

Waheeda The Sole Epistle

Husayn ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Walīd, 8th dai

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

All praise is due to God, and peace be upon His chosen servants.

Praise be to God whose justice encompasses all of His creation, both general and particular. His majestic light dazzles the insight of those who compare and obscures the depths of understanding; His grandeur stretches across the horizons of His magnificence. By the power of His greatness, He overwhelms the hearts of the disbelievers and causes them to choke.

Glory be to Him, the God who preserves His religion, establishing every station for guiding the people of His ‘Aṣr (Era), and perfecting the structure of al-Imāmah (the Imamate), making it firm. He granted that person the rank of honor and perfection among all creatures of the world, while relegating the rest to lowliness and deficiency by comparison. He singled out that person with all the virtues of humanity through His divine decree and wisdom, making the system and its pillars dependent upon His prior sanction and explicit revelation.

We praise Him for making us among those who cling to the strong rope of wilāyah (spiritual authority), who adhere firmly and seek refuge in the orbit of true knowledge, protecting themselves from waves of passing doubts and suspicions.

We bear witness that there is no deity but Him—a testimony preserved as a treasure for the Hereafter and a preparation for the Day when souls are unveiled from bodies.

We bear witness that Muḥammad is the best Messenger, whose clear insight shines like a radiant light over the sacred world. He manifested divine subtlety through clear speech to the people of the perceptible world, conveying the message of his Lord to all jinn and humans, a distinct species among creation.

May blessings be upon him—blessings granting him the highest and most sublime rank of nearness to God, adorning him with the most complete garments of intimacy, elevating him from the stations of the messengers to the highest summits, and granting him from the honors prepared for the prophets in the abode of recompense the finest and most exalted.

And upon his successor, by whom the da‘wah al-ta‘wīliyya (esoteric mission) proceeds and is anchored, who rescues the souls of his followers from drowning in the seas of misguidance and clarifies their guidance: ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, whose loyalty is the pivot of the mission of faith, the model who faced opposition like that faced by the people of Thamūd.

And upon his later wife, closely connected to her father's time, who was taken from this world with its grief due to the oppression inflicted upon her and her husband by the Pharaoh of the nation and his Haman.

And upon her two sons, the branches of the mission and succession, the lights of majesty and guidance: al-Ḥasan, the trustee of the secret of the Imamate by explicit text from his father and grandfather, and al-Ḥusayn, the permanent bearer of its honor in his lineage after him.

And upon the Imams from his progeny, the lamps of guidance who dispel the darkness of misguidance and the signs of salvation who rescue from the dangers of ignorance.

And upon the one who was tested by the concealment (iḥtijāb) of his noble person from the people of his era, so that ignorant and arrogant individuals mistakenly thought this severed the means to the Creator's grace and kindness. This is impossible, for he is the Gate of God's mercy, whose justice opens to whoever wishes to enter, and whose intended security is forbidden to those barred.

Firmly loyal to him is a small group who remain steadfast in obedience to God by following His ḥujjah (Proof) over His creation, whom he loves. They rejoice with eternal success for clinging to the rope of God appointed to be clung to, taking it as a means, whose causes have been ripened by his presence.

Our Master and Lord, the pure Imām Abu al-Qāsim, Commander of the Faithful, whose subtle elements of the second perfection dwell in intellects and souls, like the radiance of the Germanic sun's elements of the first perfection in the perceptible world. Peace be upon them all.

Now, after this:

O brother, may God grant you and us success in pleasing Him, and may He protect us all by the shelter of His merciful elements and attentions. When I reviewed your question regarding the concealment of the maqām (station) of the Ṣāḥib al-'Aṣr (Master of the Age), may God's best greetings and peace be upon him, and the trials the saints endure from their opponents with terrible speech and ugly actions, their pursuit with harm and hostility, their exposure to grievous afflictions, the obscuring of signs of guidance by widespread ignorance, and the dominance of innovators and fools over those of knowledge and reason; and regarding on whom your brother relies in carrying out the affairs of the da'wah in the jazīrah (peninsula), and who among them is qualified, whose creed is sound and whose conduct praiseworthy—after God's choosing, I deemed it fitting to answer your question and clarify what you sought. I composed this treatise named al-Risālah al-Waḥīda (The Sole Epistle) to affirm the pillars of

creed. Whatever in it is right and true is from the blessing of the sphere on which I revolve; and any error is due to my own shortcomings.

I divided it into three chapters:

On the subject of concealment (istitār), the triumph of falsehood over truth, and that the Imamate is not severed from the world.

On the origin of creation and the beginning of innate nature (fiṭrah).

On the reality of the resurrection (ma'ād), reward and punishment, and clarification of the one deserving the rank of the da'wah.

I intend, O brother, to reveal in this chapter some secrets of the friends of God (awliyā' Allāh), upon whom be peace, which they were commanded to conceal and preserve, and forbade to disclose except after obtaining pledges and oaths from those deserving and qualified. The reason for this is the increasing severity of trials, and the intensification of the matter due to the ghaybah (occultation) of the Ṣāḥib al-'Aṣr. This is so that whoever stands by him may be firmly preserved in his religion, and increases in certainty upon certainty realized through this, turning away painful doubts from those with limited perceptions, and folding away misleading suspicions that shake the foundations of weak beliefs.

I take upon myself, as one standing by this, the firm covenant of God and His strict and severe oath, which He took from the closest angels, His prophets, leaders, and their followers. No one is exempt from this except that I do not disclose these secrets to anyone unworthy, nor do I allow it except in its proper place. I protect it with the utmost preservation and reveal it only to those sincere in loyalty and religion.

From God and His Wali (Guardian) upon him be peace, I seek assistance in completing what I intend, and I ask for success and correctness in what I aim.

Chapter One: On Concealment, the Triumph of Falsehood over Truth, and the Continuity of the Imamate in the World

We say, with the help of God Almighty and the support of His Wali on earth (peace be upon him) and His guidance: This time in which we live is one of the greatest trials of the Muhammadan cycle, the harshest affliction and temptation for the people of truth. This is due to what God, in His wisdom, has decreed regarding the concealment (iḥtijāb) of the station of the Ṣāḥib al-'Aṣr (Master of the Age), peace be upon him.

Because the period of concealment has lasted so long, most of creation, especially the ignorant and unrefined masses, mistakenly believe that the light of God has been

extinguished and that the path of guidance has been erased and abandoned. This is false; God's mercy will never be cut off from the world, but it exists eternally and perpetually.

God Almighty said:

“Say, if the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement.” (Quran, 18:109)

The Messenger of God (Muḥammad, peace be upon him) said:

“I am leaving among you two precious things: the Book of God and my ‘Itrah (progeny), and they will never separate until they come to me at the pool (ḥawḍ).” Then he brought together his two forefingers.

The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), said to Kumayl ibn Ziyād in part of their conversation:

“O God, never let the earth be without a Qā’im (one who rises) for God by His proof, whether openly manifest or in secret and unknown, lest God's proofs and evidences be nullified.”

Our master al-Mu’ayyad (may God exalt his sanctity) said in the 88th session of the 102nd century:

God’s mercy is the Messenger of God (Muḥammad, peace be upon him). God said in His perfect Book:

“And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds.” (Quran, 21:107)

Since mercy is embodied in the Messenger (ṣalla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa ālih), it is impossible for God to remove His mercy from creation after him, for that would be inconsistent with His justice.

