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Two Arabic Treatises

by Āqā Muḥammad Riḍā Qumsha’ī

Translated by William C. Chittick

Introduction

Āqā Muḥammad Riḍā Qumsha’ī (d. 1306/1888) was known as an *‘arif*, a “gnostic” or master of the science of *‘irfān*, theoretical Sufism. He was born in Qumsha, a village near Isfahan, reportedly in the year 1241 (1825-26). He studied philosophy in Isfahan with Mullā Muḥammad Ja‘far Lāhijī, a well-known student of Ākhūnd Nūrī, and with Nūrī’s son, Mīrzā Ḥasan. In *‘irfān* he was a student of Āqā Sayyid Riḍā Lārījānī (d. 1270/1853-54) and probably Mīr Sayyid Ḥasan Ṭālaqānī. He became a teacher in a madrasah in Isfahan and then moved to Tehran after the year 1294/1877, around the time when several other well-known teachers also moved. He taught the whole range of traditional learning, but specialized in the intellectual sciences (*ma‘qūlāt*). He wrote ghazals with the *takhalluṣ* Ṣahbā in the style of Fakhr alī-Dīn‘Irāqī, but few have survived.¹

Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī relates several anecdotes about Qumsha’ī in various works. He says, for example, that when he came to Tehran, Peripatetic philosophy was being taught by Abu’l-Ḥasan ibn Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā’ī, who was known by his pen-name Jilwa,

¹ These details are taken from the introduction to the edition of the text on *walāya* translated here: Manūchihr Ṣadūqī Suhā, *Dhayl-i Faṣṣ-i Shīthī-yi Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam: Dar mabāḥith-i walāyat* (Qazvin: Maṭba‘a-yi Nūr, 1354/1975). For examples of Qumsha’ī’s poetry, see pp. 10-13.

“Splendor,” and who published among other things notes (*ḥawāshī*) on Mullā Ṣadrā’s *Asfār*. When Qumsha’ī began teaching philosophy, the best students preferred his lectures over those of Jilwa. Thus it was said that with his coming to Tehran, *Jilwa az jilwa uftād*—“‘Splendor’ fell from splendor.”²

Manūchihr Ṣadūqī Suhā, the editor of Qumsha’ī’s treatise on *walāya* translated here, mentions thirteen works by Qumsha’ī, most of them quite short and still in manuscript. Apparently his only long work is his notes (*ḥawāshī*) on Mullā Ṣadrā’s *Asfār*, and perhaps his addenda (*ta’līqāt*) to Ṣadrā’s *Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*. Printed works include three Arabic treatises of 4-5 pages each. One is the *Risāla fī waḥdat al-wujūd bal al-mawjūd* (“Treatise on the oneness of existence, or rather, the Existent”) translated here.³ The other two are *Mawḍū‘ al-khilāfat al-kubrā* (“The subject of the ‘greatest vicegerency’”)⁴ and *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-asfār al-arba‘a* (“Treatise on verifying the four journeys”).⁵

Both translated texts were written as explanation of and introduction to *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* by Sharaf al-Dīn Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350), a student of ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī (d. 736/1335). Qayṣarī’s commentary seems to have been the most influential of the many commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ* in the Persianate world, whereas Kāshānī’s commentary was more popular in Arab countries. However this may be, the title of the short treatise on *waḥdat al-*

² Ibid., p. 19.

³ Lithographed with Ibn Turka-yi Iṣfahānī’s *Tamhīd al-qawā‘id* (Aḥmad al-Shīrāzī, 1316/1899), pp. 218-21; also published as a footnote in Āshtiyānī’s edition of al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i ‘ilmī wa Farhangī, 1375/1996), pp. 25-28.

⁴ Published by Suhā along with the present treatise.

⁵ Lithographed on the margin of Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ al-hidāyat al-Athīriyya* (Tehran: Aḥmad al-Shīrāzī, 1313/1896), pp. 394-97.

wujūd, first published during the author’s lifetime, is accompanied by the note, “and this [treatise] is connected with the first chapter of the *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* of al-Qayṣarī.” Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, in his annotated edition of Qayṣarī’s commentary, provides the treatise as the first footnote of Chapter One of Qayṣarī’s introduction, attaching it to the word *Existence* in its title, which is “On Existence, and that It is the Real.”

In the treatise on *waḥdat al-wujūd*, Qumsha’ī wants to explain the concept (*mafhūm*) of *wujūd* and various terms employed by Ibn al-‘Arabī and his followers in discussing it. To do so, he relies on the distinction between a concept that is *lā bi-sharṭ*, unconditioned, or “not having any conditions”; and one that is *bi-sharṭ lā*, negatively conditioned, or “having the condition of ‘no.’” One can see here a sophisticated philosophical explanation of what Ibn al-‘Arabī means when he tells us that *wujūd* is unqualified (*muṭlaq*), whether by unqualifiedness (*iṭlāq*) or by qualifiedness (*taqyīd*). It is in dealing with this issue that his disciple Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī often speaks of *al-lā-ta‘ayyun*, the Nonentification (the unknown essence of the Real in Itself) and *al-ta‘ayyun al-awwal*, the First Entification (God as the self-disclosing Real).

The second, much longer treatise, was published with the Persian title *Dhayl-i Faṣṣ-i Shīthī-yi Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam: Dar mabāḥith-i walāyat*, “Addendum to the Ringstone on Seth from *The Ringstones of Wisdom: On the Topics of Friendship*.” “Friendship” translates *walāya* (or *wilāya*), a term that has been much discussed in various fields of Islamic learning, not least Shi’ite theology and Sufism.⁶ The basic verb means to be near, but the varied contexts of its derivatives in the Qur’ān and their technical usage in the Islamic sciences have led to several other translations, such as sanctity or sainthood, assistance, authority, power. In the context of Qumsha’ī’s discussion, friendship seems to be the most appropriate English term, not least

⁶ For a thorough review of the importance of the term in Islamic lore, see H. Landolt, “Walāya,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, pp. 317-22.

because he highlights *walāya*'s correlativity—the fact that it demands two *walīs*, who share a single attribute relative to each other. None of the other English renderings makes sense if one of the two *walīs* is God. Nor should we forget that the Qurʾān ascribes *awliyāʾ* or friends to Satan, not just to God and human beings.

That Qumshaʿī should focus on the issue of *walāya* is not surprising in the context of Twelve-Imam Shiʿism, given that Shiʿite theology takes *walāya* as one of the basic principles of Islam, and indeed the one that differentiates Shiʿites from Sunnis. At the same time, Qumshaʿī was thoroughly versed in the *ʿirfān* of Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers, who also discussed *walāya* in great detail. When it comes to ascribing the highest degrees of *walāya* to specific human beings, however, Ibn al-ʿArabī's views do not seem to agree with Shiʿite authors. Certainly, for Shiʿism, the *walī* par excellence is ʿAlī, and there are grounds for arguing that Ibn al-ʿArabī had the same opinion. However, when Ibn al-ʿArabī speaks of the “Seal” of the friends, he typically mentions Jesus on the one hand and one of his own contemporaries on the other, and in many places he implies that this contemporary is in fact himself.

Qumshaʿī wants to show that the expression “Seal of the Friends” (*khātām al-awliyāʾ*) has several applications.⁷ Once these are properly understood, Ibn al-ʿArabī's claim to be the Seal will be seen to be justified. At the same time, he will rank lower than both ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and the Twelfth Imam (the Mahdī). Although Qumshaʿī is forced into some questionable readings of Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings to make this argument, it seems fairly clear that he is motivated by the desire to overcome criticisms of Ibn al-ʿArabī made by Shiʿites. He does not mention any authors in particular, but he may have in mind, among others, Sayyid Ḥaydar

⁷ Anyone who has looked closely at Ibn al-ʿArabī's references to the Seal of the Friends is aware that he speaks of at least three individuals. Michel Chodkiewicz has reviewed his teachings in *The Seal of the Saints* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), Chapters 8-9.

Āmulī, who devoted a good deal of the introductory volume of his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, *Naṣṣ al-Nuṣūṣ*, to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s views on the Seal of the Friends. Āmulī says that according to Ibn al-‘Arabī, the Seal in the unqualified sense (*muṭlaq*) is Jesus and in the qualified sense (*muqayyad*) he himself. Āmulī adds that Ibn al-‘Arabī is mistaken on both counts, because ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib is the unqualified Seal, and the Mahdī the qualified Seal.⁸

In Qumsha’ī’s understanding, conflicting interpretations of the identity of the Seal can be overcome if we recognize that there are two basic sorts of friendship: the general, which pertains to all believers and indeed to all of creation; and the specific, which pertains to the “stations” (*maqām*) achieved by Muḥammad and the “Muhammadans,” that is, those who are “upon his heart” (*‘alā qalbihi*), which is to say that they have achieved his spiritual qualities and characteristics by following him.⁹ Previous prophets and their followers may also be Muhammadans, but by way of “states” (*ḥāl*), not stations.

⁸ Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, *al-Muqaddimāt min kitāb Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ*, edited by Henry Corbin and Osman Yahia (Tehran: Departement d’iranologie de l’institut franco-iranien de recherché, 1975), pp. 182ff. See also the remarks of Chodkiewicz, *Seal* 136-37.

⁹ Ibn al-‘Arabī frequently speaks of God’s friends using this expression or its near synonym “upon the footsteps” (*‘alā qadam*). The phrase can be traced back to a saying of the Prophet narrated by ‘Abdallāh ibn Mas‘ūd and often quoted in Sufi texts, a saying that provides some of the terminology employed in discussing *rijāl al-ghayb*, “the Men of the Unseen,” the invisible hierarchy of the friends. According to this hadith, God has among His creatures three hundred whose hearts are upon the heart of Adam, forty upon the heart of Moses, seven upon the heart of Abraham, five upon the heart of Gabriel, three upon the heart of Michael, and one upon the heart of Isrāfīl. Cited by Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038), *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-sa‘āda, 1974), vol. 1, p. 9.

Within the realm of the specific, Muhammadan friendship, there are then two basic sorts of friendship: unqualified (*muṭlaq*), which participates in the self-disclosure (*tajallī*) of the very Essence of God; and qualified (*muqayyad*), which is limited to the self-disclosure of one or several of the divine names. Qumsha'ī argues that the unqualified friendship is the innermost reality of Muḥammad. Muḥammad's friendship, however, was concealed by his prophetic function, and during his time it became manifest in 'Alī, the unqualified Seal of the Muhammadan Friends. Moreover, it will become manifest again at the end of time in the Mahdī, who is also the unqualified Seal of the Muhammadan Friends. The fact that both are the same Seal simply shows that both make manifest the same Muhammadan light. As for Jesus, he is the Seal of the general friendship, not the specific, Muhammadan friendship. And Ibn al-ʿArabī is the Seal of the qualified Muhammadan friendship.

