

Wahida fi Tathbit Arkan al Aqida Establishing the Pillars of the Creed

Ḥusayn ibn al-Dāʿī ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd, 8th Dai

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful

Praise be to God, whose justice encompasses all that He has originated, both the universal and the particular;
whose majestic light has dazzled the inner sight of those who would liken Him to created things,
rendering their intellects incapable of soaring through the vast expanses of His majesty, as if their wings had been clipped.

He endowed the sovereign grandeur of His greatness with the power to manifest signs of craftsmanship,
so that even the hearts of atheists might choke in awe at the evidence pointing to the Artisan behind all creation.

Glory be to Him!

A God who has preserved His religion in every age by establishing for each era a station of guidance;
who constructed the edifice of the Imamate with unshakable precision and strength;
who made it the possessor of the rank of nobility and perfection among all existents in the world,
compelling everything else to be measured by its relation to it—either in increase or deficiency.

He singled out that one person—by His decree and wisdom—as the bearer of all the virtues of the human kind,
making the system and core of these virtues dependent upon explicit designation and prior authorization from Him.

We praise Him

—for making us among those who have held fast to the firm cord of walāya (devotion to the true friends of God), and adhered;
—who have taken refuge in the celestial sphere of true knowledge, from the crashing waves of passing doubts and false semblances, and thus found protection.

We bear witness that there is no god but He—
a testimony we store as a treasure for the return (to Him),

a provision for the Day when spirits will be stripped of their bodies.

And we bear witness that Muḥammad is the noblest of messengers,
in whose pure inner vision shone the ray of the world of holiness—
so he became the embodiment of that subtlety,
expressed in clear speech to the people of the realm of sense.

He conveyed the message of his Lord to all jinn and humankind—
a species distinct from all others in kind.

May blessings be upon him—
a blessing that raises him to the highest, most exalted degree of nearness to God;
that robes him in the most perfect and purest of garments of divine aid;
that elevates him beyond the abodes of messengers to their highest summits;
that singles him out with the most splendid and noble of the rewards prepared for prophets
in the abode of recompense.

And [blessings be] upon his legatee (waṣī),
through whom the esoteric da‘wa found its flow and anchorage—
he who rescued the souls of his followers from drowning in the seas of misguidance,
and clarified for them the path of right guidance:
‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib,
whose devotion is the pivot of the da‘wa of true faith;
whose slayer among the ancients is the same as that of the most wicked of Thamūd.

And [blessings be] upon his wife—
soon to join her father after a short span of time—
removed from this world with its pangs and griefs,
because of the oppression that befell her and her husband from the Pharaoh and Hāmān of
this umma.

And [blessings be] upon her two sons—
the branches of both Prophethood and Legateship,
the twin lights of the firmament of majesty and guidance:

al-Ḥasan,
the one entrusted with the secret of the Imamate by the explicit designation of his father and
grandfather;

al-Ḥusayn,
the one in whom its noble legacy became firmly established,

its radiance enduring in his progeny after him.

And upon the Imams from his descendants—
lamps of guidance that dispel the darkness of misguidance,
banners of salvation rescuing from the abyss of ignorance.

And [blessings be] upon the one whose noble person was veiled from his contemporaries,
so that the ignorant fools imagined that the bond of divine grace and generosity had been
severed—

but that can never be!

For he is the gateway to the mercy of God,
the sacred sanctuary of security for those who seek Him,
firmly upheld by a small group loyal in their devotion,
who remained steadfast in obedience to God by following His proof among creation—
a group now rejoicing in eternal victory,
for having clung to His cord, the one He has commanded to be held firmly.

They made of him their intercessor,
by whose means their branches blossomed and bore fruit:

Our Master and our Lord, the Imām al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Qāsim, Commander of the Faithful—
whose subtle, benevolent emanations flow into intellects and souls,
just as the material emanations of the corporeal sun spread to perfect the perceptible world.

May peace be upon them all,
a peace unceasing until the Day of Judgment.

Now then, O brother—may God guide you and us to that which pleases Him,
and may He never deprive any of us of the pillars of His merciful grace and loving care—

When I reviewed your letter and the question it contained—concerning the matter of the
occultation of the Imām, the Master of the Age,
upon whom be the most excellent salutations and peace from God—
and [your concern] over what the awliyā' (friends of God) endure at the hands of their
enemies,
from vile accusations and disgraceful actions,
and the harassment and harm inflicted upon them,
as well as the suffering they undergo through all manner of affliction and tribulation—
and [when I reflected on] the obliteration of the signs of true guidance due to widespread
ignorance,

and the domination of innovators and fools over those possessed of knowledge and intellect
—

and when I read what you asked regarding whom your brother may rely on to carry out the matters of the da‘wa in the island,
and whom among its people is suitable for it—someone whose doctrine is trustworthy and whose conduct is praiseworthy—

I resolved, after seeking the counsel of God Almighty, to respond to your request and to clarify what you asked.

I composed this treatise and named it:

"The Sole Epistle on Strengthening the Pillars of Doctrine" (al-Risāla al-Waḥīda fī Tathbīt Arkān al-‘Aqīda).

Whatever it contains of truth and correctness is from the blessing of the one whose orbit governs me—

and whatever error it may contain—and God’s refuge is sought from that—is due to my own deficiency and shortcoming.

I divided it into three chapters:

The first chapter deals with the subject of the occultation, the predominance of falsehood over truth, and the fact that the Imamate is never severed from the world.

The second chapter addresses the origin of creation and the beginning of primordial nature.

The third chapter discusses the reality of the Return (ma‘ād), reward and punishment, and the identification of the one deserving the rank of the da‘wa.

And I desire, O brother, to disclose in this final chapter some of the secrets of the friends of God—peace be upon them—

those very secrets that they were commanded to conceal and preserve,
forbidden from disclosing them except after binding covenants and solemn pledges have been taken from those worthy of them.

What compels this disclosure is the intensification of tribulations,
and the severity of the crisis brought on by the absence of the Master of the Age and Time—
so that whoever comes upon this [disclosure] might find protection in his religion,
and through the certainty he gains from it, increase in conviction upon conviction;
that he might turn away from the doubts that afflict those of limited perception,

and firmly shut the door on the ambiguities that shake the fragile foundations of faulty beliefs.

And I take from anyone who reads this a binding covenant with God—the most solemn and strict of pacts,
the very covenant He took from the noble angels, the sent prophets—peace be upon them—the guiding Imams—peace be upon them—and their appointed limits (ḥudūd) who followed them—that he not disclose this to anyone unworthy of it,
nor affirm it except in its proper context,
and that he guard it with the utmost care,
never revealing it except to those who are sincere and devout.

From God and His Wali—peace be upon him—I seek aid in completing what I intend,
and I ask for success and correctness in that which I aim to achieve.
Chapter One: On the Concept of Occultation (Satr), the Triumph of Falsehood over Truth, and the Continuity of the Imamate in the World

We say, with the aid of God Almighty and His support, and through the favor and guidance of His wali (friend) on His earth, peace be upon him and his beneficence:

This era in which we now live is the most trying of all times in the Muḥammadan cycle, and the greatest in tribulation for the people of truth. This is due to what God, in His wisdom, has decreed—namely, the veiling of the [Imamic] station, that of the Master of the Age, peace be upon him. And because the period of occultation (satr) has lengthened, most people, being ignorant and unreflective, have imagined that the Light of God has been extinguished and that the path of guidance has been obliterated and effaced. But no! The mercy of God is never severed from the world; rather, it is ever-present and eternal.

God Most High has said:

“Say: If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would surely run dry before the words of my Lord were exhausted—even if We brought the like of it to help.” (Qur’an 18:109)

And the Messenger of God ﷺ said:

“I leave among you two weighty things: the Book of God and my progeny. They shall never separate until they return to me at the Pond [of Kawthar],” and he joined his index fingers from both hands to illustrate their inseparability.

And the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, said to Kumayl ibn Ziyād in one of his discourses:

“O God, the earth shall never be devoid of one who stands with the proof of God—either manifest and well-known, or hidden and obscure—so that the proofs and signs of God are not invalidated.”

Our master al-Mu’ayyad al-Shīrāzī—may God exalt his sanctity—said in the eighty-eighth session of the second hundred [majālis al-mi’at al-thāniya]:

The mercy of God is none other than the Messenger of God ﷺ, for God Most High says in His Mighty Book: “And We did not send you but as a mercy to the worlds” (Qur’an 21:107). And since that mercy is the Prophet ﷺ himself, it is inconceivable that God would strip the world of His mercy after him, for that would be incompatible with His justice. It may well be that there are people in the time after him who are more virtuous and devout than many who lived during his time. Given this, his successor in the position of waṣāya (designated legatee) must also be a mercy to the worlds, and likewise each successor in the Imamate after him, one after another, so that no era is devoid of an Imam from among the family of Muḥammad ﷺ who is a present and manifest mercy to the worlds, and whose intercession is accepted and never rejected, for he is the inheritor of the trust of his forefathers, which they received from their grandfather the Messenger of God ﷺ, taken from Gabriel, from Michael, from Isrāfīl, from the Lord of the Worlds.

He also said in the twenty-seventh session of the fourth hundred:

God said to His Prophet ﷺ, “And We did not send you but as a mercy to the worlds.” Intellect has shown us that this address was not intended only for his contemporaries; rather, that mercy has been kneaded into the substance of the earth in the form of the possessors of authority (ulū al-amr), who are leavened from the very being of the Messenger of God ﷺ. In this way, both the earliest and the latest generations may partake equally in the bond of God's mercy. It may even be that among the latter are some whose virtue and piety surpass many of the former. It is reported that Abū Ḥanīfa once met al-Ṣādiq Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad, peace be upon him, and found him leaning on a staff. He asked, “O Abā ‘Abd Allāh, has age so overtaken you that you now require a staff?” The Imam replied, “I do not use it out of necessity, but because it is the staff of the Messenger of God ﷺ, and I wish to seek its blessing.” Abū Ḥanīfa said, “Had I known that, I would have kissed it.” The Imam, uncovering his forearm, said, “If you doubt the staff, do you doubt that this is from the very body, hair, and skin of the Messenger of God ﷺ?” At that, Abū Ḥanīfa moved to kiss it, but the Imam let his sleeve fall over it, withdrew his hand, and entered his house.

