



INNER SECRETS
OF
THE PATH

Sayyid Haydar Amuli





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Table of Contents

Book Description.....	i
Preface By Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri.....	ii
Introduction and Biographical Background.....	iii
Postscript	xxxvii
I – Ground Work.....	1
1. Introduction and the First Aspect.....	1
2. The Second Aspect.....	32
3. The Third Aspect.....	38
4. The First Principle.....	47
5. The Second Principle	61
II – Roots	71
1. The First Foundation	71
2. An Investigation of the Roots	74
3. Divine Unity (tawhid)	77
4. The Justice of Allah (‘adl).....	90
5. Prophethood	99
6. Imamate.....	106
7. Events of the Hereafter (ma`ad).....	115
III – Branches	151
1. Minor Ritual Ablution (wudu’).....	151
2. Major Ritual Purification (ghusl).....	156
3. Purification with Earth (tayammum)	163

4. The Nature of Prayer	172
5. The Ascent of the Prophet (mi`raj)	176
6. Different Aspects of Prayer.....	183
7. A Method of Classification	193
8. Prayer	200
9. Fasting.....	220
10. Zakat (purifying tax)	237
11. Hajj (pilgrimage).....	245
12. Jihad	264
Final Word of Advice and Instruction.....	272
E-Books by Zahra Publications	283
General eBooks on Islam	283
The Qur'an & Its Teachings.....	283
Sufism & Islamic Psychology and Philosophy	284
Practices & Teachings of Islam.....	286
Talks, Interviews & Courses	288
Poetry, Aphorisms & Inspirational	289
Autobiography.....	290
Health Sciences and Islamic History.....	290

Book Description

In this book, Seyyid Haydar Amuli – an ibn `Arabi scholar and Gnostic from the 14th century – discusses the nature of unity, justice and prophecy as outlined by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and how spiritual travelers should walk on the path taking to their Lord using Shari`ah. It deals specifically with the roots and branches of Islam.

Preface By Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

From my early youth in Karbala, I was curious as to the ultimate purpose of any ritual that we perform and what it leads to and the benefit that it accrues to the practitioner. And, as a result of that curiosity, I often looked for the classical masters and teachers, or books, that gave me any indication of the lights and guidance that emerges as a result of adhering to strict lines of worship and *`ibadah*.

Haydar Amuli is no doubt one of the early and serious expounders of the connection between the inner and the outer, and the influence of outer practices and acceptance of boundaries to the inner state.

As time went by, my benefits accrued from books, like *The Inner Secrets of the Path*, I thought that it could also be beneficial to others who are not satisfied with only the outer practices, and were curious as to their inner meanings and, therefore, their benefits in terms of one's higher state of awakening. The result of that quest was this translation of Haydar Amuli's work.

Subsequent to this, I began to find so many other windows that shed light upon the different aspects of the *deen* and their influence upon the individual who is seeking awakening and presence to the timeless Light of the Divine.

Introduction and Biographical Background

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds who in His essential divine substance is before time and ever-existent, who in His own necessary independence is the beginning and the end and whose eternity does not admit of end.

Praise belongs to Him who by His essence is Him. The Beloved is He who is Allah, the Soul Being, the Beloved is Him. He is the Independent, the Eternal, who begets no one. The One, who was not begotten, without opponent or rival. He is the Possessor of Splendor, the One, the Eternal. His Oneness is not, however, of the kind to be counted. He is without likeness, existent before creation and time. There has been, nor is nothing similar to Him.

He is untouched by time and place. The chapter of The Unity (in the Qur'an) is an indication of this. He is Existence from before time and without need. He is the Real and the Creator of the different essences. He is without annihilation, subsistent of Himself. He exists by His essence, the Source of Outpouring of all essences.

May blessings and peace without end be on Muhammad, the first radiant manifestation of the Essence, the first of the messengers of Allah, whose reality is the radiant point of manifestation of the essence of the Lord of the Worlds, who is himself also the seal of His prophets, and on his caliph and successor, the greatest of caliphs, the most excellent of guardians and the seal of spiritual authority from the Maker of the heavens and the earth, the Commander of the Faithful and the just divider of people between the Fire and the Garden, the '*yamin of Allah*' – one of Allah's people of the right — as mentioned in the Qur'an.¹

May peace and blessings be also on the family and progeny of Muhammad, the purest of the pure who are the joy and gladness of the worlds, and in particular on the last of

¹ 'Ali is the *yamin* (right hand) of Allah, guarded by the army of Truth. The phrase *ashab al-yamin* (the Companions of the Right Hand) indicates none other than the people of 'Ali.

these, the lord of the age and time itself, the caliph of the Merciful, the leader of men and jinn – may God grant him great favors. By the family of Muhammad was the correct path made known. It was in their houses that the Book was revealed. They are the proofs of Allah for mankind. In them and their forefathers there is no doubt. In particular Abu Hasan `Ali is revered for his high station of knowledge. He is the tremendous news, the ark of Noah, the door of Allah and the final word in eloquence.

He is the first wave from the ocean of Allah's beauty and love.
He is of the depths of the sea of nobility, from the Majestic.
He is the witness and the witnessed and, by your life, endowed with great eloquence,
He is the guide of the path leading to the fortunate abode.
From God through him issues the intellect in its entirety.
He is the king of the gathering of those messengers,
The completion of the prophets by the divine overflowing from before endless time,
The source of light for all the friends of Allah.
There is one sole sun which possesses radiance,
Although from him many lights of dawn appeared on the horizon.
It was that same face of the moon whose light broke though,
But it was by him that the twelve came to rejoice in their blessing.
The state of Muhammad issues from the outpourings of the essence,
And the family of Muhammad are the nobility of creation.
The family of the Prophet are the lords of the two worlds.
The family of the Prophet are the keys to the doors of the gardens.
The family of the Prophet are the light of His beauty from before time.
The family of the Prophet are a source of gnosis which never dries up.
May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon them,
Until the moment the trumpet is sounded on the day of rising.

* * * *

The divine decrees come into being in a world other than our own and they are governed by an order and time which is particular to them – such that whenever the will of Allah impinges on this world, then the decree passes from the Tablet of knowledge in the *malakut* (the invisible world of spirit and angel) to the pages of material forms in the world of men. Since different manifestations of the divine decrees become visible in this world, we have taken to calling them 'events which happen by chance' or 'occurrences.'

It is because we interpret what happens in relation to ourselves that we react with surprise when the decree of Allah causes something to come into being, or not to come into being, and we become happy or unhappy accordingly.

The work before the reader came about in the following manner. One day some years ago one of my friends said that he had purchased a modest library wherein were several handwritten volumes. He asked me to take a look and to choose any book that I found interesting. However much I tried to refuse his offer – saying that, although handwritten, they remained for me a mere adornment and a financial investment for the book collectors, adding that after the death of their owner these papers would be sold again in the market for a ludicrous price – there was nothing I could do but peruse the books for the sake of our friendship and to avoid offending him. Of all the books – most of them of great value by reason of their illuminated pages, calligraphy and age – one in particular, which in contrast contained very bad calligraphy and not even the name of the author, attracted my attention. Despite its worn exterior, I purchased it at an extravagant price. This book was in fact ‘The Mysteries of the Revealed Law, the Stations of the Way and the Light of the Truth’ (*Asrar al-Shari`ah*) which the decree of God was now placing before my path.

By the style of the text, I realized that it was the work of the lord of gnosis and divines Sayyid Haydar Amuli, an Iranian gnostic of great standing of the eighth century AH. His writing is eloquent and he fulfills the demand for spiritual knowledge among those persons whose mother tongue is Persian. Despite the poor calligraphy, it was nevertheless exceedingly correct and had been copied from the actual work of the author himself, may Allah protect his secret; moreover, there were marginal notes elucidating most places in the book written in 950 A.H. Despite research in different libraries of Iran and Turkey I could find no trace of another copy which would permit a cross-check of my copy. The copy possessed by the University of Tehran was only a selection containing no more than five or six pages of the book; the copy I found in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (previously the National Assembly) was half missing and full of defects. I thus made a photocopy of my copy and made up for the defects of the

Assembly's copy. It was again the workings of the divine decree which caused me to then find a copy in the library of Ayatullah Mar'ashi of Qum.²

Although the copy from the library of Mar'ashi was good, having been written during the time of the Qacharis, it was not as correct as the copy I myself possessed. For this reason, I made a further copy of my text and substituted it for the other which had been registered under the number of 388. I then completed corrected that work, spending many years in the process. It so happened that one day I went to meet some friends at the Iranian Academy of Philosophy; the head of the academy was talking about the lack of correct texts and the plethora of unedited annotated works. It was at this point that the manifestation of another divine decree caused the bringing to a head of those previous incidents of destiny which I had all but forgotten.³ Thus, I disclosed that a rare text, of which no more than two copies existed in the world, lay in my hands ready for printing. Mention of this was greeted with great pleasure, and after attending to the technical matters of publication, the work was then actually printed.

As for the biography and historical importance of this divine prodigy, the men with whom he studied and the date of his death, in the majority of cases such details are recorded inaccurately; biographers have plagiarized details from others and in their ignorance some have added material to inaccurate material of a previous date. In investigating these matters great care must be taken to look closely at what actually happened and to weigh the matters up with precision in order to discriminate the chaff from the grain and jumbled invention from reality. Most of the books containing such material are sources of erroneous data not only with regard to the life of this man but also with regard to his works.

² It was with much charm and kindness that the employees of this fine library put a photocopy of the work at my disposition. The director of the library also supplied me with a copy of *Al-Muhit al-A'zam* (The Mighty Ocean), which had been handwritten by the author himself; this is the only copy which exists in Iran – the only other extant copy is in the library of Najaf – and I shall subsequently refer to it. When my eyes fell on the amber-like calligraphy of this *sayyid*, written as it were in the ink of the Cathay musk deer, they brightened with joy, and on a thorough reading I was apprised of his knowledge of the chains of transmission, of his way of the patched garment and granting of permission to his students.

³ The reason for my forgetfulness was that I was totally absorbed in correcting the books of commentary of *Sadr al-Muta'lih* The Core of the Divine Gnostics – which number fourteen detailed volumes – and *Kitab Mafatih al-Ghaib* (Book of Keys to the Unseen). The latter is the last introduction to the commentary of this great commentator and the key to understanding the deeper meanings of the Qur'an.

One such book is *Al-Kashkul fi ma jara li ali'l-rasul* (Album of Events concerning the Family of the Prophet) which is attributed to Sayyid Amuli but in fact is the work of Haydar ibn `Ali, a contemporary of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin, the teacher of Sayyid Amuli. He is mentioned with regard to the strife which broke out between the Sunnis and the Shi`ahs in 735 in Baghdad⁴ when in fact at that time Sayyid Amuli was only sixteen years old and had never been in Iraq. The source of this and many other pieces of false information is the book *Majalis al-Mu'minin* (The Gatherings of the Believers).

As for the various (dubious) biographies there is that of Sayyid Haydar Tunī. It is significant that it is included in *Rawdat al-Jinnah* (The Meadow of Paradise) as an appendix to the biography of Sayyid Amuli wherein many miraculous feats are ascribed to him. It is for this reason that we have not made any commentary on these matters. The stations, inner states and spiritual journeying are described in his own words, they being truer and clearer than anyone else's, so that any contradictory statements may be avoided. We have thus avoided the usual method employed – which is to record anything which one has heard or read without checking its veracity and without assuming any responsibility for the facts presented. Such writings only serve to obscure the true spiritual path of this friend of Allah and give a completely distorted picture of the story of his life; as a result, his way of illumination has become hidden for subsequent generations and access to the right path, the path of light indicated by him, has been obstructed for the seeker, concealed from the sight of mankind.

Until now, no complete biographical commentary on this great gnostic, which is free from extraneous and erroneous material and which contains material written by himself, has been written in Persian. Little, moreover, has been written in Arabic: the introduction which precedes his book *Jami` al-Asrar* (A Compendium of Secrets) is lengthy and tiring, and that which accompanies his work *Nass al-Nusus* (The Text of Texts) is concise but uninformative and does nothing to elucidate those matters about which we are ignorant. It was for this reason that I decided to take the task upon myself. It was with the

⁴ This strife – mostly occurring in the Karkh area of Baghdad inhabited by the Shi`ahs – was caused by political motives, according to historical testimonies (in particular that of al-Kamil Ibn Athir).

help of God that I set about composing this biography, using material from within his own works and avoiding any commentary or marginal notes.

Sayyid Amuli was born in 819 A.H. His birth heralded the tremendous influence of his life. He illumined the world of darkness and tribulation, and embellished this world, this planting ground for the next. He says himself at the end of the introduction to *Nass al-Nusus* (The Text of Texts), which is a commentary on the *Fusus al-Hikam* (The Bezels of Wisdom) of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn `Arabi: 'I completed this commentary in 782 A.H. at the age of sixty-three.'

A brief genealogy and biography of his life appears in the first volume of his commentary entitled *Al-Muhit al-A`zam* (The Mighty Ocean) M.S. 301, Mar`ashi Library, Qum. The following is a translation of this:

'I am Rukn al-Din Haydar, the son of Sayyid Taj al-Din `Ali Padashah, the son of Sayyid Rukn al-Din Haydar, the son of Sayyid Taj al-Din `Ali Padashah, the son of Sayyid Muhammad Amir, the son of `Ali Padashah, the son of Abu Ja`far Muhammad, the son of Zayd, the son of Abu Ja`far Muhammad, the son of Ibrahim, the son of Muhammad, the son of Husayn Kusaj, the son of Ibrahim, the son of Sana`illah, the son of Muhammad Harun, the son of Hamzah, the son of `Ubayd ullah al-`Araj, the son of Husayn Asghar, the son of Imam `Ali ibn al-Husayn Zayn al-`Abidin, the son of Husayn the Shahid – the martyr, the son of the Commander of the Faithful `Ali ibn Abi Talib, may the peace of Allah be upon them all.'

In the introduction of *Jami` al-Asrar* (The Compendium of Secrets) he further states: 'Know that from the earliest vigor of my youth, namely from my childhood to the age of thirty or thereabouts, I was engaged in studying the religion of my own forefathers, the *ma`sumin* – the infallible ones. With regard to the outer aspect of the *shari`ah*, I undertook a study of the Imamiyah sect and their juridical school (*madhhab*) – which is daily practiced amongst the Shi`ahs; and with regard to the inner, namely the study of the truth and reality (*haqiqah*), I devoted my attention to the Sufis and the masters of the science of the unity of Allah (*tawhid*). The two aspects came together and a joining of the outer *shari`ah* and the inner *haqiqah* was affected such that I reached the station of constancy and firmness. This, I say not through any sense of pride, but rather as an expression of the endless bounty of Allah. Indeed, I swear by Allah that if the seven

heavens were made of paper and the trees of the earth were pens, if the seas of the world were ink and the spirits, mankind and the angels were scribes, then they would be unable to write even a jot of what I had witnessed of the divine gnoses and realities referred to in the authentic or divinely inspired *hadith*: “*I have prepared for the chosen of My slaves something no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no heart has perceived*”, and in the Qur’an: “*So no soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh their eyes; a reward for what they did.*” (32:17). The least of these truths was such that after seeing reality from both sides and the true and false aspects of each side, after perceiving in what manner the one was true and the other false, I was able to understand how every one of these matters was connected to a point of reality and *tawhid* – just as the line which is drawn from circumference of a cycle is connected to the central point. I was also able to understand the meaning of Allah’s words: “*There is no living creature but He holds it by its forelock; surely my Lord is on the right path.*” (11:56) and “*Allah’s is the East and the West; therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah’s purpose*” (2:115); and the secret contained in the words of the Prophet: “*The ways leading to the Real are as many as the persons in creation*”. The saying of the Commander of the Faithful, “*Knowledge was no more than one point – and it was the ignorant who added to it*”, also became clear to me. I became as the incipient form before materialization, the form which is capable of taking on any other form, the form which accepts and understands any belief structure or desire, such that all was swallowed up in my boundless existence. This is as the sublime station of the Prophet when he stood before Allah saying, “*O Allah, show me the realities of the beings of creation just as they are*”; this is highest of the stations of *tawhid* and the sublimest of positions in the world of unveilings. “*That is Allah’s grace; He grants it to whom He pleases, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.*” (62:4).’

‘From the poetry of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn `Arabi:

Before this I used to deny my friend, for my heart could not accept his religion.

Now my heart has adopted every shape of belief;

It has become a pasture for the fine-eyed gazelles and a place of worship for the monk in his monastery.

It is the temple of idols and also the Ka`bah above which they make the rounds.

It is the tablets of the Torah and also the book of the Qur’an.

I have drawn close to the religion of love and passion such that

From wherever their caravans leave I set off too – for passion has become my way of life and faith.

‘After my affirmation of the truth of Sufism, certain persons were troubled by some of its more abstruse and esoteric aspects with regard to the Real – such people imagined that I was availing myself of invalid and other spurious means. May they realize that this was not the case and that in reality I was only drawing upon the religion of my own forefathers – the infallible Imams. Because of their extreme ignorance, the majority of Sufis think that the Imams were devoid of the excellencies and superior insights of Sufism. Moreover, many Shi`ahs also believe that the knowledge of their Imams is restricted to that same knowledge which is in common use amongst themselves. In fact there is not a single form of knowledge but that the Imams are the source of that knowledge; there is not a secret or hidden wisdom but that they are the mine from which it may be extracted; they are the teachers of the *shari`ah* and the leaders of the *tariqah* and the poles of the *haqiqah*; they are the caliphs and the vicegerents of Allah in the heavens and the earth; they are the manifestation of the power and majesty of Allah in His *mulk* – the earth and heavens – and in His *malakut* – the realm of the spirits and angels. I swear by God that if they did not exist, then the heavens would not be standing, the earth would not be outspread and the creatures would not be living in them. This is the meaning of Allah’s words to His Prophet, “*If you were not, then I would not have created the cosmos*”; here, what is meant is the abode of the different creatures. According to the scholars of the divine sciences, the whole world is maintained in existence by reason of the reality of the Perfect Man and the planets are kept in orbit by his very breaths. Muhyi al-Din ibn `Arabi says in his book *Nuskhat al-Haqq* (Copy of the Truth): “*Allah established the Perfect Man as the teacher of the angels and has caused the planets to turn by his life and breath – and this by reason of his nobility, sublimity and elevated station.*” By the consensus of the nation of Muslims, there are none greater than those great persons – neither from an intellectual standpoint, nor from conclusions drawn from the body of the traditions, nor from the station of unveilings.’

‘It was the Prophet’s own successor (‘Ali) who proclaimed with pride: “*I am the sign and indication of Allah, the All-Powerful and the Conqueror; I am the reality of the secret truths; I am the leader and guide of the heavens; I sit with the angels who make*

praise and with Gabriel and I am the friend of Mika'il; I am the guide of the planets; I am the tree of Sandalwood of the planets; I am the guardian of the thunder and the dazzling lightning; I am the face of Allah, the flank of Allah, the hand of Allah; I am the first and the last, the manifest and the hidden.”’

Sayyid Amuli also says in his own commentary: ‘After understanding religion and its associated sciences and after mastering the different degrees of knowledge with regard both to the intellect and the related body of *ahadith* (traditions of the Prophet) – this study being undertaken partly in the town of Amul, birth place and childhood home of myself and my forefathers, partly in Khurasan and Astarabad, and partly in Isfahan – I continued to strive until I arrived at the core and inner meaning of these matters.’

‘These studies lasted for approximately twenty years until for the second time I returned from Isfahan to Amul. Here I took up employment in the service of the just and temperate Padshah Fakhr al-Dawlah, the son of Shah Kay-Khisraw – may Allah grant them both a fair place in the Garden. Fakhr al-Dawlah treated me with particular respect and honor and placed me with those of his entourage who were intimate with him. After a while he made me one of his most trusted confidants and thereupon one of his special deputies and chamberlains; he accorded me this special treatment as he himself was descended from Anusharvan, Yazdagird and Perviz, one of his close relatives being a Padshah by the name of Ardishir, son of Hasan, the son of Taj al-Dawlah whom Tahir al-Din Faryabi Sha’ir, Siraj al-Din Qamari and other poets and reciters of *qasidahs* (odes) would honor and praise in their writings.’