Qumsha'ī's treatise is divided into two parts: first, an introduction on the nature of friendship and the various sorts of Seal, and second, a detailed exposition of Qayṣarī's commentary on the relevant passages from the chapter on Seth. I have differentiated Qayṣarī's text by setting it in bold letters. Qumsha'ī assumes that his readers have Qayṣarī's commentary in hand, so he often abbreviates the cited passages. I add in brackets enough from the missing text to obviate the need to refer back to the original.¹⁰

¹⁰ For the Arabic originals, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, edited by A. ʿAfifī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabī, 1946), pp. 62-64, 67 (corresponding to the English translation by Caner Dagli, *The Ringstones of Wisdom* [Chicago: Kazi, 2004], pp. 26-30, 35). Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, pp. 436-68, 487-95.

On the Oneness of Existence, or rather, the Existent¹¹

The possessors of hearts among the shaykhs and gnostics have agreed on the oneness of existence [*wujūd*]¹¹—or rather, the Existent [*mawjūd*]¹¹—and that It is an actual Ipseity [*huwiyya* ‘*ayniyya*], realized [*mutahaqqiq*] in Its very Essence. They have disagreed, however, on the reality of the Necessary—exalted is Its name! Is It the existence that is taken as conditioned neither by the things nor by their nonexistence [*lā bi-sharṭ al-ashyā’ wa ‘adamihā*]? In other words, is It the very nature [*ṭabī‘a*]¹² of existence as It is in Itself? In their view, this is called the Ipseity that Pervades the Necessary and the Contingent [*al-huwiyyat al-sāriyya fi’l-wājib wa’l-mumkin*], the Unknown Unseen [*al-ghayb al-majhūl*], the Unseen of the Ipseity [*ghayb al-huwiyya*], and the Wondrous Griffon [*al-‘anqā’ al-mughrib*], because It is neither attained by the intellects of the rational thinkers nor trapped by the imaginings of the philosophers. Thus it is said in Persian,

No one can hunt the griffon—take back your snare!

Your snare will never catch anything but wind.

¹¹ I follow the text as found in the lithograph edition published during Qumsha’ī’s lifetime (appended to *Tamhīd al-qawā‘id* 218-21) and I also take help from Āshtiyānī’s edition, which has a number of relatively minor discrepancies.

¹² “Nature” is being used in Avicenna’s sense to designate what he calls a “natural universal” (*kullī ṭabī‘ī*), that is, the reality or quiddity of a thing without regard to its existence or nonexistence.

Or, is It the existence that is taken as conditioned by the nonexistence of things [*bi-shart* ‘*adam al-ashyā*’], which is named the level of Exclusive Unity [*aḥadiyya*], the First Unseen, the First Entification [*al-ta‘ayyun al-awwal*], and existence as negatively conditioned [*bi-shart lā*]?

A group of them hold the first view, and a group the second. The two groups agree that the existence that is general [*‘āmm*] and deployed [*munbasiṭ*] among the things and the fixed and external entities [*al-a’yān al-thābita wa’l-khārija*], [in other words, fixed] in [the divine] Knowledge [*al-‘ilm*] and [found] in the outside realm [*al-‘ayn*]*—*which in the station of Knowledge is called the All-Merciful Breath and the Most Holy Effusion [*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*] and in the station of the outside realm the Holy Effusion, the Second Real, and the Real Through Which Creation Takes Place [*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bih*]*—*is the shadow [*zill*] of that Reality, and that a thing’s shadow is the same [*‘ayn*] as it in one respect, and other [*ghayr*] than it in another respect.

Verification of this station requires an introduction: It is that the object denoted [*miṣdāq*] essentially [*bi’l-dhāt*] by any concept [*mafḥūm*] is that from which the concept is abstracted [*intizā‘*] while all delimiting and causal modes [*al-ḥaythiyyāt al-taqyīdiyyat wa’l-ta‘līliyya*] other than it and predicated [*ḥaml*] of it are disregarded. Otherwise, the denoted object is not essentially denoted, nor is the essential essential. Thus, the concept of blackness is abstracted from its very nature, and one disregards the fact that it is not whiteness and any other attributions [*iḍāfāt*] and standpoints [*i‘tibārāt*]. Hence a thing’s essence and essentialities are predicated of it by essential necessity [*al-ḍarūrat al-dhātiyya*]. If the essence is beginningless [*azalī*], then the necessity is essential and beginningless, or else it would have to be essential and not beginningless.

Now that the ground has been prepared, we say: The concept of existence is abstracted from its reality and predicated of it in respect of the very essence of that nature, while disregarding all the modes and standpoints, whether causal or delimiting. So, it is predicated of it by essential necessity. Given that this nature is beginningless—otherwise it would have an existent cause and it would be necessary for the thing to be prior to itself—predicating the concept of it is by beginningless necessity. Since this is the case, the existence that is taken as unconditioned is the Real that is Necessary by essence, not that which is taken as negatively conditioned. For, this qualification [*qayd*] does not enter into the abstraction of the concept, its predication of It, and its beginningless necessity, because the concept that is abstracted from its very essence has in view neither the other nor the nonexistence of the other.¹³

In addition, the general existence that has intercourse [*mujāmiʿ*] with the things is a shadow of the existence that is unconditioned, not of that which is negatively conditioned. Although the two are One Entity [*ʿayn wāḥid*], the standpoints are different, so it has intercourse with the things. For, that which is taken as negatively conditioned refuses to come together [*ijtimāʿ*] with the things.

You should think about His words, “He is with you” [57:4]; His words, “He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward” [57:3]; His words, “You did not throw when you threw, but God threw” [8:17]; His words, “We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and in themselves, until it is clear to them that He is the Real” [41:53]; the words of the Commander of the Faithful and Master of the Unitarians, “[He is] inside the things without mixture, outside

¹³ In place of this last clause, Āshtiyānī’s text has the following, whose meaning is clearer:

“because the concept is abstracted from Its very essence without having in view the other, but qualification is to have the other in view.”

the things without separation”;¹⁴ and the words of the Prophet, “Were you to be let down to the lowest earth, you would fall upon God.” All of these indicate what I have conveyed to you.

You may say: If the reality of the Necessary is the very Nature [of existence], and that Nature is with every existent, then the reality of the Necessary is with every existent. It is either the same as it or part of it, for existence is either the same as the existent or part of it.

I say: I have pointed to the fact that the concept of existence is abstracted from existence’s Nature while disregarding all modes and standpoints save the mode of its essence. As for the quiddities of things, the concept [of existence] is abstracted from them in respect of both their delimiting and their causal modes. And as for the existences [*wujūdāt*] of things, the concept is abstracted from them in respect of their causal modes. Hence, there is nothing of these that is the very Nature, in contrast to the Necessary by essence.

One should think about His words, “Nothing is as His likeness” [42:11]. If the existences of the things were individual instances [*afrād*] of existence’s Nature, they would be similar to Him—exalted is He beyond that!

You may say: Then He is not with the things, but He has said, “He is with you” [57:4].

I say: General existence is with everything and is His shadow, as I pointed out, and a thing’s shadow is the same as it in one respect, so He is with everything.

In sum, existence taken as unconditioned—that is, the Nature of existence in respect of the fact that it is it—is existent by beginningless, essential necessity. Any existent like this is the existence that is Necessary by essence. Hence, the existence that is taken as unconditioned is the existence that is Necessary by essence. The general, deployed existence is the same as it in one respect and other than it in another respect. In respect of the sameness [*‘ayniyya*], it

¹⁴ ‘Alī’s *Nahj al-balāgha* has many similar sentences, including this from the first sermon: “He is with everything without linkage, and other than everything without separation.”

makes oneness [*waḥda*] correct, and in respect of the otherness [*ghayriyya*], it makes manyness [*kathra*] correct. Through oneness ontological [*wujūdi*] *tawḥīd* is correct, and through manyness are correct the diversity of the properties of the Necessary and the contingent, the descent and the ascent, the Origin and the Return, the nations and the religions, and the revealed laws and their rulings.

If you think about what has been said, another meaning will become apparent to you. This is that the oneness of existence is an individual [*shakhṣiyya*] oneness. There is no existence and no *mawjūd* except He. The contingent existences are its manifestations, tasks, relations, and standpoints.

The existent is Thou in reality,
the rest are relations and standpoints.

Know also that existence, when Its Essence is considered under the mode of realization and sameness, is realized by Its very Essence. Since It is Necessary by Its Essence, and since the Necessary Essence's quiddity is Its Is-ness [*inniyya*],¹⁵ there is no mode in It save the mode of existence. Since there is no mode in It save the mode of existence, nothing is with It. "God

¹⁵ This is a standard philosophical position. In other words, "what God is" (*māhiyyatuhu*) is "that He is" (*inniyyatuhu*), which is to say that God's quiddity is none other than his existence, whereas for everything else, existence and quiddity are conceptually distinct. Sabziwārī uses the same language when he says toward the beginning of his *Manzūma, al-Ḥaqq māhiyyatuhu inniyyatuhu*, "As for the Real, Its quiddity is Its Is-ness." Izutsu and Muhaghegh translate this as, "As for Truth, His Essence is His Existence." *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1977), p. 46.

was, and nothing was with Him; and He is now as He was.”¹⁶ It is this that suggests that He is an existence that is negatively conditioned. And this is indeed the case, except that Its negative conditionality is one of the concomitants [*lawāzim*] of Its Essence and has no entrance [*dakhl*] into the existence¹⁷ of Its Essence.

You may say: Then what is the meaning of that Reality’s “pervasion” [*sarayān*] of the Necessary and the contingent?

I say: The meaning of pervasion is manifestation. He may be manifest by His very Essence to His Essence, and that is His pervasion of the Necessary. He may be manifest in the clothing of the names and the entities fixed in [His] knowledge, and He may be manifest in the clothing of the entities of the existences in the entities [of the cosmos] and the minds [*adhḥān*], and these are His pervasion of the contingent. All are His essential tasks [*shuʿūnāt dhātiyya*].¹⁸

So, in respect of the Ipseity, the existence that is taken as unconditioned is the same as the existence that is taken as negatively conditioned. The diversity is in the standpoints. To this He points with His words, “Say: He is God, One” [112:1], for the word *He* is a pronoun that points to the Essence and to the fact that He has no names. The word *God* is the name of the Essence in respect of essential manifestation. The word *One* [*aḥad*] next to it shows that the name *God* here pertains to the Essence, for it is shared both by the Essence and by the Essence

¹⁶ The first two clauses are said to be a hadith, and the third a clarification provided by Junayd. See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 393, note 13.

¹⁷ Āshtiyānī’s text has *wujūb*, “Necessity,” in place of *wujūd*, “existence.”