We cite this account in connection with the idea of being “leavened from the Messenger of God ﷺ”—that is, the presence in every era and time of someone who embodies him in body, knowledge, and soul. This is his own statement. So reflect, O brother, how could anyone imagine the severing of the cord of mercy, or how could a sound mind believe that the door of goodness and blessing is closed?

The justice of the Creator demands that His bounty be as full for those who come later as it was for those who passed before. The Imamate is the enduring Word (*kalima bāqiya*), and the bounty of God to His creation, continually overflowing. But the natural world is mixed and variable; it does not remain in one steady state. Manifestation is followed by concealment, and the wicked prevail over the righteous. This serves as a purification for the true believers, who are patient through their trials.

God Most High has said:

Alif Lām Mīm. Do people think they will be left to say “We believe” without being tested? We tested those before them, so God will certainly distinguish those who are truthful from those who lie. (Qur’an 29:1–3)

And He said:

We shall test you until We know those of you who strive and are patient, and We shall test your affairs. (Qur’an 47:31)

And:

Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without measure. (Qur’an 39:10)

And one of the *mawālī* (devotees), peace be upon him, said:

“Indeed, each of you awaits one of two blessings: either God grants him victory over his enemy, and he beholds what delights his eyes; or He transfers him to what is better for him in His presence, and he likewise beholds what delights his eyes.”

Section

This *satr* (occultation), O brother, has been mentioned by the scholars and alluded to by the sages. Among what has been said is what was related from the ‘ālim, peace be upon him, in the *Kitāb al-Fatarāt wa al-Qarānāt* ("The Book of Intervals and Conjunctions"), where he stated:

“The intervals (*fatarāt*) are four:

The first occurred during the time of Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl, peace be upon him.

The second during the days of the Hidden Imams, peace be upon them.

The third will be at the emergence of the Antichrist (al-Dajjāl), may God curse him, during the time of the Qā'im, peace be upon him, and the Manṣūr, peace be upon him.

The fourth will occur during the time of the third seventh (al-sābi' al-thālith), peace be upon him, and it is the greatest and most severe of them in trial."

It is also narrated from the virtuous figure, the author of the Rasā'il (the Epistles), peace be upon him, in the Jāmi'at al-Jāmi'a ("The Compendium of the Compendium"), where, after mentioning the philosophical and legal religious festivals, he said:

"And know, O my brother—may God support you and us with a spirit from Him—that we, the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'), are the most deserving of people to uphold the religious acts of worship, to observe their times, fulfill their obligations, preserve their due rights, recite their revelation (tanzīl), explain their esoteric meanings (ta'wīl), and to discern their prohibitions and permissions.

For we are the closest to them, the most entitled to bear them, and the nearest to the one through whom they came, and most worthy of him.

And we are also the most deserving of engaging in divine philosophical worship, to uphold it, to practice it, and to revive its forgotten traditions.

When we perfect both [forms of worship], we are granted a third path which distinguishes us and sets us apart through its practice.

And we too have three days that we treat as festivals and urge our brethren to gather and strive toward.

Know, O my brother, that our festivals are not in reality like those of the philosophers nor like the [legally established] religious ones—though they are similar in form.

For our festivals are essential realities ('īd dhātī)—entities grounded in their very being, from which actions proceed, and by which and through which effects appear.

They too are three in number: a first, a middle, and a final one.

The fourth, however, is the most difficult in labor and most severe in action."

The analogy of these four days, as we have described them, is found in time itself through celestial movements and the determinations of astrological judgments:

In the natural seasons:

Spring

Summer

Autumn

Winter

In the Muḥammadan Law and the Hāshimite religion:

Eid al-Fiṭr

Eid al-Aḍḥā

The Day of Designation (naṣṣ) of the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him

The Day of Calamity upon his loss

In philosophy (astrology):

The sun's ingress into Aries (al-ḥaml)

Cancer (al-saraṭān)

Libra (al-mīzān)

Capricorn (al-jady)

In the human life stages:

Days of childhood

Days of youth

Days of maturity

The final days of life, wherein the person departs, and the soul separates from the body

It is for this reason that people weep over him, and his kin are struck with sorrow, grief, anguish, and regret for his loss—just as the People of the Prophetic Household (Ahl al-Bayt) mourned when they lost their master, when one of their own disappeared from among them, and when they were seized one after another. Their unity was scattered, their enemies coveted them, usurped their rights, and dispersed them. What transpired from them is what transpired on the Day of Karbalā': the martyrs were slain, and before them, the one most entitled to [the Prophet], to his rank, and most worthy of leadership after him, was seized. Likewise, many of his foremost companions, who supported him in establishing the namūs

(divine law), were killed—such as his confidant (ṣadīq), his fārūq (distinguisher of truth from falsehood), and the possessor of the two lights (dhū al-nūrayn).

And what followed thereafter, of continuous afflictions upon his family and kin, was a cause for the concealment of the Brethren of Purity and the severing of the dominion of the people of loyalty—until God, Mighty and Majestic, gives permission for the rising of the first, the second, and the third [of them] at the times appointed for their emergence, when they shall rise from their cave and awaken from their prolonged slumber.

The fourth [festival] will be marked by their grief at the absence of their master, just as their father, the master of the namūs, had gone missing before them—and the sorrow and anguish that befell thereafter.

And these festivals of ours, O my brother, are speaking persons (ashkhāṣ nāṭiqā) and active souls (anfus fāʿila), who act by the command of their Lord, according to what He reveals to them and obligates upon them of deeds and actions.

The first day of our days and the most virtuous of our festivals is the emergence of the first among our Qā'imīn (those who rise). This day corresponds to the day the sun enters the sign of Aries (burj al-ḥamal), the coming of spring, fertility, prosperity, the descent of mercy, manifestation, and glad tidings. It is a day of joy and happiness for us and all our brothers.

The second day is the day of the rising of the second one, corresponding to the day the sun enters the sign of Cancer (burj al-saraṭān). On this day, the length of the day reaches its maximum and the night is shortest. It is the day when the rule of the oppressors is broken and comes to an end — this is the dark, gloomy night. It is a day of joy, happiness, and glad tidings.

The third day is the day of the rising of the third among us, corresponding to the day the sun enters the sign of Libra (burj al-mīzān). On this day, day and night are equal, summer departs, and autumn begins. It marks the resistance of falsehood against truth, and the matter being contrary to what it had been.

The fourth day is a day of sorrow and gloom — the day of our return to the cave of piety (al-taqiyya) and concealment (al-istitār), with things returning to how they were in our current time until the day of emergence and rising, when the sun returns after winter leaves back to the beginning of Aries. That is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing.

None among us but has a known station.

Know, my brother, that in this period God distinguishes the wicked from the good and raises the ranks of the scholars, which they could not have attained except through their patience

and trust in their Lord, Glorious is His Name, in whatever afflicts them. Therefore, do not reject what we have mentioned that the state of time will not remain pure, for purity is known only by impurity, justice by injustice, and health by sickness.

The “Brethren of Purity” were so called because they sincerely endured affliction in both prosperity and adversity, did not resent divine judgment and decree, but surrendered and submitted to their Lord with good, tranquil, and contented souls.

This is his (peace be upon him) statement.

Section

O brother, after what has come from this noble person in this chapter of explanation — the utmost clarity about what we are in and the elucidation — do you not see how at the beginning of the chapter he said the festivals are three: the first, the middle, and the last, then he singled out a fourth with a description and epithet unlike the others, saying: “And the fourth is the hardest in work and the most intense in effect,” and he corresponded it to the season of winter, to the festivals of the Shariah by the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and to the human condition by the last stage of life and the departure of the person, the soul’s separation from the body, for which one is mourned and grief, sorrow, and sadness afflict his family.

They were saddened, the family of the Prophethood, when they lost their master and one of their household disappeared from them, and one after another was taken away, their unity broken, their enemy coveted them, their rights were usurped, and they were scattered. What happened was what happened on the day of Karbala, when the martyrs were killed, and before it, the most rightful among people and in his station and authority after him were killed, along with many of his loyal companions who assisted him in establishing the Law, such as his friend, his guide (al-Farūq), and the possessor of two lights (Ḍhū al-Nūrayn). The calamities that befell his family and relatives were many, and that was the reason for the concealment of the Brethren of Purity and the suspension of the state of the people of loyalty, until God permits the rise of their first, second, and third at the times they should rise when they emerge from their cave and awaken from their long sleep.

The fourth is the day of their sorrow over the occultation of their master, as their father, the keeper of the Law, disappeared, and the sorrow and depression that followed.

And these festivals of ours, O brother, are speaking persons and active souls that do by the permission of their Lord what He inspires them and compels them to do in actions and deeds.

Chapter

My brother, by his saying “that” he meant those upon whom these names truly apply, not metaphorically. For metaphorically, these names refer to those who followed him in this world out of desire for its fleeting spoils and hope for the caliphate which they usurped unjustly and aggressively, inclined toward the immediate and gained no lasting benefit. Truly, his companions are those who accompanied him on the path of guidance, supported and assisted him both openly and secretly in conveying the message of their Lord to the nation and helped him.

His true “friend” (Ṣadīq) is the Greatest Ṣadīq who is the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), the first to believe in him and verify the truth of what he brought from the Noble Book and the clear Law by its esoteric interpretation and realization.

