

Epistle on the Doctrine of the Unitarians (al-Muwahhidīn)

by the exalted Dā'ir, our master Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd (may God be pleased with him)

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Compassionate.
Praise be to God, and peace be upon His chosen servants.

Praise be to God, who made devotion to the Family of Muḥammad a path leading to His Paradise, who joined obedience to them with obedience to His Messenger and obedience to Himself, and who established them as standards of His obedience and gateways for the outpouring of His bounty and mercy. He elevated the ranks of their followers through the true forms of knowledge that He bestowed upon them by means of these chosen ones, and exalted their stations through the honor of receiving, from their direction, the subtle and hidden mysteries. He granted preference to some over others according to their deeds, and made it incumbent upon every subordinate among them to obey the one above him, making such obedience a guarantee of salvation.

I bear witness that there is no god but He who brought things forth from nonexistence and encompassed them with His abundant grace and overflowing blessings. Exalted is He, a God too holy to be described by either origination or eternity, and too sublime for any footstep to find a place upon the surfaces of His majesty, let alone for tongues to express Him by words composed of the letters of the alphabet.

And I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger, the best of the children of Adam, chosen for the mission to the noblest of nations. May God's blessings be upon him, and upon his legatee, who resolved through its esoteric interpretation the knots of the difficult passages of revelation, and who clarified for his devotees the reality of Divine Unity, rescuing them from falling into the abysses of anthropomorphism and negation. And upon his wife, Fāṭimah al-Zahrā', the mistress of the women of mankind, the blessed tree whose fruits are pure and flourishing. And upon her two sons, inheritors of the nobility of their grandfather and father, who guided the people devoted to their authority along the finest path and doctrine leading to success: al-Ḥasan, who preceded to the Imamate and upheld its secret in the position of one entrusted with it; and al-Ḥusayn, who received that trust and became established in its lofty and exalted excellence. And upon the Imams from the progeny of al-Ḥusayn, who brought their followers forth into the light of truth from the darkness of falsehood, inclining them away from the poisonous winds of doubt and bewilderment toward the refreshing shade of knowledge.

And upon the sun of God's religion, concealed from sight and vision by the dictates of wisdom, yet illuminating rational souls and inner perceptions with its sacred rays: our master and lord, the Imam al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Qāsim, Commander of the Faithful, God's proof over every dweller and traveler. He guarantees salvation for his followers from the terrors of the Day when secrets shall be laid bare, and through the intermediary of the stars of religion conveys his merciful graces to all those among the people of his da'wah who inhabit lands and islands, lest the human creation, brought into being through the movements of the celestial spheres and cycles, come to naught. May God grant peace to them and to him all together, an unceasing peace until the Day of Religion.

Now then:

A question had previously been posed by one of the brethren—may God increase their number and cause them to flourish—concerning the ḥudūd (hierarchs) of the Jazīrah who had been appointed throughout its regions and established for guidance and instruction in its various districts and territories. He requested from me an explanation of their ranks and a specification of them, together with the designation of their names according to their respective conditions in religion.

I replied to him that I had not personally examined the circumstances of many of them, owing to their remoteness and the inability of the times to facilitate meeting with them. I also stated that knowledge of the ranks themselves is sufficient even if the individuals occupying them are not known, and that holding a person of a given rank to his proper station, without elevating or lowering him, constitutes the true doctrine of Divine Unity (tawḥīd), through which salvation and deliverance are attained.

He remained silent for a time, but later renewed his inquiry and repeated his request, being unsatisfied with the answer I had first given. After seeking God's guidance, I considered it proper to fulfill his request. Thus I arranged the names of the ḥudūd of the Jazīrah according to the measure of knowledge possessed by each of them, this being determinative of the elevation of ranks.

Yet I do not know thereafter who among them, by virtue of righteous deeds and excellence in investigating the true sciences, may rise to a station higher than his present rank, and who, through negligence and indolence, may be held back and remain behind others on account of his sloth and heedlessness.

I have also included in this composition certain true sciences, so that whoever studies it may gain increased insight and a clearer understanding of his religious form.

By God and through His Walī I seek assistance in attaining the purpose of what I have set forth. I have cast this into the form of an epistle and entitled it “The Doctrine of the Unitarians” (‘Aqīdat al-Muwahhīdīn), clarifying the ranks of the virtuous among the people of religion.

Whatever it contains of sound meaning and correctness proceeds from the blessings of the one entrusted with supplying and guiding me; and whatever it contains of error—and I seek refuge in God from that—is from myself and is attributable to the deficiency of my own knowledge.

Chapter

God, Most High, has said:

“O you who believe! Fear God, seek the means of approach to Him, and strive in His path, that you may prosper.”

Thus the Exalted One has made prosperity dependent upon that which this verse combines.

I say that this verse encompasses all acts of obedience and contains the entirety of worship.

For the taqwā which God Most High has commanded and encouraged His servants to acquire consists in performing the prescribed religious actions and obligatory duties established by divine ordinance, together with understanding their meanings and attaining knowledge of the realities concealed within them.

This is the true nature of taqwā, the most excellent path and the middle way.

Whoever does not combine deeds and knowledge is wretched, deprived of his portion of eternal reward.

For one who worships God through outward acts alone, without knowledge of their inner meanings, resembles one who believes that the human being is nothing more than the visible body, apart from the spirit which animates and moves its limbs.

Likewise, one who abandons outward acts and contents himself with intellectual worship alone resembles one who believes that the human being consists only of the spirit, apart from the outward form manifest in the upright human figure.

Both ways are deviation, and whoever adheres to either of them is one who “worships God upon the edge,” for he is either deficient or excessive.

God, Most High, has said:

“And of everything We created pairs, that perhaps you may remember.”

Accordingly, all that God has created bears the mark of duality and possesses the principle of twoness inseparably attached to it, so that true unity (waḥdāniyyah) may belong to the One who brought things into being and originated them, and absolute singularity (fardāniyyah) may be reserved for Him who fashioned and invented the worlds.

The Prophet—peace and blessings be upon him and his family—said:

“God established His religion according to the pattern of His creation, so that through His creation one may infer His religion, and through His religion His unity.”

Since man is created from two components and divided into two parts—one being the body and the other the spirit, and only by the combination of both is he truly a human being—so too the religion by which mankind worships God is dual in nature, consisting of outward action and inward knowledge.

The outward action corresponds to the body: it is the body's share of worship and its obligation, and it can only be performed by means of its limbs and organs.

Inward knowledge corresponds to the soul: it is the soul's share of worship and its obligation, and it is the form impressed and engraved upon it.

As long as the human soul remains joined to the body and the two are not separated, man is obliged to adhere to both knowledge and action together.

When, however, the rational soul departs from its body, the outward acts which are performed by means of the body fall away, while the inward forms of knowledge, impressed upon the soul, remain by virtue of the persistence of its subtle substance in the Abode of Return (Dār al-Ma‘ād).

Chapter

If someone were to ask:

If the prescribed religious acts and obligations were instituted for the sake of the body, and if they are suspended at death—which is the separation of the soul from the body—then why is

it that they are also suspended in the Cycles of Manifestation (*adwār al-kashf*) and lifted from their people, even though they still possess bodies of flesh and blood and have not become detached from material substance? What is the meaning of this, and for what reason does it occur?

The answer is as follows.

It has already been stated that God established His religion according to the pattern and likeness of His creation, making it correspond to and mirror it. Since the physical world is divided into two parts—one more noble and subtle, namely the world of the celestial spheres moving above the lower realms, and the other inferior and denser, namely that which lies beneath the sphere of the moon, composed of the elements and foundations—it follows that religion and worship must likewise exist in two forms.

One form is an easy worship consisting solely of knowledge, and this is the worship of the people of the Cycles of Manifestation. The other is a difficult and burdensome worship, consisting of knowledge together with action, and this is the worship of the people of the Cycles of Concealment (*adwār al-satr*).

Just as the celestial world, though subtle, still possesses dimensions because it belongs to the category of bodies—dimensions that are conceived and imagined—so too the worship of the people of Manifestation, although intellectual in nature, nevertheless entails certain necessary ordinances by virtue of their continuing to possess human bodies.

God, Most High, has said:

“We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth.”

Those who are acquainted with the higher realities understand the condition of the Cycles of Manifestation throughout the succession of the ages, and they comprehend the state of the celestial realm and that to which it returns after the completion of the cosmic revolutions.

Thus there is no deliverance from the world of generation and corruption except through the perfection of both forms of worship:

knowledge, whose form is impressed upon the soul; and
action, which is performed by means of the body.

Therefore, no one should imagine or suppose that his knowledge and devotion (wilāyah) are sufficient while he abolishes religious actions, and that by such a course he will be numbered among those who attain salvation in the Hereafter.