It might be that in the times following him, there will be people better and more religious than many who were in his time. If that is so, then the one who rises after him in the rank of guardianship (wilāyah) is also mercy to the worlds, as is the one who rises after him in the Imamate, and one after another until no time is without an Imam from the family of Muḥammad (ṣalla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa ālih) who is a living mercy to the worlds, whose presence is established and whose means through him are accepted and never rejected. Because he inherits the trust of his ancestors, which was taken from their grandfather, the Messenger of God (ṣalla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa ālih), transmitted through Gabriel (Jibrīl), Michael (Mikā’īl), Israfil (Isrāfīl), and the Lord of the Worlds.

He also said in the 127th session of the 104th century:

God said to His Prophet (ṣalla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa ālih),

“And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds.”

Reason shows us that this address was not only meant for the contemporaries of the Prophet, but that this mercy continues to exist in the earth through the Awliyā' al-Amr (those entitled to authority) who are the essence of the Messenger of God (ṣalla Allāhu 'alayhi wa ālih), so the connection to the rope of mercy is equal for the first and the last, and perhaps among the latter are those whose virtue and religion surpass many of the former.

It is narrated from Abū Ḥanīfah that one day he met Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ibn Muḥammad (peace be upon him) leaning on a stick. He said,

“O Abā 'Abdillāh, has your age reached the point that you need to lean on a cane?”

He (al-Ṣādiq) replied,

“I did not take it out of necessity to lean on it, but it is the cane of the Messenger of God (ṣalla Allāhu 'alayhi wa ālih) and I wanted to seek blessing through it.”

Abū Ḥanīfah said,

“If I had known that, I would have kissed it.”

Then al-Ṣādiq exposed his arm and said,

“Do you doubt the cane? Do you doubt that this is from the flesh, hair, and skin of the Messenger of God (ṣalla Allāhu 'alayhi wa ālih)?”

Abū Ḥanīfah bent to kiss it, but al-Ṣādiq pulled his hand away and entered his house.

I mentioned this narration to illustrate the meaning of the essence (khumrah) of the Messenger of God (ṣalla Allāhu 'alayhi wa ālih) being present in every era and time, both physically and in knowledge. This is the statement of al-Mu'ayyad (may God exalt his sanctity).

Section

So how can you, O brother who is mistaken, imagine that the rope of mercy has been cut, or how can a sound mind conceive that the door of goodness and blessing and justice from the Creator has closed, depriving others as He gave to those who preceded them?

The Imamate is the enduring word and a pure grace from God upon His creation. The states of the natural world are mixed, and its affairs do not follow a single straight path. Revelation alternates with concealment, and in this, the wicked prevail over the righteous. This is a testing of the true believers who patiently endure what befalls them in trials.

God says:

“Do people think that they will be left to say, ‘We believe,’ and they will not be tested?”

(Quran, 29:2)

“Indeed, We have tested those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars.” (Quran, 29:3)

And God says:

“Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account.” (Quran, 39:10)

And:

“And We will surely test you until We make evident those who strive among you [for the cause of Allah] and the patient, and We will test your affairs.” (Quran, 47:31)

One of the awliyā’ (may peace be upon them) said:

“One of you awaits one of two good outcomes: either God will grant him victory over his enemy, so he sees with his own eyes what satisfies him; or He will take him to what is better for him, so he sees with his own eyes what satisfies him.”

Section

This concealment, dear brother, has been mentioned by the scholars and alluded to by the sages.

Among this is what was narrated from al-‘Ālim (peace be upon him) in the book al-Fatarāt wa al-Qarānāt (Periods and Generations), where he mentioned that there are four periods: the first during the time of Muhammad ibn Isma‘il, the second during the days of the hidden Imams, the third at the appearance of the Dajjal against al-Qā’im and al-Mansūr (peace be upon them), and the fourth during the seventy-third (imam) (peace be upon them all), which is the greatest and most severe trial.

Also narrated from the virtuous person, Ṣāhib al-Rasā’il (peace be upon him), in Jāmi‘at al-Jāmi‘ah (The Comprehensive Assembly), after mentioning the philosophical and legal (shar‘ī) festivals, he said:

“Know, O my brother, may God strengthen you and us with His Spirit, that the group of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ (Brethren of Purity) are the most deserving people to observe the legal worship, its times, the performance of its obligations, the commitment to its rights, the recitation of its revelation, the clarification of its interpretation, and the knowledge of its prohibitions and allowances. For they are the most special people regarding it, the closest to it in reception, and the most deserving of its service.

They are also the most deserving of divine philosophical worship, its performance and adherence, and the renewal of its concealed traditions. Once this is perfected, we will have a third practice that distinguishes us and makes us specialized in its action.

We also have three days we designate as festivals, urging our brothers to gather and strive on these days.

Know, O my brother, that these festivals of ours are not to imitate the days of the philosophers’ or legal religious festivals in reality, but by analogy. Our festivals are intrinsic and self-standing, from which actions emerge, by which and through which.

They are also three in number: the first, the middle, and the last, and the fourth is the hardest and most strenuous.

These four festivals correspond, in time, to the celestial movements and astrological decrees: spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

In the Muhammadan Sharia and the Hashemite faith, these correspond to Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, the day of pledging allegiance to Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him), and the day of tragedy (Mawṣibah) involving him (peace be upon him and his family).

In philosophy, they correspond to the sun's entry into Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn.

In the human realm, they correspond to the days of youth, adulthood, maturity, and old age, the latter being the departure of the person and the soul's separation from the body.

Hence, people mourn this and sorrow falls upon the family due to loss, just as the family of prophecy grieved the loss of their master, their leader and the pillar of their household.

After his absence, they were kidnapped, their unity dispersed, their enemy coveted them, their rights were usurped, and they were scattered.

What happened at Karbala, where many of the rightful people and those closest to the matter after him were killed, including those who assisted him in establishing the divine law, such as his friend, al-Fārūq, and Dhu al-Nurayn (the two-crowned), is well known.

The afflictions endured by his family and relatives are well documented.

This was the reason for the concealment of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and the cessation of the state of the faithful, until God Almighty permits the rise of their first, second, and third (leaders) at the times they are to arise when they emerge from their cave and awaken from their long sleep.

The fourth day is the day of their sorrow at the occultation of their master, as their father, the possessor of the divine law, disappeared and the grief and distress that followed him.

Our festivals, O brother, are living persons and active souls who act by the permission of their Lord, inspired and guided by Him to perform deeds and actions.

The first day of our days, the noble festival, is the day of the emergence of the first of our Qā'imīn (those who rise).

It coincides with the sun entering Aries, marking spring, fertility, blessing, the descent of mercy, revelation, and glad tidings—a day of joy for us and all our brothers.

The second day is the rise of the second, coinciding with the sun entering Cancer, marking the shortening of days and lengthening of nights, the end of the oppressive rulers and their state, a dark and oppressive night.

It is a day of joy, glad tidings, and hope.

The third day is the rise of the third, coinciding with the sun entering Libra, when night and day are equal, summer departs, and autumn enters.

It marks the resistance of falsehood to truth and the matter being contrary to what it was.

The fourth day is the day of sorrow and gloom, the day of our return to the cave of taqiyya (dissimulation) and concealment, and the matter being as it was in our time, until the day of emergence and rise, the sun returning after winter to the first degree of Aries.

This is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing, and every one of us has a known station in it.

Know, O brother, that during this period God distinguishes the corrupt from the pure and raises the ranks of the scholars to heights they could only attain through their patience and perseverance in their Lord's decree and what befalls them.

Do not deny what we have mentioned—that the state of the world does not remain pure because purity is known through impurity, justice through injustice, and health through sickness.