¹⁸ The term *shaʿn* or “task” is commonly employed by Ibn al-ʿArabī’s followers to mean entity, reality, or thing; it derives from the verse, “Each day He is upon a task” (55:29), which Ibn al-ʿArabī often discusses (see Chittick, *Sufi Path* 98-99).

that comprehends all the attributes. There are no descriptions or attributes in essential manifestation. Rather, the attributes are negated, just as [‘Alī]—upon whom be peace—said, “The perfection of *tawḥīd* is the negation of attributes from Him.”¹⁹ In other words, the Unknown Unseen is the Essence that becomes manifest through Exclusive Unity [*aḥadiyya*].²⁰

Given that the word *One* can be ascribed in a negative [*salbī*] meaning—as it is here, for it negates all things from Him, or rather things as well as attributes—it suggests that He is empty of things and lacks them, or rather, [empty] of attributes and perfections. But He—exalted is He!—is all things and all attributes and perfections through His oneness. So He amended this with His words, “God is the Everlasting Refuge [*ṣamad*]” [112:2]. The Everlasting Refuge is the All-Comprehensive One [*al-wāḥid al-jāmi‘*]. Then He argued for this with His words, “He has not given birth and He was not given birth to” [112:3]. This is to say that nothing has emerged from Him, and He has not emerged from anything. Otherwise He would

¹⁹ As found toward the beginning of the first sermon of the *Nahj al-balāgha*, the sentence reads, “The perfection of His *tawḥīd* is sincerity [*ikhhlās*] for Him, and the perfection of sincerity for Him is to negate attributes from Him.”

²⁰ One could better translate this last phrase by saying, “through the fact of being *Aḥad*,” but Qumsha’ī has in mind the long-standing contrast made by Ibn al-‘Arabī’s followers between *aḥadiyya* (“exclusive unity”) and *wāḥidiyya* (“inclusive unity”). He wants to show that the Koran makes this distinction in *Sūrat al-Ikhlās* with its mention of the divine names *aḥad* and *ṣamad*. Ibn al-‘Arabī himself does not contrast *aḥadiyya* and *wāḥidiyya*, but he often says that *aḥad* and *wāḥid* designate respectively the Unity of the One (*aḥadiyyat al-aḥad*) and the Unity of Manyness (*aḥadiyyat al-kathra*). See Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 167 ff.

be defective [*nāqiṣ*] by the emergence of something from Him, or His emergence from something.

So, His Exclusive Unity is because of the entifications of the things [*ta‘ayyunāt al-ashyā’*],²¹ and His being the Everlasting Refuge is by the fact that their realities are contained [*indimāj*] in Him.

This is the clarification of what is meant in this station.

²¹ That is, the fact that each thing, by the fact of its thingness, is an entity, a quiddity, something other than the Essence, the Real Existence. This latter, in the terminology favored by Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī and his followers, is “nonentified” (*ghayr muta‘ayyan*); or, it is “the Nonentification” (*al-lā-ta‘ayyun*).

Addendum to the Ringstone on Seth

from *The Ringstones of Wisdom*:

On the Topics of Friendship²²

Walāya derives from *waly* in the meaning of nearness [*qurb*].

[1] It may be general [*‘āmm*], pertaining generally to all the faithful. To this is the allusion in God’s words, “He is the friend of those who have faith; He brings them forth from the darkneses into the light” [2:257]. For, if He is the friend of those who have faith, they are also His friends, given that nearness is a relative thing by which both sides are described.

Faith [*īmān*] has levels and degrees: One is decisive and firm belief [*i‘tiqād*] that accords with the actual situation [*al-wāqi‘*], without [the aid of logical] demonstration [*burhān*]. This is like the belief of the imitator [*muqallid*], which is neither derived from nor supported by demonstration; rather, it is supported by the truthful report-giver [*al-mukhbir al-ṣādiq*]. Another is certain, decisive, firm knowledge that accords with the actual situation and is supported by demonstration. This is stronger and more elevated than the first. It is like the faith of the folk of considerative reason [*ahl al-naẓar*]. Another is witnessed, illuminative knowledge [*al-‘ilm al-shuhūdī al-ishrāqī*] that accords with the actual situation; this is called “sound unveiling” [*al-kashf al-ṣaḥīḥ*] and “the eye of certainty” [*‘ayn al-yaqīn*]. It is stronger than the two preceding levels; it is like the faith of the folk of wayfaring [*sulūk*] and the companions of unveilings. Still another is also witnessed, illuminative knowledge, but the witnesser [*shāhid*] is the same as the witnessed [*mashhūd*], and the witnessed is the same as the

²² The translation follows the text as edited by Suhā (footnote 1). Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī also includes the text, with some minor discrepancies, as a footnote to his edition of al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, pp. 440-63.

witnesser. This is called “the truth of certainty” [*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*]. It is possible, however, that the knowledge of someone with faith be such that it is the knowledge of certainty in some beliefs, the eye of certainty in others, and the truth of certainty in still others. This [third level] is stronger than the preceding levels. And all of these are friends of God, and God is their friend. Their degrees are disparate in keeping with the degrees of their faith, but they have no deliverance [*takhalluṣ*] from hidden *shirk*.²³

[2] Or [friendship may be] specific [*khāṣṣ*], pertaining specifically to the companions of the hearts [*aṣḥāb al-qulūb*] and the folk of God [*ahl Allāh*], those who have been annihilated [*fanāʾ*] in His Essence, subsist [*baqāʾ*] through His subsistence, and possess the Nearness of Obligatory Works [*qurb al-farāʾid*].²⁴ It is alluded to in God’s words, “Surely the friends of God—no fear shall be upon them, neither shall they sorrow” [10:62]; and in the *ḥadīth qudsī*, “My

²³ It is this characteristic that distinguishes the “general” friends of God from the “specific” friends who will now be discussed. *Shirk* is to associate others with God and is opposed to *tawḥīd*, the assertion of God’s unity. The hadith literature mentions “hidden shirk” (*al-shirk al-khafī*), which is contrasted with “open shirk” (*al-shirk al-jalī*). The latter is to believe openly in more than one God, as a polytheist might, and the former is to assert *tawḥīd* with the tongue but to follow other gods in the heart. One of the most commonly mentioned of these other gods is caprice or whim (*hawā*), as in the verse, “Have you seen the one who takes his caprice as his god?” (25:43).

²⁴ The nearness of obligatory works is much discussed by Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers along with the nearness of supererogatory works (*nawāfil*). The distinction between the two is rooted in the famous *ḥadīth qudsī* in which God talks about the servant’s achieving a nearness such that God becomes his hearing and eyesight. For a detailed discussion of the hadith and these two sorts of nearness, see Chittick, *Sufi Path* 325-31.

friends are under My domes.” This friendship is specified for the perfect [*kāmil*] among His servants, those who have scattered and shed the garments of human nature [*bashariyya*], stepped beyond the holiness of the Invincibility and entered into the holiness of the Divinity.²⁵ These are the true asserters of *tawhīd* [*muwahhidūn*].

This friendship also has degrees. One of them is the annihilation of the servant in His Essence by the Divine Self-disclosure [*al-tajallī al-ilāhī*] and his subsistence through Him, by taking off contingent existence [*al-wujūd al-imkānī*] and putting on Real Existence [*al-wujūd al-ḥaqqānī*]. This is at the end of the first of the four journeys [*al-asfār al-arbaʿa*]²⁶ and the beginning of the second, which is the journey from the Real in the Real through the self-disclosures of the names. This is the station of Two-Bow’s Length [*qāb qawsayn*]:²⁷ one bow

²⁵ The terminology here derives from a standard way of discussing the “five divine presences” (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhiyyat al-khams*), that is, the five worlds or levels of being in which the all-comprehensive name Allāh makes manifest the full range of its properties and traces. These can be enumerated as Kingdom (*mulk*, the corporeal world) or Humanity (*nāsūt*, the physical, human realm), Sovereignty (*malakūt*, the spiritual realm), Invincibility (*jabarūt*, the realm of the divine acts), Divinity (*lāhūt*, the realm of the divine names and attributes), and He-ness (*hāhūt*, the Essence, God in Himself).

²⁶ This expression is of course the popular title of Mullā Ṣadrā’s magnum opus, but discussion of the four journeys long predates that work. Notice also that, as mentioned in the introduction, Qumshaʿī has a separate treatise on the four journeys.

²⁷ The term Two-Bow’s Length is derived from the Qurʾān’s account of Muḥammad’s night journey in 53:9, a verse that Qumshaʿī will cite later on. It is taken as a reference to what the philosophers usually call *al-mabdaʿ waʾl-maʿād*, “the Origin and the Return.” The two bows or arcs (*qaws*) together make up “the circle of existence” (*dāʾirat al-wujūd*). First is the descending,

from the beginning to the end of the level of Inclusive Unity [*wāḥidiyya*] by means of the divine tasks [*shuʿūn*]; the other bow from the level of Inclusive Unity to Exclusive Unity [*aḥadiyya*] by means of the Essential Self-disclosures and tasks.²⁸ This friendship is specific to Muḥammad and the Muhammadans, those who are his executors [*awṣiyāʾ*] and heirs [*waratha*]²⁹ by following him [*al-mutābaʿa lahu*].

As for the precedent prophets and their executors,³⁰ those who were approved to attain this [level of friendship] attained it as a state [*ḥāl*], not a station [*maqām*].³¹ This is indicated by

cosmogonic arc that brings about creation; and second the ascending, culminating arc through which human beings attain their entelechy. For some of Ibn al-ʿArabī’s seminal discussions of the two bows/arcs, see Chittick, *Self-Disclosure* 233-37.

²⁸ The contrast between inclusive and exclusive unity was remarked upon in the notes to the first treatise. Here Qumshaʿī takes the descending arc as the locus of manifestation for all the “tasks,” that is, the entities or realities that are embraced by God’s inclusive unity, and the ascending arc as the means whereby travelers re-integrate multiplicity into God’s exclusive unity.

²⁹ By “executors,” Qumshaʿī seems to be referring to the Twelve Imams, and by “inheritors” he seems rather to have in mind the “Muhammadan friends” such as Ibn al-ʿArabī. On the station of the Muhammadans, see Chittick, *Sufi Path* 376-79.

³⁰ According to Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, each of the seven great prophets (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and Muḥammad) had twelve executors, most of whom he names. *Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ* 155-56.

³¹ In the general Sufi understanding, a state is a passing gift, and a station is a permanent acquisition. In whatever way the two may be contrasted, a station is higher than a state. See *Sufi Path* 263-70.

the fact that [Muḥammad] saw the greatest of them in the spheres during his night journey—each of them in a sphere, whether in its soulish or intellectual level. And soul and intellect—that is, the souls of the spheres and their holy intellects—are His friends through the general, not the specific friendship, for their existences are contingent existences, not Real Existences. This is because Real Existence is a comprehensive [*jamʿī*], divine existence, and the existences of these are separative [*farqī*], contingent existences.

The spheres cannot attain and the angels cannot reach

what Adam's children grasp in their secret hearts.³²

And, we are talking about stations, not states.

So, the specific friendship—which is the Muhammadan friendship—may be qualified [*muqayyad*] by one of the [divine] names or its limits [*ḥudūd*]; or it may be unqualified [*muṭlaq*] by limits and naked [*muʿarrā*] of qualifications [*quyūd*] in that it comprehends [*jāmiʿ*] the manifestation of all the names and attributes and finds in itself the modalities [*anḥāʾ*] of the self-disclosures of the Essence.

