The Epistle of Admonition to the Heedless

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. In Him we seek assistance in all affairs.

Praise be to God, the supporter of truth through the possessors of knowledge, who makes every concealed secret manifest upon their tongues; He who is too exalted for any of His creation to encompass Him, and beyond the ability of the people of knowledge and understanding to describe Him.

May God bless His noble Messenger, Muḥammad, described as possessing sublime character; and his legatee, possessed of abundant nobility and a handsome countenance, described as the "Great Tidings," ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the wise. And upon the two of them and their progeny, the inheritors of the Garden of bliss, the forefathers of our master the Imam al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Qāsim, Commander of the Believers—may blessings of God be upon them all.

To proceed:

O noble, kind, compassionate brother—may God enlighten your insight and establish your form upon guidance—I, your brother, have considered the question you mentioned and the inquiry you set down in writing. You said—may God perpetuate your success and establish your path to guidance—that you have seen many of the brethren conceal envy and hatred among themselves, while displaying arrogance and mutual opposition, until the matter has reached the point that some of them curse one another, disparage one another, sting one another with every kind of obscenity, and backbite one another. Perhaps one of them even betrays another concerning his property and acts improperly toward him in the rest of his affairs, without considering such conduct forbidden and without fearing from Almighty God any sin or transgression.

You asked whether such conduct is permissible among people of understanding, or whether it is prohibited and contrary to what is right; and whether the one who commits such an act is mistaken or correct.

You also asked: What will be the condition of the one who performs these acts and bears these characteristics and deeds? And what will be the condition of each of the one who stings and the one who is stung in his return after he has entered into the sanctuary of the Call and its guidance?

The answer to this—and through God is success, and we ask Him for soundness in reaching what is correct—is as follows:

O noble, kind, compassionate brother, I have considered your question, which demonstrates your good vigilance, purity of form, and illumination of your essence. May God enable you and us to attain His pleasure and make us and you among those who follow His guidance.

As for your statement that you have seen many of the brethren concealing envy and hatred, displaying arrogance and mutual opposition, and that some of them sting others, together with the rest of what you mentioned:

Know, my brother—may God enlighten your essence and establish your conception upon guidance—that the believer is the brother of the believer through his father and mother, just as our master al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, said:

“Their father is light and their mother is mercy.”

As Almighty God said:

“When you were enemies, He joined your hearts together, and through His blessing you became brothers.”
—[Qur’an 3:103]

And God Most High said:

“We removed whatever rancor was in their breasts; they are brothers, upon couches facing one another.”
—[Qur’an 15:47]

One of the righteous said:

“The believer is one from whose harmfulness people are safe and whose inward afflictions are safe from harming them.”

Know, my brother, that envy and arrogance are the root of every calamity and the root of every sin. They are the two things that destroyed the earlier and later peoples.

God, glorified is He, said:

“Let not one people mock another people; perhaps they may be better than them, nor let women mock other women; perhaps they may be better than them.”
—[Qur’an 49:11]

And know, my brother, that there is no justification for the envious, in accordance with God’s saying:

“Or do they envy the people for what God has given them of His bounty? Indeed, We gave the family of Abraham the Book, and We gave them a mighty kingdom.”
—[Qur’an 4:54]

This is a rebuke from God to every person who envies the people of rank for their ranks and stations which God has assigned to them.

As for your statement that many of them curse one another, this is among the greatest forms of error and transgression. God does not forgive it except through repentance, abandonment of the act, and seeking forgiveness from the person against whom the transgression was committed, in accordance with God’s saying:

“Do not backbite one another. Would any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it.”
—[Qur’an 49:12]

One of the righteous said:

“Beware of backbiting. If what you say is untrue, then you have backbitten him; and if it is true, then you have wronged him by saying of him what is not appropriate.”

Both courses are wrong.

If someone were to say that such conduct is permissible, God forbid that this should be permissible. The noble covenant has spoken to the contrary, where it says that you:

“befriend whoever is his friend, oppose whoever opposes him, support whoever supports him, abandon whoever abandons him, and do not befriend an enemy of his.”

Where, then, is the way out of this, and how can it be permissible after the condition mentioned above? Does either of them have any dispensation for this in the Book of God or in the words of the Friends of God?

May God, by His mercy, protect us from that and preserve you and us from transgressing against His Friends, through His grace and compassion.

As for your question concerning the condition of the one who performs these acts in his return, after entering the sanctuary of the Call and its guidance, and whether one who does this will have a sound return or not:

Know, my brother, that we see in sensible things examples of things that are mutually harmonious, such as gold and mercury. There is a great affinity between them, as the practitioners of the craft of alchemy know. When mercury is cast into dispersed gold, it gathers its particles, joins them, and penetrates them until it becomes a single body.

Likewise, the lodestone gathers iron filings after they have been dispersed in sand. It draws them toward itself and brings them into harmony with it because of the strength of the love, affinity, and compatibility between them.

As for things that repel one another, consider mercury and iron. When mercury is brought near iron, it recoils from it; those among the practitioners of the craft and others who have experienced this know the condition of the repulsion between them and the separation that occurs.

Likewise, when vessels are made from the hides of predatory animals and are struck near vessels made from cowhide, the former are torn apart and the cowhide vessels split and break. This is because of the repulsion between them and their ancient enmity.

The matter here is astonishing.

Look, my brother, at these sensible things, both inanimate and animal, which possess neither reason nor deliberate governance. If they do not harmonize with one another or love one

another, then how can harmony return to spiritual forms and human forms that harm one another while they are in their human bodies? How could they possess agreement in the return after their separation, repulsion, and mutual hatred in the abode of this world?

So take heed, O brother: through the sensible, know the intelligible.

Know that every person between whom and another person there is separation in this world—such as arrogance, envy, or backbiting—and between whom there is repulsion in this world, likewise their forms, when they separate from the bodies, will repel one another, just as mercury repels iron and cowhide repels the hides of predatory animals. There is no difference between these things.

For this reason the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, said:

"Souls are recruited armies. Those among them that recognize one another are united, and those among them that are mutually unfamiliar are divided."

Thus there will never be intimacy between them in one and the same return, because of the separation, envy, and enmity that preceded between them in the abode of this world. There will never be harmony between them in the abode of the hereafter.

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

"It is not among the justice of Almighty God that He should ever gather our enemy and our friend together in one abode other than this abode."

And know, my brother, that if both of them are among the people of the true Call, as we have described, then necessarily one of them is in the right and the other is in falsehood.

Know that the one who is in falsehood and transgresses against his brother is not among the Shīʿa of the Imams; rather, he is among their enemies, because of his transgression and injustice toward his brother. Thus they cannot agree anywhere other than in this abode.

You know, O brother, that the friend of the Imams, may blessings of God be upon them, is the believer who shows loyalty to his brother and to all his brethren. For he cannot be called a friend merely by his allegiance to his friends and believing brethren.

If he is hostile toward his brethren, harms them, and does not recognize their rights, then he is their enemy, one who opposes them.

Thus the saying of our master al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, is correct: that the friend and the adversary will not be gathered together in any abode other than this abode, as has already been stated.

As for the two who are sincere toward one another, they are like gold and mercury, and like the lodestone and iron filings, which love one another and are drawn toward what is compatible with and beloved to them because of the affinity between them, as we have already explained.

When they pass on, their two forms are gathered together and intermingle, becoming one thing, and they do not separate—just as gold becomes mercury and mercury becomes gold.

Likewise, the brethren who are harmonious in this world, loyal to one another, and sincere toward one another become, at the time of their transition, a single thing, as we have previously stated: a single form, with no difference between them.

This occurs through their higher Boundary, which is above them, for it is their magnet that draws them, through the elixir which he casts upon them and with which he imbues them: namely, true knowledge, which brings them forth from non-being into being.

Through this they become one thing at the time of their transition, as we have previously explained. Their souls become adjacent and their forms intermingle, because their conception is one, with no difference between them.

Through this the saying of our master al-Ṣādiq, peace and blessings of God be upon him, is verified:

"The believer is the brother of the believer through his father and mother; their father is light and their mother is mercy."

By "light," peace and blessings of God be upon him, he indicated the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him; and by "mercy," he indicated the legatee, peace be upon him.

This also verifies the saying of the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, to the Commander of the Believers:

"I and you, O ʿAlī, are the two fathers of the believers. May God curse whoever disobeys his two fathers."

In this indication there is also the answer to the second [question]. Their father being light is an indication of the dāʿī, and their mother being mercy is an indication of the maʾdhūn. This is the true lineage, not bodily lineage.

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

"By God, my lineage from ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him and upon the Imams from his descendants, is dearer to me than my bodily lineage from him."

One of the righteous said in verse:

"By your life, human beings are only by their religion,
so do not abandon piety relying upon lineage.
Islam raised Salman the Persian,
just as polytheism lowered the noble Abū Lahab."

Know, O brother, that mutual hatred and envy are the root of every sin and the head of every calamity. They lead to cursing, and cursing is separation.

A friend, therefore, must not curse another friend unless he has committed a sin that warrants it. Rather, if his brother errs, he should seek God's forgiveness for him and ask Him to preserve him from error.

It is narrated from the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, that one day he went out on one of his military expeditions. As he passed by one of his Companions, the man was cursing his camel.

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

"Go back from us, for you will not travel with us upon a cursed camel."

How, then, could it be permissible for a friend to curse another friend after this statement?

God forbid! This is nothing but a grave sin.

How could harmony in the return be hoped for from one who curses his brother, is repelled from him, and acts arrogantly toward him?

Never. Such a person will not attain it, nor can good be hoped for him. How could he, when he has broken the noble covenant and betrayed the trust by severing himself from his brother and opposing him?

The believer is bound and obligated to maintain the allegiance of his believing brother. He is required to remain loyal to his brother, preserving that loyalty in prosperity and adversity. He should desire for him what he desires for himself and dislike for him what he dislikes for himself, whether his brother is present or absent.

He should defend him when he slips, be loyal to whoever is loyal to him, and oppose whoever opposes him, whether that person is among his intimate associates or the general public, near or distant.

That is the true believer, and he is his brother in reality, not merely metaphorically.

But when he is not upon this description, he is not a brother. Rather, the name of "adversary" applies to him more fittingly, and he is called an opposing enemy, because he has severed what God commanded to be joined: the allegiance, righteousness, affection, and loyalty owed to his believing brother.

He has transformed affection into enmity, fairness into harshness, protection into betrayal, and closeness into distance.

Whoever is in this condition does not join himself to goodness or to its people, since by his actions he has separated himself from them—actions that he commits against his brethren.

Regarding arrogance and envy, which are the root of all of this, one of the Boundaries—may God exalt his sanctity—said:

"Beware of arrogance and envy, for they destroy every structure of faith."

Know that whoever commits this act against a friend is not a friend. Rather, he is among the ravenous beasts, the harmful wild creatures, and the wayward ghūls.

For it is in the nature of the predatory beast to tear apart sound, lawful animals, which are like the Friends of God. Likewise, the one who commits the act we have described has preyed upon his brother and violated the sanctity of the religion between them.

As has already been said, he has thus become like the predatory beasts, and also like scorpions, snakes, and serpents, whose only action is to sting all living creatures.

May God protect you and us, O brother, from following the path of one whose way is such. May He make us among those who acknowledge the excellence of their brother, and may He guide us to that through its guide.

God Most High has forbidden backbiting in His noble Book, saying:

“Do not backbite one another. Would any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it.”
—[Qur’an 49:12]

And He, glorified is He, said:

“Do not insult one another by nicknames. Wretched is the name of wickedness after faith. And whoever does not repent—those are the wrongdoers.”
—[Qur’an 49:11]

What proof could be clearer and more evident than that which has come in the Book of Almighty God, against which falsehood cannot come from before it or behind it—the revelation of the Wise, the Praiseworthy?

One of the righteous said in verse:

“Beware of backbiting, for it is sin, beyond all doubt;
the backbiter is like one who eats the flesh of his brother.”

Know, my brother, that many of our brethren perhaps hear some words from one of their brothers and then wish to retaliate against him because of what they have heard, whether the words are true or untrue.

He lets his tongue loose against him and says, “He has transgressed,” believing that there is no sin upon him for what he says and does.

He is worse than the first offender, because he has embarked upon one of two matters.

If the statement or deed that he heard and was told about is true, and he wishes to punish him for what he did, then he has contradicted the word of God Most High:

“Those who restrain anger and pardon people—and God loves the doers of good.”
—[Qur’an 3:134]

This is the first matter.

The other is that if the statement or deed is untrue, then he has hastened against his brother and contradicted the Book of Almighty God in His saying:

“O you who believe, if a wicked person comes to you with news, verify it, lest you harm a people in ignorance and then become regretful for what you have done.”
—[Qur’an 49:6]

It would have been better for him to do what Hābīl, the son of Adam, peace be upon him, did with his brother Qābīl, as God Most High has related in His noble Book:

“If you stretch out your hand toward me to kill me, I will not stretch out my hand toward you to kill you. Indeed, I fear God, Lord of the worlds. I desire that you bear my sin and your sin, and thus become among the companions of the Fire. That is the recompense of the wrongdoers.”

But his soul made the killing of his brother seem acceptable to him, so he killed him and became one of the losers.

“That is the recompense of the wrongdoers.”

“His soul then prompted him to kill his brother, so he killed him and became one of the losers.”

Know that the believer has rights that are incumbent upon the believer, with no dispensation for him to abandon them. They are that he should continually give him sincere counsel, respond to his call, assist him well, defend him in his absence, overlook his slip, accept his excuse, safeguard his protection, visit him when he is ill, and accompany his funeral procession.

It is related from our master al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh, peace and blessings of God be upon him and upon the Imams from his descendants, that he used to supplicate after every prayer he performed in the Palace of the Inhabited [Mosque]:

“O God, forgive whoever forgives his believing brother his sin. Repent toward whoever does not hold his believing brother accountable for his offense.

O God, establish guidance in the heart of whoever establishes a bond between himself and his believing brother and does not sever it.

Conceal the faults of whoever conceals his brother’s private defect and does not expose it.

Overlook the slip of whoever overlooks his brother’s slip and does not take advantage of it.

O God, expand the provision of whoever expands the provision of his believing brother, and make difficult the affairs of whoever is stingy toward him.

O God, destroy whoever makes his faith subordinate to his worldly life rather than his hereafter; obliterate his heart, blind his sight, bring his cheek low, blunt his edge, and give his enemy victory over him.

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds."

Consider, my brother: if this is the speech of my master and your master, and his emphasis upon the brother's rights toward his brother, his supplication for him, and his supplication against the one who wrongs his brother, then from where could it be permissible for one Friend to betray or harm another Friend?

Rather, it is incumbent upon him to love him and show loyalty toward him. Otherwise he has no faith, and the name of "believer" is removed from anyone who neglects this aforementioned condition, because he has severed what God commanded to be joined.

One of the righteous said:

"The believer is one whose faith is not complete except through righteousness toward his brother and loyalty to him."

Another said:

"Make yourself firmly attached and committed to obedience to your Master, and submit to the Boundaries of your religion. You will then be safe from the path of destruction and travel upon the path of guidance. You will set your soul free toward the world of the dominion while you are still in this heavy bodily form; you will direct your thought into the world of the highest heavens, encompass these celestial spheres and discern their inner nature.

And you must know your believing brother. Do not waste your striving through your lack of knowledge of him or through denying your brother his right. Love for him the good that you love for yourself in your religion and your worldly life."

Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān ibn Muḥammad—may God sanctify his spirit—related from our master the Imam al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, blessings of God be upon him, that he said concerning what he had made obligatory: that one must not conceal anything from him by way of treachery.

Then he said:

"As for what is between one of you and his brother, concealing it from him is more appropriate. It is among the rights of the believer upon his brother that he conceal his defect from him and give him counsel concerning it."

This is like the saying of his grandfather, peace and blessings of God be upon him:

"If I found a believer committing an indecent act, I would conceal him with my garment."

Among the transmitted sayings is:

"Overlook the slips of people of nobility."

And among the traditions transmitted from al-Ṣādiq, peace and blessings of God be upon him, who traces it back to the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, is that he said:

“There is no believing servant except that God has seventy coverings over him. When he commits a sin, one of those coverings is torn away from him. If he repents from it and seeks God’s forgiveness, God restores that covering to him, together with seventy coverings.

But if he persists in his sins, proceeding from one sin to another without repenting or seeking God’s forgiveness for them, a covering is torn away with each sin, until he remains with no covering over him.

Then God commands the angels to cover him with their wings. If he repents and seeks God’s forgiveness, God restores those coverings to him, and with each covering He restores seventy coverings.

But if he persists in his sins, the angels complain of his condition to Almighty God. Then God commands them to lift their wings from him. If he were to commit a sin at the bottom of the sea or beneath the depths of the earth, God would surely expose it upon him.”

Then he, peace and blessings of God be upon him and upon his pure forefathers, said:

“So ask God that He not tear away your coverings.”

If this is how Almighty God treats His believing servants—covering them, overlooking their slips, and giving them respite so long as they do not persist in sins—then His Friends are more deserving of carrying out this command of His and of observing what they have been commanded concerning His believing servants.

He said:

“I heard al-Muʿizz, peace be upon him, speaking about the virtue of the mosque and what is required in honoring it.”

This followed an account of a man who had been mentioned as having, in former times, entered the mosque while riding his beast. He condemned his action and regarded what he had done as a grave matter. He mentioned what is required concerning the reverence due to the mosque and its virtue.

Then he said:

“The believer is more excellent than it and more noble in condition.”

This resembles the saying of his grandfather, the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, when he looked upon the Kaʿba, the Sacred House, and said:

“By God, you are indeed magnificent in the sight of God, and I know of one who is more magnificent than you in His sight.”

They asked him:

“And who is that, O Messenger of God?”

He replied:

“The believer, for Almighty God has made inviolable his property and his honor, and that one should think badly of him.”

Consider, O brother, the conduct of the Friends of God, may blessings of God be upon them, toward their followers, and what they urged them to do concerning mutual loyalty.

Consider the saying of the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him:

“If I found a believer committing an indecent act, I would conceal him with my garment.”

This resembles the saying of God:

“Indeed, those who love that indecency should spread among those who believe will have a painful punishment.”
—[Qur’an 24:19]

So strive, O brother—may God guide you toward what pleases Him—to be among those who work for the well-being of the brethren and the reconciliation of the people of faith who adhere to allegiance to the Imam of the Age.

Avoid following Satan, those who divide the unity of the people of faith.

May God, through His grace and mercy, protect us and you from them.

It is related from Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh—may God sanctify his spirit—that he asked our master Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, peace be upon him:

“O my master, is there any shortcoming after recognizing you?”

He replied:

“Yes. When a believer falls short concerning the rights of his brethren, does not share with them in the prosperity and adversity of their affairs, and takes for himself the vanishing possessions of this world instead of sharing them with them, then at that point he is stripped of recognition and is completely stripped of his religion.

He is afflicted by such afflictions and calamities of this world that he cannot endure or bear them: illnesses in himself, loss of his wealth, and the disintegration of his affairs. This is a recompense for his falling short in righteousness toward his brethren.”

Jābir said:

“I became intensely distressed and said to him, ‘O son of the Messenger of God, what is the right of the believer upon the believer?’”

He said:

“He rejoices at his joy in goodness and grieves at his grief when he is grieved. He takes care of all his affairs with a view to their betterment. He should not be concerned with any possession of this perishing world without sharing it with him, until the two of them proceed together through good and evil in a single course.

For he is his brother through his father and mother, and he inherits from him, and he has greater right to his property, because the believer is the brother of the believer.

But if he is from his father and mother and does not recognize his right, nor recognize this matter, then he has no right to possess anything of his property, nor does he inherit from him.”

Jābir said:

“Glory be to God! And who could do that and be capable of it?”

He replied:

“Whoever wishes to knock upon the gates of the Gardens, embrace the beautiful houris, be gathered with us in the Abode of Peace, and converse directly with the Exalted, the All-Knowing.”

Jābir said:

“O my master, then what is my condition regarding what I spend upon my family and children, who do not recognize the truth? My compassion for them is greater than my compassion for my brethren, and they are from me and I am from them.”

He, peace be upon him, said:

“God forbid! They are not from you, nor are you from them, if they do not recognize this matter.”

Jābir said:

“Then I have been afflicted through them.”

He said:

“By God, you have not been afflicted through them except because you abandoned righteousness toward your brethren and neglected their rights. For the believer is your brother through your father and mother; he inherits from you and you inherit from him. There is nothing more excellent for you than recognition of your brethren.”

Consider, O brother, the words of Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, the foremost of those who bow and prostrate before the Lord of the worlds, peace be upon him, and his emphasis upon the rights of believers toward one another.

Can the one who calls himself a believer find any escape or alternative from these conditions?

God forbid that this should be so.

It is related from our master al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, that one day he was riding his mule when ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib stood in his path, seized the bridle of the mule, and said:

“You sorcerer! You unbeliever! You liar! You god of the people of Kufa!”

He spoke other vile words to him.

He, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said to him:

“Release the mule—may God have mercy upon you. By God, I shall anger the one who is behind your conduct.”

Then he went to his home.

The Shīʿa rose against the man who had spoken these words and condemned him for what he had done. He regretted it and went to our master al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, and said:

“O my master, I have wronged you, and I ask you to forgive me for that.”

He said:

“I have already done so.”

The man asked:

“When?”

He replied:

“Was it not when you seized the mule’s bridle and I said to you, ‘Release the mule—may God have mercy upon you. By God, I shall anger the one who is behind your conduct’?”

The man said:

“By God, no one instructed me to do it.”

He replied:

“Yes, he did: it was Satan, and I wanted to anger him.”

Consider, O brother, the conduct of your pure masters, peace be upon them. They do not repay an evil deed except with a good deed.

Therefore, nothing is required of us except to follow the example of our masters, peace be upon them, according to their saying:

“None is among our Shīʿa except one who follows our practice.”

It is related from our master the Commander of the Believers, peace and blessings of God be upon him and upon the Imams from his descendants, that someone asked him:

“What is greater than the heavens and the earth?”

He replied:

“False accusation [baḥṭ]. That is, when a believer falsely accuses another believer of something that is not in him.”

Know that everyone who falsely accuses a believer of something that is not in him has truly killed him, because there are two kinds of killing: killing by the hand and killing by the tongue.

False accusation is killing by the tongue, because he falsely accused him of something he had not committed; rather, he wronged him and transgressed against him.

The Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, said in a letter he wrote to Rifāʿa ibn Shaddād al-Bajalī, who was his governor over al-Ahwāz, after a lengthy discourse:

“The believer is the brother of the believer. He does not deceive him, nor does he backbite him, nor does he abandon his support.”

Then he said in that letter:

“Do not betray the one who betrays you. Fulfill your trust. Do good to the one who does evil to you. Repay the one who does good to you with something better than his good. And give to the one who deprives you.”

And he, peace be upon him, said:

“Do not quarrel with a believer, lest you strip yourself of faith as a branch is stripped of its bark.

Beware the tear of the believer, for it strikes down the one who causes him to shed it and extinguishes the seas of Fire for the one who sheds it.”

One of the righteous said:

“The believer is one who does not backbite his brother, betray him, accuse him, abandon him, or disassociate himself from him.”

He also said:

“Accept your brother’s excuse. If he has no excuse, seek an excuse for him.”

The statement at the beginning of the epistle has already been mentioned:

“The believer is one from whose harmfulness people are safe and whose inward afflictions are safe from harming them.”

Know that it is incumbent upon every believer to conceal a believer, even if he comes to know something about his affairs, because of the saying of Almighty God:

“Indeed, those who love that indecency should spread among those who believe will have a painful punishment.”
—[Qur’an 24:19]

Know, my brother, that error occurs from many people, for none is protected from error and slipping except the nāṭiqs, the legatees, the Imams, and the bābs, peace and blessings of God be upon them all, and their Boundaries who follow them.

May God make us among them and not sever us from them. Indeed, He is the Patron of that and has power over it.

You have heard, O brother, the words of your masters that the believer is closer to you than your son, your brother, and your natural father, because natural, bodily lineage cannot be compared with spiritual lineage, as has already been stated.

This is demonstrated by Salmān al-Fārisī and what the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, testified concerning him when he said:

“Salmān is from us, the People of the House.”

That is spiritual relationship.

As for bodily relationship, he was Persian.

Likewise, Abū Lahab was distant from the relationship to the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, despite their bodily lineage, just as the relationship of the children of Noah, peace be upon him, was severed from their father, according to the saying of Almighty God:

“He is not of your family; indeed, his conduct is unrighteous.”
—[Qur’an 11:46]

Know, O brother, that whoever neglects any of the qualities mentioned is mistaken and will be punished for it, because he has transgressed against what God commanded to be joined.