Moreover, it is related from Jābir al-Ju‘fī (may God be pleased with him), who said:

Abū Ja‘far said to me:

"Is it enough for one who professes allegiance to the Shi‘ah merely to say, 'I love us, the People of the House'?

By God, our Shi‘ah are only those who fear God and obey Him. They are known only by humility and reverence, by frequent remembrance of God, fasting, prayer, dutifulness to parents, compassion and care for poor neighbors, the needy, debtors, and orphans; by truthfulness in speech, recitation of the Qur'an, and restraining their tongues from speaking about people except in goodness."

Jābir said:

I said, "O son of the Messenger of God, I do not know anyone today possessing these qualities."

He replied:

"O Jābir, do not let differing opinions carry you away. Does a man suppose that it is enough to say, 'I love ‘Alī and acknowledge his authority,' and yet not perform righteous deeds?

If someone were to say, 'I love the Messenger of God'—and then not follow his way—his love for him would not benefit him, even though the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him and his family, is greater than ‘Alī.

Therefore fear God and work for that which is with God, for there is no kinship between God and anyone.

The most beloved servants to God and the most honored before Him are those most God-fearing.

So, O Jābir, act in obedience to God and in whatever draws you nearer to Him. Nothing brings a servant near to God except obedience.

We possess no guarantee of immunity from the Fire, nor does anyone have any argument against God.

Whoever obeys God is our friend, and whoever disobeys Him is our enemy.

By God, our wilāyah is attained only through righteous deeds and piety."

This is the end of his statement.

Chapter

The prophets are the physicians of souls, sent forth for their healing. They are their chosen fathers, charged with their upbringing and care. Accordingly, the religious laws and obligatory acts which they established occupy, with respect to human souls, the same position that medicines and remedies occupy with respect to bodies afflicted by diseases and ailments.

Thus, when souls cause their bodies to rise in order to perform these obligations—which stand in the place of those bitter and unpleasant medicines—their essences return to the purity in which they were first created. Their substances then become capable of being tintured with the elixir of the divine realities, so that, after their separation from the body, they become firmly attached, by the strongest bonds, to infallibility and everlasting existence.

Our master al-Şādiq, peace be upon him, said:

"Lighten your burdens through righteous deeds, and know that no one attains faith except through action, nor does a spiritual form come into being for him except through action.

Whoever abandons action commits forbidden acts, for action restrains him from indecencies. Whoever abandons action has transgressed the bounds set by God and made lawful what is forbidden. Whoever transgresses the bounds of God has wronged himself, and whoever wrongs himself is ruined and becomes among the cattle—rather, even further astray."

Such are his words, peace be upon him, making clear that there is no attainment of faith except through the prescribed religious acts, and that one who abandons action acquires no spiritual form.

Likewise, our master al-Mustanşir bi'llāh, peace be upon him, said in his decree of appointment addressed to our master al-Mu'ayyad (may his station be sanctified):

"Know that the foundation of the religious ordinances rests upon the legal commands and prohibitions, just as the foundation of the psychic faculties rests upon bodily forms.

Therefore, if you perceive in anyone a weakening in regard to the Sacred Law, know that he is a disgrace and a blemish upon the Shi'ah. Erase his name from the register of those who have responded to the call, and cut off every trace and mark of him from the assemblies of the Da'wah."

These are his words, peace be upon him.

Chapter

Our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn (may his station be sanctified) said in the first discourse of the first section of his book *Rāḥat al-ʿAql*:

We say: since the nobility of the soul consists in attaining its second perfection—which is everlasting felicity and the achievement of eternal abiding in the proximity of the Creator—its attainment of this second perfection depends upon two things.

The first is purification from the traces and darkness of nature, such as anger, injustice, greed, lack of compassion, and the other vile qualities naturally attached to it. By becoming free from these base dispositions, the soul comes into conformity with the divine forms impressed upon it through intellection, and, by virtue of its preparedness and harmony with them, these forms become effective within it.

The second is the acquisition of the divine sciences, namely knowledge encompassing the entities that preceded it in existence: the Intellects of Origination and Emanation, and the higher and lower bodies. By means of this knowledge, the soul rises to the degree whereby it becomes, through what it has conceived, an intellect corresponding to the object conceived itself, with no difference between the two from that aspect.

In the beginning of its existence, however, the soul is neither purified nor prepared to receive the divine blessings—that is, the intelligible forms by which it acquires its perfection. It resembles metallic bodies which have not yet reached the perfection of becoming gold, and which are incapable of receiving the tincture that brings them to completion except through two processes.

The first is their purification from impurities and preparation through refining and exposure to fire, so that by melting and dissolution of their parts they become fit to receive the tincture that elevates them to the rank of perfection.

The second is the application of the tincture itself, whereby both their interior and exterior become transformed according to what has been imparted to them.

Therefore, one who seeks the salvation of his soul must first cling to that which purifies and prepares it, and only thereafter proceed to the stage of intellectual apprehension. Thus, after purifying his soul, he becomes most suited to receive what he desires to know and conceive, and that knowledge takes effect within him just as the tincture acts upon molten metal.

Otherwise, his affair will not be completed, just as one who wishes to dye a metal without first melting it in fire will fail. For when a thing is approached by its proper path, it becomes easy; but when sought by other than its proper way, it becomes difficult.

Since this book of ours contains only one of the two elements by which the soul attains perfection and happiness—namely, that which impresses and engraves upon the soul the divine sciences, through which it becomes intellectually aware of itself and, by knowledge of them, ascends to the highest degrees of its stations—it follows that these matters are of no benefit to a soul unless it has first been purified before embarking upon their paths and drinking from their springs.

Nor can it benefit while remaining untrained according to the norms of the Sacred Law and the ordinances of sound discipline, stripped of the garment of worship and lacking the testimony of faith.

Accordingly, whoever reads and studies this book must first have disciplined his soul through that which prepares, purifies, and rectifies it—namely, the acts of worship whose ordinances were brought by Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā, blessings and peace be upon him and his family.

These acts operate in refining, disciplining, and perfecting the soul, and in giving health to its substance, in the same manner that fire acts in refining and melting metallic bodies when they are brought to perfection.

The reader must have enlivened his soul by performing the obligations and traditions and submitted it to the command of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him and his family—who is the leader of the community and guide to the upright direction—and to the command of the Imams who stand in his place. His habitual conduct must have become established upon the requirements of the noble Law, so that he resembles one who has become so accustomed to obedience that he can no longer act according to his own desires, but only according to what has been enjoined upon him: remaining within the bounds of command and prohibition and establishing worship in both of its aspects and both of its dimensions.

Then he may benefit from what he encounters therein.

In that case, when reading our book and grazing in the meadows of our discourse, he will resemble sweet water into which sugar has been cast: its sweetness becomes manifest and its pleasantness increased.

He will not resemble salty water, which spoils the sugar cast into it, so that the salinity destroys both the essence and sweetness of the sugar.

We have said that the acts of the Sacred Law—which constitute worship—occupy, with respect to the soul, the same place that fire occupies with respect to prepared metallic bodies, and that they are what prepare the soul and bestow health upon its substance, because every act of worship confers upon the soul a virtue and removes from it a vice.

These matters we have explained in our book *Tanbīh al-Hādī wa-l-Mustahdī*.

Such acts are the seeds of intellect, through persevering in which souls become actual intellects.

Hence, no one truly deserves to be called rational in the fullest sense except one who has fulfilled their totality and adhered to their ordinances and obligations, such as the Speaking Prophets, the Legatees, the Imams, and their followers.

For every command and every established practice possesses, through its observance, a power within the soul whose effect becomes manifest therein, whereas neglecting it leaves behind a persistent corruption whose evil likewise becomes apparent.

This is because, while dwelling in the world of nature, the soul is more predisposed to the emergence of vices than fire is to ignite naphtha.

Nothing restrains these vices except the Sacred Law and its ordinances.

Whoever adheres to the command and disciplines his soul under the burden of its obligations is truly our brother, and at every station of sincerity he experiences within himself the delight of truth.

But whoever deviates from it—whether by performing some duties and abandoning others, or by neglecting them altogether—harms no one but himself.

God will execute upon him what His judgment requires, and He is swift in reckoning.

Therefore, let the reader of this book reflect concerning himself and accept this counsel, for I am indeed among those who wish him well.

And I ask forgiveness from God, the Merciful, for myself and for the community of believers.

These are his words (may his station be sanctified).

Chapter

Our master al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn (may his station be sanctified) said in the twenty-first majlis of the first hundred of his Majālis:

O company of believers! May God set your deeds aright and bless your state with success in obedience to Him. Hasten to that whereby you may be saved among the company of the saved, and through which you may attain the utmost object of those who hope. Compete in that which removes from you the defilement of Satan, purify your souls with the water of faith, and fortify yourselves against the violence of indecency and wrongdoing with the ample coats of justice and beneficence. Cooperate in righteousness and piety, and do not cooperate in sin and aggression.