As for the “Dhu al-Farāq” (the one who distinguishes truth from falsehood), it is al-Ḥasan (peace be upon him), the trustee of the secret of the Imamate, the one who follows after his father, outwardly preceding his brother in the apparent matter. Between them was the “Farāq,” the separator between the two settled ones—his father ‘Alī (peace be upon him) and his brother al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him).

The reference to “Dhu al-Nūrayn” (the Possessor of the Two Lights) is to our Master al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him), who inherited the light of stability from his father (peace be upon him) and the light of trusteeship from his brother at the time of the calamity of al-Ḥamām, thereby becoming the gathering place of the two matters and the seat of the two lights. In him united what had been divided between ‘Abdallāh and Abū Ṭālib, for such division is obligatory and necessary, and no further division in this matter will occur until the rise of the Qa’im, the one possessing complete and perfect perfection.

These are truly his companions who accompanied him in this world and accompanied him after departing the world in the highest assembly, assisting him in establishing the Law in truth, as they are its preservers after him. They uphold it with their manifest proofs and scientific miracles, beyond the limit of its stage.

So, thank God, O brother and guardian (‘alayhi al-salām), for what He has bestowed upon you and granted you of true knowledge.

Chapter

Know, O brother, that if the station of the Qa’im (peace be upon him) is concealed from the eyes of the beholders, his means and substance are not cut off from the boundaries of his religion, from those who have appeared and those present, just as the action of the German sun continues in supplying the other planets so that management is completed and wisdom is perfected in what the Almighty, Knowing, and Able desires.

As the noble person who initiated the treatises (peace be upon him) said in the Risāla of Magic and Invocations when mentioning the Imams (peace be upon them):

“They are the true caliphs in both eras; in the era of disclosure, their dominion appears in bodies and souls, and in the era of concealment, their affairs run within the selves and intellects. The strongest actions of Iblīs (Satan) occur in the era of concealment because God’s proof on earth is hidden and concealed, though His lights shine within the souls of the gnostics who return to Him.”

This is his (peace be upon him) statement.

Also, it was narrated from our Master Ja‘far ibn Maṣṣūr al-Yaman Qas in the Book of the Biography of His Father — and perhaps he meant him in our time and referred to our Imam ‘Alī (peace be upon him), as no one of the Imams remained hidden after his words except our Master the Imam al-Ṭayyib (peace be upon him), who said:

“And if the Imam becomes concealed, his call is not null, even if it be on an island from the islands of the earth by his command or by the command of the one appointed to him and pointed to by the proof, and he exists. His existence is by the existence of his boundaries who guide to him, call to him, and establish the rituals of his call — its obligations, traditions, lawful and unlawful. The appearance and establishment of his call come with the existence of three ranks: the absolute caller, the authorized absolute, and the restricted authorized. As for the gates, proofs, and callers of communication, they do not leave him behind the veil of concealment.”

Until his saying:

“The Imam (peace be upon him) is said to exist by the existence of these boundaries just as God, Exalted, is not perceived by any of His creation nor does anyone from His creatures see Him in good or evil or benefit or harm, were it not for the presence of every successor from Messenger, Deputy, and Imam in creation to guide and instruct them. So He, the Exalted, is manifestly present by these boundaries. Thus, the Imam (peace be upon him) is manifestly present by these boundaries, and his substance flows to them, and his blessings encompass them. They see by a light from God connected and inseparable.”

‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl (peace be upon him) remained hidden so that none of his followers and boundaries knew him, yet they established his call by the command of his father and his will to them, exerting effort without negligence until his son Aḥmad arose, whom also none recognized. He endured trials, fear, and the burning of children, which is beyond the scope of this explanation, until he composed the treatises and a caller named

Abāghfīr joined him and commanded his followers to obey the required order, keeping his situation secret.

This is what Qas said.

Chapter

Know, O brother, that knowledge of the Imam (peace be upon him) is obligatory upon you with certainty, for he is the gate to the knower of the Gardens of Bliss and the path thereto. This is what the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) intended when he said:

"Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his time dies the death of ignorance."

Knowledge of the Prophets, the Trustees, and the Imams (peace be upon them) is of two kinds:

True knowledge

Metaphorical knowledge

Metaphorical knowledge is to see them with physical eyes, and the righteous and the wicked, the believer and the disbeliever, may see them. There is no reliance on such knowledge for God said to the Messenger (peace be upon him):

"And you see them looking at you, but they do not perceive." [Quran 6:36]

True knowledge is to see them with intellectual insight, to verify their high noble ranks, and understand the divine secret flowing through them by which they are honored above all creation. Each of their stations is the distilled essence of the subtle truths of the followers of their father's call, appointed after birth for knowledge of the grave matter gathered therein. Thus, they are the center of the substances of the world of creation, the ultimate of the kinds of the natural world and species.

This knowledge is the true vision the Messenger (peace be upon him) referred to when he said:

"Blessed are those who see me, and blessed are those who see those who see me, and blessed are those who see those who see those who see me."

If he meant the sensory vision, which is the physical sight of the visible by the sensory eye, the polytheists and groups of Jews, Christians, and Magians would have seen him. Rather,

what is meant is the true scientific vision we described and the intellectual knowledge we clarified.

Chapter

We say that if the invitation were not valid except by the sensory sighting of the one invited, and obedience were not established to the Imam of the age except after looking upon him physically, then those far from the Messenger (peace be upon him) in all corners of the earth would have no obligation to obey him, nor would his message reach them due to his leaving his abode. It would be impossible for all the people of his time and age to be present with him in his noble place.

No, rather obedience to him and to those who represent him from the Imams after him, by those proofs and callers they establish for the entire world, is obligatory, and the proof by the one appointed to indicate them is established in all regions.

The scholar ‘Alī (peace be upon him) said in the Book of Periods and Times when mentioning the Imam (peace be upon him):

“His silence, isolation, and departure from among them is like the interruption of the Imamate, but those in his call among the righteous and fortunate awaited for relief, will receive his substance, and through them the proof of God (Exalted is He) is established upon His creation.”

Our Master al-Mu‘ayyad (may God exalt his sanctity) said in some of his words:

“The Imam of the pious, absolutely in every age, is one, and whoever claims his station is a false deceiver doomed to destruction. His callers who call by his permission and speak according to his opinion and command are the Imams of their people, facing toward the absolute Imam as all prayer niches and qiblas face toward the Ka‘ba, the Sacred House.”

This is his statement, may God exalt his sanctity.

Section:

And know, O my brother, that the Truth is not nullified by the inactivity or scarcity of its adherents, nor is it harmed by the dominance or prolongation of the people of falsehood.

The Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, said in Nahj al-Balāgha in some of his sermons:

“If God, exalted be He, had willed for His prophets—whom He sent—to be granted the treasures of gold, the mines of precious gems, the orchards of paradise, and to be gathered with the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth, He would have done so. And had He

done that, then affliction would have ceased, recompense would have become void, trial would have become futile, the recipients would not have deserved the rewards of the tested, the believers would not have earned the recompense of the benefactors, and the names would not have retained their true meanings.”

But God, exalted be He, made His messengers possess strength in their determination, yet appear weak in what the eyes perceive of their conditions, with contentment filling hearts and eyes with richness, and need filling the sights and hearing with hardship.

If the prophets had been people of visible power, invincibility in their might, and kings to whom men would stretch their necks and hurry their journeys, this would have been easier to consider and farther from arrogance, and they would not have feared a conqueror who overwhelms them, nor swayed with desire. Intentions would have been united, and good deeds divided.

But God, exalted be He, willed that following His messengers, believing in His books, humility before His face, submission to His command, and surrender to His obedience be matters solely His, pure and unblemished by anything else.

And the greater the trial and test, the more abundant and generous the reward and recompense.”

This is his (Ali's) speech, peace be upon him.

Chapter Two: On the Principles of Creation and the Origin of the Natural Disposition (Fitrah)

We say, with the help of God Almighty, His essence, and the grace of His guardian in His land, and His assistance,

Know, O brother, that this entire realm — from the revolving celestial spheres, to the wandering planets, and all the mothers (basic elements) and the earth and all that is on it from animals and plants, and all components — is composed of matter (hyle) that arose from the original fault (sin) at the beginning of creation. Therefore, the evil has predominated over the good, and the dark has overtaken the light in this world. This is what our master the Supported One (may God exalt his sanctity) hinted at in one of his gatherings by saying:

"Praise be to God, who established matters upon hardship and ease, and made the ages run on the sweet and the bitter. Due to these, illusions became sick, and within them, souls went astray. Much was said about them, and disputes continued in their inquiry. The souls were not freed from the bonds of perplexity, nor did the heads cease to wear the veil of incapacity in their thorough investigation."

This is the speech of the Exalted One, may God sanctify him.

If the original composition of the world is from matter, which descended through envy, pride, denial of the merit of the people of virtue, and arrogance, then how could falsehood not overcome truth? How could the people of evil and corruption not claim the ranks of the lords of truthfulness? This matter — arising in the descending and condensed essence from itself in itself — differs according to the various conditions of its inner states and intentions. Otherwise, the origin of the Creator's creation would not differ, due to the universality of justice from its originator and maker.

This is the firm belief confirmed by the words of God Almighty:

"Do you not see that in the creation of the Most Merciful there is variation?" [Quran 55:3]

This is further confirmed by the statement of the virtuous author of al-Rasa'il (Peace be upon him) in the Risala al-Jamia where he said:

"Chapter: Evil has no origin in the world of the first creation from the side of the True Creator, exalted is He. If one asks: If evil has no origin in creation, then from where does it come? How did it occur? And why? Let the questioner know that the universal good and pure generosity is the overflow of the Creator, glory be to Him, upon the intellect by His generosity, so it had precedence, completeness, perfection, and advancement in existence over things."

Up to his statement:

"The proof has become clear and established that evil has no origin in creation."

And the weakness of things is called the occurrence of some from others as evil, meaning the deficiency of lagging behind the degree of the superior who precedes it. When the inferior neglects following the degree of the superior and consents to itself the lowest, most deficient place, it is pure evil, far from good, misfortune far from felicity.