Thus the Muhammadan friendship is unqualified and qualified, and each of these has degrees—the qualified [has them] through number [*ʿidda*], and the unqualified through intensity [*shidda*]. Each of them also has a Seal [*khātam*]. It is possible for one of the knowers [*ulamāʾ*] of Muḥammad's community to be the Seal of the qualified friendship, and for one of his executors to be the Seal of the unqualified friendship. And it may be that the unqualified friendship is ascribed to the general friendship, and the qualified, Muhammadan friendship to the specific friendship.

What I have mentioned repels the confusion and agitation concerning their words. It does not contradict their expressions, nor does it oppose the religious teachings [*diyānāt*].

³² The line is from the Divan of Saʿdī.

So, we say, beginning our words anew and branching off from and elaborating upon what was mentioned:

The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, is the Seal of the Friends through the unqualified, Muhammadan friendship by way of the first unqualifiedness, and the Seal of the qualified, Muhammadan friendship by way of the second unqualifiedness. It does not matter if the witnessing Shaykh [Ibn al-‘Arabī] is the Seal of the qualified Muhammadan friendship, and the Standing, Awaited Mahdī³³ is the Seal of the unqualified friendship in the first meaning and the Seal of the qualified friendship in the second meaning. The difference between him and his ancestor ‘Alī will come later.

Now, in order to clarify the manner in which each of them is specified for the station of sealhood that we have attributed to them, we say in elaboration that what is meant by “the Seal of the Friends” is not someone after whom will come no more friends in time [*zamān*]. Rather, what is meant is that his station is the highest level of friendship and the furthest degree of nearness such that no one is nearer to God than he; there is no level of nearness and friendship beyond his level.

So, the rightful friend and the unqualified ruler in nearness and friendship is the Master of the First and the Last, the Chosen of the Preceders and the Rejoiners,³⁴ the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers, Muḥammad. For he is nearer to God than all else, because he is the

³³ *Al-mahdī al-qā’im al-muntaẓar*, i.e., the Twelfth Imam. Al-Qā’im, the Standing One, is taken as one of the Mahdī’s several titles. It can signify that he has now arisen, because he was born and then went into “occultation” (*ghayba*) and dwells in the Unseen Realm (*ghayb*); and that he is standing and watching over the world, waiting for the appropriate time to return.

³⁴ *al-Sābiqūn wa’l-lāḥiqūn*. Qumsha’ī explains how he understands these two terms later in the text.

locus of manifestation [*mazhar*] for the name God [*Allāh*], which comprehends all names, and he is the true Adam, whom God created in His form [*ṣūra*]. Or rather, he is the same as that all-comprehensive name [*al-ism al-jāmi'*] in respect of being the locus of manifestation, for the locus of manifestation is the same as, and is the form of, the manifest, and the name is the same as the named. The distinction lies in the two modalities of manifestation: manifestation by essence and manifestation by attributes. The mutual distinction and separation is not because of his inadequacy in the stage of self-disclosure, but rather because of the impossibility for self-disclosure to be at the level of the Self-Discloser [*al-mutajallī*].

Nonetheless, when friendship becomes intensified and strengthened, it covers itself in the cover of prophethood and drapes itself in the drape of messengerhood, so it is hidden within them and concealed by them. In this there is a great secret and a far-reaching wisdom, but I do not care if I allude to it, for breasts are untrammelled and hearts vast, and praise belongs to God, the Vast, the Knowing.

So, I say: God put His friend [Muḥammad] among His servants and placed His beloved among His trustees [*umanā'*], for God's servants are God's trustees. This is because servanthood is acquiescence [*inqiyād*], and the servant does not step beyond the command of his master and patron. "And your Lord has decreed that you serve none but Him" [17:23], and that decree is the very fact that they are servants of God. It is incumbent on the trustee to restore the trust [*amāna*] to its Owner,³⁵ but extraneous accidents impede the restoration of the deposited trust. Hence it is incumbent upon that friend, by virtue of his being "a mercy to the worlds" [21:107], to help them restore the deposit. That restoration takes place only through their returning [*rujū'*] to Him, because the deposit is nothing but their essences and selves.

³⁵ There is an allusion here to Qur'ān 4:58, "God commands you to deliver trusts back to their folk."

Part of His mercy toward them is that He makes their road smooth and guides them to a Straight Path. And there is no path that is not straight, because of His words, “Guide us on the Straight Path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not of those against whom is wrath, nor of those who are astray” [1:5-7].

Hence [Muḥammad] is robed in the robe of the prophethood of both knowledge-giving [*taʿrīf*] and Law-giving [*tashrīʿ*], so that he may aid them by taking them back and conveying them to God so as to restore the Trust.³⁶ For, knowledge-giving and Law-giving are guidance and instruction, and all of this requires the return of everyone to God. “Surely unto God all affairs come home” [42:53]. “Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return” [2:156].

“So remind those who fear My threat of the Qurʾān” [50:45]. In other words, remind those who fear My threat that it will pass away and that they will come together with Me, for the “Qurʾān” is the “bringing together” [*jamʿ*].³⁷ This is because laudation acknowledges the truthfulness of the promise, not the threat, for the promise’s truthfulness does not contradict the threat’s passing away.³⁸ This is demonstrated rationally by the fact that constraint [*qasr*]

³⁶ The distinction between these two sorts of prophecy is basic to the distinction that Ibn al-ʿArabī draws between prophet and friend; Qumshaʿī discusses it later in the treatise.

³⁷ For some of the conclusions that Ibn al-ʿArabī draws from this primary signification of the word *qurʾān*, see *Sufi Path* 239-41.

³⁸ Ibn al-ʿArabī often mentions thinkers who maintain that God will enact his threats (*infādh al-waʿid*), sometimes identifying them with the Muʿtazilites. He rejects their opinion because of God’s mercy. In section 47 of Chapter 198 (on “The Breath of the All-Merciful”), he summarizes his own position, and refers along the way to the connection with praise and laudation that Qumshaʿī has just mentioned. He says, among other things, “The Law descended in the tongue of the folk of the Messenger, so it addressed them with what accorded with their convention

has no permanence and that everything seeks its own perfection. The verses about “foreverness” [*khulūd*] do not contradict this, because that is “as long as the heavens and the earth continue” [11:107-8]. In other words, it is as long as the traces of the celestial and terrestrial natures remain among the Folk of the Fire. How could it be otherwise? For God says, “O My servants who have been immoderate toward yourselves! Despair not of God’s mercy! Surely God forgives all sins; surely He is the Forgiving, the Ever-Merciful” [39:53].

“Immoderation toward the self” takes place only through unbelief and disobedience, but God knows the secrets of affairs, so He called despairing of His mercy “unbelief” and “disobedience.” He promised them forgiveness for all sins, and He described Himself as the Forgiving, the Ever-Merciful. It is necessary for Him to fulfill His covenant,³⁹ for He seeks

[*tawāṭuʿ*]. What accorded with their convention concerning someone described by generosity and perfection is that he enacts his promises, not his threats. . . It has come in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ‘Nothing is more beloved to God than that He be praised,’ and praising [*madḥ*] for passing over the evildoer is the utmost praise, so God is most worthy of it.” *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Cairo, 1911), vol. 2, p. 474, line 13.

³⁹ By saying “it is necessary” (*wajaba*), Qumshaʿī is alluding to the distinction that Ibn al-ʿArabī draws between *raḥmat al-imtinān*, the mercy of free-gift, and *raḥmat al-wujūb*, the mercy of necessity. The first embraces all things, and the second God makes necessary upon himself in the case of those who follow the prophets; reference is made to both in Qurʾān 7:156: “My mercy embraces everything, and I shall write it for those who are godwary.” See the beginning of the chapter on Solomon in the *Fuṣūṣ*; also Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1983), pp. 121 ff.

praiseworthy laudation. Hence it is required that the final issue [*maʿāl*] of everyone be at mercy.⁴⁰

As for His saying, “God does not forgive that something be associated with Him, but He forgives what is less than that” [4:48], that is a threat. Threats are only for instilling fear and wariness, as He says, “We send the signs,” that is, the signs that threaten, “only to instill fear” [17:59]; [“We have turned about in it something of threats] that perhaps they may be wary” [20:113]. But, He promises to pass over, for He says, “and We shall pass over their ugly deeds” [46:16]. Do not suppose that God will break His promise to His messengers. “The Pen has dried over what shall be,” and God knows the secrets of affairs. So, I am saying only that God’s mercy is vast, that “His mercy takes precedence over His wrath,” and that “God does” in His kingdom “as He wishes” [14:27].

Let us now return to the matter of friendship and the levels of the Seal within it. We say at the outset: Friendship is a divine attribute and one of the essential tasks that demand manifestation. He alludes to it with His words, “He is the Friend, the Praiseworthy” [42:28]. He has this attribute generally in respect to everything other than God, not in respect to some things rather than others, because of the equality [*istiwāʿ*] of His relation to things. In commenting on *istawāʿ alā* [Qurʾān 20:5], [the seventh Imam] Mūsā al-Kāẓim, said, “He is equal toward everything, so nothing is nearer to Him than anything else.” Another version has, “He is equal in [*istawāʿ fī*] everything, so nothing far from Him is far, and nothing near to Him is near.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ That everyone’s “final issue” will be at mercy is one of Ibn al-ʿArabī’s frequent themes. See Chittick, *Ibn ʿArabi: Heir to the Prophets* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), chapter 9.

⁴¹ Versions of this saying are given by Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Wafāʿ, 1983), vol. 3, pp. 336-37.

His form is also general and envelops everything other than God. This form that envelops everything other than God is nothing other than the fixed, Muhammadan entity.⁴² This one form is not a form of two distinct things horizontally [*fi'l-ʿarḍ*], so the two names are in vertical order [*tūl al-tartīb*]. And, the name Friend is the nonmanifest [*bāṭin*] of the name God, for friendship is more concealed than Godhood [*al-ilāhiyya*]. Hence friendship is the nonmanifest of Godhood, so it is the hidden secret and the secret that is masked by the secret. Godhood is the nonmanifest of the Muhammadan Reality, so friendship is the nonmanifest of the Muhammadan Reality, and this Reality is the manifest [*zāhir*] of the two and the form of the two. The manifest, moreover, is the same as the nonmanifest, and the nonmanifest is the same as the manifest. The difference and duality lie in the rational distinction, though they are united in existence.

As if wine, and no cup,
or cup, and no wine.⁴³

⁴² A fixed entity (*ʿayn thābita*) is a thing (*shayʿ*) as known to God. Ibn al-ʿArabī explains that there are two ways of looking at things or entities. Inasmuch as they are present in the knowledge of God—“God knows all things” (Qurʾān)—they are “nonexistent” (*maʿdūm*), that is, they have no existence in the world and are “fixed” and unchanging, which is to say that God knows them as such always and forever. Inasmuch as they have been given existence—“When God desires a thing, He says to it ‘Be!’” (Qurʾān)—they are “existent entities” (*aʿyān mawjūda*). The only difference between fixed entities and existent entities is that the latter are considered inasmuch as “Be!” has been said to them. In terms of their thingness (*shayʿiyya*), the two sorts of entity are the same (*ʿayn*). This thingness is what the philosophers call the things’ “quiddity” or “whatness” (*māhiyya*), as contrasted with their existence.