‘After some time, the just padshah, the champion of his time, the living padshah of padshahs, the brave unflinching warrior Fakhr al-Dawlah made a request to me. Thus, it was that just as Jalal al-Dawlah Iskandar and the majestic Sultan Gustaham and Tus Malik came to be employed in the service of Fakhr al-Dawlah’s brother, I also came to take up duties in his service. It was not long before – by the blessing of his company – I acquired such great position and wealth that it is impossible to imagine. In this way I came to live a life of luxury, prosperity and honor amongst the people, my friends and my fellow townsfolk.’

‘I passed some time in this state until a desire for the truth, a desire both instinctive and natural, began to flare up within me and Allah made me aware of the evil and corruption growing in me as a result of my ignorance and forgetfulness of Him. It became clear to me that I was following a way of perversity far from the straight path; it became manifest to me that I was treading the path of misguidance, close to the precipice of sin and crime. It was at this moment that I prayed to the Lord from deep within myself: I implored him to free me from these actions of mine – all my passion and desire was to leave this world and its pleasures. I found within myself that I was ready to turn in the direction of the Real and to set out on the path of *tawhid* (divine unity).’

‘It was for this reason that I no longer wished to keep the company of those padshahs nor to continue living in my own locality and place of birth, despite my love of that place; nor too could I continue to sit with my friends and brothers. It seemed the best thing to do was to abandon them completely and to move away to a place where I could carry out those duties necessary for a life devoted to the Real and where the form of my existence would be of the highest order. Thus, it was that I freed myself forthwith from the rulers, as well as from the wealth of my sons and of my mother and brothers⁵ and I put on a patched garment – not worth more than a dirham – that had been thrown into an alley at the back of the house. It was in this that I set out via Ray, Qazvin and Isfahan with the intention of making the pilgrimage and visiting the sacred House of Allah and with the intention of visiting my forefather, the Messenger of Allah and the infallible Imams. In this way I arrived in Qazvin where I had previously spent a long period of my youth amidst wealth and honor.’

‘It was because a contract of brotherhood had been made with the young men of that town (and by this, I mean with the group of Sufis) that a contract was also made between myself and the perfect shaykh, the one of arrival, Nur al-Din Tihrani – Tihran being a village on the way to Isfahan in the region of Dardasht and which is pronounced with the

⁵ Thus acting in accordance with the *ayah*: ‘Say: If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your mates and your kinsfolk and property, which you have acquired, and the slackness of trade which you fear, and dwellings which you like, are dearer to you than Allah and His Apostle and striving in His way, then wait till Allah brings about His command; and Allah does not guide the transgressing people’ (9:24).

open ‘t’ sound by the people in contrast to the Arabic ‘t’ with which it was originally spelt.’

‘Shaykh Nur al-Din Tihrani was a gnostic of Allah and an ascetic. All the people, both the common and the elite, accepted him and became his disciples. I spent a month, or rather, a little less than a month, in his company – until he gave me the real patched garment of the Sufis to wear,⁶ and I came to master the *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) of the elite rather than that of the common people; by sitting with him, I was able – by an alchemic transmission – to profit greatly, despite the extreme brevity of my stay. After this I went on from Isfahan to two other places, namely Aydhaj and Maliamir, where in company with another man of perfection and spiritual gnosis, I spent some time while waiting for the caravan to form which was bound for Baghdad. The caravan never materialized, however, and this, and the onset of a severe sickness, caused me to return to Isfahan. After a time, I did finally reach Baghdad and from there I had the honor of visiting the sacred site of the martyrdom of the Commander of the Faithful, the graves of Husayn, Musa and Jawad, together with the Imams of Samarra. I spent a whole year in these places before setting out in the direction of the Ka’bah with the intention of performing the pilgrimage. I was alone and destitute when I set out.’

‘Having visited the tombs of the Messenger and the four Imams in Madinah, I returned to Iraq and in the holy city of Najaf – may Allah bless those who visit it – I took up residence and busied myself with spiritual exercises, periods of isolation (*Khalwah*), worship, and the seeking of *ilm al-laduni* (knowledge bestowed by Allah on His slave

⁶ With regard to the patched robe, he himself says in *Al-Muhit al-A`zam* (The Mighty Ocean): ‘This garment which is well-known amongst the common and elite of the *muwahhidin* – those who affirm the unity of Allah – is an indication of the secret of *wilayah* – friendship with Allah – and the secret wisdom of *tawhid* which came from Allah by means of Gabriel to Adam and then to his son Seth: this *wilayah* was transmitted as an inner reality by means of this lineage. Thereafter, it was transferred to Noah through a chain of prophets and saints (*awliya*’) until it reached the Mahdi, may Allah speed his appearance on earth. With the Mahdi this transmission came to an end and it is for this reason that he is the seal of the *awliya*’. Thus, the patched garment is not an indication, as the ignorant maintain, of something made of wool or cotton or the like – all are aware that the outer garment itself is not an indication of the taking on of the qualities of human perfection – rather it is connected to the right-guidance of the prophets, saints and the great amongst the shaykhs and men of perfection. As an explanation of the taking on of the inner meaning of the way of these great men – through an embodiment of their character and qualities and obedience to their way of life – the patched garment is a term both noble and subtle; thus it is that God says: ‘Say: If you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you, (3:31).’

through no effort of his own). There was no one in the region who had knowledge of this kind of activity and of these states. I associated, however, with a gnostic and man of perfection of this locality who, although living in obscurity, was in fact the leader of the saints of Allah; he was known amongst the people as `Abd al-Rahman ibn Ahmad Muqaddasi and although enjoying the meagerest of means was among the finest and most excellent of the men of knowledge. I took to studying *Manazil al-Sa'irin* (The Stages of the Gnostic Travelers) together with its commentary, thereafter *Fusus al-Hikam* (The Bezels of Wisdom), together with its commentary and other books of the same nature. It was during this period of study that most of the realities contained in the books on Sufism (including both the simple and more detailed treatises) were revealed to me with clarity – and this by the blessing of that holy place, this holy person and the Imams. Thus, it was that I came to write many commentaries, made many notes on this subject and then wrote several other books. Twenty years have elapsed since that date and the books which I have written now number between twenty and twenty-four; these I catalogued with an index, the last of the books being a commentary on the Quran.’

Up to this point Sayyid Amuli records in detail the spiritual journey upwards to his Lord by a process of divine attraction. As for the journey through the self and the death of desire, he continues the description of his own states in the introduction of his commentary of the *Fusus al-Hikam* entitled *Nass al-Nusus* (The Text of Texts) (with regards to the second aspect of the *wilayah* of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn `Arabi): ‘I remained for a period in Isfahan occupied with the states of the spiritual path. It was then that, intending to go to Baghdad in order to visit the places of martyrdom of the Imams, the saints and the shaykhs of that region, and whilst planning to go to the house of Allah to perform the *hajj* and to remain forever close to this house, I suddenly saw one night in a dream that I was standing in the middle of a bazaar. I perceived that my body was as if dead, wrapped in a white shroud and fallen flat on the ground. While trying to discover the cause of this, I was at the same time in a state of great surprise: how was it that I was both standing and lying flat on the ground? It was in this state that I awoke. This in fact was the beginning of the death of desire and the start of my spiritual path – the same death alluded to by the Prophet when he says, “Die before you die” and the same as that described by the sage who said, “Die by your own will so that you may

live the true and natural life”.⁷ God says: “Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one of utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?” (6:122) I thanked God for His blessings; it is He who is the cause of eternal life and constant prosperity: “Most surely this is the mighty achievement. For the like of this then let the workers work.” (37:60-61)

‘Likewise, I saw again on another occasion that I was sitting in the shop of some friends. On my back there was copper receptacle ornamented with gold, just like those of the water carriers who would tour the bazaars pouring water for the people to drink. This receptacle had a strange mouth, just like that of the large jars which they make out of fired clay. I was giving water to those present from this receptacle while at the same time I was searching for myself. I was also sitting at the same time as I was standing. Moreover, just as I was giving water to the people to drink, I would take a drink myself. Because of this strange picture, I would repeatedly burst out laughing at myself and I felt great amazement at this state until I finally woke up. This dream was instrumental in bringing me many tremendous insights.’

‘On another occasion, in Isfahan, I saw myself seated holding a severed head in my hand; at the same time my own head had been severed, although I had no knowledge of this. I was busy turning and playing with the head and at any moment would be seized by laughter at this strange picture, until I finally woke up. This dream was the means by which I arrived at many of the most precious spiritual truths; indeed, a wealth of the finest insights was revealed to me as they flowed out from the generosity of the divine unseen. In a similar dream to this, I heard that my father gave no more nor less than a thousand dinars to the person who could interpret such dreams, and this sum was also paid without delay by some of the padshahs by the law of the exoteric. As for the inner world of meaning, a thousand things of note and worth, purer than the finest gold and clearer than the most translucent jewels promised to man in the Garden, were received

⁷ That is according to the divine pattern or *sunnah* which holds sway over nature; this means that those whose desire has not died are, according to the natural pattern of life, themselves dead. This pattern of nature is an order of interconnected harmony based on wisdom and the whole cycle of beneficence is as a spark from the inner divine order.

from the real Padshah, namely Allah, may He be exalted: “That is Allah’s grace; He grants it to whom He pleases, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.” (62:4); “And none are made to receive it but those who are patient, and none are made to receive it but those who have a mighty good fortune” (41:35). Such events often occur to myself and our spiritual friends, but despite being far-removed from the state of man, they are not extraordinary for God: “And this is not difficult for Allah” (14:20).’

At the end of *Muqaddimah Fusus* (An Introduction to the Bezels), which is about the meaning for him of the unveilings and secrets of the *Fusus al-Hikam*, he describes the holy city of Najaf as being the cause of openings from the unseen occurring in his heart – just as one night Makkah became the cause of openings for Shaykh Muhyi al-Din and thereafter Madinah inspired the Madinan disclosures. He then goes on to explain the course of his own spiritual journey both in relation to himself and to the cosmos: ‘Know that since God has commanded me to leave everything which is other than Him and to concentrate the heart completely on Him, there arose in my heart such a feeling of divine inspiration that I decided to take the noblest and sublimest locality on earth as my place of residence and worship of Him. Thus, it was that I set out for Makkah – may Allah increase it in every way. It would be impossible to contain in a whole set of books the trials and hardships, the misfortune and toil which I underwent on the journey from Isfahan to that place. Despite all this, however, the words of Allah were always on my tongue: “And whoever goes forth from his house flying to Allah and His Apostle, and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (4:100), and also the lines of that gnostic and lover of the Truth who says:

I have left all men for the sake of Your satisfaction.

I have abandoned as orphans my own sons for the sake of Your witnessing.

Even if You cut me to pieces, my heart would still long for no one but You.

This was my state when I arrived in Makkah and completed the obligatory pilgrimage together with all the necessary and supererogatory rites. It was at this point – in 751 AH – that I conceived the desire and intention to stay forever in the proximity of that illustrious house. It was not long, however, that there arose within me the desire to live in the illuminated city of Madinah and it was for this reason that I set out for this city, where I

visited the tomb of the Messenger of Allah and conceived the intention of staying within the confines of his splendid grave. At that moment, however, many obstacles were placed in my path, the greatest of these being a physical sickness, which made it necessary for me to return to Iraq and take up residence in the familiar surroundings of Najaf.’

‘Thus, I returned without further trouble to this spiritual city and busied myself with religious exercises, pious seclusion and acts of worship – of an intensity and severity never before achieved. By this means, throughout all this period, meanings, gnoses, realities and truths flowed into my heart from the direction of Allah, the Lord of the unseen. It would be impossible to reckon these things for they are divine utterances and as such cannot be contained within clearly defined limits.⁸ God, however, commanded me to reveal some of these gnoses to the elite of His slaves and so I set about writing a book about divine unity (*tawhid*) and an explanation of its secrets. Within a short time, I completed it and named it *Jami` al Asrar wa Manba` al-Anwar* (Compendium of Secrets and Source of Lights). I then wrote two more books called *Risalat al-Wujud fi ma`rifat il-Ma`bud* (Treatise on Existences on the Knowledge of the Worshipped One) and *Risalat al-Ma`ad fi ruju` al-`Ibad* (Treatise of Eschatology; on the Return to the Godhead). After these I composed some forty other books and essays in both Persian and Arabic. It was then that Allah commanded me to undertake a commentary of the Qur’an and so, after completion of the above-mentioned essays, I composed a work of seven thick volumes under the title of *Al-muhit al-A`zam wa`l-Tawd al-Asham fi Ta`wil Kitabillahi `l-`Aziz al-Muhkam* (The Mighty Ocean and Lofty Mountain: esoteric exegesis on the clear and precious Book of Allah). With the help of the Lord, it was completed in the best and most perfect manner and in the finest and most eloquent language such that no one surpassed me in this matter, neither in the way it was arranged nor in the way it was edited.’

‘Allah then commanded me to undertake a commentary on the *Fusus al-Hikam* which is a work directly inspired by His Messenger – it was the latter who gave it to Shaykh Muhyi al-Din in a dream saying: “Communicate it to those slaves who are worthy of it and who are ready to receive it”. Thus, I began this work, some thirty years after first

⁸ This is an allusion to the *ayah*: ‘And if you count Allah’s favors, you will not be able to number them’. (14:34)

taking up residence in Najaf, in 781 AH and completed it in 782 AH, a period of one year or less; my age at that time was sixty three years.’

The rest of what happened to him is described in different places of his own commentary; it is thus that he says: ‘After this activity I began service with the great shaykh of perfection, the sultan of the scholars, the Honor of the Truth and the Religion, Abu Mutahhir Hilli. In his company I studied many of the books which contain both the foundation and ramifications of the sciences of the Family of the Prophet. The Shaykh bestowed on me a license in which he addresses me as “Zayn al-`Abidin the Second” – having witnessed something in my behavior which caused him to believe that my station was only second to that of infallibility. He also issued many other licenses for me – both of a general and explicit nature – in all the sciences, one of which I shall now give:

‘The most excellent Sayyid, the great Imam, the worthiest of the scholars of the world and the most knowledgeable of the noble amongst men, the guide to those on the spiritual path, the savior of the souls of the gnostics, the renewer of the faith and the giver of life to the way of his forefathers, the one who combines the sciences of tradition with those of reason, and those of his foundations of jurisprudence with its branches, the possessor of a purified soul and the courtesy of a prophet, the pride of the family of the Prophet, which is the object of the special attention of the Lord of the Worlds, the pillar of the nation, of the truth and of the religion, Haydar ibn Sayyid al-Sa`id Taj al-Din `Ali... (including the rest of his genealogy to the Commander of the Faithful) has read and studied with me in the most scrupulous manner the following books: the Qur’anic commentary, *Jawami` al-Jami`* by the great shaykh and protector of the faith, shaykh Tabrisi, *Shari`ah al-Islam* by the great jurist Shaykh Najm al-Din Muhaqqaq Hilli, *Manahij al-Yaqin* concerning the science of theology (*kalam*) by my father, may Allah have mercy on him, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* (An Education of the Laws) by Shaykh Tayfah Tusi, *Nahj al-Balaghah* by the Commander of the Faithful and *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* by the sage Ibn Maytham. Thus, do I give permission for him to transmit all of these books, just as I give permission for him to transmit all of his own works and writings concerning the sciences based both on the traditions and reason. I also hand over to him all the above-mentioned books which he may use with his own direct chain of transmission from them – in particular the books of my father which he has acquired through me. Moreover, he has permission to transmit the books of Shaykh Mufid (there being thus two paths of transmission from himself to Shaykh Mufid) together with the books of Shaykh Tusi, Sayyid Murtada and all the *ahadith* transmitted from the family of the Prophet (the “Four Books”), all with a complete chain of transmission.’

This detailed license (*ijazah*) was given in Ramadan, 761 AH in Hillah; the Arabic text is in my possession, but for reasons of brevity I have omitted to mention the full chain of transmission, making do with a translation and resumé of the whole.’

After recording this *ijazah* he says: ‘This kind of license given to me with regard to the sciences based on the *ahadith* (traditions) and on reason is well-known only amongst the Arabs.’ In Rajab 753 AH he was given a license to teach *Manazil al-Sa`irin* and

Fusus al-Hikam, together with their commentaries, by `Abd al-Rahman ibn Ahmad al-Muqaddasi; this license is written in much the same manner as that of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin and in it we read: ‘I have benefited from him more than he (Sayyid Amuli) has benefited from me.’

He then mentions a method of *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) from Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani. It is possible that he was instructed by this man himself because he was one of his contemporaries. Sayyid Amuli goes on to say: ‘Some of the *fuqara*’ – the bereft in Allah – have explained their own way of *dhikr*, and the following is quoted: ‘This poor fakir Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani – may God bestow on him the same as those who receive eternal life after the annihilation of this world – was instructed in the way (of *dhikr*) by Shaykh Salih al-Din Abi’l-Khayr Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Muhammad Isfahani and the latter learnt the *dhikr la ilaha illa’llah* on the `Id al-Fitr 703 AH in the *khanqah*’s assembly (Sufi spiritual retreat) of Samisati in the Bayt al-Ahzan quarter near the Friday mosque in Damascus from Shaykh Salih Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Is-farayni Zayn al-`Ibad, the Flag Bearer of the ascetics, the Honor of the virtuous, the one of constant *dhikr* in the morning and the evening. He in turn learnt it from Shaykh Sayf al-Din Abu’l-Mu`ali ibn Mutahhir ibn Sa`id Badarzay and he from the Shaykh and Pole of the Age, Abu’l-Janab Najm al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn `Abdullah Khiyuqi, the same Shaykh Najm al-Din al-Kubra, one of the poles of the “golden” chains of transmission (indeed any “golden” chain of transmission connected to him is known as a “major golden chain”); the latter in turn received it from Shaykh Isma`il Qasri and he from Shaykh Muhammad ibn Mankil who got it from Shaykh Daud ibn Muhammad, known as the Servant of the Poor. The latter received it from `Abbas ibn Idris who got it from Abu’l-Qasim ibn Ramadam, who in turn got it from Abu Ya`qub Tabrisi, from Abu `Abdullah ibn `Uthman, from Abu Ya`qub Nahrjuri, from Abu Ya`qub Susi, from `Abd al-Wahid ibn Zayd, from Kamil ibn Ziyad Nakh`i (may God be content with them all), from the Commander of the Faithful, from the Messenger of Allah, from Gabriel the Guardian of Revelation, from the Lord of Power, may He be exalted.’⁹

⁹ A biography of each of these great shaykhs requires detailed investigation; there does in fact exist ample biographical material, but since it would be difficult to include in this introduction these golden chains of

Sayyid Amuli describes the method of instruction of the *dhikr*: ‘Transmission of the *dhikr* takes on a distinct form and order amongst the people of this science’; a concise description is contained in the detailed *ijazah* of the above-mentioned fakir, namely Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani; in it we see an affirmation of the transmission of the following *hadith* by the Sufi shaykhs: ‘One day `Ali came in to see the Messenger of Allah saying: “Instruct me in the way which leads quickest to Allah and which is the most acceptable to Him and the way which is easiest for His slaves.” He replied: “O `Ali, may you be blessed in that which has come to you by way of prophethood.” `Ali then asked: “And what is that, O Messenger of Allah?” He replied: “*Dhikr* of Allah.” He then said: “If the excellence of *dhikr* is so great, then all the people would make *dhikr* of Allah.” He replied: “Abandon such thoughts – the Day of Resurrection will not take place so long as there is someone on the earth saying ‘Allah Allah.’ He then said: “O `Ali, be silent. I will say this *dhikr* to you three times and you should listen; when I am silent, you should then say it so that I may hear it from you.” Thus it was in this way that the Messenger of Allah instructed `Ali in the way of *dhikr*, who then transmitted it to Hasan al-Basri, to Habib al-`Ajami – to Da`ud al-Ta`i, to Ma`ruf al-Karkhi, to Siri al-Saqti, to Junayd al-Baghdadi, to Mimshad Daynuri, to Ahmad Aswad Daynuri, to Muhammad ibn `Abdillah Bakari Suhrawardi, known as `Awami, to Qadi Wajih al-Din `Umar ibn Muhammad Bakari, to Abu'l-Najib `Abd al-Qahir Suhrawardi, to Shihab al-Din `Umar ibn Muhammad Suhrawardi Bakari, to Mu`in al-Din, one of the companions of the Shaykh of the Shaykhs of the land of Rum (the west of Byzantine), to Ahmad ibn Mas`ud in the town of Konya, one of the shaykhs of my father and forefathers, who then transmitted it to myself, the fakir, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani on the 10 Jumada al-Ula in 731 AH.’