If the world accepts the influx and generosity and ascends to the best, it becomes entirely good and entirely happy; evil disappears, and creation returns to its origin, thus becoming entirely good, as God Almighty said:

"As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it; a promise binding upon Us." [Quran 21:104]

And Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

"Then the world of evil is cut off and vanishes, and the Creator Almighty did not decree it to remain nor did He decree its permanence, nor did He create it in His perfect creation."

Rather, it is an accident without intent due to the deficiency of things in following one another because of weakness and shortcoming. It is not the opposite of truth, nor following whims, nor deviation from duty, nor trespassing the forbidden, nor false speech, nor taking what is not right.

This is the speech of Imam Ali (peace be upon him).

Moreover, what indicates that evil manifest in the world of bodies originally existed at the beginning of creation in power in the thoughts and illusions is what this noble person (peace be upon him) hinted at in Jami' al-Jami'a with his saying:

"Chapter: On the knowledge of the universal Adam, his spouse, the universal Iblis, and the forbidden tree; and what was in the beginning regarding the event of disobedience in the world of the soul, and how the matter proceeded and the flow of the psychic power in the first human persons — the Adamic form — who is the partial Adam, the one upon whom the prohibition of eating the vegetable tree occurred; and the explanation of that in its beginning in the state of the first simples until its appearance in the world of the small (the compound)."

Know, O brother, with God's support, that this chapter was never placed in books by the divine sages and celestial scholars except as symbols, hints, and subtle indications through delicate expressions and what is hidden in the allusions. What urged us to reveal what they concealed and to make manifest what they kept secret is what has happened in this era of disagreement among Islamic sects and legitimate claims, followed by the disagreements of modern philosophers and bearers of falsehood, who dominate discussions with words contrary to truth and opposing the words of truthfulness.

Many young people among the innovators and those who study religion side with them, and the devils have encompassed them with their cunning and foot soldiers — these are their tricks and the false ornaments they have adopted in their misguided opinions, seeking the dross and glitter of this world, desiring what they have of it. The disagreements among the legal scholars and those close to their views about interpretations of God's word in the Book, revealed to the Seal of the Prophets and Master of the Messengers — regarding the story of Adam, the angels, Eve, Paradise, Iblis, the tree, and what is mentioned similarly in the revealed books and detailed verses in the Torah and the Gospel, and what the prophets and righteous saints have informed — are numerous.

We intend in this chapter to mention what corresponds to the pleasure of God Almighty with the truth and adherence to the path of truthfulness, so that it may be a warning for heedless souls and distracted hearts, whom God has favored and guided to it.

Indeed, it is a great saying in a noble Book, and none is granted success in it except those whom God wills to guide, who He brings out of their blindness and gives them a light by which they walk among the people, having come forth from darkness to light, having left the darkness of graves, and attained the treasures of blessings and precious felicities.

Whoever turns away after having known it and doubts after certifying it is among those who go from light into darkness, like one who chooses prolonged imprisonment and detention over going out and striving in the marketplaces and roads.

The proof found in the intellectual power flowing in the psychic power united with the purity of the essence of the human nature is that the first principles are the ancestors of what branched from them and formed from them, and they precede them in precedence and closeness to their cause. This is observable in the principles arranged beneath the lunar sphere, which by their mixture and blending with one another compose a form that unites in it the powers of the higher principles.

By the proof that the emission of powers in those close to them through homogeneity does not change their essence as it was at the beginning; there is no difference in their essential nature from the standpoint of creative formation. The difference and divergence occur in the inward notions appearing from illusions and imaginations.

This is a statement whose understanding is delicate and only granted to those whom God has guided to comprehend it.

If the matter is as we have mentioned, then the actions and deeds manifest from the human forms and actual human persons do not occur except after the power in the principle advances.

This is the speech of the Imam (peace be upon him).

This is what has been mentioned regarding that in summary, and I, O brother, will clarify it to you with God's help in detail, so that by realizing this you will find it easier to deny the dominance of opposites, to diminish what you have magnified of the stubbornness of those astray and obstinate, and to increase confidence in what you have of knowledge and understanding. You will thank God Almighty for what He has granted you of abundant gnosis and know that all creation, as God Almighty said, is like cattle; rather, they are more astray in way.

We say: Praise be to God who has favored us above many of those He created with a great favor.

Know, O brother, that this true noble knowledge and subtle divine secret — which is the knowledge of the beginning in its clarity, the end in its reality, and insight into the truth of the Imamate and the Imam, and their permanence in the progeny without interruption through the nights and days, as was in previous times of manifestation — is only allowed to the great limits (the high initiated). However, it became necessary to reveal it to most of the saints in our time due to the severity of concealment.

Had it not been for the knowledge of this, no saintly form would be established, nor would a believer hold firm insight in this regard.

We ask God Almighty to grant us gratitude for this blessing He has given us, and to strengthen our resolve to endure what we are addressing and to keep us firm. Indeed, He is the Guardian over that and the Capable of it.

O brother, I begin first with mentioning tawḥīd (Divine Unity), for it is the foundation of divine knowledge and its pivot, the meaning of true sciences and their essence, the beauty of clear intellects and their crown, the light of illuminating insights and their lamp.

Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) said:

"The beginning of religion is the knowledge of God, and the root of knowledge of Him is His unity, and the order of His unity is the negation of attributes from Him."

This is the speech of the Imam (peace be upon him).

We say that the Exalted One (God) is not imagined by pure thoughts, even if they are described, nor is He comprehended by the creative intellects even if they rise in rank and are honored.

How can the workman be grasped by the work? How can power manage to attain its creator without something? How could the understanding intellects, dazzled under majesty and glory, have a domain or place in grasping the transcendent essence?

When the subtle selves are incapable of imagining their Creator by thoughts and reflection, the complex words indicating Him are metaphors out of necessity that fall short and are limited.

Therefore, the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) said:

"Think of the created, and do not think of the Creator."

And Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

"When speech reaches God, stop."

In the Sermon al-Wahida (the One), Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

"In His effect is the interpretation of His action, and in His creation is the union of His making, and in what He brought into existence is the relation of the meaning of His bringing it into being.

If it is said 'He created,' the created is meant; if it is said 'He decreed,' what is decreed is meant; if it is said 'He knows,' the known is meant; just as if it is said 'There is no god but Him,' the 'other than Him' is a limit.

The 'other than Him' is created with the creation, due to the impossibility of there being 'other than Him'."

And he (peace be upon him) said:

"The Essence is not comprehended by the thought, nor the thought by the Essence."

This is the speech of the Imam (peace be upon him).

Therefore, the proof is that the essence of the Truth (God) is above all qualities and attributes, exalted beyond all similitude and forms, transcending all descriptions, and absolute in absolute transcendence and unity.

This is the principle, and all creation depends upon it.

Said our Master Ḥumayd al-Dīn, may God exalt and sanctify him, in the book Rāḥat al-‘Aql in the third section of its second chapter:

We say that God, the Exalted, is hidden by His glorified transcendence from the things which serve as means for grasping existing things, and He is beyond what the special faculties (al-ālāt) possessed by humans can attain in limiting the essences—both of the intelligibles and the sensibles—because He is not of their kind and is exalted above resembling them.

Just as the sun is hidden by a likeness from the sight's perception, since He, as He is, is beyond the capacity of their beings to rise and grasp Him by a quality or essence as He is in Himself and as He is by what He is. He is absolutely distinct from all things in every respect. Therefore, neither intellect nor sense can fully comprehend Him with their power, which is overwhelmed by an obvious incapacity compared to any other power.

He, as He is, seals the mouths from movement, the tongues from speech, the intellects from comprehension, and the souls from imagination.

And He cannot be represented by anything named—even if that were the highest perfection and utmost majesty. Rather, what befits what is beneath Him is either a substance or an accident, because what is present in things are qualities of division and fragmentation, either by speech or quantity, in such a manner that the existence of that essence is based on what it is divided into.

And its existence depends on what precedes it, and its existence is based on what it depends on. But He, Glory be to Him, is exalted above division and free from any kind of deficiency or perfection.

So, Glory be to Him, these signs prove His identity, and if He is described by a quality or attributed with something of the attributes, these attributes are taken and borrowed from the existents that lie under created existence and are specific to the entities that never separate from any created cosmos.

Section: And He, may God exalt and sanctify Him, said in the sixth section of this chapter:

If names, attributes, and words resemble what they signify, and names consist of simple letters from which all other languages are built, and letters are created, then what they signify and necessitate under such conditions must be created as well.

And if the things signified by the compound letters in all languages are created, like what we have explained, then He, exalted be He, in His majesty is not created.

Therefore, it becomes clear that compound letters—which are created—cannot have any pathway to indicate something that does not suit His majesty because He is inherently opposed to created things and incompatible with them, nor is He from their essence.

And if He is opposed to created things, then it is utterly impossible that words and expressions could indicate something befitting Him, Glory be to God, the Exalted.

It becomes clear by the truth of the monotheists that He cannot be expressed by speech or by conscious intention.

How can letters indicate the identity from which the creators, the emanators, and the makers emerged, among which He is, exalted above them in the peak of majesty?

Therefore, intellects do not find guidance to grasp Him by any quality. How could intellects conceive of Him when they only comprehend what is encompassed by the essence and accident?

Rather, He is exalted in His heaven and perfect in His particles.

Glory be to Him, He is a God that cannot be described by words or expressions except insofar as those things are under His creation. There is no God but Him.

Section: And what He, may God exalt and sanctify Him, also mentioned concerning the invalidity of attributes and the correctness of monotheism in denying them in the seventh section of this chapter:

He said:

We clarify the impossibility inherent in one single attribute among all attributes to provide an argument for the necessity of all similar attributes.