So beware, O brother, of being lax regarding your brethren. Take every possible precaution against treating any one of them lightly or despising him within yourself, because of the saying of Almighty God:

“Let not one people mock another people; perhaps they may be better than them, nor women [mock] women; perhaps they may be better than them.”
—[Qur’an 49:11]

If you do that, O brother, you have certainly erred. What a tremendous sin it is, and what an immense calamity!

Rather, it is incumbent upon you to honor him, magnify him, and respect him, for he is your intimate companion, your kinsman, and your brother through your spiritual mother and father.

You and he are two noble, mutually connected members, with no separation between you, provided that you sincerely counsel one another for Almighty God and for His Friend—God's peace be upon him.

The Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

"O Abū Dharr, make your inward disposition good, for the examiner is perceptive."

God, glorified is He, said:

"Whoever does righteousness, it is for his own soul; and whoever does evil, it is against it. Your Lord is not unjust to His servants."

So beware, O brother, of intending to repay your brother for his wronging you, whether by word or deed, lest you suffer manifest loss.

Rather, say to everyone who wrongs you what Hābīl said to his brother when he threatened him:

"If you stretch out your hand toward me to kill me, I will not stretch out my hand toward you to kill you. Indeed, I fear God, Lord of the worlds. I desire that you bear my sin and your sin, and thus become among the companions of the Fire. That is the recompense of the wrongdoers."

Know that whoever forgives his brother for what he has done against him, God will not cause his deed to be lost. Rather, He will recompense him with goodness, according to the saying of Almighty God:

"Those who pardon people—and God loves the doers of good."
—[Qur'an 3:134]

And according to the supplication of our master al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh, peace be upon him:

"O God, forgive whoever forgives his believing brother his sin,"

as has already been explained at the beginning of this epistle.

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

"The Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe.

The Muslim is the brother of the Muslim: he does not wrong him and does not insult him.

The Muslims are one hand against those besides them.

Everything belonging to a Muslim is inviolable to another Muslim: his blood, his property, and his honor.

The sanctity of a Muslim's property is like the sanctity of his blood."

His statement, peace and blessings of God be upon him, here is directed to all Muslims who bear witness to the two testimonies, and no more.

So how much more does it apply to the people of faith who have entered into the allegiance of the Imam of the Age—the true Muslims, who have accepted and submitted to the Imam of the Age?

Then he, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

"Whoever restrains his tongue from the honor of people, God will overlook his slip on the Day of Resurrection.

Whoever restrains his anger while possessing the power to carry it out, God will fill his heart with security and faith.

Whoever has two tongues in this world, God will give him two tongues of fire on the Day of Resurrection.

Whoever looks into the book of his brother without his permission is as though he were looking into the Fire."

Thus the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, made it obligatory that he not betray his brother by looking into his book without permission.

How much more so, O brother, does this apply to one who backbites his brother, betrays him, or speaks against him in the manner we have previously described?

We ask Almighty God for soundness in steadfastness and purity of intentions.

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

"Whoever looks upon his brother without seeing a fault in him, God will look upon him in this world and the hereafter.

Whoever looks upon his brother with the eye of fault-finding, God will not look upon him in this world or the hereafter.

Whoever relieves his brother of one of the troubles of this world, God will relieve him of one of the troubles of the Day of Resurrection.

Whoever is occupied with the need of his brother, God will be occupied with his need.

Whoever conceals his brother, God will conceal him in this world and the hereafter.

God is in the assistance of the servant so long as the servant is in the assistance of his brother.

Whoever sees a private defect and conceals it is like one who revives a girl buried alive from her grave.

Whoever deals with people without wronging them, speaks to them without lying to them, and promises them without breaking his promise is among those whose manly virtue is complete, whose uprightness is manifest, whose brotherhood is established, and whose backbiting is forbidden."

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

"Whoever safeguards what is between his jaws and what is between his legs will enter Paradise."

He also said:

"May God have mercy upon a person who sets his tongue right."

And he, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

"A believer may be characterized by every trait except treachery and lying.

One of you sees the speck in his brother's eye while leaving the log in his own eye.

It is a great act of treachery to tell your brother something which he believes you about while you are lying to him.

Love for people what you love for yourself, and you will be a believer.

Support your brother, whether he is a wrongdoer or wronged.

Overlook the slips of people of nobility.

Speak good and you will gain; remain silent concerning evil and you will be safe.

No servant will enter Paradise whose neighbor is not safe from his harmfulness.

It is not permissible for a Muslim to frighten another Muslim.

It is not permissible for a Muslim to abandon his brother for more than three days.

No servant has faith until he loves for his brother the good that he loves for himself.

None of you completes the reality of faith until he restrains his tongue.

God does not have mercy upon one who does not have mercy upon people.

Do not display malicious joy at your brother's misfortune, lest God restore him to health and afflict you.

Do not backbite the Muslims, nor pursue their private faults.

Do not tear away anyone's covering.

Do not make a promise to your brother and then break it.

Do not envy one another, do not artificially raise prices against one another, do not hate one another, and do not turn your backs upon one another. Rather, be servants of God and brothers.

Do not be fault-finders, flatterers, slanderers, or those who feed upon the faults of others, nor those who feign death.

Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the falsest of speech.

Having a good opinion is part of good worship.

Noble character is among the deeds of the people of Paradise.

Through good character, a servant attains the rank of one who fasts and keeps vigil.

The things through which people most often enter the Fire are the two hollow things: the mouth and the private parts.

The things through which people most often enter Paradise are fear of God and good character.

God forbids you from idle talk and gossip, wasting wealth, and excessive questioning.

God is with the tongue of every speaker.

God does not accept a servant's deed until He is pleased with his speech.

The people who will suffer the severest punishment on the Day of Resurrection are those who accuse people of indecency."

These, O brother, are sayings of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, extracted from the *Book of al-Shihāb*. They contain sufficient sufficiency and a healing blessing for whoever acts upon them and takes heed of what they contain.

May God grant you and us success in everything that pleases Him, through His grace and generosity.

The Commander of the Believers, peace and blessings of God be upon him and upon the Imams from his descendants, said:

"The one who listens to backbiting is one of the backbiters."

And he, peace be upon him, said:

"I asked the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, about the description of the believer. He said:

‘Where is the believer? The believer is like the red ruby, which is found only in the treasuries of kings.’

Then he said:

‘A believer is not truly a believer until he is intelligent through knowledge, speaks with wisdom, is abstinent from the unlawful, gentle in speech, quick to be pleased, slow to anger, learns when taught, and restrains himself when insulted.

When you accompany him, you are safe; when you associate with him, you gain; and when you part from him, you regret it.

He possesses abundant dignity, obeys the Almighty, honors the neighbor, and flees from the Fire.

His heart flourishes through knowledge of God, his tongue remembers God, and his body is patient in His trials.

He is weary on account of himself, while people are at ease because of him.

His likeness is that of water: it is the life of all things.

His imagination is illumination, and his work is enduring.

He hates the world, causes little harm, spreads praise, and is far removed from ostentation.

When he is called to righteousness, he hastens to it; and when he is called to disobedience, he refuses.

He is truthful in speech, patient in body, rich in heart, generous in spirit, and moderate in both wealth and poverty.

When you entrust him with a trust, he fulfills it; and when he entrusts you with something, he does not suspect you.

He is a father to the orphan and compassionate toward widows.

He longs for Paradise and is not disobedient toward his parents.

He possesses forbearance, contentment, and intelligence.

He wishes that good should come to you and does not fear harm from him.

His speech is beneficial, his companionship elevates, and sitting with him is a blessing.

If you entrust him with a secret, he keeps it.

If you ask him for food, he feeds you.

If you seek his assistance, he assists you.

He is generous in giving for God's sake and marked by good character and contentment.

If he borrows, he repays; if he is asked to lend, he lends; and if he is asked for something, he gives.

If he is above you, he humbles himself; and if he is below you, he assists you.

His likeness is that of a tree whose root is firmly established, whose branch has grown, whose boughs have lengthened, and whose fruits have multiplied. Whoever sees it is amazed by it.

He does not take anything out of ostentation, nor does he leave it out of shame.

He holds himself accountable and examines his faults.

He considers his own knowledge small.

If he is a doer of good, he fears for himself.

He is generous with his wealth and keeps away from the wealth of others.

He is firmly grounded in knowledge, complete in intelligence, composed without laziness, diligent in travel, and well supplied with provisions.

The abundance of children does not distract him.

If he is rebuked, he does not become angry; and if he is asked to make amends, he makes amends.

He neither becomes heedless, nor plays frivolously, nor engages in idle speech.

If he is given something, he is content and gives thanks; and if he is not given anything, he is content and patient.

His likeness is that of the bee, which eats from every tree and provides sweetness to the young and the old.'"

Then the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, also said in the *Book of al-Shihāb*:

"Among the things that make forgiveness obligatory is bringing joy to your believing brother."

And:

"The believer is like the bee: he eats nothing but good and produces nothing but good."

These, O brother, are the words of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, which I have cited as evidence in this epistle. I have called it **Admonition to the Heedless** because it admonishes all the brethren concerning the fulfillment of the rights of their brethren and righteousness toward them.

Consider, may God have mercy upon you, all the words of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, and contemplate all their meanings and their instructions for his entire community.

Know that most of his words, peace and blessings of God be upon him, apply properly only to the people of the noble madhhab, for they are his community in truth.

Therefore, every believer must not listen to something said against his brother, must not direct blame at him, must not harm him, and must not associate in friendship with his enemy. Rather, he must defend him in his absence, respond to his call, and conceal his private faults.

If he is able to repel the backbiting, he should do so. Otherwise, he should do what Almighty God commanded:

“Do not sit with them until they engage in some other discourse.”
—[Qur’an 4:140]

The Commander of the Believers, peace and blessings of God be upon him and upon the Imams from his descendants, said:

“Do not despise the weak among your brethren, for whoever despises a believer, God despises him and detests him, and He will not bring the two of them together on the Day of Resurrection unless he repents.

A person should not make his brother ask him for something when he knows his need.

Support one another, show compassion toward one another, and give generously to one another.

Do not be like the hypocrite who describes what he does not do.

The Muslim is a mirror for his brother. If you see a slip from him, do not become a burden against him; guide him, advise him, treat him gently, and have mercy upon him.

When a believer says to his brother, ‘Uff,’ the bond of affection between them is severed.

If he says to him, ‘You are an unbeliever,’ then one of the two has become an unbeliever.

He should not accuse him, for if he accuses him, faith between them melts away as salt melts in water.”

Consider, O brother, the words of the Commander of the Believers, the leader of religion and father of the pure Imams, peace and blessings of God be upon him and upon them all. See how he said that the two brothers—meaning the two brothers who hate one another in this world—will have no gathering together in the hereafter, as has already been stated.

The Commander of the Believers, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

“Beware of backbiting, for a Muslim does not backbite his brother.”

God has forbidden this, saying:

“Would any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it,”

as we have already mentioned.

He, peace be upon him, also said:

“When you meet your brethren, shake hands with them and show them cheerfulness and gladness. Then you will part from one another with your burdens of sin removed.”

Take heed, O brother, of the words of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, and the words of his legatee, peace and blessings of God be upon them both and upon the Imams from their descendants.

What, then, will be the condition of one who has entered into the noble covenant, become among the people of faith who hold fast to allegiance to the Imam of the Age, and then does something toward his brethren that our masters and their Boundaries have forbidden?

Would not the one who does this be among the people of the Fire and be counted among the evil unbelievers who did not accept the admonition of the pure Imams?

May God spare us from this and make the most fitting paths easy for us.

So, O brother, you must act righteously toward your brethren, share with them in prosperity and adversity, pardon those among them who offend, have mercy upon them, and show tenderness toward all of them.

If you do this, you will be among the believers, counted among the people of allegiance and religion.

Do not hold any one of them accountable for what he has committed. Leave his affair to his Master.

God Most High said:

“Whoever does righteousness, it is for his own soul; and whoever does evil, it is against it. Your Lord is not unjust to His servants.”

“No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another.”

“Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.”

Beware of repaying any of your brethren with words or deeds, lest your work be nullified, your hope disappointed, and your disgrace become manifest.

Know, O brother, that your brother has answered your question in this epistle according to what he has composed within it, to the extent of his knowledge and of what he has composed from the words of his masters and their Boundaries.

He has not brought anything from himself, nor added a single letter to it. Rather, he has arranged their words and brought together their statements.

For *taʾlīf*—composition—is that which is collected from the words of scholars and assembled from the expressions of the sages.

As for *inshāʾ*—origination or original composition—it is what a person brings forth from himself and arranges from what he has memorized and conceived in meaning, clothing those meanings in expressions of his own speech.

That is *inshāʾ*.

What is called *taʾlīf* is the gathering, transmission, and arrangement of speech.

He has done this hoping from Almighty God for abundant reward for what he has gathered and composed, in accordance with His saying:

"And whoever saves one life, it is as though he has saved all mankind."
—[Qur'an 5:32]

This is the life of knowledge.

If there is any discrepancy among its meanings, it is due to the deficiency of its form.

We ask Almighty God for steadfastness in obedience to Him and for excellence in allegiance to Him, through His grace and compassion.

Know, O brother—may God strengthen you and us with a spirit from Him—that the author of the epistles, peace be upon him, has included in them everything that the Friend requires concerning his religion: instruction, encouragement, and warning, and he has spoken of every wondrous kind of knowledge.

After seeking God's guidance and seeking His assistance and the assistance of His Friend, peace be upon him, I have decided to include in this epistle some of what he brought, so that I may gather in this epistle various kinds of instruction and realities that the people of correctness have articulated, with the help of God, the One, the Bestower.

He, peace be upon him, said:

"Know, O noble, kind, compassionate brother—may God strengthen you and us with a spirit from Him—that it is appropriate for our brethren, wherever they may be in the lands, to have a private assembly in which they gather at appointed times. No one besides them should enter it.

There they should discuss their sciences with one another and converse concerning their secrets.

Their discussions should be predominantly concerned with the knowledge of the soul, the senses and the sensible, the intellect and the intelligible, the resurrection, investigation, and

reflection upon the secrets of the divine books and the prophetic revelations, and the meanings contained within the subjects of the religious law.

They should also discuss the sciences and the four mathematical disciplines—namely arithmetic, geometry, astrology, and composition—especially the younger among them.

Most of their ultimate aims and purposes should be investigation into divine matters, which are the highest object of delight and the utmost bliss of the people of Paradise, and through which the soul is perfected and rises from the world of the senses.

In general, our brethren—may God strengthen them—should not reject any science or abandon any book of the sages, for these are nourishment for the soul and a source of intimacy.

They should not be fanatical toward a single school of thought. Rather, they should gather all the sciences together.

This is because the proper investigation concerns all existing things in their entirety, both sensible and intellectual, from their beginning to their end, their outward and inward, their manifest and hidden, with the eye of reality.

All of them originate from a single mine, their cause is one, and their soul is one, encompassing all their differing essences, their diverse genera, their varied species, and their differing particulars."

We have mentioned in the second epistle that our sciences are derived from four books.

The first is the books composed by the sages and philosophers, concerning mathematics and the natural sciences.

The second is the revealed books brought by the prophets, peace and blessings of God be upon them, such as the Torah, the Gospel, the Furqān, and the other scriptures of the prophets. Their meanings were received through revelation from the angels, together with the hidden secrets contained within them.

The third is the natural books, namely the forms of existing things as they presently are: the composition of the celestial spheres, the divisions of the zodiac, the movements of the planets and the measures of their bodies, the cycles of time, the transformation of the elements, the receptivity of created things such as animals, minerals, and plants, and the varieties of manufactured things made by human hands.

All of these are forms and created things that point toward subtle meanings and refined secrets. People see their outward forms but do not know their meanings, which derive from the subtle workmanship of the Creator, mighty and exalted is He.

The fourth type is the divine books, which none touch except the purified, which are in the hands of noble, righteous scribes.

They are the essences, genera, and species of souls; their movements; their directing of bodies, their moving them and governing them; their control over them; and the manifestation

of their actions through them and from them, state after state, as time passes and conjunctions and cycles occur.

They include the descent of some souls into the depths of certain bodies, the rising at times of others from the darknesses of corporeality, their arising and awakening from the sleep of heedlessness and forgetfulness, their being gathered for reckoning and the Balance, their passing over the Bridge, their reaching the Gardens, or their being confined in the levels of the Abyss and the Fires, or their remaining in the barzakh and standing upon the Heights.

As God Most High said:

“And behind them is a barzakh until the day they are resurrected.”
—[Qur’an 23:100]

And in His blessed saying:

“And upon the Heights are men who recognize each by their mark.”

They are the men who are in houses concerning which God has permitted that they be raised and that His name be mentioned therein:

“Neither commerce nor sale distracts them from the remembrance of God and establishing prayer.”
—[Qur’an 24:36–37]

This is the condition of our virtuous and noble brethren.

So follow their example, O brethren, and you will be like them, God willing.

We have explained in our epistles everything that our brethren require of these sciences.

Know, O brother—may God strengthen you and us with a spirit from Him—that the gifts of God are numerous beyond counting, but they can be gathered into two genera, beneath each of which are many kinds.

One is **bodily acquisition**, and the other is **spiritual acquisition**.

Among bodily acquisitions is wealth.

Among spiritual acquisitions is knowledge.

People occupy four stations with regard to these two great blessings:

1. Some are granted both knowledge and wealth.
2. Some are deprived of both.
3. Some are granted wealth but not knowledge.
4. Some are granted knowledge but not wealth.

Those among our brethren who have been granted both knowledge and wealth should give thanks for what God has bestowed upon them by joining to themselves a brother from among their brethren who has been deprived of both.

They should support him from the excess of what God has given them of wealth, enabling him to sustain the life of his body in the abode of this world; and they should strengthen him and teach him from their knowledge, enabling him to give life to his soul for permanence in the abode of the hereafter.

This is among the closest offerings to Almighty God and among the most effective means of seeking His pleasure.

He should not remind him of what he spends upon him, nor despise him.

He should know that the One who deprived his brother is the same One who gave to him.

Just as a man does not hold it over his bodily son that he raises him and spends from his wealth upon him, and provides for him from the wealth he has accumulated after his death, likewise he should not hold it over his spiritual son.

For if that one is his bodily son, this one is also his spiritual son.

It is related from the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, that he said to ʿAlī, peace be upon him:

“I and you, O ʿAlī, are the two fathers of this community.”

And he, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

“The believer is the brother of the believer through his father and mother.”

Abraham, peace be upon him, said:

“Whoever follows me is surely of me.”
—[Qur’an 14:36]

And Almighty God said to Noah, peace be upon him, when he said:

“My son is of my family,”

He replied:

“He is not of your family; indeed, his conduct is unrighteous.”
—[Qur’an 11:46]

And He Most High said:

“When the Trumpet is blown, there will be no relationships between them that Day, nor will they ask one another.”
—[Qur’an 23:101]

Thus He made clear that bodily lineage is of no benefit in the hereafter.

For this reason the Messiah, peace be upon him, said to the disciples:

“I have come from my Father and your Father.”

And He Most High said:

“The creed of your father Abraham—He named you Muslims.”
—[Qur’an 22:78]

This fatherhood is spiritual, because its lineage is not severed.

As the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

“Every lineage will be severed on the Day of Resurrection except my lineage.”

And he said:

“O Banū Hāshim, people will come to me on the Day of Resurrection with their deeds, while you come to me with your lineage. I cannot avail you against God in anything except through a righteous deed.”

He intended by this bodily lineage, not spiritual lineage, because bodily lineage is severed when bodies perish, whereas spiritual relationship remains, because the essences of souls remain after their separation from the body.

Even if one supposes that his bodily son will preserve his memory after his death, this too is so only if the son lives in such a way that he preserves his father’s memory in the gatherings of scholars and assemblies of the righteous by disseminating his knowledge. People will invoke mercy upon him whenever they mention him, just as we remember our teachers and masters more often than we remember our bodily fathers, and invoke mercy upon them more often than we invoke mercy upon them.

And if one supposes that his bodily son may benefit him when he grows older and assist him in worldly affairs, perhaps that son may attain such knowledge, wisdom, goodness, and rank with God that he intercedes for his teacher, who is his father, and his father is saved through his intercession without knowing it.

As Almighty God said:

“Your fathers and your sons—you do not know which of them is nearer to you in benefit.”
—[Qur’an 4:11]

As for those among our brethren who have been granted wealth but not knowledge, he should take another brother who has been granted knowledge but not wealth and join himself to him.

The former should support him from his wealth, while the latter should support him from his knowledge, and the two should cooperate in the betterment of religion and the world alike.

The brother possessing wealth should not hold his financial support over the brother possessing knowledge, nor despise him because of his poverty.

Wealth is a bodily acquisition by which the life of the body is sustained in the abode of this world, whereas knowledge is a spiritual acquisition by which the life of the soul is sustained in the abode of the hereafter.

The essence of the soul is better than the essence of the body, and the life of the soul is better than the life of the body, because the life of the body lasts for a period and then is cut off and perishes, whereas the life of the soul in the abode of the hereafter remains forever.

As Almighty God said:

"They will not taste death therein except the first death."
—[Qur'an 44:56]

The brother possessing knowledge should likewise not envy his brother who possesses wealth because of his wealth, nor despise him for his ignorance, nor boast over him because of his knowledge, nor seek compensation from him for what he teaches him.

Their condition in companionship and cooperation—this one assisting the other with his wealth and that one assisting the other with his knowledge—is like the hand and the foot, and their connection to the body and service in preserving the body.

The hands do not demand recompense or gratitude from the feet when the feet provide them with a support from which they may steady themselves and remove a thorn.

Likewise, the feet do not demand recompense or compensation from the hands when the hands carry them to places where they are protected and climb with them, thereby saving them from the fear of being cut.

For both are instruments of a single body, and each is sustained by the other. The well-being of one is the well-being of the other.

Likewise, the sense of hearing does not hold it over the sight when it makes a call heard by it, nor does the sight hold it over hearing when it shows it the caller.

They are two faculties of a single soul through their connection with it, and the well-being of each is the well-being of the other through their cooperation in serving the soul and their obedience to it in perceiving sensible things.

This, then, is how the **Brothers of Purity** should act in the betterment of religion and the world alike.

The assistance of the brother possessing wealth to the brother possessing knowledge through his wealth, and the assistance of the brother possessing knowledge to the brother possessing wealth through his knowledge, for the betterment of religion and the world alike, is like two men who travel together through a wilderness.

One is sighted but physically weak and has provisions that he cannot carry.

The other is blind but physically strong and has no provisions.

The sighted man takes the blind man by the hand and leads him behind him, while the blind man takes the burden of the sighted man and carries his provisions upon his shoulder.

They share those provisions, traverse the road, and both escape safely.

Neither has the right to hold it over the other that he saved him from destruction through his assistance, because both were saved through each one assisting his companion.

Assistance occurs only between two, three, or more persons.

The ignorant brother is like the blind man.

The poor brother is like the physically weak man.

The wealthy brother is like the strong man.

The learned brother is like the sighted man.

The road is the companionship of the soul with the body.

The wilderness is the life of this world.

And salvation is the hereafter.

This is the likeness of our brethren who cooperate in seeking the betterment of religion and the world.

As for the one who has been granted knowledge but not wealth, and does not find among our brethren anyone to support him financially, he should be patient and await relief.

There must come an affair through which Almighty God strengthens him and makes light for him the burden that he bears, as He promised His Friends.

He said:

“Whoever fears God, He will make for him a way out and provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon God, He is sufficient for him.”
—[Qur’an 65:2–3]

He should know that the one who has been granted knowledge has received something better than the one who has been deprived of wealth, because knowledge is the cause of the life of the soul in both the abode of this world and the abode of the hereafter, whereas wealth is the means for sustaining the life of the body in the abode of this world.

The superiority of the soul over the body, the nobility of their respective essences, the superiority of their lives, and the excellence of their respective natures have already been discussed.

He should also reflect upon the one who has been deprived of both wealth and knowledge, so that he may recognize God's blessing upon himself and give thanks to Him in every circumstance, thereby making himself worthy of increase, as Almighty God promised:

"If you are grateful, I will surely increase you; but if you are ungrateful, surely My punishment is severe."
—[Qur'an 14:7]

As for those among our brethren who possess neither wealth nor knowledge, they are those whose souls are pure and whose character is beautiful, whose hearts are sound and free of corrupt opinions, who love goodness and its people, whose souls are patient, and who are content with what God has apportioned to them. He ought to know that what he has been given of good character, soundness of heart, love of goodness, and contentment with what God has apportioned to him is better than what has been withheld from him of wealth and knowledge. For we find among people some who have been given wealth and knowledge, or one of the two, yet have not been granted any of the qualities we have mentioned. There are people who are learned and profess philosophy, composing books on the improvement of character and commanding people to practice it, while they themselves are the worst of people in condition and character. And we find people who possess little knowledge, yet whose character is refined as we have described.

