that none could endure except one whom God had prepared for the noble station. When al-Muʾayyad was admitted to the exalted presence and represented himself before the Imam, he rejoiced at beholding him. The noble Imamic command had come to him that he should confront the Turks and the groups of Arabs and Persians who followed the ʿAbbāsid daʿwa. Among what he said to his master was: "O my master—God's blessings be upon you—my likeness is that of a Bedouin who, as I have been told, used to supplicate his Lord saying: 'O God, forgive me, for I find none to forgive me except You; and You find others besides me whom You can punish.'

"This journey upon which I am setting out is in obedience to you. In the direction toward which I am going you may find someone who can perform what I perform, someone like me or above me or below me. But you will not find among those dwelling near your noble palace one who has each day his recitation of the Qurʾan once or twice, supplication for you, glorification of your Prophet, and service in this daʿwa in the manner I perform it. I am an old man, and in this daʿwa I do not know anyone who exactly resembles me."

The answer of the Imam to this and to what preceded it caused the pearls of his noble teeth to become visible in a smile and joy to shine upon his generous face. He nevertheless ordered him to go forth upon that mission. Al-Muʾayyad continued to call with eloquent speech and to indicate with clear exposition until many groups from those nations responded to him. Calamity fell upon the ʿAbbāsid opponent who had falsely claimed the caliphate and upon his followers, until the opponent was seized. The miracle of the walī of God—peace be upon him—became manifest through the hands of one of his most excellent friends and veils.

Whenever our master al-Muʾayyad—may God sanctify his spirit—entered upon our master al-Mustanṣir—God's blessings be upon him—he would say: "God's blessings be upon you, O proof of God upon His earth and reviver of the bones when they are decayed. God's blessings be upon you, O possessor of bliss and abundant excellence. God's blessings be upon you, O separator between the obedient good and the blameworthy opponent. God's blessings be upon you, O one who is compassionate and merciful toward the believers. I bear witness that you are the true Imam. Whoever obeys you is guided through you; whoever opposes you in religion is astray and seduced; and whoever follows a religion other than obedience to you is upon ignorance.

"I call God and His angels to witness that through you and through obedience to you I am guided, and that I am free in this world and the hereafter from whoever opposes you. In the hereafter you are a pleasing witness for those who possess walāya for you; you are a mighty and trustworthy guardian over the treasuries of the sciences of the prophets; you are faithful in delivering their trusts to the people of the world; you are perfect and fully qualified in preserving Islam and delivering it. You have authority over the sciences of your two grandfathers Muḥammad and ʿAlī. Whoever drinks from a sea other than your sea, O Commander of the Believers, is wretched.

“I draw support, O my master—God’s blessings be upon you—from the blessings of your beneficence and from the overflowing of your bounty in whatever I speak on your behalf and on behalf of your forefathers. I take dictation from the abundance of your sea and the excellence of your gaze in making upright what I dictate to your servants. Whatever is correct in what forms in my heart is from you; whatever I err in is from myself. Through you I seek aid over whoever is below you, by your forefathers, O walī of God, son of His Prophet, and His proof over the worlds. God’s blessings, mercy, and favor be upon you, O Imams of the believers, all together.”

Our master Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī—may God sanctify his spirit—said: “It is incumbent upon every walī whom God grants the success of standing before the Imam of his age that this be his speech, the key to his greeting, and the meaning of what he preserves between his hands.”

Among the miracles transmitted of al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—is the following. There was a king among the kings of the Byzantines who possessed a hand fashioned of gold. He had made it his qibla, magnified it, and named it “the Holy Spirit.” It was an image of extraordinary perfection. He kept it in a protected, furnished chamber. Whenever something occurred that pleased him, or whenever he wished to supplicate God, he would go to that image, prostrate before it, rub his cheeks upon the ground, and seek by it a means of approach to God. Many of his prayers were answered because he believed in its blessing and revered what it represented.

A Muslim man from the lands of Egypt had become connected to that king. The king loved him, drew him near, and made him one of his ministers and keepers of his secrets. The Muslim learned of the image and often wondered at it. One day a conquest occurred for the king. He rose together with his ministers, humbled himself, prostrated before the image, rubbed his cheeks on the ground, praised God, and thanked Him. The Muslim asked: “What is this image before which you prostrate?” He replied: “It is the image of the Holy Spirit.” The Muslim said: “It is the image of the Mighty One of Egypt.” He concealed from him the secret of God, for he meant the walī of God—peace be upon him.

This became a prelude to the king’s felicity and a cause for the manifestation of miracles because of the good that God willed for him, knowing the sincerity of his intention and his love for the Greatest Name, which he called the Holy Spirit. A long debate occurred between the Muslim and the king. At last they agreed that the king should send ten men from among the people of wisdom, men trustworthy in their testimony, to the holy Mustanṣirī Presence. The king dispatched them and sent with them a noble gift of the sort offered to the exalted Prophetic Presence.

They arrived at the holy court and requested permission to perform the obligatory greeting. The Imam—peace be upon him—admitted them. When they entered and stood before him, he dismissed those who had been present in his assembly and began addressing them. He said: “Carry out what you were commanded to do.” His knowledge of the matter became manifest to them. They prostrated submissively and humbly. He ordered them to raise their heads. Each returned to what he had prepared in order to draw and record the Imam’s appearance. When they had finished they were taken to the lodging prepared for their hospitality. Each examined what he had drawn and described. Their drawings differed greatly from one another.

They therefore agreed to return the second day. They did so, but their images and descriptions again differed. They resolved to begin the drawing and depiction again. On the third day they entered before him, contemplated him, and drew. When they had finished and returned to their lodging, the images they had made on the third day agreed. Their hearts became tranquil. They asked permission to depart, were furnished with the finest provisions, and returned to their king.

They displayed the sheets on which they had depicted the Imam during the first two days. When the king compared them, what had seemed different to each observer revealed correspondences that made clear the alteration had not been in the Imam but in the veil of perception. Then he took the image of the third day and compared it with the golden image he possessed from the beginning. It was exactly the same image. He was astonished and became certain that the divine proof had become manifest to him.

He sent the ambassadors back to the Imam requesting that one of the Imam’s dāʿīs be sent to him to take the covenant from him. The walī of God sent a dāʿī who took the covenant from the king. His faith became excellent. God removed from him the harm he had feared from his Frankish opponents. The man became one of the faces turned toward the exalted Presence.

This is a similitude beneath which lies an astonishing meaning of wisdom. The king possessed knowledge and had looked into wisdom. He magnified one of the religious laws of the prophets, exerted himself seriously in following it, and acknowledged its excellence. The Muslim showed him that the law had been set as a similitude of the walī of God and that the prophets—may God bless them—had called toward him through their laws and cycles and had indicated his excellence. The walī is the meaning of their laws and the quintessence of their institutions. Whoever clings only to the outward command without knowing its meaning worships a body in which there is no spirit or meaning.

When the Muslim had shown him these proofs and clarified what would bring him out of the path of ignorance, the king sent people of knowledge and experience so that they might recognize what had been indicated to him in the symbolic breaking and proof and distinguish it correctly. The straight road and clear path then became manifest. On the first day al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—appeared to them in ten noble forms. These correspond to the outward daʿwa of the Prophet in which there are differences, likenesses, and apparent contradictions. For this reason the images differed among them.

On the second day he appeared to them in the forms of the ten domes of light, the people of manifestation—God's blessings be upon them—who establish the limit of taʾwīl and demonstrate it to those of understanding and intellect in its varied meanings, numerous aspects, and structures. One of the Imams—peace be upon them—once answered a questioner concerning a single matter in seven different ways. The questioner, finding this excessive, said: "Seven, O son of the Messenger of God?" The Imam replied in meaning that the sea of divine wisdom is not exhausted by a single expression.

On the third day he appeared to them in the form of the twentieth limit, the Holy Spirit, the possessor of the daʿwa of reality in which there is no contradiction and no divergence of meanings. They therefore saw one form gathering all the forms, without difference, once they had been supported by the light of reality and had perceived. The true indication then stood before them; they recognized the meaning of the possessor of the religious law and the divine wisdom; and the king responded when the pure reality in which there is no doubt became manifest to him and he understood the meaning of the beginning and what that daʿwa contained within its folds.

The manifestation of our master al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—through these noble veils resembles the manifestation of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—to Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh in the form of mīm, the form of fāʾ, and the form of the two ḥāʾs, after which he returned to the form of ʿayn. That is the great and noble form appearing through veils by which the meanings of the Books are established. He said: "O Jābir, these are my proofs and my garments. I manifest them in every time and age."

It is related that one of the companions of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—entered upon him. Al-Ṣādiq said: "Scratch my back for me." The man put his hand upon his back and found it completely covered with wounds. He said: "My master, you are too exalted and too high for this." On the second day he entered again. Al-Ṣādiq said: "Scratch my back," and the man found it sound with no wound upon it. On the third day he said again: "Scratch my back." The man reached inside the garments but found nothing at all.

On the first day the Imam had addressed him through the degree of the outward form, where doubt and confusion can arise, and the wounds resembled the distorted beliefs held by those who remain at the level of bodily imagination without referring their meanings to the friends of God. On the second day he manifested to him the degree of taʾwīl, which only the chosen among the people of interpretation attain; it was sound, with no wound, no similitude, and no anthropomorphism. Then on the third day he manifested to him the degree of reality in knowledge of him, and the man could not perceive the meaning of his knowledge or reach the limit of his attribute: he found nothing, for that station was absent from him and knowledge of it was distant.

As one of the Imams—peace be upon them—said: "Our outward is Imamate, and our inward is an unseen that is not perceived." Our master al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—appeared to those painters each day in ten forms. When he appeared to them in the human forms, each one perceived a form different from the other, just as a group looks into a mirror and each sees his own image and shape and sees only an appearance rather than the full reality. On the third day he manifested the form of reality, which is one and contains no difference.

In the age of the walī of God, al-Imam al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—God's blessings, favors, and greetings be upon him—there arose seven men of the powerful ones of the state. They supported one another in misleading the servants, manifesting obstinacy, and diminishing the exalted palace until the Imam—peace be upon him—had almost nothing

left before him except the sword and armor. They ordered his sons to leave and disperse in the lands: Nizār, ʿAbd Allāh, and Abū al-Qāsim Aḥmad al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—and others whose circumstances God knew.

When oppression became excessive and the men of tyranny reached the walī of God and his companions demanding the surrender of the sword and armor, he brought them forth and said: “I do not deny them to any one of you. Whoever can put on the armor and rise beneath it, and draw the sword from its sheath, let him take them.” They tried, but none of them was able. They went out in confusion.

There was a military man called Baldakūr who had married his daughter to Nāṣir, one of the princes of oppression—may God curse him. Because of his relationship to him he had acquired rank and prestige and considerable wealth. Baldakūr entered upon the walī of God—peace be upon him—and found him seated with nothing beneath him except a mat. Jealous concern for the Imam seized him and he wept before him, saying: “My master, has your condition reached this point?” The Imam said: “If you wished, you could remove this.” Those words remained in his heart and he returned home distressed.

His wife entered upon him and saw that his color had changed. She asked what had happened. He told her what he had seen with the walī of God and what had been disclosed to him. The woman was a believer. She became agitated and said: “Yes. As our master told you, if you wished you could remove this condition. Why did you not accept the command, act, and obtain the good of this world and the hereafter?” He asked: “What am I to do?” She said—may God have mercy upon her—“Kill your son-in-law and his companions.” He said: “Your daughter will be harmed.” She replied: “Begin by killing her and free us from her evil.”

When he saw the firmness of her resolve, his own determination became strong. He made arrangements with his trusted retainers and servants, assigning them their men. That night a maidservant had entered upon the Commander of the Believers al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—and said: “My master, I have longed for a loaf of wheat bread and harīsa,” because of the poverty that had reached them. He said to her: “You shall eat it tomorrow, if God wills.”

The next morning Baldakūr ordered his companions to divide into seven groups. Each group went against one of the seven opponents so that none might escape. Baldakūr himself went with the seventh group to the house of his son-in-law. He killed him, killed his wife—who was Baldakūr’s own daughter—and the seven opponents were all killed. Their heads were raised upon spears. God relieved the believers of them and delivered His friends from their evil.

Thus trials continually come upon the friends of God—peace be upon them—from their opponents and the people of obstinacy. The friends of God sometimes manifest incapacity in submission to the power of God Most High even though they possess miracles, clear signs, and manifest proofs which bewilder intellects and confound both questioner and questioned. They manifest incapacity together with power over miracles so that the community will not be tempted concerning them and fall into exaggeration.

They mix the manifestation of incapacity with the manifestation of miracle as an acknowledgment of God’s lordship, power, and unity, so that creation may know that they are the originated beings of God, unable in themselves to encompass their Originator. They are honored servants who do not precede Him in speech and who act by His command.

Since al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was the fourth of the witnesses, corresponding to al-Mahdī bi-llāh, the fourth of the caliphs, to al-Bāqir, the fourth of the atimmāʾ, and to Moses, the fourth of the lawgiving speakers, he knew that disagreement would necessarily arise after him and that confusion would be cast upon the walī al-amr after him. Nizār and ʿAbd Allāh had disputed over which of them was more entitled to the Imamate. He said to them: “Do not dispute concerning something whose possessor is here,” and he pointed toward his own noble loins. This was before the appearance of the Imam al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—from the purest loins and his emergence to his mother, who was among the purified women.

He had named one of his sons Nizār, another Abū Manṣūr, another ʿAbd Allāh, another Dāwūd, and another by other names, while the walī al-amr al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was named Aḥmad and given the kunyā Abū al-Manṣūr bi-llāh. Ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ was among his dāʿīs. He once asked the Imam who the possessor of the command would be. The Imam replied: “Abū al-Manṣūr.” Ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ thought he meant Nizār and therefore

attached himself to him and obstinately supported him, not realizing that the symbols of the friends of God are true and their indications truthful, and that their secrets remain concealed from one who asks before the proper time.

When the proper time arrived and al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—was born, his father explicitly designated him and wrote to the islands informing them of him and establishing the truth of the matter. A noble and honored rescript announcing al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh reached the dāʿī al-Mukarram Aḥmad b. ʿAlī—may God sanctify his spirit. In it the Imam designated his son, al-Imam al-Mustaʿlī, and declared that the Imamate would remain in his progeny until the Day of Resurrection.

Thus arose the Imam al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh, Commander of the Believers, Aḥmad b. Maʿadd—God's blessings be upon him—by the command and revelation of God, by the designation of his father, and by his delivery of the command to him. He was the fifth of the witnesses, corresponding to the bones; he corresponded to his ancestor Muḥammad al-Qāʾim bi-Amr Allāh, the fifth of the manifest caliphs; to his ancestor Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the fifth of the atimmāʾ; and to the Spirit of God, Jesus, the fifth of the lawgiving speakers—God's blessings be upon them.

He manifested signs, proofs, and miracles beyond enumeration and description. Disagreement arose in his state among his brothers and others, just as disagreement had arisen at every corresponding fifth station: like the opposition of the Dajjāl Makhlad b. Kaydād to al-Qāʾim bi-llāh—peace be upon him; like the disagreement among the descendants of al-Ṣādiq Jaʿfar—peace be upon him—in his time; and like the opposition raised against Jesus b. Mary—peace be upon him—until one of those close to him betrayed him and sought his death. In the same way the fourth, al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—had spoken in symbolic language to Ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ and others before the proof became manifest, saying: "The Imam is Abū al-Manṣūr," meaning al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh before the command appeared and giving him his son's kunyā before the son himself was known publicly. Those who lacked insight applied that indication to Nizār, who was already present and also bore a similar kunyā, and they drove him into opposition, imagining that the designation had been for him.

The matter had not been hidden from the walī of God al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh—peace be upon him—for what was to occur belonged to his stored knowledge. The people of realities followed the manifest truth and what had come in the noble rescript giving glad tidings of our master al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh, where it stated that God had established the Imamate and made it a lasting word in his descendants until the Day of Resurrection. His descendant, the victorious al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh—peace be upon him—was also symbolically indicated in those words.

When the walī of God al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—arose, his brother Nizār went among a group of the Shīʿa, corrupting them, planting intrigues, and raising devils of opposition. The walī of God admonished him and sought to guide and reform him out of compassion and mercy. He did not turn back from his error; rather, this increased him in ignorance and misguidance, and he supposed that the gentleness shown toward him by the walī of God was weakness.

When the walī of God saw that he persisted in corruption and would not turn away from error and obstinacy, he brought him and his brothers ʿAbd Allāh and Abū al-Qāsim before him and said: "The Imamate possesses known limits and described signs. Here is Dhū l-Fiqār. No one rises wearing this armor and draws this sword except the Imam. Whoever among us is able to do so is the Imam; let us follow him and obey him." Nizār, ʿAbd Allāh, and Abū al-Qāsim attempted it, but none of them was able to rise beneath the armor and draw the sword. The walī of God put on the armor, stood beneath it, and drew the sword. Nizār and ʿAbd Allāh did not accept this, but Abū al-Qāsim testified for the walī of his command and entered his covenant and allegiance.

Nizār said: "This command is not obtained by drawing a sword and lifting armor. That is merely bodily strength." The Imam—peace be upon him—said: "If that is so, then let us proceed from the miracle to the establishment of excellence. There is a lion in the palace. I shall have it brought. If you are the Imam, command it and it will obey you; otherwise I shall command it." Nizār replied: "As long as it is your lion, it knows you. I also have a lion that knows me; if I brought it, it would devour me if the Imamate were in you." The walī of God—peace be upon him—said: "Do it."

Nizār ordered the lion's keeper to bring the animal. When it was brought, the walī of God said: "I shall go to it. Order it to devour me. If it does not do so, I shall command it concerning you, so beware of it." The walī of God approached the lion after its keeper released it. When it saw him, it moved its tail, lowered its ears in submission, and rubbed itself at his feet. Nizār urged it against the walī of God, but it continued to cling to him. The walī of God said: "Beware of it, for now I shall order it against you." Nizār fled behind the door of the assembly. The lion sprang

toward the door, and Nizār shut it between himself and the animal. The keeper then restrained the lion and took it away.

ʿAbd Allāh and Nizār departed, refusing to surrender the command to its rightful possessor. When the walī of God saw their persistence in rebellion, departure from obedience, and arrogance, he ordered that ʿAbd Allāh be seized. When news of this reached Nizār, he fled to Alexandria and entered into alliance with its people, calling them to rise with him. He openly displayed opposition, obstinacy, deceit, and corruption. The walī of God ordered al-Afḍal, commander of the armies, to march against him with the victorious and divinely aided forces.

The two armies met after severe fighting. At first al-Afḍal's army was broken and Nizār pursued them with those who accompanied him until they reached the gates of Cairo. Al-Afḍal sent word to the walī of God saying: "Remain where you are; the army has been defeated and scattered. Nizār and his followers are upon us at the gates." The people of the city were shaken and afraid; tongues began speaking against the walī of God.

When Nizār and those with him drew near, the walī of God—God's blessings be upon him—appeared from the Gate of Gold accompanied by twenty-five Kurdish horsemen. When he placed his left foot in the stirrup and raised his right, he said: "Kill them—may God kill them!" His horsemen charged. Nizār and his followers were routed, a cry rose against them, and people pursued, killed, and plundered them. They fled all the way to Alexandria over a journey of three days. Nizār was captured and brought to the walī of God—peace be upon him.

When this occurred, many of the people of the daʿwa who had inclined toward him returned to obedience; but others continued in error. Ignorance became widespread and the Nizāriyya divided into two parties. One group claimed that Nizār was alive and would not die, that he remained in the palace until he should appear and fill the earth with justice. The other admitted his death but claimed that he had been wronged and that he left a son whose coming they awaited. They wandered through valleys of error, rode the mount of ignorance, and increased in seduction and blindness.

When God gave His walī al-Mustaʿlī victory over the one who had rebelled against him, he later ordered that ʿAbd Allāh be brought out from Dār al-Faḍl, for his opposition had been less severe than Nizār's. ʿAbd Allāh entered the covenant of the walī of God, acknowledged his excellence, and did not persist in rebellion and ignorance as Nizār had persisted.

After this there arose the accursed Armenian opponent Aftakīn, who advanced with armies toward the gates of Cairo. God returned him in disgrace and destroyed him by the sword of His walī. Then al-Afḍal, who had been commander of the armies, grew tyrannical over the believers after he gained control of the state. He openly displayed the religion of opposition, instituted practices contrary to the daʿwa, and caused innovations to become public. He performed the tarāwīḥ prayer in the mosque of ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ and revived practices the author condemns. He imagined that he could extinguish the light of God.

God therefore set against them the Byzantines, who were of his own kind in outward opposition. Their army was broken in Palestine in Syria; his men were killed, their wealth was taken, and he returned blamed, rejected, defeated, and broken. The Byzantines took many cities of Syria and many Muslims submitted to them. This occurred, in the author's account, because of what their own hands had earned through denial of God's signs and obstinacy toward the Imam. God set against them the worst of His creation because the walī of God was the true possessor of religion.

Then the yellow banners of truth appeared, the Byzantine forces were defeated, Islam became strong through the walī of God, justice and tawḥīd spread, and the religion returned wholly and sincerely to God. The walī of God disseminated the sciences, revealed the religion of the Living and Self-Subsisting, and stood in the station of his fathers, manifesting dazzling miracles and inward and outward signs. God made power manifest through him.

When the time of his transfer approached and his ascent toward the neighborhood of the holy abode drew near, he delivered his command to his son al-Manṣūr Abū ʿAlī al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh and proclaimed his designation, raising his remembrance.

Thus arose the Imam al-Manṣūr Abū ʿAlī al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh, Commander of the Believers—God's blessings be upon him, his fathers, and the pure Imams from his descendants. He was the sixth of the witnesses, corresponding to flesh and completing the bodily form within the third cycle. He corresponded to his ancestor al-Manṣūr, the sixth of the manifest caliphs; to Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar, the sixth of the atimmāʾ; and to his ancestor Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh, the sixth of the lawgiving speakers and Seal of the Prophets—God's blessings be upon

them all. In his age the manifestation of signs and miracles and the excellence and virtue belonging to the sixth degree were multiplied because this was the sixth of the third cycle.

To him, to his father al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh, and to his son, the Imam al-Ṭayyib—God's blessings be upon them—our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—had alluded in his discourse on the month of Ramaḍān and on the excellence of its nineteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-third nights. He said that a person should remain during these three nights in illumination, purity, vigil, prayer, and supplication, for the Night of Power will not fail to be found among them. Al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—may God brighten his face—also indicated that it is among the final ten nights of the month and connected it with the twenty-first night. The ḥudūd—peace be upon them—likewise transmitted symbolic correspondences in which the last ten signify the level of reality. This is a hidden quintessence among the concealed secrets, clear to one of insight who reflects upon it.

Because al-Imam al-Manṣūr al-Āmir—peace be upon him—was the sixth of the witnesses, corresponding to every sixth in the cycles, the people of victory and taʾyīd raised his standards, his signs became manifest, and opponents were subdued in the lands. The people of his age submitted to his authority. Among the signs of the strength of his exalted command was that fifty horsemen went to Damascus, killed Bahrām and his entourage, and were assisted by the people of Damascus. They returned safe and with victory.

A noble order came to the nephew of Ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ commanding him to kill his maternal uncle. He killed him, although the two had been Nizārī opponents. Thus he did not depart from obedience when the command reached him. Our walī also had campaigns in the lands of the Byzantines which, were we to recount them in detail, would make the explanation long.

Among the dazzling miracles related from him is that a certain man came to al-Afḍal and remained with him. Whenever food was brought, every dish upon the table would rise into the air about a cubit. Al-Afḍal was astonished at this and entered upon the walī of God—peace be upon him—telling him of what he had seen and expressing his amazement. The Imam said: "Bring him to us tomorrow."

At the time of the meal the man entered with al-Afḍal and performed what he had been doing. The walī of God said: "Does this astonish you?" They said: "Yes, O Commander of the Believers." He said: "Would you like to see something more astonishing?" The noble assembly was covered with curtains, and upon one of them was the image of a lion. The Imam—peace be upon him—turned toward the image of the lion, pointed with his glorifying finger, and said: "Eat him." The people present saw the curtain move, the image become active, and the man disappear among them as though the lion had swallowed him. They searched behind the curtains but did not find him. Al-Afḍal and those with him were stupefied.

This is among the miracles of the walī of God—peace be upon him—whereby an image possessing no ordinary life was moved and consumed the one who had astonished them. Similar things are seen in the manifest sciences of the friends of God, in which there is exposition like a spirit: it encompasses thoughts and absorbs the pretensions of one who imagines that he has penetrated deeply into meaning and possesses the true explanation. God manifests the miracles of His friends and their wonders however He wills. None turns back His judgment and none reverses His command.