We say that existence is among the attributes, and whoever claims that the Exalted, Glory be to Him, deserves to be truly described by this attribute, based on saying He has the existence of a transcendent self, Glory be to God, who is described first by existence, and secondly by this attribute, which is existence, because He is other than the rest and not them.

This attribute of existence in His being and greatness is either caused by His essence and necessitated by it, or something else.

If His essence necessitates and causes this attribute, then the affirmation and necessity relate to the affirmation of the essence itself, bare of this attribute, so that the action (which is the affirmation and necessity) results from it.

Affirmation of the essence necessitates the removal of any obstacle preventing it and its sufficiency in existence without being preoccupied by anything else.

If the essence is affirmed bare of these attributes and is self-sufficient, and existence is an attribute not required for the affirmation of the essence, then knowledge dictates that this attribute is not necessary for the essence's identity to be fixed, nor does the essence require its affirmation.

Hence, it would have that attribute without it being necessary or required.

And if it is not necessary nor required, then it would have the attribute without affirming it.

Therefore, affirming it to Him, Glory be to Him, is evidently impossible and unbecoming to His glory.

The impossible must not be attributed to Him.

When we say "existence" of God, we only say it out of the necessity of expression and because the matter cannot be comprehended except through created things known by sense —this is among the attributes of the action proceeding from the Exalted to the cosmos, expressed as the first existent and the first intellect.

It is not fitting for a denier to invert and compare the essence to the affirmation of its existence, running it along the path of the attributes we spoke about, which leads to confusion and is the method of devils in deception and misguidance, building upon impossibility and speaking of what necessarily exists in affirming the essence of the transcendent self beyond attributes.

Glory be to God!

The necessity of existence for existents rests on Him, to Whom the existents' existence is referred.

This closes the gates of atheism.

Blessed be God, Lord of the Worlds!

Nothing in the created things shares with Him what He is, and there is no god besides Him, Glory be to Him.

This is the statement of the Exalted, may God sanctify Him.

Section: And what came from our Master al-Mu'ayyad Qas (may God sanctify him) in the seventy-ninth session of the one hundred and fourth chapter:

He said:

As for the essence of the meaning, it is that the words of the Qur'an in affirming the oneness of God, His glorification, and exaltation, come with attributes that admit participation in them as well as opposition, such as saying He is Living, Knowing, Powerful, Hearing, Seeing.

All these attributes are attributes of the created beings whom He created.

He does not deserve to be described by such attributes.

For if we say He is living, we imply participation of the living beings in life, and that is association with Him.

Moreover, the opposite of life is death, which is opposition, and similarly for the other attributes like knowledge and power.

Whoever believes this is a polytheist in hidden association (shirk) — about which the Messenger of God said: "The root of shirk in my nation is more hidden than the crawling of ants on a dark night over a deaf rock."

And said the Exalted, may God sanctify Him, in some of his supplications:

"O God, You before whom we confess our inability to comprehend what He said in the wise remembrance, as You say, 'And they did not estimate God with true estimation,'

We ask You forgiveness for whoever is under the bondage of servitude in the narrowness of constraint, if he mentions Your name without being worthy of it by necessity.

Indeed, this is a sin accompanied by seeking forgiveness."

This is what Qas said.

Know, O brother, that all monotheists are compelled to speak and express by words, fleeing from negation, lest they fall into torment and long disgrace.

And the reality of every exalted attribute in the Noble Book is a reference to honoring and magnifying the First Complete Creation, since He deserves every noble and excellent name for the exaltation of His Creator above limitation, description, qualification, or characterization.

This is the saying of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī, peace be upon him:

"The realm of the King is in His dominion, and the created ends in Him,
And it is the form to which the request is referred."

Section on the Origin of the First Existence, which is the Act of Creation

Indeed, the One toward whom no thought dares to approach, nor does any intellect or insight encompass His greatness, created a creation without gradation or disparity, and brought into being a creation beyond any doubt or defect, without cause, without purpose, and without something preceding it. For if anything preceded Him, it would require a prior cause, and that cause would require another cause ad infinitum, which contradicts the unity of the Creator and His glorification.

From this original act emerged distinguished spiritual persons and complete luminous essences of utmost honor, subtlety, and multiplicity. They are equal in life, self-knowledge, and power, equal in the justice of their case in bringing them from non-existence to existence. None among them held a higher rank or was limited in that regard at that time, because such a distinction would require a prior act that would negate the Creator's justice.

All of this existence came forth at once, not in time but rather in a manner adapted to human comprehension—as He said, "And We did not command except one [thing], like the blink of an eye." From among those noble spiritual images and subtle forms, one reflected on his own essence in relation to other essences, realizing that his own essence was one among them. This led him to affirm that there must be a Creator who created and originated them.

He hastened to sanctify and glorify Him and to acknowledge the established transcendent identity without any comparison or limitation. At that moment, he was touched by divine emanation from his Creator and enveloped in radiant lights as a reward for his early act and a recompense for his unprompted affirmation of the unseen unity of the Hidden, which he conceived without any inspiration.

Thus, he became a veil for his Creator and a gate through which none from that world may enter except those who come forward in obedience to their Originator. His rank was that of the first among the numbers, the one preceding all singularities in their order. His existence, together with the rest of that world, was the first intrinsic perfection. His special distinction, bestowed upon him as an honor above his peers, was a second perfection by which he ascended through the ranks of eternity.

This exaltation is beyond what the intellect of humans can conceive or the tongue express. He became worthy of all attributes of honor and nobility, possessing the highest degrees of eminence and majesty, as we have mentioned previously.

Then, from the rest of that world, two persons remained close to him as if vying for a wager, having understood the honor and elevation granted to him by his Creator above the entire

world of creation. One preceded the other; the latter was overcome by weakness and hesitation. The first reached the ultimate goal in what he had aimed for.

He glorified the One who was first for all and took Him as a means to the Creator of the servants. Through him passed the divine influences and blessings, and he was enveloped in holy virtues and goodness. He was called the First Resurrection because he was the first to follow the one before him in his purpose of uniting in the Creator's unity. The one before him depended on him and veiled himself with him, making him the guide for all people of their noble world to him.

By his call, that world was invited to unite in the oneness of their Creator and to recognize the virtue of the first one, praising the Creator and his predecessor. They responded eagerly and obeyed willingly, so the eternal blessings reached them through his mediation from the one before him, and nothing hindered their second perfection by the acceptance of what was bestowed upon them in that noble world.

They arranged themselves into seven ranks according to their speed or slowness in responding. Each rank had superiority and majesty over the one following it, from the first to the last, according to their successive responses.

Among those who progressed toward resurrection early on was one who imagined equality for himself. This exceeded his rank, so his status was delayed from being third to becoming tenth in order. He sought to renounce his assumption through the intercession of all those ranks preceding him and humbly repented.

Mercy continued toward him by their hands all together, and he was obedient and attentive to their command. His essence then completed the second perfection by what touched it, and the darkness of that illusion, which might have cast him into the abyss of chaos and drowned him, was removed by his prompt repentance.

Yet from that world arose a group who imagined the same matter as he did and followed his example in hesitation and imitation. The work became incumbent upon them to rectify their error and to remedy their defect, for they belonged to his circle.

Since their error was linked to his sin, he addressed them to return to the state he had returned to and urged them to obey and submit to the One worthy of obedience and submission. But they refused except to persist in their stubbornness and to adhere to envy toward the lords of the high ranks regarding their divine favors, and to reject their great right.

When they obstinately rebelled, arrogantly distanced themselves from the truth, and fled from it, their luminous essences thickened after their subtlety, and were replaced by darkness

instead of radiance and transparency. They diverged upon descent as they had diverged in sin.

They became hylē and šūra — the origin of the world of bodies, deficient in the rank of perfect emanation and completion. Thus, they were cast down into the realm of trials, where they opposed each other.

God, Exalted, chose from among the purest and nearest of them those who repented and sought forgiveness, and assigned them the sky and daylight. He made the steadfast and resolute earth, and placed between these two states the world of elements, mixed at its edges in successive times.

From all of them He brought forth three kinds of births by perpetual and cyclical motion, aiming to extract the human form — the human stature — which is the purpose of all this. The whole purpose was to restore them, if they accepted what was delivered to them by the mediators, to their former state of purity and illumination, even if after some time, and to raise them to the stations of the purified and the glorifiers.

The virtuous person, the author of the Letters, peace be upon him, made this clear in the comprehensive letter by saying:

“Know, O my brother — may God support you and us with a spirit from Him — that the active psychic forces first appeared and moved when they descended to bodies from the highest surface of the encompassing sphere toward the center of the earth. They first moved with the planets, orbits, bodies, elements, and roots, and reached the very center of the earth, which is their utmost limit in descent and their final bottom.

Some repented and turned nearby and remembered, returning to unite with the luminous planets and pure bodies. Therefore they were called the tranquil soul returning soon, and its ignorance and rebellion did not last long.

Then it approached and united gradually with things step by step, according to clarity and return to acknowledgment and confession of error, until it reached the sphere of the moon, the last gate of the upper world. Then the lagging soul descended toward the center and united with the world of roots, and its powers moved in minerals, plants, animals, and humans.”

And he, peace be upon him, said in the second section of this comprehensive letter:

“When the sages say ‘partial souls,’ they mean the forces emanating from the whole soul descending to the lower center, flowing into the natural world, which is unable to receive the intellectual influx due to its lapse from glorification and sanctification in the realm of lights.

It descended to the bottom place and was assigned the duty of worship and the difficulty of obedience by the bodily instrument of natural persons. It was a kind that it is not by itself and to which it returns if it repents from its sin and rises above its stumbling.

Therefore, all sympathize with it and are kind to it; messengers and warners were sent to it, supported by the close angels. If it repents and returns, it returns to spirit and freshness, and to a Lord who is not angry. If it disobeys, persists, arrogates, turns away from the warners, does not remember when reminded, and does not see when shown, it becomes confused and torn apart, like a torrent falling from the peak of a mountain at the earth’s edges.