It is therefore clear from what we have said that good character is among the great gifts of God Most High, as it is said in the report: "God has finished with creation, character, lifespan, and provision." God Most High praised His Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, for his good character, saying: **"And indeed, you possess a tremendous character."** And He said: **"Had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you."**

It has been said that through good character a person attains in Paradise the degree of one who fasts and stands in prayer, because good character is among the characteristics of the angels and the disposition of the people of Paradise, as God Most High mentioned in the Qur'an: **"They said, 'God forbid! This is not a human being; this is none but a noble angel.'"**

Bad character, on the other hand, is among the characteristics of the devils and the people of the Fire, who envy one another and curse one another, as God Most High mentioned in the Qur'an: **"Every time a community enters it, it curses its sister, until, when they have all caught up with one another therein, they say, 'No welcome to them! Indeed, they are entering the Fire.' They say, 'Rather, no welcome to you! You brought it upon us, and evil is the abode.' Indeed, they will all share in the punishment."**

Know, O righteous and compassionate brother—may God strengthen you and us with a spirit from Him—that the strength of the souls of our brethren in this matter has four degrees.

The first is the purity of the substance of their souls, the excellence of their receptivity, and the rapidity of their conception. This is the rank of the masters possessing crafts in the city we mentioned in the Epistle. It is the rational, discriminating faculty that receives the meanings of sensible things presented to the rational faculty after fifteen years from the birth of the body. To this He alluded in His saying, Most High: **"And when the children among you reach puberty."**

These are the ones whom, in addressing them in our epistles, we call **our righteous and compassionate brethren**.

Above this degree is the rank of the **leaders possessing governance**, which consists in caring for the brethren, generosity of soul, and bestowing spiritual effusion upon the brethren through compassion, mercy, and tenderness toward them. This is the **wisdom-giving faculty** that enters the rational faculty after thirty years from the birth of the body. To this He alluded in His saying: **"And when he reached his full strength, We gave him judgment and knowledge."**

These are the ones whom, in our epistles, we call **our excellent and virtuous brethren**.

The third degree, above this, is the rank of **kings possessing authority, command and prohibition, and power of disposition**, and of standing against stubbornness and opposition when an obstinate opponent who opposes this matter appears—doing so with gentleness and kindness, and with tact in reforming him. This is the **law-giving faculty** that enters after forty years from the birth of the body. To this He alluded in His saying, Most High: **"He said, 'My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents …'"** to the end of the verse.

These are the ones whom, in our epistles, we call **our noble and virtuous brethren**.

The fourth, above this, is the rank toward which we call all our brethren, whatever their degree may be. It is **receptivity, taʾyīd, and witnessing the Truth with the eyes**. It is the **angelic faculty** that enters after fifty years from the birth of the body. It prepares for the return and separates from matter. Upon it descends the power of the **miʿrāj**, and through it one ascends to the dominion of heaven and witnesses the states of the Resurrection: resurrection and rising forth, gathering, reckoning, the Balance, passage over the Bridge, salvation from the Fires, entry into the Gardens, and dwelling in the proximity of the Merciful, Possessor of Majesty and Honor.

To this degree He alluded in His saying: **"O tranquil soul, return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing."**

The Friend of God, Abraham, peace be upon him, alluded to it when he said: **"And make me among the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss."**

Joseph the Truthful, peace be upon him, alluded to it when he said: **"My Lord, You have given me of sovereignty and taught me the interpretation of accounts. Originator of the heavens and the earth, You are my Protector in this world and the Hereafter. Cause me to die as one surrendered and join me with the righteous."**

The Messiah, peace be upon him, alluded to it when he said: **"When I depart from this body, I shall be standing in the air at the right hand of the Throne, before my Father and your father, interceding for you. So go to the kings in the regions and call them to God Most High. Do not fear them, for I am with you wherever you go, and victory and taʾyīd are for you."**

Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, alluded to it when he said: **"You will come to me at the Pool tomorrow,"** and in other transmitted traditions. All of these are well known among the people of hadith.

The wise Socrates alluded to it when he was given poison. He said: **"Although I am departing from you, noble and virtuous brethren, I am going to noble brethren who have preceded us,"** in a lengthy discourse.

Pythagoras alluded to it in his *Golden Epistle*, at its conclusion, saying: **"If you do what I have instructed you to do, then when you depart from the body you will remain in the air, not returning to humanity and not subject to death."**

Balawhar alluded to it in his discourse with Budhasaf, when the king said to his minister—and he was among those referred to in this account—"Tell me, who are you?" He replied: **"I am among those who know the dominion of heaven,"** in a lengthy discourse.

It is toward this that we call all our brethren.

And God guides whomever He wills to a straight path.

He alluded to it also in His saying, Most High: **"And God calls to the Abode of Peace and guides whom He wills to a straight path."** There are many verses in the Qur'an concerning this meaning, namely, every verse in which the Gardens, their people, and their bliss are described.

Know, my brother, that what is required of those called to this matter consists of four states.

The first is **affirmation with the tongue of the reality of this matter**.

The second is **conception of this matter through the various parables given for clarification and explanation**.

The third is **assent in the heart and conviction**.

The fourth is **realization of it through striving in deeds corresponding to this matter**.

Know, my brother, that one who affirms it with the tongue but has not conceived it and has not realized it is an **imitator**.

One who has conceived it but does not assent to it is a **doubter and perplexed person**.

One who assents to it without realizing it through striving in deeds corresponding to this matter is **deficient and negligent**.

And one who denies this matter with the tongue and rejects it in his heart is a **denier and unbeliever**.

God Most High said: **"Those who do not believe in the Hereafter—their hearts deny it, and they are arrogant. No doubt that for them is the Fire, and they are those who are excessive."**

Know, my brother, that one who affirms this matter with his tongue and conceives it in his heart according to its reality finds four qualities within himself that he did not know before.

The first is **strength of soul in rising up from the body**.

The second is **eagerness to seek deliverance from matter, which is the Hell of the soul**.

The third is **hope and expectation of attaining victory and salvation when the soul separates from the body**.

The fourth is **trust in God Most High and certainty in the completion and perfection of this matter**.

Know, my brother, that everyone who affirms this Qur'an and the books of the prophets, peace be upon them, and their reports concerning the unseen, occupies one of four stations:

1. **One who affirms with his tongue but does not assent with his heart.**
2. **One who affirms with his tongue and assents with his heart, but does not know its meanings and its explanation.**
3. **One who affirms, assents, and understands, but does not fulfill its due obligation.**
4. **One who affirms, assents, understands, and knows, and fulfills its due obligation.**

The one who affirms with his tongue but does not assent with his heart is one who has been granted little understanding and discrimination. When he reflects with his intellect and discriminates through his insight concerning what is indicated by the outward wording of the prophetic books, his intellect does not accept it. He cannot conceive their subtle meanings, their hidden indications, or their true purposes, and therefore he rejects them intellectually and doubts them.

As for the one who affirms with his tongue and assents with his heart, he is the one who reflects and knows that such a momentous matter, whose realization has been affirmed by the prophets and messengers, the rightly guided Imams, the rightly guided caliphs, the righteous believers and those who followed them, and which the excellent among discerning and enlightened people have acknowledged—must necessarily possess a reality. Yet his understanding and intellect fall short of apprehending it and conceiving it in its true realities.

As for the one who knows its explanation but falls short of fulfilling its obligation, he is one whom God has enabled, guided, and directed to the inner secrets of these dominical matters in the books of the prophets, peace be upon them. But he finds no helper to assist him in supporting them and fulfilling their due right, because he is alone.

Yet no matter among people is completed by one person alone. Rather, it may require a great assembly, particularly the matter of the **namūs**. For this, they require at least forty people whose hearts are united.

Our brethren, wherever they may be in the lands, ought, when one of them wishes to take a new friend and establish a new brotherhood, to examine his condition, learn about his circumstances, and ask him about his school and his belief, so that he may know whether he is fit for friendship, pure affection, and true brotherhood or not.

For among people are those whose natures differ and depart from moderation, whose habits are corrupting and harmful, and whose doctrines differ and are unjust. Among them are the good and the evil; the ungrateful and the grateful; the guided and the wandering; the dutiful and the disobedient; the forbearing and the foolish; the generous and the miserly; the brave and the cowardly; the loving and the hateful; the chaste and the immoral; the patient and the impatient; the greedy and the content; the gentle and the difficult; the coarse and the kind; the harsh and the tender; the intelligent and the foolish; the learned and the ignorant; the loving and the hateful; the agreeable and the oppositional; the hypocritical and the sincere; the sincere adviser and the deceiver; the arrogant and the humble; the enemy and the friend; the believer and the Zindiq; the knower and the denier; the one who approaches and the one who turns away; and other such opposing qualities, blameworthy and praiseworthy, that contrast with one another.

Know that among all these groups are those who do not believe in the Day of Reckoning. The worst of characters are like the arrogance of Iblis, the greed of Adam, peace be upon him, and Cain's audacity in killing his brother. These are the mothers of sins.

Know, my brother, that people are naturally disposed toward their characters according to the differences in the composition of the constitutions of their bodies. The reason for the differences in the composition of their bodily constitutions is the differences in the configurations of the heavens at the origin of their births. We have explained this in our *Epistle on Character*.

Know that among people are those naturally disposed toward a single character or several characters, some praiseworthy and some blameworthy. Corrupt habits strengthen corrupt characters, while beautiful habits strengthen beautiful and praiseworthy characters.

The same applies to opinions and beliefs. Some people see and believe in their religion and school that it is lawful for them to shed the blood of everyone who differs from them in their school, such as the Jews and the Kharijites, and everyone who disbelieves in God and believes in the Ṭāghūt.

And among people are those who see and believe in their religion in mercy and compassion toward all people. They show mercy toward sinners and seek forgiveness for them, show tenderness toward every living creature among the animals, and desire goodness for everyone. This is the school of the righteous, the ascetics, the pious, and the believers.

Such likewise is the school of our noble brethren and excellent, virtuous brethren.

Therefore, O brother, when you wish to take a friend and brother, you should examine him as you examine dirhams and dinars, lands of good soil for cultivation and planting, and as the people of this world examine prospective spouses, slaves whom they purchase, and the goods they buy.

Know that the danger involved in taking brothers is greater and more serious than all of these things, because true brothers are those who assist one another in all the affairs of this world and religion. They are rarer than **red sulfur**.

So when you find one of them, hold firmly to him, for he is the joy of the eye, the bliss of this world, and the happiness of the Hereafter.

For true brothers are a support against enemies, an adornment among intimate companions, pillars upon which one relies in times of hardship and trial, and a back upon which one leans when repelling misfortunes in prosperity and adversity.

They are a hoarded treasure for times of need, a protective wing lowered in times of calamity, a ladder by which one ascends to lofty ranks, a means of reaching hearts when seeking intercession, and a strong fortress to which one may flee on the day of terror and fright.

If you are absent, they preserve you.

If you are weakened, they strengthen you.

If they see an enemy of yours, they suppress him for your sake.

Each one of them is like a blessed tree whose branches bend toward you with its fruit, whose leaves shade you with their pleasant fragrance, and which conceals you beneath the beauty of its praise.

If you are remembered, he assists you; and if you forget, he remembers you.

He commands what is right and hastens ahead of you toward it.

He encourages you toward goodness and guides you to it.

He spends his wealth and gives his own self for your sake.

So if God blesses you with a brother possessing this description, then give him your own self and your wealth; protect his honor with your honor; lower your wing to him; entrust your secret to him; consult him in your affairs; heal your eye by looking upon him; and when he is absent, occupy your tongue with mentioning him and your thoughts with concern for his affairs.

If he commits a slip, forgive him.

If he makes a mistake, make it seem small to him.

Do not make him feel estranged, lest he become fearful because of your fear.

And when he does wrong, remember his previous kindness to you, so that he may feel secure from your retaliation.

For that is safer for his affection and more enduring for his brotherhood.

Know, my brother, that there are people who are not suitable for friendship, brotherhood, or companionship at all. So consider carefully whom you accompany and with whom you associate. Do not be deceived by the outward appearance of things without knowing their inward realities, nor by the sweetness of what is immediate before considering the bitterness of its consequence.

When you wish to take a brother or friend, first examine his circumstances and test his character. Ask him about his school and his belief, and observe his habits, nature, disposition, and movements. Nothing of the inward realities of things remains hidden from a discerning person when he examines their outward manifestations.

Know that among people are those who assume the appearance of a friend, deceive you under the guise of being in agreement with you, and show you affection while concealing its opposite. Do not be deceived by him.

Know that people's actions in their outward affairs correspond to the characters with which they were naturally disposed, the habits in which they were raised, and the opinions which they have adopted.

If you see a man who is conceited and arrogant, or gloomy and obstinate, or coarse and hard-hearted, or argumentative and disputatious, or miserly and stingy, or cowardly and contemptible, or crafty and treacherous, or arrogant and tyrannical, or greedy and avaricious, or one who loves praise and commendation beyond what he deserves, or one who disparages his peers, or looks down upon his relatives, or treats his brethren with contempt, and relies upon his own power and strength, then know that he is not suitable for friendship or the purity of brotherhood.

For these characters, opinions, and habits corrupt the beliefs of his brethren. One who considers it good to demand what he has no right to will not readily bring himself to give what is obligatory upon him.

Likewise, envy and obstinacy prevent a person from submitting to the truth.

Likewise, disputation and contentiousness do not prevent a person from continuing argument and disagreement.

Similarly, coarseness and harshness prevent sweetness and ease.

Roughness and anger provoke obstinacy.

In short, all these qualities corrupt the form, are contrary to the purity of brotherhood, occupy the souls, make the intimacy of spirits alienating, repel natural dispositions, and spoil the enjoyment of life and living.

Know that friendship cannot be completed between two people who differ by nature, because opposites cannot come together.

An example of this is the generous man and the miser. They are naturally opposed, and friendship between them cannot be completed, their affection cannot remain pure, and their life together cannot be pleasant.

When the generous man does something required by generosity, such as giving wealth and performing acts of kindness, the miser sees it as wastefulness: as though he had done something improper and impermissible.

And when the miser, according to his nature, does something involving the withholding of wealth—as his miserliness requires—the generous man sees him as someone who has committed something reprehensible and unworthy of being done.

Thus this becomes a cause for each of them to criticize the other, until the miser comes to believe that the generous man has foolish judgment, wastes wealth, and fails to consider consequences, while the generous man comes to believe that the miser is base, ignoble, small-minded, and lacking in aspiration.

When this occurs between them and persists, estrangement accumulates until it becomes enmity, and enmity develops into a complete severing of relations.

The same analogy applies to every pair of differing and opposing characters. They necessitate dispute; dispute necessitates competition and struggle; struggle produces anger; anger produces hatred; and hatred is the opposite of friendship.

Know that taking friends and brothers is like acquiring wealth and treasures.

Among people are those who spend their entire lives seeking a compatible friend but never find one. His example is like that of someone who spends his life seeking to accumulate wealth but is unable to do so.

Among them are those who are blessed with abundant wealth.

And among them are those who know how to acquire wealth but do not know how to preserve it.

Such is likewise the case with taking brothers and friends. Among people are those who do not know how to preserve them or attend properly to their affairs, so that they move from friendship to enmity and from affection to hatred.

Therefore, after taking a friend, the greater part of your effort and concern should be devoted to preserving him, attending to his affairs, and fulfilling his rights, so that friendship does not become enmity after a long companionship because of boredom, weariness, doubts, suspicions, some notion that enters into the affection, or tale-bearing and malicious reporting by an opponent who seeks to sow corruption between you.

So, my brother, keep watch over this matter and do not neglect it.

Know, my brother, that a human being changes frequently and has little constancy in a single condition. There are few people who undergo some worldly condition or circumstance—whether from wealth to poverty, or poverty to wealth; from residence to travel; from celibacy to marriage; from humiliation to honor; from idleness to employment; from misery to prosperity; from elevation to abasement; from abasement to elevation; from craftsmanship to commerce; from the companionship of one group to the companionship of another; from one opinion or school to another; from youth to old age; or from health to illness—without acquiring a new character and another disposition, changing his character toward his brethren and changing his manner with his friends.

Except for the **Brethren of Purity**, whose friendship does not arise from something external to themselves.

For every friendship exists for some reason. When that reason is cut off, that friendship comes to an end.

Except for the friendship of the Brethren of Purity: their friendship is a kinship of the womb, and their kinship consists in living for one another and inheriting from one another.

That is because they see and believe that they are **one soul in separate bodies**. However the conditions of the bodies may change in their outward reality, the soul does not change or transform, as the poet said:

Within the body is a soul that does not grow old with its old age,
even if what is in the face becomes ruined.

It has a claw for every claw I prepare,
and a fang when no fang remains in the mouth.

Time changes whatever it wishes of me, but not it;
so let me reach the furthest age while it remains youthful.

Another quality is that when one of them does a kindness to his brother, he does not reproach him for it, because he sees and believes that his kindness toward him is kindness toward himself.

And if his brother treats him badly, he does not become estranged from him, because he sees that it is as though he himself had done it to himself.

Whoever believes this concerning his brother, and whose brother believes the same concerning him, has made each one of them secure from the other's hidden ill-will—that he might change toward him one day because of some cause or in some manner.

Therefore, when you have found one of them, you should choose him over all your friends, relatives, clan, and neighbors with whom you grew up.

For he is better for you than your child who comes from your own loins, your brother from the loins of your father, and your wife for whom you have made all your earnings and for whose sake you exert all your efforts.

So recognize his right just as you recognize their rights. Indeed, you should prefer him over all of them.

For these others love you because of some benefit that reaches them from you, and they desire you because of some harm that you ward off from them.

When they no longer need you, they lose interest in you and turn toward someone else, and they abandon you when you are most in need of them.

But this brother does not seek you for something external to that. Rather, he seeks you because he sees and believes that **you and he are one soul in two bodies facing one another**.

What makes you happy makes him happy; what grieves you grieves him. He desires for you from himself the same thing that he desires you to desire for him.

Therefore, preserve such brothers wherever you find them, God Most High willing.

The Treatise on the Conduct of the Brethren of Purity and the Companions of Fidelity is complete.

The author of the epistles, blessings of God be upon him, said:

It has been related that there was a man among the sages, skilled in medicine and compassionate toward others, who entered one of the cities and saw that the majority of its inhabitants were afflicted by a hidden illness. They were unaware of their disease and did not perceive the ailment that afflicted them.

That wise man reflected upon their condition: how could he treat them so that he might cure them of their disease and heal them of the illness that had persisted among them?

He knew that if he informed them of their condition, they would not listen to him or accept his advice. Rather, they might even become hostile toward him, regard his judgment as inadequate, belittle his manners, and consider his knowledge worthless.

So, out of the intensity of his compassion for his fellow human beings, his mercy toward them, his tenderness toward them, and his eagerness to treat them, seeking thereby the pleasure of God, Mighty and Majestic, he devised a plan.

He asked the people of that city to bring him one of their distinguished men, one who was himself afflicted by that disease. He gave him a drink from among the medicines he had with him, which he had prepared for treating them, and administered to him a medicinal vapor that he had with him for their treatment.

The man immediately sneezed and experienced lightness in his body, relief in his senses, health in his body, and strength in his soul.

He thanked the physician, rewarded him with good, and said to him:

“Do you have any need that I might fulfill for you in repayment for the kindness you have done me by treating me?”

He replied:

“Yes. Assist me in treating one of your brothers.”

The man said:

“I hear and obey.”

They agreed upon this and went to another man whom they considered closer to righteousness. They separated him from his companions and treated him with that medicine.

He was cured immediately.

When he recovered from his illness, he thanked them both, blessed them, and said:

“Do you have any need that I might fulfill for you in repayment for the kindness and good you have done me?”

They replied:

“Assist us in treating one of your brothers.”

He said:

“I hear and obey.”

They agreed upon this, encountered another man, and treated him with the same medicine as the first. He was cured.

He said to them what the first two had said, and they said to him what they had said to the first.

Then they dispersed throughout the city, treating the people one after another in secret, until they had cured many people and their supporters, brothers, and acquaintances became numerous.

Then they appeared openly before the people and confronted them with the treatment, administering the medicine to them by force.

They would encounter people one by one: some they would seize by both hands, others by both feet, while the others would administer the medicine to them unwillingly and make them drink it by compulsion, until they had cured all the people of the city.

Know, O righteous and compassionate brother—may God strengthen you and us with a spirit from Him—that this is an analogy for the prophets, peace be upon them, at the beginning of their calling of the people: they reminded them of what they had forgotten concerning the matter of the Hereafter and the return, and awakened them from the sleep of ignorance and the slumber of heedlessness, which is the disease of souls.

Thus the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, at the beginning of his mission and Call, first began with his wife Khadija, peace be upon her; then with his cousin ʿAli, peace be upon him; then with his friend Abu Bakr; then with Malik, Abu Dharr, Suhayb, Bilal, Salman, Jubayr, Bashshar, and others, until they became thirty-nine men and women.

Then the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, prayed that God, Mighty and Majestic, strengthen Islam through one of two men: either Abu Jahl or ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab.

His prayer was answered with regard to ʿUmar, and he accepted Islam, bringing their number to forty men.

They then made the Call public. The story is long, and it is well known how it unfolded.

Moses, peace be upon him, likewise acted in this way when he entered Egypt at the beginning of his mission. He first began with his brother Aaron and others among the learned men of the Children of Israel, the descendants of Jacob, until seventy men had secretly joined him.

Then they appeared openly and set out to call Pharaoh.

His story is lengthy, and we have explained part of it in our epistles.

The Messiah, peace be upon him, likewise acted in this way in Jerusalem at the beginning of his mission.

Know, my brother, that knowledge is of two kinds: **the knowledge of bodies and the knowledge of religions**. The prophets, peace be upon them, are physicians of souls, as are their awliyāʾ and their successors. This is the doctrine of our noble brethren, and toward it we call our remaining brethren. So be, O righteous and compassionate brother, a helper to your brethren and an aid to them; you will be granted success, God willing.

Know that most people who affirm the Return are doubtful concerning it and perplexed about it. They do not know its reality nor understand its way, but merely imitate: one transmits it from another, the successor repeats what he has heard from the predecessor, and the follower relates what he has heard from the one he follows.

Their likeness in this is nothing but a group of blind men, one placing his hand upon the shoulder of another, becoming like a train of camels and setting off. If they do not have a discerning guide, they will all go astray.

I seek God's protection for you, O brother, from being among them. Rather, be a discerning guide who guides the straying, and a gentle physician who heals the blind and the leper. Do not be an ailing and sick person in need of treatment.

Know that when physicians agree together upon treating a sick person, their opinion agrees upon a single medicine, they possess insight into that illness, and they cooperate in treating him with compassion and sincere counsel, without disputing with one another, God cures that sick person through their hands in the shortest time and heals him with the easiest effort.

But when they disagree, dispute, and contradict one another, the sick person is abandoned among them and perishes. God does not heal him through them, nor do they benefit from their knowledge.

So be, O brother, a helper to your brethren, one who agrees with them and gives them sincere counsel. Through you, God will benefit His servants and set their affairs right, just as God promised, saying:

“Send a judge from his family and a judge from her family. If they both desire reconciliation, God will bring harmony between them.”

I have heard in the report that the two arbiters on the Day of Ṣiffīn did not desire reconciliation. Rather, each deceived the other, plotted, and concealed trickery and rancor. Thus they did not succeed in reconciliation upon the path of right guidance, and the Commander of the Believers returned without being pleased with that arbitration.

Know, O righteous and compassionate brother—may God strengthen you and us with a spirit from Him—that we, the group of the **Brethren of Purity**, are pure and noble friends. We were asleep in the cave of our father Adam for a period of time, being turned about by the vicissitudes of time and the calamities of events, until the appointed time came, after we had been scattered throughout the lands in the kingdom of the possessor of the greatest **namūs**.

We saw our spiritual city, elevated in the air, which we mentioned in the second epistle. It is the city from which our father Adam, his wife, and their descendants were expelled when their accursed enemy, Iblis, deceived them and said:

“Shall I guide you to the tree of immortality and a kingdom that does not decay?”

They were deceived by his words, and greed and haste carried them away. They hastened to seek that which they were not entitled to take before its proper time and their deserving it. Their rank consequently fell, their degree was lowered, their nakedness became exposed, and they and all their descendants were expelled, **“some of you enemies of others.”**

And it was said to them:

“Descend from it. You shall have an abode and enjoyment upon the earth for a time. Therein you shall live, therein you shall die, and from it you shall be brought forth” on the Day of Resurrection, when you awaken from the sleep of ignorance and rise from the slumber of heedlessness, when the Trumpet is blown into you, the graves split open over you, and you emerge from the tombs swiftly, **“as though they were hastening toward a standing stone.”**

So, my brother—may God strengthen you and us with a spirit from Him—will you hasten and embark with us upon the **Ark of Salvation** which our father Noah, peace be upon him, built, so that you may escape the flood of nature before the sky brings a manifest smoke, and be saved from the waves of the sea of matter, and not be among the drowned?