⁴³ A famous line of Ṣāhib ibn ʿAbbād, frequently quoted in Sufi texts.

So, the Muhammadan Reality is the unqualified divine friendship that becomes manifest through the attributes of [Muḥammad's] perfection and the descriptions of his beauty. It is the all-comprehensive prophethood of knowledge-giving and Law-giving.

You have heard that a thing's manifestation is its being unveiled in one respect and its being veiled in another respect.⁴⁴ So, friendship is both hidden and concealed by prophethood. By my life! Had [friendship] not been concealed within [prophethood] thereby making blindness general, had it not robed itself in that robe, and had it become manifest in its untrammelled, unmixed essence, the Muhammadan Reality would have been incinerated [*iḥtirāq*], and, with its incineration, the heavens, the earth, and everything between the two would also have been incinerated. For, it is their source and their place of return, since there is nothing in existence save "God, the One, the All-subjugating" [40:16]. He alluded to this with His words, "If not for thee, I would not have created the spheres."⁴⁵

Next, the unqualified, divine, Muhammadan friendship became manifest in the description of friendship and in the form of friendship, so it became the friend of God, the vicegerent of God, and the vicegerent of God's Messenger. Then it became manifest "each day upon a task" [55:29] among its tasks and in every locus of manifestation through one of its

⁴⁴ A commonplace observation in Sufi texts. See Chittick, *Sufism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), chapter 10.

⁴⁵ This *ḥadīth qudsī*, addressed to the Prophet, is often quoted in this form. It is not found in the most authoritative hadith collections, but some experts consider it authentic in the version, "If not for thee, I would not have created this world [*al-dunyā*]." Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1347/1968), p. 172.

descriptions. So, it became the proofs [*hujaj*]⁴⁶ of God, His vicegerents, and the vicegerents of His Messenger to the point where it became manifest in all of its attributes. Hence it became their Standing One [*qā'im*], their locus of manifestation, and the locus of manifestation for their executors. All of them are one light and one reality; their diversity lies in the manifestation of the attributes of their root reality, which is the unqualified, divine, Muhammadan friendship. I am not saying that their fixed entities are diverse; no rather, there is one entity, fixed in the knowledge of the Divine Unseen, whose manifestations in knowledge are diverse in that homestead.

So, listen to what I am saying so as to conceive of that: I say that you understand “quantity” [*miqdār*], for example, with your disengaged intellect [*‘aql mujarrad*]. This meaning is an intellective, disengaged form, without measure or shape. Then you imagine this disengaged, universal meaning with your imagining faculty. The meaning becomes a quantitative form, but you do not ascribe anything to it, nor do you take anything away from it. So, the one meaning became manifest first as disengaged and universal, and second as disengaged and particular. There is no difference in terms of adding something or subtracting something. The only difference is in the task and the manifestation.

You may say: The difference lies in disengaging [*tajrīd*] by the intellect and enclothing [*talbīs*] by imagination. No, intellect does not disengage quantity except from itself, and imagination does not enclothe it except in itself.

Now make this a staircase to the recognition that one entity may be numerous entities without difference in essence and accidents. The fixed, Muhammadan entity is the same as the

⁴⁶ A reference to friends generally or to a certain sort of friend, as evidenced by the typical understanding of the saying of ‘Alī, which Qumsha’ī quotes later, “The earth will never be empty of God’s proof.”

entities of his executors and his vicegerents. Given that the friendship is one and the entity is one, and given that there is difference only in manifestation through the essential, latent attributes, [‘Alī] spoke the truth with his words, “The first of us is Muḥammad, the last of us is Muḥammad, the middlemost of us is Muḥammad, and all of us are Muḥammad.”⁴⁷

Do not stop at the apparent meaning that he is named Muḥammad at first, in the middle, and at last, even though his words, “and all of us are Muḥammad,” refute it. With this are eliminated the disagreement and contradiction in our words, “Sometimes the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship is the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and sometimes it is the promised, awaited Mahdī,” because both of them, or rather, all of them, are one light and one reality in essence and attributes. The diversity lies in the tasks and the manifestations in keeping with the diversity of the moments and the far-reaching, divine wisdom.

It is now obvious that the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship is the Muhammadan Reality, which took off the clothing of prophethood, became robed in the robe of friendship, and came to be manifest in the form of [Muḥammad’s] inerrant executors. If you want, you can say “Commander of the Faithful”; and if you want, you can speak of any of the inerrant Imams. However, their Standing One [*qā’im*] is the most worthy of that, because all the attributes become manifest in him. Given that this is the situation in the world of Knowledge and the Unseen, it is the same in the world of the outside realm [*‘ayn*] and the Visible.

Then, when that Divine, Muhammadan friendship descends from the stages of Necessity [*wujūb*] to the waystations of contingency [*imkān*], the first of its waystations is the station of the Divine Spirit. This is the station of Jesus, son of Mary. The proof of that is [God’s

⁴⁷ The first three clauses are part of a long saying of ‘Alī addressed to Salmān al-Fārisī. Fayḍ Kāshānī cites them from *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn* by Rajab ibn Muḥammad al-Bursī in *Kalimāt-i mahnūna*, edited by ‘Azīz Allāh al-‘Aṭārudī al-Qūchānī (Tehran: Farāhānī, 1342/1963), p. 200.

words], “His word that He cast to Mary, and a spirit from Him” [4:171]. So, he was the spirit of God, and he was a friend, because of his nearness to the Real. He was also the Seal of the Friends in engendered being [*al-kawn*], because there is none nearer to God than he in the Visible Realm, for he is the opener [*fātiḥa*] of existence, and the opener is the sealer [*khātima*].⁴⁸ His friendship was concealed in his prophethood, because the World of the Visible conforms to the World of the Unseen, and in the World of the Unseen friendship is hidden in prophethood. His friendship will become manifest when he descends, and then his manifestations in the Unseen and the Visible will coincide. He will become manifest through friendship after prophethood in himself, so it may be known that the Commander of the Faithful is the Messenger’s self that became manifest through friendship. The proof of this His words, “and ourselves and yourselves” [3:61],⁴⁹ so He called the Commander of the Faithful the self of Muḥammad.

I said that [Jesus] is the Seal of the Friends in engendered being only because his existence remains comprehensive [*jamʿī*], not separative [*farqī*], and because he is a spirit, and

⁴⁸ Presumably Qumshaʿī means that Jesus, as the Spirit, is God’s first creation through which all other creatures came into engendered being. Thus he is the “opener,” and by the same token he is the “sealer,” that is, the last, the one by means of whom all things rejoin God, for the alpha and omega of creation are the same.

⁴⁹ This phrase is from a verse that challenges a group of Christians to call God to witness concerning the truth of their claims. Muḥammad is instructed to tell them, “Come now, let us call our sons and your sons, our wives and your wives, our selves and your selves, then let us humbly pray and so lay God’s curse upon the ones who lie.” According to the commentators, Muḥammad went before the Christians with his family—ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn—and recited these words, but they were afraid to accept the challenge.

the spirit is one of the contingent things. As for the self of the Messenger, that passed beyond the boundary of contingency, and his existence was comprehensive and divine. He alluded to this with his words, “My satan has submitted to me.” “So he was two-bows’ length away, or closer” [53:9]. That is why “The scholars of” his “community are more excellent than the prophets of the children of Israel,”⁵⁰ for they fly out of the cage of contingency into the space [faḍāʾ] of Necessity and Divinity [al-lāhūt], because their essences are annihilated in Him and they subsist through Him.

His friendship—that is, the friendship of Jesus—lacks this all-comprehensiveness, so it is not a Muhammadan friendship.⁵¹ For he is the Seal of the general friendship of the believers and he is one of the beauties [ḥasanāt] of the Seal of the specific, Muhammadan friendship, who is the promised, awaited Mahdī. That is why [Jesus] is [the Mahdī’s] follower, his helper, and the destroyer of his enemies. In the same way, Iblis and Dajjāl are among the ugly things [sayyiʾāt] of that promised Qāʾim, and “The beauties will take away the ugly things” [11:114].

Do not be surprised at what you have heard, for the first and the last are among his manifestations and his tasks. The proof of this is their words instructing us, “Your mention is in the mentioners, your names in the names, your bodies in the bodies, your spirits in the spirits, your souls in the souls, your traces in the traces, and your graves in the graves.”⁵² All

⁵⁰ A purported prophetic hadith.

⁵¹ Ibn al-ʿArabī maintains, however, that “Jesus is a Muhammadan. That is why he will descend at the end of time. Through him God will seal the greater friendship” (*Futūḥāt* 3: 507.4; cited in *Sufi Path* 377).

⁵² The clauses are quoted from a long prayer to be recited in visiting the graves of the Imams (*Biḥār al-anwār* 99: 132).

are pluralized and marked with the definite article—this proves their generality [*‘umūm*]. Iblis is not outside of those plurals and their generality, nor is Dajjāl.

The Pole of the Gnostics, Muḥyi’l-Dīn al-A‘rābī [sic] said in the *Futūḥāt*,

Surely the Seal of the Friends is witness,

though the entity of the worlds’ leader is not present.

He is the Qā’im, the Mahdī of Aḥmad’s family—

he will be the Indian blade when he exterminates.

He is the sun that will clear away clouds and darkness,

the downpour that is graceful and generous.⁵³

So, he called him “the worlds’ leader,” and *the worlds* [*al-ālamīn*] is a plural marked by the definite article, so it conveys generality. Jesus belongs to the worlds, and the Spirit also pertains to the worlds. Even if you read it as *the knowers* [*al-‘ālimīn*], Jesus and the Spirit are still included in the generality of the knowers, for they are among the knowers, or rather, [among the] the firmly-rooted [in knowledge, *al-rāsikhīn*]. Thus he explicitly made him the leader of Jesus and the Spirit. So, listen with the hearing of acceptance, and “Do not follow caprice” [4:135], for caprice will “bring” you “forth from the light into the darknesses,” and you will be “inhabitants of the Fire” and you will “be there forever” [2:257].

Now that you have recognized their levels in the descent [*nuzūl*] of existence, recognize them also in its ascent [*ṣu‘ūd*], through their words, “We are the preceders, the rejoiners.”⁵⁴ In

⁵³ *Futūḥāt* 3: 328.5. The printed edition of the *Futūḥāt* has *al-sayyid* in place of *al-qā’im*.

⁵⁴ That ‘Alī and the Imams are the “preceders” (*sābiqūn*) mentioned in the Qur’ān is the topic of a small chapter in *Bihār al-anwār* (35: 332-35), but the chapter says nothing about the “rejoiners” (*lāḥiqūn*).

other words, our ascending ipseities [*huwiyyāt*] will rejoin our preceding, descending ipseities. If you want more clarification, listen to what will be said to you:

Let us verify the reality of friendship beginning with new words. We say: Friendship is a universal, divine reality. Like other universal, divine realities, its property becomes manifest in all things, whether necessary or contingent, for it is an attendant of existence, roaming along with it. Just as existence has disparate degrees of perfection and deficiency, intensity and weakness, in keeping with manifestation, so also friendship has disparate degrees of perfection and deficiency, intensity and weakness, which are predicated of it and ascribed to it by way of gradation [*tashkīk*]. For, [friendship] means nearness, and nothing is nearer to the things than He—exalted is He!—in the two stations of comprehension [*jamʿ*] and separation [*farq*], differentiation [*tafṣīl*] and undifferentiation [*ijmāl*]. How could it not be so? For He is the same as the things in both stations. Nearness is His relation, and there is “relation” when there are two related things. So, the Real is near to the things, and the things are near to Him.