It becomes in the darkness of the lowest depths, sometimes falling by corruption, sometimes rising by creation to the place of bodies. Time acts upon it and the changing days cause it to sprout in the horizons and be torn into peoples.

Then comes the gathering of the young, the reunion, when the appointed time and certain term arrive. The time of conclusion and completion comes, and your Lord appears in a shade of clouds. The honored angels gather, the Lord manifests to judge, the watchers appear, the scales are set, and the path is extended for those who pass between Paradise and Hell.

The witnesses are called, and the hearing and seeing of the sinners bear witness, their mouths sealed, and their skins speak of what they did when no soul benefits from its faith. It was not believed before or did it earn good by its faith. That is the promised day.”

Thus, the state of the original existence and beginning of creation is made clear. What remains is the explanation of how it returns to the most honorable state and its final goal; and what helps the subtle spirits to be freed from the burden of bodily comparison, to attain success in the realm of transformation and resurrection, and the revelation of the true reward and punishment — which we will mention in the next section following this one.

Chapter Three: On the Reality of the Resurrection (al-Ma‘ād), Reward and Punishment, and an Explanation of Who is Worthy of the Rank of Da‘wa

We say, with the help of God—Exalted is He—and through the aid of His friend (walī), peace be upon him, that natural things, despite their differences and variations, are divided into two kinds, just as God, Exalted is He, has said: “And of everything We created pairs” [Qur’an 51:49]. One of these two is subtle (laṭīf), and the other is dense (kathīf). Their Originator is separate from all of them and bears no resemblance to anything among them, whether lofty

or lowly. And how could it be otherwise, when He is the One who brought them into existence from nothing, and the Creator who holds sway over them and over place itself?

Our master al-Mu'ayyad, may God sanctify his soul, said in the sixty-sixth session of the fifth hundred (year) in his interpretation of God's saying: "And We created you in pairs" [Qur'an 78:8]—that the meaning differs from the interpretation of the commentators who say it means male and female. Rather, we say that it refers to body and spirit, eye and sight, ear and hearing, nose and smell, mouth and taste, hand and grasp, leg and walking. Every outward organ is related to an inner meaning. Glory be to Him who created all pairs—from what the earth grows, and from themselves, and from what they do not know.

Now, since the world of Unity—which comprises the virtues—is prior in rank to the world of deficiency and vice, not by volition or intention of the Originator (al-Mubdi'), for that would entail design in establishing injustice (God forbid such a belief!), but—as was explained in the first chapter—it is due to the incapacity of the deficient to reach the rank of the more perfect, and due to the posteriority of the world of composition, which becomes clear through its wondrous secret: the true reality of hylē (matter) and ṣūra (form), as we have already explained.

We have established earlier that what is perceptible through the dense senses, which accepts dimensions and is thus called "body," is hylē. And what is latent within it—subtle, moving the body, carrying it and being moved along with it—is the essential form (al-ṣūra al-dhātiyya), which is more rightfully connected to the world of Command ('ālam al-amr). So the gaze of the world of Intellect toward what is beneath it is a gaze of compassion and tenderness, seeking to rescue it from the density that has overwhelmed it, due to the creative relationship (al-nisba al-ibdā'iyya) that unites all of them equally prior to the lapse and the sin.

Thus, the tenth Intellect stirred the world of celestial spheres (aflāk al-ajrām al-samāwiyya) after their composition and perfection, and their luminous stars cast their rays upon the world of "Mothers," which is the center of the circle of the world of spheres. Through the continual motion of the spheres and the rising of vapors over time, and the mixing of elements, all beings—minerals, plants, and animals—came into being. All of this was a preparation for the emergence of the intended aim decreed by divine care and the ultimate purpose of the natural world: the human individual, who is the one addressed (by God) and the one deserving of reward and punishment.

Section

Now, when the result has appeared from the world of the celestial spheres in the form of the millennial human figure (al-qāma al-alfiyya al-insāniyya), and there remains in the visible

world no ultimate existent except for annihilation following the exhaustion of the lifespan—then, God forbid, the wisdom of the All-Wise would be rendered null. But far be it from God that such a notion be conceived by a sound intellect.

As our master al-Mu’ayyad, may God exalt his holiness, said in one of his discourses: “I wonder—why were you drawn out from the forces of the spheres and bodies, placed into the stages of loins and wombs, brought forth from the narrowness of that veil into the expanse of this space, exchanged darkness for light, and brought into being with a hidden inner essence and manifest signs encompassing the heavens and the earth? Was all of that simply so you could imitate the beasts, devoting yourselves to what you desire of food and drink? Then die and perish, be extinguished and forgotten? No! The wisdom of the All-Wise and the decree of the Mighty, the All-Knowing, will not be nullified in you!” This is his statement, may God exalt his holiness.

The goal of the millennial human form (al-qāma al-alfiyya) is the extraction of the form whose subtle reality corresponds to the higher, noble world. For divine care, exalted in rank, has established opposite the world of spheres a world of religion, perfected in its order, receiving human souls and guiding them toward perfection and completion, so that they ascend rank after rank until they reach the Abode of Peace.

Section

The first genesis (al-kawn)—that is, the natural formation—is the first emergence, through the forced motion of the celestial spheres, for they are constrained within it. The second true genesis is through the spheres of the world of religion and the radiance of the intelligences governing it, by free choice. For those spheres, in receiving the blessed lights, are neither coerced nor compelled.

Since the world of composition is divided into ten parts through which its divisions are completed, so too the world of religion has ten ranks through which its order is perfected. The nāṭiq (proclaimer-prophet) is its first, by whom the rest are established, and the restricted ma’dhūn is its last. So, when the imām stands in the place of the nāṭiq, and the waṣī follows—peace be upon them both—then the imām is first, the believing adept (mu’min bāligh) is ninth, and the responder (mustajīb) is tenth.

This is the extended rope of salvation for the drowning, the ladder of ascent for the seeker to the Abode of Permanence, who desires to ascend after his descent. And when souls attain their first perfection—which was the intention of their Governor in forming the natural world, and the foundation upon which it was built—and when they adhere to the divine commands, and purify themselves of bestial, predatory instincts, then they are deserving, in the lowest ranks of religion, of being addressed and of reward and punishment.

If they accept and obey, they are permitted to pass, door by door, through the stages of true becoming. The first of their conditions in that existence is their eager advance to the lowest of the religious boundaries, which corresponds in the world of religion to the station of the mukāsir (breaker of idols), and in the world of origination to the Tenth Intellect. They then receive, through his hand, the covenant (‘ahd) of the Imām of the Age, and thus become among the people of faith. This is their religious birth, which revives them from the death of ignorance and opens their eyes after blindness. It is what the Messiah, peace be upon him, referred to when he said: “Whoever is not born twice shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

At the recitation of the noble covenant and the sincerity of intent, a point of radiant light (nūr al-sha‘sha‘ānī) connects with them, by which the soul becomes luminous and radiant. This is its portion received from the effusion of blessings from the World of Command, which grants it high standing and exalted worth.

When it begins to acquire noble sciences and persist in righteous deeds, it ascends in the ranks of true knowledge, stage by stage, until it reaches the rank of the believing adept (mu’min bāligh). The luminous point inscribed within its essence expands and ignites, for the sciences it receives act like air blown into embers that still retain sparks of fire, causing them to flare up again.

When its Creator finds it walking the path of uprightness, equipped to present proofs and skilled in argument and response, He raises it to the dignity of a higher rank and assigns it duties carried out by those of its circle. Its status ascends to the rank of the one above, giving thanks to its Creator for the good He has bestowed and granted.

Ranks continue to rise in this manner until the bābī (gateway) rank is the highest and final one. This supreme rank is not attained except by the few and the singular, nor is it ascended to except by the elect of every age and the noble.

Chapter

As for the one who responds to the guiding call (al-da‘wa al-hādiya), and sincerely and truthfully undertakes its noble covenant, then is suddenly overtaken by death in that very state—his soul, by virtue of its sincerity in devotion at the time of covenanting with the Imam of its age, and the counsel and obedience it offered to the one entrusted with its affairs, will have connected with a point of light and obtained its share of the substance flowing from the Manager of affairs.

So, at the time of separation (death), that acquired good will diffuse within it, and it will rise, transferring to the closest rank to it, in accordance with what the All-Knowing—who encompasses its inner self—determines, for He is the One who elevates and transfers it. Thus,

its return (ma‘ād) will be to the possessor of that rank so that it may, by his elevation upon his own transfer, reach that which is above both of them. For the third rank is that to which both ultimately return and at which they terminate.

The form of this noble boundary is the “garden” (rawḍa) to which the Prophet—peace be upon him and upon his purified progeny—referred when he said: “The grave is either a garden from the gardens of Paradise or a pit from the pits of the Fire.” Upon this pattern runs the state of all the people of ranks: the form of the higher boundary is for the one below it a magnetic reality, its established attractor, such that the final end of all is the rank of the Bābiyya (the Gate), which is the noble gathering point for the forms of the elevated and sublime ones of that age.

And the religious ranks are preserved by those appointed in place of those who have transitioned, so that the carrying out of the affairs of the da‘wa—which is the best of deeds—may not be nullified. Divine providence organizes these forms, through the medium of the Column of Light connected to the lord of the age, into a luminous structure and a glorified, sanctified station. That structure is the reality of the Imamate, marked by dazzling nobility and honor, arranged according to their affiliations—even while joined with their bodies.

This is in accordance with the rule of justice and merit, ordained by the Lord of Majesty and Generosity. Even though that noble assembly has attained through its state the utmost exultation and joy, and been enveloped in immense delight and rapture because of what it had previously sent forth, it has been graced with divine support and encompassed by infallibility (‘iṣma)—fulfilling God’s promise as He says: “And We desire to favor those who were oppressed in the land, and to make them imams.”