Among those who rebelled in his time was an opponent named Sinīr, one of those who manifested corruption in the earth. His power and opposition to the walī of God became strong and common people gathered around him. He advanced until his army reached the gates of Cairo. The gates were shut. He remained there for days. There was an Armenian man with a group of companions guarding one of the gates of Cairo. One night, while the opposing forces remained in their positions and the victorious army had gone out to confront them, fear entered the hearts of the believers.

The Armenian and those with him saw one of the gates of Cairo open during the night and saw a single rider come out, with no one accompanying him. They followed in secret to discover who he was and found that it was al-Imam al-Āmir—God's blessings be upon him—riding alone. Soon another rider met him, greeted him, and each asked the other about his condition. They dismounted from their horses. The man who had met him asked: "Where do you intend to go?" The Imam replied: "I intend to give victory to my army over the people of opposition and to bring them to destruction." The man said: "We will suffice you in that, O walī of God. Return to your place."

Each of the two spread his garment upon the ground and prayed two rakʿas. Then they mounted. The Imam—peace be upon him—returned after the man said: “We shall suffice you against meeting the enemy tomorrow, if God wills.” They bade one another farewell. In the morning the soldiers came galloping with the glad tidings that the enemy had been routed and Sinīr—may God curse him—had been killed. The Armenian became certain of the excellence of the walī of God and that the truth was with him. He accepted Islam, his Islam became excellent, he raised himself above what he had previously followed, and he entered the Imam’s covenant when the sign and miracle had become manifest to him.

The miracles of the friends of God—peace be upon them—are manifest and hidden, just as their weapons are manifest and hidden. Some are seen by ordinary eyes; others are perceived by the intellect as guidance for the people of knowledge and insight. Opposition and obstinacy also continue in every time, age, and cycle, especially at the time of a sixth approaching the appearance of a seventh. The strength of the devils becomes great according to the strength of the possessor of the cycle; their darkness becomes intense according to the brightness of the light.

The devils became strong in the time of Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—and opposed his waṣī, the seventh of the prophetic cycle, concerning whom the Prophet said in meaning that the Hour almost overtook him but he preceded it. The Hour is the seventh, the Qāʾim of the people of the settled Imamate, in whom the ranks of prophecy and Imamate are gathered. His devils became powerful against him and against his two grandsons. They sought to extinguish the light of God in him and in the Imams among his descendants, but God willed to complete His light and make manifest the command of His friends.

God says: “God commands justice, excellence, and giving to the near of kin, and forbids indecency, wrongdoing, and transgression.” Justice is Muḥammad—may God bless him and his family—the balance of religion. He established the outward and set over it its inward counterpart, making the two correspond, and he indicated his waṣī ʿAlī—peace be upon him—when the command came to turn toward the Sacred Mosque. ʿAlī is the other half of his daʿwa and the one appointed to explain the inward meaning of his sharīʿa. Excellence is the Commander of the Believers and love for him, the good deed with which no evil can coexist in the way opposition does. “Giving to the near of kin” is the delivery of the Imamate to the two grandsons and its permanence in the progeny of al-Ḥusayn.

Then the verse forbids indecency, wrongdoing, and transgression, which the author applies polemically to those who opposed the Commander of the Believers and to those who altered the order of walāya. The author interprets the successive adversaries of ʿAlī as embodiments of these three forms of deviation. They bear their own burdens and the burdens of those whom they misled without knowledge, and they are arrogant toward God and His friends while outwardly displaying asceticism and piety and inwardly concealing denial.

The devil does not always appear in the ugliness of his true distorted form. Were his deformity and blindness displayed openly, the very sight of him would prevent people from following him. Rather, he assumes other forms and wears likenesses unlike his reality, riding through them the mount of seduction and deception. Thus the trial and affliction become severe. The pure progeny may be overcome outwardly, and darkness may cover the shining sun for a time, even though the light itself has not ceased.

A similar trial occurred in the time of Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar, until his son was concealed, and disagreement arose among the children of al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him. Likewise, in the time of the sixth of the witnesses, opponents rose until the event of the killing and concealment of the walī of God occurred and the faction associated with ʿAbd al-Majīd turned back from the truth.

Yet the opponents do not cease to be ultimately subdued, and the friends of God return to strength. At the time of the seventh, as at the time of al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, the seventh of the caliphs, the enemies of religion were broken and the signs of God became manifest. This indicates what will occur in the age of the Qāʾim: the suppression of the opponents, the destruction of those who spread corruption in the earth, the vanishing of the wicked, and the manifestation of the lights. At that time there is no veil between Paradise and Hell when doubts and ambiguities are cut off and clear realities and meanings are reached. The state of Iblīs ends and the trial of confusion is brought to completion.

When the walī of God al-Āmir—peace be upon him—knew that the event was approaching, he hastened to send the noble rescript of the Imamate and the designation of his successor to his Hujja, the noble free lady al-Sayyida al-Ṣulayḥiyya, who stood over the dāʿīs and friends in the Yemeni island. Her master commanded her to treat far and near equally in communicating this knowledge, to inform the connected ḥudūd, the near and the distant, so that no

one in the hierarchy would remain ignorant of it. She thanked her master for this favor and stood proclaiming what he had bestowed upon her, calling openly and without fear or taqiyya to the Imam al-Ṭayyib—God's blessings be upon him.

The same command proceeded through the dāʿīs in the Yemeni island. The spiritual supplies of their masters watched over them, and divine care guarded them from the obstinate opponents. The Imam—God's blessings be upon him—had also indicated to the chosen ones of his daʿwa that the time of his departure was near. He once brought citrons before them and ordered them to choose one, while saying: "Poor, poor is the one slain by the knife."

He sent to his Hujja, the Sayyida in the Yemeni island, a worn handkerchief. When she looked at it she wept and said: "Our master has informed me that his transfer has drawn near, his concealment has come, and he has announced his own death to me." Soon after this report came the event of the attack of the accursed assassins upon the Imam—peace be upon him—and what they did to the noble body and nāsūt through which he had appeared. Yet "they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it was made to appear so to them" in the esoteric sense already explained.

ʿAbd al-Majīd, the son of his paternal uncle, then stood as a depositary over the palace and outward kingdom, corresponding to the depositary functions of earlier cycles. The dāʿīs of the Yemeni island, whom the guardians had appointed to preserve the noble Ṭayyibī daʿwa, stood with the rank of deposit in service to the friends of God who possessed the settled Imamate by right. Every one of these servants is in the religious sense an "ʿabd al-majīd," a servant of the Glorious, for al-Majīd is among the Names of God applied in creation through His friends, while their servants and dāʿīs indicate them.

But the historical ʿAbd al-Majīd who bore that name became arrogant, opposed the command of the walī of God—peace be upon him—and persisted in misguidance and opposition. His letters came to the noble free lady al-Sayyida al-Ṣulayḥiyya demanding that she acknowledge his claim to the command of the believers. He called himself Commander of the Believers after previously being called only Heir Apparent of the Muslims. The noble lady—may God sanctify her spirit—became angry for God and the religion and said in meaning: "Yesterday he was the son of Aḥmad, the heir apparent of the Muslims, and today he is Commander of the Believers? This is manifest error."

She informed the people of her daʿwa of his falsehood, made public the misguidance and hostility in which he stood, and obligated the dāʿī Dhuʾayb b. Mūsā—who had received from Yaḥyā b. Lamak what he had received from his father, from al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, from al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh, Commander of the Believers—to stand with the Ṭayyibī daʿwa and clarify the difficult matters so that the responders would not die the death of ignorance.

Dhuʾayb stood calling to his master—peace be upon him—with the finest discourse. Our master, the descendant of al-Ḥasan, al-Khaṭṭāb, assisted and strengthened him. May God exalt their sanctity and grant us their intercession and intimacy. They stood in the finest manner. After them came Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī, Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm, ʿAlī b. Ḥātim, Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, and others who stood establishing and confirming the command of the friends of God.

The station did not disappear while they were speaking on behalf of the one to whom they called. The walī of God did not become absent while they were rising with the lights of his taʾyīd. The horizon of religion did not become dark while they shone with the lights of demonstrations. Through them the religion of truth stood, the proof from creation to the Creator was made manifest, and walāya for the One True God stood firm. They called to the walī of God by the supplies that reached them from him and clarified the rank of Imamate and waṣāya after recognition of messengerhood and prophecy. What moons and stars these were, by whom the darknesses became illuminated and through whose right guidance every hopeful seeker attained his hope.

The Imam al-Āmir—peace be upon him—did not disappear without first establishing his son al-Ṭayyib—peace be upon him—in his place. The daʿwa of God continues through the pure progeny until the Day of Resurrection. Thus arose the Imam al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Qāsim, son of the Imam al-Manṣūr al-Āmir—God's blessings be upon them, upon their fathers, and upon their descendants—from behind the veils of concealment by the command, revelation, and knowledge of God, through the designation that ended in one chain from the waṣī and the Prophet and from those before them—God's blessings be upon them all.

He is like the “other creation,” the seventh of the witnesses. He corresponds to al-Imam al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, the seventh of the manifest caliphs; to our master Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, the seventh of the atimmāʾ; and to the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the seventh in the cycle of the lawgiving speakers in the sense already explained. When the concealment of his father occurred and the people of oppression and obstinacy seized the kingdom of his fathers, he—peace be upon him—departed together with his Gates, Hujjas, and Dāʿīs al-Balāgh. He left Egypt and wrapped himself in the veils of concealment, as his ancestor Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl had done and as the descendants of Abraham had done when the exalted command of God concerning concealment descended among them.

Darkness became widespread because the oppressors gained control, and the eyes were prevented from looking upon the shining sun. Yet we know with truth and are certain with true certainty that even if the noble person of the Imam—peace be upon him—is absent from the eyes and concealed according to the stored and hidden knowledge of God, so that the impure may be distinguished from the pure and the believing seeker of forgiveness from the obstinate sinner, the earth is never empty of one who stands for God with a proof. This is so in every time and age, with a clear path and manifest highway.

The Imamate is an Imam after an Imam, inherited by son from father, transmitted to one after another as both religious cause and natural lineage. One who understands this knows that even when night falls, the sun is absent from sight, the horizon darkens, and the stars appear, the sun still exists within God’s creation. The celestial sphere is not empty of it; its lights continue to shine, and its influence remains the cause of the light seen through night and day.

The sun remains so throughout the ages as long as the seven strong heavens and the spread earth remain. If it is veiled from the eyes and the night becomes dark so that darkness prevents the seeing people from perceiving it, the sun itself remains luminous and free of darkness, shining and manifest in itself. The obstruction lies between it and the eyes, while it remains what it is in radiance and light. Its supplies of light continue to reach the moon and stars by the command of God, the Living and Self-Subsisting.

So too is the Imam—peace be upon him. Even if he is absent and concealed, God never leaves His lands empty of him, nor does He withhold from His servants the guidance that proceeds through him. Divine mercy encompasses all creation. The lights of his taʾyīd remain connected and uninterrupted, never cut off for even the blink of an eye from his friends and ḥudūd in East and West. His dāʿīs and ḥudūd remain manifest like the moon and stars when the sun is hidden, indicating the walī of God—God’s peace and blessings be upon him. The dāʿīs of God—peace be upon them—have clarified this with proofs, demonstrations, and evident signs as long as the indication remains, its signposts are clear, its proofs are manifest, and its rites endure.

The walī of God—peace be upon him—had informed his chosen followers beforehand of the trial and had told the eloquent ranks of the coming test. He spoke to Ibn Madīn, the possessor of the noble rank of the Bābiyya, and to trusted men called Ruslān, al-ʿAzīzī, another Ruslān, and Qūnaṣ. Ibn Madīn—may God sanctify his spirit—remained in his station, while these four remained in the Imam’s presence. The Imam—peace be upon him—used to say: “None of these four will break away from me.” Whenever they heard from the Imam words whose inner meaning they did not understand, they would go to their shaykh Ibn Madīn, ask him, and he would say: “Our master spoke to you and said such and such; his indication refers to this and this, and its meaning is such and such.” This was their custom and the path they followed.

When they came to Ibn Madīn and asked him about the Imam’s saying that none of the four would break away, he said to them: “The Imam will manifest concealment through killing. When his concealment appears, disagreement will arise in the land. The son of al-Afḍal will seize power, rebel, and openly proclaim the religion of opposition. The walī of God Abū al-Qāsim will become concealed. The son of al-Afḍal will kill the friends and drive away the sanctuary. When his power becomes strong, he will send for you four and say: ‘Will you not dissociate yourselves from the Imam and his religion?’ You will refuse and curse Satan. Al-ʿAzīzī and Ruslān will be killed. Qūnaṣ, you will flee to Yemen. Later you will return and killing will overtake you. As for me, O ʿAzīzī, I shall be staying in your house. They will seize me afterward and offer me what they offered you. I shall not choose this world over religion, and they will kill me in testimony.”

They asked: “Who is the Imam after al-Manṣūr manifests concealment through killing?” He said: “He is the seventh Qāʾim, al-Imam al-Ṭayyib—God’s blessings be upon him. He is concealed and hidden.” They asked: “Who

will possess the rank after you?" He replied: "My son-in-law, the qāḍī Ibn ʿAlī. He will become concealed with the concealment of his master and appear with his appearance."

When the event occurred, the son of al-Afḍal arose and ordered the four men to choose safety by dissociating themselves from al-Manṣūr and his religion, otherwise he would kill them. Qūnaṣ fled to one of the distant places. The others said: "We believe in God and His walī; we will not obey Satan." They were killed, and many believers were killed with them. Ibn Madīn, the possessor of rank, was seized from the house of al-ʿAzīzī and killed the next day. Qūnaṣ went out to Yemen and later returned and was killed.

The qāḍī Abū ʿAlī, whom Ibn Madīn had established in the degree of those attached to the walī al-amr after his concealment, also disappeared. The Imam al-Ṭayyib—peace be upon him—was no longer seen openly in Egypt. The houses became empty because the believers emigrated with him and his sincere friends concealed themselves. Only those who were prevented from travel by a valid excuse remained, according to the judgment and decree of God.

The noble command reached the Yemeni daʿwa through Muḥammad b. Ḥaydara and others, and it was clarified to the noble free queen and to those who stood through her toward the walī of God. Meanwhile the outward kingdom passed at times to ʿAbd al-Majīd and his descendants and at times to other usurpers among the enemies of God until his line and political claim came to an end: his progeny perished, his followers and adherents lost, his proof vanished, and his path was obliterated.

We shall mention that elsewhere in this book. God is the helper, and from Him we seek success and beneficence. Some ignorant and foolish people whose abode is Hell, the dwelling of ruin, have claimed that the Imamate has been cut off from the noble progeny. We seek refuge in God and in His friends and dissociate ourselves before Him and before them from whoever says or believes this. Whoever holds it nullifies the wisdom of God in His creation and command and the wisdom of His Prophet; he denies origination and the Originator and imagines an impossible absurdity.

God Most High did not bring forth natural creation and its generated beings except so that from among them the living, speaking human being who proclaims tawḥīd might appear. The quintessence of humanity is the friends of God—peace be upon them—in the other creation, and through them the circles of existence are completed. Whoever denies this denies the purpose of creation and nullifies the order established by God. Just as if the other creation were removed from the human being the human would not possess its intended completion, and if the human being were removed from the world its highest light would be missing, so the world cannot be without the Imam.

Our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, pillar of the people of tawḥīd, Hibat Allāh b. Mūsā—may God sanctify his spirit—clarified tawḥīd of the Originator and the permanence of the rank of Imamate in every time and age, throughout the succession of epochs and years. He said in one of his intimate supplications: "Glory be to the Ancient, the Pre-eternal, mighty in His grasp, Light of lights in every dwelling and place, Creator of things and Originator of them, Cause of causes. Holy, holy, holy! O You whom I acknowledge, for I have testified that You were worshiped throughout the ages and existent in the times that have passed. The higher lights and timeless elements testify to the self-sufficient singularity. He is the one whose Essence is beyond all attributes, prior to creation without temporal priority."

He continued in meaning: "The One who judges has judged by truth and has not called toward nonexistence. He is manifest for establishing the proof upon creation and hidden beyond the senses. He stands in the world He brought forth so that each sees according to the measure of his purity, like one looking at his face in a mirror. Glory be to Him! He brought forth their creation through His subtlety and manifested to them so that faith in Him might become true and certain. Then He made them familiar with the manifestation in order to establish the proof upon them, for they are unable to perceive His modality and cannot through the power of their intellects reach knowledge of His quiddity. True knowledge belongs to one for whom existence and the ḥudūd have been made sound."

"He established Himself in the human veil at one time and through power at another, communicating His command to every effect and assigning to every cause a known station and established ordinance. Glory be to Him, exalted above opposite and rival; glory be to Him whom no description encompasses, no name fully expresses, no image represents, and no knowledge contains. The creature reaches only what corresponds to its own form. Can one look at light except through a likeness proportioned to the density within him? Can the dense perceive the subtle except through a supply from subtlety?"

This is what he said—may God be pleased with him—clarifying tawḥīd and glorification of the Most High and Majestic, and clarifying the station of greatness that is not confined within a nāsūt. He explained that the knowledge of the malakūt does not become absent from Him, that His manifestation is without departure and His concealment without movement. The station of greatness becomes manifest through a nāsūt in every age, while the nāsūt changes from time to time; the spiritual reality itself is not absent and does not change.

As our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr said in The Taʾwīl of Zakāt: "The Imamate is one condition that does not change and does not move from one abode to another despite the passing of the ages. The Imams—peace be upon them—move on and pass to the abode of God's generosity and the place of His pleasure when their persons become hidden, while the successor from among them stands in the station of the predecessor through connection with the Imamate. For the Imamate itself does not move and does not cease. Rather, the Imams inherit it by transmission and connection, successor after predecessor, just as the Throne of God is one condition that does not cease, while those who circle around it are its angels and those who act beneath them are attached to their lords through the supplies that reach them."

Thus he clarified—may God sanctify his spirit—that the Imamate is one condition that does not move, change, perish, or become altered. What changes are the nāsūt forms through which the spiritual realities appear. The unseen command speaks through them and is united with them in the sense of support, hidden from eyes and from ordinary insight. Exalted is God; there is no god besides Him, the Originator of the complete and the perfected, Creator of both follower and Imam.

When the Imams—peace be upon them—stand through the command of God connected with them in taʾyīd, the angels are beneath them. The "angels" are those entrusted with their daʿwa, those who stand to reform creation and guide it. Our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr—may God exalt his sanctity—said in The Taʾwīl of Zakāt: "Every Imam in his age is the Name of God among the people of his era. Whoever sees the Imam of his age, takes his covenant, submits to him in all his affairs, recognizes his ḥudūd, acknowledges them, gives every rank its right, and does not transgress the rank has known God with true knowledge and has proclaimed His unity."

"Whoever sees the Imam of his age otherwise, ignores the stations of the ḥudūd, does not know God or proclaim His unity, does not obey Him or worship Him, does not hold fast to His rope, and directs obedience outside the pleasure of God is inwardly doubtful concerning God, transgresses His limits, deviates concerning Him, associates partners with Him, and takes another beside Him."

The Commander of the Believers ʿAlī—peace be upon him—clarified this in one of his sayings: "Association among you is more hidden than the crawling of a black ant on a black stone in a dark night." God says: "Whoever transgresses the limits of God has wronged himself." Knowledge of the Imam of the age and establishment of his ḥudūd are knowledge of God Most High and of His signs; ignorance of the Imam and transgression against his ḥudūd are ignorance of God, unbelief in Him and in His signs, association concerning Him, and setting up a partner beside Him. Whoever is ignorant of the station established by God and doubts His chosen one has incurred the anger of God and the curse has descended upon him.

It is related from the Messenger of God—may God bless him and his family—that he said: "Whoever dies without knowing the living Imam of his age dies a death of ignorance." Ignorance is the opposite of knowledge, and the ignorant are those who associate partners in the religious sense. Exalted is God above their ignorance and association. Were there in the heavens and earth gods other than God, they would both be corrupted—meaning, in the esoteric exposition, that the order of the Imamate cannot be divided among independent claimants.

This statement—may God sanctify the spirit of its transmitter—makes clear that knowledge of God Most High is through knowledge of the existent Imam and knowledge of the ḥudūd, and that this is the reality of tawḥīd. It is therefore necessary for a person to know his true and intellectual limit, so that his limit may lead him to knowledge of the Imam and he may not remain ignorant, associate partners, and die the death of ignorance.

We have known our ḥudūd and through them found indication toward knowledge of the Imam of our age. We have seen him—praise be to God—with true seeing and known him through intellectual knowledge. Knowledge through the eyes does not avail in place of knowledge of the hearts and disclosure of the secret of God that is veiled. God Most High says: "It is not the eyes that become blind, but the hearts within the breasts become blind." And He said to His Prophet—may God bless him and his family—concerning those who look without insight: "You see them looking toward you, but they do not see."

The matter has become clear, the caller has proclaimed it, spoken plainly, and explained. We know that al-Imam al-Ṭayyib—peace be upon him—is the Qāʾim of the witnesses. After him are the abdāl, changing their human veils, concealed because of the domination of their tyrants. They supply the dāʿīs who call toward them and indicate them according to what the appointed times of their ages require. Through them they appear and through them their meanings are expressed.

When the cycle of the abdāl is completed, the fifth great cycle through which the cycles of the five lawgiving speakers possessing firm resolve are completed will come to its end, and the Qāʾim will arise. Deeds will be raised and the matter will return to God, the Great and Most High. “Your Lord will come in shades of clouds and the angels,” in the inner sense, through the manifestation of the Meaning of Meanings and their disclosure in the luminous form. At that time the veil will be raised and doubt and uncertainty will disappear.

The Imamate is therefore neither changing nor transformed nor moved from one reality to another. Rather, it is ordered through the luminous forms and becomes manifest through them in concealment and manifestation. The cycles revolve upon this: after every concealment comes manifestation, darkness is followed by light, and relief comes after hardship.

The Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said: “My community is like rain: it is not known whether its beginning or its end is better.” The bodily forms of the Imams are subject to the events of the world and to transfer; killing may outwardly fall upon them, as we witness in the histories. But the rank of the Imamate and the light by which it is upheld do not perish through those events. Thus we have explained the succession from one Imam to another and the permanence of the divine proof through appearance and concealment.

As our master al-Muʾayyad—may God exalt his sanctity—said: “Know them according to the aspect from which they are bodies: they are compounded from the clay of the earth and bound to generation and corruption. They eat food; pains and illnesses descend upon them; the appointed term of death comes upon them and the decree of the fixed period reaches them. But according to the aspect from which they are what they truly are—peace be upon them—beneath them stand the complete and the perfected, and from them proceeds the existence of those below. Above them is only their Originator, who cannot be expressed by speech, contained by imagination, or reached by thoughts and aspirations.”

How then could intellects encompass that station or dreams reach it? May God make us among those who remain attached to them, who hold fast to them, and may He not cut us off from their walāya, through which righteous deeds attain their order and completion.

In the age of our master al-Imam al-Ṭayyib—peace be upon him—there appeared an intellectual power and signs of wisdom that confirmed what the ḥudūd had indicated and spoken after taking the covenants and pledges: the power of the seventh, his manifestation, the loftiness of his degree, and the clarification of his light. Among what our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, protection of the people of tawḥīd, stated concerning this is what appears in the Book of Beginning and End.

Likewise, reports came from our master al-Nuʿmān—may God exalt his sanctity—in what he transmitted from our master al-Manṣūr and our master al-Muʿizz—peace be upon them—concerning the seventh and the seventh from the descendants of al-Muʿizz—God’s blessings be upon them. What appeared in this age appeared as knowledge and as a clear exposition of wisdom. What his dāʿīs manifested from his hidden knowledge and stored secret, through the support and taʾyīd he gave them, became illumination for the hearts of those possessing insight and light for the sight of the discerning knowers.

Thus he became concealed in his noble person while becoming manifest through his knowledge, which is the reality of bliss. What has been described of his manifestation may also be fulfilled through one who arises from among his pure descendants and from the progeny that commands justice and beneficence. What was in the first will also be in the last, and what appeared in an earlier age will appear in a later one. God will complete His light even though the unbelievers hate it, and He will make the Imamate remain in the noble Prophetic progeny until the Day they are raised.

May God make us among those who hold firmly to the walāya of the walī and who acknowledge the one whom God has established in the station of Muḥammad and ʿAlī. Praise be to God with the praise of grateful people of

insight. May God bless Muḥammad and ʿAlī, their pure progeny, and those among their descendants who are awaited.