As for the taking on of the patched robe, this has been transmitted from the Commander of the Faithful in various chains of transmission. He goes on to say: ‘The *kharqah* – the patched garment – both among the common and the elite is an expression of the secret of *wilayah* (intimacy with Allah) and the hidden wisdom of *tawhid*. This *wilayah* and wisdom was bestowed by Allah on Adam’ (as we have explained earlier); he

wilayah will be investigated according to the strict methodology of this science (of determining the veracity of the men and chains of transmission) if a suitable opportunity arises, God willing.

continues: ‘As for an investigation into the relationship of the *kharqah* to the Commander of the Faithful and his infallible progeny – both in the outer realm of the manifest and in the inner realm of meaning – then it is as follows: ‘as for what is manifest, I am Rukn al-Din Haydar, the son of Sayyid Taj al-Din...’ and the ancestry here given is the same as that stated earlier. As for the realm of meaning, the account of his own childhood, spiritual development and his donning of the outer *kharqah* has already been mentioned; he himself says: ‘Most of the chains of transmission of the *kharqah* come through Junayd al-Baghdadi, as he was the leader of a community, the Shaykh of a spiritual order and lived soon after the time of the infallible Imams.’¹⁰

He then relates the chain of transmission of the patched robe of the perfected shaykh Sa`d al-Din Hamawi and thereafter the chain of the gnostic and *muhayqiq* (he who has arrived at the station of inner truth) Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, according to the license that he had given to some of his own disciples – a chain which stretches back in three different paths of transmission to the Commander of the Faithful.

He quotes this license given by Shaykh Shihab al-Din to his disciples saying: ‘Know that the way of the Sufis has two aspects: the aspect of company and that of the patched robe. As for the aspect of company, I trace my relationship to my shaykh, Shaykh al-Islam Muhammad ibn Hamawi who himself held company with Khidr. As for the aspect of my *kharqah*, know that Muhammad ibn Hamawi took it on from his grandfather Imam Muhammad ibn Hamawi... from Ibn `Ali Farmadi, from the pole of the age Abu`l-Qasim Gargani, from Ma`ruf al-Karkhi, from `Ali ibn Musa al-Rida and the latter took it on from the Seal of the Prophets (Muhammad).

Shaykh Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, known as Abu Hafs, says: ‘My paternal uncle Shaykh al-Islam Abu`l-Najib Dia` al-Din `Abd al-Qahir `Abdullah ibn Muhammad Suhrawardi invested me with the patched robe and he himself was invested with it by his paternal uncle Wajih al-Din Muhammad, known as `Amawiyya... and he, by two great

¹⁰ The form of my *ijazah* to wear the outward *kharqah* – which I received from Shaykh Nur al-Din Isfahani – was in accordance with the way he himself had received it and under the same conditions imposed by the shaykhs of this realm; indeed, all the shaykhs without exception took it on in this way – right up to the perfect shaykh, Junayd al-Baghdadi, who himself received it from his maternal uncle Sirri al-Saqti, who received it from Ma`ruf al-Karkhi and in turn from `Ali bin Musa.

shaykhs, the first Akhi Faraj al-Din... whose chain of transmission reaches to `Ali ibn Musa al-Rida, and the second by his father Muhammad ibn `Amawiyya from Shaykh Aswad Daynuri... whose chain also reaches to `Ali ibn Musa al-Rida.’¹¹

In the same book *Al-Muhit al-A`zam*, he relates how, besides the chain of transmission of the patched robe of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani, he also took on another *kharqah* from the hand of Shaykh Nur al-Din Tihrani: ‘I (Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr), the shaykh of the shaykhs of Abu`l-Hasan ibn `Umar ibn Abi`l-Hasan, have been invested with the *kharqah* from `Imad al-Din `Umar ibn Abi`l-Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad Hamawi and he held company with his grandfather Imam Muhammad ibn Hamawi (this being an indication that Sayyid Amuli also took on the *kharqah* from the hand of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Simnani).’

In conclusion, he says: ‘My arriving at the Truth and my unveilings were not dependent on the above; my arrival was first and foremost because of God rather than on account of my own spiritual progress. I was a *majdhub* – a person intoxicated by divine attraction – amongst spiritual travelers: I was of the beloved of Him rather than of those who love Him and the former have precedence over the latter – just like the prophets, the saints and their followers in the correct path, for Allah says: “Those who have been recorded with good deeds from Ourselves, they are far removed from the bad”; I had achieved the desired goal through the care and grace of God, not through any action on my part, nor through any knowledge I possessed.’¹²

Up to this point we have described the life of this great gnostic Sayyid Haydar Husayni Amuli, the pole of the gnostic cosmos and the moon in the heaven of glory and

¹¹ The three dots indicate that some of the links in the chains are omitted to avoid repetition. They are delineated in Sufi books; it is possible that they will vary somewhat in who they include or omit.

¹² My opinion was and still is that when the state of profound divine attraction overcomes a person – just as it overcame Ibrahim Adham and Shaykh `Ala` al-Dawlah Simnani and many others like Uways al-Qarani, then the Real transports them to His court where He himself undertakes to bestow perfection and courtesy on them – this has been witnessed to be true in the case of many of the *majdhubs*, who are amongst the great saints of God: people, such as Shaykh Abu`l-Hasan al-Kharaqani, who drew perfection from the spirituality of Bayazid Bastami; indeed, Sayyid Amuli also received perfection directly from the spirituality of the infallible Imams, from the poles of previous ages and from the poles and saints of his time, and in the course of his spiritual path, he crossed the station of the *majdhub* – and Allah knows best the truth of such matters.

sublimity up to the year 782 AH, using his own words of truth and drawing from different places from a variety of his works.

Many of the works of this great gnostic resemble the name of the fabulous Simurgh; nothing remains of them but their titles. From 782 AH onwards we have no information about the life of this sage. We know nothing about when and where he died – except that he wrote a book entitled *Risalah fi'l-'Ulum il-'Aliyya* (A Treatise concerning the Sublime Sciences) in 787 AH, and as Sahib Dhari`ah has noted: ‘In it is mentioned that it was written after the book *Muntakhab al-Ta`wil* (An Anthology of Hermeneutics),’ but other than this we have no other information or indication of any date.

As for the body of gnostic writings he has left us, it is better that I describe them by quoting from his own illuminating words which are the truest and most appropriate record of the matter; indeed, his work is as a burning torch in the darkness of history and a shining lamp in the darkened hearts of the ignorant.

In the introduction of *Nass al-Nusus* (The Text of Texts) he himself says, after the opening section, entitled, ‘The historical circumstances related to the writing of the books’:

1. Realize, O seeker of knowledge, that God painted the eye of the heart with the light of guidance and success after I finished writing *Majma` al-Asrar wa Manba` al-Anwar* (Collection of Secrets and the Source of Lights);¹³ this work contains an explanation of *tawhid* (the unity of Allah) and the hidden truths, which are connected to *tawhid* (general definitions, classifications, states of doubt and ambiguity, subtleties and points of wisdom, secrets and indications), and a description of how *tawhid* may be defined in terms of divine *tawhid* or existential *tawhid*. It also shows how the science of *tawhid* may be divided in another way, namely into the *tawhid* of essence, of attribute and of action, or to express this otherwise, the *tawhid* of knowledge, of experience and of absolute truth; thereafter, follows a clarification of these matters with respect to prophethood, to the message of prophecy and to *wilayah*; in conclusion there is an investigation into the

¹³ This book was printed in 1347 (Persian solar calendar) by the Iran and France Institute.

shari`ah, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* together with an investigation into submission, faith and certainty accompanied by appropriate examples.

2. I then undertook *Risalat al-Wujud Ji Ma`rifat al-Ma`bud* (Treatise on Existence; on the Knowledge of the Deity) concerning the nature of existence – with respect to absolute, accidental and necessary existence, and also with respect to the oneness of existence, the manifest existence and the plurality of existence. In this work, I have proved that He, that is “Existence”, is the necessarily existent by His essence, and that He necessarily cannot be conceived as non-existent; I have also shown that that which is in the outward is not other than Him, for “He is the First and the Last and the Ascendant (overall) and the Knower of hidden things, and He is Cognizant of all things” (57:3).

3. After this, I completed *Risalat al-Ma`ad fi Ruju`i`l-`Ibad* (Treatise of Eschatology, on the Return to the Godhead), together with a study of those matters pertaining to the Last Day and the rising from the grave, according to its three aspects: the minor day of rising, the intermediate day and the major day – and a proof of these according to the twelve risings of the outward and inward within the balanced framework of the cosmos as a whole and within that of the human self.

4. I then finished *Al-Usul wa`l-Arkan fi tahdhibi`l-Ashab wa`l-Ikhwān* (Principles and Pillars, concerning the Reform of the Companions and Brothers). This work describes the five principles of belief, and each belief is examined with regard to the three classifications of *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*, and the five pillars of the religion (prayer, fasting, alms tax, pilgrimage and *jihad*¹⁴).

5. I then completed *Risalat al-`Ilm* (Treatise of Knowledge) which deals with the three groups of men, namely the Sufis, the sages, and the scholastic theologians (*mutakallimun*); in it I describe the different spheres of knowledge of the three groups, including the principles, major subject matters and finer points associated with each.

¹⁴ Striving; *Jihad fi Sabih lillah* (Striving for the sake of Allah, i.e., not for the sake of other-than-Allah, e.g., the ego-self).

6. There, then followed the *Risalat al-`Aql wa'l-Nafs* (Treatise on the Intellect and the Soul) which contains an examination of the difference between the intellect and the soul – with regard to both the particular and the general – together with an investigation into other related matters.

7. ...thereafter, *Al-Amanat al-ilahiyah fi ta`yin al-khilafat al-rabaniyyah* (Divine Trusteeship in Man, determining the Divine Caliphate), which is concerned with the *ayah*: “Surely, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth...” (33:72) and offers an explanation of why the mention of the injustice and ignorance of man is as a form of praise of the highest order on behalf of Allah – in contrast to those shortsighted persons who think that this *ayah* refers to the disgrace and ignominy of man.¹⁵

8. ...*Al-Hujub wa Khulasatu'l-Kutub* (The Veils and Quintessence of Books), containing a study of the *ayah*: “Then thrust him into a chain the length of which is seventy cubits” (69:32), an explanation of the saying of the Prophet, “There are seventy thousand veils of light and darkness before God...”, and a comparison of these two statements. Such a comparison presents considerable difficulties, especially with regard to the whole sum and its parts, with regard to the parallel drawn between the Qur’an and the Prophetic traditions and with regard to the phrases “a thousand years,” “five thousand years” and “three hundred thousand years”; such metaphors are similar to the statement of one of the great shaykhs: “I am two years younger than my Lord”, and that of another: “Between myself and my Lord there is no difference except that I come first in the state of slavery.”

9. ...*Risalat al-Faqr wa Tahqiq al-Fakhr* (Treatise on Poverty and the Fulfilment of Glory) containing a comparison of the three *ahadith* related from the Prophet concerning *faqr* – poverty: “Poverty is my honor and by it I gain distinction over the rest of the prophets and messengers” and “Poverty means blackness of face in the two worlds” and “Poverty brings one almost to a state of unbelief (*kufr*)”¹⁶

¹⁵ This work is wrongly entitled *Risalat al-Amanah* (Treatise of Divine Trusteeship) in some copies.

¹⁶ Sayyid Qutub al-Din Nayrizi, one of the great gnostics and torch bearers during a time of declining Sufism and darkness, says in his book *Fasl al-Kitab* (The Decisive Book, on the subject of the gnostics who believe in the unity of existence). ‘Sayyid Haydar bin `Ali al-Husayni al-Amuli of the country of Tabaristan and Mazandaran possesses boundless excellence and is of the station of unveiling and witnessing; from among his beautiful works there are those entitled *Jami` al-Asrar* (Compendium of Secrets), *Muhit al-A`zam wa'l-Bahr al-Khadam* (The Mighty Ocean and the Great Sea).’ These works

10. ...*Risalat al-Asma'i-Ilahi wa Ta'yin al-Mazahiruha min al-Ashkhas al-Insaniyah* (Treatise on the Divine Names and Identification of their Epiphanies among Human Beings) which deals with the prophets from Adam to Muhammad – may peace be upon them.

11. ...*Risalat al-Nafs fi Ma'rifat al-Rabb* (Treatise of the Soul; on the Knowledge of God) which contains the saying of the Prophet: “Whoever knows himself knows his Lord” and which is composed in the light of the words of Allah: “And He has knowledge of all things.” (57:3) and “And in your own souls (too); will you not then see?” (51:21).

12. ...*Asrar al-Shari`ati wa Anwar al-Haqiqah* (Mysteries of the Law and Lights of the Truth) containing a description of each by the people of each group – just as Allah says: “For every one of you did We appoint a law and a way” (5:48) and just as the Prophet has said: “The law (*shari`ah*) is my speech, the spiritual way (*tairqah*) my work and the truth (*tariqah*) my inner state.”¹⁷

13. ...*Risalat al-Jadawal* (Treatise of the Diagrams) also entitled *Madarij al-Salikin fi Maratib al-`Arifin* (Degrees of the pilgrims, concerning the Ranks of the Gnostics) describing the hundred basic stations of the journeying and the thousand subordinate grades, drawn from a cycle of one hundred divisions each containing ten grades.

which are in my possession are amongst the most precious of books. The commentator of *Fasl al-Kitab* who it appears had seen the *Risalat al-Faqr* (Treatise on Poverty), relates: ‘I have written this book after seeing some of the ignorant believing that there is a contradiction in terms between the way of *faqr* (the state of the fakir on the path to Allah) and the way of the Shi`ah. In it I have demonstrated that any Shi`ah who is not of the people of poverty and spiritual journeying is not of the Shi`ah and every fakir who is not a Shi`ah is not a true fakir nor a *salik* (spiritual traveler), since these two matters are of their nature connected – the way of poverty being the way of the infallible Imams: to profess Shi`ism means that one follows them in their actions and their worship. Thus, anyone who is neither a *faqir* nor a *salik* is in reality beyond the pale of Shi`ism, even though he may call himself a Shi`ah. I have composed the following lines about the people of the outward:

Such people are unaware of both the outward and the inner, and so they go astray by their ignorance and lack of guidance;

They are immersed in worship of other than Him, while to tell the truth,

There is in reality no actor save Allah.’

¹⁷ This book is referred to sometimes as *Asrar al-Shari`ati wa Anwar al-Haqiqah* and sometimes as *Anwar al-Haqiqah wa Asrar al-Shari`ah* in the book *Jami`al Asrar*; according to the text in my possession it is *Anwar al-Haqiqah wa Atwar al-Tariqah wa Asrar al-Shari`ah*; according to the index of the university it is *Asrar al-Shari`ati wa Anwar al-Haqiqah*; in the library of Ma`rashi in Qum it is *Anwar al-Haqiqah wa Asrar al-Shari`ah*.

14. ...*Naqd al-Nuqud fi Ma`rifat al-Wujud* (Final Examination of the Knowledge of Existence) which is a selection from our *Risalat al-Wujud*.¹⁸
15. ...*Muntaqa al-Ma`ad fi Murtada il-`Ibad* (A Quintessential Eschatology of the Chosen One amongst the Slaves), which is a selection from our work *Al-Ma`ad*.
16. ...*Risalat al-Tanbih fil-Tanzih* (Treatise of Advice in the *via negationis*), which, as is clear (by its title), is about Allah – may He be exalted.
17. ...*Amthalat al-Tawhid wa Abniyat al-Tajrid* (Examples of Divine Unity and the Principles of Divestment) after the manner of the book *Lama`at `Iraqi*.¹⁹
18. ...*Risalat al-Kanz al-Kanuz wa Kashf al-Rumuz* (Treatise of the Treasure of Treasures and the Unveiling Symbols).
19. ...*Nihayat al-Tawhid fi Bidayat al-Tajrid* (The Conclusion of Divine Unity in the Beginning of Divestment) which is a selection from *Jami` al-Asrar* and *Manba` al-Anwar*.
20. ...*Ta`yin al-Aqtab wa`l-Awtad* (Identification of the Poles and Supports) containing mention of nineteen persons (seven great prophets and twelve Imams) – no more nor less (neither three hundred nor forty nor seven nor three nor one) since the number is nineteen with regard to the station of realization; I have also composed a further forty or so writings in a similar vein, in both Arabic and Persian.
21. ...after completion of the above mentioned works – during a long period extending over thirty years – I wrote a commentary on the Qur`an entitled *Al-Muhit al-A`zam wal-Tawd al-Ashamm fi Ta`wil Kitab illahi`l-`Aziz al-Muhkam* (The Mighty Ocean and Lofty Mountain; esoteric exegesis of the clear and precious Book of Allah), comprising seven large volumes; I composed it in the manner of the great shaykh Najm al-Din Razi, known as “Dayah”, who wrote a further six volumes of his book after completing the volume

¹⁸ This book, together with *Jami` al-Asrar*, was printed by the Iran and France Institute in 1347 AH (solar dating).

¹⁹ These two books, namely *Risalat al-Tanbih* and *Amthalat al-Tawhid* in addition to *Jami` al-Haq`iq* were written in Persian and the another indicates this at the end of *Jami` al-Asrar*.

called *Bahr al-Haqa'iq wa Manba' al-Daqa'iq* (The Sea of Truths and Source of Subtleties). Our commentary is also written in accordance with the *hadith* of the Prophet, which says “The Qur’an has an outer and an inner aspect: as for the inner there is always another aspect within this – extending to seven inner aspects”; all of the great and well-known figures of spiritual realization and all those intimate with these matters affirm that this work has no equal, in particular with respect to Qur’anic knowledge. Moreover, this work is not a product of any effort on my part, but rather it is the result of the outpourings from the unseen – from the Beneficent Himself.²⁰

22. After completion of all these writings, a group of persons of perspicacity, together with a number of eminent men of Allah, were exceedingly desirous that I write for them a commentary on the *Fusus al-Hikam...* and this work is the same *Nass al-Nusus fi Shark al-Fusus* (The Text of Texts Elucidating the Bezels) mentioned at the beginning of the introduction.’

These are books and essays (*Risa'il*) written by Sayyid Amuli up to 782 AH and which have been described by his own hand in the introduction to the *Nass al-Nusus* – the commentary on the *Fusus al-Hikam* of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din Ibn `Arabi.

He has made no reference to any other essays, but other works written in his graceful hand have been recorded by the bibliographers:

23. *Risalat al-Ta'wilat* (Treatise of Spiritual Hermeneutics), a work of Qur’anic commentary, which is a selection from the book *Al-Bahr al-Khadm* (The Great Sea) and which is also known as *Muntakhab al-Ta'wil* (Extract of Hermeneutics).