When existence comes to rest in nonexistence, its descriptions are negated and its properties are concealed, to the point that its name is stripped from it and its designation disappears. In the same way, when friendship descends to [nonexistence] and ends therein, its property disappears from it and its name is stripped away from it. It is not said concerning dusky and dark things “friends of God,” nor of stones, clods of earth, disbelievers, and the depraved. In the same way, one does not say that they are “existent things” [*mawjūdāt*].⁵⁵ This is because the light and attributes of existence have been subjugated, and the darkness and properties of nonexistence predominate. So, when existence comes forth from its hiding place

⁵⁵ The argument clearly depends on an understanding of existence as the same as the Real; otherwise, it is commonly said in Islamic thought that any “thing” (*shayʿ*) is “existent” in some respect or another; even a figment of imagination has mental existence.

and is illumined by the light of faith, its properties become manifest, its attributes predominate, and it comes to be described by friendship according to the disparity of its degrees. “God is the friend of those who have faith; He brings them forth from the darkneses to the light” [2:257]. Then existence advances and friendship is intensified, in keeping with the advances of faith, so that they reach beyond the levels of earthly souls to the levels of heavenly souls, and from there to the world of holiness; they rise up in the degrees of the holiness of the Invincibility until they reach the station of the Greatest Spirit, which is the station of Jesus, son of Mary. “. . . And a word that He cast to Mary, and a spirit from Him” [4:171]. Here the general friendship is sealed, as opposed to the specific Muhammadan friendship; this is the general, Muhammadan friendship in the station of creation and contingency.

Then existence advances and friendship intensifies beyond the level of contingency, entering into the holy sanctuary of the Divinity by transformation from contingency into necessity, and by annihilation in God and subsistence through Him, which purifies friendship from hidden, concealed *shirk*. This is the “Clear Opening,” by which He “forgives” him his “former sins and the latter” [48:1-2]. It is this friendship that is aimed for by the gnostics of this mercy-given community. Here the friend travels in the levels of the specific friendship and the degrees of the Godhead [*al-ulūhiyya*] until he travels in all the divine names and reaches the level of all the names; he becomes a leader [*imām*] and a point of reference [*marjaʿ*] for all the specific and general friends. All seek shelter in him and take effusion from him. This is one of the meanings of the saying of [the eighth Imam] ‘Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā, “The sultan is God’s shadow; everyone who is wronged [*mazlūm*] takes shelter in him.” For the

names descend from heaven and from the friends, especially the elect among them, those who wrong [*muzlimūn*] themselves, for they annihilate [*mufnūn*] themselves in God.⁵⁶

This all-comprehensive friendship, once it is intensified, is one of His attributes, that to which is alluded by His words, “And He is the Friend, the Praiseworthy” [42:28]. It may become manifest in the perfection of its intensity. Then it is prophethood as both knowledge-giving and Law-giving. It is thereby concealed by prophethood, and the one who possesses it is the Seal of the Prophets, for complete manifestation is a veil, no doubt. In the same way, the Real is hidden by His extreme manifestation.

⁵⁶ Grammatically, *al-muzlimūn li-anfusihim* should mean “those who darken themselves,” and this may be what Qumsha’ī means to say. The context, however, not least the parallelism with *mufnūn*, suggests that he has in mind the Qur’ān’s discussion of those who wrong (*zālimūn*) themselves, an expression that usually denotes evildoers. Ibn al-‘Arabī often talks about a certain type of *zālimūn li-anfusihim* who are friends of God, especially on the basis of Qur’ān 35:32: “Then We gave the Book as an inheritance to those whom We have chosen from among our servants; so, among them is the one who wrongs himself, among them is the moderate one, and among them is the foremost in good.” Such friends of God “wrong themselves” by forbidding their own selves (*nafs*) from partaking in certain rights (*ḥaqq*) that God has given to them, but they do so “for the sake of themselves” (*li-ajl anfusihim*; *Futūḥāt* 2: 136.33, 532.34), that is, for the sake of the long-term welfare of their own souls. Ibn al-‘Arabī also explains that those who carry the Trust (*al-amāna*, Qur’ān 33:72), which is the vicegerency of God, “wrong themselves” because the self is defined by its servanthood (*‘ubūdiyya*), but they transgress its limits by undertaking vicegerency, which is an attribute of lordship (*rubūbiyya*) rather than servanthood; this explains why the verse of the Trust calls them *zālūm*, “wrongdoing” (*Futūḥāt* 2: 160.30). See also *Futūḥāt* 4: 73.11, 193.1.

It may also descend slightly from the perfection of its intensity, a descent in which the attribute of friendship dominates over the attribute of prophethood. Then Law-giving is hidden and knowledge-giving remains, because of the descent of the name-based and engendered equilibrium of the constitution [*‘tidāl al-mizāj al-asmā’ī wa’l-kawnī*].⁵⁷ This was the case with the Commander of the Faithful in relation to the Seal of the Prophets, for he knew the knowledge [*‘ulūm*] of the former and the latter folk, as has been reported,⁵⁸ and part of that was the Laws [*sharā’i’*]. Thus [all-comprehensive friendship] was not robed in the robe of prophethood, but became manifest in the attributes of friendship. The one who possesses it is the Seal of the Friends, the locus of manifestation for God, the Friend, the Praiseworthy. He is the predominating friend of God ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, for he was the nearest of people to the Seal of the Prophets in the Unseen and the Visible.

The author of the *Futūḥāt*, after mentioning that our Prophet was the first to become manifest in existence, says “And the nearest of people to him was ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the leader

⁵⁷ In traditional medicine, the health of a person’s constitution (*mizāj*) is determined by the equilibrium or disequilibrium of the “mixture” (*imtizāj*) of the four humors. In the same way, the health of the whole person, made in God’s form, is established by the equilibrium of the divine and engendered attributes that make up the full human constitution. Qumsha’ī is employing the standard contrast between *ilāhī*, “divine” (that which is uncreated, e.g., the divine names and attributes) and *kawnī*, “engendered” (the created, that which derives from the engendering command, “Be!” [*kun*]).

⁵⁸ The editor thinks that Qumsha’ī has this report in mind (citing it from *Biḥār al-anwār*): “When the people swore allegiance to the Commander of the Faithful as caliph, he went out to the mosque. . . . Then he said, ‘O people! Ask of me before you lose me, for I have the knowledge the former and the latter folk.’”

of the world and the secret⁵⁹ of all the prophets.”⁶⁰ The hadith-scholar [Fayḍ] al-Kāshānī quotes this from him in his *Kalimāt al-maknūna*.⁶¹ I say: His words here provide evidence that in his view, as in ours, the Seal of unqualified, divine friendship is ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, not Jesus, for three reasons:

First, [Ibn al-‘Arabī] says explicitly that [‘Alī] was the nearest of people to him. This is unqualified, so it embraces formal [ṣūrī] and supraformal [*ma‘nawī*] friendship, that is, that which pertains to both the Visible and the Unseen realms. The superlative mode shows either

⁵⁹ “Secret” translates *sirr*, which can mean secret or mystery in the sense of a hidden knowledge, but which also commonly designates “the secret heart,” the deepest level of human consciousness. Here, however, Qumshā’ī seems to have in mind an even deeper dimension of the human reality, the uncreated, fixed entity. Ibn al-‘Arabī sometimes enumerates the levels of the human reality as body, soul, spirit, and divine secret (*al-sirr al-ilāhī*), the last being the same as the “specific face” (*al-wajh al-khāṣṣ*), that is, the specific face of God turned toward each and every existent thing, unique to that thing. This is none other than the thing’s fixed entity. See *Futūḥāt* 1: 168.20 (corresponding to the critical edition of Osman Yahia [Cairo: al-Hay’at al-Miṣriyyat al-‘Āmma li’l-Kitāb, 1972-92], vol. 3, p. 92); 3: 295.19, 343.22. On the specific face, see Chittick, *Self-Disclosure* 135-55.

⁶⁰ The text as cited here is found in a copy of the first redaction of the *Futūḥāt* that was made within forty years of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s death; it is noted in the apparatus to the text as published by Othman Yahia. Yahia’s chosen text, however, is based on the second redaction in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own hand, and reads like this: “And the nearest of people to him was ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and the secrets [*asrār*] of all the prophets” (*Futūḥāt* 1: 119.31; Yahia 2: 227).

⁶¹ *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* 203. The printed edition of this book does not have the words “and the secret of all the prophets,” though, as we saw, the *Futūḥāt* passage does include them.

that he is superior to the ones to whom he is compared, or that superiority is negated from them. In the first case, his nearness to him is greater than anyone else, and so also in the second case, for the source of unqualified friendship, as you have come to know, is the Seal of the Prophets. So, whoever is nearest to him—that is, nearer to him than anyone else—is the Seal of that friendship. The Seals are not many, so the one who is nearer to him than anyone else is not many, and his nearness to him is greater than anyone else's. Hence he is the Seal of friendship, and everyone else is below him and under his banner and takes from him. Now, among the friends is Gabriel, and 'Alī is his teacher, as is well known.⁶² As for Jesus, he was from the inblowing [*nafkh*] of Gabriel,⁶³ which is why [Jesus] was “a spirit from Him” [4:171], so he took from [Gabriel].

Second, he says explicitly that he is the leader of the world, and Jesus is part of the world. Hence he is the leader of Jesus, and the leader has priority over the led. Hence 'Alī has priority over Jesus, so he is the Seal, not Jesus.

Third, he says explicitly that he is the secret of all the prophets, and Jesus is one of the prophets. So he is his secret, and the secret of the prophets is their friendship. Hence, through his friendship, he pervades him and the other prophets, for his friendship is the unqualified friendship that pervades all qualified things, and the qualified things are his tasks,

⁶² The editor of the text remarks that there are reports that the Imams taught the angels how to glorify and praise God and that the specification of 'Alī as the teacher of Gabriel is apparently “among the well-known things” (*az mashūrāt*), which is to say that he is not aware of a specific hadith saying so.

⁶³ Reference to the Qur'ānic accounts of Mary's becoming inseminated by means of Gabriel (21:91, 66:12).

his manifestations, and everything that is taken from him. He is the Seal, and everyone takes from him, so Jesus takes from him.

If you say that the Shaykh has said explicitly more than once that Jesus is the Seal of the Friends, I will reply that he means the Seal of the general friendship that is contrasted with the specific friendship, not the general friendship that embraces both, as I said. I will return to this, God willing.

Master Rūmī says explicitly what the Shaykh says, in these verses:

As soon as form was joined with the world, ‘Alī was there;

When earth and time were painted, ‘Alī was there.