— End of Chapter Seventeen —

Chapter Eighteen

On the Imamate and the Imam, and on what our masters have expressed in discourse concerning nāsūt and lāhūt

We say, and from God come aid and taʾyīd, and from the blessings of His friend—God's blessings be upon him—we seek benefit:

The Imamate is the gathering of noble, subtle, ascending souls: souls disciplined by the works of the sharīʿa, formed by virtuous angelic character, dyed with the noble spiritual dye, made substantial by the subtle true sciences, and joined to the noble luminous column. Having become subtle through the subtlety of the spiritual world, they depart from the density of bodies when the death decreed by God reaches them. The noble spiritual magnet—what is expressed by the luminous column—draws them. Their subtle form rises, separates from the gross body, and ascends to the ḥadd from which it had received and learned. It joins his soul and mixes with his form, and thereafter receives from the one who teaches the subtleties and realities of knowledge.

The ascending soul and the form it acquired—its scientific form and its practical form—become as one form. It is mingled with the noble form of its ḥadd and united with it. A good word rises to the rank above it and ascends. It reaches the first gates of the gardens, triumphs, and rises. Thereafter it does not turn backward, nor does it return bewildered after entering the spaciousness of clear knowledge.

If, however, the soul of a ḥadd turns back, declines, or becomes apostate after having attained a station, it descends and becomes deserving of distance from the one from whom it had been receiving. This occurs through sins that overtake it, through persistence in what casts it into the valleys of destruction and sinking, through neglect of obligatory works, or through deviation from the path of the sciences of the friends of God by which the ascending soul reaches perfection.

When an ascending soul is preserved by the form of the ḥadd with which it has mingled—a form consisting of the true sciences—then after its bodily departure that form rises to the rank above it. It does not collapse again into destructive doubts after its release, nor is it cast back into bewilderment. It continues to ascend through the ranks of the ḥudūd and to be arranged among the spheres of felicity.

Whenever a ḥadd departs while remaining firm in walāya and excellence, formed by the true forms that free him from the doubt of ignorance, performing the works he has been commanded to perform, and continuing to guide learners, this is the reality of his drawing near and his nearness. He ascends carrying with him the forms of those beneath him who have departed. They mingle with the form of the one above them and dwell beside his soul. They rise through his elevation and receive sciences so that they may be completed, reaching in their knowledge what his spiritual intuition brings to them.

This ascent and advancement through ranks and causes continues until it ends at the nearest Garden of Refuge, which is the rank of the Bāb. When those souls gather in the soul of the Bāb of the Imam, and when all the spiritual forms that have separated from sensible bodies have been purified and come to him, he becomes for them a gathering place in which those forms are completed. He pours over them what reaches him of the flowing spiritual materials through the mediation of the Imam—peace be upon him—whose knowledge is likened to a river.

When those forms gather, join, and become harmonious with the Bāb of the Imam, and the treasures of the islands have all come to him, they become with him as a single form and a single soul. They have advanced through the ranks and risen until their second perfection has been completed through their ascent within the pure ḥudūd. Thus they become as one soul and one form.

They are then fully formed and prepared to receive whatever benefit reaches them from the world of subtlety. Nothing remains except the breathing of the spirit through the establishment of the possessor of the Imamate, to whom they are returning. The religious creation has then advanced through its stages and has become, by its living reality, enduring.

The mustajīb is like the extract from which formation begins. He reaches the rank of the maʾdhūn, which in relation to the possessor of the Imamate is like the drop. He rises to the rank of the dāʿī, which is represented by the clot. He rises to the rank of the Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq, which corresponds to the formed lump of flesh. He rises further through the

ranks of the ḥujaj, represented by the bones, those whom the friend of their age distinguishes with honor and magnification.

Advancement and elevation continue until the rank of the Bāb, who is like the flesh of the religious creation; through him its perfection is completed just as flesh completes the formation of the bodily embryo. Then nothing remains but the breathing of the spirit through the rising of the supreme Imam, who receives those noble forms and takes them into his charge.

Every ḥadd whose soul rises after separation from bodies, and who ascends toward the one above him, is brought nearer to his goal. The body through which he worshipped God remains until he is permitted to ascend; he must join his lord when his lord wills, after the appointed term has been completed by the decree of the Governor of existence.

But after the spirit has departed, the most subtle part remaining in the body rises to the world of the celestial bodies. This ascent begins after the body has been placed in its grave. When the time of natural death arrives, the body is drawn to the grave by the relationship between its corporeal nature and the earth. The subtle airy constituents rise. The rays of the stars have matured them by the subtle divine providence; they are received gradually from the bodies of those who have passed away. The purest of them are extracted from the bodies of the righteous.

The moon gathers those subtle forms and then, through Mercury and Venus, delivers them to the sun. The light of the moon diminishes as it hands over those airy subtleties and empties itself of them. When these airy souls—the subtle extract of the innate heat that had been present in bodies—reach the sun, the sun recognizes them, purifies them, refines them, and delivers them to the spirituality of Jupiter, which is the Greater Fortune, and to the spirituality of Venus, the Lesser Fortune. The purification continues in the corporeal world, and those subtleties are preserved until their delivery in bodily creation.

When the time arrives for the appearance of an Imam from his father and mother, and God decrees that he emerge into the world and be manifested, those airy souls become part of his nāsūt, his body, and the form in which the Imamate is veiled, by the permission of the One who establishes and supports him. The spiritualities of Jupiter and Venus meet what has been gathered of those airy elements by permission of the One to whom belong power and ability. In the language of similitude, they descend like a shadow into pure sweet water unstained by turbidity and into good fruits whose eating requires no fire.

When these subtle elements have come into the sweet waters and pleasant fruits, by divine providence and noble lordly wisdom, the Imam—peace be upon him—and his purified wife take nourishment from them. The wife is described as purified from menstrual impurity and freed from sin and foulness, and the mothers of the Imams—peace be upon them—are likewise described by their ḥujaj as purified from bodily defilements and from the doubts that lead others toward ruin.

The Imam and his wife feed upon that noble extract. Their union occurs according to what the justice and wisdom of God require. From that union comes the noble drop, arising from the male and female who stand above the males and females of ordinary mankind. From it is formed an embryo blessed in its mother’s womb and distinguished above other embryos by what God, in His subtle knowledge, has placed within it.

The purest part of that drop and its noblest spiritual disposition are that by which the body is completed and grows. It progresses through the stages of the embryo and rises through them. Then, by natural birth, there appears a complete and excellent human person, connected from the beginning to divine assistance and felicity. The abstract intellects cast their rays upon him, and the governing celestial principles give him from their subtleties and felicities. Thus he is distinguished by intelligence, authority, knowledge, and awe from the people of his age, and no speaker can adequately express the height of his nobility and the loftiness of his rank.

When the child reaches the years of education—here described as four years—the Bāb of his father, with whom the gathered forms had reached completion, transfers those subtle souls that had been with the father and had become stored with him. Their form becomes joined to the form of the child, and the forms gathered in the preceding Imam become gathered in this new possessor. He thus becomes a noble comprehensive gathering of all the ḥudūd. This is the “other creation”: the rising of the one in whom the ranks are gathered through what is formed in him of the inner and outer sciences.

When these have gathered in his noble root and great source, the spirit becomes complete through all of that, and he deserves thereby to be magnified above others and preferred. That noble body is the nāsūt expressed by the term

“Imam.” The noble Imamic forms by which those souls had reached perfection and completion have become a single soul. They have returned to their Lord, well-pleased and pleasing, when they have come back to him.

Those souls are arranged at that lofty station and ordered within the noble Imamic form. Some are like the heart, and some like the other limbs. They are ennobled one above another according to precedence, work, and knowledge. Some occupy the place of the heart and brain; some are like the hands and feet; others correspond to the other members according to their advancement and their performance of the daʿwa, until the lowest among them are compared to hair and nails.

They have reached completion according to their knowledge and works, each in accordance with his degree, and they are ordered into a noble, lofty, subtle, luminous Imamic form. In it the possessor becomes powerful, knowing, joyful, and delighted by the gathering of the members of his spiritual kind. Those joined and elevated souls rise toward their highest degrees and are connected to what supplies them from the radiant luminous column. The noble spiritual Intellect is joined to them.

Through the Imam there then appear wonders and miracles, and by means of his person clear signs become manifest. Creation becomes complete and the order is made harmonious through the conjunction of the Imamate and the Imam. By what reaches him of the revelation and knowledge of God, he raises the people toward their Lord and toward recognition of His unity. He causes them to proceed under the command of the Word of God. He frees them from the world of nature, raises them toward the neighborhood of the world of subtlety, and draws them by the magnet of noble spiritual knowledge.

He conveys to them what reaches him from the noble luminous column, lifting them by it so that they may ascend, exalting them so that they may triumph and attain felicity, and returning every lower ḥadd to the ḥadd above him to which he is attached and by which he draws near. The Imam is the acting cause with respect to those beneath him, their governor and leader, the one who casts into them the spirit of life, brings them by the light of his knowledge from darkness, raises them through stations and degrees, leads them upon the road of salvation, frees them from the world of density, and raises them by what he conveys to the world of subtlety.

At the time when one of the faithful ḥudūd is transferred from this world, the Imam gives him glad tidings according to his deeds and sciences. At the moment when the soul reaches the throat, the Imam appears to him together with his ḥujja. The daʿwa continues in the Imam’s name, and the dāʿīs and ḥudūd act according to his ordinance until his son rises to the station to which he himself had risen and takes possession of the daʿwa, just as the father before him had taken possession of it.

When the time of the Imam’s transfer arrives, his appointed term and elevation have come. He hands the rank over to his son and designates him, just as the one before him had designated and chosen him. This occurs after the son has been completed in the lāhūt through the gathering of the forms with the Bāb of his father and their ending in him, and after he has appeared as a noble nāsūt containing the airy souls that had reached completion in the corporeal world, from which his bodily person came forth through natural birth from the Imam who designated him.

At that point the preceding Imam rises with what he contains to the encompassing sphere of the Tenth, which the author calls the praised barzakh in which the noble souls are progressively completed until the Last Day. The ascent, elevation, and rising continue until the establishment of the Qāʾim in whom the noble meanings are gathered, just as the ranks of the ḥudūd were gathered and completed in the form of the Imam.

The prophets, legatees, and Imams who have risen to the Tenth are gathered and raised from there toward the ranks and spiritual circles above it. The ascent and advancement, the joining of the world of subtlety and subsistence, continue until all the ascending souls are gathered into the Universal Soul. They come to be within its lofty subtle sphere. In that gathering the intellects that have risen from the world of nature meet the intellects of the world of origination toward which they have come. They are in the universal precinct of holiness, the lofty Garden of Refuge. There is joy, radiance, splendor, delight, and glory beyond what a tongue can express or any sign or explanation describe. As the Prophet—God bless him and his family—said: “In Paradise is what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and what has never occurred to the heart of a human being.”

We say: every ḥadd is an imam for those beneath him, and they take him as their imam, because through him they rise and attain felicity. Before all of them is the universal possessor of command, namely the Imam; and the meaning

of the Imamate is manifest through him. From him appear the noble miracles by which every rightly guided seeker attains his perfection and completion.

The friends of God—peace be upon them—have established teaching ḥudūd for those who seek benefit and instruction. At the level of taʾwīl, those ranks purify the symbolic world of religious forms, which contains the signs and indications that belong to the most subtle laws of the prophets, by means of the true meanings and noble spiritual forms. These teaching ranks are the instruments through which taʾwīl removes the doubts and falsehoods that cling to the outward forms.

This teaching structure is like a nāsūt through which the teachers among the people of taʾyīd appear to learners. Through what they gather of the true forms—the kernels extracted from the realities of religious knowledge—the noble spiritual forms and subtle scientific realities come together among the eloquent and excellent ones connected with taʾyīd, just as the noble lāhūt is gathered and united with the Imam—peace be upon him. By means of these forms the people of taʾyīd are connected to the tawḥīd of the Possessor of might and sovereignty.

That ultimate unseen reality is hidden from the ḥudūd; every high and low limited rank falls short of comprehending it. The Imam appears through his lāhūt to the higher ranks in the form of the Imamate, and he draws near through his nāsūt to the learners, pouring upon them from his favors that by which they become worthy of excellence and honor. These are his veils and the human forms through which he appears; through them he is also a veil from the sight of inner perception.

Their outward is Imamate, while their inward is an unseen that cannot be comprehended. The nāsūt is the veil through which they appear for teaching, so that it may be believed in and held fast to. Whoever reaches this recognition has known the Imam and the Imamate, has become worthy of the highest excellence and honor, and has affirmed the transcendence of the unseen above the attributes of created beings.

Such a person rises through the gift of meaning to its proper abode and rightful station. He knows that the Station of Majesty is unseen and beyond perception, and that above the darkness of the stone there are spheres beyond spheres. May God make us and you firm, and may He not make us among the people of exaggeration or deficiency who enter the watering places of destruction. Praise be to God for what He has bestowed and granted us, and His blessings be upon Muḥammad and his family, through whose walāya we attain triumph in the first life and the last.

Chapter Nineteen

On the ḥudūd, and on those whom the friends of God establish among them for guidance toward everlasting subsistence and the reality of existence

We say, seeking help from God, relying upon Him, and drawing near to Him through His friends—peace be upon them—asking Him to make us firm and to keep us from error and slipping:

The friends of God have arranged the ḥudūd of their daʿwa in ranks. They made loyalty to them obligatory upon those connected with them, and commanded every limited rank to remain within his proper limit, so that he may attain felicity when he reaches the utmost of his effort in obedience. They commanded that no ḥadd be lowered from the station to which he has risen, and that none be raised above the limit in which he stands. Whoever raises a ḥadd beyond his ḥadd has committed ghulūw; whoever lowers him beneath his station has committed taqṣīr and opposed his master. For this reason knowledge of the ranks is obligatory, for they are the means by which one reaches the Worshipped One.

The Prophet—God bless him and his family—said: "Whoever knows himself knows his Lord." That is: whoever knows the ḥadd from whom he receives, and from whose knowledge he draws the breath of spiritual life, is led by that knowledge to the ḥadd above him. From him he comes to know his lord in that degree and triumphs through knowledge of him in word and deed. Knowledge of the corporeal ḥudūd thus leads to knowledge of the spiritual ḥudūd; and knowledge of the Imam of the age leads to knowledge of the Originator of originated beings, exalted above attributes and unique in His transcendence.

The ordering of the Imam's ḥudūd is according to the likeness of the command of God as it flows to the noble spiritual intellects, abstracted from corporeality, and according to the measure of their precedence in receiving the command and the elevation they attained by what reached them from their Originator.

The sages have said that because the intellects are subtle, elevated, and exalted, there is in themselves no bodily arrangement of high and low. The ranking that is spoken of among them is expressed through the corporeal ḥudūd, which are made to correspond to them in the stations of the religious hierarchy.

They gave as an example the Prophet—God bless him and his family—and the descent of revelation upon him. Revelation in itself is not divided into ranked bodies; it is one condition, neither deficient nor excessive. When the Prophet spoke through the knowledge that reached him from the world of subtlety and expressed it in comprehensive words, the hearers became ranked and differed according to their understanding, acceptance, delay, and deficiency. What reached the Prophet was in every case one and the same, neither embodied nor ranked in itself. But when he embodied it in speech and made it manifest to human beings, they differed with respect to it and it became ranked in relation to them.

This shows that the spiritual world is not described by spatial elevation and lowness, ascent and descent, as bodies are. Such language is used to bring the matter near to understanding and to give the intellect a way to conceive the order through speech. The subtle reality of knowledge is one; deficiency and excess appear in the learners who receive it.

Thus the ḥudūd were ranked in correspondence and likeness to the world of origination, and were established for guidance and instruction in the instituted religious forms. When they receive from the subtle intellects they are, in that reception, stripped of density; when they turn back toward learners to give benefit, the subtle meaning becomes clothed in corporeal expressions and forms.

Our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, the protection of the unitarians and chosen one of the Commander of the Faithful, said: "The intellects of the world of nature receive from the intellects of the world of origination. They are the places upon which the rays of the lights of their mysteries fall. They rest upon them and take dictation from them concerning the forms they establish. Those are supported, and these are supported; those are abstract, these embodied; those unrestricted, these restricted; one group acts and another is acted upon, one group gives and another receives. Yet all of them stand in the rank of servitude to the true Originator—glory be to Him. Whoever holds fast to them has held fast, from God, to the strongest protection, until the spheres become as a place beneath his feet and the spheres take from his mouth the proclamation of their glorification and their declaration of divine unity."

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn, the ḥujja of the two Iraqs—may God sanctify his spirit—also spoke in Rāḥat al-ʿAql concerning the correspondence of the ḥudūd to the intellects and the ranking of the former as an image corresponding to the latter. He said, in removing doubts, that the effective teaching ranks of the soul are those by which it receives all that completes it and transfers it from the degree of potential intellect to actuality, bringing it into the realm of subsistence and eternity through the blessing bestowed upon it in the world of religious institution.

The divine teaching ranks are ten, and the existence of all proceeds from the first of them, while each is the proximate cause of the existence of the rank beneath it. Beyond the ten ranks of teaching there can only be the learner who receives the blessing of their effusion. This correspondence is a witness that in the intellectual world there are likewise ten intellects that exert influence upon what is beneath them, and that each is the proximate cause for the existence of that which follows it. The order of teaching thus follows the higher order.

Of the ten religious ranks, three are universal and seven follow them.

The first of the three universal ranks is the nāṭiq. His function is the outpouring of blessing through the establishment of the laws of outward practical worship by means of revelation and sharīʿa. Through this, many souls enter religious existence and obtain the first perfection.

The second is the waṣī, who receives that blessing and stands with all the revelation. He establishes the laws of inward intellectual worship through taʾwīl, a function that gathers many things, among them the formation of souls by abiding spiritual forms through which they attain the second perfection.

The third is the Imamate. Its function is command and the governance of the entire Imamic order. It gathers many functions concerned with the cultivation of the earth, the purification of souls, and drawing souls into true existence. For this reason God called them “those vested with command.”

The seven ranks that follow are these:

First is the clarification and decisive separation of discourse, which belongs to the Bāb.

Second is judgment concerning the arrangement of ranks, weighing views and beliefs according to the balance of creation, and making manifest the taʾwīl of the Book; this belongs to the ḥujja. Thus God said, in reporting His favor to David: “We gave him wisdom and decisive speech.” Through that favor he attained the rank represented by the Bāb.

Third is argument by proof for the establishment of the higher ḥudūd and their ranks in the existence of their essences, together with instruction concerning the return; this belongs to the Dāʿī al-Balāgh.

Fourth is teaching intellectual worship, spreading taʾwīl, and making known the higher ḥudūd; this belongs to the Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq.

Fifth is teaching the rites of practical worship and making known the lower ḥudūd and their cycles, both small and great; this belongs to the restricted dāʿī.

Sixth is taking the covenant and oath and teaching the forms and manners of religion; this belongs to the unrestricted maʾdhūn.

Seventh is breaking the resistance of the opponent, guiding to the truth, and directing people to hold fast to the rope; this belongs to the restricted maʾdhūn.

Each of these ten ranks possesses what lies beneath it, but the converse is not true. Thus the nāṭiq possesses the functions of all those beneath him; the waṣī possesses what lies beneath his rank; and likewise every higher ḥadd comprehends the lower functions appropriate to his universality.

The higher ranks are universal with respect to the lower, while the lower are particular with respect to the higher. Their order is: the nāṭiq, the asās, the Imam, the Bāb, the ḥujja, the Dāʿī al-Balāgh, the Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq, the restricted dāʿī, the unrestricted maʾdhūn, and the restricted maʾdhūn.

The statement that the lower ranks are particular in relation to the higher means that the relation does not reverse: the lower rank does not contain the totality of the rank above it. The higher rank is universal in the sense that its reality contains the functions beneath it. Thus every nāṭiq is, in that comprehensive sense, also asās, Imam, ḥujja, and the rest of the lower functions. The reverse cannot be said without qualification. An asās is not thereby a nāṭiq, nor an

Imam an asās in the proper assignment of office, even though what belongs to the lower rank is comprehended within the higher universal one.

Because the nāṭiq gathers the blessing and encompasses all the religious ranks—revelation, taʾwīl, command, decisive speech, judgment, proclamation, knowledge of the higher and lower ḥudūd, taking the covenant, and guidance—yet is especially distinguished by revelation, which gathers the sharīʿa, this is a witness to the First Originated Intellect. The First is universal with respect to the ten ranks and is especially distinguished by origination and the giving of form to the principles of existence. For this reason God names the First in the language of the Book with the name connected to forming and origination.

The asās, while likewise gathering the ranks beneath him, is especially distinguished by taʾwīl. This corresponds to the Second, which proceeds by emanation and assigns to what has entered existence the forms most fitting to it according to the order of wisdom. In the universal world this applies to all things, and in the celestial likeness especially to the second sphere. Thus the divine names of formation and ordering are used in the Book as symbols for these functions.

The Imam likewise gathers the ranks beneath him and is especially distinguished by “creation” in the sense of composition and ordering, universally, and in the celestial correspondence particularly with the third sphere. Thus the divine names “Creator, Maker, Fashioner” are gathered in a single verse and attributed to the One, while in the language of correspondence the functions represented by those names are reflected in the ordered ranks beneath the transcendent Originator.

The fourth religious rank is the Bāb. His gathering of what lies beneath him, together with his special possession of decisive speech, bears witness to the fourth existent in the higher order, which is beneath the third yet comprehends the ranks below it and is distinguished by a particular function in producing the beings of the corporeal world, with a special correspondence to the fourth sphere.

From the fourth proceeds the fifth. The ḥujja gathers the ranks beneath him and is distinguished by a specific portion of the blessing. Beneath him stands the Dāʿī al-Balāgh. This corresponds to the fifth existent in the higher order, ranked beneath the fourth, possessing the ranks below it and distinguished by a particular effect among the generated beings of the corporeal world and, in the celestial correspondence, by the fifth sphere.

From the fifth proceeds the sixth. The Dāʿī al-Balāgh stands with proclamation and beneath him are the remaining ranks. His position bears witness to the sixth existent, which likewise has what lies beneath it and is distinguished by a particular effect in the generation of beings in the corporeal world, with a special correspondence to the sixth sphere.

From the sixth proceeds a seventh, and so on with the remaining ḥudūd according to what each of them is especially charged with, until the tenth. In the higher world likewise, from each existent proceeds another beneath it until the tenth, which completes the world of emanation. Its influence is especially connected with what lies beneath the sphere of the moon: the mutable bodies and generated beings. This corresponds to the tenth religious rank, the mukāsir, whose particular action upon souls is to break their resistance and draw them toward the path of truth.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God sanctify him—therefore made the First Existent, the First Originated One, correspond to the highest sphere and placed opposite it the nāṭiq, whose rank is revelation. The Second Existent, the First Emanated One, has its action in the second sphere, and opposite it stands the asās, the second religious rank, whose function is taʾwīl.

The third among the emanated intellects corresponds to the third sphere, the sphere of Saturn, and opposite it stands the Imam, the third religious rank, whose function is command.

The fourth existent in the intellectual world has the fourth sphere, the sphere of Jupiter. Opposite it stands the Bāb, the fourth religious rank, whose function is decisive speech, the function associated with dominion.

The fifth existent among the intellects has the sphere of Mars, the fifth of the spheres. Opposite it stands the ḥujja, the fifth of the ḥudūd, whose function is judgment concerning what is true and what is false.

The sixth existent among the intellects governs the sphere of the sun, the sixth sphere. Opposite it stands the Dāʿī al-Balāgh, the sixth rank, whose function is proof and the teaching of the return.

The seventh existent among the intellects has the seventh sphere, the sphere of Venus. Opposite it stands the Dāʿī al-Muṭlaq, the seventh religious rank. His station is to make known the higher ḥudūd and to teach the inward worship.

The eighth existent among the intellects has the sphere of Mercury, the eighth sphere. Opposite it stands the restricted dāʿī, the eighth rank. His station is to make known the lower ḥudūd and to teach outward worship.

The ninth existent in the world of Intellect has the ninth sphere, the sphere of the moon. Opposite it stands the unrestricted maʾdhūn, the ninth rank, whose station is to take the covenant and oath.

The tenth existent in the intellectual world governs what lies beneath the sphere of the moon, the realm of nature and generated things. Opposite it stands the restricted maʾdhūn, the tenth religious rank, who is the mukāsir. His station is to draw souls toward the truth.