The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' were named so because of their sincere patience through trials in prosperity and adversity, without complaint at divine judgment and decree, submitting and surrendering to their Lord, with good, tranquil, and contented souls.

This is his speech (peace be upon him).

Section

So, dear brother, after what this noble person has revealed in this section with clarity, as the utmost explanation of what we are in and the clarification, do you not notice his saying at the beginning of the chapter about the festivals—three: the first, the middle, and the last—then he singled out the fourth with a different characteristic and marked it with a sign unlike the others, saying: “And the fourth is the hardest in deed and the most severe in effect”, and he

corresponded it to the season of winter, to the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and to the human person in old age, the departure of the person, and the approach of death.

His meaning (peace be upon him) by the first festival, corresponding to the sun's entry into Aries, is the appearance of our master al-Mahdī (peace be upon him) after concealment and hiding, for he is the fourth of the Imams from the era of the caliphs.

The middle festival refers to our master al-Mu'izz (peace be upon him), the seventy-second Imam, who crushes the noses of the stubborn and the opponents. Each of the fourth and seventh Imams has a unique strength and power in sanctified blessings and substances that did not reach others.

The other festival among these three is our master al-Mustanşir (peace be upon him), the fourth from the era of witnessing.

Then he mentioned the fourth day as the day of sorrow and gloom, the return to the cave of taqiyya (dissimulation) and concealment, and that the matter would be as it was in his time—this is peace upon him—from trial. This is what happened with the killing of our master al-Āmir and the concealment of his son (peace be upon them both), and this state has continued to the present.

His saying “until the day of emergence and rise, and the sun's return after winter to the beginning of Aries” means those who will come after him in the future, such as the appearance of al-Mahdī (peace be upon him) with victory over enemies and subjugation. This condition comes after a long period of dormancy and concealment.

His saying “This is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing” means that their matter (peace be upon them) in concealment and appearance is nothing but the planning of the Manager of affairs. As some of them (peace be upon him) said, “If God wills, we will do, and if we will, God wills.”

His saying “And there is none among us but he has a known station” means that whoever made their Creator manifest through him will not have it manifest by anyone else's hands. This is a profound wisdom and a great blessing for the people of gnosis.

So, understand this, O brother, and contemplate what he concluded the section with, from his saying:

“And know, O my brother, that during this period God distinguishes the corrupt from the pure and raises the ranks of the scholars to levels they could only reach through patience and

seeking reward from their Lord, exalted is His name, in all that befalls them..." until "...with good, tranquil, and contented souls."

This is what our master al-Mu'ayyad said (may God exalt his sanctity)—a trial that the ignorant consider a change in God's knowledge, while the scholar counts it as a sacrifice for God's sake.

As for what was mentioned by peace be upon him in the chapter regarding the killing of those companions of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) who helped him establish the divine law—such as his friend, al-Fārūq, and Dhu al-Nurayn—I want, dear brother, to clarify this meaning further for your benefit, so that you can distinguish its recognition from others.

Know that by "those" he meant the real bearers of these names, not metaphorically.

For these names are metaphors for those who accompanied him in the world with desire for its fleeting possessions, and greed for the caliphate which was unjustly usurped after him, inclined to the immediate and failing to achieve lasting benefit.

His true companions, however, are those who accompanied him on the path of guidance, supported him in secret and in public in conveying the message of their Lord to the nation, and assisted him.

His friend, in truth, is the Greatest Friend—Amir al-Mu'minīn Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him and his blessings)—the first to believe in him and confirm him, and who made clear the meaning of the Noble Book and the luminous Sharia with its inner interpretation and its truth.

The Farūq is Al-Hasan (peace be upon him), the entrusted one with the secret of the imamate who came after his father, preceding his brother in outward matters. Due to this, he was the separator between the two settled ones—his father Ali and his brother Husayn.

The Dhu al-Nurayn refers to our master Husayn (peace be upon him), who received the light of stability from his son (peace be upon them) and the light of trust from his brother when death approached him, thus uniting the two matters and becoming the holder of the two lights.

He gathered what had been divided in Abdullah and Abu Talib; this division is a necessary and obligatory matter, and this division will not occur after this matter with the arrival of the Qā'im, the possessor of complete perfection and completeness.

These are the true companions who accompanied him in the world, and accompanied him after leaving the world in the highest assembly, those who assist him in establishing the divine

law in reality, for they are its protectors after him, suppressing with clear proofs and scientific miracles whoever transgresses his stage alone.

So thank God Almighty, dear brother, and his guardian (peace be upon him) for what He has bestowed upon you of true knowledge.

Section

And know, O brother, that even though the station (peace be upon him) is hidden from the eyes of observers, its materials are not disconnected from the limits of his religion, those apparent and present, just as the sun in Gemini supplies the other planets to complete management and perfect the wisdom that the Mighty and Capable desires.

As the virtuous person, the author of the epistles (peace be upon him), said in the Epistle of Magic and Invocations while mentioning the Imams (peace be upon them):

They are truly the caliphs in both eras (concealment and disclosure). In the era of disclosure, their kingship appears in bodies and souls, and in the era of concealment their affairs are conducted in the inner selves and minds. The strongest acts of Satan occur in the era of concealment, because the proof of God on earth is hidden and concealed, although its lights illuminate the souls of those who know Him and return to Him.

This is his statement (peace be upon him).

Also narrated from our master Ja'far ibn Mansur al-Yaman (may God sanctify his soul) in the biography of his father (may God exalt his sanctity), and perhaps he referred to our Imam (peace be upon him) in our time, since none of the Imams concealed after his speech except our master (peace be upon him), where he said:

“And if the Imam’s concealment occurs, his call is not nullified even if it is on an island from the islands of the earth, by his order or by the order of the one who supports him and directs to him, and he exists by the existence of those who point to him and invite to him, and establish the rites of his call from its obligations and its sunnas, its lawful and unlawful.”

The appearance and establishment of his call exists by three levels: the existence of the absolute caller, the absolute authorized one, and the limited authorized one.

As for the gates, proofs, and callers of the message, they do not leave him behind the veil of concealment.

This is the meaning of “May God sanctify his soul”.

The Imam (peace be upon him) is said to exist through the existence of these limits, just as God Almighty cannot be perceived by any of His creatures, nor seen by any of His creations.

He neither chooses nor is evil or good, nor benefit or harm, if it were not for the existence of each risen one from Messenger, successor, and Imam among the creatures for their guidance and direction.

So He, Glory be to Him, is manifest and present through these limits, and His materials flow to them, and His blessings encompass them, for they look by a light from God, continuous and undivided.

Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Isma'il (peace be upon him) was concealed until no one among his followers and limits knew him, so they established his call by the order of his father and his will to them, and they exerted no effort nor neglected their situation until his son Ahmad rose and was not known either.

He underwent trials and fears and the burning of sons, which would be too lengthy to explain.

Then the author of the epistles was connected with a caller named Abu Ghufayr, who ordered the people of his call what was necessary for the matter, and concealed his condition.

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

Section

And know, my brother, that knowing the Imam (peace be upon him) is obligatory with certainty, for he is the gate for his knower to the gardens of bliss and the path thereto. This is what the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, intended by his saying: "Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his time, dies the death of ignorance."

Knowledge of the Prophets, the Trustees (Awsiya'), and the Imams (peace be upon them) is of two types: true knowledge and metaphorical knowledge.

Metaphorical knowledge is to see them with the physical eyes. Both the righteous and the wicked, the believer and the disbeliever, may see them thus; but no reliance should be placed on this kind of knowledge, as God Almighty said to His Messenger (peace be upon him and his family), "They see you, but they do not perceive."