24. *Masa'il al-Amuliat* (Amuli Questions), a copy of which, consisting of approximately six pages and written in the hand of the author, exists in the Central University Library of Tehran (under the file no. 1022); in it he says: ‘These treatises are concerned with questions of jurisprudence and take the form of questions, posed by myself (on various occasions), and the corresponding answers in the form of legal opinions (*fatwas*) by the

²⁰ In another volume of this book (No. 301 in the library of Mar’ashi in Qum), he says: ‘I completed this at the end of the month of Shawwal 777 AH in Najaf.’

great Shaykh, the sultan of the scholars of the earth, the honor of the Arab and non-Arab alike, the example and model of realization for the whole or creation, the object of special favor by the Lord of the Worlds, the Imam and eminent scholar, Fakhr al-Haqq wa'l-Millat wa'l-Din, the son of `Allamah Hilli; the first of these interviews took place at the end of the month of Rajab in 759 AH in the town of Hillah; I, the questioner, am the slave and fakir Haydar ibn `Ali ibn Haydar al-`Alawi al-Husayni al-Amuli.' The questions are twelve in number and cover a variety of subjects in the realm of theology and jurisprudence. They, together with the accompanying treatises, are all in Arabic and all are written in the hand of Sayyid Amuli; the replies in the form of *fatwas* are in the hand of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin Hilli; the date of the writing of the *Masa'il* is 761 and the other *risalahs* 762 AH.²¹

²¹ These *risalahs* are written in the hand of Sayyid Amuli, a hand fairer and more beautiful than a ravishing face; the *fatwas* of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin, the teacher of Sayyid Amuli, are to be found in the margins and between the different sections of the work; the following is a list of these thirteen *risalahs*:

1. *Masa'il Amuliat* consisting of twelve questions put to Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin by Sayyid Amuli: (1) concerning the necessity of divine gnosis and concerning the attributes which may or may not be associated with Him; (2) concerning the *mukallaf* (the one on whom some duty is incumbent) who does not have the capacity to carry out that duty, who by his ignorance, is in a state of extreme weakness and, by his foolishness, is in great need of sustenance; (3) concerning the duty of the *mukallaf* and how a portion of it may be more difficult than the rest; (4) concerning the trader who does not pay the *khums* tax on his wealth; (5) and (6) concerning the `Alawi Sadat (those who are descended from the Prophet by the lineage of `Ali) and the way in which *khums* is given to them; (7) and (8) concerning the *khums* of those who are not descended from the Prophet and who are either employees or workers; (9) concerning the love of the *mukallaf* for the Prophet and the Imams and concerning what kind of love it should be – whether it should be the same as that associated with humankind – a love caused by inclination, natural passion or some other kind of love; (10) concerning the request for blessings on the Prophet and whether or not it is obligatory or recommended and whether it is obligatory in the prayer and at other times just recommended; it also concerns the question as to whether it is an absolute obligation and deals with the difference between the asking of blessings on Muhammad and his Family and the asking of blessings merely on His family; it discusses too the difference between *ahl* and *al*, both linguistically and in terms of their application; (11) concerning the saying of *amin* after the *al-Hamd surah* (something which is done by the Sunnis), whether or not the saying of it invalidates the prayer and whether or not this word is part of the Qur'an or not; (12) this particular page is torn and patched up and the *fatwa* of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin is missing.

Within this collection – apart from the *Masa'il Amuliat* there are also twelve other treatises, all written in the hand of Sayyid Amuli:

2. *Masa'il Madaniyat* (Madinan Questions) by `Allamah Hilli; written on the back of this manuscript is the *ijazah* of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin and in the work itself he corrects several points of the *risalah* of his own father.
3. *Risalatu fi Hajj al-Mutamatti' bihi wa Wajibatuhu* (The Treatise of the Hajj al-Tamattu' and its obligations) by Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin.

25. *Risalat al-Fi'l-Ulum al-'Aliyah* (Treatise on the Sublime Sciences), related by the author of *Al-Dhari'ah* and composed and written in 787 AH.²²

As for the other treatise which have been attributed to him in such bibliographies as *'Iyan al-Shi'ah*, *Idah al-Maknun* (The Unveiling of the Hidden), *Majalis al-Mu'minin* (The Gatherings of the Believers), *Mu'ajam al-Mu'alifin* (The Encyclopedia of Authors), *Fuwa'id al-Ridawayah* (The Benefits of al-Rida), *Hadiyat al-'Arifin* (The Guidance of the Gnostics), *Rawdat al-Jinnah* (The Meadow of Paradise), *Al-Dhari'atu* (The Dhari'ah), *Rayhan al-Adab* (The Scent of Courtesy), and others it should be said that it cannot be ascertained for certain whether they are actually his works or not; indeed there is more evidence to indicate the contrary; the following is a list of such works:

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4. *Risalat al-Mi'raj al-Salamah wa Minhaj al-Karamah* (The Treatise of the Ascent to Safety and the Miraculous Way) by 'Ali ibn Sulayman al-Bahrani.
 5. *Kitab Suyun al-Hikmah* (The Book of the Springs of Wisdom) by Fakhr.
 6. *Risalat al-Hudud* (The Treatise on the Legal Parameters and Punishments) by Ibn Sina.
 7. *Masa'il Mutafarriqah* (Miscellaneous Questions).
 8. *Risalat al-Tawhid* (The Treatise on Divine Unity).
 9. *Istalahat Hukama* (The Terminology of the Wise).
 10. *Risalah Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi*.
 11. *Risalat al-'Ilm* (The Treatise on Knowledge).
 12. Questions put by Shaykh Sadr al-Din Qunyawi to Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi.
 13. *Risalat al-Qada' wa'l-Qadr* (The Treatise of the Decree and Predestination) by Hasan Basri.

²² I saw this work – written in the hand of the author – included with the book *Muhit al-'Azam* in the library of Najaf (there is another copy of the same volume in the library of Mar'ashi in Qum). In it, the author says: 'I wrote this brief treatise concerning the sciences of the three groups (the Sufis, the philosophers and the theologians) at the behest of certain respected persons. It consists of an introduction and ten subjects of investigation: the introduction deals with the three types of knowledge, the first an explanation of the knowledge of the people of Allah, the second concerning the way in which revelation and inspiration are transmitted, and the third concerning the nature of unveiling together with the different orders of divine names – the names of action, the names of the attributes and the names of the essence.' This *risalah* is the same *Risalat al-'Ilm* which has already been mentioned above (no. 5) or rather it is a shortened version of it; the year 787 AH, however, does seem rather late; Sayyid Amuli would describe each year of his life in the course of his writings, but from 782 AH, the year in which he completed the commentary on the *Fusus* to 787 AH, there is an inexplicable gap of five years of which we know nothing; with regard to the date of writing of the commentary (in the library of Mar'ashi – written in the graceful hand of the author) the year 777 AH is recorded, and it is possible that this treatise, which is part of another volume of commentary, has been wrongly dated by the writer or has been misread – that is, that the middle number has been inverted: and Allah knows better the truth of all matters.

26. *Rafi`at al-Khilaf`an Wajh Sukut Amir al-Mu`minin`an al-Ikhtilaf* (Justification for the First Imam's attitude to the three first Caliphs).²³
27. *Risalat al-Mu`tamid min al-Manqul fi-ma Awha ila al-Rasul* (Treatise of the Trustworthy Narrations concerning the Revelations to the Messenger).
28. *Risalat al-Zad al-Musafirin* (The Treatise of the Travelers' Provision).
29. *Lubb al-Istilahat al-Sufiyah* (Kernel of Sufi Terms) – which is a selection of the *Istilahat* of Kamal al-Din `Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani.
30. *Kitab al-Kashkul fi-ma jara li'l Ali'l-Rasul* (Album of Events concerning the Family of the Prophet) which has already been mentioned.

If these works had actually been written by him, then he would have mentioned them in the introduction to *Nass al-Nusus* – in particular *al-Kashkul*, which dates from 735 AH. *Nass al-Nusus* was composed in 782 AH; if we examine the rest of the books from this perspective, then it is clear, just as it is clear at first glance to those who are familiar with the style of Sayyid Amuli, which of the works are actually his and which are merely attributed to him: 'Whenever we scrutinize a particular art, it seems that art belongs to a particular person.'

In conclusion we should not forget that *Asrar al-Shari`ah* is twice mentioned by Sayyid Amuli in *Jami` al-Asrar*; as we have seen from above list many of the works of Sayyid Amuli are either shortened versions of his own books or – to use the language of the logicians – they are either complete abridgements or abridgements with regard to one aspect only; thus, the content of one of his books may closely resemble that of another, or the structure of one may reflect that of another. Thus, for example, the important work *Ta`wilat Qur'an al-Karim* (The Hermeneutics of the Noble Qur'an), which I read in the Mar`ashi library in Qum, usually treats the *ayat* according to the same three levels, namely *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*, and the text of *Asrar al-Shari`ah* is almost always perceptible throughout the whole of the commentary. Similarly, the book *Jami` al-Asrar*

²³ Henry Gorbin attributes this work to Haydar Amuli and states that it was written at the request of his teacher Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin. See *La Philosophic sh`ite* (Tehran and Paris, 1969), p. 41

revolves around the three levels of *tawhid* – essence, attribute and action – together with *tawhid* of knowledge, experience and truth, a study of prophethood, prophecy and *wilayah*, a study of *shari`ah*, *tariqah*, and *haqiqah*, and the subjects of submission (*islam*), faith (*iman*) and certainty (*iqan*). The *Risalat al-Ma`ad*, which is about the resurrection of God's slaves, contains amongst other matters the three-tiered aspect of the day of rising – the minor, intermediate and the major – which has already been dealt with in a more comprehensive manner in *Asrar al-Shari`ah*. Similarly, the book *Usul wa'l-Arkan* (Principles and Pillars) is an abridgement of this same book and the abridged text of *Risalat al-Hujub* (The Treatise of the Veils) is to be found in the chapter concerning the Day of Resurrection, just as the subjects of prophecy and the Final Day are dealt with in *Risalat al-Asma'* (Treatise of the Names) in an abridged and different form. *Risalat al-Tanbih* (Treatise of Advice) explains the three levels of divine unity, and *Risalat al-Wujud* (Treatise of Existence) – in particular in the introduction – deals with many of the questions of *tawhid*, albeit in a different manner.

Thus, this precious work contains the subject matter for seven or eight of his main books of research into the divine truths; it contains the finest selection of Sayyid Amuli's ideas, both with regard to the Islamic system of belief and to the acts of worship – drawn from the Possessors of Divine Inspiration, the pillars of divine unity, the store-houses of boundless knowledge, namely the infallible Imams – drawn by way of unveilings and witnessing after long years of divine attraction, spiritual exercises and acts of worship and then set down in this book at the command of Allah as if without any effort on his part.

Shari`ah, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* are different names indicating one truth – namely, the pattern of behavior of Muhammad. Each, however, has its own specific realm of meaning: just as the almond consists of a shell, an outer skin and the kernel, so the shell is as the *shari`ah*, the outer skin the *tariqah* and the kernel the *haqiqah* – the inner core; the almond as a whole embraces all three.

In the *Majallah* (Place of Manifestation) of Ibn Abi Jamhur and *Bahr al-Ma`arif* (Sea of Gnosis), by Mulla `Abd al-Samad Hamdani, prayer is treated as consisting of three

different levels: *khidmah* (service), *qurbah* (a drawing closer through humility) and *wuslah* (union); *khidmah* is thus on a level with *shari`ah* and the physical actions of the prayer, *qurbah* on a level with *tariqah* and the concentration of the heart during prayer, and *wuslah* on a level with *haqiqah* and the core meaning of prayer; all three are also contained in the word prayer. Sayyid Amuli also says in *Jami` al-Asrar*: ‘*Shari`ah* is on a par with the divine message, *tariqah* with the prophecy and *haqiqah* with *wilayah* (intimacy with Allah); all accept these truths: anyone who rejects them or who rejects just one of them is an unbeliever.’

Therefore, do not deny something simply because you cannot understand it. It is by purifying the heart of the impediments and troubles caused by this world, and by deep reflection on the words of these great people that the outward meaning of what they are saying will become comprehensible to you; this is because their speech comes from the world of witnessing and vision, and not from the realm of mere knowledge and explanation; however much one tries to express this state in the language of knowledge and explanation, it is never more than secret compounded upon secret; God himself says: “And they do not assign to Allah the attributes due to Him.” (6:91). Imam Ahmad Ghazali has said: ‘Anyone who has no portion of *tawhid*, then I fear for him that the outcome of his affair will be a bad one – that is his final seal and judgement on death will be as one of the unfortunate’; the minimum portion is that he accepts and submits to the people of realization – who are the saints or friends of Allah. Our Imams have also said: ‘To deny is to cover up the truth: those who speak of the essence, the attributes and the actions of God are speaking only in order to increase our awareness and to encourage us’; in fact nobody really understands the *wali* (the intimate friend of Allah) and the attributes of the *wali* but the *wali* himself: the unripe cannot encompass the ripe so it is better to be brief and say: Peace! The denial of those who deny is merely a physical response to what they hear: their very efforts not to understand such matters are all-powerful and all contentment and submission have been extinguished in them. Since this group live on the level of the senses, they are incapable of understanding anything but tangible things; they are incapable of going beyond this level.

Since the worm is hidden in the apple, it knows nothing but that as its world and heaven.

If they were to step out of the prison of the senses into the world of the heart, they would perceive that:

The heavens are contained in the *wali* whose divine intimacy causes the ordering of this world's heaven.

Most of humankind are in the station of those who are anxious for their sustenance, who are greedy and miserly, and who are caught up in all the material aspects of the world. Imam Baqir has said:

Most men are beasts and four-footed animals...

Open the eye of your heart that you may see the soul and the unseen.

If you enter the realms of divine passion, you will see all horizons as a garden.

Rise above all the people of this world by your intent and look around the heavens.

The heart wants that which you see and that which your heart wants you shall see.

The heart will see its sun in every splitting of the atom.

If you give everything you have with passion, then call me an unbeliever if you ever suffer loss in your desiring.

If the soul burns up with the fire of passion, then you will see passion as the elixir of the soul.

Travel beyond the confines of this life and see the vastness of His kingdom beyond space.

Let your ear listen to what it has not heard and your eyes see what they have not seen, until they lead you to where you see the One of the world and all the worlds.

Express your passion for the One from your heart and soul until you see Reality with the eye of certainty:

There is only One and nothing but Him, He is Alone and there is no god but Him.²⁴

It is for this reason that the teaching shaykhs always warn their students and disciples against denying the people of Allah, saying: The expressions of these people are obscure; it is hard to understand them when they talk about their thoughts and intentions because such matters are far removed from the minds of ordinary people. Shaykh Mahmud Shabistari comments in the following way: 'The saints of this path, both before (Muhammad) and after (him) have given indications of their inner experiences. When

²⁴ This set of verses ending (in the original) with the refrain 'you see' is an indication of divine passion and the witnessing of the Truth – which is the basis of divine gnoses. Such witnessing entails a divine attraction towards oneness by means of the attributes of *tawhid*, then an entering into the different levels of unveiling – in which the heart becomes aware of every molecule – and then a passing into the levels of *fana'* (annihilation) whereby the spiritual traveler gives up everything he possesses to his desire for the divine existence. In doing so, all excess or lack of material wealth ceases to exist since his own illusory existence has disappeared into oneness with God. Thereafter, there is the *baqa'* – in which one abides in Allah; in this state, passion is transformed by alchemy into the elixir of existence and one moves beyond the limits of the world of the senses and the four dimensions.

they became aware of the parameters of the self, they described both the one who acquires knowledge and the source of this knowledge. Since each person's speech is a reflection of their station, the common people find it difficult to understand this variety of experience.'

Shaykh Sa`d al-Din Hamawi said to some of his own disciples: 'Do not be duped by the variety of terms, and do not be negligent of their inner meanings, for on the day when the people are raised from their graves and when that which was hidden in their breasts becomes known, when the great plain of the Last Day encloses all of humankind, out of every thousand persons who are raised up, nine hundred and ninety nine of them will be killed by the sword of those expressions or by the arrow of those indications – blood will be split on the necks of those very people who were careless with regard to the meanings, who pursued the way of rejection and denial and abandoned the edifice of knowledge.'

Allah will forgive the person who desired that his actions be just and who, with the help of his intellect, avoided any dispute because he realized that he had no knowledge in these matters; this is the way of the spiritually advanced (*salihun*) and the sincere of His slaves. He says: "Those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are they whom Allah has guided, and those it is who are the people of understanding." (39:18)...

²⁵

It remains to me to thank those at the Cultural Studies and Research Institute of the Islamic Iranian Academy of Philosophy and all those who, whatever the circumstances have a passion for Islamic texts and who have a profound love for the truths of gnosis – all those who by the music of spirituality awakened my lifeless heart and broken spirit after an extended period away from any research of this nature. I have completed this introduction with the desire that it be of particular interest to the honored scholars and researchers of this institute; I have added to it a list of contents which shows in detail the principles on which each section is based, principles which are as it were the links in the golden chain of this divine religion, and which reflect the progression from *shari`ah*, through *tariqah* to *haqiqah*. I hope that I have managed to portray the beauty, radiance

²⁵ The editor's commentary on the text has been omitted since it largely comprises a selection of passages translated into Persian for the benefit of the Persian reader with a poor knowledge of Arabic.

and splendor of these gnostic truths and subtleties which issue from behind the subtle veils of that garden of profundities, that abode of magnificence and elegance (which is the heart). I desire as reward for my efforts nothing but increase in God's grace and generosity, nothing but illumination by the lights of the Muhammadi realm and nothing but spiritual assistance on the path from Sayyid Haydar `Alawi. It is thus that I present this brief work as a service to Allah whose reward can only be received in the next world.

This introduction was completed in the evening of the first of Muharram 1403 after the *hijrah*; I ask Allah that He bless all those who under took that *hijrah*.

Sing the song of goodness in this echoing dome of the world.

For it shall return your song generously after death.

Muhammad Khajavi (26/7/1362 AH)

Postscript

The burial place of Sayyid Amuli is to be found in the town of Amul, at the lower end of the bazaar in a quarter known as Buqayye Mir Haydar ('Say Tan'); the building contained therein dates from the Seljuk period and the dome resembles that of Baba Rukn al-Din Shirazi, the renowned gnostic who died in 769 AD in Isfahan. On two small doors on either side of the building is written in Arabic: 'Construction of this revered burial ground was undertaken on the instructions of the Pole of the men of spiritual realization and the Proof of the spiritual travelers, Sayyid 'Izz al-Din ibn Sayyid Baha' al-Din Amuli.' Again, I express the hope that God willing, in the future, the illuminated visage of Sayyid Amuli will reveal itself more clearly to us from the dark mirror of history.

I – Ground Work

1. Introduction and the First Aspect

A Study of Theology and the Science of Gnosis

May Allah give me success in completion of this book, by the blessing of Muhammad, his pure family and progeny. Praise belongs to Allah, Who has illuminated the hearts of His slaves by the knowledge of the truth, tasting and witnessing, Who has cooled their eyes with the antimony of His divine grace and love from eternity, Who has brought them to the highest stations of witnessing in the world of pre-existent form and spiritual unveiling, and Who has enabled them to establish proof based on the intellect and clear evidence, based on the traditions by way of the higher levels of the purified soul and the illuminated intellect.

May Allah bless the one who guides to such stations by means of the lights of inner vision and who indicates the path leading to these divine gnoses; may He bless the one who has made clear the meaning of the *shari`ah*, that is the merciful code of behavior incumbent upon every Muslim. May He bless too his progeny, companions and family – the continuation of the lineage of the Prophet; it is in accordance with man's enmity or love of them that the different levels of the Garden and the Fire are apportioned in the hereafter.

Only the slaves of abundant excellence and of penetrating knowledge will be able to arrive at the Divine Presence and to fulfil the exigencies of the subtle diving states; such slaves alone will be able to come close to the Reality of Oneness and will be able to extinguish their own essence in the stations of unity after traversing the names and attributes of the Real by means of the station of oneness and arriving at knowledge of the higher and lower manifestations, together with the manifestations within the self and in the cosmos as a whole. Only these slaves will achieve the level of angelic attributes by their understanding of the most imperceptible of signs along the spiritual path, by their struggle and perseverance in the search for meanings, by their purification and refinement

of behavior and their capacity to free the self from the veil of animal urges. Only these slaves will be able to break the chains of bodily desires and the fetters of material bondage.

None will comprehend the nature of travel on this path but those experienced and knowledgeable in the science of true divinity and the stations of unveiling – that is the stations of the *awliya'* (the saints or intimate friends of Allah), the prophets and the greatest amongst the men of wisdom.

The spiritual gnoses and the rules of behavior embodied in the *shari`ah* have come down to us from the Divine Presence by means of the Muhammadi reality; together, they convey the blessings of the prophetic example and the stations of elevation. It was this important fact which spurred me to write a book expounding the way of perfection, which is the way of those able to unite what is separate by their gnosis and by applying the *shari`ah*. Moreover, I have composed this book with the view to comparing the way of the sincere Sufis and the way of the Imamiyah sect in the light of the divine insights and in accordance with each of the three levels of unity, namely the *shari`ah*, the *tariqah* and *haqiqah* of the Prophet, Mustafa ('the chosen one'). These three levels embrace the totality of the stations of the Muhammadi way; that is, both the inner and the outer stations. They embrace too all the degrees of perfection belonging to the prophets and the saints – who are the caliphs of Allah and the vicegerents of divine Lordship.

In writing this book I have followed the path of the *shari`ah*, the path of specific duties and service made incumbent by Allah on His slaves. I have travelled lightly along this path with the minimum of hindrance and impediment, so much so it may be construed as an omission or negligence on my part. I have travelled thus along the spiritual path on seeing that this age and this country are devoid of men of excellence; I did not take upon myself this great task except after perceiving the absence of men of perfection and the absence of spiritual 'poles' (a group of spiritual guardians, appointed by God and specific in number) and after seeing the door to spiritual travel closed.