This, then, is the order of the ḥudūd and their correspondence to the higher world, which is the world of Intellect governing existence. It also explains the governance of the intellects over the world of the spheres by comparison with the governance exercised by the ḥudūd in the daʿwa over those beneath them who seek to bind themselves to the causes of guidance and to hold fast to them.

The ranks of the intellects and their governance all belong, in a comprehensive sense, to the First Intellect, and every action beneath it is attributed to it through the taʾyīd by which each subtle intellect is empowered. In the same way all religious ranks belong, comprehensively, to the Prophet in his age, to the waṣī in his time, and to the Imam in what follows, for these are the universal ranks.

Every act performed by the lower ḥudūd—giving benefit, teaching, taking covenants—is attributed to the Prophet, the waṣī, and the Imam, because through them the religious creation is ordered and brought to perfection and completion. The lower ranks act through the command and support of the one who supplies them.

The Imam is thus the one to whom matters are referred and from whom they issue. He makes manifest what exists in the intellectual world through the ḥudūd who stand in religion and sharīʿa according to their degrees of excellence. In this sense he is the gathering point of the two worlds and the center of the two orders: the center of the higher world because the spiritual materials that reach the noble ranks are gathered in him, and the gathering point of the religious world because what issues from him of noble spiritual support reaches the people of the religious ranks.

Every nāṭiq among the lawgiving prophets—God bless them—stood by the command of the possessor of his age. Hānīd [the reading is uncertain in the printed text] was the one who established Adam; Lamech was connected with Noah; Idrīs, called Hermes—peace be upon him—stood in his appointed place; Ṣāliḥ was the establisher for Abraham; ʿAdnān the establisher for Moses; Khuzaima the establisher for Jesus; and Abū Ṭālib the establisher for Muḥammad—God’s blessings be upon them all.

Our master the dāʿī Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God sanctify him—said, in continuation of the discussion already cited in this chapter: “The balance of religion also requires another balance that confirms what we have said. It is that the station of the ḥudūd beneath the waṣī and the seven Imams of the cycle is such that every one of them in the religious world corresponds to an existent Intellect in the world of origination. Their tenth is the Qāʾim by whom the cycle is completed. In his own rank he stands independently, judges all souls, possesses the world of nature, and governs it. No further rank is placed beneath him, for he is the second end.”

He continued: “It has therefore become clear that the tenth of the lower ḥudūd is the end of the ranks beneath him and that through all of them the spiritual offspring are generated. No rank is established beneath him. His task is the care of souls in the abode of nature and drawing them to worship so that they rise through the degrees. Likewise the tenth existent in the world of Intellect is the end of the emanated intellects. From it issue the powers in bodies through which corporeal offspring are generated. Since it is the terminus, emanation stops with it, and it has no task but care for the world of generation and corruption. This is the likeness of the tenth of the lower ḥudūd, whose task is care for souls and drawing them to worship and obedience.”

We then say: it is known from established premises that if one thing is the likeness of another, and that second thing is itself the likeness of a third, then the third corresponds to the first. The ordered arrangement of the lower ḥudūd in the religious world is the likeness of the ordered arrangement of the higher bodies, and the order of the higher bodies, as an effect of the world of origination, is in turn a likeness of the order found there.

Therefore what exists among the lower ḥudūd corresponds, rank for rank, to what exists among the higher intellects in the world of origination and emanation. It has been established from what we have presented that the intellects brought forth from the First Originated One in the abode of origination have their likeness in the ḥudūd of the religious world, leaving nothing of the order without a correspondence. “You see no disparity in the creation of the All-Merciful.”

These are the higher active letters, the angels brought near, whose lights flow through the corporeal world. Glory be to the One who governs through this governance and orders through this order. There is no god but He, and there is no power and no strength except through God, the High, the Mighty.

I seek God’s forgiveness and repent to Him. I seek His help and the help of His friend upon His earth, for He is the best one from whom help is sought. I entrust all my affairs to God and rely upon Him. Whoever relies upon God—He is sufficient for him, and He is the best trustee.

Our master Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr—may God exalt his sanctity—mentioned in the Book of the Taʾwīl of Zakāt the ranks of the ḥudūd and made them the second set of those to whom zakāt is given. He explained that the distribution that flows among them is such that each takes according to his ḥadd and the measure of his entitlement.

He said: “All the ḥudūd are ṣadaqāt for one another.” That is, every ḥadd confirms the ḥadd above him and points toward the ḥadd beneath him, because each ḥadd receives from the one above him and gives benefit to the one beneath him. Their giving and receiving one from another is according to the ordinance of the Possessor of Command and the master of the age.

God—majestic is He—said: “The alms are only for the poor, the needy, those who administer them, those whose hearts are reconciled, for freeing necks, for debtors, in the path of God, and the traveler—a duty from God.” The “alms” in taʾwīl are the ḥudūd as a whole, established by the nāṭiqs in their ages, by the asāses in their times, and by the Imams in their periods.

The “poor” are the nāṭiqs. This is because in the entire world there is no created teacher from whom they receive and no one upon whom they depend in the manner that lower ranks depend upon higher ranks. Their material is from the transcendent current of taʾyīd, while the world is poor toward them and in need of them; it cannot dispense with them.

God said to His Prophet Muḥammad—God bless him and his family: “Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter?” That is: were you not unique in your age and time, with none among them to whom you could call as your superior in the earthly order? He therefore likens him to an orphan who has no clan or people to protect him. God then gave him shelter through those who obeyed him, heard his call, answered his summons, entered his community, and believed in him. Through them God increased him after smallness, strengthened him after weakness, sheltered him after bewilderment, and aided him after domination by his enemies.

“And He found you wandering and guided.” That is, He found you among a people who did not know you or acknowledge you; among them you were like a lost thing with none to receive it and none to rest with it. God guided the community by his guidance and made manifest through the believers the rank that had been hidden among them.

“He found you burdened, and enriched you.” That is, the burden upon his back was heavy because of what he carried of the responsibilities of the community, the establishment of the sharīʿa, and what he had been charged to convey of the message of his Lord. God enriched him through the flowing spiritual support, supplied him with taʾyīd, and strengthened his back through the waṣī so that the waṣī might convey the taʾwīl on his behalf.

“As for the orphan, do not oppress him.” God—mighty and majestic—commanded him by this not to conceal from the people what had been made obligatory upon him to convey concerning the rank of the Imamate and the recognition of the Imam, who is “orphaned” in his age in the sense that he has no peer or likeness in the world. To “oppress” him would be to conceal his right.

“And as for the petitioner, do not repel him.” The petitioner signifies the waṣī. He was commanded not to conceal his affair from the community and not to delay his designation and establishment.

“And as for the blessing of your Lord, proclaim it.” The blessing which God commanded him to proclaim is the appointment of ʿAlī as his waṣī, as one established in his place, and as his successor, together with making walāya and obedience to him obligatory.

We have already established the poor; the “needy” are the asāses. The most excellent, noble, and exalted among them in station is the asās of the Messenger and his waṣī, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—God’s blessings be upon him. His excellence over the other asāses is like the excellence of the Messenger of God over the other messengers.

They are called “needy” because the whole world comes to rest with them and takes refuge with them. People ask them, and they are caves for those who seek shelter and strongholds for those who repose in them. They establish the ḥudūd of the daʿwa of taʾwīl, spread the inward sciences, and revive the outward sharīʿa according to the way established by the Messenger.

“Those who work upon it” are the ḥujaj of the Imams who establish the daʿwa of taʾwīl and appoint the dāʿīs who open the way for the children of the daʿwa and the mustajībs by explaining the taʾwīl and the inward meaning of revelation.

“Those whose hearts are reconciled” are those who have been brought together upon obedience to God through the walāya of His friends, the pure Imams. God said to Muḥammad—God bless him and his family: “Had you spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but God united them.”

We have already mentioned the “poor,” namely the nāṭiqs, who are in need of what flows to them from the higher ḥudūd through the intermediary called the Trustworthy Spirit. God says: “The Trustworthy Spirit brought it down upon your heart”—that is, O Muḥammad, upon the heart represented by your asās—“that you might be among the warners,” meaning that you warn your people by appointing your asās.

The nāṭiqs are cut off toward the two roots among the higher ḥudūd. God, exalted is His name, says in the story of Abraham: “And Abraham was a devoted servant of God,” in the sense of one made poor toward taʾwīl. In the story of Muḥammad—God bless him and his family—He says: “Devote yourself to Him with complete devotion,” commanding him to cut himself off toward the corporeal ḥudūd that connect him to the higher order.

From this is the statement attributed to al-Ṣādiq Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad—peace be upon him: “God took Abraham as a servant before He took him as a prophet; then He took him as a messenger after taking him as a prophet; then He chose him as a friend after the messengership; then He said to him: ‘I am making you an Imam for the people.’” That is, He established him successively in the following ranks: first the rank of the mustajībs, then among the maʾdhūns, then in the ranks of the dāʿīs, then among the nāṭiqs. Afterward He commanded him to establish the sharīʿa so that people might take him as imam.

The needy are the asāses with whom the people of the daʿwa come to rest, by whom their hearts are reassured, and with whom the mustajīb finds refuge. Through them the whole religion reaches its perfection. The sharīʿa of a messenger is not completed, nor religion brought to perfection, until he establishes his waṣī, designates him, and calls the people to him. Then his affair and daʿwa are complete.

Thus the Book reports concerning Moses—peace be upon him—that after he became a messenger he asked God to strengthen his back, expand his breast, and make his task easy: “My Lord, expand for me my breast, make my task easy for me, untie the knot from my tongue so that they may understand my speech, and appoint for me a minister from my family—Aaron my brother. Strengthen my back through him and make him share in my command.”

Likewise the Messenger of God—God bless him and his family—said: “I say as my brother Moses said: My Lord, appoint for me a minister from my family, ʿAlī my brother; strengthen my back through him and make him share in my command.”

The asāses therefore complete the affair of the nāṭiqs, and they are the “needy” among the friends of God. As for “those who work upon it” in the outward sense, they are the collectors of the alms who take what is due from them. In the taʾwīl they are the Imams, because the nāṭiq and his waṣī established the sharīʿa outwardly and inwardly and made clear the ḥudūd of the daʿwa through revelation and taʾwīl; then they entrusted the affair after themselves to the Imams.

The pure Imams—God’s blessings be upon them—are the workers of the sharīʿa and the guardians and explainers of its taʾwīl and inward meaning in the age and time of every Imam until the completion of the cycle. They succeed one another, one ḥadd following another, without the office being cut off. They are called “workers” because they inherit the nāṭiq and the asās, know their teachings, follow their traces, revive their affair, and establish their station.

“Those whose hearts are reconciled” are also the lawāḥiq, for a share of the spiritual current is allotted to them. They become reconciled and united in establishing the daʿwa through explanation, through examination of taʾwīl, and through the establishment of proof.

The verse, “Had you spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but God united them,” means that even had the Prophet opened to them all the exposition and taʾwīl that was with the waṣī for the people of the earth, if none of them had a share in the flowing spiritual support they would not have become united. They would have remained differing and divided. But when the spiritual current reached them, they were reconciled after disagreement because of what they learned from the affair of the walāya and what they witnessed of proofs and signs. “We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.”

“Freeing necks” signifies the wings of the daʿwa, because they undertake the nurturing of the mustajībs and take the covenant upon their necks from those who respond to them.

“The debtors” signify every unrestricted maʾdhūn in relation to the mukāsir, because he undertakes the nurturing of one who has not yet received the covenant. He bears the cost of opening the teaching for him, instructs him, and gives him from what God has provided him of knowledge and explanation. That expenditure does not diminish his knowledge but increases it, for the spending of knowledge increases its treasure.

“In the path of God” signifies the restricted maʾdhūn, the mukāsir, beneath the unrestricted maʾdhūn. He does not go beyond his ḥadd, because he is the “path of God” by which one reaches the wing above him. From the unrestricted maʾdhūn he borrows what he uses to guide the seeker toward the path of God through wisdom and good counsel.

“The traveler” is the mustajīb. He is below the mukāsir in degree and station, like a son beneath the one who educates him, and he is the last of these ḥudūd.

These eight secondary ranks each receives from the one above him through the limit of taking benefit, and each gives in charity to the one beneath him through the limit of teaching and giving benefit, except the mustajīb. The mustajīb is the place where the explanation settles and the station of receiving benefit. He receives from the one above him who has permission to instruct and open the teaching, but he gives instruction to no one, because he has not been authorized or released to do so.

He is therefore like a person in the state of iḥrām. One in iḥrām may not have intercourse or hunt. When he leaves the state of consecration, it becomes lawful for him to hunt, eat of the hunt, and have intercourse. Likewise the religious novice is forbidden from opening the teaching and breaking resistance until he is released from that restriction—that is, until permission is granted to him.

In the same way these ḥudūd must confirm one another and acknowledge the excellence of one another, the lower acknowledging the higher. Each is, as it were, a ṣadaqa from the one above to the one beneath, and they regard the establishment of obedience of one to another as a duty from God—mighty and majestic.

It is related that a man asked the Prophet—God bless him and his family—while he was distributing alms to give him some of them. He said: “If you are among the eight, then yes; otherwise it is a sickness in the belly and an ache in the head.” The eight are the eight secondary ḥudūd we have explained. The “belly” signifies the inward daʿwa; the sickness is doubt concerning inward knowledge and denial of it. The “head” signifies the Imam of the age; the headache signifies denying him, rejecting him, and repelling what he has brought.

Thus the Prophet intended: if the man was not among the eight ranks described as recipients of the obligatory ṣadaqa by the text of the Book, then he was inwardly sick—doubting the bāṭin—and suffering from the “head” by denying the Imam of the age. As the Messenger of God—God bless him and his family—said: “Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his age dies the death of ignorance.”

In another report: “Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his age and taking his covenant meets God on the Day of Resurrection mutilated, with no hands.” That is, he has no Imam by whom he may take hold and no ḥujja.

Then our master—may God exalt his sanctity—explained the ranks of the ḥudūd and their ordering for eternal subsistence and existence. God made zakāt obligatory in ten things: gold, silver, camels, cattle, sheep, and among the crops grapes, dates, wheat, barley, and rice. Beyond these the remaining grains have no obligatory zakāt. This is an indication of the ten ḥudūd through whom religion stands and by whom the affair of the daʿwa is established, just as

God says concerning Moses: “We appointed for Moses thirty nights and completed them with ten, so the appointed time of his Lord was completed in forty nights.”

The ten ḥudūd were the completion of the rank of the nāṭiq. When ten were added to thirty, forty were completed, and forty is the age of the nāṭiq at which prophethood and messengership are brought to completion and the conveyance begins. At thirty the rank of asāsiyya and waṣāya is attained. Thus the ten ḥudūd form the separation between the rank of the nāṭiq and the rank of the asās, because they are inward ranks.

Among them are the two intellects, the two asāses, the two branches, the wing, the maʾdhūn, and the mustajīb. Know that these ten ḥudūd are the purifications and increases. Some are higher than others in the ranks and divisions of religion. They are those whom God has given excellence and an increase of taʾyīd, purified, and through whom He purifies others and makes their works pure. They are elevated above the rest of creation because they are the lords of religion, its gates, its veils, and its chiefs. No one’s religion is completed except through them and through knowledge of them.

They call the ḥadd who gives knowledge the “intellect,” because he is the one through whom the learner understands. They call the ḥadd beneath him a “soul,” because he is the recipient of that teacher’s benefit, his learner, his one who is guided, and his one who is corrected. Every ḥadd is therefore a “resurrection” for the one beneath him and an imam for the one who follows him in excellence, for the lower looks toward him because of the loftiness of his rank and knowledge.

Some of the ḥudūd—may God illumine their faces—said: “The resurrections are eight.” For the people of sharīʿa and response, their resurrection is the mukāsir. The maʾdhūn is the resurrection of those beneath him among the people of sharīʿa and response. The mukāsir and dāʿī are resurrections for those beneath them. The Bāb is the resurrection of those beneath him. The Imam is the resurrection of all these. The Tenth from the beginning is the resurrection of all; the ḥujja of the Qāʾim is the resurrection of the rest; and the Qāʾim gathers all and is the one to whom all arrive. These are the barzakhs. At that point is joining and completion, and all return to the Tenth.

This saying makes clear that every higher rank is the resurrection of the one beneath him, because the lower returns to him, rises to him, and through him attains completion and felicity. The Prophet—God bless him and his family—said: “Whoever dies, his resurrection has begun.” The likeness in this is the present and the witnessed: the one who rises through the ranks of knowledge undergoes a resurrection every time he passes from one ḥadd of knowledge to the next. Whenever a meaning is unveiled to him, that is a resurrection in which his excellence and degree rise, his affair becomes established, and he lives a life by which he draws near to his Lord.

From this is the saying of God: “O you who believe, respond to God and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life, and know that God comes between a man and his heart.” The ascent continues until the meaning of meanings is reached. Then there is a universal resurrection gathering the ranks of knowledge beneath it.

Some of the ḥudūd have said that the emanations are twelve: the mustajīb; the mature believer; the mukāsir; the maʾdhūn; the dāʿī; the Dāʿī al-Balāgh; the ḥujja; the Bāb; the Imam; the ḥujja of the Qāʾim; the Qāʾim; and the Tenth through whom the arrival at the world of emanation is achieved, who is the twelfth in this enumeration. Every predecessor is “living,” and the ranks beneath him have life according to their order.

God—glory be to Him—said: “Blessed is God, the best of creators.” There is no true giver of existence except God—majestic is His glory—who is too exalted for attributes to ascend to Him, for indications to be directed toward Him, or for Him to be expressed by the changes of languages. He is the Creator of creation and the Expander of provision.

The meaning of the verse in the Book, within this taʾwīl, is the religious creation by which the ranks pass from one creation to another through those who form them, give them benefit, and teach them. They create them a second creation for existence in the abode of subsistence and for knowledge of the tawḥīd of the Creator, so that they become worthy of ascent and elevation.

Thus the phrase “best of creators” points, within the created hierarchy, toward the supreme station—peace be upon him—the goal of goals and end of ends, beneath whom all created ranks stand, while all of them worship the true God by His command. In the world he is like the originated formative principle that was distinguished by the name because the spiritual forms of origination proceed from its noble forms, which are the exalted Word of God and His lofty holy support.

Every lower ḥadd is connected to the one above him, drawing near through him to the friend of God. The connection of the ranked ḥudūd is therefore an indication of the One who is worshipped. Upon this the covenants and oaths were taken: that the lower should connect himself to the higher and should never be separated from recognition of his excellence and walāya.

When he is connected to him he is not cut off from him; he is connected to his knowledge, which the higher rank has received. That knowledge leads him to knowledge of the one from whom it issued, until the connection reaches the Originator of the spirit and Creator of the body.

Our saying "connected" does not mean the joining of bodies. It is a subtle connection through which perfection and union of meaning are attained. Our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—said in the Epistle on the Return that connection to the Imams through walāya is superior to physical birth. If their own offspring oppose them, bodily kinship does not benefit them, while one unrelated by blood who joins them through walāya becomes closer in the religious reality.

God—glory be to Him—has made for everything a cause, for every limited thing a limit, and for every outward a corresponding inward. He placed the unveiling of the inward in the hands of His friends and the possessors of His religion. He concealed it from the rest of creation and made creation dependent upon them. This is consummate wisdom.

His friends take account of the strength and capacity of the people and give them in every age as much as its people can bear and as much of the sciences as they need. In every time and age, outwardly and inwardly, they disclose according to what that age can bear. The affair continues in this way until the end of time and the rising of the Qāʾim —peace be upon him.

When the affair reaches its end and the Book reaches its appointed term, every hidden matter will be made manifest, every veiled thing uncovered, and nothing difficult will remain. As God says: "On the day when the shin is uncovered and they are called to prostrate…" Religion will become spiritual while the body remains corporeal; the subtleties will become manifest and the dense coverings will disappear.

Our master—may God sanctify his spirit—thus makes the Qāʾim the goal of the ḥudūd and the greatest cycle. The Imams are cycles in relation to the ḥudūd beneath them, just as the Imam himself is the great encompassing cycle, and the end of the ranks lies with them—peace be upon them. Every qāʾim among them is a resurrection for those whose affair he establishes and for those beneath him, and they are called to him through obedience and submission.

Our master al-Muʾayyad also said in the epistle already mentioned: "Know that death in relation to us is the transfer from the abode of this world, which is the abode of passing away, to the abode of the hereafter, which is the abode of subsistence. The taʾwīl of death is transfer from state to state and from degree to degree according to what a person's works and entitlement require."

The transfer of the prophets, legatees, and noble Imams is not like the transfer of those beneath them among the people of the degrees; the transfer of the ḥujaj, Bābs, and dāʿīs is not like the transfer of ordinary believers. Al-Muʾayyad had already explained at the beginning of that epistle that the transfers of the believers and religious ḥudūd are toward the prophets, legatees, and Imams, for those higher ones are their barzakhs.

If someone asks: "Then toward what are the prophets, legatees, and Imams transferred?" it is said: toward the two roots that are the roots of all things. Their transfer is purification from corporeal individuation and nearness to the Merciful at the station of Intellect and Soul and the higher ḥudūd. The believers who follow them are known through their names and reach through their conveyance. This is the ordering of the ḥudūd of religion and its correspondence to the order of the divine philosophers concerning the return.

From what we have mentioned and presented concerning the ḥudūd, it is clear that the return of every limited rank is to his own ḥadd, because his beginning was with him and because his subtle spiritual knowledge came from him. I mean this with respect to the subtle sciences and lofty noble lights, not with respect to dense bodies.

Our master al-Muʾayyad—may God exalt his sanctity—explained the return of souls, saying: "We say, and success is from God: human souls are not like the souls of other animals. The souls of animals are merely the sensory soul, without the rational soul through which there are thought, discrimination, governance, consideration of worldly and otherworldly matters, the arts, sciences, and subtleties."

“The human soul resembles the drop in that at first it is only in potentiality to acquire a bodily form suitable to it. In like manner souls possess the potentiality to receive a form suited to their essence, one that will stand for them in the abode of the return through what they acquire of knowledge and wisdom.”

“The rational soul draws the sensory soul toward itself, makes it pure like itself, and prevents it from being overcome by turbidity. It is prepared for the arrival of the spiritual form and made felicitous by accepting it. If there comes to it from that form what earns for its spiritual essence the angelic sciences flowing upon the tongues of the friends of God—peace be upon them—which they acquired from the world of Intellect and Soul, then the soul becomes felicitous and saved, attains a mighty triumph, and returns to its Lord well-pleased and pleasing, tranquil and assured.”

“It passes from state to state and from degree to degree until it reaches its goal and the perfection God has appointed for it. Such a soul is no longer under the mastery of the natural powers.”

“But if there reaches it what is contrary to its essence, drawn from the world of nature and body, and if it follows the bestial dispositions sought by people of shallow intellect and deficient judgment, then that acquired image becomes its form. The rational soul becomes the servant of the sensory soul by following it.”

“At separation from the body, its rational essence looks toward what is suited to it in the higher assembly, while the acquired sensory form looks toward what resembles it in the lower abode. The soul is then prevented from the object of its higher vision and driven away from the remembrance of it. It remains imprisoned between the spiritual and bodily centers and is driven back toward severe punishment by the sensory form it acquired.”

“It cannot free itself from that lower form for the duration of the age, nor pass beyond its center. The turbidity of the world, its inclination to its desires, and obedience to the sensory soul have made it dense and confined within sensation. It cannot reach its goal, and therefore remains in continuing punishment.”

Al-Muʾayyad then says that it has thereby become clear that the souls of the righteous and friends of God are not gathered with the souls of unbelievers.

His words make clear the ascent of the rational soul that has been joined to true realities—the divine rational speech. When it receives what is suited to it from the world of subtlety and from the teaching ḥudūd, those realities raise it, refine it, make it felicitous, and attach it to the subtle world. It is freed from doubts and confusions and rises with its subtleties beyond corporeal substrates, joining the world of holiness and subsistence and separating from the world of error and misery.

If, on the contrary, it takes what reaches it from the ḥudūd and forces it back into the limit of density and embodiment, returning upon its heels and imagining the intellectual world by means of the conflicting bodily forms found in the sensory world, then it becomes attached to the enduring turbidity of this world. It is cut off from the noble higher ḥudūd through inclination toward desire and through giving the sensory soul precedence over intelligible realities. It remains in everlasting punishment, abiding there as long as the age abides, because it has been cut off from the ḥudūd and has descended from intellectual subtlety into corporeal fixation.

May God make us among those who are brought near and connected, and not among those who are driven far and separated, by the right of Muḥammad and his pure family.