True knowledge is to see them with the insight of the intellect, and to investigate their exalted noble ranks, and the way the divine secret flows within them by which they have been ennobled above all creation. Each station of theirs is the pure essence extracted from the

subtle inner realities of those who followed the call of his father—the Successor (Al-Nass) upon him—from birth, knowing the critical matter involved. Thus, he becomes the center for the substances of the world of creation, the ultimate of all kinds in the natural world.

This knowledge is the true vision the Messenger (peace be upon him and his family) spoke about when he said: “Blessed is he who sees me; blessed is he who sees one who saw me; and blessed is he who sees one who saw one who saw me.”

If he had meant the physical sight that coincides with the sense of vision for a visible seer, then the polytheists, Jews, Christians, and Magians would have seen him. Rather, he meant the true scientific vision we have mentioned, the intellectual knowledge we have explained.

Section

We say: if the invitation were not valid except by physically seeing the one invited, and obedience not confirmed for the obedient to the Imam of his time except after visual perception, then after the Prophet’s (peace be upon him and his family) departure and his physical absence from the world, obedience to him would not be necessary nor attainable throughout the lands of the earth, for it would be impossible for all people of his time and era to gather at his honorable place. That is not the case.

Obedience to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and obedience to those who represent him from among the Imams after him is binding upon whoever upholds them as proofs and callers for all the world, and the proof is established through those appointed to guide to them in all regions.

The scholar (peace be upon him) said in the book *Al-Fatrat wa Al-Qaranat* when mentioning the Imam (peace be upon him):

His seclusion, solitude, and departure from among them is a sign of the cessation of the Imamate, and those who remain in his call from the truthful, fortunate, and awaiting for relief will have access to his substances through his followers, and by them the proof of God Almighty on His creation is established.

And our master Al-Mu’ayyad (may God exalt his sanctity) said in some of his sessions:

The Imam of the pious, absolutely, in every era is one. Whoever claims his position falsely is doomed. Then his callers who call by his permission and rely on his opinion and command are the Imams of their people, oriented with their faces to the Absolute Imam, like how all mihrabs and qiblas turn toward the Kaaba, the Sacred House. This is his saying, may God exalt his sanctity.

Section

And know, my brother, that the truth is not nullified by the inactivity or scarcity of its people, nor harmed by the predominance or prolonged reign of the people of falsehood.

The Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) said in Nahj al-Balagha in some of his sermons:

If God Almighty had intended for His Prophets, when He sent them, to open for them the treasures of gold and the mines of jewels, and to gather for them the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth, He would have done so. And if He had done so, the trial would have been nullified, the reward annulled, the test wasted, and the deserving would not have earned the recompense of the tested, nor would the believers have deserved the reward of the good-doers, nor would the names have been bound to their meanings.

But God Almighty made His messengers possessors of firm resolves, yet weak in what the eyes see of their states, with contentment filling hearts and eyes with wealth, and humiliation filling sights and hearing with harm.

If the Prophets were people of invincible strength and honor, kings whom men would bow their necks to and set out their tents toward, this would have been easier for creation to consider, and more distant from arrogance, and they would have believed out of fearful awe and swayed desire, and intentions would have been mutual and good deeds divided.

But God Almighty intended that following His messengers, believing their books, humbling before His face, submitting to His command, and surrendering to His obedience be exclusive and pure matters, uncontaminated by others.

The greater the trial and test, the greater the reward and recompense. This is His saying.

The Second Chapter: On the Origin of Creation and the Beginning of Nature

We say, with the help of God Almighty, His substance, and the favor of His Guardian on His earth (peace be upon him) and His benefit:

Know, my brother, that all this realm—planets, moving stars, all mothers, the earth with its animals and plants, and all creations—is a fault (a flaw) occurring in the first creation. For this reason, evil dominates good, and darkness prevails over light in this world. This was hinted at by our master Al-Mu'ayyad (may God exalt his sanctity) in some of his sessions when he said: Praise be to God who founded matters upon hardship and ease, and passed time over the sweet and bitter, for a reason: delusions have prevailed, and souls have failed. The discourse has prolonged, and debate about it continued; the souls have not freed themselves from the bonds of confusion, nor have the heads ceased from the veil of incapacity in its complete investigation.

If the world's composition originated from a chaotic matter that is arrogant and envious, denying the merit of the people of virtue and oppressive, then how could falsehood not dominate truth, and the people of evil and debauchery claim the ranks of the truthful?

This prevailing matter on the dense, descending substance is from itself in itself, according to the difference in their inner states and intentions. Otherwise, the Creator's creative act admits no difference, due to the universality of justice from its Originator and Creator.

This is the firm belief, testified by the verse of God Almighty:

"You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any disparity."

This confirms the saying of the virtuous person, the author of the Messages (peace be upon him) in the Comprehensive Message, where he said:

Section: On the fact that evil has no origin in the original creation by the True Creator, Glory be to Him

If someone asks, "If evil had no origin in creation, then where did it come from, how was it, and why?"

Let this questioner know that the total good and pure generosity poured out by the Creator upon the intellect by His bounty had precedence and completeness and perfection and priority in existence over things... [text continues]

... So it has been proven by evidence that evil has no origin in creation. The incapacity of things was called by the occurrence of some things from others as evil, meaning the failure to keep up with the degree of the superior, who is advanced in rank over it by the degree of the better. Whenever the inferior neglects to follow the superior's degree, and is content with the lowest and basest place, it is pure evil, far from good, and misfortune far from happiness. So if the world accepts the overflow and generosity and rises to virtue, it becomes all good and all happiness; evil disappears, and creation returns to its origin, becoming all good, as God Almighty said:

"As We began the first creation, We will repeat it; a promise upon Us."

... And the Messenger (peace be upon him and his family) said afterward:

Thus, the world of evil is cut off and vanishes, and God Almighty did not decree it to be permanent, nor did He ordain it to last, nor did He create it in its perfect creation. It is only an accidental occurrence without intention, a failure of things to keep up with each other due to incapacity and deficiency.

It is also the opposite of truth, following whims, deviating from what is obligatory, and trespassing into forbidden things, and false speech, and taking what is not rightfully for the taker. This is his saying, peace be upon him.

Section

Among what also indicates that the evil that manifests in the world of bodies was, at the very beginning of creation, present in potential form in thoughts and illusions is what this honorable person (peace be upon him) alluded to in Jami'at al-Jami'a.

Section on the knowledge of the universal Adam, his wife, the universal Iblis, and the forbidden tree, and what happened concerning them at the beginning — the sin that occurred in the realm of the soul, and how the matter was set into motion by the flow of the psychic force, which is the Adamic form — who is the disgraced sinful Adam who was forbidden to eat from the plant tree, and the explanation of that in its beginning during the primitive simple state up to its appearance in the microcosm. For what appeared in the simple states potentially appeared in the realm of composition in actuality.

Know, O brother, may God strengthen you and us with His spirit, that this section was scarcely placed by the divine sages and heavenly scholars in their books except as a symbol or an allusion and hints through subtle phrases, and what is hidden from these hints.

What compelled us to uncover what they concealed and to reveal what they kept secret is the recent occurrence in this time of discord among the Islamic sects and legitimate claims, and the subsequent disagreements of the modern philosophers and the bearers of falsehood who dominate discourse with statements opposing the truth and contradicting the word of honesty, along with the bias of many youth, beginners, and those seeking knowledge in religion towards them. This has led to the influence of devils upon them through their cunning and craftiness and the falsehoods they fabricate with their misguided, misleading opinions, all in pursuit of the dregs of this world and its adornments and coveting what they have from it.