Through your following of the Family of Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him and his family, God has made easy for you the paths leading to His pleasure, and through them He has given you refuge in the call to truth, replacing your fear with security. Therefore, clothe yourselves in the garment of piety, adorn yourselves with the hems of wisdom, and beautify yourselves with the beauty of the Sacred Law.

How astonishing indeed are two men who stand before a journey whose deserts they must inevitably traverse and whose plains and rugged passes they must endure with patience.

One of them exerts himself and wearies himself with travel, yet possesses no guide and knows not the direction of the road.

The other knows the road and possesses a guide, yet sits sluggishly and refrains from setting out.

This is the likeness of those among you who are negligent in comparison with your opponents.

The journey is the road of the Hereafter that lies before you.

The man who toils without knowledge of the path and without possessing a guide represents your opponents, who bear the hardships of acts of devotion and the burdens of worship, while all of it is wrapped in the folds of loss and enclosed in the degrees of uselessness. They resemble one striking out upon the earth in error without knowing where he strikes, or one wandering aimlessly in the wilderness without awareness of where he goes. The more weariness he experiences and the farther he advances, the greater his misery and the farther he becomes from his intended destination.

But the man who possesses the guide and knows the road, yet remains motionless, inert, and seated by the wayside without undertaking the journey—these are the negligent among yourselves.

For you possess, from your Imams, lamps and signs. In their sciences are manifest proofs whereby the intelligible bears witness to the sensible and the sensible to the intelligible.

And yet, despite this, your ears are sealed by heedlessness and you are altogether oblivious to yourselves.

Otherwise, where are your acts of worship? Where is your eagerness to gather for your Fridays and your congregations?

Why do you strip yourselves of the garment of piety that rightly belongs to you and leave it to the people of outward claims, excusing yourselves by reason of your own shortcomings?

They preserve the outward ordinances of the Law while you sleep.

They rise to fulfill its obligations and supererogatory acts while you remain seated.

They crowd the mosques, the congregational places, and their courtyards, while from you they are empty and deserted.

They fill their precincts while they remain devoid of you.

They perform the pilgrimage to the Sacred House, to which access is possible only through the sword and wealth of your Imam, and whose rites can be reached from East and West only under his protection and shadow.

Yet its rituals and sacred stations are empty of you, though you are his followers and his chosen supporters.

You have been called to add knowledge to action, so that knowledge may be the spirit and action the body. Through their union you attain the life of reality, and through their harmony you remain upright upon the path.

But those who acted unjustly substituted something other than what had been said to them.

Your Imam is free from anyone who alters and substitutes. He is free from anyone who deliberately abandons one of the pillars of the Sacred Law and nullifies it.

He is free from one who interprets the prayer merely as a symbol of this, and almsgiving merely as a symbol of that, and thereby abolishes action after having affirmed its obligation.

O God, bear witness! O God, bear witness! O God, bear witness!

How strange indeed is the devotion of the immoral and the immorality of the devout!

One possesses food but has no teeth, and another possesses teeth but has no food.

Your master, the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, once struck his chest and said:

"Indeed, here is abundant knowledge, if only I could find those fit to bear it. But I see one who is intelligent but not trustworthy, and another who is trustworthy but not intelligent."

One of the truthful Imams also said:

"Be for us silent callers, by restraining yourselves from the things forbidden by God, avoiding disobedience to Him, and following His good pleasure. For if you are thus, people will hasten toward us.

Know that your Imams make you beloved to God through guidance and admonition, so do not make them hateful to people through ugly deeds and evil traces.

They encompass you with that by which God will save you from the Fire, so do not open for yourselves, through what your hands have earned, a path of disgrace against them.

Therefore pray, give alms, fast, perform the pilgrimage, and hold firmly with both hands to the outward and the inward, before there comes upon you the caller of separation through the souls being stripped of the covering of nature.

Then neither advancement nor delay will avail, and after separation all reckoning becomes impossible.

And it shall be said to you:

'Did We not grant you a life long enough for anyone who would remember to take heed? And the warner came to you.'

The period of respite will have been consumed through procrastination and excuses. The decree will have been fulfilled.

Warn them of the Day of Regret, when the matter shall have been decided while they are in heedlessness."

These are his words, may his station be sanctified.

After citing this passage, the author returns to his own voice and asks:

After all this, O brethren, is it fitting for one who seeks the salvation of his soul to surrender himself to laziness and negligence?

Or is it becoming for him to treat lightly the performance of the obligations of the Sacred Law while simultaneously seeking to understand the noble meanings contained within them?

The implied answer is clear: one must combine both dimensions. The pursuit of the inner meanings (maʿānī) is inseparable from faithful observance of the outward acts (aʿmāl), for knowledge is the spirit and action its body; neither reaches perfection without the other.

Chapter

As for the means (wasīlah) which God commanded men to seek and coupled with the taqwā that He urged them to acquire and store up, it is devotion (wilāyah) to the Imams. Through it the unity of knowledge and action is brought together, and through it the servant who combines knowledge with practice becomes worthy of nearness to the Possessor of Majesty and Glory.

Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī narrated:

ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, said to us:

"Which places are the most excellent?"

I replied, "God and the son of His Messenger know best."

He said:

"The most excellent place is that which lies between the Corner and the Station. If a man were to live for as long as Noah lived among his people, fasting by day and standing in prayer by night in that place, and then meet God without our wilāyah, God would not cause any of that to benefit him."

Such are his words, peace be upon him.

God, Most High, says:

"Indeed, God is with those who are God-fearing and those who are doers of good."

The God-fearing (al-muttaqūn) are those who combine knowledge and action, while the doers of good (al-muḥsinūn) are those who maintain allegiance to the Imams of their age and cling to the bond of their affection. Such is the reality of their beneficence.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him and his family, said:

"Love for 'Alī is a good deed with which no sin causes harm."

And one of the Imams said:

"The good deed is love for us, and the evil deed is hatred for us."

Since God says:

"Indeed, God is with those who are God-fearing and those who are doers of good,"

it follows that He is not "with" those who do not possess these qualities.

Yet He also says:

"There is no private conversation among three but that He is their fourth, nor among five but that He is their sixth, nor fewer than that nor more except that He is with them."

Thus God has affirmed that He encompasses His creation and is present with them all.

The meaning of His being "with those who are God-fearing and those who are doers of good," to the exclusion of others, is that He turns toward the followers of the Waṣī and the Imams devoted to them—those who uphold both forms of worship—with the face of His mercy, continually supplying them through His support and assistance because they obey God's command and His Messenger's command concerning obedience to them and adherence to their party.

By contrast, He turns away, in respect of His mercy, from those who oppose the Imams and reject them.

The Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him and his family, said:

"When the believer perfects his faith, becomes connected to the Imam of his age, and knows God as He ought to be known, God is nearer to him than his saliva is to his tongue."

The Imams are those whose obedience has been joined to obedience to God and His Messenger, whose wilāyah has been made obligatory upon all creatures. They are the gates of mercy and the possessors of goodness and blessing.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him and his family, said:

"I am the City of Knowledge, and 'Alī is its Gate,"

thereby making clear that one who does not approach through his Waṣī will never attain the realities of knowledge nor gain access to hidden mysteries.

God alludes to this when He says:

"Righteousness does not consist in entering houses from their backs, but righteousness belongs to him who fears God. Enter houses through their doors."

Were God merely speaking of physical houses and intending no more than their outward meaning, such speech would be strange indeed. For no rational person leaves the door of his house and climbs over its back imagining such behavior to be righteousness.

Indeed, if someone acted in this manner, silence concerning him on account of his lack of understanding would be more appropriate than addressing him.

Even beasts, though devoid of reason and discernment, when raised in houses and then released, instinctively return to their places through the doors.

How much more, then, should rational beings—who rule over beasts by virtue of the faculty of discrimination entrusted to them—understand this matter!

Therefore, let every possessor of reason and discernment reflect upon the meaning of this address.

For if the verse truly referred merely to physical houses, it would be among the most astonishing of marvels.

Rather, its meaning is the command to obey the Waṣī, through whom obedience to the Prophet—who is the House of Wisdom—is rendered valid, since the Waṣī alone elucidates the subtleties of the Book and the Sacred Law. This can only be accomplished through him or through those Imams who stand in his place.

God also says:

"Enter the gate in prostration and say, 'Ḥiṭṭah.'"

Prostration represents the utmost degree of humility before God.

The Prophet said:

"The nearest a servant comes to God is when he is prostrating."