Hold fast, my brother, to the ḥudūd and you will be connected to the One who is worshipped. It is related that the Greek ʿAmlāq asked his teacher Qusṭā b. Lūqā: “Will you not make known to me the one I am to worship, so that I may draw near to him and seek refuge in him?”

He replied: “Have you not recognized 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; who taught you that, by obeying what he taught you, fear would be removed from you when you were threatened; and who rescued you from the confusions of events by placing within you something whose sweetness you taste, whose strength you perceive, and through which you become independent of what lies beneath it?”

ʿAmlāq said: “I knew none of that except through you.”

He replied: “Then you have found your lord in your degree, and you are among the believers.”

ʿAmlāq said: “O mine of the light of the unseen, what is beyond my lord, so that I may become among the triumphant?”

He answered: “Beyond him is one whose relation to him is like his relation to you: one above one, until the Bāb is reached in whom all the ranks beneath him are gathered; every scholar of his age is incapable before him, all the people of his time fall short of him, and all the people of his age stand in need of him. He is the lord of lords for that age and the master of the people.”

“He receives from his higher lord and hears his hidden command. In the same manner each higher rank is hidden from the one beneath him until the ascent reaches the furthest One in the created order: the source of beginning, the fullest Holy Spirit, the station of the first heat—namely the First Intellect and the First Existent. From it is the beginning and to it is the ending.”

God has made knowledge of this a hidden treasure and an uncounted blessing. So reflect, my brother, upon the arrangements of the sages and the symbols of the learned. Hold fast to the covenants and oaths taken from you. Know your own scientific ḥadd, and you will know your beginning and your end; you will know your Imam and become connected to the tawḥīd of your Originator who brought you into being.

May God grant you success and guidance, raise you through the degrees of triumph, and exalt you. Praise be to God for what He has bestowed upon us of knowledge of the ḥudūd through whom the Worshipped One is known in the order of religion. May He make us firm in obedience to His friends through whom existence appears in the religious creation. God’s blessings be upon Muḥammad, His Messenger specially supported by taʾyīd; upon his waṣīʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, whom He supported with the foundations of religion and tawḥīd; and upon the pure Imams, their successors, the chosen ones appointed to the ranks after them, in spite of every obstinate opponent.

Chapter Twenty

On the Greater Qāʾim—peace be upon him—who is the completion of the Imams and the prophets, through whom their number reaches perfection; on the reward and punishment that occur at his hand; and on ascent through him to the spiritual world to which is the return and the homecoming

We say: from God comes the spiritual material, and from the blessings of His friends—God's blessings be upon them—comes benefit.

Since everything has a goal to which it ends and an end at which it stops, and since the human being is the goal of the generated beings and their nobility because of the rational speech that is found in him and not in those beneath him, then likewise the goal, end, quintessence, and purest part of the human ranks are the singular friends of God, through whom the causes of the return are established.

Our master the dāʿī al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn, the pillar of the unitarians—may God exalt his sanctity—said: "Know that the one upon whom the name 'humanity' falls without qualification in every age is a unique ḥadd upon the horizons: like the Prophet who has with his Lord a firm precedence and who wins every race in the virtues; like the waṣī who stands after him in his station and raises the banners of religion; and like the Imams from his progeny, one after another, offspring following parent. Each of these is the absolute human being, the realized Adam. Whoever draws near to them by the nearness of his religion and knowledge—not merely by the nearness of this world and body—is nearer to true humanity, more truthful in his testimony for God, and stronger in love for His friend."

The one who stands in the rank of the Imamate is the gathering of the ḥudūd and the goal of the people of his daʿwa. Those who truly enter it receive through him the reality of the name "existence."

The goal of the prophets and legatees and the gathering of the noble pure Imams is the Qāʾim of the Resurrection. He is, in the comprehensive sense, all the prophets, Imams, and legatees; they are his parts, and he is their gathering totality. They are his members.

Every sacred person who arose from the beginning of the three-thousand-year cycles—through the cycle of Adam and his waṣī and the Imams of his age; the cycle of Noah and his waṣī and the Imams of his age; Abraham and his waṣī and the Imams of his age, both settled and depositary; Moses and his waṣī and the Imams of his age; Jesus and his waṣī and the Imams of his age; Muḥammad and his waṣī and the Imams of his age—God's blessings be upon them all—is gathered in the noble Qāʾimī assembly.

Their luminous intellectual forms extend from the beginning of those ages to the end of the cycles. The Qāʾim is like the number one thousand, gathering the hundreds, tens, and units that precede it and bringing them to their end. The sacred ranks that accompanied every noble group of Imams, from Seth son of Adam to the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—peace be upon him—the waṣī of the possessor of the sixth cycle, and onward until the last, are all brought to their completion in him.

Before that final completion, their meanings exist in potential and are not yet stripped from the forms in which they were expressed. When the affairs reach completion and the whole order rises in harmony and balance, the parts come to their totality and the meanings stand stripped of their former instituted forms. Those noble extracts become one noble extract and one meaning to which all the meanings return.

The ḥujja of the Qāʾim must appear before the Qāʾim's own light becomes manifest and before the brilliance of his light is unveiled, just as the light of dawn appears before the sun, and just as the proof appears to the people of intuition before the full meaning is disclosed.

The ḥujja of the Qāʾim is the last great station within the order of the nāṭiq. He calls openly toward the Qāʾim and declares his excellence with a truthful tongue. It is of this that God says: "Indeed, We sent it down on the Night of Power." That is: We indicated the Qāʾim through his ḥujja, who is the Night by virtue of the hiddenness of his reality, his lofty measure before God, and his exalted remembrance.

"And what will make you know what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months." That is: the ḥujja of the Qāʾim is better than a thousand ḥujaj among the ḥujaj of the Imams because of the universality of what has been entrusted to him.

“The angels and the Spirit descend therein by permission of their Lord, from every command.” This signifies the descent and gathering of the angels and spiritual ranks, the people of the noble assembly who had transferred into the horizon of the Tenth and whose final gathering is in the assembly of the Qāʾim, which is expressed as the Last Day. They descend by permission of their Lord—that is, by the permission of the First Intellect, which supplies them with the light of taʾyīd and raises them toward the stations of the intellects when the Qāʾim who gathers them rises.

“Peace it is until the rising of dawn.” That peace comes from every spiritual Intellect and from the favors joined to it through the prophets, legatees, and Imams, until the appearance of the Qāʾim of the Imams, their seal, supported by the command.

The Night of Power also signifies Fāṭima al-Batūl, the consort of the waṣī and daughter of the Messenger. She is the ḥujja of our master the Commander of the Faithful and the mother of the pure chosen Imams—God’s blessings be upon them all. She is the ḥujja of the waṣī in whom the meanings were established, and through whom the settled line from the children of Ismāʿīl was gathered in the subtle meanings. In this respect she is like the Qāʾim’s universal gathering through the luminous column.

Thus Fāṭima al-Batūl is better than a thousand ordinary ḥujaj among the ḥujaj of the Imams of the cycles, because through her the pure Imams continue in succession, preserving the sharīʿa of her father and making its meanings clear. The Spirit is the flowing support that reaches every station connected to it and whose course is not cut off by nights and days.

This is the Spirit of which God said to His Prophet—God bless him and his family: “Thus We have revealed to you a Spirit from Our command,” meaning the angelic taʾyīd and light by which he was supported and the mighty excellence given to him. From every command there is peace—that is, from every noble spiritual Intellect there is a connection through the prophets, legatees, and Imams.

This Spirit is life itself, and through it abiding life is given to the one into whom God breathes it, raising his remembrance and making manifest the greatness of his station. The dawn continues to rise through the connection of the Imamate in the progeny of al-Batūl until the rising of the Qāʾim and the appearance of the possessor of the Gathering.

When the ḥujja of the Qāʾim has completed the daʿwa toward him, has openly proclaimed his noble station, and has pointed people toward him, the Qāʾim—peace be upon him—appears together with the gathering of the prophets and Imams signified by the saying of God: “Do they wait for anything but that God should come to them in shadows of clouds, and the angels, and the matter be decided? To God all matters return.”

Those noble stations that have been gathering from the beginning of the cycles are then made manifest. What reached them from their Originator by means of the abstract intellects of light becomes apparent. That exalted noble form is manifested in a defined human nāsūt gathered from the purest extracts of the brains and souls of the excellent ones among the ḥudūd, just as the human forms of the Imams were gathered from the refined airy constituents. This is the nāsūt of the noble station indicated by the Qāʾimī totality.

Our master al-Muʾayyad—may God exalt his sanctity—explained this in the sixty-fifth session of the fifth hundred, in his discussion of the verse: “About what are they asking one another? About the mighty tiding concerning which they differ.”

He first mentions what is found in the outward commentaries concerning the “mighty tiding”: that it is the Resurrection at which God sits upon His throne to judge, rewarding those who did good and punishing those who did evil. We say of those who hold this bodily conception: you have known one thing while many things have escaped you.

Those who speak in this manner have departed from the straight path, for they attribute to the One they worship bodily standing and sitting such as belong to bodies surrounded by the six directions—above and below, right and left, behind and in front. God is exalted above all of that.

The one signified by these bodily-seeming expressions is the Qāʾim of the Resurrection—upon his remembrance be peace—in whom the powers of all the prophets, legatees, Imams, and possessors of taʾyīd are gathered, and who appears in an existent, defined human person.

We have said that each prophet bears a stamp from the nobility of the one to whom the final completion leads, for they are prophets and he is the Mighty Tiding. Their names derive from his name and their forms proceed according to his form. God, exalted and transcendent, is beyond resemblance to either His spiritual or corporeal creation.

But those who oppose the religious order and resist the ḥudūd, because they have not distinguished the psychic from the natural and have turned away from the guides of their religion and the Imams of their sharīʿa, have mixed things together in error and followed analogy and private opinion. They did not distinguish between servant and Worshipped One, lord in a relative created rank and the absolute Lord, nor between the one governed and the One who is truly beyond all governance.

The path of recognition is built upon distinguishing the ḥadd through whom the divine order is manifested from the God who is beyond all created ranks. Otherwise there would be no distinction between Aaron of the community and the calf set up for it, for both are corporeally existent and are of flesh and blood. What distinguishes the true rank is hidden from ordinary sight: the spiritual realities of immense degree. One must distinguish these spiritual realities from natural corporeal qualities mixed with turbidity.

The Qāʾim—upon his remembrance be peace—is the possessor of the station we have described, the one who takes possession of the throne for the separation of judgment. This is what is indicated by the verse: "And your Lord comes, and the angels, rank upon rank." Once this meaning of the possessor of the Resurrection has been understood, there is no need to add to the Qurʾan what is not in it or to remove from it the language of coming and sitting upon the throne. The words remain; their taʾwīl establishes transcendence.

It is related from Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—that the "Mighty Tiding concerning which they differ" is, in its reality, the possessor of the Resurrection—peace be upon him—and that the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī—peace be upon him—is its majāz, its path and earlier manifestation.

Our master al-Muʾayyad explains that the Commander of the Faithful is the majāz, meaning the road leading to that final reality. He says that ʿAlī is Qāʾim in potential, while the possessor of the Resurrection is Qāʾim in actuality. God says: "concerning which they differ," because disagreement has arisen about both of them alike.

Some say that the final Qāʾim is the eternal Word by which the heavens and earth stand, just as some Christians said of the Messiah—peace be upon him—that he is the son of God. In the same way some claim concerning the Qāʾim that he is the First and the Last by whom the heavens and earth stand.

The people of reality do not say this and do not hold a doctrine resembling those who liken the Creator to bodies and describe Him with corporeal attributes. In the same way, when sayings are transmitted from ʿAlī—peace be upon him—such as "I am the First, I am the Last, I am the Manifest, I am the Hidden, and I know all things," none of these expressions requires a claim to divinity—far be it from him to claim what does not belong to him. We have explained the resolution of this difficulty elsewhere.

After the differences that arose concerning the Commander of the Faithful—peace be upon him—the people of reality nevertheless deny divinity of him and affirm that he is the waṣī of the Messenger of God, the one entrusted with the explanation of his sharīʿa and the taʾwīl of his Book. This itself differs from the claim of those who say "he is the fourth of three," and differs again from the claims of the Khārijites—may God curse them—who opposed him in another manner. Thus disagreement concerning him occurred in many forms.

The Mighty Tiding is the Qāʾim whose rising the Imams foretold: the Qāʾim of the Resurrection, at whose coming people rise before the Lord of the worlds. This is the meaning of the words of our master—may God exalt his sanctity—concerning the Qāʾim who is the end of the cycles and the gatherer of the ages before him. It also explains how the people of exaggeration spoke of the Commander of the Faithful—peace be upon him—and why he was called the Mighty Tiding concerning which they differed.

The Qāʾim is the Last Day, the Known Day, and the Seventh Day in which there is "settling upon the throne." The six days in which the heavens and earth were created signify the six lawgiving nāṭiqs—peace be upon them—within whose cycles were arranged the ranks of the Imams, the ḥujaj, and those who establish the religion of God. The settling upon the throne is the full possession of true knowledge in the seventh day and the manifestation of the hidden command toward which the lawgiving prophets and the people of the revealed laws pointed.

The Qāʾim is the possessor of the second blowing of the trumpet, through whom there is life. Through him the instituted sharīʿas reach completion, just as the sharīʿa of the Prophet—God bless him and his family—and the

religion were completed through the designation of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, Commander of the Faithful. That designation was like the breathing of the spirit into the purified sharīʿa through the establishment of the one who stands for it, founds it upon piety, and orders its parts.

Therefore the address from God to His Messenger came in the verse: "Today I have perfected for you your religion, completed My blessing upon you, and approved Islam for you as religion." Religion was not perfected and completed except through the walāya that is the seal of the Prophet's daʿwa.

In the same manner the religions and sharīʿas of the previous lawgiving prophets reach their final completion through the appearance of the chosen extract drawn out from them, the first pure extract that the Divine Maker had prepared. With the second blowing there is the completion of the cycles and their return to the reality from which their meanings came.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—said in Rāḥat al-ʿAql: "As for what occurs at the end, it is the second blowing, the blowing specially associated with the Resurrection at the completion of the cycles and the completion of the establishment of religion. It is the connection of the soul in actuality, through the emergence of the remaining powers from potentiality, with the powers of the First End—the First Existent, the First Origination, and the First Emanated One."

He continues: "The first emanation, expressed as the Holy Spirit, is the end of the first perfection. The second end is the completion of the existence of the human being, whose existence depends upon the complete connection of the powers of the First End through the seven cycles by means of the supported ones who are emanated in the second emanation in the abode of nature. This is the new creation and the other creation that gathers the souls existing from the beginning of the age until its end, souls that earned in their worldly life and separated from their individual bodies in their appointed times, all gathered for the completion of what was awaited for their rising."

Our master Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī said regarding this statement of our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn: "This is the gathering that gathers the totality from the beginning of the cycles."

Then our master Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn—may God exalt his sanctity—said: "Know that this section is what the whole book, from its beginning to its end, is directed toward. Its meaning gathers the realities that our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity and grant us his intercession and companionship—scattered throughout this and his other books. Here he has indicated them to you in a single section. He summarized the meaning in it and gathered what was dispersed elsewhere. Understand it with an understanding through which every doubt will disappear from you. May God make you among those in whose hearts the symbols of the realities are engraved and for whom the locked doors of the subtle meanings are opened, through His favor and generosity."

These are their words. May God grant us their intercession and pour over us from their blessings.

Know, my brother—may God make us and you firm upon the path and method and grant us realization of its truth—that the Qāʾim—peace be upon him—is the gatherer of the earlier and the later. As God says in His clear Book: "Say: indeed the former and the latter shall be gathered to the appointed time of a known day."

Every Imam appears for the people of his age, every nāṭiq for the people of his cycle, and every ḥadd for those contained within his rank. At the final gathering they confront them concerning the works they sent ahead and debate them on the day of return and homecoming. They give glad tidings to the people of righteous works that they will reach eternal bliss in the abode of permanence, while they meet the people of opposition and disobedience with the declaration that they are destined for the Fire.

They rebuke them for their hostility toward the friends of God, for their enmity, for persisting in disobedience, and for setting themselves against them. It is said: "What is with this Book that it leaves neither small nor great without counting it? They find what they did present, and your Lord wrongs no one."

At that time the Qāʾim commands concerning the enemies of religion, and they are "slaughtered" as the sacrificial animals are slaughtered on the Day of Sacrifice. Fire descends upon them and burns them, and their smoke is driven toward the depths of the earth until they reach the rock that is Sijjīn, remaining there in humiliating punishment. They cry: "Our Lord, bring us out so that we may do righteous deeds other than what we used to do." It is said to them: "Did We not give you lives long enough for one who would remember to remember? And the warner came to you. Taste, then; the wrongdoers have no helper."

It is said to them: taste what you used to do as recompense for what you sent ahead in the days that have passed and for the hostility toward the high stations in which you persisted.

The “expulsion” of those evil forms full of doubts and confusions occurs when the true luminous form appears containing the subtleties of the sacred stations. The “slaughter” of the opponents of truth signifies the friends of God confronting them at that time with decisive refutation and piercing argument. What was inside them of borrowed sciences flows out as blood flows from the slaughtered body, and the hypocrisy they had hidden becomes manifest when the knowledge of the true learned ones appears.

The “fire from heaven” that descends upon them signifies what descends upon them from the lofty authority of Prophethood: proofs that disperse those parts compounded from doubts and burn them, smashing them by the demonstrations of the possessor of the cycle and sharīʿa—peace be upon him—and causing them to vanish.

They then end at the cycle that drives them toward the lowest earth so that they may receive what they deserve of the punishment decreed for them. May God protect us from deviation and denial and make us among the ḥudūd who preserve the covenants, remain connected to obedience, and obey the Imam of the age—peace be upon him—the present existent one, so that we may be saved from falling into painful and everlasting punishment.

The accursed Iblīs is “slaughtered” at the rising of the Qāʾim—peace be upon him—and thereafter there is no disbelief. The division between Garden and Fire is an indication of this: when the end is reached, explanation appears and the meaning stripped of doubts becomes manifest. Through it the sins and burdens of those who reach it disappear.

The cycle of the Qāʾim is a cycle of unveiling and explanation. Knowledge is spread, and in that age there appears to the chosen and their people the removal of their adversaries and the disappearance of the doubts that used to afflict them. Religion becomes wholly God’s, and truth rises over falsehood and its people.

Those who had not looked toward its taʾwīl say when its taʾwīl comes: “The messengers of our Lord came with the truth.” That is, the universal taʾwīl and the explanation of the decisive proof have appeared. They say, in the language of taʾwīl: “Our Lord has come with the truth.” This is the taʾwīl concerning which the revelation addressed us with the tongue of truth.

The people of the cycle of the Qāʾim therefore dwell in eternal goods, clear proofs, and radiant shining sciences. The people of the cycle of unveiling arise from the refined residues of the bodies of the people of the cycles of concealment: nature has purified and refined them, matured them, and made their subtleties into radiant noble souls, clear and receptive to wisdom, connected to goodness and blessing. The remaining bodily portions become the bodies of the people of the cycle of unveiling. Their bliss and triumph, and the disappearance of adversaries in their cycles, are a sensible reward for the trials they endured and for their proximity in earlier ages to the people of error and tyranny.

The refined remainder of a dāʿī becomes, in that cycle, one like him in the rank of dāʿī; the refined remainder of a ḥujja becomes one like him in the rank of ḥujja; and likewise the remnants of the other ḥudūd and mustajībs become corresponding ranks. This is a kindness from God toward them and a mercy.

As for the bodies of the Imams—God’s blessings be upon them—the source states that they become subtle and ascend, not remaining in their graves beyond three days. Their refined substance then becomes material for the hearts of the eloquent, excellent, high-ranking ḥudūd. Glory be to the One who has arranged and governed this. There is no god but He. We praise Him, rely upon Him, ask Him for protection, ask Him to gather us with our masters the Imams in the abode of triumph and mercy, and to gather us with them in the assembly of the Seventh, the possessor of unveiling and manifestation, who makes every hidden meaning clear.

The cycle of unveiling lasts fifty thousand years. The cycles continue to succeed one another and the ages follow one another. In them the nāṭiqs establish revealed laws, while the possessor of unveiling among them is the Seventh Qāʾim. His cycle is called the cycle of manifestation, in which the outward reality of every hidden and difficult meaning is disclosed.

When the Qāʾim departs from the world and rises to join the Tenth, he appoints his son, designates him, and makes him his successor, just as every prophet and Imam appoints his successor. The ages continue in this way until there is the Qāʾim of the Resurrection, the end of ends, at the dissolution of the bonds of the spheres and the ruin of the earth and heavens.

At that point the people of the Fire are finally set free and the mercy of the Mighty Compeller reaches them. The spiritual intellects and those who have ascended from the world of nature are gathered in the noble luminous higher assemblies. All become gathered within the sphere of the First Emanated One, which is the Universal Soul.

This is the highest degree of ascent and the final point to which intellects and noble stations rise, together with the ḥudūd contained within them: the universal precinct of holiness, the Abode of Permanence, and the Garden of Paradise gathering everlasting goods, blessings, and felicities.

The abstract intellects and noble souls attain their nobility through knowledge of the first and formal principles. Each intellect is ennobled by recognizing what preceded it, and the intellects of the world of nature are ennobled by encompassing the noble holy intellects. Thus they rise through all the ranks and ascend toward the eternal end, to the origin and cause appropriate to them.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—made this clear in Rāḥat al-ʿAql, and our master Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī explained his proof. He said that the Soul's nobility lies in attaining its second perfection when there arrive in its essence, through its formation, the divine forms by which it comprehends what preceded it in existence among the intellects of origination and emanation. It thereby reaches the ḥadd in which it stands and what it conceives becomes inseparable from it.

By the shining of its essence and the illumination of its substance by the forms of the holy ones who bestowed excellence upon it, it becomes attached to the eternal principles and resembles them. At separation from the body it becomes a pure intellect roaming freely in a spaciousness without constriction. It flies with the angels brought near through the land of origination, without toil or exhaustion, no longer subject to the burdens that weigh upon followers in relation to their leaders.

It comes to a meadow in which it grazes among its flowers, a Garden in whose courtyard it enjoys bliss: everlasting gardens, unending felicity, holy lights, and a delight that, in comparison with the natural pleasures enjoyed by the sensory soul, is as the fully developed life of a human being compared with the nourishment of an embryo in the womb of its mother—indeed, higher, nobler, more exalted, and more subtle than that.

This is what it sent ahead in the former days and what it provisioned itself with through piety while using the perishing bodily instrument. It then rejoices in the good things, blessings, and favors that have preceded it.

It enters a built city that is the refuge of those like it who came before, those purified ones who traveled the path of the particular religion. The prophets, legatees, and righteous Imams built this city in past ages from their own souls and through their followers, the people of inner understanding and vision.

It has seven gates. Every gate leads to a palace of light with a vast courtyard, in which is a flowing spring, raised couches, cups set out, cushions arranged, and carpets spread. It contains a garden surrounded by palms, pomegranates, and grapes, containing everything that God created of delights and fragrant fruits, together with lights of holiness in which the souls have their abiding place.

In every chamber are twelve assemblies, and in every assembly among the emanated angels are blessings and goods beyond counting. There are angelic melodies and their beautiful pure tones in sanctification and declaration of divine unity—what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and what has never occurred to the heart of a human being. The Sun of Origination and Moon of Emanation shine upon it.

The arriving soul rejoices at the welcome of the angels brought near and the souls freed from the world of nature, at their return to it and their happiness at its arrival among them.

The second thing that reaches the soul after its arrival in that assembly is the joy and delight that come to it and to those already there, through the second perfection and through what makes it felicitous in nearness to the Originator, in the company of the prophets, the legatees, and the pure Imams. It enjoys the companionship of the ḥūr ʿīn and of lights through all eternity and the age of ages. Its state resembles the joy, delight, happiness, and gladness of one who arrives among beloved persons who had long preceded him and whom he now sees gathered in safety and blessing.

These are the words of our master—may God exalt his sanctity—describing the highest noble assembly, which is the assembly of the Universal Soul that gathers the spiritual intellects and the ranks of every Qāʾim who rises from the world of nature, together with the noble souls contained within him, stripped of bodies and rising to the world of eternity. They come to the sphere of the First Emanated One. He also points to the assembly of the Qāʾim—peace be

upon him—in which are gathered the stations of the prophets, legatees, Imams, and their followers, and to the order in which they stand in that noble assembly and the eternal goods, unending blessings, and angelic taʾyīd that reach them. How noble is that station.