Chapter

And now that the discussion has been completed regarding the noble ascending forms—those gathered from all the descending segments, constituting the luminous gathering composed of both the exalted and the lowly among the believers—let us explain how they become veiled by the “human shell” (al-nāsūt) that is extracted from the quintessence of the bodies of the departed, their latent refinement, which stands among human bodies like red ruby among other minerals.

This is because divine providence and the flowing divine power, after the ascension of the aforementioned spiritual subtleties—interwoven with their forms—and after they become a noble structure of lofty stature, turn their attention to the bodies of those subtleties who had transitioned from the bounded ranks and their limits. These bodies had served as instruments for the worship of the adored Lord.

These are fermented in their graves for a period of three days, and from them is extracted their “froth” (zabad), which is their airy essence (rīḥiyya), by means of the rays of the planets. This essence is raised up to the celestial sphere (‘ālam al-ajrām), and it is released little by little, successively, in accordance with the rise of the forms to the threshold of the station which is the exalted noble gathering.

When the Manager—exalted is He—permits one He has empowered to specify this noble froth for embodiment as the ṣāhib al-‘aṣr (lord of the age), as the best inheritor and vicegerent in his station, divine providence gathers what has accumulated in the celestial realm by means of the rays of its planets and deposits that ferment into one of the purest of human foods or drinks. This is hidden from all creatures until it reaches the Imam of the Age, the purest of those from East and West.

He then consumes it, along with one of his wives—a wife who has been purified from all filth and is worthy to be the vessel of that noble body by the decree of the Mighty, the Overwhelming. That exalted station becomes immensely joyous and delighted by obtaining that froth, and rejoices in attaining that which had been appointed for him as the utmost goal and hope.

Intercourse occurs between him and that pure wife, and all of that exalted and noble froth is deposited with her. When the term of this camphoric phantom (the embryo) is complete in her womb, it emerges as a noble and complete newborn—through the grace of the One who manages and creates.

This is the true meaning of what our master al-Ṣādiq—peace be upon him—alluded to when he said: “When God wills to create the Imam, He sends to his father a cup of sealed nectar, and he drinks it, and from him the Imam is created.”

Then that structure, built from all the forms, is transferred by the transfer of the Bāb, and is united with the noble envelope formed from the airy essences of the people of wisdom. The Imam is then completed in his Imamate, and his father gives glad tidings of him to the people of his da‘wa and informs them that he is the one whose obedience God—exalted is He—has made obligatory upon them, linking it to the obedience of His Messenger and to His own.

His father, by bringing him into being, deserves transition to the abode of honor, for he is the true believer about whom our master al-Mu‘izz—peace be upon him—said: “A believer is not truly a believer until he brings forth another believer like himself.”

Chapter

And this final station—the station of veiling from the world of origination (al-ibdā‘)—became the center for the radiance of that ray, from which appear to the world astonishing acts and

immense power. Minds and thoughts are bewildered by the miracles that manifest from him—manifestations of wondrous miracles and actions that defy the norms.

All this occurs by the manifestation of the one united with him, who is veiled, chosen from the entirety of the world of nature, and selected. But what is observed of incapacity at other times and the need for food and drink is attributable to the human shell (al-ghilāf al-nāsūtī), corresponding to the human kind to which he is similar.

When this noble person, as we described, rises to occupy the station of his father who brought him into being, his father ascends to the company of the Tenth Intellect, obtaining the most abundant eternal reward. He and those like him from among the predecessors remain awaiting the rise of the Qā'im (the Riser), who is in reality the Perfect Son.

Through him, all the ranks that had transitioned in the previous cycles will be gathered and united. Indeed, Ādam—peace be upon him—who was the first of the speakers (al-nuṭaqā'), and the people of his cycle, correspond to the position of "lineage" (sulāla); Nūḥ and his people to the position of "seed" (nuṭfa), who surpassed those before them in the rank of majesty; Ibrāhīm and his people to the position of the "clinging clot" ('alaqa); Mūsā and his people to the position of "chewed lump" (muḍgha), both formed and unformed; 'Īsā and his people to the position of "bones" ('izām); and Muḥammad and his progeny—peace be upon them—and his people to the position of "flesh" (laḥm), through which the earlier stages attain completion.

And the noble essence of the Qā'im—peace be upon him—corresponds to their essences as the "soul" (rūḥ) that animates the body upon its emergence from the womb. He is the Sovereign (Sulṭān) intended by God—exalted is He—when He said: "O company of jinn and men, if you are able to pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass; you shall not pass except with authority (sulṭān)."

He—peace be upon him—is, in perfection, like the "alif" among the ranks of numbers—the ultimate end, after which there is only repetition by the restatement of the ones (aḥād), as our master Ḥamīd al-Dīn—may God exalt his sanctity—said in the fourth chapter of Rāḥat al-'Aql:

"Since there is no position after the alif to which number extends, and none before it that was not preceded by another, it follows that after the Qā'im—the master of the seventh cycle appearing in his complete rank—there exists no rank that did not precede him. For he is the ultimate point, gathering all the ranks, just as the alif gathers all the numerical ones." This is his statement—may God illuminate his face.

So when the rise of this universal Qā'im—peace be upon him—takes place, and he is born as are the Imams of men, all who transitioned in past cycles, whether stable (mustaqarr) or entrusted (mustawda'), are gathered to him. They are arranged as the form of Imamate is arranged in that noble structure and assembly, and all of them become a complete form, like one of the forms of origination (ṣuwar al-ibdā'), deserving to inherit the rank of the Tenth Intellect in its exalted position.

Section

As for the wicked adversaries from among the people of religions—those who exhibit enmity toward the people of faith—they are not separated at the time of death from the dark imaginal form that clings to them, which arises from their assault against the people of truth, their denial, and their opposition. Rather, their sensory souls recoil backward, regressing due to their evil deeds into the intermediary realms of punishment. They diffuse into the filth of those bodies and experience the torment of the chains that encompass them with all forms of suffering. They come to realize that all of this is a consequence of their rejection of the ranks of the lords of the cycles and their following of the imams of misguidance—those who call to the Fire.

Once they have fully tasted of the lower torment in the intermediary worlds, in accordance with their deeds, they then return through stages of generation (al-takwīn) to the human form. This is as God informed His servants through the tongue of His Messenger, peace be upon him and his family: “We shall surely make them taste the lesser punishment before the greater punishment, that perhaps they may return.”

As for those who falsely claim the ranks of the Imams of the ages, and those cursed evildoers who supported them, all of them shall be brought before the Qā'im, peace be upon him, to acknowledge the crimes they previously committed, so that each of them may be recompensed for the sins they committed and the offenses they acquired. This occurs after they don the full garments of the lesser torment and are fully clothed in the punishment and disgrace of the hated intermediary world.

Then, each of the noble archetypes present in that blessed celestial structure will manifest, displaying the images of the exalted ranks and spiritual stations, in order to shame those who opposed them in earlier ages and times. Upon them shall descend, at the hands of the awliyā', dreadful vengeance and terrible afflictions—they shall be slaughtered like sacrificial animals. Then a fiery flood will descend to burn the wickedness of those bodies, transforming them into vapor and smoke so that they return to the worst of abodes—the descent into the lowest depths of the earth—to enter the greater torment, the severe punishment in the prison-rock known as Sijjīn, with continuous burning fire while they are in the most abominable forms and shapes.

They cry out in desperation from the horror of the afflictions that have befallen them, saying: “Our Lord, bring us out! We shall do righteous deeds, different from what we used to do.” But their suffering is not lessened, nor are they relieved from the immense torment they endure. Instead, it is said to them: “Taste the punishment of the Fire that you used to deny.” There is no hope of escape or release for them until the orbits of the heavens come to a halt. May God, Exalted is He, protect us from falling into the places of destruction, and safeguard us all from error and confusion in our religion, by His grace and His bounty.

Section

When this Qā’im, peace be upon him, brings forth his noble son from the people of his da‘wa—he being the first Imam to arise in the cycle of unveiling from among his Imams—he ascends along with all those forms assimilated into his own. He replaces the Tenth Intellect, taking charge of the governance of the world of nature, attaining the highest of ranks. The ranks of the world of command are then elevated in succession, each one who had held a lower rank ascending to that of the higher, until the first of the seven ascending ranks reaches the Garden of Refuge (Jannat al-Ma’wā), victorious are those for whom the noble hosts therein have prepared the reception.

This is the sphere of the first resurrection, referred to as the Radiant Sanctuary of Holiness (ḥaḏīrat al-quḏs al-zāhira), the gathering place of the lights of both the first and last emanations. It is to this that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, alluded in his report: “In Paradise, there is that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and has never occurred to the heart of any human.”

Therein is perfect equality and symmetry, and the distinctions between the forms that arise in that noble sphere disappear, along with all superiority or inferiority. The truthful word of God becomes fully realized there: “As We began the first creation, so shall We return it—a promise binding upon Us; surely We shall fulfill it.”

Yet none of those intellects can attain to the rank of the Preceder (al-sābiq), due to his being veiled from all creation by the lights of his Originator. He holds the rank of absolute unity, transcending all likeness and similitude. He is the source of the Holy Spirit, which flows to all worlds by his connection. May God grant us and you, O brother, the fulfillment of our highest hopes, and provide us with assistance in acquiring noble sciences and performing righteous deeds—by the right of our master Muḥammad and his pure progeny, blessings of God be upon them, the best of families.

Section

And know, O brother, that since evil is a phenomenon that arose in the essential constitution of the natural world, it is not to be denied when it manifests in its branches. Every existent inclines naturally toward that which resembles it and recoils from that which opposes it.

Be aware that the cause of harmony or aversion among beings is what was once latent in potentiality but became manifest in actuality in this world. It results from the difference in descent, as we previously mentioned, between those who descended with regret and confession and those who descended concealing denial of the excellence of the Excellent One and in denial.