Or, my brother, will you look with us until you see the dominion of the heavens which our father Abraham saw when the night covered him, so that you may become among those possessing certainty?

Or, my brother, will you fulfill the appointed time and come to the appointed place at the right-hand side, where it was said, **“O Moses,”** so that the matter may be delivered to you and you become among those who witness?

Or, my brother, will you do what the people did therein, so that the spirit may be breathed into you and blame may depart from you, until you see **Īsūʿ** at the right side of the Lord's Throne, his abode having drawn near, as a son draws near to his father, or see those around him among those who look upon him?

Or, will you emerge from the darkness of **Ahriman**, so that you may see **Yazdan**, from whom the light has shone forth in the expanse of **Afrīḥūn**?

Or, will you enter into the **temple of ʿĀdīmūn**, so that you may see the spheres which Plato weaves?

They are only spiritual spheres, not what the astrologers indicate. For the knowledge of God Most High encompasses what the intellect contains of intelligibles; the intellect encompasses what the soul contains of forms; the soul encompasses what nature contains of generated things; and nature encompasses what matter contains of manufactured things.

Thus they are spiritual spheres, each encompassing the other.

Or, will you refrain from sleeping from the beginning of the **Night of Decree**, until you see the **miʿrāj** at the time of the rising of dawn, when Aḥmad, the one sent forth, is in his Praiseworthy Station, so that you may ask for your fulfilled need, neither prevented from receiving it nor deprived of it, and become among those brought near?

May God grant you success, O righteous and compassionate brother, and all our brethren, to understand these symbols and indications, to open your heart, expand your breast, purify your soul, and illuminate your intellect, so that you may witness with the eye of insight the realities of these secrets.

Then do not be frightened by the death of the body when you leave it while the soul possesses life within it. Thus you may be among the awliyāʾ of God who desired death, and not among those who merely imagined themselves to be among them.

God said:

"O you who are Jews, if you claim that you are the awliyāʾ of God to the exclusion of other people, then wish for death, if you are truthful."

Know, O brother, that no one will be sincere with you in affection or genuine in his counsel toward you if he does not believe that he will be rewarded for his affection toward you and repaid for his love of you after the separation of the body.

So do not be deceived by one who, in assisting you, desires nothing except to obtain benefit for his body or ward off harm from it.

Know that whenever two people cooperate in seeking some benefit in which there is fear that the body of one of them will perish while the other remains safe, each of them wishes his own body to remain safe even if the body of his companion perishes, so that he may obtain that benefit and be the fortunate one while his companion is the unfortunate one who perishes.

Know, my brother, that this is not the view or belief of our brethren concerning their assisting one another in seeking the welfare of religion and the world. Rather, it is the opposite.

Among the nobility of their character and excellence of their belief is the account related of the wise man who was the minister of **Khayshwān**, king of the Hephthalites, as is related in the histories.

When **Fīrūz**, king of Persia, came against him to fight him with his armies, and the news reached him and he knew that he was incapable of resisting him, he gathered his ministers and consulted them about the matter.

Some advised him to fight, some advised him to flee, and some advised him to employ a stratagem.

One of those who advised him to employ a stratagem was a wise man. He said:

"O King, I have a subtle stratagem. If you accept it and act upon it, you will be saved—you, your army, and your subjects—your country will remain safe, and your enemy will perish."

The king said:

"Come, advise me according to your judgment and wisdom."

The wise man said:

"Clear the council for me."

He did so.

The wise man said:

"My opinion is that you gather your treasures and proceed to such-and-such a place, for it is a secure place. Then you and your army proceed to such-and-such a place, while you leave me here, after cutting off my hands and feet, gouging out my eyes, and displaying anger toward me.

"You should say to those around you and those at your door: 'A betrayal and lack of good counsel toward me have become manifest in him, and this is the punishment for that.'

"Then depart when you know that the king of Persia has drawn near, leaving me in my place. Wait until my stratagem has been completed."

The king said:

"By God, I have never seen, nor imagined, that any person would consent to what you have allowed yourself to endure."

The wise man said:

"Someone before me consented to something like this—the crafty and intelligent man."

The king said:

“Tell me his story.”

The wise man said:

“It is related that a group of divers went to an island to extract pearls. A crafty man accompanied them, intending to deceive them so that he might obtain some of what they extracted.

“When they had reached their destination and were returning, the man had obtained none of what he had sought, except for some small pearls which they had given him in return for his service to them.

“Then highway robbers appeared before them on their road.

“When the divers saw them, each one swallowed what he had with him of the precious jewels, out of fear that they would be taken from him.

“The crafty man had nothing whose loss he feared, so he did not swallow anything.

“When the robbers seized them, they searched them and found nothing with them except the small pearls.

“They said:

‘Where have you hidden the large ones?’

“They replied:

‘We have nothing except these.’

“They said:

‘Rather, you swallowed them. We shall cut open your bellies.’

“They detained them that night and resolved to cut open their bellies.

“The divers spent the whole night thinking.

“The crafty man also thought about the matter. He was an intelligent man, so he withdrew with them and said:

‘I will tell you: I accompanied you only for such-and-such a reason, but I obtained none of what I sought. I know that every one of you has swallowed something, except me.

“‘If they cut open the belly of one of you and find something, we will all perish.

“‘I have therefore devised a plan: I will ransom you with myself, perhaps you will be saved.

“‘I will say to them: “If there is no alternative, cut open the belly of one man. If you find something, then do as you see fit with the others; but if you find nothing, know that we are truthful.

“‘“‘However, give us time to cast lots among ourselves. Whoever’s lot is drawn, there you have what you want.”

“‘If they agree to this, I will contrive matters so that my lot is drawn. If I perish and you are saved, I ask you to treat my descendants well and give them some of what you have with you when you are saved, God Most High willing.’”

“They did this to him. Nothing was found in his belly, so the group was saved.

“Thus, O King, I know that if our enemy overcomes us, I shall certainly perish. I hope that if my stratagem succeeds, the king, his court, his subjects, and those with them will be saved, while our enemy will perish—even if my body is destroyed.

“Moreover, I believe that that man was more generous than I am, because he was a young man who hoped to live, whereas I am an old man who has grown weary of life.

“Yet I know that if the king is saved, he will treat my descendants better than that man could have hoped for his own, and there will be a good remembrance of the old man after me, just as there was for that man.

“Moreover, those whom I ransom with my life are more numerous than those whom he ransomed.”

Then the king ordered that what the wise man had advised should be done.

When Fīrūz, king of Persia, drew near, the king departed and left him in his place.

When Fīrūz's companions saw him in that condition, they asked him about what had happened to him and who had done this to him.

He claimed that he had been one of the ministers of Khayshwān, king of the Hephthalites, and that when Khayshwān consulted him about fighting Fīrūz, he had advised him to make peace and pay tribute. Khayshwān disliked this advice and had done to him what they saw.

His story was reported to Fīrūz, and the man was brought before him and questioned. He gave the same answer.

Fīrūz believed him and said:

“You were right in the advice you gave him.”

He replied:

“O King, let your compassion reach me and take me with you, lest wild beasts devour me. I will guide you along a road that is closer than the one you are taking and more concealed.”

Fīrūz accepted his counsel and said:

“Provision yourselves for two days.”

He then led them along a distant wilderness.

After they had traveled for two days, their provisions ran out.

They said:

“How much remains?”

He replied:

“Only a little. Travel swiftly.”

They traveled throughout that day.

On the following day they said:

“How much remains?”

He replied:

“I do not know. I traveled this road when I could see, but now you see my condition. Seek salvation for yourselves.”

They scattered throughout that wilderness, and most of them perished.

Fīrūz survived with a small number of his close companions and returned to his country.

Khayshwān made peace with him and returned to his own country safely, together with his close companions.

The descendants of that old man became among the most honored and wealthiest people in the kingdom, and the good reputation of that old man remained among his brothers, friends, and fellow people.

Thus our noble and virtuous brethren regard assisting one another in supporting religion and seeking their livelihood. When they know that the destruction of their bodies will bring benefit to their brethren in the affairs of religion and the world, they willingly accept the destruction of their bodies.

They hope for the same thing that the wise old man and that virtuous, intelligent young man hoped for—and more than they hoped for.

For they see and believe that whoever does such a thing, seeking the pleasure of God, supporting religion, and bringing welfare to the brethren, will, after his soul separates from his body, ascend to the dominion of heaven, enter among the company of the angels, live

through the Holy Spirit, and move through the expanse of the spheres in the spaciousness of the heavens—joyful, delighted, blessed, experiencing pleasure, honored, and rejoicing.

This is the meaning of the saying of God, Mighty and Majestic:

"To Him ascends the good word, and the righteous deed raises it."

By this He means the spirit of the believer.

And God, Mighty and Majestic, also said:

"Do not think of those who were killed in the path of God as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision, rejoicing in what God has bestowed upon them of His bounty…"

—to the end of the verse.

Every learned person knows that those bodies have decayed in the earth and been torn apart, and that this honor belongs only to those souls that willingly accepted the destruction of their bodies in support of religion and the welfare of their brethren.

This is because when the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, migrated from Mecca to Medina, he wrote to the believers instructing them to migrate to him.

Some hastened to migrate, while others delayed, presenting the circumstances that prevented them from doing so: concern over abandoning young children, an elderly parent, a brother, a friend, a suitable wife, a familiar dwelling, accumulated wealth which they feared losing, or a trade whose decline they feared.

Then God sent down this verse to His Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, and the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, conveyed it:

"Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your clan, the wealth you have acquired, the commerce whose decline you fear, and dwellings in which you take pleasure are dearer to you than God, His Messenger, and striving in His path, then wait until God brings His command. And God does not guide the defiantly disobedient people."

Know, my brother, that knowledge is of two kinds: the knowledge of bodies and the knowledge of religions. The prophets, peace be upon them, are physicians of souls, as are their saints and successors. This is the doctrine of our noble brethren, and to this we call the rest of our brethren. So be, O noble and compassionate brother, a helper to your brethren and an assistant to them. You will, God willing, be granted success.

And know that most people who affirm the Resurrection are doubtful about it and perplexed concerning it. They do not know its reality or understand its way, but merely follow one another by imitation: the later repeats what the earlier relates, and the follower recounts what the followed has said. Their likeness in this is none other than a group of blind men, one of

whom places his hand upon the shoulder of another, and they proceed like a caravan of camels. If they have no seeing guide, they all go astray.

I warn you, O brother, lest you be among them. Rather, be a seeing guide who guides the astray, and a gentle physician who heals the blind and the leper. Do not be an ill and sick man in need of a physician.

And know that when physicians agree in their judgment to treat a sick person, their word is united upon a single medicine, they possess insight into that illness, and they cooperate in treating him with compassion and sincere counsel, without disputing with one another, God heals that sick person through their hands in the shortest time and cures him with the easiest effort. But when they differ, dispute, and contradict one another, the sick person is abandoned between them and perishes. God does not heal him through them, nor do they benefit from their knowledge.

So be, O brother, a helper to your brethren, in agreement with them and giving them sincere counsel, so that God may benefit His servants through you and set their affairs right through you, just as God has said:

“Send a judge from his family and a judge from her family; if they both desire reconciliation, God will bring harmony between them.”

And I have heard in the report that the two arbiters on the Day of Ṣiffīn did not desire reconciliation. Rather, each deceived his companion, plotted against him, and concealed trickery and rancor. Thus they were not granted success in reconciliation upon the path of right guidance, and the Commander of the Believers returned dissatisfied with that judgment.

Know, O noble and compassionate brother—may God strengthen you and us with a spirit from Him—that we, the company of the Brothers of Purity, are pure ones and noble friends. We had been asleep in the cave of our father Adam for a period of time, being turned about by the vicissitudes of time and the calamities of events, until the appointed time came after we had been scattered throughout the lands, in the kingdom of the possessor of the greatest religious law.

We saw our spiritual city, raised in the air, which we mentioned in the second epistle. It is the city from which our father Adam, his wife, and their descendants were expelled when their accursed enemy, Iblis, deceived them and said:

“Shall I direct you to the tree of everlasting life and a kingdom that does not decay?”

They were deceived by his words, and greed and haste carried them to hasten after and seek that which they were not entitled to take before its proper time. Their rank consequently fell, their degree was lowered, and their nakedness was exposed. They were expelled, along with all their descendants, each an enemy to the other, and it was said to them:

“Descend from it; for you shall have a place of settlement and enjoyment upon the earth for a time. In it you shall live, in it you shall die, and from it you shall be brought forth.”

On the Day of Resurrection, when you awaken from the sleep of ignorance and rise from the slumber of heedlessness, when the Trumpet is blown into you, the graves will split open

before you and you will emerge from the tombs swiftly, as though they were hastening toward a monument.

So, my brother—may God strengthen you and us with a spirit from Him—is there in you a willingness to hasten and embark with us upon the Ark of Salvation which our father Noah, peace be upon him, built, so that you may be saved from the Flood of Nature before the heaven comes with a manifest smoke, and so that you may be delivered from the waves of the sea of matter and not be among the drowned?

Or, my brother, are you willing to look with us until you behold the dominion of the heavens which our father Abraham saw when the night covered him, so that you may be among those who possess certainty?

Or, my brother, are you willing to complete the appointed time and come to the appointed place at the right side, where it was said, "O Moses," so that the command may be conveyed to you and you may be among the witnesses?

Or, my brother, are you willing to do what those people did, so that the spirit may be breathed into you and blame may depart from you, until you see Jesus on the right hand of the Throne of the Lord, his dwelling having drawn near, as a son draws near to his father, or until you see those around him who gaze upon him?

Or, are you willing to emerge from the darkness of Ahriman, so that you may see Yazdan, from whom the light has dawned in the expanse of Afrīhūn?

Or, are you willing to enter the temple of Ādimūn, so that you may see the spheres woven by Plato? They are spiritual spheres, not what the astrologers indicate. For God's knowledge encompasses what the intellect contains of intelligibles; the intellect encompasses what the soul contains of forms; the soul encompasses what Nature contains of generated things; and Nature encompasses what matter contains of manufactured things. Thus they are spiritual spheres, each encompassing the other.

Or, are you willing not to sleep from the first night of the Night of Decree until you behold the Ascension at the moment of the rising of dawn, where Aḥmad, the one who was sent, is in his Praiseworthy Station, so that you may ask for your need, which shall be fulfilled, neither prevented nor lost, and become among those brought near?

May God grant you success, O noble and compassionate brother, and all our brethren, to understand these indications and symbols, and may He open your heart, expand your breast, purify your soul, and illuminate your intellect so that you may behold, with the eye of insight, the realities of these secrets. Then do not be frightened by the death of the body when you leave it, while the soul possesses life, so that you may be among the friends of God who desired death, and not among those who merely imagined themselves to be among them, as God said:

"O you who are Jews, if you claim that you are the friends of God to the exclusion of all other people, then wish for death, if you are truthful."

And know, O brother, that one who does not believe that he will be recompensed for his affection toward you and rewarded for his love of you after the separation of the body will

not be sincere toward you in affection or faithful to you in counsel. So do not be deceived by one who seeks, in assisting you, nothing except to draw some benefit to his body or ward off some harm from it.

And know that whenever two people cooperate in seeking some benefit in which there is a fear of destruction for the body of one of them while the other remains safe, each of them wishes that his own body be saved even if the body of his companion perishes, so that he may obtain that benefit and be the fortunate one while his companion is the unfortunate and perishing one.

Know, my brother, that this is not the view or belief of our brethren concerning their assisting one another in seeking the well-being of religion and the world. Rather, it is the opposite.

Among the nobility of their character and excellence of their belief is what is related concerning the wise man who was the minister of Khīshwān, king of the Hephthalites, as is related in the histories.

When Fīrūz, king of the Persians, approached him with his armies to fight him, and the news reached him and he realized that he could not withstand him, he gathered his ministers and consulted them concerning the matter. Some advised him to fight, some advised him to flee, and some advised him to employ a stratagem.

One of those who advised a stratagem was a wise man. He said:

“O king, I have a subtle stratagem. If you accept it and act upon it, you and your army and your subjects will be saved, your country will remain safe, and your enemy will perish.”

The king said:

“Come, advise me with your judgment and wisdom.”

The wise man said:

“Clear the assembly for me.”

He did so.

The wise man said:

“My counsel is that you gather your treasures and proceed to such-and-such a place, for it is a secure location. You and your army should then proceed to such-and-such a place, leaving me here after you have cut off my hands and feet, blinded my eyes, and displayed anger toward me. Tell those around you and those at your gate: ‘A betrayal and lack of counsel toward me have become manifest from him, and this is his punishment for it.’ Then depart when you know that the king of the Persians has drawn near, leaving me in my place. Wait until my stratagem has been completed.”

The king said:

“By God, I have never seen, nor imagined, that anyone among the people would willingly submit to what you have allowed yourself to undergo.”

The wise man said:

“Someone before me submitted to something like it—the cunning and intelligent man.”

The king said:

“Tell me his story.”

The wise man said:

“They relate that there was a group of pearl divers who went to an island to extract pearls. A cunning man accompanied them, intending to trick them and obtain some of what they extracted. When they reached their destination and then turned back, the man had obtained nothing of what he desired except some small pearls which they had given him in return for his service to them.

Then bandits came upon them on their road. When the divers saw them, each one swallowed what he had with him of the precious jewels, fearing that they would take them. The cunning man had nothing that he feared they would take, so he swallowed nothing.

When the bandits seized them, they searched them and found nothing with them except the small pearls. They said:

‘Where have you hidden the large ones?’

They replied:

‘We found nothing except these.’

They said:

‘Rather, you swallowed them. We will cut open your bellies.’

They imprisoned them that night and resolved to cut open their bellies.

The divers spent the whole night thinking. The cunning man, who was an intelligent man, thought to himself and then withdrew with them privately. He said:

‘I shall tell you that I accompanied you only for such-and-such a reason, but I obtained nothing of what I sought. I know that none of you has swallowed anything except me. If they cut open even one of us and find something inside him, we will all perish.

I have devised a plan by which I may ransom you with my own life, perhaps you will be saved. I shall say to them: “If there is no alternative, then cut open one man. If you find something, then do what you will with the others; but if you find nothing, know that we are truthful. However, give us time to draw lots among ourselves. Whoever’s lot is drawn, take what you want from him.”

If they agree to this, I shall contrive matters so that my lot is drawn. If I perish while you are saved, I ask you to treat my descendants well and support them from what you have with you once you are saved, if God Most High wills.'"

They did this to him. Nothing was found inside him, and the men were saved.

So, O king, I know that if our enemy prevails over us, I shall certainly perish. I hope that if my stratagem succeeds, the king, his court, his subjects, and all those with them will be saved while our enemy perishes.

Even so, I believe that that man was more generous than I am, because he was a young man who hoped for life, whereas I am an old man who has grown weary of life. Moreover, I know that if the king is saved, he will treat my descendants better than that man could have hoped for his own descendants, and a good remembrance of me will remain after my death just as it did for that man.

Furthermore, those whom I ransom with my life are greater in number than those whom he ransomed."

The king then ordered that what the wise man had advised be done. When Fīrūz, king of the Persians, drew near, he departed and left the wise man in his place.

When Fīrūz's companions saw him in that condition, they asked him about his story and who had done to him what they saw. He claimed that he had been one of the ministers of Khīshwān, king of the Hephthalites, and that when Khīshwān had consulted him about fighting Fīrūz, he had advised him to make peace and pay tribute. The king disliked this advice and had done to him what they now saw.

His story was conveyed to Fīrūz, and he was brought before him and questioned. He gave the same answer. Fīrūz believed him and said:

"You were right in the advice you gave him."

He said:

"O king, let your mercy reach me and take me with you, lest the beasts devour me. I shall guide you along a road that is nearer than the one you are following and more concealed."

Fīrūz accepted his counsel and said:

"Provision yourselves for two days."

He led them through a distant wilderness. After they had traveled for two days, their provisions ran out.

They said:

"How much remains?"

He said:

“A little. Travel swiftly.”

They traveled throughout that day. On the following day they said:

“How much remains?”

He said:

“I do not know. I traveled this road when I could see, but now you see my condition. Seek salvation for yourselves.”

They scattered throughout that wilderness, and most of them perished. Fīrūz survived with a small number of his closest companions and returned to his country. Khīshwān made peace with him and returned safely to his own country with his close companions.

The descendants of that old man became among the most honored and wealthiest people in the kingdom, and the good remembrance of the old man remained among his brethren, friends, and people.

Thus our noble and virtuous brethren view assisting one another in supporting the religion and seeking livelihood: when they know that the destruction of their bodies will bring about the well-being of their brethren in matters of religion and the world, their souls willingly consent to the destruction of their bodies, because they hope for what that wise old man and that virtuous, intelligent young man hoped for, and even more than they hoped for.

For they believe and hold that whoever does this seeking the pleasure of God, supporting the religion, and bringing well-being to his brethren, his soul, after separating from his body, ascends to the dominion of heaven, enters the company of the angels, lives through the Holy Spirit, and moves through the expanse of the spheres, in the spaciousness of the heavens, joyful, delighted, blessed, enjoying, honored, and fortunate.

This is the meaning of God’s saying:

“To Him ascends the good word, and the righteous deed raises it.”

By this He means the spirit of the believer.

And God Most High also said:

“Do not think of those who were killed in the way of God as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, provided for, rejoicing in what God has bestowed upon them of His bounty…”

Every learned person knows that those bodies have decayed in the earth and been torn apart, and that this honor belongs only to those souls that willingly consented to the destruction of their bodies in support of the religion and the well-being of their brethren.

This is because when the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, migrated from Mecca to Medina, he wrote to the believers instructing them to migrate to him. Some hastened to migrate, while others delayed because of obstacles preventing them from doing so: concern over neglecting young children, an elderly parent, a brother, a friend,

a suitable wife, a familiar dwelling, accumulated wealth that they feared losing, or a trade whose decline they feared.

Then God sent down this verse to His Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, and the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, conveyed it:

"Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your clan, the wealth you have acquired, the trade whose decline you fear, and dwellings in which you take pleasure are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and striving in His way, then wait until God brings His command. God does not guide the defiantly disobedient people."

When they read it, they hastened to migrate to the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family. A group of weak people remained who could not leave because of their lack of provisions and the distance of the road. Thus they remained like the losers.

The polytheists among the people of Mecca began to subject them to persecution—insulting them, imprisoning them, beating them, and killing them. They complained to God Most High and called upon Him to remove what had befallen them. They wrote to the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, informing him of the persecution they suffered from the polytheists.

Then God Most High sent down this verse and permitted the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, to fight the polytheists of Mecca in order to free the believers from their hands:

"And why should you not fight in the way of God and for the oppressed among men, women, and children who say: 'Our Lord, bring us out of this town whose people are oppressors, and appoint for us from Yourself a protector, and appoint for us from Yourself a helper'?"

The Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, went out to the Battle of Badr to fight the polytheists of Mecca. When the two armies met and they came forward for single combat, the polytheists called out:

"Send us our equals, O Muhammad."

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

"Your support of your Prophet has become obligatory upon you, O Banū Hāshim."

His uncle Ḥamza, ʿAlī, and Abū ʿUbayda rose and fought in single combat. The battle then became joined, and victory fell to the polytheists' opponents.

There were approximately seventy men with the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, from the Emigrants. There was not a man among them who did not have, in the army of the polytheists, a son, father, brother, friend, relative, or member of his clan. Yet they did not respond to their pleas; they fought them with the sword and showed no pity either for them or for themselves, lest they perish, because they knew that in this lay support for the religion, the well-being of their believing brethren, obedience to the

Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, and the pleasure of the Lord, Mighty and Majestic.

The same occurred on the Day of Uḥud, when the situation became severe and the people fled, while the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, remained with only a small number of men.

The Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

“Who will support me today and ransom me with his own life? For him is Paradise.”

Three men from the Anṣār rose to him. Each one stood before one of the archers of the polytheists and shielded the Prophet with his own body, making his body a protection for the safety of the Messenger of God, until all three were martyred.

They knew that his survival meant support for the religion and the well-being of their brethren. The Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, did not seek them because he feared death or desired worldly life, but because the religion had not yet been completed and the sacred law had not yet been perfected.

When this verse was revealed:

“Today I have perfected your religion for you and completed My blessing upon you,”

the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, desired death.

Then the verse was revealed:

“When the help of God and the victory come, and you see people entering the religion of God in multitudes, then glorify the praise of your Lord and seek His forgiveness. Indeed, He is ever accepting of repentance.”

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

“My own death has been announced to me.”

Someone said:

“O Messenger of God, if only you were to ask God to preserve you among your community until the Day of Resurrection, so that they might benefit from you.”