This may also be a description of the Abode of the Daʿwa, which is a Garden in potentiality and from which one reaches those Gardens. By completing knowledge of its ḥudūd, the blessings are attained. The daʿwa is the near Garden built by the prophets, legatees, and righteous Imams in the past ages from their own souls by means of those who follow them—the possessors of hands and sight.

It has seven gates. They are the gates of the lawgiving prophets, namely their seven legatees. Every gate leads to a palace of light. The palaces are the seven nāṭiqs. Within them is a flowing spring, meaning the knowledge of taʾwīl that flows from the ḥudūd of religion and waters what grows from the religious offspring.

The raised couches, cups, cushions, and spread carpets are the ḥudūd of the nāṭiq and asās. The enclosed garden is the knowledge of the nāṭiq, containing all the spiritual forms. Within it are chambers above which are chambers, meaning the ḥudūd: the restricted maʾdhūns are chambers above the ranks of the mustajībs, and above them are the ranks of the unrestricted ones—chambers above chambers.

From another aspect, the chambers are the Imamic stations, each according to his rank and lofty degree. Every one of them has twelve ḥujaj in twelve islands, and in every assembly are innumerable emanated angels.

The saying that the Sun of the Abode of Origination shines upon it means that the "Sun of Origination" in the religious world is the Prophet, while the "Moon of Emanation" is the waṣī through the sciences of taʾwīl. Thus the people of the cycle of every nāṭiq are ordered in this way.

The "built city" in the higher Garden is the highest assembly, namely the Qāʾim—peace be upon him. The prophets, legatees, and righteous Imams built it from their pure souls—that is, their souls arrived there and settled there, and through their arrival and gathering with those who came before and after them the supreme station is inhabited.

Its gates are the Imams recurring seven after seven. Every gate leads to a palace of light, and those palaces are the high spiritual ḥudūd from whom the nāṭiqs receive what they receive and then pour it onward to those beneath them.

This description applies in reality to the assembly of the Universal Soul. It also applies to the assembly of the Qāʾim and to the assembly of the noble daʿwa, for in it are likenesses of those noble gatherings and those holy lofty stations.

Its vast courtyard is the great spaciousness that does not become constricted by however many noble spiritual forms and lofty spiritual intellects are gathered within it. Its flowing spring is the waṣī—peace be upon him—the great spring. Likewise at the higher subtle rank it signifies the emanation from which the material of the other ḥudūd is drawn and from which they receive the life that abides eternally and the reality of existence.

The enclosed garden signifies the Imam; from another aspect, the nāṭiq; and in the higher spiritual order, the noble emanated Intellect. The chambers above it are the stations of the Imams and of the intellects that rise to them. Each of them comes forth toward an ascent that does not cease and is illumined by the Sun of Origination and the Moon of Emanation—that is, by the light of the Sābiq and Tālī.

Likewise in the daʿwa the light of the Imam and the ḥujja shines upon the twelve assemblies, namely the people of the twelve islands. They rise to the neighborhood of the Imamic intellects and become part of the supreme gathering.

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, for what He has taught us of the knowledge of His friends and for the manifest and inward favors He has poured upon us. The deliverance of souls is not attained except by holding fast to the ḥudūd and by rising through recognition of the ranks that preceded them in ascent. Thus souls rise in the company of their ḥudūd to the stations of the Imams, and the ascent with them ends at the lofty noble Qāʾimī assembly. From there advancement and rising continue to the supreme intellectual emanated assembly.

Holding fast to the ḥudūd is obedience to God—glory be to Him—His tawḥīd, and recognition of the spiritual world. Through it one reaches existence and the second perfection.

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn, the pillar of the unitarians—may God sanctify his spirit—said: "Among the things that benefit the soul is the formation within its essence of an intellective likeness of what preceded it in existence among the divine principles, which are sciences. All of that is felicity for it, through which it reaches the degree of the

second perfection. It becomes existent after having been nonexistent, abiding after having been perishing, living after having been dead, and pure after having been mixed with turbidity."

What we have set forth in this book belongs to the class of things that gives the soul such formation: it engraves upon it the forms of the world of origination and the realities existing therein; connects it with what endures by His endurance; gives it intellectual radiance and divine light; and protects it from change and alteration by raising it beyond the dominion of nature and by causing it to acquire forms from the first principles.

Through forming itself by these realities and encompassing them, the soul stands in relation to Intellect, eternity, supreme felicity, and the first blessing in a way that resembles the highest divine existents.

Our master continues: "The Imam who gathers the ḥudūd that stand for preserving the sharīʿa, spreading its meanings, raising its banners, and calling to knowledge and action by it, together with their teaching, causes the existence of the human being as a true human being. Through their effect upon souls by teaching and guidance and through bringing them to the degree of perfection and the rank of the intellects, they follow the course of the angels appointed over the world who stand in actuality."

"The human being at the beginning of his existence possesses life and capacity. In this first state he is like a soul only in potentiality, standing ready to receive the second perfection. He continues to receive, learn, hunt for cognitions, and act until he reaches the degree of Intellect. At that point he is no longer fittingly called merely 'soul' with respect to his ascent to perfection."

"The souls of the nāṭiqs—God's blessings be upon them—are a single degree in this respect: they pass from state to state until, through encompassing the essences that preceded them and joining them with complete connection, they become an encompassing whole. Thus the second perfection is obtained."

"In that way the later in bodily existence is joined to the earlier spiritual principle. The souls become intellects by encompassing what preceded them in existence."

Thus he—may God exalt his sanctity—explained the ascent of souls through knowledge of their principles. They attach themselves to the first principles and become connected to the noble stations while moving from state to state. They rise through the causes and enter the Garden of Refuge, the precinct of holiness, through all its gates.

Every higher ḥadd is a qāʾim for those beneath him and is the soul of the noble ḥudūd contained within his rank, until the ascent reaches the Bāb of the Imam. The Bāb is the soul of the universal ḥudūd and their Qāʾim, the one who gathers them. The one connected to his station is connected to a station of unity, since ending at his gate and standing there resembles the ending of the nāṭiqs, legatees, and Imams—God's blessings be upon them—at the Qāʾim of the cycles. He is for them a soul and an Abode of Permanence.

The ranks continue to ascend among the spiritual intellects. Each higher one is a universal soul for the ranks beneath it. The highest point of advancement and ascent is the sphere of the First Emanated One. The Sābiq's station is the station of unity to which the ascent leads; there is no rising beyond it to another created rank.

Likewise no one among the lower ḥudūd rises beyond the rank of the Imam within the religious order, and the highest point of advancement of those ranks is the Bāb, the gathering place of the gates and meanings.

Our master al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—explained the transfer of souls from lower ḥudūd to higher ḥudūd, their ascent to the rank attached to the Qāʾim who is the second end, and their rising to the assembly of the Universal Soul, which is the Garden described by the Prophet—God bless him and his family—in which the ranks of the spiritual intellects shine with the lights of the tawḥīd of their Originator.

He said—may God exalt his sanctity and grant us his intercession and companionship: "Just as a bodily offspring passes from the extract to the drop, from the drop to the clot, from the clot to the lump, from the lump to bone, from bone to flesh, and then to the other creation, so the intellectual subtleties and spiritual powers pass through degrees and stages until their form is completed and comes to resemble the form of its two parents and roots: Intellect and Soul."

"When it resembles them through the nourishment that reaches it from them on the tongue of the Messenger, waṣī, and Imam in every age and time, it becomes able to join its world and reach the place from which it began. It becomes eternal in the horizon of unity, capable of every good and blessing, knowing what is in the two worlds, and attaining the good of the two abodes."

“Its stages of ascent are through seven powers: first the mineral power, then vegetable, animal, human bodily form, jinn, angels, and finally humanity in actuality. These are the stages of reward that resemble the two roots from which they appeared and from which their spiritual materials came.”

“Therefore, in the root of creation and the arising of the natural disposition, the human being must in the end cause his subtle form to become angelic, just as the form of the body passes through stages until it is completed, resembles its parents, becomes suitable for service, and becomes able to act in the worldly abode. At first its form was neither knowing, living in actuality, nor capable of recognition.”

“God decreed and governed it through the materials of the bodily instruments suitable to this noble excellent form, whose nature and potential are to return to the form of its two parents—the knowing, powerful, excellent, living principles that are the roots of all bodily, celestial, psychic, and intellectual-spiritual creatures.”

The believer does not reach his purposes and ends except through the sound belief connected to the true ranks and through the support of the divine friends. This is the degree by which he reaches what has no end. As the Prophet—God bless him and his family—said: “In Paradise is what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and what has never occurred to the heart of a human being.”

Whoever lags behind them, turns away, objects to them, or deviates concerning them falls from the path, goes astray, perishes, and becomes of the party of Satan.

Let the seeker who desires the truth know, then, how his deliverance to the hereafter occurs through the guides. Just as the noble celestial bodies are stable in their spheres, the believers have their stability in their ḥudūd. The ḥudūd raise them to the degrees of the hereafter and the lofty Garden and return them to the higher ranks. The ḥudūd themselves are the degrees by which souls rise to the degrees of subsistence and to which their return is made.

God says: “On the day We call every people by their Imam.” Whoever leaves this body joins them, formed according to their forms in proportion to his knowledge, work, and belief. Whoever had belonged to their kind and been nourished from their knowledge returns to them through resemblance. He recognizes them and they recognize him; he becomes connected to them and enters their company and dwelling. His rank rises above the heavens and he attains a great lofty degree.

When the Qāʾim rises and the first blowing of the trumpet occurs—for there are two blowings—the spiritual form undergoes the first transformation that prepares it for the final gathering.

The acquired sciences are like bodies, while the second blast is the blowing of spirits into them. There will then be no death, annihilation, play, alteration, or weariness. They ascend from one noble station to one still nobler until each reaches the station appointed for it.

This is his statement - may God exalt his sanctity. In it he describes the ascent of the soul and its elevation, through the sciences and through realization of their meanings, in the ranks of the hudud until it reaches ascent into the spiritual world. These are the degrees of the Hereafter and of Paradise to which souls arrive after the blowing in the Trumpet and their gathering in the assembly of the Qāʾim of the Resurrection, the master of the second blast and of manifestation. His words contain clarity for the hearts of the knowers and an admonition concerning that by which the souls of the sincere ascend.

The Qāʾim of the Resurrection - peace be upon him - is the master of the second blast. Among the lawgiving speakers he is like the "other creation" in the development of the embryo, and among the hudud of the world of religion he is like the Imam. Through him their order reaches completion, their arrangement becomes harmonious, and their assembly is perfected. He is like walāya in the law of the Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - for the Prophet made walāya the last of the pillars to which he summoned. By it he directed them to the walāya of the Imam, through obedience to whom one leaves resemblance to cattle, ascends to the stations of the noble angels, and reaches completion and perfection. Were there no walāya of the wali, the law would not be perfected, the message would not be complete, and the proof would not be made clear.

Likewise, were it not for the manifestation of the Qāʾim and the emergence of the universal, all-gathering meaning, the speakers, foundations, and Imams would not attain their ultimate end; the creation of religion would not be completed; the tawhid of the people of tawhid would not be perfected; and they would not ascend to the ranks of the spiritual world, which is called ʿIlliyyin. He is the authority by whom one passes beyond the regions of the heavens, reaches the first principles, and arrives finally at the abode of permanence, the gathering-place of the lights, the

kernel of the meanings, and the secret of secrets. There the sun of origination shines and the moon of emanation gives light. There one has no need of the corporeal sun or visible stars, because of the radiance of the spiritual sun, the intellectual stars, and the shining of divine lights in the universal souls in the eternal cycles, possessed of splendid gifts and everlasting blessings. Description falls short of them, and even the discerning knower cannot encompass them. There are light and splendor: light upon light; God guides to His light whom He wills.

The Speaker of our cycle - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - stands in that noble Qāʾimic assembly in the position of the brain, the place of intellect, because he is the head and chief of the Speakers. His legatee is like the heart, the house of life and the source of spirit and animation. The awliyāʾ and the Imams - God's blessings be upon them - are like the remaining members.

This is an analogy intended to bring the meaning close. That noble assembly is in truth divine, luminous, and spiritual. It is not measured by bodies and is not described by attributes of a body enclosed within dimensions. The Qāʾim - peace be upon him - is the Universal Man who gathers the elect of humanity, and he is the Universal Soul that gathers the souls until they become one noble, subtle, tranquil soul, returning to its Lord pleased and pleasing through the reward of God Most High.

Everyone who has ascended through the noble Imamic stations remains within that gathering in the praiseworthy barzakh until the Qāʾim - peace be upon him - arises. Hence it has been said: "Lighten yourselves and join, for your first awaits the arrival of your last." This signifies the ascent of those in the rank of response to the breakers, the ascent of the breakers to the maʾdhuns, the gathering of the people of an island with their dāʿī, and the return of all of them first to the Bāb of the Imam of their age. They are gathered with him. Then they enter into the noble Imamic lāhūt and receive the exalted, victorious material belonging to the spiritual intellects while they are connected with that sublime station. When the Imam passes into concealment, he conveys them with him into the encompassing rank of the Tenth, and they remain in that great barzakh until the Last Day.

Our master Hamid al-Din - may God exalt his sanctity - said in Rāhat al-ʿAql that souls, when they are isolated and disengaged from the forms of persons and freed from the bodily forms that occupied them, carry with them what they performed through their persons, whether good or evil. Their remaining in the barzakh is for the completion of the new creation through the succession of generations and for the completion of the action of the hudud upon them by teaching and forming them. In their totality they are gathered to the appointed time of the Day of Resurrection, which is the completion of the seventh cycle and the arising of the rule of the Universal Soul in the world of nature. God says: "Indeed, the former and the latter will surely be gathered to the appointed time of a known day." This is a command from God Most High by way of the near angels. By "the former and the latter" he means those who came before in the past cycles and those who will come into being in the remaining cycles, small and great: all are gathered.

They are gathered, through those whom We support by Our spirit, into one order of worship and tawhid, and they remain upon it until the appointed time of the Known Day - that is, until the master of the seventh cycle, which is the Last Day and the Known Day. The souls that have come into existence become, in their totality, like the form of a single person. The individual souls are like the many limbs belonging to that person. Every soul has a form in itself, but through the totality of all those souls the form of the later genesis and the new creation is completed, just as the person is completed through all his limbs. The Holy Spirit flows through them by the emanation of the master of the seventh cycle. Through that, the whole becomes capable of passing through the narrow confines of bodies and attaining the upper face beyond them, just as the spirit of the embryo flows through it while it is enclosed in the womb. The perfection of the seventh cycle and the passage into actuality is the authority and power without which one cannot penetrate beyond the regions of bodies.

God Most High says: "O company of jinn and humankind, if you are able to pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass beyond. You shall not pass beyond except with an authority." That is: O people of the gnoses, those who uphold worship outwardly and inwardly, if you can pass beyond the regions of the heavens - if you can separate from bodies - then pass beyond. Yet you cannot separate from them except through a power acquired from the hudud, through your gathering together, and through the emanation and actual arising of the master of the seventh cycle. Passage cannot occur through a soul existing by itself, nor penetration through individuals in isolation, but only through the totality. For the souls in their existence for the later genesis and the new creation are like the limbs that make up the person of the first genesis. Just as a limb needs its fellow limbs for

completion, so the soul by itself cannot attain universal perfection or encompass everything contained within existence. Only through the whole is the whole attained.

He continues - may God exalt his sanctity - that every hadd among the hudud of God Most High, through his daʿwa, knowledge, and instruction, is a gathering-place for those of his cycle who follow his command and yearn for what he has brought. He is like a head that gathers the senses and many members, and like a body that gathers many members. The relation of the limbs to the head is repeated in the Hereafter, and the person gathers them into one person.

Perhaps this is an interpretation of the glad tidings stated at the beginning of this book concerning the one who reads it in religion. It has therefore come from our masters - peace be upon them - that a person is resurrected with the one whom he loves. It is also related from the Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - that on the Day of Resurrection the master of each cycle comes with the people of his cycle, those who followed his command, his legatees, the Imams, the dāʿīs, and those who followed them in goodness. Thus God Most High says: "On the day when We call every people by their Imam." The master of the seventh cycle, which is one of the days of God Most High, establishes them and supports them; every follower is called with the one he followed, for reckoning and questioning concerning the commands of God that he upheld.

He continues - may God sanctify his spirit - that all proceed to the barzakh and remain there until the Day of Resurrection. It belongs to the Greater World and is the nearest world to the World of Holiness, which lies beyond it, just as the womb, which is the abode of the embryo until its form is perfected, is the nearest of the worlds of the Small World to the Greater World outside it.

Then he said - may God sanctify his spirit - in refutation of the people of transmigration: souls do not attach themselves to another corpse. We have demonstrated in our book al-Rushd wa-l-Hidāya the impossibility of what they claim, for knowledge shows that such attachment and transmigration are impossible and false. We mentioned this previously. Thus he made clear - may God exalt his sanctity - that the matter is not as the misguided people of transmigration believe when they say that souls transfer into other persons, there to be rewarded through the enjoyments of this world or punished through deficiency, misery, and pain. We seek refuge in God from a doctrine that casts one into the abysses of error, and we ask Him to establish us upon the proof of guidance that leads to felicity in the final end, through Muhammad and his family, the people of merit and beneficence.

The souls do not pass from bodies to other bodies, as the ignorant imagine. Rather, when the rewarded soul departs and is stripped from the body, it connects with the column of light flowing from the World of Subtlety. It attaches itself to it and, through correspondence, becomes joined to the form of its own hadd, neighboring his soul until the time of his transition. The form and the soul become intermixed, not by indwelling, but through a subtle connection and correspondence, like the attraction of a magnet. It is drawn toward that which is above it out of yearning and is driven toward the perfection to which it comes by ascending the degrees of ascent.

Its felicity, triumph, and bliss lie in its connection with the Abode of Holiness and the World of Subtlety, purified from the impurities of nature and stripped of prime-material substances. Noble materials pour upon it and blessings neither diminish nor cease. It remains connected with that which gives it life, ascending through the degrees of ascent toward the abode of its honor and majesty, until it becomes blessed in the Abode of Holiness, safe from return to the inverted bridges of the sensory abode, ascending the ladder of merit and its degrees.

Thus the statements of the people of truth concerning ascent and descent must be understood as spiritual and religious realities, not as the bodily transmigration imagined by the ignorant. The soul that has purified itself through knowledge and action is attracted upward by the hudud and by the luminous material that flows through them. The soul that has bound itself to sensory images, passions, and opposition is turned downward by what it has acquired.

Among the sayings transmitted from the people of wisdom is the statement concerning the moving things and the stationary things: "Through him the movers moved, and the stationary came to rest." The movers are the spiritual intellects in the world of eternity. Their movement was for the manifestation of the one who was complete in actuality and perfect in intellect. They moved by supplying the world of bodies with the flowing providence and by supplying the people of the world of religion with their connected spiritual materials.

Likewise, the celestial bodies and spheres moved, under the governance of their governor, for the production of the Qāʾim, who is the elect of the corporeal, bodily, and religious worlds. Through his manifestation their forms are

perfected. Likewise the movements of the prophets, the legatees, the Imams, and the hudud were for the manifestation of the meanings they brought, through the arising of the figurative cause by which deliverance from the fetters of the natural world and ascent are attained.

His statement, "and the stationary came to rest," means that the intellects rest from action when their action reaches its goal and their activity attains its furthest end. Likewise the celestial bodies cease their motions when the one who turns and governs them, by the command of God, the Merciful and Compassionate, ceases to govern them. Likewise the intellects of the world of nature rest from action when they have received their reward and ascended to the World of Subtlety and Eternity, joining their lords.

His statement, "Through him the temporal things became temporal and the spatial things became spatial," means that the temporal things are the world of celestial bodies and the spatial things are the world of bodies. He is the one charged with their governance and the one who supplies them through his perfected craftsmanship and determination. After the Tenth, the Governor, is succeeded, he becomes for what is in the world of bodies the creator, originator, and fashioner by the command of God, the All-Knowing, All-Aware, and through the subtlety of the intellectual material flowing to him according to what it reaches and what he determines.

To this greatest Qāʾim, the goal of goals, the all-gathering Qurʾān enclosed by the signs, our master al-Zāhir - God's blessings be upon him - alluded when speaking of the Imams of the cycle of Muhammad - may God's blessings be upon him and his family. He said that their last is delivered to the master of the intellectual daʿwa, whose immense station the revealed laws symbolized and whose perfect guidance and felicity the prophetic books indicated: the breaker of the accursed tree and the one who makes the word and religion of Muhammad prevail over all religions.

The Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - said in his supplications concerning him: "O effacer of the traces of the rebels against the Imams of the age!" And he said: "O destroyer of the party of hypocrisy, falsehood, and aggression, who assembled their cavalry and infantry against the possessor of waṣāya and faith who arose after the person of Prophethood, of mighty station!" He is the completion of the other creation gathered for the Day of Resurrection according to the clear proof of the revealed laws, because of the deposits placed therein. He is the counterpart of the overflowing sea and the encompassing ocean, whose guidance and meanings receive the simple World of Holiness. He returns the ends of things to their beginnings and joins the extremities of the intelligible circles to their world. He judges among the people of religions and sects and brings them to account for what they neglected in acceptance and action. He removes the rulings of the Pharaohs established through oppression and illuminates the darkness of the human analogies by the power of unveiling. He opens what had been closed of their beginnings to the five senses, supports the hudud of his cycle with the support of the originary intellects, and extracts from existence the emanated intellects, analogous to the First, the first originated one at the beginning of the worlds. He speaks with the realities of aims and signs. His station is sought by all the religious communities. Through his manifestation the followers of the innovating tyrants are destroyed. He slaughters Iblis and effaces his age, saves the people of his cycle and daʿwa from his seduction and deception, and purifies the world from his impurity and disgraces.

He brings the people of his cycle to a standstill before his walāya, recompenses them, and leaves those who oppose him and their peers in a state in which neither do they die nor do they live, until a path of transformation becomes possible for them according to the exhaustive divine wisdom.

This statement - God's blessings be upon its speaker - points to the Qāʾim. By it he meant the legatee of the cycle, for the intellectual, interpretive daʿwa is one of his dimensions, and the Qāʾim is its end, elect, and goal. He is extracted from the legatee and related to him. He is the Pond which the Messenger - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - promised: his legatee will give drink from it to whoever befriends him and drive away from it whoever opposes and hates him. Upon it are cups as numerous as the stars of heaven. Its vessels are the prophets, legatees, and Imams of guidance, the knowers, who give drink by the hand of the legatee from the current of his knowledge to whoever holds fast to his rope, through the intellectual materials and noble higher goods that they pour upon them.

The Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - said: "I leave among you that which, if you hold fast to it, you will never go astray: the Book of God and my progeny, the people of my House. The two shall never separate until they return to me at the Pond, like these two." This is through the succession of the Imamate in the noble progeny and prophetic family from the offspring of Muhammad and ʿAli, the chosen, selected, and elect ones

in whom it has continued and whose word remains among them until the manifestation of the Master of the Resurrection.

He is the Pond to which all come and the witnessed gathering. The daʿwa of the Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - and the meanings contained within it continue until the Qāʾim arises and the universal meaning and clear proof emerge through the manifestation of the noble Qāʾimic station, in which are gathered the powers of the prophets, legatees, and Imams. He cuts away doubts from the prophetic daʿwa. It becomes a noble daʿwa, upright and luminous, its proof exalted and its light manifest.

For this reason it is said that the world comes to an end. What comes to an end are the descriptive revealed laws and duties established by the Speakers, the analogies whose meanings were veiled, contained within them and concealed beneath their coverings, expressed through sensible examples and bodily words. They are the garments of the symbolized meanings, just as this world is the outward form of the Hereafter.

God Most High says: "And the Hereafter is better for you than the first." That is, your daʿwa - although all of it is good - is not intended for its outward form alone, as the anthropomorphists and the misguided imagine. The daʿwa of the Hereafter is better before God and higher. None knows it except the people of goodness and purity, the followers of the Imams of guidance who preserve their command and conceal their secret. Some of the awliyāʾ - peace be upon them - said: "Our secret is difficult and difficult to bear; none bears it except a sent prophet, a near angel, or a believer whose heart God has tested for faith."

Our master, the virtuous person, the author of the Epistles - God's peace and blessings be upon him - said: Faith is assent to that thing and confirmation of the speech of those who report it, not the thing itself. The prophets and their awliyāʾ are those who report the Hereafter, who have formed its conception and know its reality through their intellects. The believers are those who confess the Hereafter with their tongues, confirm the prophets in what they report, and await its unveiling to them.