Thus do the people of truth encounter enmity from the sects of misguidance and the injuries they suffer from them at all times. The Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, said: "Souls are like recruited soldiers—those who recognize one another will find affinity, and those who do not will find discord." And the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, said: "Were I to strike the believer on the nose, he would not hate me. But if I gave the hypocrite gold and silver, he would never love me."

Section

Know, O brother, that the world of religion is the counterpart to the world of creation, and it resembles it in all of its states.

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, said: "Indeed, God has established His religion upon the pattern of His creation, so that by means of His creation one may be guided to His religion, and by means of His religion, to His Oneness (tawḥīd)."

The world of creation consists of hylē (prime matter) and form. Hylē is coarse and receptive to accidents, while form is subtle and, in reality, the bearer of that hylē.

Likewise, the world of religion has its origin in the Noble Book and the Sacred Law (sharīʿa), and what lies buried within them of exalted and lofty meanings. The outward words of the Book and the prescribed duties of the sharīʿa stand in the place of hylē in the world of creation, while the subtle meanings, which are known to the people of truth, are the equivalent of form in the world of religion.

Since the celestial orbs and stars are the most refined of that which descended from the spiritual world, so too are the limits (ḥudūd) of the world of religion the noblest of the human kind. They were made the most efficacious means and finest intermediaries to the world of angels.

Since the human species comes after the other generated beings in the world of nature, the followers of the Islamic sharī‘a are distinguished above all other prior religious communities.

Just as the life of this human species and of the lower animals depends on inhaling the breeze of air through the mediation of the sun and moon, so too does the wellbeing of the followers of Islam and others depend on the justice and governance issuing from the Supreme Station (al-maqām al-a‘ẓam) and those entrusted with that authority—by restraining hands extended toward corruption and harm.

Since the sun, the greatest luminary, is the center of sensory life, the sun of the world of religion—that is, the maqām, peace be upon him—is the source of true formal blessings.

Just as the material sun provides some among humanity with sensory vitality while excluding others, so too does the Imām, peace be upon him, bestow the sacred formal benefits to the people of his inner da‘wa, to the exclusion of those in the outer fold of Islam.

As the physically sustained from among humanity are the intended aim among their kind, so too are the souls nourished by true knowledge the essential substance, while others—being dependent—are like accidents.

Just as the motion of the spheres and the action of the stars upon the four elements produce natural beings, so too does the bestowal of knowledge from those of high rank among the ḥudūd upon those below them result in the generation of exalted religious forms.

And just as what is pure and subtle in temperament is more receptive to the influence of the spheres and stars, so too do the nobler souls, through knowledge and good deeds, merit elevation through the mediation of the ḥudūd to lofty stations.

Since the existents of the natural world culminate in the human form, so too do the existents of the religious world culminate in the exalted collective—symbolized by the imamate.

Since the essence of this millennial human form is the single individual who is the maqām, so too is the ultimate aim of these noble spiritual assemblies the supreme collective, which is the Qā’im, peace be upon him.

And since most of humanity are worse in wickedness and vileness than beasts and apes, so too are most who claim the Islamic sharī‘a more hostile to the people of truth than Christians, Magians, and Jews. These are the sects who rebel against obedience to the ulu’l-amr (those vested with authority), lost in the valleys of misguidance, traversing its paths—those about whom the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, said: “My

umma will divide into seventy-three sects; one of them will be saved, and seventy-two will perish.”

Section:

And as for your question, O brother, regarding the highest ranks of the island at this time, and who deserves to be distinct from your brother in his rank among the brothers, know that it is necessary for every person of rank in the ranks of religion to have someone who stands in his place and is drawn forth from among the community of believers. That is his good deed which elevates the doer and secures for him the greatest share of reward at the appointed time and the most abundant recompense. This is the true meaning of gratitude for a blessing. For he who has been blessed by the existence of someone like him, just as he himself was brought into existence, and by entrusting to him the trust he holds — thereby the ranks of the boundaries are preserved. This encompasses justice from the One God, since the existence of one who fulfills the duty of the call from among the callers is proof of the existence of the Imam, peace be upon him, as was previously discussed in the first chapter of this treatise.

This Yemeni island has always been preferred above all islands and specially distinguished from all regions of the earth by the highest, most manifest honor, because of what it held in the beginning and what it will have in the later day. And by the statement of the Prophet, may peace be upon him, who was sent to all mankind and jinn: "The Ka'ba is Yemeni, and Wisdom is Yemeni, and the Religion is Yemeni." And by what our Master, the Commander, peace be upon him, testified in some of his noble registers, where he said: "And because the island of Yemen is among the regions overseen by the Commander of the Faithful who attends to all its affairs, great and small, as it was among the emigrants of the Muslims in the earliest times and the place of faith since the foundation of Islam became strong and until now; and it has never been without descendants of the Fatimid da'wa and the deputies of the 'Alawi da'wa, the bearers of the Qur'an and those who respond to God's call with faith." This is his saying, peace be upon him.

Therefore, the rank of the da'wa (mission) has always been preserved in this island of ours, watched over with care and protection by its guardian, blessings be upon him, and by the presence of successors following predecessors among the boundaries, continually connected to the prophetic rank of the Commander, as he commanded the call to his descendants, peace be upon them, and took the covenant and the pledges from them. As is mentioned in the register of glad tidings to the Proof of the Island — may God exalt her sanctity — regarding the appointment to him and the command to her and all the boundaries, in belief in his imamate and the establishment of the call to him, namely the trustworthy and faithful Sayyidnā (Master) al-Ṣa' (peace be upon him), supported by the Spirit of Holiness from the Lord of the Worlds, branch of the prophetic tree and guardianship, who follows his path in guidance and direction, heir to the honor of infallibility from his purified forefathers free of all impurities, concerning God's statement: "You are the best nation brought forth to mankind."

Our master Ḥātim ibn Ibrāhīm, may God exalt his sanctity, clarified in the treatise Tuḥfat al-Qulūb how the matter of the da'wa proceeded from the days of our master al-Mustanṣir, peace be upon him, in the Yemeni island until it settled with his two sons, their high blessings. And what was also mentioned by the father of all, Sayyidnā 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd, may God exalt his sanctity, in the treatise called Nahj al-Idāḥ, regarding the succession of the leadership in the rank of the da'wa, with the clearest possible expression.

Know that the intention of the father of all, may God exalt his sanctity, in composing this aforementioned treatise was to appoint the rank to Sīnā 'Alī ibn Ḥanẓala ibn Abī Sālim, may God exalt his sanctity, and to clarify that he is his successor and trustee after him for the affairs of the island. He established him in his place to complete his work and elevated him to his rank by reaching the utmost satisfaction of his Lord. Then Sayyidnā 'Alī ibn Ḥanẓala, may God exalt his sanctity, appointed the rank of the da'wa in which he was established to Sayyidnā Aḥmad ibn al-Mubārak ibn al-Walīd and set him as his successor. He then passed away to the divine pleasure of the Exalted, after he had opened the way for your brother to undertake the affairs of the da'wa, supporting the aforementioned master and assisting him in all matters assigned to him.

He had advised the aforementioned master, may God exalt their sanctities, to appoint your brother as his successor in his position and to hand over this rank to him upon the end of his days. When the matter became after the passing of Sayyidnā Aḥmad ibn al-Mubārak, may God exalt his sanctity, your brother received it with acceptance, complying with the order of the Muslim who was given authority over him, even though he knew that he was in a position unable to reach the highest of those before him and falling short. Yet he hoped for help from God and His wali (the Imam), peace be upon him, and sought assistance from both in bearing the burden and in success in all his affairs and rectitude.

Know that your brother has not seen — at this time among the boundaries of the island — anyone more suitable to delegate and entrust with this important matter and to elevate to the rank of obligatory gratitude as was mentioned by the favored one upon whom the blessing rests — other than the most eminent judge Sayyid al-Afḍal al-'Ālī above others by what God granted him of the secrets of truths and empowered him: Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥanẓala. May God grant him success, rectitude, and assistance to undertake what he is worthy of and support him.

This is the cream that your brother extracted in his time and obtained in his moment and season. So know his noble right and high rank, and do not compare him with any other from all the people of the island in his time. May your reason be sweetened by his cause, that you be granted success in the matter of your religion and righteousness, and may your effort be joined with what you hope for of success in your hereafter with achievement.

And God, the Exalted, is the One to be asked to keep everyone firm in obedience to Him and obedience to His wali on His earth, peace be upon him. Praise be to God who preserves His religion by the righteous and glorious Imams, and fortifies it by creating proofs for them against the claims of those who are first in error and obstinacy. May God's prayers be upon His Messenger supported by the noble angels, calling his nation to the abode of peace, Muhammad the chosen from all the people of the earth, the intercessor who intercedes on the Day of Reckoning, and upon the trusted one in what he legislated, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib the brave and the bold, and upon the Imams from his pure progeny, the guides who clarify to their followers the path of salvation, and upon the heir of their honor, the proud holder of their manifest glory, our master and lord the pure Imam al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Qāsim, Commander of the Faithful, son of the Imam, the Commander. The help and refuge of his loyal followers and supporters on the Day of Judgment. Peace be upon them all, a continuous peace until the Day of Judgment.

Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best Disposer of affairs; the best Master, and the best Helper; and there is no power and no strength except by Allah, the Most High, the Great.

This noble treatise named al-Waḥīda in establishing the pillars of the creed was completed copying on the night of al-Mi'rāj in the month of Rajab, 427 AH. It was written by the least servant of our master the favored da'ī Fatimi, Sayyidnā Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn Ṭā'i, and the humblest of his servants and the foster child of his grace and blessings, 'Alī aṣ-Ṣaghīr al-Shaykh Ismā'īl al-Shaykh Ḥakīm al-Dīn. The servant hopes from his master that he accepts his effort and regards it with the eye of acceptance. May God make me his sacrifice.