Those who supported the legitimists and those close to their opinion among the claimants who had no rightful claim to interpret what Allah Almighty mentioned in His Book, which was revealed in His address to the Seal of the Prophets and the Master of the Messengers — the story of Adam, the angels, Eve, Paradise, Iblis, and the tree — all that is mentioned in such form in the revealed books, the detailed verses in the Torah and the Gospel, and what was informed by the prophets and righteous saints.

We intend in this section to speak about that in a manner that accords with the pleasure of God Almighty through the word of truth and the necessity of the path of honesty, to serve as a warning to the heedless souls and distracted hearts whom God has favored and reached. Indeed, it is a great statement in a noble book, which none can be granted success in except one whom God guides by it, removes him from his blindness, and sets for him a light to walk among people — so he has emerged from darkness into light, parted from the darkness of graves, and attained treasures of goodness and precious happiness. And whoever turns away after knowing it and doubts it after certifying it, is among those who went from light to darkness, like one who chose long imprisonment and confinement over going out and striving in markets and roads.

...to his (peace be upon him) saying... The existing proof in the flowing rational power united with the clarity of the essence of the human nature is that the original roots are the fathers of what branches from them and are the cause of their being, and that they precede them in precedence and closeness to their origin. This is observed in the roots placed under the sphere of the moon, from whose mixtures and combinations emerges a form that unites the powers of the higher roots.

And it is proven by reason that the emanation of powers in what is akin to them in similarity does not change what they are intrinsically, for the beginning had no difference in their essence concerning the creative origin, but the difference and disparity occurred in the latent ideas appearing as imaginary illusions. This is a statement whose understanding is subtle and only accessible to those whom God has granted knowledge.

If the matter is as we have mentioned, then the acts and deeds manifesting from the human form and the Adamic persons actually happen only through the precedence of the root with power in the root — this is what ‘a.m.’ said.

This is the summary of what has been delivered concerning its investigation, and I, O brother, will clarify it to you in detail by God’s help, to ease for you, through this realization, what you denied regarding the dominance of opposites and to diminish for you what you found difficult and stubbornly denied — and to increase your confidence in the sciences and knowledge you have, and to thank God Almighty for the abundant gnosis He bestowed upon you.

And know, O brother, that all creation, as God Almighty said, are no more than cattle; indeed, they are even further astray. So we say: Praise be to God who favored us above many of those He created in preference.

Know, O brother, that this true, noble knowledge and the subtle divine secret — which is the knowledge of the beginning in its clarity, the end in its reality, the insight into the truth of Imamate and the Imam, and that it is everlasting in the progeny without interruption through nights and days, as was previously stated regarding the times of appearance — is only permitted to the great boundaries (the great saints). Rather, it was necessary to reveal this to more of the saints in our time due to the great concealment.

Were it not for this knowledge, no saint’s image would be firm, nor would a believer’s vision be sustained in the temple of insight.

We ask God Almighty to grant us gratitude for this blessing He granted us, to strengthen our resolve to patiently endure what we are engaged in, and to keep us steadfast. He is the Guardian over that and capable of it.

Section

And I, O brother, begin first by mentioning Tawhid (the Oneness of God), as it is the origin of the divine sciences and their axis, the meaning of true knowledge and its core, the beauty and crown of pure intellects, the light of shining insights, and their lamp.

The Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him), said: The beginning of religion is the knowledge of God, the foundation of this knowledge is His Oneness, and the system of His Oneness is negation of attributes from Him — this is his statement (peace be upon him).

We say: The Exalted (Glory be to Him) is not conceived by the pure thoughts, even if described, nor comprehended by the creative intellects, even if exalted in rank and illuminated. How could the work have a way to grasp its maker? And how can minds, amazed under majesty and grandeur, be allowed to have a domain or arena in comprehending the transcendent Essence? And when the subtle selves fail to conceive their Creator by thoughts and reflection, then the compound words indicating Him are only metaphors out of necessity, incomplete and deficient.

Therefore, the Messenger of God said: “Think of the created, but do not think of the Creator.”

And he (peace be upon him) said: “When speech reaches God, restrain yourselves.”

And the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) said in the Sermon al-Wahida: “In its effect lies the interpretation of its action, and its crafting is joined to its making, and to what he brought into being is attributed the meaning of its creation: If it is said ‘created,’ then the created is meant; if it is said ‘determined,’ then the determined is meant; if it is said ‘known,’ then it is referred to the known, as if it is said ‘There is no god but Him,’ then ‘other than Him’ is limited; and the ‘other’ occurred with the creation, because it is impossible for what is exclusive to Him to be other than ‘other.’”

He (peace be upon him) also said:

“Inability to comprehend comprehension is comprehension,
And the search for the secret of the Essence is associating [partners],
And uncovering the unexpected of the unseen is blindness,
Upon him are the spheres of ignorance.”

And he also said:

“The nature of the soul is not perceived by man,
So how can the nature of the Almighty in eternity be perceived?”

He is the one who created things initiating them,
So how can the newly created grasp Him?

And our master Hamid al-Din (may God exalt his sanctity) said in the Book of Comfort for the Mind, in the third chapter of the second section: We say that He, the Exalted, is concealed by His glory from the things that serve as means to the perception of existents, and He is beyond what the instruments of perception limited to humans can achieve in enumerating the simplest divisions of the intelligible and sensible. Because He is not of their kind, and He transcends resembling them, like the sun is hidden by analogy from the eyes' capacity to encompass.

He, as He is, is a matter beyond the ability of souls to rise and grasp Him with a form. His identity is the identity of "what is what it is" and "what is what it is by," which is the foundation of all things in all forms.

Hence, the intellect and senses cannot encompass Him with what He is of the overwhelming power that renders all other power impotent.

He is, as He is, the One who seals mouths from moving, tongues from speaking, intellects from comprehending, souls from imagining, and no image is ascribed to Him even if of utmost perfection and grandeur, except what is befitting what is beneath Him, which necessarily must be either a substance or an accident, because existence in it of attributes comes from differentiation and division either by quantity or quality into a form that has existence due to what it is divided into, and its existence necessitates what precedes it and is based on what it depends upon.

And He, Glory be to Him, is exalted above division and free from defects and completeness.

Glory be to Him from these signs that establish His identity. If a quality is ascribed to Him, those qualities are borrowed and metaphorical from the existents which are under the created existence, and are specific to the entities that are inseparable from the sign of the creative universe.

Chapter

And the Most High, may He be sanctified, said in the sixth section of this same chapter: If the names, attributes, and words resemble what they indicate, and the names, attributes, and words are composed of simple letters from which all other languages are built, and the letters are newly created, then what they signify and imply in their state is also newly created. And since what the compound letters in all languages indicate is newly created, as we explained, and He, the Most High, in His majesty, is not created, it becomes clear that the compound letters and languages, which are created, cannot have any path or way to signify

what befits His Majesty. For He, the Most High, is distinct from created things, unlike them, and not of their essence.

And since He is distinct from created things, there is complete despair that words and phrases can indicate anything befitting Him. Glory be to God, the truth of the monotheists is manifest in that He cannot be expressed by a word or the contraction of a pronoun. How can letters have indication of an essence from which all created beings and existents emanate, when He is above and beyond them at the peak of glory? Therefore, intellects do not find a way to conceive Him with any attribute, as they only grasp what falls under essential or accidental characteristics. No! He is exalted in His heaven and perfect beyond it. Glory be to Him, from a God no words or phrases can truly describe, except by analogy and for necessity, and such is deficient and limited.