Know, my brother, that those who await the matter of the Hereafter are two groups of people. One group awaits its coming-to-be and occurrence in a future time, at the destruction of the heavens and earths. These are those who know of things only sensibles, of substances only bodily substances, of states only what is manifest. The other group awaits it as an unveiling, a clarification, and an unveiling of sight upon it. These are those who know intelligible matters, spiritual substances, and states of the soul.

This is his statement - peace be upon him. Reflect upon it, my brother, and contemplate it. Awaken from the sleep of the heedless and the slumber of the ignorant, those who know only an outward aspect of the life of this world while they are heedless of the Hereafter. Do not be among those who await the Hereafter through time, for there is no time there. Be instead among those who await it through proofs and knowledge, when the latter Qāʾim appears through clarification of the meaning and unveiling for those to whom the best has already gone forth from Us.

The best went forth for them because of what they sent ahead in former ages and because they recognized the merit of the legatee of the Chosen Prophet. Love of him is a good deed with which an evil deed does not harm - meaning that one who truly gives him walāya is not harmed by those "evil deeds" that the ignorant fabricate against him.

Know also, my brother - may God guide us and you to correctness and make us among those who know the meaning of the Book - that in this book we have transmitted much of what has reached us from the awliyāʾ of God and their hudud concerning the Qāʾim, the Resurrection, and the raising of souls from ignorance and from conceiving sensible things to conceiving intelligible things. That is the resurrection and the abiding life in which there is no annihilation, disappearance, or alteration for one who has connected himself with it, passing from state to state.

In the little that we have presented there is sufficient sufficiency and a healing blessing for one who recognizes it. The Qāʾim, the Resurrection, and the raising are the hidden teaching and treasured secret of which outward people remain unaware. Among the people of purity, luminous insight, intellect, and gnosis, however, these are realities known through the spiritual sciences, the secrets of wisdom, the subtle meanings, and the radiant proofs.

The author of the Epistles - God's peace and blessings be upon him - said: Know, my brother - may God support us and you with a spirit from Him - that among the greatest virtues of the rational are abundance of sciences and gnoses, and that among the noblest sciences and most majestic gnoses to which the knowers attain, and to which God guides His awliyāʾ among the believing and confirming, is the knowledge of resurrection, recognition of the reality of the Resurrection, and the manner of its transformations and states.

May God make us and you among those who understand these realities, hold fast to the walāya of His awliyāʾ, and await the Qāʾim through knowledge, proof, and purification rather than through the imaginations of the heedless. Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds, and God's blessings be upon Muhammad and his pure family.

The states of the Resurrection have been indicated in the Qurʾān in approximately one thousand seven hundred verses, under many descriptions and varied allusions, such as His saying, "the Day of Resurrection," "the day they are raised," "the Day of Religion," "the Day of Decision," "the Day of Gathering," "the Day of Mutual Loss," "the Approaching Day," "the Day of Calling," "the Day of Reckoning," "the day they come forth," and "the day the Hour rises," together with expressions resembling these. The intellects of most scholars have been bewildered in seeking knowledge of their realities and imagining their manner according to the essence of their attributes. None knows their interpretation except God and those firmly rooted in knowledge among the awliyāʾ and chosen ones of God, who say, "All is from our Lord." They encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills, and He discloses His unseen to none except a messenger whom He has approved; they stand in awe of Him.

This is his statement - may God exalt his sanctity - making clear the knowledge of Resurrection and raising: its interpretation is known only to God and those firmly rooted in knowledge. Whoever awaits it through knowledge and gnosis sees it and witnesses it as reality, not metaphor. Whoever awaits it through time and a fixed hour waits for something distant and seeks a matter exceedingly difficult.

We ask God, O brother - may God establish us and you upon certain knowledge and guide us among those who seek guidance - to make us among those who know and contemplate His signs, who return in what is difficult for us to the questioning of His awliyāʾ, and to resurrect us with them. May He not sever us from them in the noble company that gathers the subtle lights. Praise belongs to God for His blessings, though we fall short of rendering their thanks. May God bless Muhammad His Prophet and the Imams of his pure and purified progeny, and grant them all an unbroken peace until the Day of Religion.

Chapter Twenty-One

On the Return of the Opponents and Adversaries of the Awliyāʾ of Truth; What They Encounter of the Realization of Hell and the Paths of Painful Punishment According to Their Reprehensible Deeds and Their Hostility toward the Purified Elect among God's Awliyāʾ; and Their Destination in the Greater Punishment, Which Is Sijjīn - May God Protect Us and All Followers of His Pure Awliyāʾ, God's Blessings Be upon Them All, from That

We say, seeking from God assistance and support, and hoping through the blessings of His awliyāʾ for increase in the favor that has reached us from them: We have already mentioned in this book the noble, subtle, spiritual world, which is the world of Intellect, and the angels stripped of bodies who are above the world of spheres and celestial bodies; the perfection and completeness they possess; and those intellects that emerge from the world of nature and ascend through the lofty, elevated degrees of reward, rising step after step from the world of coming-to-be and passing-away to the abiding World of Subtlety forever. We have mentioned what reward they obtain there, as the Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - said: "In Paradise is what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and what has never occurred to the heart of a human being."

Let us now mention the state of the one between whom and his guidance a barrier intervenes, who departs from the party of God. This one is cast into the paths of Hell, entering its evil places of entry and passing repeatedly through the bridges of punishment and realization until he ends in the accursed rock of Sijjīn, the severest punishment to which the stubborn, arrogant Iblises ultimately arrive. God Most High says in His decisive Book: "Enter, O people of Pharaoh, the severest punishment."

We have already mentioned descent from the World of Subtlety to the abode of density, and the ordering of those who descend according to what they deserve and according to their remoteness from mercy and tenderness. The worst and greatest of them are those who persist, grow arrogant, become remote from the World of Subtlety, and flee from it. Among these are the Iblises in every cycle and the Pharaohs who meet the awliyāʾ of God with disdain and pride and who persist in harmful opposition to them.

Because the cycle of Muhammad - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - is the comprehensive cycle and Muhammad is the Seal of the purified, chosen prophets, his legatee - peace be upon him - arose in his station and ascended to a degree of merit whose perfection the worlds are unable fully to know. For that reason his Iblis was the most stubborn of the Iblises and the greatest of them in ingratitude and denial of God's blessing. Our master al-Muʾayyad fi al-Din, pillar of the people of tawhid, said: "According to the strength of the master of a cycle is the strength of his Iblis. This cycle of yours is the seal of the cycles, and its Iblis is the seal of the evil Iblises."

Whoever denies one of the hudud of God and His favor, whose connection with divine protection is cut off, who persists in rebellion and disobedience and denies the wali of the age and time, is joined to the evil Iblises, made remote from the mercy of God the Mighty, the Compeller, and counted among the people of persistence and arrogance. For the Iblises, in the root of their existence, are from the clay of corruption, the most vile of impurities and the worst of what descended among those who accepted the daʿwa of emanation.

When the lapse occurred and one part of the world mixed with another and all came to the earth, the impure and the pure were distinguished after the existence of the thousandfold stations, and some became manifest from others according to what divine providence had decreed. This is like the appearance of Cain from Adam, who was the adversary of Abel; like the appearance of the son of Noah who opposed his legatee Shem whom Noah had chosen and elevated to the rank of waṣāya; like the appearance of Abu Lahab from ʿAbd al-Muttalib; like the appearance of Nizar from the Imam al-Mustansir bi-llah - peace be upon him; and like the appearance of Muhammad b. Abi Bakr from Abu Quhafa's son.

This is like light emerging from darkness. Muhammad b. Abi Bakr - may God's good pleasure be upon him - was among the sincere followers of our master the Commander of the Believers, and the Commander of the Believers regarded him in the station of a son. His mother Asmaʾ bt. ʿUmays had walāya for her master ʿAli b. Abi Talib because of what she had heard from the Messenger of God Muhammad - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - concerning his excellence. Abu Bakr was before the Commander of the Believers with companionship, gentleness, and outward closeness, but when what lay in his substance became manifest, the light of following God's wali and his party separated from him. The reward that had accrued to Abu Bakr for obedience to the Prophet became manifest in his son Muhammad, while he himself returned with loss because of his transgression, stubbornness, and hostility toward the wali of God, the one glorified in the cycles.

When Muʿawiya caused Malik al-Ashtar to be poisoned and Muhammad b. Abi Bakr to be killed, the Commander of the Believers - peace be upon him - used to say: "May God curse Muʿawiya. As for Malik, he was to me like this" - indicating his nearness - "and as for Muhammad, he was to me a son." Muhammad - may God's good pleasure be upon him - more than once forbade his father from disobedience, commanded him to desist, and warned him of the punishment of the Fire. By this he opposed him and affirmed that he was among the people of salvation, while his father was among those who persisted in pride. His devil led him astray until he disavowed the pledge he had given and returned to hostility. The consequence of the matter was the Fire for those who persisted in opposition.

Opposition to the stations - peace be upon them - is the worst destination of the arrogant. Their release from it is only through abandoning that opposition. When walāya was presented to them and they were summoned to the one whom God made the goal among His awliyāʾ, they said: "We did not believe them in the subtle rank, so how should we believe them after they appeared in density through the revealed laws?" It is like the words God Most High recounts from the opponents: "Shall we believe in two mortals like ourselves while their people are servants to us?"

Thus every adversary of the wali of his age departs from the people of faith, persists in arrogance, denial, and disobedience, abandons the commands of the radiant sharīʿa, and returns backward in the world of interpretation. At the hour of his death and the separation of his person, he beholds his evil deeds, his rejected actions, and his dark, retrograding form. He sees what terrifies and alarms him, and he beholds what his hands sent ahead after a barrier has been placed between him and repentance and desisting.

This is like the state of Pharaoh when drowning drew near and the painful punishment approached him. He said: "I believe that there is no god except the One in whom the Children of Israel believe." His belief then did not benefit him, and the answer to him was what God Most High says in the clear Book: "Now? Though before you disobeyed and were among the corrupters?"

The two angels of mercy are formed for such a person out of the rejected actions he committed; they rebuke him for what he sent ahead when he left obedience to the awliyāʾ of God and persisted in devilishness and Iblis-like conduct. What the adversary calls Munkar and Nakir are, in the language of reality, like Bashir and Mubashshir for the wali. They reproach him for his evil conduct and make known to him the punishment and calamity prepared for him. The two angels are the Imam of his age and his Hujja, against whom he broke away when he left the daʿwa; they had made known to him what he would come to if he persisted in the lapse and error.

Then his impure soul becomes diffused through his body and densified so that it becomes prepared for punishment. Nothing remains with it except the evil form of opposition and hostility in which it persisted. It does not incline toward repentance. It seeks the ascending form that rises toward subtlety, but it is repelled from it and veiled. It tries to return to its impure body, but a barrier is placed between it and the body, as a recompense corresponding to what it acquired. It remains suspended between heaven and earth, suffering in the cursed punishment, turned away from subtlety by the rays of the stars and prevented from returning to the body that had predominated over it.

It resembles one who desires, through knowledge, to imagine the World of Subtlety but whose ignorance returns him to density: he has neither ascended to subtle knowledge nor returned to the bodily images because of the magnitude of deprivation and misery. He is prevented from ascent to subtlety and barred from returning to what he knew of density, driven between heaven and earth, finding no path back to what he had been and no ladder by which to ascend to heaven.

He remains like this for a period of time, and he appears to the people of error and rebellion, encouraging them in the ignorance they possess and commanding them to incline away from the ancient straight path. This is the meaning of God's saying: "Devils of humankind and jinn, inspiring one another with adorned speech in deception." These are the jinn and devils in actuality who had been devils in potentiality while in their persons, through their dark forms and corrupt beliefs by which they imagined the subtle lights according to the sensible things they were accustomed to.

When they leave their bodily molds while persisting in remoteness from the pure awliyāʾ of God, they stray far from the truth, become remote, transgress, and rebel. They become subtle corporeal entities and distorted satanic forms, appearing from time to time to people whose intellects are deficient, not to those of complete intellect. These are the ghouls said to appear to Bedouins and children. They are the blameworthy jinn among the Iblises and devils who opposed and showed hostility to the awliyāʾ of God, did not acknowledge or confess their revealed laws, and falsely claimed the knowledge of subtlety although their evil morals and dense natures excluded them from it.

For that reason eyes do not see them except when they manifest to ignorant and heedless people. Their dwellings are the wastes, ruined places, houses of fire, filthy places, and places distant from human habitation. Some of them assume for a person the form of a woman, a child, or a man and appear to him in a seizure, placing a barrier between him and return to his intellect and preventing him from it. They remain in this state for some time.

The awliyāʾ of God in every age summon them to faith and look upon them according to what they have been given of subtlety through encompassing knowledge of humankind and jinn. If the sin of one among them is slight and God wills to guide him to a path of truth, he returns and responds, like the jinn who listened to the Qurʾān and said: "We have heard a wondrous Qurʾān," believed in it, and did not associate anyone with their Lord. Another example is the believing jinn who responded to Noah - peace be upon him - and ascended to the sphere of the sun. He served there as long as God willed, submitting in the age of every prophet and believing in the time of every wali, until he came to the Commander of the Believers ʿAli - peace be upon him - and submitted at his hand. Through the providence of the Governor he returned to the lower world and then ascended to the thousandfold station, becoming among the people of realization.

Those of this kind who serve the awliyāʾ, return from opposition, and reach the thousandfold stations connect with the rank of protection and become safe from return to the dark paths. This is because of the service, submission, and obedience that preceded from them toward the prophets, legatees, and Imams, and because they came near to the rank of subtlety, attached themselves to it, and ascended striving through the degrees of sciences and gnoses. They therefore deserved entrance into the noble Imamic assembly and ascended with those who ascend in his company, secure from deviation in religion and blindness, rising in the causes of reward with the awliyāʾ of God. Their opposition had been slight and their hostility not immense.

As for the accursed adversaries who rebelled against the people of the cycles and ages and persisted in curse and obstinacy, there is no return for them until they have fully undergone the realization of punishment and entered the Greater Hell through all its gates. They are made to stand at the two dark nodes outside the corporeal sphere, opposing the sun and moon through which God adorned the heavens and made them the lights of the world through the luminous radiance He placed in them. From these two dark nodes come eclipse of the sun and moon and the darkness that obscures them. From them arose, in the symbolic order, those who denied and rejected.

These two nodes are called the Head and the Tail. They are a gathering-place of dark, impure souls. They remain at those two nodes for as long as the Governor wills. Then they are crushed and descend to the thousandfold station, and from them comes forth an adversary to the wali of God, accursed and arrogant.

As for the bodies through which these souls spread and which became densified by their denial of the stations of God's awliyāʾ and their turning away from them, their corpses dissolve. From their corruptions arise harmful things in the world that destroy animals and human beings: thunderbolts, terrors, and every harmful thing that afflicts the world in its minerals, plants, and animals with destruction and ruin. This continues for as long as God wills. Then they return to the lowest depth and ascend to the thousandfold stations in distorted forms and degraded conditions, in every impure species and corrupt group.

Whenever they die, divine providence returns them to the lowest depth, and they ascend in nourishment into persons. Every impure species that has been cast into inversion feeds from them, until they complete in each form what is due to it of chastisement and calamity, such as bears, apes, swine, and other creatures of distorted and repellent form.

When they have completed seventy garments in such forms, they return to what is lower than that among manifest created things. This is the meaning of "metamorphosis." God Most High says concerning them: "Those among you who transgressed concerning the Sabbath" - that is, concerning the station - peace be upon him - that is the elect of existence and the seventh of the hudud. Because they transgressed against their stations they were returned to those blameworthy animals and deserved descent into the painful, evil realization of punishment.

The examples of apes and swine among human beings are those who transgress the sharīʿa, leave the rule of its master of exalted and lofty rank, turn eagerly toward appetites, and commit what he forbade. Even if they are in human forms, their souls, through their rebellion against the awliyāʾ of the Merciful, are in the worst forms of animals. God Most High says - and His saying is sufficient as guidance and proof: "Rather, they are further astray from the path."

Those impure souls continue to be returned through every repellent animal form and to circulate through them until they have completed seventy garments in every kind, as recompense for the deeds that led them to the paths of humiliation. Then, through the action of the wise Governor, they return to the lowest depth. From them come every impure, blameworthy plant, completing in them seventy kinds that fulfill the number: plants by which animals and human beings are destroyed through fatal poisons, every foul-smelling plant containing no fragrance, and every wood by which fires are kindled.

After that they pass into impure minerals and stones, remaining there for as long as God has determined. God Most High says: "Be stones or iron, or any created thing that seems greater in your breasts." Divine providence carries them beyond the limit of equilibrium in the inhabited quarter toward what is more remote from it. His words, "or what seems greater in your breasts," signify the state they take on when they leave equilibrium and complete what is due to them among blameworthy minerals, until they become animal-like forms originating from mountains. They remain in this until the arising of the Qāʾim.

Then those who disbelieved are driven toward Hell in companies. When they reach it its gates are opened, and its keepers say to them what the Book has related. The word of punishment is fulfilled against the unbelievers, and it is said to them: "Enter the gates of Hell, remaining therein. Evil indeed is the abode of the arrogant."

This occurs after they are brought before the Qāʾim - peace be upon him - and before those among the stations and hudud gathered within him. They are rebuked for their evil deeds and their persistence in error and denial. They are slaughtered as sacrificial animals are slaughtered and cast down until their corpses fill the earth and the believers suffer from their stench. Fire then descends upon them from heaven, burning them until they become smoke. The earth takes them in through its pores and draws them to its lowest depths. They proceed to the Abyss, the blazing Fire of God - the Greater Hell - as dark, blameworthy persons possessing distorted forms and altered shapes.

They remain in painful punishment for as long as the spheres endure. They remain there while their punishment encompasses the cycles. The Greater Hell is the Rock. Whenever the sun revolves, its heat and burning rays fall upon them, burning and blazing against them and inflicting punishment. That is the severe punishment of God and the lowest of the low, remote from the mercy of God.

When the people of Sijjīn have completed the calamity and punishment assigned to them, and after the Greater Cycle has run its course and the heavens and earth have been renewed according to the wisdom of the Creator, they continue to circulate through the immense cycles of punishment until they become purified from them and can ascend. Whenever one of them truly repents, he rises and becomes among those who precede toward the lofty, luminous stations under the mercy of the Mighty, the Compeller, and is freed from the Fire.

Yet this does not reach the Sijjīn of the principal adversaries of God's awliyāʾ in the same way. As for their followers who merely followed them in what they professed, and those associated with them in whom there was not the same degree of opposition and hostility, who mixed evil deeds with good deeds, they return after realization and after completing the punishment they deserved. They are returned to the lowest depth, then ascend toward the thousandfold station, where they become capable of renewed advancement.

May God protect us from returning through the paths of punishment and from regret and remorse at the moment of reversal. Its punishment is painful and severe, and it is not far from the wrongdoers. A person is harmed merely by the heat of the sun; what then of the heat of fire, and what of the kindled Fire of God to which the evil among humankind and unbelievers proceed? We ask God Most High to grant us certainty that saves us from those losing bridges, and to make us among those who triumph by following the awliyāʾ of God, through whom there is salvation from falling into the Abyss. Whoever is connected to them has triumphed and is among the saved because of them, by the truth of God's awliyāʾ whom He selected, chose, and elected from His creation, destroying their adversaries and bringing them to ruin.

It has been transmitted from some of the awliyāʾ of God - peace be upon them - that the realizations of punishment correspond, in inverted fashion, to the degrees of reward: the one proceeds upward through ascent, while the other descends toward the punishment of God. This is because ascent occurs through minerals, plants, animals, and those forms among them that remain in equilibrium and are made lawful by the radiant sharīʿa for the human being. Descent, by contrast, occurs through what has fallen back, become degraded, and descended among every impure, reprehensible thing forbidden to the human being and condemned by the people of the revealed laws - God's blessings be upon them.

Everything that exists within the circle of existence has a corresponding meaning in the circle of reward and punishment, as has been said symbolically. The people of reward are those who ascend through the true gnoses and acquire noble spiritual forms. They are freed from the darkness of dense doubts and destructive ambiguities and enter security. Those who are punished are those who remain circling in doubts and ambiguities, bewildered in them and in imagined bodily representations, having departed from the Imams of guidance and inclined away from the middle proof. They torment and injure their own souls through the association and error that arise within them.

The angels are the awliyāʾ of God whom God has placed in charge of the affairs of His religion and has made, together with their hudud, His messengers to His creation and those who stand for the guidance of those who respond to them, giving them drink from the sweet spring of His knowledge. The Iblises and devils are the human beings who oppose and separate themselves from them, transgress against them, deny them, and conceal their station from the outward people, and also those who claim the realities of philosophy while rejecting the revealed laws, abandoning religious outward practice, persisting in hypocrisy, and wandering through the horizons with philosophical sciences detached from divine guidance. Among them are the devils who are cut off and despairing of the mercy of God Most High.

The praiseworthy among those occupied with such sciences are those who confess the revealed laws of religion, know their hidden interpretive secret, affirm the true realities, and recognize the concealed spiritual symbols and subtleties.

Our master al-Sijistani - may God sanctify his spirit - said concerning the just ones among the jinn that they are those occupied with the sciences of philosophy, mathematics, and natural science in a way that remains ordered under divine truth. Another kind is called the unjust jinn. Their rebellious ones are called ghouls. He said that these are like those who stand with demonstrations and intellectual powers yet use them to mislead the servants of God, calling them away from the divine sciences and sacred wisdoms toward sophistical fantasies and corrupted premises.

This is a clear explanation for one who reflects and moves from the unknown to the known. Among human beings there may be one who is like this: he possesses intellectual claims, yet neglects the works of the sharīʿa and trains his soul to conceive bodily things as though they were the only realities, turning away from true meanings. Such a person resembles, in the reality of his inner form, animals such as apes, swine, and other creatures, though outwardly he possesses the human thousandfold form.

Our master al-Muʾayyad - may God exalt his sanctity - made this clear in one of his sessions. Speaking for the benefit of one whose intention is sound and who seeks the path of knowledge, he commented upon God's saying: "Is one who walks fallen upon his face better guided, or one who walks upright upon a straight path?" He said that the one fallen upon his face is like the beast bent toward the earth, knowing nothing except its fodder, food, and drink. The very shape of its bending down signifies that it looks toward the center from which it arose, from whose vegetation it ate, and to which it returns when its bodily composition dissolves.

There are people in human forms who resemble such beasts. Though they possess the thousandfold human stature, they are ignorant in the manner of beasts because of their greed for food, drink, and natural conditions, and because of their ignorance of spiritual and angelic measures.

He said in another session - may God exalt his sanctity - that transformation occurs in them through their false souls and corrupt beliefs, while their bodily forms and created shapes remain as they were, neither altered nor exchanged. Likewise the outward words of the Qurʾān remain preserved as they were; distortion enters them through the meanings imposed upon them. Thus he made clear that the transformation affecting them is an inward transformation of the soul, while their bodily forms remain preserved because they preserve the outward words of the Qurʾān but divert their meanings from their true places by taking religion from other than the awliyāʾ of God and from sources other than its springs.

Whoever gains access to something of the meanings and then treats the outward form with contempt, making lawful what God has forbidden, committing obscenities and displaying reprehensible acts, resembles apes, swine, and other blameworthy animals. Indeed he is worse and more remote than they and more swiftly descending than ascending. Such a person is truly metamorphosed in his essence because he has abandoned the commands of the sharīʿa.

Another person is metamorphosed in meaning while keeping the outward form, because he turns intellectual matters back into sensory matters. His wording may remain straight while in meaning he has been returned to the lowest of

the low after having been in the best of forms. Some become comparable to stones because of their remoteness from the Speaker, their denial that a share of the spirit of exposition and realities can flow in them, and their refusal to take a saving path through the angelic worlds. They do not respond to God and His Messenger when He calls them to what gives them life, but incline instead toward the lowing of the calf and the temptation of the Samaritan.

Our master al-Muʾayyad fi al-Din - may God exalt his sanctity - said concerning those who neglected their proper side, inclined toward Satan and his party, and were thereby transformed away from the perfection of the human form endowed with rational virtue into an angelic-spiritual form: their "metamorphosis" is with respect to the soul, not a bodily metamorphosis such as people of deficient intellect and small understanding imagine when they claim that peoples were physically changed into dogs, apes, and swine. They tell tales such as a man seeing in a dream a camel turning a mill and saying, "I am your father, and by turning this mill I am afflicted with labor and exhaustion." Such tales pass only among those of feeble intellect and weak opinion.

He continued - may God exalt his sanctity - that if hearts can be called "stones" in revelation, then those described as stones here too must be people denoted by that figure, because they are at the utmost degree of refusing the fear and watchfulness of God. In the rank of interpretation they are people who have not connected themselves with the hudud of the daʿwa and in whom wisdom has not taken effect. With respect to humanity they are like inanimate matter, even though their bodily forms and shapes are human.