In the esoteric sense, prostration symbolizes obedience to the Imam, which brings one near to obedience to God.

Thus God commanded them to follow the Waṣī and acknowledge his Imamate.

The phrase "say, 'Ḥiṭṭah'" signifies humility, the laying aside of pride, submission, and self-abasement before him.

The Prophet said:

"Complete humility is fitting only before one's parents or before the just Imam."

The Waṣī is the Gate:

"whose interior contains mercy and whose exterior, on its side, contains punishment."

The meaning of "its interior contains mercy" is that those who enter his da‘wah and bind themselves by his covenant and allegiance receive mercy and are encompassed by blessing through the truths of knowledge that he grants them—truths which dispel doubts and ambiguities and remove blindness and bewilderment from their sight.

The meaning of "its exterior, on its side, contains punishment" is that whoever arrogantly refuses to enter into obedience to him and does not seek refuge in the bond of his wilāyah remains in this world tormented by the fire of doubts and disagreements, and in the next world by the Fire of Hell prepared for those who deny the ranks of the guiding Imams.

Thus wilāyah is the beneficial means (wasīlah), the ladder by which souls ascend to the angelic world and are elevated to the higher realm.

Section on Jihad:

As for jihad in His way, its path is the Imam (peace be upon him). Allah said to His Prophet: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction and argue with them in a way that is best." This means call those obedient to you to obey the guardian, who is the path of Allah, by encouraging them through interpretation (which is wisdom), informing them that the guardian is the owner of that path. They cannot attain it except through his guardianship and obeying him.

"Argue in the best manner" means show them what they gain through his guardianship, which is the best you bring them, with great reward and eternal bliss for sincere adherence. Jihad in His way is to refute the claims of false imams and to disavow them. Jihad occurs through the hand, the tongue, and the heart to the best of one's ability. The heart's jihad never ceases and is the disavowal (bara'a) without which guardianship is invalid.

It is narrated that a man came to Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) and said, "I love you and I love Umar." He replied, "You are one-eyed; either you see or be blind." He meant to purify his guardianship by repudiating his rival's guardianship and disowning him, for one cannot follow the rival and still hold to the guardian's bond.

Allah said: "Whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah..." Faith in Allah is not established except after disbelieving in Taghut (false deities).

Allah also said: "And when you recite the Qur'an, seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan." The seeking of refuge precedes the recitation, indicating the precedence of disavowal (bara'a) over allegiance (Wala'a).

This is further evidenced by the testimony brought by the Prophet (peace be upon him): the testimony "There is no god but Allah" begins with negation before affirmation. When the Imam (peace be upon him) intended all creation to testify to their Creator's divinity and recognize His Lordship—while they had been corrupted by idol worship and darkness—he began with negation, purifying their souls from what they worshipped besides the Creator, cutting off their attachments to false gods, then followed with affirmation to establish the testimony of God's divinity after denying the opposites, and to acknowledge Lordship for all.

Similarly, since the guardianship of the Imam of Truth is pure religion and the invitation of creation to it, and after the Prophet's time false claimants overwhelmed the world and most people worshipped living idols with bodies, it was necessary to precede allegiance with disavowal of the rival Imam to clear the guided person's soul from the echoes of that falsehood, removing any imagined obligation to follow one who overpowered the true guardian and usurped his right, so that allegiance to the true guardian, the essence of religion, becomes valid and free of shirk, marked with the sign of monotheists. Hence, breaking the covenant and disavowing the covenant-breakers is necessary.

Allah said: "And when you meet those who disbelieve, strike their necks until you have subdued them, then bind them firmly; then either release them as a favour or ransom..." Those disbelievers are those who concealed the position of the Imam of Truth by denying him and abandoning his rank, believing in the rival Imam. Striking the necks means cutting off heads from bodies, which signifies death. The meaning here is to refute those who believed the misguided Imams' imamate, invalidate their rank, and nullify their leadership. "When you have subdued them, bind them firmly" means compelling them with decisive evidence after refuting the imamate of the misguided ones and confirming the rightful imamate from the Almighty. When this evidence is undeniable and all agree on the Imamate of the true Imam, then the covenant of allegiance should be strengthened.

Section on the nature of the Prophet's soul and monotheism:

Since the soul of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was purified from idol worship and ready to proclaim pure monotheism and exclusive worship of the Sovereign Judge, Allah addressed the matter of monotheism in a manner unlike what He ordered others, beginning with affirmation: "Say: He is Allah, [who is] One," then followed by negation: "He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent." This shows that innate children of nature—those in the circle of the call who do not believe in the imamate of false imams and have

never deviated from the call of truth—are not addressed by disavowal or argumentation, because their souls are free from that deviation.

The Prophet said: "Every newborn is born upon the natural disposition of Islam," meaning the essence of the soul is pure, suitable to be inscribed upon like white paper or a white cloth ready for dyeing. They are given a covenant to the Imam and invited to adhere to his guardianship and hold fast to it. This resembles the precedence of affirmation.

When they realize the Imam's imamate and sincerely obey him, disavowal of the rival imams and enemies, and their hatred become obligatory. This is the counterpart of the previous negation.

Section

If someone says: Since God Almighty commanded the Prophet (peace be upon him) to place affirmation (al-ithbat) before negation (al-nafy) in His oneness, due to the Prophet's honor and purity of soul, then how did He require the Successor (al-Wasi), who is similar to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in purity and who follows him in honor, to place negation before affirmation in the testimony (shahada) like other people? Especially since the Successor did not worship idols or statues but was pure and free from such things.

The answer is that placing negation before affirmation is necessary for him for a reason other than what was mentioned before. The Prophet (peace be upon him) receives inspiration from the world of holiness, through a spiritual angel with a fixed essence in his world, not subject to impossibility. His acceptance of that material in his pure heart is of meanings abstracted from words, which corresponds to affirmation. Then, this is followed by the souls linked to transient, negated, impossible bodies conveying that noble material in the form of spoken words, which corresponds to negation. So, it is as if the Successor ('a), who follows the Prophet in rank and is his partner in receiving those noble lights—since the Prophet holds the rank of proximity and preceded him—is the intermediary for him in connection to that source and material. But unlike the Prophet, the Successor does not receive the lights of the world of holiness directly in his heart from a spiritual angel with a fixed essence; rather, he derives it by hearing, through vocal instruction from a physical body that does not persist in the bodily realm. This causes difficulties for others beneath him.

Since the noble meanings connect firmly to the pure soul of the Successor after first hearing the negated and transient verbal expressions, this necessitates placing negation before affirmation in his testimony and makes him similar in that regard to others beneath him. This does not mean his affirmation involves shirk (polytheism); rather, he must negate first and affirm divinity afterward, and this is obligatory for the reasons mentioned.

Placing negation before affirmation is necessary for all who enter the Islamic faith, indicating that understanding the esoteric meanings and inner interpretations can only be gained through the outward, apparent revealed words; otherwise, it is impossible. Due to the honor of the Successor and his close kinship to the Speaker (the Prophet) and his distinction over others, his reception of this is not like that of others. He said: "The Messenger (peace be upon him) taught me a thousand doors of knowledge, and from every door I reached a thousand more," indicating his acceptance of the materials of the world of holiness unlike others beneath him. This also indicates that his material was initially received from a physical source by instruction, and later in his life from a spiritual source by confirmation, thus his state resembles the Speaker's. Therefore, he took his place after him, deserved his rank, and equalled him in status, even if he reached it through mediation.

Know, brothers, that the success obtained from this verse is the soul's separation from the body, freeing itself from the world of corruption and returning to its spiritual realm and its origin, thereby preserving its second perfection. This is because the souls that returned to the world of bodies due to their sinfulness and were tested by the world in it, after their previous exaltation, became low and ignoble; after having been free in the vast realm of creation, they became confined within the limits of the natural world.

On the Beginning of Creation with God's Help, His Good Will, and the Material of His Successor on Earth and His Assistance

I will explain from the beginning of creation what clarifies the nature and manner of this sin, and I will clarify what can be clarified from it, revealing from its truth what its evidence indicates. But I first present the discussion on divine unity because the unity of God is the noblest, most exalted, and most honourable of sciences, and the foundation of religion and the system of worship for the devoted. As the Commander of the Faithful ('a) said: "The beginning of religion is knowledge of God; its root is His unity; and the system of His unity is negation of attributes from Him." This is his speech, peace be upon him.

I say, by God's help, His will, and the material of His Successor on earth, that the true essence of divine unity and pure transcendence is the belief that the Creator of all creatures is exalted beyond being comprehended by any created thing, high or low, who brought into existence or imagined or fashioned anything. Pure thoughts and noble reflections, when they seek to grasp His greatness, return defeated in helplessness. They find no refuge to protect them from destruction or sanctuary to prevent their denial and association (shirk) except by affirming a transcendent existence, from which all created beings originate, sanctified from any attributes. Attributes can only exist in compound words made of letters, and letters are newly invented, so attributes do not truly belong to Him. The monotheist, fearing denial, resorts to metaphor to express these attributes and to point to Him.