For this reason, the Messenger of God said: "Think about the created, but do not think about the Creator."

And he said, Salih: "If speech reaches God, then restrain yourself."

And the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, said in the Only Sermon:

"In its effect is the interpretation of its act, and with its making is its creation joined, and whatever is newly created is attributed to its creation."

If it is said, "He created," then the created is other than Him; and if it is said, "He decreed," then the decreed upon has a description; and if it is said, "He knew," then the known is indicated, just as if it is said, "There is no deity but Him," then other than Him is limited; the 'other' came into being with the creation, because it is impossible that what is other than Him should be other than other than Him.

And he, peace be upon him, also said:

"Inability to grasp perception is itself perception,
and seeking the essence of the secret of the Self is association,
and revealing the hidden mysteries is blindness,
upon it are the orbits of ignorance."

He also said:

"The nature of the soul is not grasped by man,
so how can he grasp the nature of the Eternal in eternity?"

And He is the One who created all things at the beginning.

"So how can He be grasped by the newly originated spirit?"

And our master Humayd al-Din, may God exalt his sanctity, said in the book Comfort of the Mind, in the third chapter of the second surah of it:

We say: He, exalted is He, is veiled by His glory from the things that serve as means for perceiving existents, and He is beyond what the special faculties of humans attain in enumerating the concrete forms of intelligibles and sensibles, because He is not of their kind.

His exaltation is like the sun veiled by a likeness from the eyes' reach. He is what He is by nature, and His identity is based on what all things are based on, in every respect. Thus, intellect and sense cannot encompass His essence, which is an overwhelming power that nothing else can equal. From His standpoint, He silences mouths from moving, tongues from speaking, intellects from comprehending, and souls from imagining. He cannot be represented by anything that is called by a name, even if it is perfect in its utmost and glorious to the highest degree—except that which befits what is beneath Him, which must be either substance or accident.

Because existence in it has qualities of difference and division, whether in quantity or quality, in a form whose existence is divided into parts, and its existence necessitates what precedes it and upon which its existence depends. He, exalted, is beyond division and free from all deficiencies and completions. Thus, He is glorified by these signs that justify His identity. If He is attributed with an attribute or something is said of Him, those attributes are borrowed from existents, which are under the created existence and are specific to beings that never separate from the sign of the creative universe.

Section

Then, among the entirety of that world, there were two persons who remained steadfast therein like the stakes of a wager. This occurred because they comprehended the honor and elevation they had attained, and the favor they enjoyed from their Creator above all the world of creation. One of them preceded the other, while the latter lagged behind due to his own weakness and slowness. The former reached the utmost degree in what he had previously advanced towards, glorified the First of all, and took Him as a means to the Creator of the servants. By virtue of his mediation, he was accompanied by the divine substances and blessings, immersed in sacred virtues and good graces. He was named the First Emanation because he was the first to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor regarding the unity of the Creator, and he relied upon him. Thus, the one before him concealed him and made him a guide for all the people of their noble world to Him. The call went forth in that world to the unity of their Creator, and to the acknowledgment of the favor of the Predecessor in glorifying the Creator and their forerunner. They hastened to respond to his call and obediently complied with what they were commanded. Thereupon, the eternal blessings encompassed them through his mediation on behalf of the Predecessor, without obstructing their second perfection by accepting what was bestowed upon them in that noble world. They arranged themselves in seven ranks according to their response in slowness and speed, with each preceding rank holding a position of majesty and exaltation over the one following it. This continued from the first to the last in successive order of response and outpouring.

Section

Among the currents of the emanation in its early stage, there was a misconception of equality for himself, thus transgressing his stage. Consequently, his rank delayed, after being third,

until it became tenth in order. He sought to relinquish what he had presumed through the intercession of all the people of the ranks preceding him, and humbly submitted like a repentant penitent. Mercy followed him at the hands of all of them, and he was a listener and obedient to their command. His essence completed the second perfection by what approached it, and the darkness of that illusion which had clouded it was removed. Had it not been for his promptness in seeking forgiveness, he would have been cast into the abyss of chaos and drowned therein.

Then, from that world, a faction emerged who imagined what he initially imagined, imitating his example in hesitation and following in his footsteps. Thus, the work was incumbent upon them, to repair their faults and rectify their shortcomings. They were the people of his circle, their fault joined with his. He addressed them to return to what he had returned, urging obedience and submission to the One to whom they owe obedience and submission. Yet they refused except to persist in their stubbornness, clinging to envy of the high-ranking lords for the blessings they possessed from God, and opposing the great right with denial.

When they persisted in their arrogance and rebellion, distanced from the truth and turning away, their luminous selves thickened after gentleness, replaced the radiance and intercession with darkness. Thus, they varied upon descent as they varied in sinfulness. They were the chaotic matter and form essentially—the world of bodies—deficient in the rank of emanative perfection and completeness. They descended into the abode of trials, warring among themselves.

God's Most Capable One, the purest, nearest to them in remorse and repentance, caused the heavens to recede, and the dense earth to extend. He established between the two realms the world of elements, mingled at its edges through the succession of times. He extracted three births from among all by constant, cyclic movement, seeking to extract the human form and stature. The purpose of all this was their return to their original state of purity and illumination, even if belated, and to elevate them—if they accept what is cast to them through the mediators—to the stations of the pure, glorifying.

Section

The noble person who authored the Messages—peace be upon him—clarified this in the comprehensive message, saying:

"Know, O my brother, may God support you and us with His Spirit, that the vital forces of the souls first manifested and flowed when they descended into bodies—from the highest surface of the encompassing sphere down to the confines of the earth's center. They first traveled with the planets, spheres, stars, elements, and mothers, reaching the earth's center, which is the utmost boundary of their descent, their nadir. Some of them repented and

turned back from near to near, recollecting themselves, returning to unite with the luminous planets and pure stars. Likewise, it was called the 'tranquil soul,' returning from near, not delayed long in ignorance and rebellion."

And it kept drawing closer and uniting gradually with things, step by step, according to purity and return to acknowledgment and confession, though by error, until it reached the sphere of the Moon, the last gate of the upper world. Then those left behind in acceptance descended toward the center and united with the world of mothers. Their forces moved within minerals, plants, animals, and humans."

He (peace be upon him) said in another section of this comprehensive message:

"When the sages speak of the individual souls, they mean the forces emanating from the universal soul descending to the lower center, flowing to the world of nature, lagging behind the reception of intellectual grace, which cooled in glorification and sanctification in the place of lights. Therefore, it descended to the center's abode and was burdened with the duty of worship and the difficulty of obedience by bodily instruments and natural persons. It was of a kind unlike what it now is, and it returns to it if it repents from its sin and recovers from its fall."

Hence, all have compassion for it and feel affinity. Messengers and warners were sent, supported by the closest angels. If it repents and turns, it returns to spirit and freshness, to a Lord not wrathful. If it rebels and denies and persists in arrogance and neglects the warners, it forgets when reminded, and fails to perceive when shown. It becomes confused and torn apart like a stream descending from a mountain peak to the earth's edges, dwelling in the darkness of the lowest depths. Sometimes it descends in corruption; other times it rises with the cosmos to the realm of bodies. Time controls it, the days alternate; it sprouts in the horizons, and tribes scatter. Then, at the appointed time, the gathered are gathered, and the day of reckoning comes, with the Lord appearing in clouds' shade. The noble angels are present, the Lord appears to judge, the recorders stand, scales are set up, the bridge is extended between Paradise and Hell. Witnesses are called forth; hearing and sight testify; skins speak of what they concealed. On that day, faith benefits no soul if it did not believe before or earn good through faith. That is the promised Day."