If we accept that knowledge is bestowed by Allah on certain of His slaves, then it is not surprising that He may store up this knowledge for certain of the later generations of gnostics. Thus, it may be that understanding of that which was difficult for many of the earlier generations becomes easier for later generations. I feel there is no saying more apt than that of the one who said: ‘So much has been left by earlier generations to their successors. May Allah grant us refuge from envy which closes the door of justice and bars the way to attainment of man’s finer qualities.’ There are no more fitting words than those of Abu l-`Ala al- Mu`arra on the same topic:

By your father’s life, the man of nobility is never attributed with generosity.
As long as the Generous Himself exists in the world;
But if the land becomes barren and the crops wither,
Then one pastures on the dry stubble.

We should note too the famous words of the Commander of the Faithful (`Ali), words which have been related in an unbroken chain of transmission: ‘Even if one does not attain everything, one does not abandon everything,’ and ‘Do not abandon what is easy because of what is difficult.’

Thus, I composed this book and named it, ‘The Light of the Truth, the Stations of the Way and the Mysteries of the Revealed Law’. In doing so I sought from the Good, the Generous, that He grant us success by it and that He grant me success in its composition – success in delineating the spiritual path of right guidance – and that He enable us to avoid any mistakes in the exposition of the various topics under discussion; surely, He is the Most Generous of those Who bestow goodness.

Before embarking on this study, however, I should present an introduction encompassing the numerous benefits awaiting the reader of this book; it is necessary that I provide the key with which to unlock the treasures contained therein for those desirous of such knowledge. Know therefore that this introduction includes an explanation of *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*, together with a clarification of their various degrees according to the intellect, the body of traditions and the states of unveiling. Most of the elite and the common of this time think that *shari`ah* is at variance with *tariqah* and *tariqah* is at variance with *haqiqah*; they imagine that there are real differences between

these various levels and they attribute certain things to each of them which are inappropriate, in particular to the group which affirms the Oneness of Allah, namely the group known as the Sufis. The reason for this is their lack of knowledge of the various spiritual states of each of the three groups and their deficient understanding of their beliefs and principles. Thus, I desired to make clear these different states to those who had misconceptions about them; I desired to reveal to them these spiritual states in a way that would enable them to gain true knowledge of each of the groups, in particular the people of Allah. I wanted to bring them to a realization that *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* are synonyms for one truth, albeit in different terms. By this means I desired that they abandon their conflicts with the people of Allah, including the elite amongst them, and they leave off disputing with the masters of the science of divine unity. I desired that, as a result, they would rid their hearts and souls of the darkness of ill-conduct and corruption and depart from the realm of doubt and misgiving. Thus, my clarification would be a purgative medicine for their petrified minds and their coarse natures: it would cause them to get rid of noxious waste material and corrupting humors, with the result that they would acquire a capacity to listen to words which they had previously been unable to digest, and they would be able to accept the beliefs (of the above-mentioned groups) whenever anyone gave expression to them.

The words of the scholars, for example, confirm the prophetic code of behavior and the divine rules imposed on man. Indeed, each of the three levels, namely prophethood, delivery of the message (*risalah*) and saintship or divine authority (*wilayah*) is a pre-requisite of the other levels and all are interconnected. Thus, *shari`ah* is the pre-requisite of *risalah*, *tariqah* is the pre-requisite of prophethood and *haqiqah* is the pre-requisite of *wilayah*. This is because *risalah* is the term for the transmission of that which was revealed to the Prophet giving his period of prophecy; it is the Prophet's instruction of the people in jurisprudence, politics, social behavior and divine wisdom – and this is precisely the nature of the *shari`ah* as a whole. Prophethood is also the expression of that which manifests during the state of *wilayah*, that is, it is the perception of gnoses which arises from the Essence of the Truth, through His names, attributes, actions and laws. It is an expression of the state of those who take on His attributes and His code of behavior –

and this is precisely the nature of *haqiqah* itself. The totality of this wisdom is dependent upon one person, namely the messenger, or upon one reality and that is the *shari`ah*. This concurs with our earlier statement that the prophetic code of behavior and the divine body of laws imposed on man is one truth which encompasses all three levels and that the different names are synonyms for this one truth.

There are many examples of this in other spheres of investigation: the names *`aql* (intellect), *qalam* (pen) and *nur* (light), all indicate one reality, namely the reality of the Cosmic Man – as in the authoritative traditions which say, ‘The first thing created by Allah was the *`aql*’, and ‘The first thing created by Allah was the Pen’, and ‘The first thing created by Allah was My light.’ Likewise, Allah’s use of the words *fu`ad*, *qalb* and *sadr* all refer to one reality, namely the reality of the lesser man: “The *fu`ad* or heart was not untrue in making him see what he saw”, and “The Faithful Spirit has descended with it, upon your heart (*qalb*)”, and “Have We not expanded for you your breast (*sadr*) and taken off from you your burden”. Thus, there is no dispute between the prophets and the messengers with regard to the basic question of truth and reality, namely the question of the religion of Islam and its pillars or foundations. Allah says: “He has made plain to you of the religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, that you keep to obedience and be not divided therein”, and, “The same did Abraham enjoin on his sons and (so did) Jacob. O my sons! Surely, Allah has chosen for you (this) faith; therefore, die not unless you are *muslims*”, and His words on the tongue of His Prophet: “And (know) that this is My path, the right one, therefore, follow it, and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way; thus, He has enjoined you with that you may guard against (evil)”, and finally His words: “That is the right religion, but most people know it not.” With these words Allah is indicating the right way – the way of Muhammad – whereby man must establish the three pillars of the *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* and fulfil the demands of each, according to the different levels. The fact that “most do not know” is because of their ignorance and blindness.

If one understands that there has never been any dispute amongst the prophets and messengers with regard to the foundations and pillars of Islam, then one should realize

too that if differences do occur in the details and branches of the law, then these differences are of quality or quantity and do not indicate any difference in the essence or reality. Thus, the reality of the *shari`ah* has been the same in all ages and locations; indeed, it is untouched by contention and difference. What variations in law and rule there are arise because of the diversity of situation and time or because of the difference of degree in people's spiritual rank and understanding. Thus, Allah has said: "We make no difference between any of His apostles." On further investigation we realize too that this divergence results from the complexity of the creational order and harmony and as such could not be imagined otherwise. Thus, it has been said that there is no more perfect a creation in the realm of the possible than the creation of this world, since if there were a creation more intricate in workmanship and He were storing it up, then that would imply meanness on His part and a deficiency in His generosity; it would also imply incapacity and a negation of His power. Moreover, if existence were not organized and arranged to this degree of sophistication, then it would not be possible for any of His slaves (that is, all of creation) to attain their own individual reality in accordance with their own individual capacity: it is clear that it would be impossible to channel all the varying capacities into one single path and at one simple level. Allah Himself says: "For every one of you did We appoint a law and a way." Thus, these differences are in accordance with the nature of existence and a state of affairs other than this would not be possible.

The expressions and indications of the Sufis to describe these degrees and levels are difficult to understand; indeed, their profundity of meaning is not intended to be comprehended by all. Thus, the teaching shaykhs strove always to advise and guide their disciples in such matters, saying for example, 'Do not be duped by the diversity of the terms; surely when those in their graves are raised up and what is in their breasts becomes known, when humankind comes before Allah on the Day of Resurrection, then of every thousand so raised up, nine hundred and ninety nine will be killed by the gnostic terms or be slaughtered by the swords of gnostic signs: they will be covered in blood and wounds through their neglect of the meanings and their abandonment of the principles of this matter.'

If this point is understood, then the reader should also realize that the ultimate intention of this study is to explain that all these names refer to one reality, albeit using different terms; thus, there is no fundamental difference between them. Moreover, we must have recourse to the three aspects of *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* in order to demonstrate this fact in more detail. We must explain, first, that these three names are, in fact, aspects of one reality; secondly, that the people of *haqiqah* are greater than the people of *tariqah* and the people of *tariqah* are greater than the people of *shari`ah*, and that between them there exists no essential divergence; and thirdly, that an explanation of the *shari`ah* must be based on the intellect and the intellect on the *shari`ah*. This third section will also contain a study of other related matters.

With regard to the first aspect – to its definition and its reality as a unified whole – then know that the *shari`ah* is the name of the God-given path which lies before man in his life in this world; it encompasses both the principles and the branches of the religion; it encompasses both the duties and prescriptions which admit of a certain degree of choice for man in their method or time of undertaking and also the obligatory duties; it also encompasses all those actions which are most excellent in the eyes of God. As for the *tariqah*, it is the way of maximum prudence, the path of the best and surest action: thus, any path which leads man to the best and surest in speech or action, in the attributes he acquires or the states he experiences, is called *tariqah*. As for *haqiqah*, it is affirmation of the existence of Being, either through unveiling and vision of its substance, or experiencing spiritual states, or affirming the Oneness of God. It has also been said that the meaning of *shari`ah* is that you worship Him, of *tariqah* that you attain His presence, and of *haqiqah* that you witness Him. Furthermore, it has been said that *shari`ah* means that you are maintained in existence by His command, *tariqah*, that you carry out His command, and *haqiqah*, that you exist by and in Him. This meaning is supported by the words of the Prophet who said: ‘The *shari`ah* is my words, *tariqah*, my actions, *haqiqah*, my states, gnosis is my capital, intellect, the basis of my religion, love, my foundation, passion, my mount, fear, my companion, knowledge, my weapon, forbearance, my friend, trust, my cloak, contentment, my treasure, truthfulness, my residence, certainty, my refuge, poverty, my glory – and by it, I attain to an honor above the rest of the

prophets and messengers.’ Likewise, the words of the Prophet (on the occasion when he asked Harith: ‘How are you this morning?’ and the latter answered: ‘I have become a true believer’): ‘For every truth there is a reality, so, what is the reality of your belief?’ He replied: ‘I saw the people of the Garden visiting each other and the people of the Fire howling at each other; I saw plainly the throne of my Lord.’ He then said: ‘You have spoken correctly, so persevere.’ Thus, his true faith in the unseen was his *shari`ah*, his unveiling and consciousness of the Garden, the Fire and the throne was his *haqiqah* and his doing-without in this world and the actions undertaken by him such that he merited this degree were his *tariqah*. Moreover, all three levels are encompassed by the prescribed laws of Islam and are in no way outside of it: we have seen earlier how the Islamic code includes all of them.

It has also been said that the Islamic code is like the almond nut, which consists of the oil, the kernel and the shell: the almond as a whole is the *shari`ah*, the kernel is the *tariqah* and the oil the *haqiqah*. A similar meaning has also been applied to prayer: ‘Surely prayer is service, a coming closer and an arrival;’ the service corresponds to the *shari`ah*, the coming closer to the *tariqah*, and the arrival to the *haqiqah*. Moreover, the word prayer includes all three of these. Allah Himself has referred to these three degrees by the phrases: *`ilm al-yaqin* (the knowledge of certainty), *`ayn al-yaqin* (the vision or experience of certainty) and *haqq al-yaqin* (the truth of reality of certainty) – an explanation of these terms will follow later in this work.

On investigation we realize that *shari`ah* expresses man’s affirmation of the words of the Prophet in the heart and man’s acting in accordance with the laws of Islam; we realize that *tariqah* is the fulfilment and realization of these laws, together with the prophetic pattern of behavior and the putting into practice of this way (or *tariqah*) by the taking on of the appropriate attributes; we realize too that *haqiqah* is the witnessing through unveiling of the states and stations of the prophets – for, as Allah has said: “Certainly, you have in the Apostle of Allah an excellent exemplar.” Attainment of this degree of *haqiqah* is only possible by taking upon oneself the attributes and behavior pattern of the Prophet and by perception of prophetic knowledge through unveiling; indeed, one only attains to this model of behavior through establishing the duties of the Islamic code. This

meaning is also indicated in the words of the Sultan of the Saints and Spiritual Inheritors, the Commander of the Faithful: ‘I am going to attribute what has never been attributed to Islam by anyone before: Islam is submission and submission is affirmation and affirmation is certainty and certainty is constancy and constancy is performance and performance is righteous action. Thus whoever wishes to model himself on his Prophet as is fitting, then he should take on all these qualities and not reject any of those who themselves have taken on these qualities in their behavior because...’²⁶

By its nature, the essential cannot be separated from the essence. Allah’s words: “And they shall continue to differ, except those on whom your Lord has mercy; and for this, did He create them” confirm, this insomuch as differences in the outward arise from differences in the inner realm of meaning, and differences in the meaning arise from differences in the realm of truth and substance. Truth and substance, however, are not established in time by the Creator; thus, what is meant by “He created them” is not that they are coerced in their distinct creational form, but rather, that they are bestowed existence in accordance with their original substance and reality. This bestowal is not an in-time initiation of something on the part of the Creator, for in reality they are non-existent and in annihilation, and that which is non-existent and in annihilation is not a creation of the Creator; rather, it is inherent and inseparable from His knowledge.

A dispute of vast dimensions exists concerning this subject, namely the nature of the beginnings of things and whether or not they are created by the Creator. This question is of utmost importance with regard to the science of *tawhid* (unity); indeed, a proper investigation of the truth of divine unity is not feasible without an understanding of these beginnings. Since the scholars involved in this argument continue to infer and deduce other matters related to this question, and they continue to accuse each other of misinterpretation and deception, we decided to set out in this book the basic conclusions arrived at in this matter by the people of Allah and their elite together with the

²⁶ The text of the copy in my possession as well those copies in the Mar’ashi and Consultative Assembly Libraries were all interrupted here; in the book *Jami`al-Asrar*, however, the text reads: (after ‘because’) ‘the source of all, even if there are differences in the code of rules, according to circumstance and condition, is the one reality, namely the Prophetic *Shari`ah* and the Divine Rule imposed on man.’ In all three copies there is an empty space of half a line. And Allah knows best.

conclusions of the people of the outward and the inward. We desired to undertake this task in order to remain true to the condition imposed upon ourself at the opening of the book, namely that we undertake a comparison between the outer and the inner, for the station of joining between these two is the highest of stations and the ultimate goal. With this in mind we would quote the words of Allah: “And if Allah had pleased, He would have made you (all) a single nation, and they shall continue to differ, except those on whom your Lord has mercy; and for this did He create them.” It should be borne in mind that we are clarifying the meaning of the differences which exist in the realm of realities and substances – the differences existing in the essential realities of people and in their opinions and beliefs. Moreover, it should be noted also that this study has particular recourse to Allah’s words, “And they shall continue to differ.”

At this point a note of introduction is needed: substances and essences are, according to the belief of some, brought into existence by the Creator, while for others this is not so. The first belief belongs to the people of the outward; that is, those scholars who demand that the common people imitate their example in the execution of religious duties. The second is that of the people of Allah, that is the men of gnosis, those who affirm the all-encompassing Oneness of God and certain of the philosophers. As for the first group, they quote the fact that Allah is All-Knowing and Wise and that He does not act except on behalf of what is good and beneficial and in accordance with His knowledge and wisdom; they also quote that: ‘He cannot be questioned concerning what He does and they shall be questioned.’ Thus, in the light of this approach, the differences in the substances and the essences exist in relation to His knowledge and wisdom; likewise, the bringing into being of these substances and essences in the outer realm and their creation in the world of vision and witnessing spring from His knowledge of them from before eternity: thus, the act whereby He brings into being any creational form corresponds to that which is contained in His knowledge. This is referred to in His words: “He does what he wishes” and “Allah orders what he desires.”

At this point, however, we should note that many dispute the validity of this argument; their disagreement lies in the fact that any substance or essence may protest with a voice issuing from a station of spirituality or with the voice of outer learning saying: ‘Why

have You brought me into being in such and such a form?’ or ‘Why did You not create me in that form?’ Thus, the unhappy person – with respect to the happy and fortunate person – will say: ‘Why did You create me in an unhappy state? Why did You not create me in a happy state?’ The same might be said by the ignorant person with respect to the one of knowledge, the poor person with respect to the rich person. They would, in effect, have an argument against Allah – and not Allah against them – although Allah Himself says: “Then Allah’s is the conclusive argument.” Moreover, there is no escape from this accusation and there remains nothing to be done in this state of affairs but to submit and to be content with what has been decreed: one must accept that the matter depends on His knowledge and wisdom and things depend wholly on His will and desire. There is no doubt, however, that this belief is neither reasonable nor acceptable. It is for this reason that He says: “Do not put questions about things which, if declared to you, may trouble you.” In truth, then, their belief is not consonant with the facts.

As for the people of the second group, they say that the realities, the substances and the essences are not brought into being by the Creator – rather, they are part of His knowledge from before eternity. It is not permitted that these knowledges be brought into being because, if these knowledges were ‘created’, then either knowledge of what becomes known would be necessary prior to this within a specific time, or lack of knowledge of these knowledges would be implied – before He brings them into existence. Both ideas, however, are totally fallacious. The only possibility left is that His knowledges are not in-time creations on His part. Moreover, it has been established in the principles of logic that knowledge depends upon or ‘follows’ what is known: thus, the existence of a dependent thing, namely knowledge, without the existence of the thing upon which it depends, namely the thing known, is impossible. Knowledge is not affirmed as a knowledge except if it corresponds to that which is known. If this is not the case, then it is called ignorance – may Allah be exalted above this. Thus, their aim in saying this is to establish that knowledge must be in accordance with what is known, since any knowledge which does not correspond to the known in the realm of the outward is ignorance. Based on this premise, therefore, it is not permitted that His knowledge from before eternity be part of His creation, or be conceived of as having been brought

into being by Him; if this is not the case, then His knowledge cannot be affirmed and imperfection of knowledge is imputed to Him as we have seen above.

The commentator of *Al-Fusus* says: ‘Since pre-material forms and realities are conceived in the realm of imagination, they cannot be described as creational or brought into being; what is imagined does not have existence in the phenomenal world and only something which is created or brought into being can be existent. Likewise, something pictured in the imagination, or the mind’s eye, through one’s knowledge of that thing cannot be described as having been brought into being as long as it is not seen to exist in the phenomenal world; otherwise, impossibilities would also be capable of being brought into visible existence.’

The commentator mentions a still more striking example when he says: ‘Know that the names possess rational forms in the knowledge of Allah – since He is knowledgeable by His very essence of His own Essence, His Names and Attributes. Thus, those rational forms existing in the realm of knowledge are actually the Source and Essence itself, made manifest by their establishment in the realm of specificity; the latter is also called the realm of the pre-existent source-forms, irrespective of whether these forms are of a general or particular nature, according to the terminology of the people of Allah. According to the theorists, however, the general or universal forms are called substances and realities and the particular are called essences. Thus the substances are the universal forms defined through the names residing in the Presence of His knowledge – and as such these forms flow out from the divine source by an outflowing on the level of sanctity and purity; they emanate from the First Manifestation by means of the essential Love and through a seeking of the keys of the unseen whose outward manifestations and perfections are only known to Him.

This divine overflowing may be divided into two types: that is, the overflowing from the greater sanctity and that emanating from the lesser sanctity. From the first arise the pre-material forms and from the second the phenomenal manifestations of the forms with their relative qualities and characteristics. This theory is based on the premise that the doer and the one who receives the actions are one and the same: there is nothing in

existence except Him and His perfections; thus, He is the Doer from one aspect and the One who receives from another – just as the philosophers have said that the intellect, the one who uses that intellect and the notion conceived of by that intellect are in reality one thing, although described in different ways. Likewise, this could be said of love, the lover and the loved one. The Great Shaykh (Ibn `Arabi) has also referred to this in *Al-Fusus* when he says: ‘It is impossible to admit of another equal to Him in respect to the divine laws: all bodies receive the divine spirit by way of Him and by means of His breath; this is nothing other than their gaining the capacity of receiving the constant, never-ending outpouring of divine manifestations while existing in those forms.’ The receiver can only exist by this very outpouring of purity and sanctity. Thus, everything from the beginning to the end is from Him, everything returns to Him just as it began from Him.