The king who was both executor and friend was ‘Alī;

the sultan of generosity, nobility, and munificence was ‘Alī.

Adam, Seth, Idris, and Job,

Jonah, Joseph, and Hud were ‘Alī.

Moses, Jesus, Khizr, and Elias,

Salih the prophet and David were ‘Alī.

Jesus came into existence and spoke in the cradle—

his speech and fluency were ‘Alī.

When the angels bowed to Adam, that was from ‘Alī.

The one to whom is bowed in Muḥammad’s Kaabah is ‘Alī.

Listen to “Your flesh is my flesh” to know

that the companion who was the Prophet’s self was ‘Alī.

That eminent king who, on the night of the *mi‘rāj*,

was one with Aḥmad the Chosen was ‘Alī.

Those were not praiseworthy [*maḥmūd*] who did not see

that in the road of religion Aḥmad and Maḥmūd are ‘Alī.

The meaning of the Qur’ān to which God in the whole Qur’ān

gave the attribute of inerrancy and extolled was ‘Alī.

This is not unbelief, these are not words of unbelief—

‘Alī has always been, and ‘Alī will always be.

Up to the point where he says,

The secret of both worlds, of everything apparent and hidden,

displayed by Shams-i Tabrīzī was ‘Alī.⁶⁴

These verses show that he is the Seal of the unqualified friendship because he is the self of God’s Messenger, as shown by “our selves,” and the secret of the prophets and messengers, and he is given priority over all of them, including Jesus. This is clear, without need for explanation.

Let us now return to our goal. We say: Next, friendship descended in its waystations within the holiness of the Divinity, then descended within the holiness of the Invincibility, and then it came to rest in the Spirit, which is the station of Jesus. Then it descended until it embraced the faithful and came to rest in them in accordance with the disparity of their degrees in faith. Jesus is the first of them and their Seal in respect of adhering to the order [bi-

⁶⁴ Although commonly ascribed to Rūmī, this ghazal is not included in the critical edition of his Divan, and few who are familiar with his style would imagine that he could have authored it. Fayḍ quotes a slightly different version, with four more verses, in his *Kalimāt al-maknūna* (203-4) directly after quoting the passage from Ibn al-‘Arabī in praise of ‘Alī that Qumsha’ī has just quoted. Unlike Qumsha’ī, Fayḍ does not attribute the poem to Rūmī, though the mention of Shams-i Tabrīzī implies, of course, that the poem is from his Divan.

i'tibār akhdh al-tartīb]. In the same way, 'Alī is the first of them all and their Seal in contradistinction [*bi-ikhtilāf*] to adhering to the order.

* * *

Let us now begin to explain the book, clarify the aim of its author, and point out the road taken by the 'Allāma al-Qayṣarī in clarifying his aim. I say, asking God for success in being protected from error in my views:

[Ibn al-'Arabī] says: “[**This knowledge belongs to none but the Seal of the Messengers and the Seal of the Friends.**] No prophet and messenger sees Him [except from the niche of the Messenger, the Seal, and no friend sees Him except from the niche of the Friend, the Seal. Even the messengers, when they see Him, see Him only from the niche of the Seal of the Friends.]” Then he says, “For messengerhood [and prophethood—I mean the prophethood of Law-giving and its messengerhood—have been cut off, but friendship will never be cut off].”⁶⁵ This follows up on the description of the Seal of the Prophets and the Seal of the Friends, for, having mentioned that this knowledge belongs only to these two, and having already mentioned that the servant sees the Real in the mirror of himself—or rather, that he sees his own form in the mirror of the Real—he wanted to mention that this vision derives from their niche, or rather, from the niche of the Seal of the Friends.

This is because of what you have come to know: Everyone who sees the Real sees Him in the form of his own entity. So, the prophets see Him in the form of their own fixed entities, which are among the tasks and loci of manifestation for the fixed Muhammadan entity in respect of the fact that [Muḥammad] is a prophet and a messenger. Each of the entities of the

⁶⁵ *Fuṣūṣ* 62; Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* 436-38.

prophets is a niche of his prophethood and his messengerhood. Hence they see from the niche of the Seal of the Prophets.

In the same way, the friends see Him in the forms of their own entities, and their entities are the tasks and loci of manifestation of that [Muhammadan] entity in respect of the fact that [Muḥammad] is a friend; or rather, in respect of the fact that it is an entity of friendship. Each of the entities of the friends is a niche of his friendship, so they see Him from the niche of the Seal of the Friends. To this is the allusion in his words, “**Even the messengers, when they see Him, see Him only from the niche of the Seal of the Friends.**”

Know also that the ‘Allāma al-Qayṣarī interprets “Seal of the Friends” here as the one who is the complete locus of manifestation for the friendship of the Messenger, the Seal. This is a correct statement; there is no doubt about it. Then he specifies that he is Jesus, but here there are considerations, because the closer the locus of manifestation is to the manifest, the more complete it is; and none of the friends is closer to it than the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, because of God’s words, “and ourselves” [3:61]. Hence He stipulated that he is the self of the Messenger, and there is nothing nearer to a thing than itself. And also because of the words of the author, “And the nearest of people to him was ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the leader of the world and the secret of all the prophets.” So, here by “Seal of the Friends” he must mean ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, not Jesus.

As for the words of the ‘Allāma al-Qayṣarī, “**As will be explained,**” that will be answered.

You have already come to know that [‘Alī’s] being the Seal of the Friends does not contradict the fact that the Owner of this Age [the Mahdī] is the Seal of the Friends in this meaning, because the two—or rather, because all of them—are one entity. I explained that.

Then the mentioned ‘Allāma says, “**The owner of this level, in respect of the nonmanifest, is also the Seal of the Messengers, because he is the all-comprehensive locus of manifestation. So, just as God discloses Himself to creation from behind the veils of the names that pertain to His level, so also this Seal discloses himself to creation from the world of his Unseen in the form of the Seal of the Friends. Hence this Seal is a locus of manifestation for the complete friendship.**”⁶⁶

In these words is a complete confirmation of what we said concerning the fact that [‘Alī] is this Seal as well as the locus of manifestation for the complete friendship, because he is the form of the unseen Seal of all the friends, just as the Shaykh said: “And the secret of all the prophets.” And God’s Messenger is one of the prophets, so he is the secret and the unseen of God’s Messenger. His “secret” is his friendship, and his friendship is the Seal of friendship. That is why he was with him on the night of the Ascent and was informed of his secret, for [‘Alī] reported it to [Muḥammad] before he reported it about himself. Concerning this it was said,

The gnostic traveler told God’s secret to no one—

I am bewildered: Where did the wine-seller hear about it?⁶⁷

From here it also becomes obvious that the Seal of the Friends is one of the beauties of the Seal of the Prophets—as the Shaykh will point out explicitly—because he is one of his manifestations and tasks. That is why he said, “I am one of Muḥammad’s servants,” for the servant of a thing is one of its manifestations and tasks, just as God’s servants in both the

⁶⁶ Qayṣarī 437.

⁶⁷ Ḥāfiẓ. The editor of the text cites a similar interpretation of this verse from Shāh Muḥammad Dārābī, *Laṭīfa-yi ghaybī* (Shiraz: Aḥmadī, n.d.), pp. 83-84.

Kingdom [*mulk*] and the Sovereignty [*malakūt*]⁶⁸ are His manifestations and tasks. Lordship and servanthood are not realized and cannot possibly come to be except by way of being-Manifest [*zāhiriyya*] and being-locus-of-manifestation [*maḥhariyya*]. That is why He says, “He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Nonmanifest” [57:3]. The Imam speaking the truth, the source of knowledge and gnostic sciences, Abū ‘Abdallāh Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq said, “Servanthood is a pearl whose core is Lordship.”⁶⁹

So, perish the tongues of those who say that the friend is more perfect than the prophet and who ascribe this reckless statement to the possessors of knowledge and gnosis!

[Ibn al-‘Arabī’s] words, “**For messengerhood [and prophethood—I mean the prophethood of Law-giving and its messengerhood—have been cut off, but friendship will never be cut off]**”: The ‘Allāma’s explanation has no need of clarification, except that he did not make explicit the connection with what came before, and that is this: It can be gathered from what came before that the side of friendship is higher and more eminent than the side of prophethood, and perhaps people’s natures will consider these words farfetched. Considering them so is eliminated by the fact that messengerhood and prophethood have been cut off, but friendship will not be cut off. What will not be cut off is higher than what has been cut off.

The commentator points to this and to the secret of being cut off and the lack of it with his words, “**Messengerhood and prophethood are among the engendered,**

⁶⁸ That is, the corporeal world and the spiritual world; as already noted, these are considered two of the five divine presences.

⁶⁹ This is the first sentence of the one hundredth (and last) chapter of a book attributed to the Imam, *Miṣbāḥ al-sharī‘a wa miftāḥ al-ḥaqīqa*. See the edition by Ḥasan Muṣṭafawī (Tehran: Anjuman-i Islāmī-yi Ḥikmat, 1360/1981), p. 453.

temporal attributes, but friendship is a divine attribute. [That is why He calls Himself “the Friend, the Praiseworthy.” “God is the Friend of those who have faith,” so this will not be cut off for all eternity. It is not possible for any of the prophets or for anyone else to reach the Divine Presence except by friendship, which is the nonmanifest of prophethood].⁷⁰

The Shaykh’s words, “The messengers, [since they are friends, see what we have mentioned only from the niche of the Seal of the Friends—so what of the friends below them? Even though the Seal of the Friends follows the rulings of Law-giving brought by the Seal of the Messengers. . .]”:⁷¹ All of this confirms what has preceded it, with an additional benefit, which is that the Seal of the Friends follows the rulings of what was brought by the Seal of the Messengers.

[Ibn al-‘Arabī’s] words, “That does not detract [from his station, nor does it contradict what we have said, for in one respect he is lower, just as in another respect he is higher. . . . It is not necessary that someone who is perfect have priority in everything and in every level. The Men look only at priority in the level of knowledge of God. That is their goal. As for occurrences in the realm of being, to those they do not attach their minds].”⁷²

I say: You have come to know in what has been said that prophethood is nothing but perfect friendship. When you consider friendship empty of the prophethood of Law-giving, then it is defective in relation to it, so there is no wonder that the friend follows the prophet. But when you consider the levels of the two and compare them, then friendship is more

⁷⁰ Qayṣarī 438.

⁷¹ *Fuṣūṣ* 62; Qayṣarī 438.

⁷² *Fuṣūṣ* 62-63; Qayṣarī 438-39.

eminent, and it is a wonder that the friend follows the prophet. The Shaykh considers the two in the second respect, and he removes the wonder with these words, up to his words, **“So verify what we have mentioned!”**⁷³

The commentator, the ‘Allāma, says, **“It is not fitting to suppose that what is meant by ‘Seal of the Friends’ is the Mahdī, for the Shaykh has said explicitly that he is Jesus and that he will become manifest among the non-Arabs [al-‘ajam], but the Mahdī is one of the sons of the Prophet and will appear from the Arabs, as we shall mention with his words.”**⁷⁴

I say: You have come to know that here the Seal of the Friends is the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. The words of the commentator, **“said explicitly that he is Jesus,”** are rejected by the fact that every word takes its station in the context of its companions, and in each case “the Seal of the Friends” is ascribed to an individual.