He said:

“Indeed, we belong to God, and to Him we return. God has refused to grant His friends everlasting life in this world.”

Then he said:

“How I long for my brother-prophets!”

He remained only a short while thereafter before he died and departed to God Most High. May He honor his resting place, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, and upon all the prophets.

Know that the prophets, their followers, their successors, and the philosophers and sages who hold the same view as them pay little attention to the matter of bodies, since the souls are resurrected. They regard these bodies as prisons for the souls, or veils over them, or a path, or a barzakh, or the Heights. We have explained these meanings in our epistles.

The soul only feels concern for the body so long as it has not been resurrected. Once it has been resurrected, separation from the body becomes insignificant to it.

Among the things that indicate the soundness of what we have said is the burning of their bodies by the Brahmans, who are the sages of India. As for those who do such things out of ignorance and foolishness, that is not what we are discussing; rather, we mean the enlightened sages among them.

They believe that these bodies, for these particular souls, are like eggs for the chick or the womb for the fetus, and that Nature has incubated them. The soul is concerned for the body so long as the creation has not been completed or the form has not been perfected. When the creation is complete and the form perfected, it no longer cares if the egg is broken or the womb torn apart, provided that the chick or child is safe.

Such is the condition of the soul with respect to the body. It is concerned for the body, preserves it, and cares for it only so long as it does not know that it has an existence free from the body, and that such existence is better, more enduring, more delightful, and more excellent than this existence and permanence that accompany the body.

When the particular souls have reached completion, their form and knowledge have been perfected, and the soul awakens from this sleep and rises from this heedlessness; when it senses its estrangement in this corporeal world and realizes that it is imprisoned by Nature, lost in the depths of bodies within the sea of matter, burdened with serving bodies, and deceived by the adornment of sensible things; when it knows the reality of its own essence, recognizes the excellence of its substance, looks toward its own world, beholds that spiritual form separated from matter, sees those colors and hues and intellectual pleasures, and directly witnesses those lights, delight, joy, spirit, and fragrant repose—then separation from the body becomes insignificant to it, and it willingly allows the body to be destroyed for the sake of the pleasure of God Most High, support of the religion, and the well-being of the brethren.

Among what demonstrates this is that the prophets, peace be upon them, believe in the endurance of souls and the well-being of their condition after the destruction of bodies. This is demonstrated by what Moses, Jesus, and other prophets, peace be upon them, did.

Moses, peace be upon him, said to his companions and brethren:

“Repent to your Creator and kill yourselves; that is better for you with your Creator.”

That is, kill these bodies with the sword, for the substance of the soul cannot be reached by iron.

The people had been tested by worshipping the calf while Moses was away at the mountain. When he returned to them and it became clear to them that they had gone astray, they regretted it and repented.

When Moses learned that those who had abstained from worshipping the calf were those who had remained firm upon his way after his mission, while those who had worshipped the calf were those who had been raised upon the custom of the Age of Ignorance before his mission, he knew that if they remained after his death, he could not be certain that they would introduce something else into his religion, practice, and sacred law.

He therefore judged it correct to remove them from the community of the Children of Israel, and God Most High permitted him to do so because of the benefit it contained for the community at large and the general welfare.

Then Moses said to them:

“If you wish God Most High to accept your repentance, restore the wrongfully taken rights, write your wills, put on your shrouds, go out to the place of prayer, and call upon God to have mercy upon you, to accept your repentance, or to carry out His judgment upon you.”

They did this willingly and unwillingly. The willing among them were those who knew that the destruction of their bodies was beneficial and good for their souls, while those who were unwilling were those who did not understand this and whose understanding of the reports had been obscured.

Then Moses commanded those who had avoided worshipping the calf to take up swords and strike the necks of those who had worshipped the calf, showing no mercy to any of them and allowing no pity for any of them to prevent them in the matter of God’s religion.

They did as they were commanded and remained steadfast because they knew that in this lay life for their souls. There was not one among them who did not have, among those killed, a brother, son, relative, or friend. Yet this did not prevent them from killing them, because they knew that the destruction of their bodies brought well-being to their souls, support for the religion, well-being for their surviving brethren, obedience to Moses, and the pleasure of the Lord.

Likewise, the souls of those magicians were content with the destruction of their bodies through killing or crucifixion when Pharaoh said to them:

“You believed in him before I gave you permission?”

They replied:

“We will never prefer you over the clear proofs that have come to us and over Him who created us. So decree whatever you are going to decree. You can only decree concerning this worldly life. We have believed in our Lord, that He may forgive us our sins and the magic to which you compelled us.”

So he crucified them all, and they did not fear him. Their souls willingly consented to the destruction of their bodies because they knew that in it lay life for themselves, victory and

salvation, support for the religion, the well-being of their brethren, obedience to Moses, and the pleasure of the Lord.

Then, after the killing of the idol-worshippers, Moses wanted to go to the mountain to converse with his Lord. Aaron said to him:

“Take me with you, for I am not secure from the possibility that the Children of Israel may introduce another innovation after you and that you will become angry with me again.”

So he took him with him.

When they had gone part of the way, they came upon two men digging a grave. They stopped before them and asked:

“For whom are you digging this grave?”

They said:

“For the person most resembling this man,” and they pointed to Aaron.

Then they said to him:

“By your God, would you not descend and see whether it is spacious?”

Aaron removed his clothes, handed them to Moses, descended into the grave, and lay down in it. The Angel of Death seized his soul at that moment, the grave closed, and Moses departed weeping and grieving over his separation from him.

He returned to the Children of Israel carrying Aaron’s clothes. They accused him, saying:

“You envied him and killed him.”

But God absolved him of what they said, and he was honored in the sight of God.

Moses remained only a short while after Aaron’s death. He wrote the Torah for them, instructed them concerning what they needed, entrusted it to Joshua, bade him farewell, and ascended the mountain while the people wept, until he disappeared from their sight and surrendered himself to his Lord.

Then he died, and the two of them departed to their Lord. May He honor their resting places, peace be upon them both.

The Children of Israel remained after Moses’s death for forty years, wandering away from guidance, until Joshua son of Nun, son of Nun, son of Joseph the Prophet, peace be upon him, was sent among them. He was one of the two men whom God had favored when Moses said to the Children of Israel:

“Enter the Holy Land which God has prescribed for you.”

Among what demonstrates that the prophets, peace be upon them, believed in the endurance of the soul and its well-being after separation from the body is what the Messiah, peace be upon him, did in his humanity and what he commanded the disciples to do likewise.

When the Messiah was sent among the Children of Israel, he found them professing the religion of Moses, adhering to the outward aspect of his sacred law, reading the Torah and the books of the prophets, but not fulfilling what was required of them, nor knowing their realities. They did not know their secrets; rather, they used them according to habit and followed them by imitation.

They did not know the Hereafter, nor desire it. They did not understand the matter of the Resurrection, nor did they know what it contained. They knew nothing beyond this world, its deception, and its hopes and wishes. Of the sacred law and religious practice that they followed, they understood nothing except the pursuit of worldly life.

But the purpose of the prophets in calling nations, establishing sacred laws and practices, is not merely to reform worldly life. Rather, their purpose in all of this is to save drowning souls from the sea of matter, free them from the captivity of Nature, bring them out from the darkness of bodies into the lights of the world of spirits, awaken them from the sleep of ignorance, rouse them from the slumber of heedlessness, deliver them from the pain of the fires of corporeal desires that consume the hearts, give them insight against being deceived by the terrifying pleasures of the body, and heal them of the diseases of the soul: the torment of heat and cold, hunger and thirst, the pain of illnesses and sicknesses, fear of poverty and destruction, grief and sorrow, the events of time, the anger of enemies, grief over friends, the burning concern for loved ones and relatives, hostility toward adversaries, rivalry with peers, envy of neighbors, the whisperings of Satan, and the calamities of events, one after another.

When the Messiah saw them in this condition, there was no distinction between them and one who did not affirm the Resurrection, know religion and prophethood, recognize the Book, the practice, the path, or the sacred law, practice asceticism toward the world, or desire the Hereafter.

This grieved him. He felt compassion for them, showed tenderness toward his fellow human beings, and reflected upon how he might heal them of the disease that had become established in them.

He knew that if he rebuked them with harshness, threats, warnings, and intimidation, that would not benefit them, because all of these things were already present in the Torah and the books of the prophets that they possessed.

He therefore decided to appear to them in the guise of a physician who treats the sick. He began traveling through the settlements of the Children of Israel, meeting people one by one, admonishing them, reminding them, giving them parables, awakening them from ignorance, making them renounce the world, and encouraging them toward the Hereafter and its bliss.

Eventually he passed by a group of cloth-fullers outside the city. He stopped before them and said:

“Consider these clothes. When you wash them, clean them, and bleach them, would you allow their owners to wear them while their bodies were stained with blood, urine, feces, and the colors of filth?”

They said:

“No. Whoever did that would be foolish.”

He said:

“You have done exactly this.”

They said:

“How so?”

He said:

“Because you have cleansed your bodies, whitened your clothes, and put them on while your souls are contaminated with corpses and filled with filth: ignorance, blindness, dumbness, bad character, envy, hatred, deceit, treachery, greed, miserliness, ugliness, evil suspicion, and pursuit of corrupt desires. You are in the humiliation of servitude, wretched, with no relief for you except death and the grave.”

They said:

“How then should we act? Must we not seek our livelihood?”

He said:

“Would you be willing to desire the dominion of heaven, where there is neither death nor old age, sickness nor disease, hunger nor thirst, fear nor sorrow, poverty nor need, weariness nor hardship, grief nor envy among its inhabitants, hatred, boasting, or arrogance? Rather, they are brethren reclining upon couches facing one another, joyful and delighted, in spirit, fragrant repose, blessing, and divine pleasure; in joy and recreation they move through the expanse of the spheres and the spaciousness of the heavens, beholding the dominion of the Lord of the worlds, seeing the angels around His Throne standing in ranks, glorifying the praise of their Lord with melodies and harmonies the like of which neither human nor jinn has ever heard.

You will be with them, abiding forever. You will not grow old, die, hunger, thirst, become ill, fear, or grieve.”

He continued to give them much counsel, and his words took effect in their souls. God Most High desired good for them, so He caused them to hear and guided them, expanded their breasts, opened their hearts, and illuminated their sight.

They saw what the Messiah, peace be upon him, had described—what he himself saw with the eye of insight, the light of certainty, and true faith. They desired it and renounced the world, its deception, and its hopes and wishes. They departed from the servitude in which

they had been engaged, the pursuit of worldly desires, put on patched garments, and traveled with the Messiah wherever he went through the lands.

It was the practice of the Messiah to move each day from one village to another among the villages of Palestine, and from one city to another among the lands of the Children of Israel. He treated people, admonished them, reminded them, called them toward the dominion of heaven, encouraged them toward it, made them renounce the world, and explained to them its deception and its hopes.

He was sought by the king of the Children of Israel and by their mobs. While he would be in a gathering of people, the king's men would rush upon him to seize him, but he would slip away among the people and they would be unable to reach him or discover where he had gone. Then they would hear news of him from another village and seek him there.

This was his practice and theirs for thirty months.

When God Most High desired to take him and raise him to Himself, his disciples gathered with him in Jerusalem, in a single room, together with his companions.

He said:

"I am going to my father and your father. Before I separate from my nasut, I give you an instruction and take from you a covenant and pledge. Whoever accepts my instruction and fulfills my covenant shall be with me tomorrow. Whoever does not accept my instruction, I have nothing to do with him, nor does he have anything to do with me."

They said:

"What is it?"

He said:

"Go to the kings of the regions and convey to them from me what I have conveyed to you. Call them to that to which I have called you. Do not fear them or be intimidated by them. When I separate from my nasut, I shall be standing in the air on the right side of the Throne of my Father and your Father, and I shall be with you wherever you go, supporting you with victory and taʾyīd, by the permission of my Father.

Go to them and call them with gentleness. Treat them. Enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, so long as you are not killed, crucified, or expelled from the land."

They said:

"What proof is there that you command us to do this?"

He said:

"I shall be the first to do it."

The following day he went out and appeared before the people. He continued calling them and admonishing them until he was seized and taken to the king of the Children of Israel, who ordered that he be crucified.

His nasut was crucified, and his hands were nailed to the two beams of the cross. He remained crucified from midmorning until afternoon. He asked for water and was given vinegar. He was then pierced with a spear and buried in the place of the cross, and forty men were assigned to guard the grave.

All of this took place in the presence of his companions and disciples. When they witnessed this from him, they became certain and knew that he had not commanded them to do anything in which he himself did not precede them.

Three days later they gathered at the place where he had promised to appear to them. They saw the sign that had been between him and them. News spread among the Children of Israel that the Messiah had not been killed. The grave was dug up, but the nasut was not found.

The sects among them differed, and disputes and conflicting reports multiplied. Its story is lengthy.

Then those disciples who had accepted his instruction dispersed throughout the lands. Each one went where he had been directed: one went to the lands of the Maghreb; another to the lands of Abyssinia; two to the lands of Rome; two to the kingdom of Antioch; one to the lands of Persia; one to the lands of India; and two remained in the lands of the Children of Israel, calling to the view of the Messiah, until most of them were killed.

The Call of the Messiah appeared in the east and west of the earth through the actions of the disciples after them.

Their disregard for the matter of their bodies indicates that they believed and held that the soul endures and remains in a sound condition after the destruction of the bodies.

Among this are the actions of the monks, who are the best of his companions and followers. One of them confines his body in his cell for many years and abstains from food, drink, pleasures, fine clothing, the delights of this world, and its desires—all of this because of the intensity of their certainty in the endurance of the soul and the soundness of its condition after the destruction of the bodies.

Among what indicates that Abraham, the intimate friend of the Merciful, held this view is his saying:

“He who created me—it is He who guides me; He who feeds me and gives me drink; and when I fall ill, it is He who heals me; He who causes me to die and then gives me life; and He in whom I hope will forgive me my error on the Day of Judgment. My Lord, grant me judgment and join me with the righteous.”

Likewise, the saying of Joseph the truthful:

“My Lord, You have indeed given me sovereignty and taught me the interpretation of sayings. Creator of the heavens and the earth, You are my protector in this world and the Hereafter. Take me as a Muslim and join me with the righteous.”

Do you suppose that the two of them intended to be joined with the righteous in their bodies or in their souls?

And what joined their bodies to the righteous except the dust of the earth from which they were created?

Rather, they intended their two purified, noble, spiritual, heavenly, luminous souls—not their bodies, composed of flesh, blood, bones, veins, sinews, and the like of the four humors.

Among what indicates that the Ahl al-Bayt of our Prophet, peace be upon them, held this view is their surrendering of their bodies to be killed on the Day of Karbalāʾ. They would not agree to submit to the rule of Yazīd and Ibn Ziyād, and they endured thirst, stabbing, and blows until their souls departed from their bodies and were raised to the dominion of heaven, where they met their purified fathers, Muḥammad and ʿAlī, and the Emigrants and the Helpers who followed them in the hour of hardship, those with whom God was pleased and who were pleased with Him.

Had those people not been certain of the endurance of their souls after separation from their bodies, they would not have hastened to destroy their bodies and surrender them to killing, blows, and stabbing, nor to separate themselves from the pleasant life of this world. But those people had learned and become certain of what they had been called toward: life in the Hereafter, its bliss and everlastingness, victory and salvation, and deliverance from the deception and affliction of this world.

Thus they hastened toward what they had envisioned and become certain of, and they hastened in good works. They called upon their Lord with hope and fear, and they were apprehensive out of awe of Him.

So, my brother—may God strengthen you and us with a spirit from Him—will you emulate them and their practice, follow their path, seek their destination, and hasten, before the opportunity is lost, to free your soul from the captivity of Nature, save it from the sea of matter, bring it out from the depths of bodies and the darkness of corporeal forms, and deliver it from the devouring fires of desire and deception through bodily pleasures in the company of Satan?

And will you act as the noble-minded people act, by keeping the company of brethren who are sincere counselors, generous friends who love you, devoted to your well-being and the salvation of their own souls? Let us desire their companionship, listen to their sayings, understand their words by attending their gatherings, and examine their books so that you may know their beliefs, acquire their character, learn their sciences, walk according to their just conduct, act according to their purified practice, and become learned in their rational sacred law, so that you may live as they live in the realm of dominion and dwell the life of the fortunate, abiding forever.

And avoid the company of the brethren of Satan, who want you only for the betterment of their worldly affairs, the preservation of their bodies, and the warding off of harm from them, while they destroy their own souls without realizing it.

Among what indicates that the philosophers and divinely oriented sages held and believed this view is Socrates' surrendering his body to destruction and voluntarily taking the cup of poison.

This man was a sage among the sages and philosophers of the land of Greece. He had displayed asceticism toward this world, its bliss and pleasures, desired the joy, spirit, and fragrant repose of the world of spirits, called people toward it, encouraged them to desire it, and made them renounce remaining in the world of generation and corruption.

A group of the sons of kings and prominent people responded to him. Young men and the sons of the prosperous gathered around him, listening to his wisdom and the extraordinary marvels of his speech.

A group of his opponents, and those who desired the world and its adornment, became jealous of him. They accused him of loving boys, claimed that he treated lightly the worship of idols and commanded others to do so, and denounced him to the king. Eleven men gave false testimony against him that he deserved to be killed.

He was imprisoned for several months while they considered killing him. About seventy philosophers, both those who agreed with him and those who opposed him, gathered with him in prison, debating his view and what they believed concerning the soul, its endurance after separation from the body, and the soundness of its condition.

He refuted all of them and established the correctness of his view concerning the endurance of the soul and the soundness of its condition after separation from the body. The story of this is lengthy in its account.

Among the things said to him was:

"If you have been wronged, would you be willing to escape death by paying a ransom from your wealth or by fleeing?"

He replied:

"I fear that tomorrow the Namūs will say to me: 'Why did you flee from my judgment, O Socrates?'"

They said:

"You would say: 'Because I was wronged.'"

He said:

"Suppose he said to me: 'What if the eleven judges and justices wronged you by giving false testimony against you? Was it therefore incumbent upon you to wrong me and flee from my judgment? What would I say?'"

He argued with them in this way because in their sacred law, when the just witnesses testified against a person regarding a judgment, it was obligatory upon him to submit, even if he had been wronged. Whoever did not submit was considered to have wronged the judgment of the Namūs—that is, the sacred law.

Socrates therefore submitted to being killed on account of this.

Then he said:

"Whoever treats the Namūs lightly, the Namūs kills."

When he took the cup of poison to drink it, the sages and philosophers around him wept in grief for him. He said to them:

"Do not weep, for although I am departing from you, my wise and virtuous brethren, I am going to wise, virtuous, and noble brethren of ours. So-and-so and so-and-so have gone before us."

And he named a group of philosopher-sages who had died before him.

They said:

"We are only weeping for ourselves, because we are losing a wise father such as you."

Among what indicates that Plato, the sage of the Greeks, held and believed this view—that is, the endurance of souls and the soundness of their condition after separation from the body—is his saying in one of his wisdoms:

"If we had no Return in which we hoped for good, this world would be an opportunity for the wicked."

He also said:

"We are strangers here, imprisoned by Nature and in the company of devils. Our expulsion from our world came about through an offense committed by our father Adam."

And he said words to this effect.

Among what indicates that Aristotle, the author of logic, held and believed this view is what he said in the epistle known as *The Apple*, and what he said when death came upon him, and his argument concerning the excellence of philosophy: that the philosopher is rewarded for his philosophy after the soul separates from the body.

Among what indicates that Pythagoras, the master of number, who was one of the virtuous sages, held and believed this view is what he said in the *Golden Epistle* and in his advice to Diogenes. At its end he said:

"For at that time, when you separate from this body and become like an empty vessel in the air, you will then be a traveler, safe and at rest, never returning to humanity and never subject to death."

We have cited the sayings and counsels of the philosophers, and the deeds of the prophets and the practices of their sacred laws, as evidence for this view because within the religious law there are people who philosophize but know nothing of philosophy except its name, and there are people of the sacred law who know nothing of the secrets of the sacred law except formal practices.

They take their seats at the head of gatherings and speak about things they do not understand. They debate concerning things of which they have no knowledge. At one time they contradict philosophy with the sacred law, and at another they contradict the sacred law with philosophy. Thus they fall into perplexity and doubts, going astray and leading others astray.

Among what indicates the endurance of souls after their separation from their bodies is that every intelligent person who reflects upon the weeping and grief of people for their dead at the moment when their souls separate from their bodies will recognize this.

If their weeping were for their bodies, why would they weep when the bodies are completely present before them and they can see them, with nothing missing from them?

If they wanted to preserve those bodies by medicines applied to them so that they would not change for a long time, they could do so. Yet instead they become repelled by them and bury them, because they dislike their appearance and are ashamed of their disgrace once their souls have departed from them.

And if their weeping were simply grief over the loss of the movements and actions, wisdoms, virtues, and works that used to appear from those bodies, why do they not weep over their loss during sleep? For all of these things cease during sleep except the pulse and breathing.

Do you not see, my brother, that this familiarity, companionship, affection, and loving tenderness are directed only toward those noble souls and precious substances?

Thus this weeping, grief, regret, and sense of estrangement are for the loss of those souls whose movements, speech, actions, virtues, crafts, and wisdoms had appeared through their bodies.

Among what indicates the endurance of the soul and the soundness of its condition after separation from its body is that people go to the graves of the righteous, the friends of God, and the virtuous, seeking forgiveness, the acceptance of supplication, and seeking intercession through them with God Most High.

They hope for their intercession before their Lord, and they also seek the fulfillment of their needs concerning worldly matters through supplication at their graves.

Do you suppose that the people of all religions agreed upon something that has no reality?

No. Rather, this is a profound knowledge and hidden secrets that none comprehend except those who possess knowledge, as God Most High mentioned them and praised them for what they knew that was hidden from others, saying:

“And on the Day the Hour is established, the criminals will swear that they remained only for an hour. Thus were they deluded. And those who were given knowledge and faith will say:

‘You remained in the Book of God until the Day of Resurrection. So this is the Day of Resurrection, but you did not know.’”

It is appropriate that we explain how the Brothers of Purity maintain communication with one another, how some of them assist others in seeking the livelihood of this world, what becomes of one whose death precedes that of his companion, and how those who remain live after their companion has departed.

It is related that there was a city situated atop a mountain on an island among the islands of the sea. It was fertile, abundant in blessings, tranquil, with pleasant air, sweet waters, and good soil. It had many trees, delicious fruits, and many kinds of animals, according to what the soil, air, and waters of that island required.

Its inhabitants were brothers and paternal cousins to one another, descended from a single man. Their life was the most pleasant life that could be lived because of the affection that existed among them: love, mercy, compassion, and gentleness, without the disturbance caused by envy, transgression, hostility, and various forms of evil, as occurs among the inhabitants of oppressive cities whose natures are mutually opposed, whose faculties are discordant, whose opinions are scattered, whose deeds are ugly, and whose characters are wicked.

Then a group of the inhabitants of that virtuous city went out to sea. Their vessel broke apart, and the waves cast them onto another island. On it was a rugged mountain with tall trees bearing sparse fruit, deep springs whose waters were turbid, dark caves, and predatory beasts.

The general population of that island consisted of monkeys.

Among some of the islands of the sea there was a bird of enormous size and great strength which had been set upon them. Every day and night it would attack them and snatch away a number of those monkeys.

The group who survived the shipwreck scattered throughout the island and the valleys of the mountain, seeking whatever fruits they could live upon because of the hunger that had overtaken them. They drank from those springs, sheltered beneath the leaves of the trees, and at night took refuge in the caves, protecting themselves there from heat and cold.

The monkeys became accustomed to them, and they became accustomed to the monkeys, since the monkeys were the species of predatory animal most closely resembling humans in appearance.

The female monkeys became enamored of them, and those among the men who were afflicted with strong sexual desire became enamored of them. The monkeys conceived from them, reproduced, and multiplied.

Time passed, and they settled upon that island, took refuge in that mountain, became accustomed to that condition, and forgot their homeland, its pleasures, and the families who had once been with them.

Then they began building structures from the stones of that mountain and making dwellings from them. They became eager in gathering and storing its fruits, and the greedy among them hoarded them.

They began competing for the female monkeys and envying whoever among them had the greatest share of these circumstances. They wished to remain there forever. Enmity and hatred arose among them, and the fires of war were kindled.

Then one of them saw in a dream that he had returned to the city from which he had departed. When the inhabitants of that city heard of his arrival, they rejoiced, and his relatives came out to meet him outside the city.

They saw that travel and exile had changed him, and they disliked having him enter the city in that condition. At the city gate there was a spring of water, so they washed him, shaved his hair, trimmed his nails, dressed him in new clothes, perfumed and adorned him, placed him upon a riding animal, and brought him into the city.