Among those sharing the Fire with them is another group: the people of exaggeration, who separated from the people of deficiency but then themselves exceeded the limit. They declared walāya for the legatee and the Imams and disavowed those who transgressed against them, yet then exaggerated concerning the awliyāʾ of God. The Messenger of God - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - said concerning such people: "They pass out of religion as an arrow passes through the prey." These two groups were indicated by the Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - when he said concerning ʿAli: "Two groups perish concerning you: an exaggerator and a deficient one."

God Most High says: "Its fuel is people and stones." The exaggerators are the people, even though they differ from the deficient in acknowledging the walāya of the legatee and the Imams and disavowing those who transgressed against them. They nevertheless returned to beliefs resembling those of the corporealists represented by stones concerning God, the Hereafter, reward, and punishment. They agreed with them in much of their confused speech and then added their own error and unbelief by saying concerning the legatee or other Imams - peace be upon them - that he is the ultimate goal and the object of worship, and that the abode of punishment is only this world.

The subtle spiritual form, however, cannot be perfected except through corresponding sciences and works. God says: "Its fuel is people and stones, prepared for the unbelievers," those who turn away from truth and break from the path of sincerity. Our master al-Muʾayyad never ceased in his sessions to disclose these realities without concealment, proclaiming them from the pulpits.

Know, my brother, that those who disobey the guides of their right direction and deny the one whom God made the path toward the abode of His reward are shackled in fetters and punished with what they loved. Their chains bind them from moving in the horizons of the soul, and there is neither release nor liberation for them there.

Our master al-Muʾayyad fi al-Din - may God exalt his sanctity - explained this when he said: The Knower said that they brought this upon themselves throughout the duration of the life of this world by disobeying their Lord and wandering in the valley of their association. They were already bound together in fetters from behind the veil, though they did not understand. Their souls did to themselves what the silkworm does when it spins its thread around itself. When the veil is lifted they see that the fetters have taken hold of them and prevented them from movement toward the goals of their pleasures.

He commented upon the verse: "Their garments are of pitch." Pitch draws fire because of the correspondence between it and fire. He said: they wore such garments because the filth of disobedience and association is a magnet for fire, just as pitch is a magnet for it. "And the Fire covers their faces." The human being is known by his face; had they acted for the Face of God, the faces would have recognized one another and been mutually familiar. They would have been protected from the covering of Fire through resemblance to the Face of God, whereas everything perishes except His Face.

He said concerning the verse, "So that God may recompense every soul for what it has earned; surely God is swift in reckoning": Your bodily form was entrusted to others while you were in the darknesses of the womb, but the formation of your soul for the other abode is in your own hand. God does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. For it is what it has earned, and against it is what it has acquired. This is a proclamation for humankind, that they may be warned by it and attain intimacy through knowledge of their Lord and the guidance of His religion, leaving the abode of estrangement for the abode of intimacy, the place of alienation for the place of nearness. There is no god but He.

This is his statement - may God exalt his sanctity. Reflect, my brother, upon the words of the people of guidance. Turn toward them with the turning of one who believes and is guided, and perform for your soul that which will save it and raise it in the ranks of the worlds.

There is no eternal abiding with the people of reward in the lofty stations except by preserving the works of the sharīʿa together with true knowledge received by obedient souls, drawn from the World of Holiness and support, through which the soul attains an abiding that does not perish, neighboring in the World of Holiness the righteous angels and triumphant in the noble abode. It is thereby made safe from being returned to the inverted paths into which the people of Fire are cast and from return into the inverted world through the descending, restricted stations.

Those souls returned downward because they denied the people of truth, turned away from them, and followed their corrupt appetites, desires, and purposes, becoming remote from the subtlety through which souls ascend and returning to the density drawn from the sensory world. Just as righteous souls ascend through the sciences and works that raise them, so these souls descend and fall in realization with their forms; punishment is renewed upon them and they are overturned into the Abyss until they reach the lowest depth. They enter with those who depart from shade into scorching heat and arrive at the Abyss symbolized by the Rock, together with satanized souls that persist in arrogance and opposition, regretting what they sent ahead.

But what benefit is regret after they have abandoned repentance and been returned to the furthest degree of descent and humiliation? There they remain punished for ever and ever, curses following one another upon them from the angels, the hudud, and those supported by divine aid. They are in a punishment such that they would wish they had been mere dust. They have been made remote from mercy and driven away, and their regret over what they sent ahead and left behind is prolonged.

So beware, brothers - may God guide us and you to knowledge of the realities and make us among those whose souls He fashioned through the commands of the sharīʿa and who know the meanings toward which those commands point. Do not take the path of those who once walked the straight path but slipped and returned after certainty, then went astray and led others astray, turning back upon their heels and cutting themselves off from the awliyāʾ of God and their causes. They returned backward after advancing, apostatized after the loftiness of their station, and after having been in the best of forms were returned to the lowest of the low.

They turned away from the path of the knowers toward the doubts of the ignorant by disputing with the people of merit concerning their stations, overstepping arrogantly toward degrees they did not deserve, and thereby becoming remote from them. Their secret intention became corrupted and their covenants were undone. They returned after the uprightness of their souls and after receiving the materials of Intellect to crooked doubts arising from opinion and analogy, from which they gain only ignorance.

Our master al-Muʾayyad fi al-Din - may God exalt his sanctity - said: "As for those who are wretched, they are in the Fire; for them therein is sighing and groaning." They had been created in the best of forms, transferred from the power of an inverted world to sound, upright intellect. Then they disputed with the intellects whom God Most High established as standards for the world of resurrection - the prophets, legatees, and Imams, peace be upon them. They cut themselves off from guidance by the upright world that had been the cause for the arising of the inverted world, in order that they might return as God began them. Instead, they relied upon their own power and strength in seeking their goals. Finding no model to follow other than the inverted world and the crooked outward interpretation that follows opinion and analogy, they followed that path and became as God Most High says: "We created the human being in the best of forms, then We returned him to the lowest of the low."

Because he turned upon his heels and returned to conceiving inverted sensible things instead of upright intelligibles, the form of his composition became the form of devils dwelling eternally in humiliating punishment. We seek refuge in God from it. O God, I ask You for pardon, forgiveness, righteousness, and beneficence, by Muhammad and his pure family.

This is his statement - may God exalt his sanctity - describing one who had advanced toward conceiving meanings and knowing the exposition and interpretation of the Qurʾān and the second existence, but then returned to conceiving sensible things and, after his jewel had become luminous, went back to stumbling in darkness. He neither descended properly to the lowest center nor became capable of maintaining the outward Book that was revealed. He became bewildered between the two and returned a loser with respect to profit in the abode of the Hereafter.

Our master al-Muʾayyad fi al-Din - may God exalt his sanctity, the pillar of religion - also said that some of the truthful ones - God's blessings be upon them all - said: There are two centers: the center of the angels above expression, which is the transparent luminous point, and the center of those possessing bodies, which is the point of darkness. Whoever is severed from the earthy center by natural death while felicitous through completing the form of his soul and becoming substantiated by the substance of the angels, whose kind he shares and who share his kind, moves from the center of darkness to the center of light and exchanges shade for scorching brightness.

Whoever passes away without this disposition has his foot slip toward the dark center and does not connect with the protection of the luminous angelic center. He therefore remains inverted, at one time through scorching heat and at another through confusion in cold, like those to whom it is said: "Depart to a shadow of three branches, neither shading nor protecting from the flame."

This is his statement - may God exalt his sanctity - verifying the condition into which the people of punishment proceed when they leave the equilibrium and reach the mirage. Excessive heat seizes them, symbolized by blazing fire; excessive cold seizes them, symbolized by freezing bitter cold. After that they become minerals as a completion of realization. Their departure from equilibrium is a recompense for their having departed from equilibrium in the daʿwa: they came from deficiency and excess rather than balancing revelation and interpretation and matching the sensible to the intelligible.

Some exceeded the limit in exaggeration and increased in arrogance, imagining that once they possessed knowledge they had no need of action. This is like excessive heat upon them, in which they have sighing and groaning. Excessive cold corresponds to their deficiency concerning the Imams - peace be upon them - and the hudud, and their persistence in denying their noble and lofty stations, stopping at action without knowledge and departing from the state of people of discernment and understanding.

Others, through their arrogance and denial of the stations of the awliyāʾ of God, fell into the bottoms of the seas by holding to outward forms that are like brackish water. After entering, there is for them neither going forth nor release. Waves toss them through the knowledge of the master of the sharīʿa while they have abandoned the ship whose gate is the Gate of the City. They are barred from entering it as though by a locked door. It is as though they had never heard the saying of the Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family: "The people of my House are like the Ark," nor understood that ʿAli is the Gate and he is the City.

That leads them to Sijjīn, symbolized by the Rock, after they are made to repeat the abiding punishment time after time. "No indeed! The record of the wicked is surely in Sijjīn."

The eminent dāʿī Hamid al-Din - may God exalt his sanctity - said: The word "No indeed" confirms what follows it. "The record of the wicked" means that the souls of the wicked who oppose God's command concerning His command, deny it, abandon the two forms of worship, or neglect both or one of them, are in Sijjīn - that is, in the furthest remoteness from the First End, which is ʿIlliyyun as previously mentioned. This is wretchedness expressed as Sijjīn, through which they are punished.

It has been said in interpretation that Sijjīn is a rock in the lowest of the low. "And what will make you know what Sijjīn is? A written record." He said: the soul itself is a record, inscribed and formed according to what it acquired of works and cognitions outside God's good pleasure, obedience to Him, and obedience to His awliyāʾ. It gathers its corresponding forms, just as the earth is inscribed through gathering all the forms that fall under sensation. The punishment reaches it through what its states contain of varieties of pain, just as transformations occur among the beings of the earth, which have been made an analogy for punishment.

This is an allusion to those sensory souls that have separated and to those resembling them who deserve the companions of the blazing fire and follow them. It concerns what befalls them before the transition, in the time of the master of the seventh cycle, of griefs through exposure to every affliction because of what they chose for themselves by acting contrary to what God Most High and His Messenger commanded.

This is his statement - may God exalt his sanctity. Therefore exercise the utmost caution against deficiency in action and against following the blameworthy path of believing that knowledge saves without action. Many of those who claimed inner knowledge were destroyed by treating the works of the sharīʿa lightly. They falsely imagined and held the unsound opinion that knowledge would benefit them without action. Their striving was lost, their hope failed, and their portion became small. Their likeness is that of one who tears away his covering and exposes his nakedness.

Their forms become subtle like forms of jinn and devils, but action has not made them secure. Scrupulous piety has not clothed them, the trust has not refined them, good character has not purified them, repentance has not cleansed them, testing has not made them sincere, and devotion has not washed them. They remain polluted by the impurities of disobedience, arrogance, envy, deceit, domination, hatred, and tale-bearing, while in their approach to eating and drinking they are like beasts. They do not cease from burdens, do not wear the garment of the righteous, and do not fear pride and arrogance.

The sciences they received while remaining in that condition become for them calamity, punishment, and chastisement. After separation from the bodily mold, those sciences bind them to humiliating punishment and fasten them until they arrive at Sijjīn. The soul desires ascent because of the subtle knowledge it possesses, yet its corrupt works are not suitable for it. The impurities of disobedience and ugly actions pull it toward what corresponds to the abode of sensory life. Whenever it seeks ascent toward the World of Intellect and Soul it is cast down, and whenever it seeks reward it falls into painful punishment according to what it chose. Thus they are made remote from mercy and circulate within punishment. God Most High says: "Neither dying therein nor living." Such a person has lost both the Hereafter and this world.

Our master Hamid al-Din described in Rāhat al-ʿAql the state of one who attaches himself to knowledge while neglecting action and the chastisement and calamity that follow. He said - may God sanctify his spirit - that just as everything has a path, so the path to Paradise and deliverance into bliss and joy is worship. Worship is of two kinds: worship through action and worship through knowledge.

Worship through action is what is required for traveling the road to Paradise through rectifying the soul and disciplining it so that it acquires moral virtues, which are like the matter for the formal virtues acquired through the other worship - worship through knowledge. Since what we have set forth in this book concerns worship through knowledge, we say that whoever rushes into intellectual worship without first rectifying the soul through discipline, without establishing it through constant devotion in worship, without removing from it the filth of nature, without adorning it through the command of his religion and the worship of his Lord brought by the Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - and without making continual preservation of obligatory acts, sunnas, and religious duties his habit, has not prepared himself properly.

If his character has not become beautiful through scrupulousness and religion, if he has not accustomed himself to truthfulness and rendering trusts, and if after falling short he does not repair his matter through repentance to God, turning back, and reviving the rites of worship, but remains in deficiency toward the worship of his Lord according to the upright milla while believing he can be saved by his knowledge without his works, persisting in committing disobedience and major sins, then let him receive the "good tidings" of the long dread, regret, and wailing that follow his corrupt belief and action, for ever and ever.

Let him know that his soul, because of what it encompasses of these divinely constructed sciences, acquires a form resembling the lofty stars and hidden intellects, and thereby remains enduring. But because it has abandoned the rule of worship and the rectification of character through the rulings of the sharīʿa, believed it permissible to leave all or part of them, and failed to fulfill them, it also possesses a form contrary to that acquired through encompassing the divine cognitions.

It therefore comes to possess two opposing forms: one, because it conceived the obligation of knowledge and imagined sufficiency in what it knew, resembles the forms of the holy angels through its knowledge; the other, because it conceived the permissibility of abandoning action and considered itself independent of it, resembles the forms of beasts and wild animals that do not worship their Lord. The first form corresponds to the angelic knowledge it encompassed; the second is the form through which it is prepared for descent. We seek refuge in God from that.

He then said that the form acquired through knowledge of the hudud preserves the soul from annihilation, while the other form it acquired remains in it as long as it remains. From the coexistence of the two forms arise pains. How severe are the pains! The possessor would ransom himself from them if he could, but how can he do so after he has

entered the domain of enduring existence, the judgment of persistence and continuance having been made upon him? His substance becomes dark with darkness and gloom, each of the two forms causing pain to the other.

It is like two men joined together: one is a learned, virtuous man whose sole desire is knowledge and whose only occupation is worship; the other is an ignorant, foolish, coarse man whose only concern is play, amusement, appetite, and sensual pleasure. If they were forced to remain inseparably joined, each would be tormented by the other's condition. So too is the soul in which an angelic form of knowledge is joined to a bestial form of action.

Neither does it die so as to find rest, nor does it live a life that raises it to the spacious station. It remains punished for ever and ever as a recompense corresponding to the form it has acquired. It cannot pass beyond its center for the duration of the age because of its attachment to the impurities of this world, its inclination toward its appetites, and its obedience to the sensory soul. It enters the region of density and sensation and cannot reach its intended goal. It therefore remains in severe punishment.

We seek refuge in God from wretchedness after blessing, and we ask Him to make us among those who preserve His hudud, through whom there is salvation for the noble soul. Whoever transgresses them has wronged himself.

This is the statement of al-Muʾayyad fi al-Din - may God exalt his sanctity. Hamid al-Din then continued the same meaning in commenting upon the words "neither dying therein nor living." He said: It suffers painful punishment in its essence from the Sun of the Wilderness in the Royal City built by the holy lights on a day whose measure is fifty thousand years, a city gathering within it wine, milk, honey, and water. It endures severe punishment; boiling water is poured over its head and its food is only ghislin. It cries for aid but is not aided except in the manner appropriate to it. Pain from denial reaches it, as does the rebuke of those who preceded it in arriving at the Pond of Kawthar. Their facing it and saying to it, "No welcome for you," makes it wish its mother had never borne it.

This occurs because they are harmed by its arriving among them in the form in which vices had spread through it because it abandoned God's rulings and command. Its presence increases their disgust, just as fire increases when fuel is added. Thus there is joy for the one who reads this book along the path of religion and sorrow for the one who reads it not along the path of religion. Every good has a corresponding evil. We seek refuge in God from it.

So let the reader of this book who is among the seekers of this world beware of making it a means toward worldly desire, or of turning away from the walāya of the pure Imams and their paths in worship of God, Lord of the worlds. Such a person only preserves himself for punishment throughout the ages. Let him repair his condition before the possibility of repair disappears, in order to escape the abysses of destruction, and let him understand that what we have warned of concerning the opponents will truly occur when the earth is shaken with its shaking and the mountains are crushed to dust. Let him accept that I am among those who offer sincere counsel. Only the one who is truly our brother will accept it.

May God make us and the community of believers among those who avoid disobedience to Him, and may He assist us toward what He desires in our religion. I seek forgiveness from God the Magnificent, seek His assistance, and say: There is no power and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Mighty, the Wise.

This is his statement - may God exalt his sanctity. It makes clear that one must possess noble character, avoid vices, acquire virtues, and never imagine that knowledge alone will suffice while one's striving in knowledge is praised but one fails to perform the commands of the sharīʿa, preserve them, uphold their obligations, and rely upon them. The soul of such a person proceeds to the long punishment and grievous woe we have described. It neither dies and finds rest nor lives a life by which it ascends to the spacious station, but remains punished for ever and ever as recompense for what it acquired.

His statement concerning the "Sun of the Wilderness" in the Royal City built by the holy lights means the Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - who instituted and described the sharīʿa and made its path clear to those who travel it. He is the one through whom the soul recognizes what it neglected from the commands of the sharīʿa in its past age. It regrets what it abandoned of its commands and what it committed of its prohibitions and restraints.

The "Royal City" indicates the noble, subtle form gathered in the assembly of the Qāʾim of the Resurrection, the first of thought and the last of action, who gathers those who preceded him among the prophets, legatees, Imams, and their followers. Their forms are established in him, former and latter together. He likens it to a city that gathers goods. That noble daʿwa and subtle company gathered the assemblies of merit and blessings. They became subtle,

angelic, eternal, noble, spiritual forms that had ascended from the world of actions to the world of words. They came to dwell in the neighborhood of the Great, the Exalted, safe from transformation and decay, continuously supplied by the holy materials whose merit and nobility are neither limited nor bounded, built by the holy lights - that is, the noble, subtle intellectual materials that neither change nor cease from them.

His statement concerning "a day whose measure is fifty thousand years" is an indication of the cycle of unveiling, in which punishment is renewed for the people of the Rock and regret and sorrow continually seize them.

His description of the Royal City as containing wine, milk, honey, and water also bears an inward meaning. Wine is the noble intellectual material connected with those exalted and luminous stations. It is forbidden in this world - that is, that noble subtle knowledge is forbidden to lower religious ranks because it would intoxicate them, their intellects could not receive it, and their understandings could not bear it. As some of the truthful Imams - peace be upon them - said: "Our knowledge is difficult and difficult to bear; none bears it except a sent prophet, a near angel, or a believer whose heart God has tested for faith."

When that noble, subtle hadd reaches them, they become capable of receiving it in the noble form, and the subtle exalted souls and intellects accept it according to what they can bear.

Milk is what is extracted from the sciences of the Speakers, legatees, and Imams. God says concerning cattle: "From between waste and blood, pure milk, pleasant to the drinkers." That is, from among ambiguous analogies and differing symbols the legatees, Imams, and their followers extract noble meanings, making them pleasant to drink, permitted to seekers, accessible to those who desire them, between what the exaggerators and the deficient falsely believe.

Honey is the knowledge of the legatee - peace be upon him - who is the Commander of the Bees. The bees are the believers, and this is their knowledge and their drink, in which there is healing for people and removal of doubts and whisperings that arise.

Water is that by which spirits live. It is the analogy of the flowing material connected to the Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - from the angels, and from him to the legatee, the Imams, and their followers.

Thus that noble, exalted daʿwa, the virtuous Royal City, and the lofty, luminous assemblies gather all these sciences. What had been unknown within them becomes known. All who transfer into it from the stations of the prophets, legatees, Imams, and those who follow them in goodness are the governors of the world in the assembly of the Qāʾim after ascent from this abode into the abode of permanence. They are the ones who administer the punishment of the people of the Fire.

May God protect us from abandoning obedience to those who command by His command. May He make us among those who hold fast to the two forms of worship so that we escape being among the losers. Reward and punishment, recompense and reckoning, are inevitable, contrary to a people whose ignorance blinded them to their right direction and who denied reward and punishment, becoming through ignorance exceedingly remote from reward.

It is related that al-Sadiq - peace be upon him - said to one who disputed and denied this, persisting only in obstinate opposition: "If the matter is as we say - and it is as we say - then we are saved and you are destroyed. If it were as you say, though it is not as you say, then we and you would all be saved." How could God Most High make the righteous and the wicked equal, or make the immoral and the chosen good equal? Woe to one who believes this; his is the evil end of the abode.

Jaʿfar b. Muhammad al-Sadiq said: "God does not gather in one abode the one who gives us walāya and the one who shows us hostility."

The Prophet - may God's blessings be upon him and his family - established in his revealed law what makes this distinction clear. He barred the polytheists and the people of ritual impurities from entering the mosques, which are houses of purification and places of worship. He said: "Keep your Jews and Christians away from your mosques," and warned against being transformed in the religious sense into apes and swine.

God Most High says: "Indeed, it is a noble Qurʾān, in a hidden Book; none touches it except the purified." The Sunna likewise establishes that an offering is not brought except when sound and whole, without defect. In the unique daʿwa and in the rule that governs it, knowledge is not given except to one worthy of it, or to one who is being led toward worthiness by a clear indication and manifest path to the Abode of Return.

The righteous are in the abode of bliss and eternal, primordial good; the wicked are in painful punishment and abiding, lasting evil. May God make us among those who hold fast to His covenants, hope in His promise, and fear His threat.

I have set forth in this book what I promised to set forth of the hidden knowledge and treasured secret, from what I received from the followers of the pure awliyāʾ of God and gathered from their sayings accompanied by proofs. It is my doctrine and the form concealed within my soul, presented in hope of the Face of God Most High and seeking His pardon and forgiveness and the journey to the abode of His security and safety. I desire neither reward nor thanks from people.

I seek refuge in God and in that by which His pure awliyāʾ sought refuge from error and slipping, and I ask Him for success in righteous speech and action. Through Him I seek assistance, upon Him I rely, from Him I ask, and toward Him I seek approach. I ask Him to make me firm upon the walāya and obedience of His awliyāʾ, not to make me among those cut off from connection with them, to cause me to die upon their walāya just as He gave me life upon it, and to join me to those connected with them in the luminous world, by the truth of the radiant primordial Light, the cream of the cream and the meaning of meanings.

Praise belongs to God who originated the First One, the unique single one, and to Him belongs its return and destination; the Creator of people for the Day of Reckoning, who rewards and punishes them according to action and acquisition; who raises His awliyāʾ to the highest ʿIlliyyin and causes them to abide in the neighborhood of His exalted angels, and who returns their adversaries to the lowest of the low and punishes them in their destination according to what they did.

May God bless the one through whom He sealed the messages and made clear the proofs and indications: Muhammad, His Messenger, whom He took by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque and brought near until he was at the distance of two bow-lengths or nearer, raising him above all His messengers and selecting him. And may He bless his legatee, the Gate of the City and the meaning of the cloud and the Ark, ʿAli b. Abi Talib, his legatee and successor, who succeeded him in clarifying what was difficult in his law.

May He bless his pure, purified progeny, the chosen among them, the elect whom God chose and the best family and progeny; and their remaining successor, heir to their lights and pure descendant of their line, the elect of God and inheritor of their secrets, the Imam from the progeny of the Imam al-Tayyib Abu al-Qasim, Commander of the Believers, through whom his awliyāʾ hope for forgiveness of their sins and lightening of their burdens. May peace be upon them all, a peace that remains for ever and ever.

God is sufficient for us and the best Trustee, the best Master and the best Helper. There is no power and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Magnificent.

The composition of this blessed book was completed on the morning of Thursday, the seventh of Shawwal, in the year eight hundred and thirty-two [AH]. Its author asks the One who originated the One eternally, made him a master, chose Muhammad and ʿAli from His creation, and raised His prophets and legatees to a lofty station, to overlook his errors and slips, make him firm in speech and action, make him among those who triumph through His Paradise, and resurrect him in the company of Muhammad His Prophet, ʿAli his legatee, and the pure Imams from his progeny. He asks Him not to deprive him of continuing connection through His bounty and mercy. He is the Hearer of supplication, the Doer of whatever He wills. There is no power and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Magnificent.

The copying of this blessed book was completed on the seventeenth day of Shaʿban in the year 1288 from the Hijra of the Chosen Prophet - may God bless him and his pure family - for as long as night grows dark and day gives light.