Once the state of the original creation and its beginning are clarified, nothing remains but to explain how it returns to the most honorable state, and what frees the subtle souls from comparison with bodies, securing victory in the abode of transformation and resurrection, and unveiling the reality of reward and punishment, which we will mention in the next chapter following this one.

Chapter Three: On the Reality of Resurrection, Reward and Punishment, and the Clarification of the Worthy for the Rank of Calling

We say, by the help of God Almighty, His substance, and the grace of His Guardian on earth, peace be upon him and his aid:

Natural things, despite their differences and variations, are divided into two categories, as God Almighty said, "Of everything We have created pairs." One category is subtle, the other dense. Their Creator is evident above all, unsuitable for any of them, lofty above the high and low. How could it be otherwise when He is the Originator of them from nothing, the Creator capable over them and their place?

Sayyidna al-Mu'ayyad (may God exalt his sanctity) said in the sixty-sixth session of the five hundredth council, interpreting the verse "And We created you in pairs":

"We say in meaning, contrary to the interpreters who say that means male and female, rather it means body and soul, eye and sight, ear and hearing, nose and smell, mouth and taste, hand and grasp, leg and effort. Every apparent instrument relates inwardly to a meaning. Glory to the One who created all pairs from what the earth produces, from themselves, and from what they do not know."

Because the realm of unity containing virtues is advanced in honor over the world of deficiencies and disgrace—without intent or will of the Creator, for otherwise it would necessitate the structure of injustice, God forbid, by his belief and praise—but as explained in the first chapter, by the incapacity of the deficient to attain the rank of the perfect, which is the reality of the delay of the world of composition, clarified in its secret—the reality of matter and form as we explained.

Thus, what is perceived by the dense senses receptive to dimensions, called the acceptance of the body, is the matter; and the subtle mover of the body and the bearer of the movement by its own movement is the form itself, which by relation to the world of command is more deserving and more proper.

The rational world looked at what was near with compassion and mercy, desiring to rescue it from the density that obscured it. This creative relation between them, in which all were equal before the slip and sin, moved the tenth intellect—the world of the Germanic spheres—after their composition and regulations. It cast its luminous planets' rays toward the mothers, which are the center of the world of bodies, thus producing by continuous motion and ascent of vapors, successive in perpetual time, and the mixing of temperaments, all the births from minerals, plants, and animals.

All this was directed towards the emergence of the intended goal desired by providence—the human person deserving of address and entitled to reward and punishment.

Chapter

When the outcome became evident from the realm of the Germanic spheres, through the appearance of the thousandfold human stature, there remained no visible end in the observable realms except annihilation after the wasting away of days and the dissolution of life. And if—God forbid—the wisdom of the Wise One were to be nullified, it would be an absurdity for any sound intellect to conceive.

As our master Al-Mu'ayyad—may God exalt and sanctify him—said in some of his words:

"I wonder why you descend from the powers of the spheres and celestial bodies, and you are enrolled in the ranks of wombs and loins, emerging from the confinement of that membrane into the vastness of this expanse, and replaced darkness with light, and created within you the inner meaning of the Self, apparent in signs and encompassing the earth and heavens. Is all this so that you resemble beasts, clinging to what you desire of drinks and foods, then die and are annihilated, and perish and are neglected? Never! The wisdom of the Wise One and the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing, will not be voided in you."

—May God exalt and sanctify him.

The intent behind the thousandfold stature is to extract the form, which is the essence of its subtle meaning, bestowed upon the noble higher world. For Divine Providence has exalted the rank of the realm of the celestial bodies above the realm of matter, which is orderly and receives the human souls, leading them towards perfection and completeness, ascending through its stages to the abode of peace.

Chapter

The universe is the first creation through the mediation of the Germanic spheres, where it is compelled; the second, true universe, is through the mediation of the spheres of the religious realm and the illumination of its rulers, where it exists by choice, for it accepts those blessed lights willingly, without coercion or compulsion. Since the realm of composition is divided into ten dimensions that complete its divisions, the religious realm likewise has ten ranks that perfect its order. The speaker (the rational being) is first, who brings forth the rest, and the subordinate is last.

When the Imam stands in place of the speaker and guardian over them all—peace be upon him—he is first, and the fully realized believer seventh, and the responsive one tenth. This is the lifeline extended to save the drowning and the ladder of ascent for those seeking to rise to the realm of permanence after their descent.

When souls reach their first perfection, which is intended by their Director in the composition of the natural world and upon whom they rely, and they adhere to the lawful commands, distancing themselves from bestial and animalistic natures, then they deserve to be at the lowest religious rank subject to judgment and have earned the acceptance and obedience to pass from the true universe from gate to gate.

Their initial state in that existence is their turning eagerly toward the lowest limit of boundaries—referred to as the “breakers,” stationed in the religious realm opposite the tenth intellect in the realm of creation. They take up the covenant through the hands of the Imam of the age, thus becoming among the faithful. This is their religious birth that saves them from the death of ignorance and enlightens them after blindness, as Christ—peace be upon him—indicated when he said: “Whoever is not born of the two births shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.”

They connect to it when reciting the noble covenant upon them and purifying their intention. A shining point of light emerges therein, making those souls radiant and luminous. This is their share from the outpouring of the blessings of the realm of command, which elevates their status and rank.

When they begin acquiring the sacred sciences and persevering in deeds, and they advance through the ranks of true knowledge stage by stage, then they reach the rank of the fully realized believer. The luminous point within their essence expands and ignites, as the sciences entering them act like blowing on the coal that carries the spark of fire, leading after dormancy to manifestation and ignition.

Once their Creator attains realization through them on the path of right guidance, fulfilling proofs, issuing arguments and presentations, He elevates them to His Majesty in His rank and compels them to uphold what is established among the people of their circle. Their limit rises to the rank above them, until the highest gate is reached, which is the final and utmost rank. Only the chosen few and the pure of every age and glory can reach this lofty rank.

Chapter

As for those who respond to the guiding call, embrace its noble covenant with sincere and truthful intention, then suddenly are struck by death while in that state, their souls, purified by their allegiance to the Imam of their era and their devotion and obedience to the one in charge, continue their connection as that point of light.

At the moment of departure, this goodness in them becomes manifest and they ascend to the nearest rank according to the knowledge of the One who surrounds their conscience, the

One who lifts them and transports them. Their return is to the owner of that rank to reach, by his conveyance, what is above it. The third rank is the place of their return and destination.

The image of this noble limit is the garden which Al-Bani Sal'ah and the family of the Imams described as: "It is either a garden from the gardens of Paradise or a pit from the pits of Hell." Thus is the condition of all ranks. It forms the image of the high limit for those beneath it, being the real magnet that attracts and binds them.

Hence, the ultimate destination for all is the gate rank, which is the noble assembly of the forms of the high and radiant people of that era. The religious ranks have been preserved with those who established them as a replacement for those who passed away, so the efforts of the call—which is the best of deeds—are not nullified.

Divine Providence arranges these forms through the pillar of light connected to the owner of the era, a luminous temple, a revered and holy station. This temple is the true Imamate, distinguished by splendid honor and dignity, its hierarchy arranged according to its affiliation with the bodies, based on the issue of justice and merit from the One of Majesty and Generosity.

Although this noble group has attained the utmost protection and joy, and is covered by immense delight and happiness, supported and protected by infallibility, it is the fulfillment of God's promise: "And We desired to bestow favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders."