The Messenger (peace be upon him) said: "Reflect on the created and do not reflect on the Creator." And he said: "When speech reaches God, hold back." The Commander of the Faithful ('a) said: "Names and attributes point to their likeness and embody their form; negating God's attributes before knowledge is denial, and affirming God after knowledge is transcendence."

From his speech, peace be upon him, Kumayl ibn Ziyad asked him about pure unity with truthful, singular words. He replied: "Woe to you, Kumayl ibn Ziyad, whoever answers about unity with a phrase is an atheist; whoever indicates it is dualistic; whoever pronounces it is ignorant; whoever remains silent is heedless; whoever thinks he has reached it has no understanding. Whatever you imagine with your thoughts in its truest meanings is diverted from it and rejected back to you as something new." Then he said:

"Inability to grasp the grasp is grasp,
Seeking the essence of the secret of the Self is association,
Unveiling the outlandish of the demons is blindness,
Upon him from the darkness of ignorance are the spheres."

He said: "Describing Him is likening, attributing Him is misleading, silence about Him is denial, pointing to Him is representation, imagining Him is estimation, and speaking about Him is defining. The essence of His unity is not imagining, and the reality of His moderation is not accusing."

In the "Solemn Sermon," he said: "In His action lies the interpretation of His action, and with His creation is linked His making, and to what He originated is related the meaning of its occurrence. If asked about creation, the created is not Him; if asked about decree, the decreed upon is His attribute; if asked about knowledge, it refers to what is known, just as when it is said: 'There is no god but Him,' the 'other than Him' is a limit. The 'other' came into existence with the creation because it is impossible for what is other than Him not to be other."

From his speech, peace be upon him, when a man asked him: "Have you seen your Lord, O Commander of the Faithful?" He replied: "'a) I worship what I do not see." He said: "How did you see Him?" He said: "The eyes do not perceive Him by visual observation, but the hearts perceive Him by the realities of faith: near to things but not touching, far from them but not alien, speaking without reflection, willing without determination, acting without limbs, subtle beyond description, seeing without sense, merciful beyond softness, faces humble before His greatness, and hearts bewildered by His awe."

This is his speech.

The Honourable Shaykh, the Author of the Treatises, Peace Be Upon Him Said:

“My brother, know that it is inappropriate to say God Almighty is a ‘self’ because self implies attributes, like body and its accidents, or soul and its actions. It is not said He exists because existence implies a creator who caused it, and something that causes a will has no end to it. It is not said He is alive by Himself or knows by Himself because these attributes always require being either eternal or created. Whoever claims they are eternal is ignorant because saying many eternals implies the existence of a specific being who owns all attributes, and that specific is the Creator, not the attributes themselves. And if said they are created, then the Creator becomes the place of created things and participates with His creation, while He is far above that. Whoever claims that the actions of the servants please or anger God has ascribed to Him changes between pleasure and anger, which is impossible; God is free of this. The actions of servants return to them as God said: ‘Whoever does good does so for himself, and whoever does evil does so against himself.’ Our statement is: When we observe creation coming into being from nonexistence, we know it has a Creator who is beyond our intellect to comprehend.” This is his speech, peace be upon him.

Sayyid Hamid al-Din Qass in the Durriya Treatise Said:

“Praise be to God who is exalted beyond having any likeness, and glorious beyond being described by any attribute. God is exalted so much that intellects falter in understanding Him, and minds lose their way in seeking any path to reach what you call Him, except for their ignorance. I praise Him as one who acknowledges by reason His essence as unique and none of His creatures as gods, and nothing among His creations except by glorifying Him. I bear true witness to what I rely on for salvation and attainment, that divinity is not for anything perceived by intellect or soul or judged by imagination or senses except what forces souls to acknowledge by affirming: ‘There is no god but He, and none is worshiped but Him.’”

Sayyid al-Muayyad Qass Said:

“Praise be to God, the Creator of the singulars; no singular description can attain Him. Impossible is to say He exists or does not exist or has the power of creation or annihilation. His Word spread its light and extinguished the fire of atheism.”

“I bear witness that there is no god but God who created existence and refrained from disputing about its nature and exalted above being likened in His essence.”

This section on divine unity contains at least what suffices to heal what is in hearts, clarifying that inability encompasses both the highest and lowest creation in comprehending their Creator, and how the creation can never grasp its Maker and Creator.

Chapter on the Beginning of Creation, which I promised to speak about, and to explain from its matter as far as is possible

I say, with the help of God, Glorified and Exalted be He, and by His Will, and the substance of His Guardian on His earth and His assistance, that whoever does not venture thoughts toward Him, nor can the intellects and consciences encompass Him, has created the realm of creation—spiritual forms and pure luminous spirits, extremely subtle and numerous, at the ultimate degree of equality in vitality, knowledge by itself, and power. For equality in the origin of existence is proof of justice, and its truth is witnessed by the intuition of reason.

This creation was not from anything that would be considered *Materia prima* (prime matter) preceding that existence, nor from anything that would be a place (since places are attributes of bodies with dimensions), nor for anything as an intended goal in what was done, nor upon anything as a model to be imitated. For if anything preceded that existence, it would be the cause of its existence, and that cause would in turn require another cause, and the pathways to the unity and glorification of the Creator would be disturbed.

When the first of these beings attained pure thought, it surged forth in the unification of its Lord, sanctifying His origin from non-existence and His creation, and spoke in the language of transcendence and detachment. It preceded its own kind in the truth of monotheism, for it knew without inspiration that it and its kind had a Creator, acknowledged Him, confessed its incapacity to comprehend Him, and humbled itself submissively before His majesty.

Sayyid al-Mu'ayyad Qass said about this meaning:

“Praise be to God who appeared to the universal intellect insofar as it recognized Him as a creator by His creation, thus He became manifest; and to its depths insofar as it was certain of its incapacity to comprehend Him, thus He remained hidden.”

When this intellect confessed its Creator's divinity and hastened to unify and glorify Him, it preceded all creation and was their source, originating from the Creator the holy bounties and substances. Thus, it was over all that world and was among them as the One preceding all numbers. Its existence, equal to that of all its world, was called the First Perfection. The substance connected to it from its Creator is the Second Perfection, which it deserved as a reward for what it had done. It then concealed itself from that world by that substance which caused the exaltation of its state, becoming hidden from them and beyond their grasp due to its lofty eminence and majesty. It is characterized by unity and perfection, clothed in the mantle of grandeur and majesty.

Sayyid al-Mu'ayyad Qass referred to this in praising some of his noble gatherings:

“Praise be to God, the perfect unique Creator, whose essence is intellective, and by His invention is sufficient; the Doer of every effect, the Bearer of every carried thing, who relies only on His own essence for support, and stands only by the pillars of His unity; and all else depends on Him and rests in existence upon Him—the First, who is the source of blessings and the cause of stillness and movement. If there were a first before Him, His priority would be disturbed, or if there were a cause for His existence, His unity and eternality would be compromised. Rather, He is the One who is still by virtue of His establishing Himself on His Throne in perfection and completeness and moved by gratitude for the favours He received from His Creator.” This is his statement.

This noble limit (or boundary) is the one deserving of the name Divinity and worthy of obedience, which is the true essence of worship from all creation. For the name Allah is derived from two aspects: the divine aspect, which is longing for His Creator, and the state of *walah* (yearning), which is confusion over the greatness of His existence and His invention.

As Sayyid Hamid al-Din Qass also mentioned in the sixth chapter of *The Ease of the Mind* (Rahat al- 'Aql):

“It is the Greatest Name and the Most Supreme Designation, because while there are many names by which the Exalted is sanctified and called in the realm of bodies (the realm of nature), the greatest of them, which none deserves and which He alone possesses uniquely, is Allah. The most rightful names are those whose meanings align perfectly with the realities they denote in the named entity, expressing the nature and indicating the state of the one named. This name expresses the meanings of divinity—longing—and *walah*—confusion—since it is said, ‘So-and-so *allāha* (longed) with divine yearning,’ and ‘So-and-so *walah* (was confused) in longing.’ This name truly expresses these two meanings for the Creator, who is the First Being by whose existence these meanings of longing and confusion arise regarding His existence and Creator.” This is his statement.

Chapter

Then the second intellect, called the Follower, preceded in emulating it, and took it as a means to the Sanctified beyond the transcendent description. It followed the first through the mediation of those substances and attained the Second Perfection, which is the honor of essence, reaching the ultimate desired goal. It was equal to the first in both perfections, though lacking the honor of precedence in all conditions and meanings.