When the inhabitants of that city saw him, they rejoiced. They began asking him about his companions, their journey, and what time had done to them. They seated him at the head of the gathering in the city and gathered around him, amazed at him and at his return after they had despaired of ever seeing him again.

He was joyful at being with them and at what God Most High had saved him from: that exile, that shipwreck, the companionship of those monkeys, and that miserable life.

He believed that all of this was something he was seeing while awake.

When he awoke, however, he found himself in that place among those monkeys.

He awoke sorrowful and brokenhearted, renouncing that place, distressed and contemplating his situation, desiring to return to his homeland.

He told his dream to one of his brothers.

That brother remembered what time had caused him to forget about their homeland, their relatives and families, and the prosperity in which they had lived.

They consulted with one another, deliberated, and said:

“How can we return? How can we escape from here?”

An idea for a stratagem occurred to them: they would assist one another, gather wood from the island, build a vessel upon the sea, and return to their homeland.

They made a covenant and pledge with one another that they would not weaken or become lazy, but would strive as a single man in what they had resolved to undertake.

Then they considered that if another man were with them, he would be a greater help to them in accomplishing this, and that the more numerous they became, the more effective they would be in reaching their goal and destination.

They therefore began reminding their brethren about their homeland, encouraging them to return, and making them renounce remaining there.

A group of those people eventually united around the plan of building a ship in which they would travel back to their homeland.

While they were diligently cutting trees and sawing wood to build that ship, the same bird that used to snatch away the monkeys came and seized one of them, carrying him through the air to eat him.

When it had flown a considerable distance, it examined him and realized that he was not one of the monkeys it was accustomed to eating.

It continued flying with him until it passed over the city from which he had departed. It dropped him onto the roof of his house and released him.

When the man looked around, he found himself in his homeland, among his household, relatives, and family.

He began wishing that the bird would pass by every day, seize one of them, and drop him in his homeland just as it had done with him.

As for those people, after the bird had snatched him away from them, they wept for him, grieving over his separation because they did not know what the bird had done to him.

Had they known his condition and what had become of him, they would have wished for what their brother wished for them.

Thus should the Brothers of Purity understand the condition of one whose death precedes that of his companion.

The world is like that island, its inhabitants are like those monkeys, death is like that bird, the friends of God are like those people whose vessel was wrecked, and the abode of the Hereafter is like that city from which they had departed.

This is the belief of our noble brethren concerning their mutual assistance in this world and what they believe regarding one whose death precedes that of his brethren.

This, O brother, is the discourse of the author of the epistles, the compiler of virtues. In it there is instruction for every intelligent person.

We ask God Most High to guide our brethren to the clear path and make them among those who know and act, through His grace and gentleness.

Know, O brother, that your brother has incorporated into this epistle of his these two epistles, using the explanations and clarification of the proof contained within them concerning the conduct of brothers who adhere to allegiance to the Imam of the Age as an argument. The author of the epistles, peace be upon him, symbolically indicated in these two epistles the

beginning and the end, and alluded, in each branch of the sciences, to what is sufficient for whoever understands it. I have brought them into this place only by way of citing the various parables and wondrous sayings contained within them.

So consider, O noble brother, what every ally owes his brother in mutual support and assistance, allegiance and brotherhood, casting aside arrogance and envy, overlooking the one who does wrong, showing compassion toward the ignorant, mercy toward the intelligent, and guidance toward the heedless.

Beware, O brother, lest you neglect the admonitions of the friends of God or treat their words lightly, for then destruction may befall you and you may be thrown into the sea of confusion. Rather, it is incumbent upon you to follow in their footsteps, walk according to their righteous conduct, and do not take your erring brethren to account or repay them for their ignorance. Rather, forgive as God Most High has commanded you, and pardon, for God loves those who do good.

He says:

“Whoever does good, it is for his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is against it. Your Lord is not unjust to His servants.”

And:

“Whoever does an atom’s weight of good shall see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil shall see it.”

And:

“On the Day every soul will find whatever good it has done brought before it, and whatever evil it has done, it will wish that between itself and it there were a distant span.”

And:

“God warns you of Himself.”

It is incumbent upon you, O brother, and upon every ally, to follow the example of the friends of God, peace be upon them, in their forgiving those who wronged them, restraining their anger, and pardoning those who acted wrongly toward them.

This is exemplified by what our master al-Nuʿmān ibn Muḥammad, may God sanctify his spirit, related concerning the forbearance of our master al-Muʿizz, peace be upon him:

He said:

“I attended his assembly one day. He spoke for some time, then said to one of the servants before him:

‘Prepare the bath.’

“He said:

‘Yes.’

“He then sat for a long while. I had no doubt that he had already ordered it to be prepared earlier. Then he called for the horse, mounted it, and we proceeded before him to the chamber containing the bath in his palace.

“He entered and dismounted to enter the bath, but found its door locked because it had not yet been prepared. He asked for the key, but it could not be found.

“He stood there for a long time. He did not show any change in his condition, no anger appeared from him, and he said nothing about it.

“Then he called for a chair and sat down. He continued conversing until the key was brought and the bath was prepared. He rose, entered, and nothing in him was disturbed, nor did anything hidden within him become aroused.

“The servant who had claimed to him that he had prepared it was standing before him.

“I was overcome by intense anger toward him and toward the person responsible for preparing the bath.

“This reminded me of a report that had been related to us from one of his forefathers—I believe it was Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, peace be upon him. He had been sitting with his companions when he heard a cry in his house. One of the servants then came to him, bent over him, and whispered something privately to him.

“He said:

‘Praise be to God. To Him belongs what He has given, and to Him belongs what He has taken. Stop them from weeping, prepare him, seek the poor woman, and tell her: “There is no blame upon you. You are free for the sake of God,” because of the terror that has overtaken you.’

“Then he returned to his conversation.

“The people were too apprehensive to ask him about it. Then someone came to him and said:

‘We have prepared him.’

“He said to them:

‘Come, let us pray over this child.’

“They said:

‘Who is he, O son of the Messenger of God?’

“He said:

‘My son, so-and-so. He fell from the hands of a servant girl who was carrying him and died.’

“We also received from one of his forefathers that a servant girl stood before him to perform his ablution. The vessel fell from her hand, struck him, and broke. She became frightened and said:

‘My master, God says: “Those who restrain anger.”’

“He said:

‘We have restrained it from you.’

“She said:

‘And He says: “Those who pardon people.”’

“He said:

‘We have pardoned you, O servant girl.’

“She said:

‘And He says: “God loves those who do good.”’

“He said:

‘You are free for the sake of God.’

“I cannot count how many times I saw al-Muʿizz, peace be upon him, in his assembly and in the conduct of his departures, confronted with things that would normally call for punishment and anger.

“Sometimes one of his servants would interrupt him in his judgment, cut off his speech, argue with him, order him about and address him, or challenge him concerning matters about which no one should have challenged him. Such things would cause the breast of those present who heard them to become constricted.

“Yet I never saw him become angry at any of this, nor punish anyone for it.

“The most I ever saw from him was that one day he went outside al-Manṣūriyya for one of the matters for which he would go out. The people crowded around his mount and surrounded him from every direction, asking him for their needs and presenting their petitions to him.

“He had appointed someone to handle this, but they insisted on approaching him directly. He continued turning toward them, one after another, and toward groups one after another, speaking with them, answering them, and ordering that their needs be fulfilled, until so many of them came that he could no longer walk.

“The horse beneath him became agitated and turned around. He ordered them to disperse and ordered the footmen before him to drive them away.

“They persisted and would not leave him. The footmen were unable to repel them. He took a spear from the hand of one of them and said:

‘The only recompense for one of you is that he be struck with this.’

“Then he looked toward us, peace be upon him, and smiled immediately afterward. He said:

‘Do you not see what we are dealing with?’

“And he continued speaking as though nothing had happened.

“By God, I and those whom I saw around me, who had been traveling with him, were overcome with intense grief and anger because of what we had witnessed.

“But by God, nothing came from him beyond what I have related of the conduct displayed by his noble nature, as was his customary practice, peace be upon him.

“He said:

“Al-Muʿizz, peace be upon him, once rode during a spring day to a place that had been described to him as having beautiful flowers and abundant vegetation, and on the road there was also much of the same.

“When he left the gate of al-Manṣūriyya, the people surrounded him, asking him for their needs and presenting their affairs to him.

“He continued turning his face toward each individual, then each group, speaking with them and answering them, until he reached the place that had been described to him.

“He returned in the same condition. He did not fully enjoy the sight of what he had gone out to see, nor did he give it more than a fleeting glance, and nothing that the people did annoyed him.

“Yet I, who was around him, became annoyed on his behalf because of it.

“The footmen before him would push the people aside, so he would order them to leave alone those whom they were pushing away.

“Many of the people would prolong their walk alongside him and repeat their requests. Those around him would order them to depart and some would gesture to them, wishing to lessen the burden upon him and allow him to look at what he had gone out to see.

“But he would forbid them from doing this and order them to let the person who had spoken to him remain until he had his need fulfilled and departed of his own accord.

“This was his practice on most of his departures, peace and blessings of God be upon him.”

This, O brother, is a small portion of the many virtues of the friends of God, peace be upon them. If we were to pursue in detail all that is related of their forgiveness and forbearance, the discussion would become lengthy and exceed the bounds of composition. The accounts of such things, however, are found in the books of biographies.

Among them is the forgiveness of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, toward Waḥshī and his pardoning of him, although he was the killer of his uncle Ḥamza ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, peace be upon him.

Likewise, his forgiveness of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who had satirized him in a thousand verses, yet whom he subsequently forgave.

Likewise, his pardoning of Abū Sufyān and Ibn al-Dhubʿarī, who had also satirized him, yet whom he forgave.

Likewise, his forgiveness of Hind, the mother of Muʿāwiya—may God curse her—who had eaten the liver of Ḥamza, peace be upon him.

Likewise, his forgiveness of the People of al-ʿAqaba and what they had done to him that night when they frightened his she-camel; he forgave them.

Likewise, his forgiveness of everyone who opposed him, challenged him, and contended with him.

Had we enumerated all the examples of such matters concerning him and his legatee, peace be upon them both, the discussion would become extensive and exceed the bounds of this book. The accounts of them, however, are found in the books of biographies.

Among these is also what has been related from our master al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, peace and blessings of God be upon him: a man used to harm him and insult him constantly, both in his presence and in his absence, and during this he would insult the Imam.

One day, when the Imam, peace be upon him, heard that man insulting him, he said to those around him:

“Bring me this man so that I may cut out his tongue.”

They brought him, and everyone watched, expecting him to cut out his tongue.

But behold, he, peace be upon him, clothed the man, gave him a gift, and sent him away. The man left praising and commending him.

Such was one of his deeds.

If we were to pursue all that follows this pattern, we would exceed what we have set out to do, as has already been stated.

Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon all the brethren to emulate their masters, follow their way, and practice according to their practice, since they are their allies and their Shiʿa.

For we have seen many people who are not of our doctrine, yet who profess chastity and scrupulousness, truthfulness of tongue, good character, cheerfulness toward those near and far, asceticism, and generosity.

Our brethren, therefore, have greater right and are more deserving of possessing these qualities, because they follow the Imams of truth, and because they guide them toward faith and truthfulness.

What greater deficiency and what greater disgrace could there be for any ally than for truthfulness, fidelity, asceticism, chastity, contentment, and righteousness to be found in others among all the sects outside allegiance, while he himself lacks them?

That would indeed be manifest loss and tremendous deficiency.

We ask God for steadfastness in goodness and purity of intentions, through His grace and generosity.

Know, O brother—may God strengthen you and us with a spirit from Him—that whoever does not possess the qualities of the people of goodness mentioned above is a hypocrite, not a believer, [and is] one who falsely lays claim to the secrets of the friends of God.

The sage said: “Every tree whose owner, the gardener, does not recognize it is planted by Satan.”

So wretched is the one who falls into the pits of destruction and puts on the garments of evil deeds; and blessed is the one who seeks the gates, secures the return, takes poverty as his garment, and the Qur’an as his companion.

Know that God has chosen among His creation those who worship Him with sincerity of their innermost selves, and He responds to them with the sincerity of His goodness. They are those whose records pass with the angels empty until, when they reach Him, He fills them with the secret of His knowledge.

Their bodies are worldly, but their hearts are heavenly. With all the knowledge contained within their hearts, it is as though they worship God in His heaven.

They are those whom God has seated upon the chairs of the physicians of the people of knowledge. When they are present, they are not recognized; when they are absent, they are not missed; when they travel a road, they turn away from it; and when they seek in marriage, they are not given in marriage.

Their eyes are bleary from weeping, their bellies lean from fasting. They are few in number, yet the greatest in rank with God.

It is related that the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said to Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, may God have mercy on him, as an admonition:

“O Abū Dharr, blessed is the one who humbles himself without humiliation, lowers himself without abasement, spends wealth that he has acquired without disobedience, shows mercy to the people of lowliness and poverty, and associates with the people of chastity and wisdom.

“Blessed is the one whose inward state is sound, whose outward state is noble, and whose evil he has kept away from people.

“Blessed is the one who acts according to his knowledge, spends the surplus of his wealth, and restrains the surplus of his speech.

“O Abū Dharr, wear coarse clothing and be apprehensive of it, as an act of humility before God, so that perhaps pride and glory will find no path within you.

“O Abū Dharr, toward the end of time there will be people who wear wool and seek ostentation through their clothing, fasting, and prayer. They will think that they possess superiority over others. The Tyrant of the heavens and the angels brought near will curse them.

“O Abū Dharr, shall I tell you who the people of Hell are?”

“I said: ‘Yes, O Messenger of God.’

“He said: ‘Everyone who is pleasant in scent and fine in clothing, but vile in conduct.’

“And I shall tell you about the people of Paradise: they are disheveled and dust-covered, wearing worn garments out of humility. They are not given importance; yet if they were to swear an oath by God, He would fulfill it for them.”

Our master the Commander of the Believers, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

Your proof that poverty is better than wealth,
and that little property is better than abundance,

is that you meet a creature who disobeyed God because of wealth,
but you never see a creature who became arrogant because of poverty.

It is related that a man from the scholars of the Children of Israel used to read in the Torah, morning and evening, these verses:

“Be content, O son of Adam, and you will become independent.
Withdraw from people, and you will be safe.
Abandon desires, and you will perfect the intellect.
Abandon covetousness, and your manliness will become manifest.
Abandon envy, and you will become free.
Be patient for a little, and you will enjoy much.”

Salman al-Fārisī, may God be pleased with him, said:

“Three things made me laugh and three things made me weep.

“The three that made me laugh were: one who seeks the world while death seeks him; one who is heedless while he is not overlooked; and one who laughs with his mouth full without knowing whether he has pleased God or angered Him.

“The three that made me weep were: the separation from the beloved ones, Muḥammad and his companions; the terror of the place of emergence during the agonies of death; and my standing before God, not knowing whether I will go to Paradise or to Hell.”

The Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, said:

“I found that Barzūjmihr had stated five words that ought to be written in gold:

“His saying: If God Most High is the greatest of all things, the ultimate of all ultimates, and the final end of all ends, then knowledge of Him is among the most exalted sciences.

“If treachery is a natural disposition among people, then trusting everyone is the very height of incapacity.

“If the world is passing away, then coveting it is delusion.

“If sustenance has been apportioned, then the striving of the covetous person in the world is futile.

“And if God is just in His decree and destiny, then whatever afflicts the learned person is only for a reason.”

It is related from Wahb ibn Munabbih that he said:

“It is written in the margin of the Torah twenty-two words around which the Children of Israel would gather and recite them every day:

There is no treasure more beneficial than knowledge.
There is no wealth more profitable than forbearance.
There is no nobility of lineage higher than good conduct.
There is no lineage more exalted than silence.
There is no might more mighty than intellect.
There is no honor greater than God-consciousness.
There is no generosity better than abandoning desires.
There is no intellect better than reflection.
There is no good deed higher than patience.
There is nothing worse than poverty.
There is no remedy more beneficial than gentleness.
There is no guide clearer than truthfulness.
There is no misery more wretched than stupidity.
There is no poverty more enduring than covetousness.
There is no worship better than humility.
There is no asceticism better than contentment.
There is no life more pleasant than health.
There is no living more comfortable than well-being.
And there is no visitor nearer than death.

One of the Jewish sages said:

“I looked in the Torah and found ten words. I wrote them on a piece of parchment, hung it around my neck, and looked at it every day.

“The first was:

‘O son of Adam, do not fear any authority other than Me so long as My authority remains; and My authority shall never be exhausted.’

“The second:

‘O son of Adam, do not worry about sustenance so long as My treasuries are full; and My treasuries shall never be exhausted.’

“The third:

‘O son of Adam, do not find companionship with anyone other than Me so long as you find Me, for I shall never be absent.’

“The fourth:

‘O son of Adam, I created all things for your sake, so do not let what I created for your sake distract you from what I created for My sake.’

“The fifth:

‘O son of Adam, do not demand from Me tomorrow’s sustenance, just as I do not demand from you tomorrow’s deed.’

“The sixth:

‘O son of Adam, My obligations upon you are My prescribed duties, and your sustenance is with Me. Just as you do not oppose Me regarding My prescribed duties, I will not oppose you regarding your sustenance.’

“The seventh:

‘O son of Adam, I created you from dust, then from a drop of fluid, and I was not wearied by creating you. Would a loaf of bread that I send to you weary Me?’

“The eighth:

‘O son of Adam, you have not dealt fairly with Me concerning yourself. My good descends toward you, while your evil rises toward Me.’

“The ninth:

‘O son of Adam, everyone wants for himself, whereas I want for you, and you flee from Me.’

“The tenth:

‘O son of Adam, if you are content with what I have apportioned to you, I will give rest to your heart and body, and you will be praised. But if you are not content with what I have apportioned to you, I will set the world over you, and you will run about in it like a wild beast in the wilderness.’”

These, O brother, are the etiquettes of God Most High and the etiquettes of His friends for whoever belongs among them.

So understand what they established and contemplate what they prescribed. You will thereby be saved from the people of error and keep away from the people of association and falsehood.

So strive, may God have mercy on you, to purify your relationship with the brethren and to maintain allegiance to the people of faith.

You have seen—and we have seen—many people of nobility who associate and become brothers, such that none betrays his companion, deceives him, backbites him, or approves of evil conduct toward him. Rather, he supports him with his own person and wealth and protects him in all his circumstances.

Yet between them there is nothing but worldly companionship and bodily familiarity.

How much more, then, O brother, should this be the case with one who is your brother in religion, whom the covenant of the Commander of the Believers has united with you, while you and he know your beginning and your end, from where you came and where you are returning!

Is it permissible for you two, after this knowledge, to separate?

God forbid! This is nothing but tremendous ignorance and grave sin, into which none falls except every transgressor steeped in sin.

We ask God Most High, for ourselves and for all our brethren, for purity of hearts, purification from sins, and freedom from defects. He is the guardian of that and has power over it.

These, O brother, are the etiquettes of God and the etiquettes of His friends.

Following this is the letter of ʿAbd Allāh al-Najāshī to ʿAbd Allāh Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq, peace and blessings of God be upon him, when he was appointed over al-Ahwāz.

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Salmā al-Dawlānī said:

“I was with Abū ʿAbd Allāh Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, when a client of ʿAbd Allāh al-Najāshī came to Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him. He greeted him and delivered the letter to him.

“He opened it and looked at it. At the beginning of the letter was:

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

May God prolong your life, O my master, and make me a ransom for you against every evil, and never let me see anything distressing befall you. He is the guardian of that and has power over it, through His grace and gentleness.

“Know, O my master, my lord, and the one who is the source of my blessings, that I have been tested by being appointed over al-Ahwāz.

“If my master sees fit, establish for me a boundary and give me an example by which I may know what brings me closer to God and His Messenger, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family.

“Summarize for me in your letter everything that you consider I ought to practice: where I should place my acts of kindness; with whom I should employ and expend my standing and influence; where I should place my alms and upon whom I should spend them; with whom I should find companionship and with whom I should rest; in whom I should place my trust and whom I should entrust; and to whom I should refer my affairs.

“Perhaps God will save me through your guidance and direction, for you are God’s proof over His servants and His trustee in His lands.

“May God not forsake you or remove you, through His mercy.

“So advise me, O my master, according to what you see.

“And may your opinion, my master, in this letter be accompanied by your safety and the safety of those under your care and those whose affairs concern you, successful, God willing, Most High.”

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Salmān said:

“Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, replied to him:

May God encompass you with His care, favor you with His grace, and guide you through His protection, for He is the guardian of that and has power over it.

“To proceed:

“Your messenger came to me with your letter. I read it and understood everything that you had written and asked about.

“You said that you had been tested by being appointed over al-Ahwāz. This pleased me and troubled me, and I shall tell you, God willing, what pleased me about it and what troubled me.

“As for my pleasure at your appointment, I said: ‘Perhaps God will relieve through you one of the distressed and fearful among the friends of the family of Muḥammad, peace and blessings of God be upon them; strengthen their weak; repair their brokenness; free their

captives; feed their hungry; clothe their naked; give security to their fearful; strengthen their weak; and extinguish through you the fire kindled by those who oppose them.'

"As for what troubled me about it, the least of what I fear for you is that you may stumble regarding one of the friends of God, and then you will not enter the enclosure of holiness.

"I shall summarize for you everything you asked about. If you act upon it and do not go beyond it, I hope that you will be safe, God willing.

"O ʿAbd Allāh, my father related to me from his fathers, from ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, from the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and them all, who said:

"'Whoever is consulted by his believing brother and does not give him sincere counsel, God will take away his judgment.'

"Know that I shall tell you my judgment. If you act according to it, you will escape that which you fear.

"Know that your well-being, salvation, and success lie in sparing blood, restraining harm from the friends of God, treating the subjects gently, proceeding deliberately, and maintaining good relations—with gentleness without weakness, firmness without violence, and tact toward your companion and toward whoever comes to you from his messengers.

"'Repair what is torn in your subjects, and open what has been closed among them, according to what accords with truth and justice, God willing.

"'Beware of informers and tale-bearers. Do not allow any one of them to gain power over you, and do not let God see you, day or night, accepting anything they bring, whether false or true. Otherwise God will nullify your deeds and expose your covering.

"'Beware of the deception of the Khūz of al-Ahwāz, for my father related to me from his fathers, from the Commander of the Believers, peace and blessings of God be upon him, that he said:

"'Faith does not become firmly established in the heart of a Jew or a Khūzī.'

"As for the person with whom you find companionship, in whom you find ease, in whom you trust, and to whom you entrust your affairs, let him be the tested, discerning, trustworthy, religious man who agrees with you in your religion.

"Test your close associates, distinguish your common people, and test both groups. When you see sound judgment there, then proceed according to it.

"Beware of giving a dirham, a garment, or carrying someone upon an animal for anything other than the sake of God—whether he be a poet, an entertainer, or one who praises you—unless you give its equivalent itself for the sake of God.

"Let your gifts, grants, mounts, and garments be for commanders, messengers, those entitled to them, intelligence-gatherers, visitors, those who bear correspondence, those involved in

administration, and the chief of police, the ḥawālī, the bandār, the collectors of reports, and the muḥāshir.

“And whatever you wish to spend in the avenues of righteousness—marriage, manumission, charity, pilgrimage, food and drink, clothing in which you pray and with which you honor your parents, and the gift through which you offer something to God Most High and to His Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family.

“Let the purest of your earnings be from the path of gifts, for God is good and accepts only what is good.

“O ʿAbd Allāh, strive not to hoard gold or silver, lest you become among those described in this verse:

‘Those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of God—give them tidings of a painful punishment. On the Day when it will be heated in the fire of Hell and their foreheads, sides, and backs will be branded with it: “This is what you hoarded for yourselves, so taste what you used to hoard.”’

“Do not regard anything from a creature or a garment as insignificant, nor any surplus food that you can place into hungry stomachs, thereby calming the wrath of the Lord, Blessed and Exalted is He.

“Know that I heard my father relate to me from his grandfather ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, that he heard the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, say to his companions:

“‘A person who sleeps satisfied while his believing neighbor is hungry does not truly believe in God.’

“They said:

“‘We are ruined, O Messenger of God!’

“He said:

“‘From the surplus of your food, the surplus of your dates, your provisions, and your garments, [give] that by which you extinguish the wrath of the Lord.’

“And I shall inform you of the insignificance of the world and its adornment in the eyes of those of the earlier generations and the Successors.

“Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, related to me that when al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, peace be upon him, prepared to depart for Kūfa, Ibn ʿAbbās came to him and adjured him by God and by the ties of kinship not to be the one killed at al-Ṭaff.

“He said:

‘I know better than you the place where I shall fall. My share of the world is nothing but leaving it.

‘Shall I tell you, O Ibn ʿAbbās, a report concerning the Commander of the Believers and the world?’