With this in mind, it is not permissible to say that the pre-material forms, the substances and the beginnings are created by the Creator – if we suppose that the Creator and the Receiver of the created forms are one and the same and if we suppose that the Doer is His Essence and the Receiver is His Names and Attributes. If we call the first the Absolute Essence and the Reality and the second the dependent existence and creation, if we call the whole a manifestation of His Names, His Attributes and Actions, if we accept that the pre-existent forms, the substances and the realities are images of His pre-eternal primal knowledge, then this Existence would not bring something into being which was dependent and related to His Essence and Perfections – for He has always been the same and how, one may ask, could He become otherwise? Change is not possible, in particular with respect to the Necessary of Existence. Indeed, there is nothing whatsoever which brings itself into being – and this applies equally with respect to His essential Perfections and those particularities associated with His Names. Besides, nothing can be devoid of both aspects: either it is necessary by its essence or possible by its essence. If it is necessary by its essence, then His perfections, His particularities and everything based upon these things come about by the essence: thus, it cannot be that they are ever brought into being, in time. If it is possible, then its substance in the realm of knowledge and its pre-existent form in the realm of rationality are not brought into being in time by Him or

any other; rather, they arise out of the pre-eternal divine knowledge, as has already been established.

As for the possible, it is nothing but the ‘request’ – in the terminology of the people of spiritual stations – for outward existence in accordance with that thing’s capacity, a request which is made to the Real Actor and in accordance with existence in the realm of knowledge. This, then, is the aim of our study. Thus, He says: ‘And He gives you of all you ask Him’ meaning with the tongue of your capacity and receptivity and in accordance with existence in the realm of knowledge, that is uncreated and out of time. If we accept this, then He does not bring anything into being from that Existence, but from the existence in the outward, as we have already made clear; moreover, it is not true to say that anything is ‘brought into being’ except within the sphere of this outward existence. Understand this point well – it will be of great benefit on many occasions on reading this book.

The subject of our study contains secrets of the greatest order with respect to the question of predestination; it is, therefore, necessary at this point that we investigate further into this matter and we shall begin with some appropriate examples, which will increase understanding and clarify the matter. Know then that a simile of the possible pre-existent forms and possible substances within the realm of the Real’s knowledge is that of the pre-form and source-form of the letters in the mind of the writer: their establishment in the mind is not because the writer brought them into being – the writer has only knowledge of their existence and their essences; that is, their existence in the realm of knowledge and their essences and various shapes as mental pictures. It is clear that knowledge itself has no influence over that which is known. Thus, from this aspect, these letters are not brought into being by the writer, although it is true that they are brought into being by the writer when he brings them into outward existence (by the act of writing) in accordance with what is in his mind. This same metaphor may be applied to the Real: if He brings something into outward existence, in accordance with what is in His knowledge from before eternity (and which is obviously prior to the existence of that thing), then it is called ‘created’ or ‘brought into being.’ If, however, it was in His ‘essential’ knowledge from before endless-time and part of His primal knowledge, then it

is not called created or brought into existence. Thus, we arrive at the desired conclusion, namely, His knowledges from before eternity are not brought into being; “And (as for) these examples, We set them forth for people, and none understand them but the learned.”

There is also another example worthy of mention: it is that the pre-material source forms and substances are related to the never-ending perfections hidden in His Essence, which are also known as Attributes and Names. These expressions are similar in their metaphorical nature to the branches, leaves and fruits, which are all ‘perfections’ of the tree itself, which in its state (while in the realm of knowledge) within the essence of the seed is not called by the name tree and is not called ‘an existence’ in the outward. Rather, this knowledge is called the knowledge of the seed together with its essential perfections and its inherent degree of ‘tree-ness’. Likewise, knowledge, with respect to the seed, for example – together with details of its essential perfections in the forms of its leaves, branches, flowers and fruits – is not related to the action of its coming into being. Similarly, knowledge of the Real, together with details of His essential perfections in the form of His names, attributes, actions, manifestations and emanations, does not presuppose its creation in time. Thus, He Himself says: “When He intends anything, He says: ‘Be, so it is’”, meaning that if He wishes to bring something into outer existence from those things existent in the realm of knowledge, then He indicates this by making it manifest in existence after its non-existence, thereby making visible that which was hidden. As He Himself says in the Qur’an, “And His are the most exalted attributes in the heavens and the earth.” His words: “Shall I guide you to the tree of immortality and a kingdom which decays not?” seem to indicate the Absolute Tree of existence, which is the world with all its ramifications, since its branches, leaves and flowers are the dependent existent beings: anyone who witnesses this tree together with its perfections, names and attributes will be in a ‘kingdom which decays not.’ This same meaning is also expressed in the language of the scholars of this science inasmuch as they relate existence in the realm of knowledge to the pre-material source forms and existence in the outward realm to the various manifest creations. Moreover, they relate the first to the first emanation of the Essence and the second to the second emanation of the Attributes. They

affirm that the first emanation is the essential emanation, that is the emanation of the Essence alone within its own essence – and this is the presence of Oneness – there being no attribute or form within this realm, since the Essence (which is the Absolute Existence of the Real) is pure Oneness. Any existence other than this is nothing but absolute non-existence, namely, pure nothingness. Thus, the Essence in its oneness is in no need of singularity or specificity to distinguish it from another essence nor has it any need to distinguish itself from anything else at all. Indeed, its unity is its essence and this unity is the source of its singularity and uniqueness. It is essence by itself and of itself, and thereby I mean, that it is not dependent on anything; the Absolute encompasses its own being, there being no thing co-existent with it: this is in effect complete singularity. The realities in the essence of singularity are as the tree within the seed, hidden within the hidden. The second emanation makes manifest the pre-existent source forms which are the very workings of the Essence; this is His reception of form in the world of creation. The Real descends by means of this emanation from the Presence of Singularity to the Presence of Uniqueness through His relationship to the Names. It should be noted that this notion is in complete accord with the direction of our discourse above.

The aim of using quotations and supporting examples from the works of the distinguished saints of Allah is twofold: the first is to reassure the heart of the reader and to aid him in removing doubt; the second is to repulse the sayings of the ignorant and those who reject the people of Allah, as far as we are able. If this objective is not met, then there are many other studies one may refer to; it is not fitting, however, that we reproduce them here.

The aim of this introduction is to comment upon the meaning of Allah's words: "And they shall continue to differ." Given that this is understood and accepted as a principle, then we must also realize that these words are an indication of the essential differences in the realm of inner meaning with respect to the source-forms within the Presence of the Unseen and with respect to those of His knowledge. They are at the same time an indication of the differences in outward form which correspond to those differences in the Presence of the Unseen and the Sphere of Witnessing. Moreover, the meaning of these words presupposes that the source-forms and related substances are pre-eternal and not

created. As for His words: “Except those on whom your Lord has mercy,” they refer to those known by your Lord to be people of guidance and kindness who have remained faithful to their own harmonious being and to their finer, subtler creational form. It refers then to the people who keep away from the people of argument, misguidance and perversion and take no part in their disputes. In truth, the whole of the matter rests on the exigencies of the essence of the being in question. Allah has, in His own way, knowledge of what is to be in the future. But as we have seen knowledge itself has no influence in the matter. His words, “And for this did He create them”, means in fact ‘for, by reason of these differences, did He create them’ – they are as diverse in image, shape, opinion and belief as they were in their essence, substance and primal reality. He gives them outer existence in accordance with their existence in the realm of knowledge such that His knowledge does not contradict His action and His hidden unseen aspect does not contradict His witnessing. Moreover, there is no one who objects, saying, ‘Why did you create me in such and such a manner?’ This state of affairs is as it is because the Actor does not give existence to the receiving creational forms except in accordance with their true natures. This existence is ‘sought’ by means of the speech of spirituality from the Actor. This same meaning has already been referred to with the metaphor of the writer, the writing and the letters (and their existence both in the mind and the concrete world).

These source-forms and substances are non-existent in the phenomenal world, but they exist in the realm of knowledge and are constantly seeking outer existence by the tongue of spirituality and their own capacity. The Actor, for His part, requires from His Essence a constant outpouring of existence, by means of the substances and source-forms. He is the One of Absolute Generosity and so the constant Outpourer of Good, be it in the realm of existence, of attribute, of knowledge, of speech or action. Thus, if one of the source forms demands of Allah, the true Actor, by the language of spirituality that it be given outward existence, then the Real has no option but to bestow on it that required existence in accordance with the capacity and receptivity of that particular source form. The Absolute Actor does not, therefore, govern the receiving form in an absolute manner but rather in accordance with the aspect of that receiving form. There is a similar relationship between the One of absolute Generosity and the creational form which requests existence

from Him in that He can only bestow the most complete and perfect form on the created being; I mean by this that He bestows existence on it to the full extent of its capacity without any withholding on His part – for withholding would imply meanness, which is an impossibility with regard to His Presence, may He be exalted above such a notion. He bestows on them outward existence exactly in accordance with their capacity – no more and no less. If He were to bestow something which was above their capacity, they would not be able to accept it and so this bestowal would be futile – and such futility is impossible with respect to Allah. Likewise, if He were to bestow less than their capacity, then they would also not be able to accept it and the bestowal would again be in vain. Thus, there can never be any objection on the part of any of the existent beings – no matter what the circumstances. No being could say: ‘Why did You create me in such and such a manner,’ because it knows in truth that such an objection would be unjustified; it knows that its existence is in accord with the source-form and the reality and that Allah has decided by its very nature that it be created in such and such a way. Likewise, as we have seen in the example of the letters, neither the ‘a’ or the ‘b’ or any other letter would demand of the writer that they be set down otherwise.

This notion is supported by Ibn al-‘Arabi when he says: ‘He does not rule over us except by us, nay, rather we rule over ourselves, albeit in Him.’ It is for this reason that He has said: “Then Allah’s is the conclusive argument”, that is, against those who are veiled when they say to the Real: ‘Why did You do such and such a thing to us?’ When something does not accord with their aims and the matter becomes difficult for them. As for the gnostics, the matter is clear for them. Moreover, the veiled think that the Real has not acted in the way they asked Him to act; this notion is of their making, however, and they only know as much as their particular creational form permits them to know, thus their argument is untenable and the conclusive argument which is Allah’s remains. The famous saying of the Arabs is particularly relevant here: ‘Your arms are for leaning on and your mouth is for speech.’

Thus, any existence which manifests, be it in the realm of action, speech perfection or imperfection, be it beautiful or ugly, is dependent upon the source-form in accordance with the essence. Thus, it is not directly dependent on Allah nor on other than Allah –

although it does depend on Allah with respect to His bestowal of what was asked of Him; by this I mean that the existence of that thing is from Allah, and by virtue of that ‘request’, made to Him. This is referred to when He says; “Everyone acts according to his manner,” and also in the words of the Prophet, ‘Everything lives and develops in accordance with what it has been created for.’ These two statements are supported by the words of David: “I said to my Lord: ‘O Lord, for what have You created the creation?’ He replied, ‘For that which they have been created,’” meaning, for that particular capacity or receptivity, that perfection or imperfection inherent in their creation. Again, Allah’s words are sufficient in this matter, “And for this did He create them,” since this statement is the complete answer for the gnostic.

We have seen that the term ‘creation’ means the bringing into being of something: What is indicated, as we have seen on many previous occasions, is that Allah brings them into being in accordance with their source-form in the world of essences and substances; if there are any differences in the essences, then there are also differences in the attributes; if there are differences in the essences and attributes, then there are no likenesses or similarities between them in the totality of the states. Thus, he who has said that ‘There does not exist any resemblance between things at all except by the Necessary of Existence’ has spoken the truth and in accordance with what he has actually witnessed.

It has been established as a principle by the scholars of the science of unity that the divine manifestations are not repeated and that the Real never manifests twice in the same way, neither in the realm of form or meaning – so it has been from before eternity and so it will be to eternity. He is the One who continues from pre-endless-time and He is the One who is in constant annihilation. If we now consider the basic premise that there is none but Him in existence, and nothing but His Names and Attributes, and that All is Him, by Him, from Him and to Him, then we realize that His perfections are never-ending and yet without repetition. Indeed, all existence is a never-ending manifestation of His perfections. We realize that resemblance and equality with regard to all aspects of a thing are not possible under any circumstances; we realize, too, the meaning of His words, “And they continue to differ” and the hidden meaning indicated in “and for this did he create them.” And Allah is more knowing and of acuter judgement in all matters.

The following saying of the Prophet is also relevant: ‘Whoever finds good, then let him praise Allah, and whoever finds other than this, then let him blame no one but himself;’ so also are the words of Imam `Ali ibn Musa al-Rida: ‘Generosity on the part of the creature is to carry out what is incumbent; generosity on the part the Creator is in both His giving and His withholding;’ this is a subtle statement containing secrets of great value, secrets which may only be understood by the elite, for these secrets issue from the secrets of destiny, the divulgence of which is forbidden to other than those who are worthy of them. This idea is contained in the words of Allah when He says: “Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners.” It is as if Allah is referring to this when He says: “I have prepared for the righteous of my slaves something that the eye has never beheld, what the ear has never heard and what the heart of man has never perceived.” This ‘something’ is a special secret of the elite of the friends of Allah and the great prophets. We have dwelt long on this question because it is one of the most important in the science of divine unity; it is a principle containing precious jewels and costly pearls of wisdom which may only be gained by those who are purified from the pollution of greed and craving and from anything which prevents them from attaining the stations of divine unity. May Allah sanctify their purified souls and bestow on them the divine illumination; may Allah grant us the light which is reflected from their perfections and emanations, after seeking help from Him for He is the Generous, the Noble.

If the reader has understood the ideas, we have expounded to him – ideas which merit being written with a pen of light on the cheeks of the maidens of Paradise, or being placed as amulets around the neck so that they may live through the ages – if he has imprinted them on his mind with the inward eye, if he has placed them in the store chests of his memory and perceiving intellect, then we shall now return to our original topic. Know then that all the different levels of humankind, both the common and the elite and the elite of the elite are three in number; by these I mean the beginning, the intermediate and the end. Even if these levels do not contain individual characteristics and details, they encompass with respect to type and universal groups. Thus, the *shari`ah* is the name of the Divine Code and the prophetic pattern of behavior, and is also the beginning; the *tariqah* by its name and meaning indicates the intermediate stage; and the *haqiqah* by its

name and meaning indicates the final stage. No level falls outside these three. Moreover, the first, the *shari`ah*, encompasses them all (as we have already discussed above); this is because it encompasses the first level, namely that of the common people, the second, that is that of the elite, and the third, the elite of the elite. The Muslims as a body – who by their acceptance of Islam take upon themselves the duties of the religion – together with the people of intellect are not outside these three levels; the levels embrace the whole and are subject to the demands of the whole – in that each level possesses laws distinct unto itself. Thus, it is not permitted to deny the validity of any of these levels, nor to reproach any of the people (who follow them). The model of prophetic behavior, Muhammad, can only be followed to perfection when these three levels are respected.

Allah speaks about the differences of capacity and receptivity within creation when He says: “For every one of you did We appoint a law and a way, and if Allah had pleased, He would have made you (all) a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you; therefore, strive with one another to hasten to virtuous deeds; to Allah is your return, of all (of you), so He will let you know that in which you differed.” By Allah, if this were the only *ayah* in the Qur’an, it would be sufficient proof of what we are saying, without even considering the fact that a third of the Qur’an is laden with such examples and without having recourse to the body of authentic traditions related from the Prophet. If we investigate further, we realize that submission, faith and certainty are the prerequisites of these three levels – and also an inherent part of these three levels. The same could be said for the three states of revelation, inspiration and unveiling, for prophethood, message and *wilayah* (spiritual guardianship), for knowledge of certainty, experience of certainty and reality of certainty, and finally, for the triad of words, actions and states – all of which exist according to the three states of *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*. All existence is contained in these levels, the three-tiered division being necessary, given the multiplicity of creational and metaphysical realities. We see this in the three levels of knowledge, the knower and the known – that is the three-tiered division of manifest individuality, the Presence of Singularity and the Divine Uniqueness with respect to the worlds of the unseen. We see also the three divisions of knowledge, command and will with respect to the created worlds and their corresponding forms of receptivity, namely,

the known, the commanded and the object of one's will. Further, we witness the existence of the *mulk* (the kingdom), the *malakut* (the realm of angelic forms) and the *jabarut* (the realm of His Absolute Dominion), and then the world of the intelligences, the souls and the senses. There exists too the three-tiered level of the Muhammadi aspect – referred to when he says: ‘There are three things which are dear to me in this world of yours: perfume, women and the coolness of the eye which comes from prayer,’ and everything else in creation accords with these classifications.

Thus, it is not permitted to deny the sayings of the prophets, nor those who speak or deliver the prophetic message, particularly with respect to the people of *shari`ah* and the people of beginnings. Moreover, it is not permitted to deny the actions of the prophets, nor those who take upon themselves the prophetic attributes and act accordingly, particularly with respect to the people of *tariqah* and the people of the middle or intermediate path. Finally, it is not permitted to deny the states of *haqiqah*, nor to reject those who have taken on the corresponding qualities of this level together with those of the ending or final level.

In short, it is not permitted to reject any of the people of the *shar`iah*, *tariqah* or *haqiqah*. The Prophet's words, ‘I have been given all the names and have been sent to perfect good behavior,’ is an indication of just what we have been indicating: creational realities are not such that they may be completely contained in any one level or station; rather, they are as diverse as their capacities and receptivities, and each must be given its rightful place in accordance with this capacity and receptivity. Thus, it is that we are commanded to talk to the people in accordance with the capacity of their intellects.

You may say that according to the above argument, it is claimed that each group, with its own particular way of worship, its opinions and beliefs, is correct, but by the nature of things, each and every one cannot be right. I would say, in reply, that whoever is living according to the *shari`ah*, the *tariqah* and *haqiqah* (as defined above) and who carries out what is demanded of him in accordance with the respective levels of each, then he has the truth, is on the straight path and his religion is correct. Allah's words: “That is the right religion, but most people do not know,” are another indication of this same meaning.

Anyone who is not as we have described is astray, in error and a rejector of the truth. It is obligatory to avoid such people and this is a rule of behavior which is always observed amongst the people of spiritual realization; indeed, all the principles and branches of the religion are founded on this rule. Allah indicates this when he addresses the Prophet: “Say, ‘This is my way; I invite to Allah with insight, I and those who follow me.’” The words of those who have described the shaykhs of instruction also testify to this fact: ‘The shaykh is the man of perfection with regard to the sciences of *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*; they have reached the limits of perfection in each by their knowledge of the diseases of the self and the corresponding cures – provided of course the self is willing to accept this cure in the form of spiritual guidance.’

A similar division may be seen in the description of the levels of knowledge of the knower, namely in terms of the husk, the shell and the kernel. Each indicates a level of knowledge, together with a corresponding awareness of the demands and claims of each level. Thus, it has been said that the husk refers to any outward knowledge which protects the inner knowledge, namely the kernel, from harm: the *shari`ah*, therefore, stands in a similar relation to the *tariqah* as the *tariqah* to the *haqiqah*. Whoever does not protect his spiritual state and path by the *shari`ah* will destroy that state and cause harm to his path, whether by desire, folly or Satanic whisperings. Whoever does not attain the *haqiqah* by means of the *tariqah* and does not protect the former by the latter will cause harm to his *haqiqah* and resort to heresy and disbelief. The shell is the intellect which is illuminated by the light of sanctity and purified of the obscurities caused by fantasy and imagination. The kernel is the very stuff of divine and sacred light from which the intellect seeks help in order to rid itself of the above-mentioned obscurities; thus, the heart which is attached to this world, shut off from understanding and veiled by official learning, is not able to comprehend the higher sciences by virtue of the good which has been pre-determined for him by Allah: “Surely (as for) those for whom the good has already gone forth from Us, they shall be kept far off from it.”

Know too that the laws of the *shari`ah* constitute the divine code and social order: it is incumbent on the prophets and the friends of Allah to establish this order together with its ‘pillars’ and to command the Muslim nation to respect and fulfil its demands. By this I

mean that they are not permitted to omit any of the three levels, for this would imply an omission or deficiency with respect to their obligations, and this is impossible given that they are prophets, and as such, are protected from any wrong or hateful action; indeed, nothing of this nature may happen at their hands. That they have always respected these three levels is clear from their various *shara`i`* (divinely-inspired codes of behavior) and ways of worship which have been given to all the prophets from Adam to Muhammad. Again, we refer here to the (above-mentioned) words of our Prophet: ‘*Shari`ah* is my words, *tariqah* my actions and *haqiqah* my states.’ The meaning of these words is also reinforced by the instructions given by Abraham to his people in the *surah*, ‘The Cattle’, which features the story of the star, the moon and the sun. The first instruction is for the guidance of the common people, the second for the elite and the third of the elite of the elite – in line with the three distinctions of *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*.