The first called upon the entire realm of its kind to unify the Creator in acknowledgment of its precedence. The ranks of emanation hastened to that, each according to its speed in responding or delaying, in successive and intersecting order. Each was obedient to the one above it, committed, and sought mediation through the one higher than it in the chain of the

monotheists in an organized manner. Blessings followed them and the sacred substances and bounties flowed upon them. Their essences shone with blessings, and they were protected from slips and sins.

However, among those creative essences, a group lagged in response. They followed the path of arrogance and refused to obey those preceding them, denying their great right. They were known as the hulul (prime matter), incapable of their original noble state. They drowned in the sea of prime matter, confined by three dimensions: length, width, and depth. The lowest rank among those noble intellects was charged with their care and management. The enlightened intellects supported it in what it was directed toward, so it was the wise one in its actions toward them, the knowledgeable one in what benefits them, the expert.

Chapter

The intentions of the falling sects varied. Though united in outward denial, they differed in conscience and inner fear. Divine care mixed them until all became one body—it is noble with its base, its good with its evil, united.

Their ranks were arranged in the natural world according to those consciences, placing each in the position suitable for it among the parts of the world, as necessitated by prior causes and required by temperaments. The spheres of the heavens moved on the circles of the mother spheres, extracting from those kinds of births, driving them toward the human forms, which are the purpose in the composition of the natural world from the Originator to the Restorer.

When the human forms reached the first natural perfection—which is the attainment of the rank of conception—and achieved the purpose of the appointed instrument, which is the world of bodies, then the care was directed from the spheres and celestial bodies to extract their fine subtleties and spirits, raise them in the degree of the spiritual world, and transfer them.

The first gate through which the soul passes from the spiritual universe and enters it, the best true good it acquires, is the taking on of the noble covenant through the nearest of the boundaries. Through this, it emerges from non-existence, marked with the sign of existence, entering among the people of faith, winning salvation if it remains steadfast in true allegiance to the Imams and boundaries, safe from torment at the end.

After that, it continues acquiring inner knowledge by means of knowledge and action joined with sincere loyalty, until its journey ends at the supreme assembly of emanation, becoming part of the most noble foremost structure, prepared to ascend in its group to the presence of the world's Administrator. It remains in that greatest luminous isthmus (barakah) awaiting the

universal Riser, who by his hands enacts punishment for the opposing rebellious and reward for the obedient loyal friend.

Thus, it becomes part of that assembly entitled to the succession of the tenth intellect in governance. It ascends in the universe to the high, dangerous station, and attains the world of unity, free from multiplicity, returning to the virtuous state it had at the first time. Even more honoured than that, by acquiring the Second Perfection, which is the honor of essence, and the attainment of eternity by which it is protected from error and remains in the best states.

It praises the one responsible for its salvation among the Imams and boundaries, thanks them for bringing it into true existence, acknowledges their generous care that was the reason for its salvation from the world of creation and corruption, and judges them worthy of its ascension to the spiritual world.

Then it moves through the ranks of the luminous creative world, and after cycles and spheres, it reaches the circle of the first emanation, known as the lofty sacred sanctuary, to which others who ascend join those before them. There, all are equal in the Second Perfection, just as they are equal in creation, according to the verse: “As We began the first creation, we shall repeat it—a promise binding upon Us. Surely, we shall do it.” (Quran 21:104)

Chapter

As for those who turn away from the call and do not protect themselves by answering it, persisting stubbornly in previous errors and slips, they descend into the abyss of torment, returning from the natural realm backwards.

If they are among the common people and the masses who follow the enemies of the Imams (peace be upon them), they follow a path in those condemned realms (the purgatories) according to the measure of their deeds and what their disbelief and misguidance deserve. When they have exhausted what they brought forth and did, they are returned on the ladder of ascent to human stature to acquire what they choose, for which they will be rewarded in the future.

If they are among those who claim the high Imamate ranks and support them sincerely in belief and intention, they will be among those presented for reckoning when the Qa'im (the one who rises) appears, held accountable and lamenting over their sins and crimes. After being slaughtered and their skin burned by the fire descending from the sky along with their likes, they will be cast into the lowest part of the earth for the greatest and everlasting torment, to remain as long as the heavens and earth endure in torment. May God protect us and his chosen ones from that, and we ask Him for protection that necessitates avoiding destruction.

Chapter

If the situation, brothers, is as I have explained, and the issue of the original creation is as I have made clear, how can one be lax about the obedience due to the boundaries (the appointed authorities), neglect their guardianship, and waste it?

God Almighty said: "O you who believe, obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you." (Quran 4:59)

This three obedience's are connected to one another; the first cannot stand without the second, and the second cannot stand without the third. Obedience to God, which is obligatory on all creation, is only valid through obedience to His Messenger, as God said: "Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed God."

If obedience to God is not valid except by obeying the Messenger, and if the permanence of the Messenger is eternal (since all people cannot obey him physically forever), it is necessary that his representative in every era and time stand in his place, so that obedience to him is obedience to the Messenger and his command is God's command. Without the representative, obedience falls; with the fall of obedience, obedience to God falls and the commandments become void.

Thus, obedience to God is contained within obedience to the Messenger, and obedience to the Messenger is contained within obedience to the Wali (guardian/authority), the one who represents him and is appointed from his side.

As for the claim that those in authority are anyone commanding over the Muslims, even if unjust in what they possess, lying in what they assume and claim, God forbid that obedience to tyrants be mandated or equated with obedience to Him and His trustworthy Messenger. It is not right to command people to obey every unjust usurper.

The universe is full of false claimants, liars. God cursed the oppressors and liars and urged following those truthful servants who fear Him: "Fear God and be with the truthful."

Those who say the authorities are military commanders who are now extinct and whose obedience ended with their extinction have invalidated obedience to God and His Messenger, since these are contained within obedience to the authorities, as explained earlier.

The true authorities, whose obedience contains obedience to God and His Messenger, are the Imams who stand in every era from the progeny of the guardian (Imam Ali) and the chaste (Fatimah).

Obedience to each Imam organizes the threefold obedience and preserves the firmest bond, the strongest rope not to be broken or loosened.

Whoever says the Imamate can be absent at times nullifies these obligatory obedience's, scatters their system, and causes the command of God to be negated, breaking all by permitting the fall of some.

They are those God refers to in His words: "And those who sever what God has commanded to be joined and cause corruption on earth." (Quran 13:25)

God mandated these obedience's and commanded their connection; no one is accepted except with all. What is more severing than breaking the link between the worshiper and the worshiped? What corruption in the religious earth is worse than this?

Chapter

If it is established that there is no obedience to God except by obedience to His Messenger, and no obedience to the Messenger except by obedience to the Wali (the authority), the Qa'im in every era; likewise, no obedience to the Wali (the Imam in each era) except by obedience to those appointed by him from among the boundaries who call to him and point to him.

Because obedience to God was made obligatory on creation who neither witnessed Him nor perceive Him, it became the true obedience to His Messenger.

Since obedience to the Messenger was obligatory on all creation who did not live during his time, it became true obedience to the Wali who represents him in every era.

Similarly, obedience to the Wali was made obligatory on all people of his time, yet he is physically present in a part of the earth and cannot be reached by all those who must obey him. Thus, true obedience is to those boundaries appointed by him in distant places, his deputies in all corners of the earth.

Obedience to these boundaries, appointed by the Wali, is obedience to the wall himself; disobedience to them is disobedience to him.

Chapter

If obedience to God is not valid except by obedience to His Messenger, and obedience to His Messenger is not valid except by obedience to the Wali, and obedience to the Wali is not valid

except by obedience to those appointed by him from the boundaries — and likewise obedience to any of these boundaries is not valid except by obedience to those beneath them — this applies down to the lowest ranks of religion and closest to the responders.

As our master Al-Muayyad (may God sanctify his secret) said in the Risaalah Al-Ma'ad:

This is the inevitable statement for anyone who knows the truth: that if he obeys his immediate boundary, he has obeyed all boundaries, since they form a chain linked to each other. Obedience to the highest is like obedience to the lowest.

This is pure monotheism, free from anthropomorphism or negation, and by this one enters Paradise; whoever contradicts or disobeys falls from this rank, and this is the cause of entering Hell.

And in the ninety-third council of the hundredth volume, he said:

We say that the “Raqit” (the awake), the “Atid” (the firm), and the “Shaheed” (the witness) all exist in the field of esoteric invitation (da'wah ta'wiliyya). This is indicated by God's words: "So that the Messenger may be a witness over you," which points to who is eligible to be a witness over you — the Imams.