“Ibn ʿAbbās said:

‘Yes, by my life. Tell me about them both.’

“Al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, peace be upon them both, said:

‘My father, the Commander of the Believers, peace and blessings of God be upon him, related to me:

“‘I was at Fadak in one of its gardens, which had come into the possession of Fāṭima, peace be upon her. Suddenly a woman appeared before me. I had a hoe in my hand and was working with it.

“‘When I looked at her, my heart leapt because of the beauty that overwhelmed me. I compared her to Buthayna daughter of ʿĀmir al-Juḥamī, who was among the most beautiful women of Quraysh.

“‘She said:

“““O son of Abū Ṭālib, would you marry me, so that I might free you from this hoe, show you the treasures of the earth, and make kingship yours for as long as you live?”

“‘ʿAlī, peace be upon him, said:

“““I said to her: ‘Who are you, that I should seek you in marriage from your family?’”

“‘She said:

“““I am the world.”

“‘ʿAlī, peace be upon him, said:

“““Return and seek a husband other than me. You are not among my wives.”

“‘He said:

“‘Then I turned back to my hoe and began reciting these verses of poetry:’

Truly, he has failed who is deceived by a base world,
and it has not benefited those generations whom it deceived.

It came to us in the guise of a bride, Buthayna,
adorned with those very charms.

I said to her: “Deceive someone other than me,
for I am averse to the world and am not ignorant.

What have I to do with the world, even if Muhammad
were bound by poverty among those rocks?

Suppose it came to me with its treasures and pearls,
the wealth of Qarun and the kingdom of the tribes.

Would not our destiny, all of us, be toward extinction?
And would we not seek from its treasurers only with great exertion?

So deceive someone other than me; I have no desire
for the glory, kingdom, or gifts that are yours.

I have become content with what has been provided to me,
so leave me, O world, and the people of treachery.

For I fear God on the day I meet Him,
and I fear an everlasting punishment that shall never cease."

He departed from the world while no one among its people had any claim against him. When he commanded something, he did not let it lead him to anything else, until he joined God, praised and not blamed.

Then the Imams after him took up what has reached you concerning them. They did not become soiled by any of its calamities. May blessings be upon them all.

I have directed you toward the excellences of this world and the Hereafter through the words of the truthful, confirmed, trustworthy one, the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family. If you act according to what I have summarized for you in this letter of mine, and even if your sins and transgressions were like the weights of mountains and the waves of the seas, I would hope that God, by His power, would overlook them for you.

O ʿAbd Allāh, beware of frightening a believer. My father, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, peace and blessings of God be upon him, related to me from his father, from his grandfather, from ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, that he said:

"I heard the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, say:

'Whoever looks at a believer with a look by which he frightens him, God will frighten him on the Day when there is no shade except His shade, and He will resurrect him in the form of an atom, with his flesh, body, and all his limbs, until He brings him to his appointed destination.'

"And from him, from his fathers, from ʿAlī, peace be upon them, that he said:

'Whoever relieves a distressed believer, God will relieve him on the Day when there is no shade except His shade; He will make him safe from the greatest terror and safe from an evil return.

‘Whoever fulfills a need of his believing brother, God will fulfill many needs for him, one of them being Paradise.

‘Whoever clothes his believing brother when he is naked, God will clothe him in brocade, silk, and fine silk garments from the garments of Paradise, and he will continue to wade in God’s pleasure for as long as a thread remains upon the garment with which he clothed him.

‘Whoever feeds his believing brother when he is hungry, God will feed him from the fruits of Paradise.

‘Whoever gives his believing brother drink when he is thirsty, God, Blessed and Exalted is He, will quench him with sealed pure wine.

‘Whoever provides his believing brother with a servant who strengthens him and reinforces his support, God will provide him with the ever-youthful servants of Paradise and lodge him with His purified friends.

‘Whoever carries his believing brother upon a mount, God will carry him upon one of the she-camels of Paradise, and He will boast of him before the angels and creatures on the Day of Resurrection.

‘Whoever marries his believing brother to a wife with whom he finds companionship and repose, God will marry him to a maiden of Paradise. He will give him companionship in his grave with the most beloved of the two groups among his household and brethren, and will give them companionship through him.

‘Whoever assists his believing brother against an oppressive ruler, God will assist him in crossing the Ṣirāṭ when feet slip.

‘Whoever visits his believing brother in his home, having no need of him and doing so only for the sake of God, will be recorded among those who visit God, and it is incumbent upon God to honor those who visit Him.’”

O ʿAbd Allāh, my father related to me from his father, from his grandfather, from ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon them, that he said:

“I heard the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, say to his companions one day:

‘O community of believers, one who believes with his tongue but does not believe with his heart is not recorded in God’s register.

‘Do not pursue the faults of believers, for whoever pursues the fault of a believer, God will pursue his fault; and whoever has his fault pursued by God, He will expose him within the innermost part of his own house.’”

And from him, from his fathers, from ʿAlī, peace be upon him, that he said:

“God took the covenant of the believer that he would be truthful in his speech, that he would not seek retaliation against his enemy, and that he would not satisfy his anger by exposing his own faults. For every believer is bridled, and this is for a short end and a long repose.”

And from him, from his fathers, from ʿAlī, peace be upon them, from the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, that he said:

“God took the covenant of the believer concerning four trials, the easiest of which upon him is another believer like him who speaks according to his doctrine, envies him, and seeks to harm him.

“The second is a devil who intercepts him in order to lead him astray.

“The third is a ruler who follows his tracks and seeks out his slips.

“The fourth is a disbeliever in that which he believes, who regards fighting him as obligatory, oppressing him as a gain, and violating his sanctity as a religious duty.

“So what remains for the believer after all this, O ʿAbd Allāh?”

My father related to me from his fathers, from ʿAlī, peace be upon them, from the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, who said:

“Gabriel, peace be upon him, descended to me and said:

‘O Muḥammad, God conveys His peace to you and says: “I have derived a name for the believer from My own name. I named him muʾmin [believer]. The believer is from Me, and I am from him. Whoever treats a believer contemptuously has confronted Me with hostility.”’”

And from him, from his father, from his fathers, from ʿAlī, peace be upon them, from the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, that he said:

“When God, Mighty and Majestic, wishes to bestow a gift upon His believing servant, He causes someone who will wrong him to be set over him.

“Whoever wrongs a believer shall never enter the enclosure of holiness.”

And from him, from his fathers, from ʿAlī, peace be upon him, that he said:

“The Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said to me one day:

‘O ʿAlī, never set yourself in opposition to a man until you examine what is in his inward self. If his inward state is good, God, Mighty and Majestic, would never abandon His friend because of your enmity toward him. If his inward state is evil, his faults may suffice for you; even if you exerted yourself to make him commit more of God’s sins, you would not be able to do so.’”

My father related to me from my fathers, from ʿAlī, peace be upon them, from the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, that he said:

“The lowest degree of disbelief is that a man hears a word from his believing brother, preserves it against him, and intends to use it to rebuke and disgrace him. Those people shall have no share in this world or the Hereafter.”

My father related to me from his fathers, from ʿAlī, from the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon them, that he said:

“Whoever says about a believer what his eyes have seen and his ears have heard, in a manner that disgraces him and destroys his manly honor, is among those concerning whom God Most High said:

‘Indeed, those who love that indecency should spread among those who believe shall have a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter.’”

My father related to me from his fathers, from ʿAlī, peace be upon them, from the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, that he said:

“Whoever transmits a report about his believing brother, intending by it to destroy his honor and disgrace him, God will ruin him in the clay of khabāl in the lowest depth of the Fire—or else he will produce an excuse.”

The Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, added to this:

“He will not produce an excuse.”

O ʿAbd Allāh, whoever brings joy to his believing brother has brought joy to us, the Ahl al-Bayt. Whoever brings joy to us, the Ahl al-Bayt, has brought joy to the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him. Whoever brings joy to the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, has brought joy to God, Mighty and Majestic. And whoever brings joy to God, Mighty and Majestic, it is incumbent upon God Most High to bring joy to him and make him dwell in His Paradise.

Then I advise you to have God-consciousness toward the Great God and to hold fast to His rope, for whoever holds fast to the rope of God has been guided to a straight path.

Fear God, and never prefer anything over His pleasure and His God-consciousness. For God-consciousness is God’s counsel to His creation, and God accepts nothing else from them, nor does He exalt them except through it.

Know that creatures have not been entrusted with anything better than God-consciousness. It was the reliance of people of understanding and the counsel of the intelligent in the past.

So if you are able to obtain from the world enough to make you independent of that concerning which you will not be asked tomorrow, then do so.”

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sulaymān said:

“When the letter of Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, reached ʿAbd Allāh al-Najāshī, he read it, then shook his head and said:

‘By God, in whose presence there is no god other than Him, no one in this world acts according to what is contained in this letter except that he is saved.’

“ʿAbd Allāh, may God have mercy on him, continued to act according to it throughout his life.

“May God be pleased with him and be pleased with his state, and make his resting place good.”

Al-Muʿallā related from one of the family of Āl Yaqṭīn, from his father, from his grandfather, who said:

“A man from the scribes of Yaḥyā ibn Khālid was appointed over us in al-Ahwāz. I was liable for a tax from which the loss of my prosperity and the removal of my property would have resulted.

“It was said to him that I professed this matter. I did not dare to place my hand in his hand, fearing that what had reached me might not be true and that I might thereby fall into a situation from which I could not escape.

“So I fled to Mecca—may God protect it.

“When I completed my pilgrimage, I made my way toward Medina and entered upon al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him.

“I said:

‘O my master, so-and-so, son of so-and-so, has been appointed over my province. I have been informed that he is among your friends and among those who maintain allegiance to you, the Ahl al-Bayt. I did not dare place my hand in his hand, fearing that what has reached me might not be true and that through him I might lose my property and my prosperity. So I fled from him to God and to you.’

“He wrote a small note in his noble handwriting containing:

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

‘God has, beneath the shadow of His Throne, a shade in which no one dwells except a believer who relieves his brother of a distress, assists him with his own person, or does him a kindness, even if it be no more than half a date.

‘And this is your brother.

‘Peace.’

“He then sealed it, gave it to me, and ordered me to deliver it to him.

“When I returned to my province, I went to him at night. I informed the chamberlain to say:

‘Your master’s messenger is at the door.’

“The chamberlain went in and informed him. Suddenly he came out to me barefoot.

“When he saw me, he greeted me and kissed me between my eyes.

“Then he said:

‘My master’s messenger, are you?’

“I said:

‘Yes.’

“He said:

‘Then you have set me free, if you are truthful.’

“He took my hand and brought me into his house. He seated me in his own place of sitting and sat before me.

“Then he said:

‘O my master, how did you leave my master?’

“I said:

‘Well.’

“He said:

‘God?’

“I said:

‘God.’

“He repeated this to me three times.

“Then I handed him the note. He read it, kissed it, and placed it upon his eyes.

“He said to me:

‘O my brother, state your affair.’

“I said:

‘So-and-so amount of dirhams is recorded against me in your register, and it contains my destruction and ruin.’

“He called for the register, erased what was recorded against me, and gave me a document releasing me from it.

“Then he called for the chests containing his wealth and divided them equally with me.

“Then he called for his riding animals. He would take one animal and give me another.

“Then he called for his servants. He would take one servant and give me another.

“Then he called for clothing. He would take one garment and give me another, giving me the choice in all of these things.

“He continued sharing all his property with me and kept saying:

‘O my brother, have I made you happy?’

“I would say:

‘Yes, by God!’

“And my happiness increased beyond measure.

“When the days of the pilgrimage season came, I said:

‘No, by God! I cannot repay this brother with anything more beloved to God and His Messenger than to go to Mecca—may God protect it—pray for him, go to my master, thank him before him, and ask him to pray for him.’

“So I went to Mecca—may God protect it—and made my way to my master.

“When I entered upon him, I saw joy in his face.

“Then he said to me:

‘O so-and-so, what happened between you and the man?’

“I began relating to him what had happened between us.

“His face continued to brighten, and the joy upon it became evident.

“I said:

‘O my master, the happiness he brought me through what he did—may God bring him happiness in all his affairs.’

“He said:

‘Yes, by God, it has brought me joy! By God, it has brought joy to my fathers! By God, it has brought joy to the Commander of the Believers! By God, it has brought joy to the Messenger of God! By God, it has brought joy to God upon His Throne.’”

And from al-Luʾluʾ, from Ṣafwān, from Ibn Nukayr, from ʿUbayda ibn Zurāra, who said:

“Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, sent a man to Ziyād ibn ʿAbd Allāh and said:

‘Appoint this man over some of your administrative work.’”

Ibn Faḍl related from Abū al-Muʿizz, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, that a man asked him, while I was listening:

“I pass by one of my brethren who is an official, and they bring me dirhams. May I take them?”

“He said:

“Yes.”

Ibn Abī ʿUmayr related from Hishām ibn Sālim, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, who said:

“God has, among the rulers of oppression, friends through whom He wards off affliction from His friends. Those are the true believers.”

Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā ibn Abī Najrān related from Muḥammad ibn Muslim, from al-Mufaḍḍal, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, who said:

“God has, at the doors of the tyrants, creatures among His creation through whom He wards off affliction from His friends. Those are God’s freed ones from the Fire.”

ʿUthmān ibn ʿĪsā related from Bahrān ibn Muḥammad, from Abū Baṣīr, who said:

“I heard Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, say:

‘There is no tyrant except that God has placed with him someone through whom He wards off harm from the believers and from their persons. Those have the greatest share in the Hereafter.’”

And from al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, from ʿUthmān ibn Abān, from Sinān, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, who said:

“I said to him:

‘There is a believing man among your friends who takes up administrative work for these rulers. He takes the best and finest of his work and assigns it to those who oppose us, while a man from your friends comes to him and he does nothing for him.’

“He said:

‘He is not one of you.’”

And from Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā, from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥajjāj, who said:

“I was sitting with Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, when a man from the Shiʿa entered and complained to him of need.

“He said:

‘What prevents you from presenting yourself to this ruler and entering into some of his affairs?’

“The man said:

‘You have forbidden it to us.’

“He said:

‘Tell me: does the authority belong to us or to them?’

“He said:

‘Rather, it belongs to you.’

“He said:

‘Then are they the ones entering upon us concerning our right, or are we the ones entering upon them concerning their right?’

“He said:

‘Rather, they are the ones entering upon you concerning your right.’

“He said:

‘They have a practice and regulations that differ from your practice and regulations.’

“He said:

‘Have not the people already proceeded according to those regulations for them?’

“He said:

‘Yes.’

“He said:

‘Then let them proceed according to what they themselves have established in their register, and beware of wronging a believer.’”

And from Muḥammad ibn Sinān, from Abū al-Jārūd, from Abū Jaʿfar, peace be upon him, who said:

“I asked him about working for the ruler and entering into the affairs in which they are engaged.

“He said:

‘There is no harm in it if he supports his brethren and relieves the distressed among those under his allegiance.’”

And from Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Faḍḍāl, from Ḥammād ibn ʿUthmān, from one who related it to him, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, who said:

“We asked:

‘Does any one of you enter into the service of the ruler?’

“We said:

‘Sometimes one of our men enters it.’

“He said:

‘Then how do they support their brethren and those connected to them, and how do they bring benefits to them?’

“We said:

‘We do not know of such things among them.’

“He said:

‘If they are like that, then disassociate yourselves from them.’”

From Abū ʿUmayr, from his father, al-Walīd ibn Ṣubayḥ al-Kalbī, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, that he said:

“Whoever enters his name into the register of the sons of Satan—the Banū Shayṣabān—God will resurrect him on the Day of Resurrection as a pig, except for one who enters into their affairs with knowledge and clear insight concerning them, intending thereby to do good to the people of his allegiance.”

Some of our companions related from Sayf ʿUmayr, from Abū Ḥamza al-Shimālī, who said:

“I heard Abū Jaʿfar, peace be upon him, say:

‘Whatever we have permitted for someone from what he has acquired through the offices of the oppressors is lawful for him, because the Imams among us have been entrusted with authority over this matter. Whatever they make lawful is lawful, and whatever they make unlawful is unlawful.’”

And from al-Naẓar, from Naḥw al-Jalabī, from Shuʿayb al-Ḥumayyād, from Abū Baṣīr, who said:

"ʿAlī ibn Darāj, to whom he had entrusted his affairs, related to me. He told me at the time of his death:

'Al-Mukhtār appointed me and Bishr ibn Ghālib to office. We acquired some wealth, so al-Mukhtār seized us and imprisoned us. Then he was killed and released us.

'I had entrusted a portion of that wealth to someone. I went and married using it. Then I came to Medina and met the Banū Hāshim and asked them about it, but I found nothing with them.

'Then I met Abū Jaʿfar, peace be upon him, and asked him about it. I found with him both a matter and an abundance of good.

'I said to him:

"Al-Mukhtār appointed me to one of his offices, and I acquired some wealth. I entrusted a portion of it in Hamadān, then went and married using it."

"He said:

"You are absolved and it is lawful for you, all of it."'

From ʿĪsā ibn Muḥammad ibn Sinān, from Ibn Ṭayyār, who said:

"I heard Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, say:

'God did not ask His creation for what is in their hands out of any need for it. Whatever right He has belongs to His ally. He has only made the believers a means of ascent for one another—a ladder, a degree, and a means of elevation.'"

From Ibn ʿUmayr, from al-Ḥakīm ibn Ayman, from ʿAliyān al-Asadī, who said:

"I was appointed over Bahrain and acquired a great deal of wealth. I spent from it and purchased estates, slaves, and slave women who had borne children. Then I went to Mecca—may God protect it—taking my family, the mothers of my children, my wives, and my children with me. I also brought that wealth.

"I entered upon Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, and said:

'May I be your ransom. I was appointed over Bahrain and acquired a great deal of wealth there. I purchased estates and slaves, purchased mothers of children, and spent from it. Here is one-fifth of it. And here are the mothers of my children, my wives, and my slaves; I have brought them all to you.'

"He said:

‘Indeed, all of it belongs to us. I have accepted what you have brought. I have absolved you concerning your mothers of children, your wives, and what you have spent, and I guarantee for you—on my authority and on the authority of my fathers—Paradise.’”

It is related from one of them that he said:

“I mentioned to my master, peace be upon him, the large number of our companions who take up positions in the government and become involved in its affairs.

“He said:

‘What is their conduct toward their brethren while they are there?’

“I said:

‘Some strive, and some fall short.’

“He said:

‘Whoever honors his brother for the sake of God and harms his enemies for the sake of God, and whenever he is able, gives them sincere counsel—those people move about within the mercy of God.

“Their likeness is that of a bird that comes every summer to the land of Abyssinia, called Qadam. It lays its eggs and hatches its young there. When winter comes, it calls to its young, and they gather around it and leave the land of Abyssinia with it.

“When our Qa’im rises, our allies will gather to him from every direction and distant road.”

Then he recited the verse attributed to ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, peace be upon him:

“When the cycle reaches
its appointed end, the bird Qadam comes,

with a Book whose verses have been set forth,
containing clarification of the accounts of the nations.”

And from Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā, from Muḥammad ibn Sinān, from Ḥasan ibn Mukhtār, from Zayd al-Sajjām, who said:

“I was with Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, when he was asked about a man from the people of Kūfa. They told him that he had died.

“He said:

‘May God have mercy on him and meet him with radiance and joy.’

“A man among the group said:

‘He owed me some dinars during the time he held office under the ruler, and he overcame me concerning them.’

“The face of Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, changed at this.

“He said:

‘Do you think that God would take an ally of ʿAlī and cast him into the Fire because of your dinars?’

“The man said:

‘But he held office for the ruler.’

“He said:

‘Was he good to the brethren?’

“The man said:

‘He is absolved of it because of that.’

“Abū ʿAbd Allāh, peace be upon him, said:

‘Why was this not said before now?’”

These, O brother, are the etiquettes of the purified friends of God for their Shiʿa who follow them.

So take great care, may God have mercy on you, to conduct yourself according to their conduct, follow their way, and embrace what they commanded concerning doing good to your brethren and maintaining good allegiance toward them.

Do not despise any of them, whether small or great, and do not hasten to treat any of them badly. Rather, forgive the wrongdoer and show mercy to the young and the old, according to what has already been stated.

It is related that the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, was once sitting in his house, while one of his servants was at the door of the private chamber. He, peace be upon him, called out to the servant to attend to a need, but the servant did not answer him with a single word.

The Commander of the Believers, peace and blessings of God be upon him, went out and found him sitting at the door.

He said to him:

“Why did you not answer me when I had been calling you?”

The servant said:

“I did not fear punishment from you, so I did not hasten to come to you.”

ʿAlī, peace be upon him, raised his hands toward heaven and said:

“Praise be to God who has caused my servant, this morning, not to fear my punishment.”

So follow, O brother, the conduct of your masters and adhere to the finest path that will suffice you.

You will prosper among those who prosper and become among those concerning whom there is no fear and who shall not grieve.

May God make us among them and unite us with them, through His grace and generosity.

The Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said to his companions:

“Do you know who are the foremost to the shade of God on the Day when there is no shade except His shade?”

They said:

“God and His Messenger know best.”

He said:

“They are those who, when given what is due, accept it; when asked, they give; and when they judge for the Muslims, they judge for them as they would judge for themselves.”

He, peace and blessings of God be upon him, also said:

“The believer’s faith is not complete until he is pleased for his brother with what he is pleased for himself.”

Our master al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, said to al-Mufaḍḍal:

“O Mufaḍḍal, no one reaches the reality of faith until his brother has a greater claim upon his wealth than he himself does, until poverty is more beloved to him than wealth, death is preferable to life, sickness more desirable to him than health, and affliction more pleasant to him than ease.

“For he knows that these are a means of his salvation, an acceleration of his success, and a drawing near of his deliverance.

“Whoever knows and is certain of what he is going toward finds every condition that may befall him, or that may separate him from what lies beyond him, easy to bear.”

Our master al-Ṣādiq, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

“Whoever transmits a report about a believer intending to disgrace him, destroy his manly honor, or cause him to fall in the eyes of people, God will remove him from His allegiance into the allegiance of Satan, and Satan will not accept him.”

He also said:

“Whoever assists against a believer even with half a word will meet God Most High with written between his eyes:

‘Despairing of the mercy of God.’

“So let whoever reads our book fear God, and let him follow the words of our masters, peace be upon them, so that he may be among those who prosper, concerning whom there is no fear and who shall not grieve.”

Following this is a chapter from the assembly of our master al-ʿAzīz bi-Llāh, peace and blessings of God be upon him:

“God has commanded you in more than one place in His Book to show affection and unite yourselves upon obedience to His friends, and to maintain allegiance to one another through their allegiance.

“He has forbidden you from enmity and hatred, and has described the condition of believers in their mutual allegiance, as well as the condition of those who turn away from the friends of God in their mutual enmity and hatred.

“Among this is His saying, Glorious is He, concerning the qualities of the believers:

‘Indeed, those who believed and emigrated and strove with their wealth and their souls in the way of God, and those who gave shelter and gave assistance—they are allies of one another.

‘And those who believed but did not emigrate—you have no obligation of allegiance toward them until they emigrate. But if they seek your help in religion, then it is your duty to help them, except against a people between whom and you there is a covenant. And God sees what you do.

‘And those who disbelieved are allies of one another. If you do not do so, there will be discord upon the earth and great corruption.

‘And those who believed and emigrated and strove in the way of God, and those who gave shelter and gave assistance—they are the believers in truth. For them is forgiveness and generous provision.

‘And those who believed afterward and emigrated and strove with you—they are of you. And blood relatives are nearer to one another in the Book of God. Indeed, God knows all things.’”

As for His saying—Mighty and Majestic is He—concerning the believing emigrants who strive in the way of God with their wealth and their souls, and those who give shelter and assistance, meaning believers like themselves, that they are allies of one another:

“This is what God Most High imposed upon the believers whom God described with this quality: that they maintain allegiance to one another through affection, love, and harmony; unite upon allegiance to the friends of God Most High; listen and obey them; and act, both secretly and openly, according to their command.

“And that they be brothers, as God Most High named them in His saying:

‘The believers are but brothers, so make peace between your two brothers.’

“So obey, O community of believers, God Most High’s command to you concerning your mutual allegiance in the manner that has been explained to you, and reconcile what is between you.

“For He, Glorious is He, says:

‘O you who believe, fear God and reconcile what is between you.’

“For the friends of God command you to do this as part of God Most High’s command. They call you toward it and warn you against transgressing it, in obedience to God Most High’s command concerning it.

“They forbid you from the enmity and hatred that God Most High has described Satan as seeking to bring about among the believers.

“So obey, O believers, what you have been commanded, and you will leave the ranks of the friends of Satan and his party. You will become among the friends of God and the friends of the Imams of His religion.