The first symbolizes the light of goodness which belongs to the people of *shari`ah*, the people of the outward and the common people in their search for the truth and in their going beyond. This is so because the star of this world is like the light of goodness in human beings. The second symbolizes the light of the intellect and those of this station who are searching for the truth and the journeying beyond are the people of *tariqah*, the people of the inward and the elite. This is because the moon in this world is like the light of the intellect in human beings. The third symbolizes the light of sanctity, known as the light of Reality, and those who are seeking the Real and the journey beyond are the people of *haqiqah*, the people of the inward of the inward and the elite of the elite. This is because the light of the sun in this world is like the light of sanctity in man – in accordance with the words of Allah: “What! Is he whose heart Allah has opened for Islam so that he is in a light from his Lord (like the hard-hearted)?” Thereafter, there must follow a going beyond: by this I mean a going beyond the light of the Real. This is because the one who sees, the seen and the connecting light between them are three distinct things which would mean multiplicity. Vision and witnessing in the realm of divine unity does not admit of this; rather, there must be a crossing beyond to a point where unity is attained. This point is reached by the annihilation of the knower in the known and the witnesser in the witnessed.

As for the opinion of some commentators, namely that Abraham was at the time a small child and was not able to distinguish between the star, the moon, the sun and his Lord, then it is a total falsehood, indeed a complete heresy – may the stations of the prophets and Friends of Allah be exalted above such words. This is so because the prophets and Friends of Allah are infallible and their infallibility necessarily extends throughout their whole life, from childhood to old age – with regard to their words, actions, states, religion, beliefs and all other aspects of their character whether visible or hidden. No heinous act whatsoever could possibly issue from their hand, neither from an unintentional mistake, human error or conscious oversight. Moreover, the opinion of others – chiefly the rationalist scholars – that Abraham was then at the beginning of his path and at the outset of his intellectual and gnostic awareness is also incorrect. This, we know because this incident happened during the period of his prophecy when he was calling his people to Islam; it was thus during the period of his perfection, with respect to his intellect, his gnosis and his perspicacity. How, may one ask, can such opinions be expressed when prophecy, messenger-ship and the associated knowledges are not things which are acquired and are not theoretical in nature; rather, they are outright gifts from God, pure acts of giving without cause or reason, on the part of the Lord, and not acquired through any action on their part. This is indicated when Allah talks about our Prophet, saying, “He has taught you what you did not know, and Allah’s grace on you is very great,” or when He says to Solomon, “This is Our free gift; therefore, give freely or withhold, without reckoning,” or when Jesus says, “Surely, I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet; and He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and the poor-rate so long as I live,” or when He addresses John the Baptist, “O Yahya! Take hold of the Book with strength, and We granted him wisdom while yet a child.” Let these examples suffice as an indication of our meaning, although there are numerous other examples in the Qur’an.

Know too that the laws of the *shari`ah* constitute the divine code and social order: it is incumbent on the prophets and the friends of Allah to establish this order together with its ‘pillars’ and to command the Muslim nation to respect and fulfil its demands. By this, I mean that they are not permitted to omit any of the three levels, for this would imply an

omission or deficiency with respect to their obligations, and this is impossible given that they are prophets, and as such, are protected from any wrong or hateful action; indeed, nothing of this nature may happen at their hands. That they have always respected these three levels is clear from their various *shara'i`* (divinely-inspired codes of behavior) and ways of worship which have been given to all the prophets from Adam to Muhammad. Again, we refer here to the (above-mentioned) words of our Prophet: '*Shari`ah* is my words, *tariqah* my actions and *haqiqah* my states.' The meaning of these words is also reinforced by the instructions given by Abraham to his people in the *surah*, 'The Cattle', which features the story of the star, the moon and the sun. The first instruction is for the guidance of the common people, the second for the elite and the third of the elite of the elite – in line with the three distinctions of *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*.

As for the words which testify that the incident involving Abraham took place during the period of his prophethood and his calling of the people to Islam, then the following *ayah* is one of several where this is mentioned in the Qur'an: "And the people disputed with him. He said: 'Do you dispute with me respecting Allah? And He has guided me indeed; and I do not fear in any way those that you set up with Him, unless my Lord pleases; my Lord comprehends all things in His knowledge; will you not then take heed?' And this was Our argument which we gave to Abraham against his people; We exalt in dignity whom We please; surely your Lord is Wise Knowing." May Allah's witnessing be enough for us. If this had not been during the time of his prophecy and calling, Allah would not have said: "And the people disputed with him." It should be remembered that some of his people were worshipping and prostrating to the stars, while others worshipped and prostrated to the moon, and yet a third group worshipped and prostrated to the sun and other idols. Abraham would guide them according to the laws of the *shari`ah* together with teachings about the Oneness of Allah, the Creator and Originator of all existence; he would also instruct them in the science of the inward and in the witnessing of the Oneness in all existence, in witnessing the One who brings all into existence and the manifestation of Him as the Unique God. This, we may see from his words: "Surely I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him, Who originated the heavens and the earth and I am not one of the polytheists." He also asks, "Is this my

Lord?” on three different occasions – not as a genuine inquiry, but rather as a question whose reply is implied to be negative. Thus, the complete utterance might be: ‘Is it possible that this created and phenomenal event, namely the manifestation of the setting of the star, the moon and the sun be my Lord and the Lord of all things? No, by Allah, it is not possible: it is neither my Lord nor the Lord of all things; rather, it is a created thing fashioned by Allah’; or he might say: ‘Is it by the light of this created and phenomenal thing, by this light which is the light of goodness, the light of the intellect or the light of sanctity or the combination of these that I know my Lord? Is it possible to gain knowledge of Him by means of these three lights? No, by Allah, it is not possible: rather, it is only possible by crossing beyond them and ascending above their levels.’ Arrival at true knowledge of Him and direct witnessing of His essence is only possible by Him and by His light of Reality. This is referred to in the words of the Prophet when he says: ‘I have known my Lord by my Lord.’ One of the gnostics of his people has also said, ‘By God one cannot arrive at Him except by Him.’ Every gnostic knows that it is only possible to see the orb of the sun and its rays by the very light of the sun.

The people of *shari`ah* who seek gnosis of the Real by way of the light of goodness are like the person who seeks to see the orb of the sun in the darkness of the night by the light of the stars; as is obvious, he will never be able to catch sight of it. The people of *tariqah* who seek gnosis of the Real by way of the light of the intellect are like the person who seeks the orb of the sun in the darkness of the night by the light of the moon; as is clear, he will never catch sight of it. The people of *haqiqah* who seek gnosis of the Real by means of the light of sanctity are like the person who actually sees the sun: it is clear that he can see it, although his seeing is that of the witnesser and the witnessed, not the seeing of pure divine unity. The subtlety of meaning expressed here is that just as anyone who sees the light of the sun by means of the light of the sun is only able to arrive at a witnessing of the sun after establishing a connection based on purity, light and perfect nobility between himself and it, so too the person who sees the Real is only able to arrive at this witnessing after establishing a connection based on the liberation of the self from other than Him, by means of contentment and affirmation of His absolute sanctity and exaltedness above creation. Such a connection means the taking on of His characteristics,

as is demonstrated by the words of the Prophet when he said, ‘Make your character the character of Allah,’ and by Allah’s words in a sacred *hadith* (spoken directly by Allah, albeit on the tongue of the Prophet and in the latter’s words): ‘I was his hearing, his sight, his tongue, his hand and his foot.’ It is for this reason that the gnostic has said: ‘It is not everyone who sets out who arrives, and not everyone who arrives attains, and not everyone who attains attains, and not everyone who attains separates, and not everyone who separates arrives, and not everyone who arrives arrives.’

The Commander of the Faithful (‘Ali) explains the relationship (between Allah and His slave) in the following way: ‘Allah possesses a drink which is reserved for His intimate friends (*awliya*): when they drink, they become intoxicated, when they become intoxicated, they become joyful, when they become joyful, they become sweet, when they become sweet, they begin to melt, when they begin to melt, they become free, when they become free, they seek, when they seek, they find, when they find, they arrive, when they arrive, they join, and when they join, there is no difference between them and their Beloved.’

Allah describes the lack of any distance or separation in His relationship with the Prophet when He says, “And you did not smite when you smote (the enemy), but it was Allah Who smote.” The Prophet has also said, ‘Whoever sees me has seen the Truth.’ Others have said, ‘Praise be to me, how great is my affair!’ and ‘I am the Truth’ and other similar expressions. This station is called the station of annihilation in unity. By this I mean the station of annihilation of the knower in the known, the lover in the beloved and the witnesser in the witnessed – by way of the disappearance of phenomenal duality and the removal of egotism which is the obstacle to arrival at Him. The following verse also refers to this:

Between myself and You is individual existence following from me.
So, by Your grace, remove this individuality from between us.

The prophets, messengers, intimate friends and gnostics have all reached a point of annihilation in Him and then a continuing in Him; thus, their contact with the ordinary world still exists despite the fact that they were spiritually annihilated in Him. It is

necessary to understand this point well, for the annihilation of the Prophet in Allah did not prevent him from eating, drinking or getting married. His words, ‘I have moments with Allah which include no one, not even His most intimate of angels, nor messengers, but myself’, are an indication of this state of annihilation. Moreover, his words, ‘I am a man like the rest of you’, is an indication of the station of continuing in the world. Allah’s words, “And as for these examples, We set them forth for people, and none understands them but the learned”, and ‘Everything is perishable but He; His is the judgement, and to Him you shall be brought back”, and “Everyone on it must pass away. And there, will endure forever the person of your Lord, the Lord of Glory and honor’, are all further indications of the same meaning.

If the meaning of the annihilation of the slave in his Lord is still unclear, then we would describe it metaphorically as the disappearance of the light of the stars in the light of the sun when the latter rises on the horizon, or as the constant breaking and disappearance of the waves in the sea. This idea has also been expressed in the following verse:

The sea is the same sea as it has been of old;
The events of today are its waves and its rivers.

Thus. it has been said that the one who continues (after annihilation) into eternity and the one who is annihilated is in a state of annihilation which has not yet finished. Knowledge of certainty, experience of certainty, and truth of certainty are terms which describe the three gnoses. The truth of certainty is particular to the station of annihilation and the disappearance of the slave’s features in his Lord (as the quotation above indicates). Indeed, the establishing of the station of truth is in the disappearance of these individual features; if a person does attain to this kind of annihilation, then he annihilates his existence in the existence of the Truth, his essence in His Essence and his attributes in His Attributes; if he obliterates his form, then his name falls away from him like the disappearance of the light of the stars in the light of the sun. If he witnesses the truth, by the very Truth itself, in the manifestations of its perfections and attributes, he realizes the meaning of “Everything is perishing but Him.” If he understands the secret of His words, “Therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah’s purpose,” if he understands why the

gnostic said, ‘When poverty is perfected, then that is Allah’, and why he said, ‘Glory to myself, how great is my affair!’ and why he said, ‘Who is there like myself and is there anyone but I in the two worlds?’ and Allah’s words, “Our Lord! Make perfect for us our light, and grant us protection, surely, Thou hast power over all things” – if he comprehends all this, then it is as a guidance which will enable him to see this light that annihilates the darkness of his own existence and brings him to his Lord by a link of spirituality, illumination and purity, by stripping away other-than-Him and liberating him from dependency on the world of form. It is for this reason that Allah says in reply to them, “It shall be said: Turn back and seek a light.” This means: ‘Return back to the original state of non-existence and to the necessary annihilation of the essences of possibility and contingent existences, leave behind the seeing of the physical eye, and extricate yourselves from the darkness of egotism and otherness, and then take hold of the light of truth – it will allow you to go on for ever and ever and will cause you to enter into the Garden of the Essence, the Arena of the Attributes and the worlds of never-ending divine emanations.’

If we examine the Qur’anic *ayah*: “Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth; a likeness of His light is as a niche... ,” we realize that it alludes to the witnessing of this light according to the three levels of consciousness. The niche refers to the world of the *mulk* (the phenomenal world) and it corresponds to the *shari`ah*. The glass refers to the world of the *malakut* (the world of angelic and spiritual form) and corresponds to the *tariqah*. The lamp refers to the world of *jabarut* (His dominion) and corresponds to the *haqiqah*. The tree refers to His Presence of Power and corresponds to Absolute Existence from which all dependent form issues. This interpretation is correct because, by common agreement, light is existence and darkness is non-existence.

Allah’s words, “Light upon light. Allah guides to His light Whom He wills,” is an indication of the light of the hereafter – and the cause of witnessing and arrival, and is also the means to the connecting relationship between Him and His slaves. Thus, Allah says immediately afterwards, “Allah sets forth parables for people,” as an exhortation to His slaves to realize that attainment of the light of witnessing is dependent upon removal

of the darkness of their existence (existence, which is contingent and a mere reflection of the true existence).

In this *ayah* and others before it are secrets beyond the compass of the heavens and the earth. Thus, for example, He says: “If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would surely be consumed before the words of my Lord are exhausted, though We were to bring the like of that (sea) to add thereto.” This *ayah* and the other examples above demonstrate the validity of what we are describing concerning the attainment of this light and the witnessing; they demonstrate too the importance of the removal of the duality of the phenomenal world and the way in which the Prophet guided his people to this very light. Thus, he says in one of his supplications: ‘O Allah, place light in my heart, light in my hearing, light in my sight, light in my flesh, light in my blood and light in my bones, light in front of me, light behind me, light beneath me, light above me, light to the right of me, light to the left of me and light in my grave. O Allah, increase me in light and bestow on me light and give me light, by the truth of Your Reality, O most Merciful of the Merciful.’

It is by these examples that we recognize the prophets’ and messengers’ respect for these three levels of consciousness, and we see how they commanded their respective peoples to also respect them and to carry on the duties incumbent on them – whether it be by the *shari`ah*, the *tariqah* or *haqiqah*. Therefore, it is obligatory for every person of sane mind to carry out these duties as far as he is able. Moreover, it is obligatory to strive to attain perfection and bliss in each of these three levels after complete submission to the Lord: this is the belief of the people of Allah, their elite, the masters of divine unity and the chosen amongst them. Happy indeed is the slave who follows in their footsteps. ‘All praise is due to Allah Who guided us to this, and we would not have found the way had it not been that Allah had guided us.’

Having established that the *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* are all terms which describe the One Truth, the Divine Code, and that there exists no contradiction between the different levels, we shall begin the second aspect of our study, namely the superiority of one level over the next.

2. The Second Aspect

Description of the people of haqiqah (the inner truth) and how their station is higher than that of the people of tariqah (the way); and how the people of tariqah are higher than the people of shari`ah (the law).

Know that although *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* all describe one truth, *haqiqah* and its people are higher than *tariqah* and *tariqah* and its people are higher than *shari`ah*. *Shari`ah* is the level of beginnings, *tariqah* the intermediate stage and *haqiqah* the final level. Thus, just as perfection of the beginnings lies in the mean and the intermediate, so the perfection of the intermediate lies in the end; and just as the intermediate is not attained without the beginning, so the end is not attained without the intermediate. By this I mean that just as existence of that which is above is not possible without that which is below it – while the reverse is possible – so too existence at the intermediate level is not possible without the beginning, nor existence at the final stage without the intermediate – although the reverse is possible. Thus *shari`ah* is possible without *tariqah* although *tariqah* is not possible without *shari`ah*; likewise, *tariqah* is possible without *haqiqah*, but *haqiqah* without *tariqah* is not. This is because each is the perfection of the other. Therefore, although there is no contradiction between the three levels, the perfection of *shari`ah* is only possible through *tariqah* and that of *tariqah* only possible through *haqiqah*. Accordingly, the perfection of perfection is the joining together of all three levels, for the sum of two things, or two states when joined together, must be better and more perfect than the two when separate: the people of *haqiqah* are therefore superior in relation to the people of *shari`ah* and *tariqah*.

Our Prophet was the greatest and noblest of the prophets since he brought all three levels together, as his words attest, ‘I have been given all the names.’ We are familiar with the hidden meanings of these words, but there remains one aspect we have not considered, namely that the station of joining – which is particular to the Prophet and those of his people who are seekers of *haqiqah* – is the most sublime and most noble of stations. The words of the Prophet: ‘My *qiblah* (the direction of prayer, namely Makkah) is between the East and the West’ also indicate the station of joining – for the East was

the *qiblah* of Jesus and the West that of Moses and between the two was the *qiblah* of the Prophet. The Prophet joins the two; that is to say, the stations of the two. At the esoteric level the East is the world of souls and spirits and the West is the world of material bodies and corporeality: between these two states is the joining isthmus, the stations of the Prophet with regard to both the form and the inner meaning. Thus, the station of the Presence of Singularity is the station of both Reality and Form; this is like the state of man who joins the two worlds which are inherently manifest in him. There is likewise the state which encompasses the joining of all the meanings of the prophets and messengers, or the state which joins all the forms of the various external codes and methods of worship. Thus, the perfection of Moses and his people was in their perception of the realities of the world of materiality and corporeality, together with their different degrees and levels; the perfection of Jesus and his people was in their perception of the realities of the world of the souls and spirits, together with their different degrees and levels; the perfection of Muhammad and his people was in their perception of both the realities of the world of spirit and those of the world of materiality. It is for this reason that Allah refers to His Truth and Light (or Reality) as being “neither of the east nor the west.” Allah has also said of His people: “And thus, We have made you a middle nation that you may be the bearers of witness to the people... .’

Moreover, there exists similarity between the two worlds and between the west and the east at the levels of form and meaning. The east with regard to the realm of form refers to the place of rising of the sun, the diffusion of its light and the illumination of the sensory world; with respect to the realm of inner meaning, it refers to the rising of the sun of reality and the diffusion of its light (meaning here the spirits and the souls) in the darkness of the world of corporeality so that the bodies and forms come to life and continue in this light of reality. This state is referred to by Allah when He says, “And the earth shall beam with the light of its Lord.” The Imam has also said: ‘It is a light which shines of a morning from before eternity, its effects appearing in the realm of divine unity.’ The two states referred to in the *ayah* and the saying of the Imam are thus connected in meaning. The same is true of the west: at the formal level it refers to the place of setting and eventual disappearance of the light and orb of the sun; at the level of

meaning, it refers to the setting of the light of the sun of reality and disappearance of its rays (meaning here its spirits and souls). Allah thus says, “(the sun) going down into a black sea,” and “Most surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day there are signs for the people who understand.” There is also a relationship between them in the sense that the light of our Prophet is not solely from the world of the souls and not solely from the world of forms. As Allah has said: “Neither of the east nor the west;” thus, he is neither of the people of the senses nor of the people of the intellect, rather, he is other than these two and above them, by countless degrees. He is not absolutely of the station of prophets, which is concerned with external authority, and not absolutely of the station of the intimate friends, which is concerned with internal authority; rather, he is other than these two with respect to their spiritual stations, and above them, with respect to his gathering and encompassing these differences. The truth of this statement is manifest in the existence of the various legal systems and methods of worship, which have been brought by the different prophets: thus, Moses came to perfect the different aspects of the law, adding to this the perfection of some inward elements – this is established in the Torah which sets out the code of laws. Jesus came to perfect the inward, adding to this the perfection of some aspects of the outward – this is established in the Gospel with the exposition of the divine secrets and mysteries. Our Prophet Muhammad came to perfect both aspects and to join the two levels; hence his words, ‘I have been given all the names’ and ‘My *qiblah* is between the East and the West.’ This truth is also established in the Qur’an, by the latter’s inclusion of both the laws and the secrets. In truth, the very name of the book – al-Qur’an – is significant: linguistically *qara’a* can mean a picking up or gathering together. The Commander of the Faithful (‘Ali) has said: ‘I am the Qur’an speaking and I am the Book of Allah which unites.’ He is the one who unites the two levels and the two states of the outward and the inward.

One of the gnostics has composed the following lines:

I am the Qur’an and the seven oft-repeated verses,
and the spirit of the spirit and not the spirit of empty vessels.