You (the Imams) will be witnesses over the people, and the Imams are witnesses over those who follow their doors and proofs (hujjah). The proofs are witnesses over the subsequent callers (Du'at), the callers are witnesses over those who submit to them, and those who receive submission (Madhu nun) are witnesses over their responders and followers.

This is the explanation by this noble boundary (may God sanctify his soul), clarifying that obedience of every person to God is obedience to his nearest boundary, and that the boundary is the witness in his appointed time upon him.

How can anyone hope for salvation without aligning with all boundaries or seek his own existence by cutting the causes of that existence? Each boundary passes on life to those below, and the path to good nearness connects only through them.

Chapter

In the realm of creation, worship is by spiritual angels, and monotheism and sanctification by the monotheists who are sanctified there, accepted only after every prior accepts his predecessor and commits to his obedience, taking him as a means to the Creator in accepting obedience, monotheism, and worship.

Because the predecessor refused to acknowledge his predecessor's dignity and was arrogant, denying his great right, the creative essences fell into sin and transformed from luminous forms into dense, dark matter, as previously explained.

How then could those of the natural realm, drowning in the sea of bodies and characterized by qualities unlike the honoured angels, find salvation except through obedience to the higher and lower boundaries and taking from those in the corporeal realm a means to those in the spiritual realm, interceding through all to the Creator of all to be sanctified from any correspondence in created attributes or meanings?

Our master Al-Muayyad said in the fiftieth council of the hundredth volume:

We previously mentioned that prayer is a continuous connected chain from the opening takbir to the reading, bowing, prostration, testimony, and ending salutations; taken together, these form the prayer.

If one cuts what God commanded to be connected in it, the prayer is invalid; thus, it is neither that which pronounces takbir alone nor one who recites the Quran alone, unless the parts are connected.

Similarly, the call is to upper spiritual boundaries and lower corporeal boundaries, linked to one another as a connected chain, and they are the rope, one end held by God and the other by us.

Whoever recognizes them and prays the outward prayer with an intention for the inner prayer as its condition is truly praying.

Whoever separates their boundaries and conditions is among those God said: "Working hard and tired, praying to a burning fire." (Quran 74:42)

This is his statement (Al-Muayyad).

Chapter

Whoever commits to the nearest boundary, believing that obedience to him is obedience to the one above him, culminating at the One God, deserves from God closeness and nearness, and merits that the Holy Spirit (the command of the Lord) be breathed into him, so he is illuminated by the light of knowledge, distinguished from those dwelling in the darkness of ignorance.

He is revived with true life, distinct from those about whom God said: "They are dead, not alive, and they do not perceive when they will be resurrected." (Quran 2:259)

Because the one who follows the boundary through the hand of his boundary of knowledge rises by his sensory self to his body's station, thus reviving eternal life and living eternal life.

Our master Al-Muayyad said on this meaning in the ninety-third council of the hundredth volume:

It was said to you that revelation and support from God to His Messenger is the infusion of the spirit into him, and likewise, each Imam's designation of his successor is the infusion of the spirit into him.

Similarly, the appointment of Imams to their gates, boundaries, proofs, and callers is the blowing of the spirit into them.

Likewise, the calling of the callers and those authorized by them to those they call and who respond is the blowing of the spirit into them.

Every boundary breathes life into those beneath it.

God said: "O you who believe, respond to God and the Messenger when He calls you to that which gives you life." (Quran 8:24)

The natural breath of spirit shared by animals is the basis of this great matter, just as the earth, being matter, is the base for forms that appear from it, with the human form being the best of them.

The human form is the origin of speech, and speech is better than it, and speech is the origin of intellect, which is better than it.

God's signs are established in the heavens and the souls to prove His religion by His words: "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth." (Quran 41:53)

This is his statement (may God sanctify his soul).

Chapter

Every boundary appointed by the Imam (peace be upon him) or appointed by one of his noble boundaries is the one from whom knowledge must be taken and from whom benefit must be gained.

Before him is the life of his responders, and through his hands they are bounded.

He is their particular Imam who leads them to the universal Imam.

Our master Al-Muayyad said in the thirty-sixth council of the hundredth volume:

The Imam of the pious in every era and time is one; whoever claims his position is a lying destroyer.

He is the absolute Imam of the pious.

Then those who call by his permission and speak about his opinion and command are Imams to their people, facing the absolute Imam like the direction of the mihrab and qibla toward the Kaaba, the sacred house.

This is his statement.

Whoever sets himself up to teach and establish himself as a source of instruction without permission from any of the boundaries connected to the Imam's command and God's command, his teaching is not lawful, for he is unjust in assuming a position not his and cut off from the command of his superiors.

Our master Hamid al-Din said in the second section of the first chapter of the book "Rest for the Mind":

No one may teach anyone anything about religion, rites of worship, faith, and certainty without permission from the Qa'im, the Prophet's representative, who is the Imam, or from one on his side.

Whoever does so transgress the command, is misguided, on the path of opposites, and among the foremost hypocrites.

It is not lawful to listen to anything from him at all, and it is obligatory to avoid him, lest one be unable to abandon what he teaches and be destroyed thereby.

This is his statement.

Chapter

Since the purpose of this message was to specify the names of the boundaries of the island at the time of its composition and clarification, and to explain their ranks according to what appeared to me of their affairs and manifestations, and since some brothers previously asked about the one deserving the rank of Da'wah (call) in the island, the foremost among all its people, to whom the affairs therein are assigned, controlling its bonds and their dissolution,

I answered in the message entitled "Al-Wahida" that this is the most eminent judge and the best master, of pure lineage and shining morals, encompassing all virtuous qualities, and containing complete sound knowledge,

Ahmed bin Ali bin Hanthala (may God grant him success and happiness) is the one to whom the Da'wah affairs in the Yemeni island have been entrusted to expand and contract, raise, and lower.

I have entrusted him with this responsibility and granted him authority over all the boundaries and bounded ones therein, giving him absolute discretion to judge those he deems worthy and restrict who is worthy of restriction.

All the believers in the island are subject to him and attached to him; their causes are connected to him.

Let everyone who reads this message know this and respond with hearing and obedience as required by religion and faith.

Chapter

When I tested the fortunate, successful, rightly guided boy Muhammad ibn Saeed ibn Al-Mubarak ibn al-Waleed, I found him to have a sincere and sound authority, a pure and clear creed, envisioning the truths in their clarity, free from excess and neglect, and not following the soul's paths of error and temptation. I saw that he deserved to take the rank of the esteemed judge, and the best master mentioned earlier. So, I assigned him second place in the order of the island's boundaries, and next in religious order, granting him full liberty across the entire island to take the pledge and covenant. I approved him to save the image, correct the beliefs, affirm what is established, and abolish what is corrupt.

Following him in rank is the noble Sheikh Malik Muhammad ibn Abi al-Mas'ud, then Sheikh Malik Hatim ibn al-Hussein, then the two judges Malik al-Hasan and al-Hussein, sons of Ali ibn Hanthala,

then Judge Malik Muhammad ibn Muhalab,
then Sheikh Malik al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Shaghadri,
then the fortunate boy Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn Al-Mubarak,
then Sheikh Malik Ali ibn As'ad al-Ahuri,
then the wise Malik Abdullah ibn Hatim,
then Judge Malik Mas'ud ibn Muqail,
then Sultan Malik Ali ibn Jahfal,
then Sultan Malik al-Harth ibn al-Wisah,
then the two Maliks Sheikh Abdullah and Abu al-Fadl, sons of al-Hasan al-Mujalli,
then Sultan Malik Muhammad ibn Abbas ibn Ali,
then Sheikh Malik Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Tayyib,
then Sheikh Malik Salim ibn Hussein al-Asi,
then Sultan Malik Ali ibn Hawshab al-Alawi,
then Sultan Malik al-Ghaysim ibn Hadha,
then the cultured Malik Yahya ibn Muhammad,
then Sultan Malik Mansur ibn Suleiman al-Salihi,
then Sultan Abu al-Ghaith ibn As'ad al-Alawi,
then Judge Malik Muhammad ibn Suhail,
then Sheikh Malik Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Abi al-Farh,
then Sheikh Malik Suhaim ibn al-Qadsi,
then Sheikh Malik Suleiman ibn Daghfal,
then Sheikh Malik Salim ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Ghusi,
then Sheikh Malik Abu Bakr ibn Abi al-Mas'ud,
then Sheikh Malik Abdullah ibn Mahdi al-Sakani,
then Sultan Malik Rabih ibn al-Hussein al-Abri,
then Sultan Malik Ahmad ibn Abdullah al-Ya'bari,
then Sheikh Malik Qais ibn Klayn al-Murba'i,
then Sultan Malik Alwan ibn Abdullah al-Ya'bari,
then Sheikh Malik al-Hussein ibn al-Mansur ibn al-Fadl al-Yami,
then Sheikh Malik Manal ibn Imran al-Yami,
then Sheikh Malik Ali ibn al-Muzaffar al-Ya'bari,
then Sheikh Malik Muhammad ibn Saeed al-Is'hami,
then Sheikh Malik Hibat Allah ibn Khalid,
then Sheikh al-Umr ibn al-Saeed,
then Sheikh Malik Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Khattabi,
then Sultan Malik Sarsu ibn Abi al-Su'ad al-Salihi,
then Sheikh Malik Mufaddal ibn Ali al-Ma'ahidi,
then Sheikh Malik Sa'd ibn Duranid,
then Sheikh Malik Subh ibn Ahmad al-Hibri,
then Sheikh Malik al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Imran al-Alawi.