“For those entrusted with your affairs are more tender toward you, more compassionate toward you, and more concerned for the soundness of your affairs than your fathers and mothers.

“And they are, in the inward reality, the fathers and mothers.

“As for fatherhood through outward birth, you can see and witness what exists between many children and their fathers and mothers: opposition, estrangement, hatred, and separation of bodies and religions; and the killing and transgression that occurs between some of them, and the harm that some wish upon others.

“None of this exists between the friends of God and those who truly maintain allegiance to them, nor do they harbor any such thing toward those who are truly loyal to them.

“So recognize their virtue and strive sincerely, that you may occupy with them the position of their true sons.

“As for their sons by birth, you are more preferred and beloved to them than those sons if you are sincere toward them.

“Leave whoever the one entrusted with authority chooses from among their community to occupy his position, and whoever among the remainder reaches the station of those among

you who are sincere—when he becomes equal with you in sincerity—may surpass you by virtue of his outward kinship through birth.

“But as for those among them who fall short of your sincerity, you are more preferred with God and with His friends than they are.

“So rejoice in this distinction and compete for this rank, O sincere believers.”

As for His saying:

“And those who believed but did not emigrate—you have no obligation of allegiance toward them until they emigrate,”

then the emigration of one whose dwelling is far from the friend of God is, outwardly, his moving toward him and being with him.

Inwardly, for one who is in his presence, it is what you have learned of the prescribed duties and drawing near through expenditure.

Whoever does this is an emigrant, and allegiance to him becomes obligatory upon the believers.

Whoever does not do it has no claim to the allegiance of the believers.

Yet his support becomes obligatory upon those who are not people of covenant and pledge, if he himself undertakes it, even if he has not emigrated, until his emigration is completed.

Then God reinforced this obligation upon you, O community of believers, by informing you, after commanding you to do it, that He sees what you do—that is, this and other things.

So obey His command, Mighty and Majestic is He, concerning your mutual allegiance, and be sincere in your deeds toward Him and toward His friends, through whom God has blessed you.

Then He further reinforced this upon you by informing you that:

“Those who disbelieved are allies of one another.”

He did not command you, nor permit you, to take any of them as an ally.

He reinforced this still further by saying:

“If you do not do so, there will be discord upon the earth and great corruption.”

That is, if you do not do what He commanded you concerning allegiance.

So consider, O community of believers, how strongly God, Mighty and Majestic is He, has emphasized His command that you maintain allegiance to one another, disassociate yourselves from those who oppose your command, disbelieve in your Imams, take their enemies as allies, and claim their station.

Do not take this lightly, since God Most High has emphasized it for you with such emphasis and made it clear to you with such clarity.

Then He informed you concerning those who do this that:

“They are the believers in truth. For them is forgiveness and generous provision.”

And whoever acts as they act is one of them.

So beware of enmity and hatred among yourselves.

By God, this cannot coexist with sincerity among you, as the Qur’an itself testifies against you.

God Most High said, describing those who went astray from His path and turned others away from it among the earlier peoples:

“And We cast between them enmity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection.”

By this He made clear that those who turn people away from the friends of God, in every age and time and from every nation, will continually be enemies of one another, quarrel among themselves, and hate one another.

Affection and love, on the other hand, exist only among the believers: those who know the friends of God Most High, hold fast to them, act according to their command, and are sincere toward them.

Thus, as God Most High described them:

“They are allies of one another,”

and they are brothers in the religion of God Most High, as He named them.

They are:

“firm against the disbelievers, compassionate among themselves,”

as He characterized them.

As for the enmity and hatred that has occurred among those who profess allegiance to them with their tongues, that is merely corruption that has entered their inner selves.

Through it they have departed from the qualities with which God Most High described the believers in His Book.

That is among the clearest proofs and strongest evidences of the corruption of their condition.

Likewise, the friend of God urges you to show affection and harmony toward one another, love and mutual attachment, so that your hearts may become pure for His allegiance and you

may be brothers, as God Most High named you in His Book, compassionate among yourselves, as He, Glorious is He, described you.

So establish this firmly within yourselves, resolve it within your hearts, and overcome for its sake your desires and whatever your thoughts pull you toward, and whatever your breasts whisper to you that conflicts with God's command to His friends, in this and in other matters.

For you will not attain obedience to God and obedience to His friends, nor attain His pleasure, until after striving against the souls that command evil.

And beware of speaking evil concerning your brethren, except when one among them has been wronged by an oppressor. Yet forgiveness of wrongdoing is more fitting for you. For God says:

"God does not love the public utterance of evil speech, except by one who has been wronged. And God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. Whether you reveal a good deed, conceal it, or pardon an evil deed, indeed God is Ever-Pardoning, All-Powerful."

Thus He, Mighty and Majestic is He, informed you that God does not love the public utterance of evil speech, except by one who has been wronged. There is therefore no harm in a person mentioning the wrong committed against him by the one who wronged him, and mentioning the insult that was directed against him, if he wishes to make a complaint.

But if he does not intend that, and his purpose is instead to diminish the reputation of the one whom he mentions by speaking of it, then this is disliked in the character of believers.

Train your tongues, therefore, to speak beautiful and good words, and do not set them loose upon evil speech and ugly expressions.

For the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, mentioned the treachery of the tongue and said:

"Is anything other than the harvests of their tongues what causes people to be cast upon their faces into the Fire of Hell?"

Then God Most High informed you that if you reveal good, conceal it, or pardon evil, then God is Ever-Pardoning, All-Powerful.

He thereby encourages you to speak good, hold good within yourselves, and pardon.

And He, Mighty and Majestic is He, informed you that He pardons while possessing the power to punish. Through this He calls creation to obey His command and follow His practice.

So do good, O community of believers; speak it and hold it in your hearts. Pardon evil and turn away from it.

These are the etiquettes of God and the etiquettes of His friends toward you, contained in what He sent down to you in His Book: He admonishes you and makes it clear to you, while the friend of God explains it to you, reminding you and admonishing you through it.

So adopt the etiquettes of God and heed His admonitions. Accept what comes to you from His friend, and you will be happy, prosper, and be rightly guided.

And whoever among you speaks or acts should be just in his speech and his action, both toward himself and toward others.

Beware of following passion, which leads astray from the path of God.

For He, Glorious is He, says:

“O you who believe, stand firmly for equity, witnesses for God, even if it be against yourselves, or your parents and near relatives. Whether he be rich or poor, God is nearer to both. So do not follow passion, lest you swerve from justice. And if you twist or turn away, then indeed God is aware of what you do.

“O you who believe, believe in God and His Messenger, and the Book which He sent down upon His Messenger, and the Book which He sent down before. Whoever disbelieves in God, His angels, His Books, His messengers, and the Last Day has surely strayed far astray.”

His saying, Glorious is He,

“Stand firmly for equity, witnesses for God, even if it be against yourselves, or your parents and near relatives,”

means that you must be just in speech and action for God Most High, according to truth, whether it concerns what is for you or against you, and whether it concerns someone close to you or someone distant from you.

He has forbidden you in this matter from following passion, error, and turning away from the truth.

So be just, O community of believers, in your words and actions, concerning what is for you and against you, and concerning what you love and what you dislike.

God Most High has commanded you to do this, and He has informed you of belief in Him, in the Book which He sent down upon His Messenger, and in the Book which He sent down previously.

“Whoever disbelieves in God, His angels, His Books, His messengers, and the Last Day has surely strayed far astray.”

The completion of faith is as you have already been told and as has been repeated to you in more than one place.

So make your faith sincere with your tongues and your hearts. Perform with your limbs the obligatory acts prescribed for you in it. Guard among His boundaries what He has entrusted you to preserve, and observe toward your brethren the rights that you have been entrusted to observe.

Then your faith will be complete and sound for you.

Let every person therefore examine the fault within himself, for that will occupy him and distract him from examining the fault of another.

God, the Most Truthful of speakers, says:

“O you who believe, upon you is yourselves. Those who go astray cannot harm you when you are rightly guided. To God is your return, all of you, and He will inform you of what you used to do.”

He, Glorious is He, says that it is incumbent upon every individual among the believers to examine his own affairs.

If he is rightly guided, then the straying of another does not concern him.

So attend to yourselves, attend to yourselves, O community of believers. Take responsibility for them. Reform them, discipline them, and straighten them according to that which contains their deliverance and salvation.

Do not concern yourselves with matters concerning others with which you have not been charged, until the friend of God appoints someone whom he sees fit for that purpose, someone whom he considers more suitable for it than you.

How ugly it is for a person to be blind to his own fault while looking at the fault of another, and to neglect correcting himself while wishing to correct someone else.

More ugly than all of this is for a person to diminish another because of his fault and disparage him for something that he himself possesses—or something even worse.

So beware, O community of believers, of finding fault with your brethren and mentioning their defects.

Instead, pray to God for soundness for yourselves and for them whenever you learn of something concerning them that the friends of God dislike.

Report to the one entrusted with your affairs whatever you have learned and verified concerning such matters, when there is reason to fear its consequence because of their violation of what they covenanted with God.

But do not mention such things to him repeatedly, among yourselves, or to anyone else.

Do not entertain evil thoughts about something you hear, or something reported to you concerning one of the believers, unless it has been established through your own direct observation and witnessing.

Whoever directly observes, witnesses, or hears such a thing should convey to the friend of God whatever of it must be conveyed to him, and should not disclose it to anyone other than him.

Whatever the friend of God sees fit to make public, he makes public; whatever he sees fit to conceal, he conceals.

He refers the matter back to God Most High, as He—there is no partner for Him—says:

“To God is your return, all of you, and He will inform you of what you used to do.”

Do not tear open one another’s coverings, for God Most High says:

“Indeed, those who love that indecency should spread among the believers—for them is a painful punishment.”

Rather, counsel one another toward what is right, as God Most High has commanded, and restrain one another from wrongdoing.

Let those who command you to do this be among those whom the authority has permitted to do so, those who know what they are commanded to command and what they are forbidden to forbid.

For God, Glorious is He, says:

“And consult together concerning what is right.”

And He, Mighty and Majestic is He, says:

“And converse privately concerning righteousness and piety.”

And He, Mighty and Majestic is He, says:

“By the Age! Indeed, mankind is in loss, except those who believe, perform righteous deeds, counsel one another to the truth, and counsel one another to patience.”

The mutual counsel among you should not be in the manner of the ugly scandals previously forbidden to you—the mentioning of indecency and spreading it among the believers.

Rather, it should be when you seek the face of God through that counsel and intend sincere advice for your believing brethren.

For the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

“Religion is sincere counsel: for God, for His Messenger, for His friends, and for the believers.”

And whoever receives sincere counsel from his brother should accept it and not resent his counsel, lest he become as God Most High describes him:

“And when it is said to him, ‘Fear God,’ pride in sin seizes him. Sufficient for him is Hell.”

Christ, peace be upon him, said:

“Blessed is the one who distances himself and keeps away from the Satan of tale-bearing, the Satan of rancor, the Satan of desire, the Satan of envy, the Satan of anger, the Satan of pride, and the Satan of division.

“Whoever distances these seven from himself and protects himself from the helpers of death is the king of life.

“The dwelling-place of Satan is oppression and rancor, and the companionship whose fruit is lying and denial.”

He also said:

“Whoever possesses envy toward his brethren is a killer of souls, while he does not know where he is heading, because the wrong he has committed is wrapped around his heart.”

Then he said:

“Beware, O my beloved; beware lest any one of you become deficient toward his brother and destroy his foundation.

“A person who destroys his brother’s foundation will never know himself.

“Whoever destroys the foundation of his brother has only destroyed the foundation of himself.

“Religion has a structure in the heights, and such a person has no structure in the heights.

“So beware of the spirits of deficiency and envy, and have compassion upon yourselves because of them.

“The likeness of a believer to his friend, when one of the spirits of mankind wounds him, is like a vessel filled with fine wine whose owner preserves it and seals its mouth, yet is heedless of a tear in it.

“If he does not repair it immediately, all that wine will be lost, and nothing will remain for him.

“Likewise, whoever preserves himself while there is envy, anger, or tale-bearing within him will perish, and will cause his precious wealth to perish, while this remains hidden from his sight and he does not see it.

“For everyone who casts off this world, establishes himself in religion, takes it as his allegiance, and embraces it, all become together like a structure whose strength has been brought forward.

“They are all the sanctuary of God Most High, and they are all one structure belonging to God.”

God says in describing the believers:

“As though they were a structure firmly joined together.”

Through the small part of the structure the great is made firm, and through the small the great is established.

This is the saying of Christ, peace be upon him.

He also said, peace be upon him:

“I say to you and command you to gather together in sharing with the sons of the religion, and to make your striving among them until you reach the depths of religion, enter into its secrets, and take your share of the obligations of its people.

“So accept the Lord of this dominion.

“The Lord will say to you: ‘I was hungry and you fed Me; thirsty and you gave Me drink; naked and you clothed Me; humiliated and you supported Me; a stranger and you gave Me shelter.’

“They will say: ‘Our Lord, when did we see You in this condition that we might assist You?’

“The Beloved will say to you: ‘Whenever you came to the youngest of the sons of the religion, you came to Him.’”

He said:

“Know that whoever sees hardship afflicting his brother and abandons him has no share in the love of God.

“He who attains everlasting life is only one who shares in the hardship of the believers.

“Through this he obtains the great share and everlasting life.

“You ought to manifest the fruits of your wisdom in speech, support, and protection of those whom you love, so that you may have the reward multiplied many times over.

“Trade, then, for you will gain great profit in your souls if you repent and seize this time.”

And God says:

“The believing men and believing women are allies of one another.”

And:

“If you do not do so, there will be discord upon the earth and great corruption.”

What is intended for us and for you is striving and exertion in seeking knowledge and wisdom, and strength against this inverted, afflicted, ill-fated creation.

Your struggle with the tongue is more effective than your struggle with the sword.

And God says:

“O you who believe, when you meet a group, stand firm and remember God much, so that you may prosper.”

Our master al-Muʿizz, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

“Let every one of you examine the fault within himself, for that will occupy him and distract him from examining the fault of another.

“God, the Most Truthful of speakers, says:

‘O you who believe, upon you is yourselves. Those who go astray cannot harm you when you are rightly guided. To God is your return, all of you, and He will inform you of what you used to do.’

“He said that it is incumbent upon every individual among the believers to examine his own affairs.

“If he is rightly guided, then the straying of another does not concern him.

“A person should not command another to perform a good deed that he himself does not perform, while forgetting himself in the matter.

“God Most High says:

‘Do you command people to righteousness while you forget yourselves, though you recite the Book? Will you not understand?’

“So God Most High has opened this matter to you.

“May God have mercy upon whoever among you examines his own affairs and reforms them, occupying himself with that instead of with the faults of another, and therefore does not condemn another for something that is present within himself.”

So, may God have mercy upon you, you must offer sincere counsel to the friends of God, your Imams. God, Mighty and Majestic is He, has granted you no dispensation in this matter.

Do not oppose them in what they command you, thereby disobeying them, for they have spared no effort in counseling and admonishing you, urging you toward that which brings you nearer to God, Mighty and Majestic is He, secures His pleasure for you, and provides the means by which you seek their intercession for you before Him.

So obey what they command you concerning obedience to God, Mighty and Majestic is He, and fulfilling His obligations, outwardly and inwardly, secretly and openly, in action and in belief.

The matter has been repeatedly stated to you, and the explanation has already been presented to you, so that:

“Whoever perishes may perish upon clear evidence, and whoever lives may live upon clear evidence.”

This is the saying of your master, peace be upon him. So follow his example and you will be guided; obey and you will be rightly directed.

The Commander of the Believers, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said:

“Four things break the fast of the fasting person: food, drink, sexual intercourse, and backbiting.”

So beware, may God have mercy upon you, of breaking the fast of religion through backbiting the believers, lest you suffer manifest loss.

Strive, O brothers committed to the allegiance of the Imam of the Age, upon whom be prayer and divine pleasure, to follow the path of the people of allegiance and trace the way of the people of religion and understanding.

One of your masters said to al-Mufaḍḍal:

“Whatever you have been given of your worldly possessions is but a contradiction of your rewards and a delaying of your deliverance, except for the one who takes what he has been given of the world and gives it to its people and those entitled to it, maintains ties with his brethren through it, and makes his expenditure a means of expiation for what preceded of his falling short toward himself and his excess in his affairs.

“O Mufaḍḍal, no one reaches the reality of faith until his brother has a greater claim upon his wealth than he himself does, or until poverty is more beloved to him than wealth, death is preferable to life, sickness more desirable to him than health, and affliction more pleasant to him than prosperity.

“For he knows that this is the cause of his salvation, the hastening of his success, and the drawing near of his deliverance. Whoever knows and is certain of what he is going toward finds every condition that may befall him, or separate him from what lies beyond it, easy to bear.”

I said:

“O my master, your favor has become immense, and your blessing upon your servant has encompassed me. If you deem it fitting to complete the blessing and perfect the favor, if you see me worthy of it, then make me acquainted with the ranks of the believers in their ascent and the classes of the unbelievers in their descent.”

He said:

“O Mufaḍḍal, your right has become due, and you have been freed from your bondage and released from the fetters of your soul.

“So take what I have given you and be among the grateful. Preserve it and you will be among those who prosper.

“As for the ranks of the believer, they are ten ranks, and each rank has ten degrees:

examination, sincerity, selection, nobility, naqāba, orphanhood, bābiyya, prophethood, messengership, and imamate.”

These, O brothers, are the etiquettes of your masters. So adopt them and you will be happy, prosper, and be rightly guided.

Love one another for the sake of God, for your master al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, said:

“The beloved has five obligations toward the one who loves him. He is not truthful in his love until he completes them for him and within himself.

“The first is sincerity, such that he finds no expectation, scent, hearing, sight, or sensation in anyone other than him, so that he belongs entirely to him and is wholly within him.

“The second is that he be obedient to him: loving what he loves, hating what he hates, maintaining allegiance to whoever is his ally, and opposing whoever opposes him.

“The third is that he find patience concerning him sweet, that no matter concerning him terrify him, that he advance toward affliction for his sake, and that he fear no annihilation on his account.

“The fourth is that he love him for no thing belonging to him and for no thing accompanying him, whether he treats him badly or well, whether he turns toward him or turns away from him.

“The fifth is that he not forget him: he remembers him and does not sleep without dreaming of him, and he does not turn away from him without turning toward him.

“When he completes this, he is called truthful in his love, not incapable in his resolve.”

God, Mighty and Majestic is He, has said:

“If you love God, then follow me; God will love you.”

These, O brothers, are the qualities of the lover, the conditions of the beloved, and what is incumbent upon him.

As for one who begins his day heedless and ends it distracted, striving after wealth that he may accumulate, status that he may secure, and a house that he may adorn, while he does not know what he is earning or by what means he has incurred the consequences that have befallen him—then consider, may God have mercy upon you through His mercy and inspire you to give thanks for His blessing, what you have been instructed to do, and take guidance from that by which you have been guided.

You will prosper with those who prosper and become among the inhabitants of bliss.

So beware, may God have mercy upon you, of arrogance, mutual aversion, hatred, and envy, lest your foot slip and regret overtake you.

Far be it! Where and how could one seek release from what has passed?

He was warned but did not accept the warning; cautioned but did not heed the caution. The one who came before him was guided, while the one who opposed and remained ignorant fell.

How far apart are profit and loss, guidance and disobedience, forgiveness and deprivation, on the Day when every soul will be recompensed for what it earned, and they will not be wronged:

“Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.”

These, O brothers, are answers that I have gathered, and sections of knowledge that I have set down, from the words of your masters.

So be restrained by what you have been restrained from, and comply with what you have been commanded.

There may be repetition in them because of the abundance of quotations from the words of the Boundaries, for their speech is one: there is no disagreement among them in wording, statement, or meaning.

So listen to what I have put before you and act upon it, and you will be rightly guided.

Do not be like the one who, when told, “Fear God,” is seized by pride in sin.

A person should not command another to perform a good deed that he himself does not perform, while forgetting himself in the matter.

God, Glorious is He, has said:

“Do you command people to righteousness while you forget yourselves, though you recite the Book? Will you not understand?”

God Most High has thereby shown you the ugliness of such conduct.

May God have mercy upon a believing man among you who examines his own affairs and reforms them, occupying himself with that rather than with the fault of another, and whose own eye is occupied by its mote so that he does not look toward the mote in his brother’s eye.

Restrain your tongues from chewing over the honor of the believers and mentioning their faults and shortcomings.

For the rectification of yourselves provides you with enough to occupy you instead of occupying yourselves with others.

May God have mercy upon a believing man who refrains from mentioning his brother’s faults, does not listen to others when they mention them, rejects such talk in his brother’s absence, and counsels the one from whom he hears it to refrain from it.

Adopt the etiquettes of God, Mighty and Majestic is He, that He has prescribed for you and that He sent down in His Book for you.

Listen to His explanation and do not let it pass over your ears without effect.

Take on the character of the believers, act according to their deeds, counsel one another to what is right as God, Mighty and Majestic is He, has commanded you among yourselves, and be brothers as He has named you.

May God grant you success in that which pleases Him concerning you, keep you away from that which displeases Him concerning you, and establish you through divine enabling in all your affairs.

This, O brothers, is the speech of our master al-ʿAzīz bi-Llāh, peace and blessings of God be upon him, and his etiquettes and admonition for all the friends of God concerning their mutual allegiance and fulfilling what is incumbent upon each one of them.

O brother, contemplate what I have explained to you and consider what I have made clear.

I have gathered for you in this treatise from the Book of God Most High, the words of His Messenger, the words of his legatee, and the words of the Imams from his descendants, peace and blessings of God be upon them all, what is sufficient for you in a single section: a sufficient sufficiency and a healing blessing.

It is understood by whoever is an obedient friend, while it remains inaccessible to whoever is a returning hypocrite.

O brother, look and contemplate; understand and reflect upon that which you have been commanded, and abstain from that from which you have been restrained.

Look after yourself while there is still respite, and do not rely upon being distracted by hope.

O brother, look with the eye of insight, and purify for God and His friends what is within you.

O brother, the one who is consulted is entrusted with a trust.

I have counseled you, made things clear to you, uncovered them, and indicated them to you. I have made the path clear to you and acquainted you with the truth through verification.

So follow the path of the people of right guidance, follow the noble friends of God, and turn away from the people of deviation and unbelief.

You will prosper with those who prosper and become among the people of the Garden of Bliss, concerning whom there is no fear and who shall not grieve.

O brother, what I have already cited for you from the speech of God, the speech of the Messenger of God, the speech of his legatee, and the speech of the purified Imams from his descendants, peace and blessings of God be upon them all, is sufficient.

“Whoever is guided is only guided for his own soul, and whoever goes astray only goes astray against it. Your Lord is not unjust to His servants.”

May God make us, O brother, among those for whom the path has become clear and who follow the truth and reality.

Praise be to God who guided us to the path through our following the truthful counselor and guide—a praise that continually brings increase, a praise whose beginning is joined to its end and whose present is joined to its past.

A praise by which we ascend the degrees, reach the highest chambers, and accompany the people of religion.

And we ask Him to bestow the finest pure blessings and blessed salutations upon the best of the messengers whom He chose, the chosen one by whom He raised the beacon of truth: Muḥammad, the best of mankind and the chosen one of the living and manifest, the guide to the religion of Islam, the caller to the Abode of Peace, the one whose call is answered, he who raised the foundations of the Sacred House;

and upon his mighty legatee, the lion-like horseman, the valiant warrior, the father of the illustrious Imams, he for whom the sun returned after darkness:

ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the lion of battle;

and upon the noble Imams from their two descendants, the purified rulers.

And peace be upon them, and upon the successor after them, and upon the lineage descended from them: the pure Imam, son of the Imam, Abū al-Qāsim, Amīr al-Muʾminīn, peace be upon him and upon his purified forefathers and his most noble sons, those who are awaited until the Day of Religion.

And may abundant peace be upon them.

Completion was made of writing this noble book by computer on the tenth day of Ṣafar al-Muẓaffar, 1421—one thousand four hundred and eleven years after the Hijra—may the peace of God be upon its bearer—with the aid of God Most High and through the blessing of the prayer of the trustworthy Dāʿī of God, Shams al-Duʿāt al-Muṭlaqīn, Ṣafī Amīr al-Muʾminīn, deputy of Āl Ṭāhā and Yāsīn, Dāʿī of the Age and Time, our master, lord, and sovereign, and sovereign over all our affairs, Khātim of our Cycle, Abū al-Qāʾid Jawhar Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn—may God prolong his noble life until the Day of Resurrection—through the work of his least servant, Muḥammad ibn al-Shaykh Ṭayyib ʿAlī Dahanīrawālā, under the auspices of the blessed al-Jāmiʿa al-Sayfiyya, may God exalt its beacon, in the city of Surat.