He is referring here to this all-encompassing station of joining, which is the Muhammadi state. Another gnostic of excellence has expressed this same meaning in his writings: ‘Just as the perfection of Moses was an absolute perfection of a specific kind, so he inclined to the perfection of the most inferior part of man, namely the body; it is for this reason that the Torah is full of references of use to man in his daily life and his means of subsistence. Since Jesus was of a greater perfection than him, his perfection lay in a part of man more noble than the body, namely the soul: thus, it is that the Gospel is full of references to the Day of Resurrection and the Day of Judgement. Since Muhammad attained absolute perfection of a specific kind, his absolute perfection was in the human side of his character. As for his composite perfection, it is the perfection of all matter and form, and this is the path of excellence – this is precisely the hidden meaning contained in the abolition of monasticism in his religion. Thus, the *fuqaha*’ (those trained in jurisprudence) and the Muslim scholars are similar to Moses in their perfection of the outward dimensions, whereas the Muslim philosophers and their like amongst the intellectuals are similar to Jesus in their perfection of the inward dimensions; the gnostics and men of realization are similar to Muhammad in their perfection of both the inward and the outward dimensions and by their acting according to the three levels mentioned above (*shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*). This idea is reinforced by the words of the sultan of the gnostics, the Commander of the Faithful: ‘*Shari`ah* is a river and *haqiqah* a sea: as for the *fuqaha*’, they keep to the banks of the river; as for the philosophers, they dive for pearls in the sea; as for the gnostics, they ride in boats to safety.’ If this is understood, then the reader will realize that the peoples of the *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* correspond to each of these three levels: the people of *shari`ah* are like the *fuqaha*’ and those of their states; the people of *tariqah* are like the scholars and philosophers and those of their stations; the people of *haqiqah* are like the gnostics and those of their station. Similarly, Moses and his people, Jesus and his people, and Muhammad and his people each correspond to one of these stations. Thus, the station of joining is particular to the gnostics and people of realization from amongst the people of Muhammad – namely the people of reality. These people are higher, greater, nobler and more excellent than the other two levels. Moreover, here lies the core of our investigation. The gnostics are at times in the arena of Allah and His angels – in accordance with His words, “Allah

bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge, maintaining His creation with justice” – and sometimes in the arena of Allah alone – in accordance with His words, “and none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge.” It is for this reason that they are classed as the elite of the elite, the intimate ones and those who go before. It is they who are referred to in the last of each of the following (three-tiered classifications), namely, ‘the common people, the elite and the elite of the elite,’ ‘the people of the right, the people of the left and the intimate’ and ‘the oppressor of his self, the one of moderate temperament and the one who goes ahead doing good works.’ Further proof of their elite position is to be found in Allah’s words, “We believe in it, it is all from our Lord; and none of them is mindful except those with understanding.” Those who thus say: “everything is from our Lord” are the ones of realization and are no other than the elite referred to above; in contrast the Ash`arites, who believe in absolute predestination, veil themselves from this station.

Witnessing that all is from the One True Lord is realization that imperfection on His part is not admissible since His sanctity, incomparability and exaltedness over anything created are connected with the concept of pure divine unity. This unity is totally removed from the duality of the phenomenal and may be described as the unity of action, of attribute and of essence. No persons other than these attain to this degree, although the Ash`arites do not believe in it. Allah’s words, “and none do mind except those having understanding” is further proof that this meaning is intended – namely that this vast and noble secret is only known, as is fitting, to those of His slaves who have understanding.

Thus, having demonstrated that the stations of the people of *haqiqah* are higher than the people of *tariqah* and *shari`ah* in all respects, let us begin with our study of the third aspect, which is a description of how the divine code is dependent upon the intellect and how the intellect is dependent upon this same code and how each is dependent upon the other. It will be a demonstration and proof, which will prevent the ignorant person from imagining that the divinely revealed laws contradict the intellect and that the methods of reasoning are opposed to this divine code. Many have made this mistake, with the result that they have themselves gone astray and have also led astray many other servants of

Allah who were devoid of knowledge. This is referred to by Allah when He describes them and their adversaries during the difficult moments of the Day of Judgement: “Our Lord! Show us those who led us astray from among the jinn and the humans that we may trample them under our feet so that they may be of the lowest.” There are many examples of this nature in the Qur’an – and Allah is more knowing and of greater wisdom. He it is Who declares the Truth and Who guides to the right path.

3. The Third Aspect

the need of the intellect for the divine code of laws and the dependence of the latter on the intellect.

Know that this study necessitates a passage of introduction, namely a description of how all the prophets and intimate friends or saints are doctors of the self and healers of the heart, in the same way as the doctors and physicians are all healers of the ailments of the human body. By this I mean that just as the doctors of the human body know how to get rid of physical diseases from their patients by their skill in healing and their use of potions and drugs, so the doctors of the self or the soul know how to remove the psychological and spiritual ailments of their patients by their skillful guidance and their use of knowledge and gnosis derived from the realm of reality. Thus, we read the following description of spiritual treatment in a language specific to its domain: ‘Spiritual treatment is by knowledge of the perfections of the heart, by knowledge of whatever mars these perfections through illness, and by knowledge of that which cures this illness. Likewise, it is knowledge of the methods of maintaining good health and even temperament and prevention of further “infection” with this disease.’ We read too of the spiritual doctor in similar terms: ‘The spiritual doctor is the shaykh, the person who has gnosis of the treatment and who is capable of giving guidance and perfection.’

As we have already seen, it has also been said: ‘The shaykh is the perfect man with regard to the *shari`ah*, the *tariqah* and the *haqiqah*, having reached the limits of perfection in each by his knowledge of the diseases and illnesses of the self and the corresponding treatment and medicine and his capacity to cure. The perfect man gives guidance to the self if it is ready for that guidance and agrees to be guided.’ Just as it is not permitted for the one who is physically sick to object to the method of treatment nor the nature of the medicine given by the physician, so the person who is spiritually or psychologically sick is not permitted to object to the spiritual doctor, nor to his methods of guidance, his imposition of spiritual exercises or difficult physical tests. Indeed, objecting to any doctor, whether of the physical or the spiritual, only increases the sickness of the sick person. If the physically sick person objects to the physician, then the

latter will abandon him and the course of treatment; this will result in a worsening of his illness, sudden death or a long, drawn-out, painful end. Whatever happens, the result is undesirable and may lead to loss of life. Similarly, if the spiritually sick person objects to the spiritual doctor, then the latter will abandon him and the treatment (that is the guidance) and the spiritual illness will increase (that is, he will go further astray and Allah refers to this when He says: “There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease”) and they will die the death of meaning or the death caused by disbelief and hypocrisy, which Allah refers to when He says: “Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?” Either result is undesirable: it causes eternal distress and never-ending misery. Thus, just as a physically sick person who wishes to regain perfect health is obliged to take bitter-tasting medicine from the physician, willingly or unwillingly, without objection or remonstrance, so the spiritually sick person who desires perfect health is also obliged to drink a bitter medicine, namely to accept the imposition of arduous tasks of varying degrees of severity from the spiritual doctor – willingly or unwillingly and without objection or remonstrance. Allah refers to this when He says, with respect to the Prophet Muhammad: “But no! By your Lord! They do not believe (in reality) until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with entire submission.”

Our aim in this introductory study is to demonstrate to the reader the truth and validity of the principles and precepts outlined herewith, with particular regard to the *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*. We also wish to show how each level is just as it should be, and that no one from any one level should object to anything from another level, or say that that thing contradicts the intellect or the narrated body of traditions. It is clear that something which is contrary to one person’s intellect is not necessarily contrary to another person’s intellect, particularly in the case of the intellects of the prophets and saints – their intellects are the most perfect of intellects, just as their souls are the most perfect of souls: there is manifestly a great distance between the two and whoever denies this is in sheer

folly and in haughty disregard of his intellect. We are not, however, addressing such persons.

The situation is similar with regard to the body of the narrated traditions: it is not possible that one can have heard or understood all the traditions which exist. By the nature of things, we do not become aware of many of the traditions and we thus cannot be expected to comprehend them all. Allah refers to this notion when He says: “I have prepared for My righteous slaves what the eye has not seen, what the ear has not heard and what the heart has not yet awareness of.” It is also clear that the majority of the laws and prohibitions of the divine legal code are beyond the compass and perception of the intellect and sensory awareness. Nevertheless, it is not permitted to object to any of them, since the prophets and saints would not have been commanded to enact these laws if they had not have been in accordance with their intellect; indeed, anything which is in accord with their intellects is in accordance with all intellects. It may be that the conclusion drawn in a particular subject is contrary to one person’s intellect or contrary to others of like intellect, but this does not mean that it is irrational and contrary to the intellect: most intellects are incapable of understanding the divinely appointed code of laws. Moreover, most of the profounder meanings of the laws and judgements lie outside the framework of human understanding. The Messenger did not allow the people of outward dimension to ask about the precise nature and purpose of certain things – questions, for example, concerning the reason why the midday prayer should consist of four cycles, the sunset prayer of three and the morning prayer of only two. The same applied to the rest of the basic pillars of the legal code. As for the incapacity of the intellect to comprehend the more profound meanings of the divine system, we may cite its inability to understand the secret of the Angel of Death: the intellect does not have the power to see how one angel is able to seize the souls of hundreds of thousands of persons or animals from the four corners of the earth in one instant. Likewise, it cannot perceive the secret of Gabriel and how he descends in one instant from the seventh heaven and from the Throne to the earth, how he reveals the revelation to a prophet and then returns in the same instant or a few moments later. In the light of these events, the best a thinking Muslim can do is to submit to the divine commands and laws; the best he can do is to affirm and believe in them

without enquiring into their substance and inner reality. There is nothing in the divine code which is contrary to the intellect and, on investigation, one realizes that the whole system of legal duties and ordinances with all its details and ramifications is based on the intellect and is within the true grasp of the thinking man.

Indeed, all the workings of existence are based on the intellect and the understanding of the man of intellect: it was within these parameters that existence came into being and so will it end with the annihilation of existence. Thus, it has been said: ‘Glory to the One Who brought existence into being with the intellect and sealed it with the man of intellect.’ It has also been narrated in a *hadith* of the Prophet: ‘The first thing which Allah created was the intellect. He thereupon said to it: “Come closer” and it came closer. He then said: “Go back” and it went back. He then said: “By My power and My glory, I have not created any creation more beloved to Me than you: By you I take and by you I give, by you I reward and by you I punish.” ’

The likeness of the divine code and the intellect and the dependence of each on the other is also the likeness of the soul and the body and the dependence of each on the other: I mean by this that just as the workings of the soul and the manifestation of its attributes and perfections is not possible except by means of the body (by way of its physical strength and the various limbs), so the workings of the divine code and the manifestations of its various levels are not possible except by means of the intellect and by means of the different levels and stations of the intellect.

The different levels of the intellect comprise what is called the material intellect, the intellect of action, the faculty of intellect, and the acquiring intellect. The whole of the divine code is based on these different levels: the first and the second are the levels of the common people, the third is that of the elite, and the fourth that of the elite of the elite from amongst the prophets and saints.

The object of this study is to show that the divine code is not independent of the intellect, nor the intellect independent of the divine code. Most scholars, gnostics and philosophers, among them the perfect shaykh Abu’l-Qasim al-Husayn ibn Muhammad al-

Raghib al-Isfahani, agree with this. In his book *Tafsil al-Nash`atayn ft tahsil al-sa`adatayn*,²⁷ Shaykh Raghib mentions this subject in detail saying: ‘Know that the intellect never guides except by the divine code and that the divine code will never be understood except by the intellect.’ The intellect is like the foundation and the divine code is like the building: the building cannot be firmly established without a foundation. Moreover, the intellect is like the faculty of sight and the divine code like the rays of light: sight is of no use without light. It is for this reason that Allah says, “Indeed there has come to you light and a clear Book from Allah; with it Allah guides him who will follow His pleasure into the ways of safety and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His will.” Similarly, the intellect is like a lamp and the divine code the oil which fuels it: if there is no oil, then the lamp will not burn, and without the lamp, there will be no light. Allah has indicated this to us with His words: “Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth... Light upon light.” What is referred to in the latter portion of the *ayah* is the light of the intellect which is above the light of the divine code – for the former will not shine without the latter. Besides, the divine code is the intellect from without and the intellect is the divine code from within: indeed, the two are mutually supportive, indeed, united.

As the divine code is the intellect in its outward aspect, so Allah has stripped the name intellect from the disbeliever on more than one occasion in the Qur’an, like, for example, when He says: “Deaf, dumb (and) blind, so they do not understand.” As the intellect is the divine code in its inward aspect, Allah has said: “The nature made by Allah in which He has made humans: there is no altering of Allah’s creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know.” In this *ayah* Allah relates knowing and the intellect to *din* – religion as a complete way of life. Allah also refers to the union of the intellect and the divine code when He says, “Light upon light,” meaning here the light of the intellect and the light of the divine code. Thereafter He says, “Allah guides to His light whom He wills,” referring to these two lights as one single light. If the intellect is missing, then our worship is deficient, for the divine code does not cover in detail all aspects of belief and

²⁷ (A detailed Exposition of the Two Lives of this World and the Next with respect to the Obtaining of the Two Happinesses).

worship; likewise, if the divine code is missing, then the intellect is incapable of dealing with many of the details of belief and worship. This is because the divine code is as the eye and the intellect as the light or vice-versa: neither of the two can do without the other.

One should realize too that the intellect of itself is hardly enough: it can perceive the universality of things, but it cannot cope with the details. It realizes the benefit of belief in the truth, in speaking the truth, in behaving well towards others, in acting justly, in being chaste and so forth, although it may not comprehend the details of these matters. The divine code encompasses both the fundamentals of belief and worship together with the details of these matters; it describes in detail human being's obligations and how to conduct one's affairs in an equitable manner. Thus, the intellect does not know of itself, for example, that pork, blood or wine are prohibited, or that one should abstain from eating at specific times, or that one should not marry someone who is closely related, or that one should not have sexual intercourse with a woman during her period of menstrual bleeding. The only way of finding out these things is to refer to the divine code since it is a system of correct belief and correct behavior: it is a means towards the best of this world and the next and whoever abandons it goes astray. Allah indicates that there is no option for the intellect but to accept and realize this fact when He says, "We do not chastise until We raise an apostle" and also, "And had We destroyed them with chastisement before this, they would certainly have said: 'O our Lord! why didst Thou not send to us an apostle, for then we should have followed Thy communications before we met disgrace and shame.'" On another occasion Allah refers to the intellect and the divine code in terms of grace and mercy: "And were it not for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have certainly followed Satan, save a few" – by the word 'few' Allah is indicating the elite.

As we have already seen, Allah shows that a person who does not devote himself to the divine code and worship of His Lord is neither a true man nor a person of intellect – if he is called a man, he is supposed to be a thinking person. Shaykh Raghīb has said that 'man, because of his human nature, either becomes a true man by means of his intellect or he loses his human qualities when his behavior is no longer connected to this faculty; in fact, he is reduced to being a mere shadow of a man and becomes in reality like a

mindless brute.’ As we have seen above, the intellect is not perfected except after having taken on the guidance of the divine code. In several places in the Qur’an the disbeliever is regarded as devoid of intellect because he has failed to heed the prophetic words of guidance. Acceptance of this guidance, this divine code, is in fact worship of Allah. Therefore, the true man is the person who recognizes the truth of the message and thereby worships his Lord: it was for this very purpose that he was created. Allah says, “And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me” and “And they were not enjoined anything except that they should serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience, upright, and keep up the prayer and pay the poor-rate.”

Anything which has been brought into existence for a specific task is as if in a state of non-existence if it does not fulfil that specific task. Thus, in a similar way, people discard a thing’s very name if that thing is not fulfilling the function for which it was created. When they see a worthless horse, for example, they might say, ‘That is not a horse;’ likewise, of an abject man they might say, ‘That is not a man;’ again, they might say of someone ‘he has no eye’ or that ‘he has no ear’ if that person’s eye or ear have ceased to function properly, although there may be still a trace of hearing or sight left. Allah refers to this when He talks about those who do not use their faculty of intellect: “Deaf, dumb (and) blind, for they do not understand.” Likewise, man only attains to his human nature to the extent that he attains to the worship for which he has been created: whoever worships in the correct manner perfects thereby his humanity; whoever refuses to worship is stripped thereby of his humanity and becomes the worst of beasts. Allah refers to these disbelievers when He says, “They are as cattle, nay, they are in worse errors” and also, “Surely, the vilest of animals, in Allah’s sight, are the deaf, the dumb, who do not understand;” thus, not only does He describe them as beasts and animals, but also as the worst of their kind. Indeed, He describes their speech as non-human: “And their prayer before the House is nothing but whistling and clapping of hands,” likening them to the birds that whistle and clap their wings. Again, Allah elaborates on this theme when He declares that a human being is not a human being except by way of his religion: “The Beneficent God, taught the Qur’an, He created man, taught him how to express himself.” It should be noticed that the two halves of the statement are not joined by an ‘and’; one

would have thought at first that in describing man, Allah would have said, ‘He created man, He taught him how to express himself and then taught him the Qur’an,’ but Allah begins by mentioning the Qur’an and thereafter says that He created man, since he is not considered to be a man if he does not apply himself to the Qur’an. Allah demonstrates hereby that the true capacity to articulate thoughts is attained only through knowledge of the Qur’an. Allah demonstrates these meanings in a particular order and leaves out the joining word ‘and’ in between, making each phrase take the place of the one preceding it. Thus, the words indicate a certain progression and are not merely placed one after the other as mere additional information.

Again, in order to emphasize this point, we would repeat that man cannot be considered to be a man as long as he has no knowledge of the various acts of worship required of him, and his speech is not considered speech unless his words are uttered in accordance with the demands of the divine code. We are not denying that the unbeliever is a human being in a general sense; but rather that, with respect to the exigencies of the intellect and the divine code, it is not fitting to call him human except in a superficial way as there appears no sign of these two things in his actions. If, however, he is called a human being for the sake of classifying him with a general name, then there is no objection to this. It is clear that many words are used in this way: knowledge of the divine code shows that some words do not in fact mean what they appear to mean. The Arabs use the word *ghinan* to mean abundance of wealth, but a narration of the Prophet demonstrates that this is not so: ‘*ghinan* is not abundance of wealth, but rather, it indicates self-sufficiency and contentment of the self.’ Allah Himself has said, “Whoever is rich, let him abstain altogether” and here uses the word according to its usual meaning. In short, if a wise person uses a word of praise, it is understood as such, although the word may either be used to describe something praiseworthy or despicable; for example, if someone says someone is well-known, it can carry either a positive or a pejorative implication depending on the circumstances.

Thus, it might be said that everything is described or praised in terms which are related to the nature of that thing or its kind; it is said, for example, ‘such and such a person is a human being’ or ‘this sword is a sword.’ In an analogous manner it is said that

the absolute human being is the prophet of his time. One scholar has said that the person who says that man is a living being, endowed with speech and doomed to die, is correct, but the real or inner meaning of this statement is not as many people imagine. He does not live or die in the same way as animals and his speech is not the mere faculty of expressing words; rather, what is meant is that the life of the one referred to in His words, “He taught him the mode of expression” and the subsequent death of such a person is the life and death of the man who has overcome the forces of desire and anger by means of the *shari`ah*. Thus, death is here the death of the will and life is the true and natural life of the balanced man. This notion has also been expressed in the phrase ‘Die the death of the will and you will live the natural life of a balanced man;’ the Prophet has also indicated this kind of death with His words, ‘Die before you die.’ The Commander of the Faithful (‘Ali) has also said in this respect: ‘He has brought his intellect to life and has killed his self (*nafs*) such that his splendor manifests and his coarseness is refined; there then appears a shining radiance which lights up the way for him; he travels along that way, propelled from gate to gate until he reaches the gate of peace and the abode of rest; his step is firm and his body is tranquil, enclosed in safety and ease – and this, by virtue of how he has used his heart and satisfied his Lord.’

Examples such as these are many and the reader is advised to research the matter in the appropriate books – and Allah is more Knowing and Wise; He it is who declares the Truth and guides to the right path.

Thus, we conclude our investigation of the *shari`ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah* and the need of the intellect for the divine code and the need of the divine code for the intellect; we have treated the matter in such detail and depth as befits a matter of such importance. We shall now begin another investigation which follows on from, and is a necessary complement to, the two other subjects; indeed, our research cannot be completed in a fitting manner except by recourse to this third domain of investigation which is concerned with what may be called the two principles and the two rules. The first principle concerns the general duty incumbent upon the prophets, the messengers and the saints which is the duty to instruct and guide creation to the straight path.

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