These are the established boundaries in the Yemeni island of blessed and noble conditions at the time of this composition. Perhaps among them are some with little knowledge or slow understanding, but the reason for their appointment is that they are the most suitable in their place and aspect.

Chapter

It may happen that some of these mentioned or others among all the saints and believers feel some envy towards those elevated above them, thus harbouring rejection of their rank or being overcome by pride, refusing to submit to their command and obedience, belittling their status and rank, due to their lack of means or the obscurity of their mention. They do not realize that denying their right is denying the one above them, connected to the leader of their time, and this denial will be the cause of their destruction and ruin, expulsion from faith, and loss.

Let every person hold themselves accountable and know that sincere allegiance to the boundaries (saints) is a purification of the self from the universe and corruption. They should cleanse it from the stain of the original sin by the water of obedience and submission to them.

They should reflect on what caused the fall of the creative essences, what is the true nature of the slip leading to their decline and sin. Isn't it merely denying them, arrogance in disobedience, and abandoning supplication to the Highest, the Glorious?

It becomes clear that the ranks of the religious world are like the ranks of the intellectual world. Whoever denies the spiritual boundaries and rejects their honor and virtue, we seek refuge in God from denying the ranks of the boundaries, neglecting their duty, and refusing their right.

We ask Him for protection, steadfastness, and help in acquiring lasting good deeds.

Chapter

I have finished listing their names in order, following the sequence toward the intended goal. I want to conclude this message with words from our master, the originator of these messages, in the assembly of purity and cleanliness, clarifying the etiquette of religion and explaining how the people of faith, the boundaries, and the bounded should be.

He (peace be upon him) said:

“Know, may God strengthen your hands and ours with a spirit from Him, that the etiquette of a scholar is to be patient and gentle with the learners. The etiquette of the learner is to endure, respect, and submit to the scholars regarding the knowledge they carry and benefit from their wisdom.

If the learner who has acquired knowledge abandons the way of endurance, does not submit to his teacher, and does not respect him, then the scholar should leave and use the method of discipline and reprimand so that his command follows God’s law and the rule of His governance.

If the scholar is patient and easy-going in every situation with everyone, two defects will appear: one, the dignity of his justice and warning may be lost, so the learner might misbehave shamelessly without fear or vigilance. Two, the scholar would neglect God's law because God does not always show mercy nor forgive every sin. Therefore, gentleness and soft speech should not be used everywhere.

When you speak with your brothers in religion, speak with compassion, gentleness, affection, and advice. If you speak with the enemies of religion, speak with grandeur, leadership, power, and authority according to the honor of your religion and the strength of your adherence to it.

When you speak before God, you must speak with poverty, need, submission, humility, and supplication. If you used the humility and supplication that you use before God in front of the enemies of religion, you would belittle the religion, and that would almost be disbelief in God.

If you used the firmness and leadership that you use with the enemies of religion with your brothers in religion, you would deserve God's punishment.”

He also said in another chapter:

“Know, may God strengthen your hands and ours with a spirit from Him, that the proper conduct of sincere students with their teachers is well known and not exceeded, and likewise the conduct of the teachers with their students is known and not surpassed.

Among the signs of the students’ conduct is that when the teacher begins to speak, they face him with their faces, lower their gaze toward him, lend their ears to listen, and control their tongues in silence. This is like the custom of the congregation during the imam's sermon when they listen and refrain from speaking, with their ears attentive and their hearts watching what they hear.

The second sign is their obedience to the wise and their good acceptance and following of him, like the custom of congregations during the imam's prayer, where none precedes the imam, nor raises or lowers their head before him.

The third sign is when they speak wisdom and demonstrate knowledge, it is like the practice of the prophets of God and their Lord regarding what they have been entrusted with from His knowledge, presenting it in its proper form and context.

The fourth sign is whenever a thought occurs to them or they hear it from others or it comes to them by agreement, they present it to the teacher and ask about it. This is like the five senses receiving something tangible and presenting it to the common inner sense and then to the discerning speaking faculty to determine what is acceptable and worthy of being retained in the storehouse of memory, and to discard what is unsuitable, incorrect, or displeasing.

The fifth sign is that when they speak before the teacher, they do not shift from one topic to another until they finish, nor mix matters, placing everything in its proper place, like the custom of Quran recitation where they read to the reciter and see the teacher's mercy, kindness, and satisfaction with them.

The sixth sign is that whatever is under their control and possession is like it belongs to their teachers, and they see the teacher's judgment as valid and his command effective, like the ruler's judgment over the property of his servants and subjects.

The seventh sign is that they help one another, like the left hand assisting the right hand in the same body, and the foot helping the seeing eye. When the eye desires or intends something, the foot goes toward it without refusal, like other members helping each other willingly and without reluctance. Each should strive to help and carry the burdens of his companion, just as the hands help each other, each bearing the load for the other. This mutual assistance and support should be without grudging or superiority.

The eighth sign is that when they speak, they speak with one tongue and unique speech, not contradicting or disputing one another.

The ninth sign is that when they sit before the teacher, none precedes his companion; they sit before him with dignity like rows in a circle, equal and straight, and none goes ahead except the teacher who may appoint one of them to stand in for him during his absence.

If the students follow this conduct and adhere to this method, it becomes obligatory for the teacher to consider them among his inner circle and honor them as his own senses, thought, memory, tongue, and hand, sharing with them his spirit and soul, meaning wisdom and knowledge, so they become alive by his life, seeing with his insight, united in agreement like

the actions of the limbs of a knowledgeable, rational, wise human being whose actions correspond with his words and writings revealing the beliefs of his heart.

When the students and teacher are thus united, they become like one soul, as in the human world where all the limbs and senses are one without dispute, contradiction, or differentiation.

Similarly, the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwan al-Safa) are one body with separate limbs; if one does good to his brother, he does not think of owing him, believing that his good is to himself. If his brother wrongs him, he is not distressed, seeing it as coming from himself to him, so he patiently corrects and treats him until he returns to his original state of health and righteousness.

Whoever believes this about his brother and his brother believes this about him, each is safe from his companion's harm, loneliness, and disgrace.

They help each other to reach salvation from this world and win the abode of eternal bliss.

God guides whoever He wills to the straight path, and there is no power and no strength except with God, the Exalted, the Great.

This is a unification and clarification, these are his words, peace be upon him.

The fortunate ones, O brothers, are those who observe the etiquette of God and His saints and obey what is commanded of them in the obedience that raises and honours their rank.

Praise be to God, the Bestower upon His obedient servants with proofs leading them to the path of salvation, reviving them with the spirit of life.

May God bless His Prophet, sealed with the message of messages, supported by overwhelming power and miracles, Muhammad, exalted from honor to the highest degrees, transferred from pure progenitors to pure wombs, and his successor, the caliph after him, Ali ibn Abi Talib, the bearer of the banners of guidance and their flags, attaining the utmost reward in his meeting and goal.

And blessings be upon the imams from their progeny, the ships of salvation for the servants and refuge for their followers in the meeting places, and upon the Imam of the age and time, tested by his era by concealing his noble person from them as the greatest test.

Our master and lord, the good Imam Abu al-Qasim, Commander of the Faithful, the proof of God over all humans and jinn, the saved one for those who cling to his allegiance and

confident in the afterlife of protection from punishment, may peace be upon them all continuously until the Day of Judgment.

In praise of this message, "The Message of Creed in Establishing the Pillars of Creed," Muhammad ibn Hani said in poetry:

This message is the provision of every traveller * toward the hereafter and the path of every noble one.

To God belongs what it contains of generosity and loyalty * for the travellers and the garment of correction.

This is the way of the Brethren of Purity * which guides by their conduct to the Eternal.

I testify that it is unique * among others with true precedence.

The copying of this blessed and happy message, titled "The Creed," was completed on Friday, the 22nd of Jumada al-Akhirah, year 1423 AH (Islamic calendar). Peace be upon its owner.