Chapter

When the discourse about the noble ascending forms, gathered from all the adjoining regions—forming the luminous assembly in which the high and low among the believers are organized—is complete, we explain how they become veiled by the humanity distilled from the froth of the bodies of the departed, its purity hidden, as the red ruby among minerals.

This is because Divine Providence and the flowing divine power, after the ascent of the mentioned subtle forms mixed with the images—having become a temple of high rank and exalted status—caused those subtle souls departing from the limited and boundaries, which had instruments for worshiping the worshipped Lord, to be sealed in their graves for three days.

It then gathered their froth—the spiritual essence—through the rays of the planets and raised it to the realm of celestial bodies, and gradually that froth was released in succession according to the ascent of the images to the gate of the noble assembly, which is the high gathering place.

When the Manager—exalted be He and empowered by the Purest—commands the manifestation of that noble, high froth to be for the Imam of the age in his station, the best inheritor and successor, Divine Providence gathers from what has come together in the realm of celestial bodies by the mediation of their planetary rays, and places that yeast in the best of human foods or drinks, the most delightful of them.

It is preserved from all creatures until it reaches the Imam of his age—the chosen of the people of the west and east—who nourishes himself and some of his wife, purified and cleansed from all impurities, deserving to be the vessel for that noble body by the decree of the Mighty, the Compeller.

This station brings the Master, peace be upon him, the greatest joy and delight at the arrival of that froth, and he rejoices at reaching what was intended and hoped for. The contact occurs between him and that pure wife, and all those pure noble froths settle with her.

When the duration of this camphor-like essence in the womb completes, a noble complete offspring emerges by the grace of the Director and Creator. This is the true meaning of the symbol used by our Master Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, when he said: “When God wills to create the Imam, He sends to his father a cup of sealed nectar to drink, and from him comes the Imam.”

Then that constructed temple made of all images passes by the transfer of the gate, uniting with the noble sheath formed from the spirits of the ‘possessors of intellect’ (Awliya’ al-Albab), and the Imam then becomes complete in his Imamate. His father announces this to his people and informs them that he is the one whose obedience God has imposed upon them, connected to the obedience of His Messenger and his own obedience.

His father deserves the noble rank of the conveyors, for he is the true believer, about whom our Master Al-Mu’izz said: “A believer is not a true believer until another believer like him is established.”

Section

And this other station, the station of concealment from creation, came to be an influential (central) point for the radiance of that ray. From it, the world perceives the astonishing acts and decrees, and the minds and intellects become perplexed at the miracles it reveals. What it displayed of magnificent miracles, and what appeared from it of actions extraordinary beyond customs, all that was due to the manifestation of the one united with it, the concealed, the chosen one from all the natural world.

And what was the weakness present at other times, and the need for drinks and food, is attributed to the human physical body appropriate to the type of earthly humans. So when this virtuous person, as mentioned, takes his station from his father who created him, his father ascends to the proximity of the Tenth Intellect, receiving the most generous eternal reward, waiting — he and those before him like him — for the appearance of the Qa'im (the one who rises), who is in truth the Perfect Father. Through him, all the transferred stations from the first veil of concealment find their reunion and unification.

This is because Adam (peace be upon him), who is the first speaker, and those of his era, hold the station of the seed; Noah (peace be upon him) and those of his era hold the station of the germ that attained the rank of majesty; Abraham and those of his era hold the station of the clot; Moses (peace be upon him) and those of his era hold the station of the morsel — which is both created and uncreated; Jesus (peace be upon him) and those of his era hold the station of the bones; and Muhammad (peace be upon them all) and those of his era hold the station of the flesh, which perfects all that came before. The essence of the noble Qa'im (peace be upon him) for their souls is like the spirit that connects the person at the moment of birth from conception.

He is the authority whom God Almighty referred to in His saying:

“O assembly of jinn and mankind, if you are able to pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass beyond. You will not pass except by authority.”

And he (peace be upon him) in perfection is like a thousand ranks of numbers, the ultimate which nothing follows except repetition by rearticulation of singular units.

As our master Hamid al-Din (may God exalt his sanctity) said in the fourth chapter of the Comfort of the Mind (Rahat al-'Aql):

“And since there is no existence beyond the thousand for a rank to end at, and none existed before it, it was necessary that after the Qa'im, the owner of the seventh apparent cycle with the perfect rank, no existent rank should come, for he is the end that gathers all ranks, as the thousand gathers all ranks of numbers.”

This is the statement of (may God illuminate his face) Nadhar.

When the comprehensive Qa'im (peace be upon him) arises and appears by birth as the Imams of mankind appear, he possesses all those who have transitioned in past cycles, their abodes and reservoirs arranged as the form of Imamate in that noble structure and assembly. The whole becomes a complete image, like one of the creative forms, deserving of succession to the Tenth in the lofty exalted rank.

Section

As for the opposers and wicked among the followers of religions, those who are hostile to the people of faith, at death they do not part from the oppressive conception that comes from their rejection of the people of truth, their denial and opposition. Rather, their sensory souls regress backward, descending with some of their deeds to the intermediate realms of punishment, widespread in the malice of those bodies, found in the chains of the path that leads to all pains. This occurs because of their denial of the ranks of the lords of the cycles and following the leaders of misguidance who call to the fire.

When they complete their visitation to the lower punishment realms according to their deeds, they return by ascending the ranks of creation to the human form and obtain what God Almighty informed His servants through the tongue of the Messenger (peace be upon him), that “We will surely make them taste the lesser punishment before the greater punishment, that perhaps they might repent.”

As for the claimants to that among the cursed evildoers, all of them appear before the Qa'im to answer for the excesses of sins and predecessors, so that each is recompensed for what he committed. This happens after they don the garments of the lesser punishment fully, and they bear the garments of the despised intermediate realms and its honorable chastisement from the forms of high limits and stations to cause sorrow for their adversaries in past times and epochs.

Then, terrible punishments and calamities descend upon them by the hands of the saints, and they are slaughtered as victims are slaughtered. Then the fiery flood descends to burn the wicked of those bodies, turning them into vapor and smoke, returning to the worst abode, which is the greatest punishment and severe chastisement in the rock called Sijjin, with the perpetual burning of fire. They are in the worst of creations and forms and cry out in terror from the horrors of the calamities upon them. There they say, “Our Lord, remove us so we may do righteous deeds other than what we used to do.” But they never cease from their great sufferings, and it is said to them, “Taste the punishment of the fire which you used to deny.” No salvation or escape is hoped for them until the heavens cease their rotations.

May God save us from entering the realms of destruction and protect us all from error in our religion and confusion, by His grace and favor.

Section

When the Qa'im (peace be upon him) extracts his noble offspring from among his followers, who is the first Imam to arise in the unveiling cycle from among his Imams, he ascends with all those forms poured into his form, and succeeds the Tenth Intellect in managing the natural world, attaining his high rank.

The ranks of the world of command ascend successively, each lower rank transferring to the higher, until the first of the seven ranks in ascent reaches the Paradise of refuge, the successful one who is judged among the noble groups there by delegation — the first resurrection cycle, also called the shining sacred enclosure, the assembly of the initial and final radiant lights.

The Messenger of God (peace be upon him) alluded to this when he said in the hadith: “In Paradise, there is what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no heart of man has conceived.”

There equality and likeness prevail, distinctions between the images present in that noble circle are nullified, and the truth of the words of the most truthful speaker is realized: “As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it, a promise binding upon Us; truly We shall do it.”

And no intellect can reach beyond that.