[Ibn al-‘Arabī’s] words, **“When the Prophet compared prophethood [to a brick wall, perfect except for the place of one brick, he was that brick; as the Prophet said, however, he saw it only as one brick. As for the Seal of the Friends, inescapably he has this vision, so he sees the comparison made by God’s Messenger, and in the wall he sees the place of two bricks—bricks of gold and silver. He sees the two bricks that the wall lacks and by which it is perfected—a brick of gold and a brick of silver. Inescapably he sees himself as fitting into the place of those two bricks, thereby perfecting the wall]”**:⁷⁵ This is all one of the properties of the Seal of friendship generally, and its meaning is clear. The

⁷³ *Fuṣūṣ* 63; *Qayṣarī* 439.

⁷⁴ *Qayṣarī* 438.

⁷⁵ *Fuṣūṣ* 63; *Qayṣarī* 439.

commentator, the ‘Allāma, quotes from him in the *Futūḥāt* that he had a vision of a wall of gold and silver, and he takes his words to mean that he is the Seal of the qualified Muhammadan friendship, not the unqualified that belongs to the universal level.⁷⁶ This confirms what we mentioned—that it is one of the properties of the Seal of friendship generally and that it does not pertain specifically to one Seal rather than another Seal. This also confirms that “Seal of the Friends” has various ascriptions.

Know that the qualified Muhammadan friendship of which the commentator speaks and which he takes as the meaning of the Shaykh’s words in counting himself as the Seal of friendship is not the same as the qualified friendship that we clarified in the [classification of the] kinds. For, in [Ibn al-‘Arabī’s] view, the qualified friendship is the universal, unqualified friendship that is ascribed to any one of the prophets, as he himself has said explicitly.

[Qayṣarī] also quotes from him what he says in the thirteenth section of the answers to Imam Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Tirmidhī:

The Seal is two seals: the Seal with which God seals friendship in the unqualified sense, and the Seal with which God seals the Muhammadan friendship. As for the Seal of friendship in the unqualified sense, that is Jesus, for he will be a friend through the unqualified prophethood in the time of this community, but he will be barred from the prophethood of Law-giving and messengerhood. For, he will descend at the end of time as an inheritor, a Seal, and there will be no friend after him.

⁷⁶ Qayṣarī 439; *Futūḥāt* 1: 318.33 (Yahia 5: 68). For a translation of the passage, see Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, pp. 128–29.

So the first of this affair, Adam, was a prophet, and its last will be a prophet, that is, Jesus—I mean the prophethood of election. So [Jesus] will have two musterings [at the Resurrection]: a mustering with us, and a mustering with the prophets and the messengers.

As for the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship, that belongs to a man of the Arabs, among the most noble of them in his root and with his hands, and he exists with us today in our time. I was introduced to him in the year 595 [1199], and I saw the mark that he has and that the Real had concealed within him from the eyes of His servants; it was unveiled to me in the city of Fez so that I would see in him the Seal of friendship. He is the Seal of the unqualified friendship about whom most people do not know. God tried him with folk who denied him in the truth [of the knowledge of Him]⁷⁷ that he had realized in his secret heart.

Just as God sealed the prophethood of Law-giving with Muḥammad, so also God sealed the friendship that is gained from the Muhammadan Inheritor⁷⁸ with the Muhammadan Seal, not that which is gained from the other prophets. For, among the friends are those who inherit from Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, and these will be found after this Muhammadan Seal, though after him no friend will be found upon the heart of Muḥammad. This is the meaning of the Seal of the Muhammadan

⁷⁷ The phrase in brackets is found in the *Futūḥāt*, but not in Qayṣarī.

⁷⁸ Qumshaʿī, following Qayṣarī, has *wārith* (“inheritor”) here, rather than *wirth* (“inheritance”) as in the *Futūḥāt*.

friendship. As for the Seal of the general friendship after whom no friend will be found, that is Jesus.⁷⁹

I say: By “**Seal**” here he means Seal in accordance with time, even if it is also according to level, because his words indicate that as well, as we will point out. By “**unqualified**” [he means] the lack of qualification, because he is “**upon the heart of Muḥammad,**” for this corresponds to the Muhammadan friendship, as he has said explicitly.

His words, “**As for the Seal of friendship in the unqualified sense, that is Jesus**”: This is the general friendship that is contrasted with the Muhammadan friendship and is sealed in time through Jesus. None of the friends will be found after him in time until the coming of the Hour. **For he will be a friend through the unqualified prophethood,** that is, the prophethood of knowledge-giving, **in the time of this community,** just as he was a friend through the prophethood of Law-giving in the time of his community. But his knowledge-giving prophethood will be barred from the Law-giving [prophethood]; or, if you like, you can say, his knowledge-giving friendship [will be barred] from his Law-giving [friendship].

For, he will descend at the end of time, that is, at the manifestation of the Qāʾim, **as an inheritor,** because he is a friend who remains after his death—God has hurried his release from this world—a **Seal, and there will be no friend after him,** that is, in this world, until the Hour comes. **So the first of this affair, Adam, was a prophet,** which is to say that the first of the friends in this world and in accordance with time was a prophet, Adam, **and its last will be a prophet, that is, Jesus.**

⁷⁹ *Futūḥāt* 2: 49.15 (Yahia 12: 119-22). Chodkiewicz provides a looser translation of this passage, encompassed by much commentary, in *Seal* 117-18.

His words, “**the prophethood of election [ikhtiṣāṣ]**”: This means the prophethood of Law-giving, for he was a prophet through the prophethood of Law-giving. This is one of the things that comes by way of election and not by earning [iktisāb], in contrast to the prophethood of knowledge-giving, for that is gained through earning.

These words of his indicate that by “Seal” he means Seal in keeping with time.

His words, “**As for the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship, that belongs to a man of the Arabs, among the most noble of them in his root and with his hands,**” to his words, “**in his secret heart**”: **As for the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship**, that is, the one after whom none will be found in time upon the heart of Muḥammad, that is **a man of the Arabs**. He means the promised, awaited Mahdī—God hurry his release! This is shown by his words, “**among the most noble of them in his root and with his hands,**” for his root is from the Quraysh, and they are the most noble of the Arabs and their masters, and the most generous with their hands as well. This is because he is the Seal of Muhammadan friendship in level, in keeping with these words from the twenty-fourth chapter of the *Futūḥāt*: “The Muhammadan friendship specific to the Law sent down upon Muḥammad has a specific Seal, who is the Mahdī, and he is above Jesus in level.” In the printed edition, the text has “below” instead of “above,” but this is a printing error.⁸⁰ For

⁸⁰ The editions of the *Futūḥāt*, including Yahia’s critical edition, all have “below” rather than “above,” followed by the phrase, “because he [i.e., Jesus] is a messenger.” The passage continues like this: “And he [the Seal] was born in our time, and I have seen him and met with him. I also saw the mark of the Seal that is within him. So there is no friend after him that does not go back to him, just as, after Muḥammad, there is no prophet after him that does not go back to him—like Jesus, when he descends. So, every friend there may be after this Seal until the Day of Resurrection is related to him just as every prophet there may after

this level is the highest of levels in friendship, and it requires that he be the most noble of the Arabs with his hands, for he is of the offspring of both [the Prophet's] clay [*tīn*] and his dispositions [*a'rāq*], and he is “upon a magnificent character” [Qur'ān 68:4]. We have already quoted from [Ibn al-ʿArabī] that he said that he is “the downpour that is graceful and generous.”

His words, “**he exists with us today in our time**”: This is what is indicated by his words [in the poem], “Surely the Seal of the Friends is witness.”

His words, “**I was introduced to him**” etc.: These clarify his unveiling and witnessing of him, and the meaning is plain.

His words, “**God tried him with folk who denied him**” etc.: The meaning concerning him is plain. This is the reason he entered the unseen realm and it is indicated by the words quoted from [Ibn al-ʿArabī], “but the entity of the worlds' leader is not present.”

His words, “**Just as God sealed the prophethood of Law-giving with Muḥammad, so also God sealed the friendship that is gained from the Muhammadan Inheritor with the Muhammadan Seal,**” that is, the Seal of His guided Imams and His approved Executors: This is a confirmation, stipulation, and explanation of what came before—that their Qā'im is the Seal of the Muhammadan Friends, after whom no friend will be found in time upon the heart of Muḥammad, even if friends will be found in time who are upon the heart of other prophets. He conveys this with his words, “**not that which is gained from the other prophets**” to his words, “**no friend will be found upon the heart of Muḥammad**”; in other words, after this Seal in time.

Muhammad is related to him in prophethood, such as Elias, Jesus, and Khiḍr, in this community.” *Futūḥāt* 1: 185.9 (Yahia 3: 177).

His words, “**This is the meaning of the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship,**” and his words, “**As for the Seal of friendship after whom no friend will be found, that is Jesus**”: These make explicit what we have mentioned, that by “Seal” here he means Seal in keeping with time; and by Jesus’s being the Seal of the Friends he means the general friendship as contrasted with the Muhammadan friendship.

In this passage, the word *yūjad* [“**will be found**”] comes from the base *wijdān* [“to find”], not from *ījād* [“to bring into existence”]. This is shown explicitly by his words, “**So the first of this affair, Adam, was a prophet, and its last will be a prophet, that is, Jesus,**” for Jesus will be the last to be *found* among the friends—from *wijdān*, not from *ījād*, because, after his being brought into existence, God brought many friends into existence, among them Salmān, and other friends pertaining to Jesus. “And the earth will never be empty of the proof [*ḥujja*]”⁸¹—and they are friends. How could this not be so? For Muḥammad is the most perfect of the friends, his executors are friends of God, and God brought all of them into existence after bringing Jesus into existence.

You may say, building on the reports of the “return” [*rajʿa*]⁸² and the statement that the inerrant Imams will return and Muḥammad will return, that they will surely be brought into existence after the Mahdī as friends upon the heart of Muḥammad, so the Mahdī is not a Seal

⁸¹ A version of this saying is found among ʿAlī’s words addressed to Kumayl ibn Ziyād toward the end of the *Nahj al-balāgha*: “The earth will never be empty of one standing [*qāʾim*] for God with a proof.”

⁸² This “return” has been interpreted in many ways by Shiʿite thinkers, and it is unfortunate that Qumshaʿī only hints at his own understanding. See Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, “Rajʿa,” *The Encyclopedia Iranica*

(http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/ot_grp9/ot_raj_a_20050927.html).

of the Muhammadan friendship in time. I say: This discussion is not about the “return,” for their time is not of the time of this world. In the same way, this discussion is not about cycles and ages. Talk of that requires another base that we are not in the midst of clarifying.

Know also that the ‘Allāma al-Qayṣarī takes this passage quoted from [Ibn al-‘Arabī] as an allusion by him to himself, for he sees that he makes himself a Seal of the Muhammadan friendship. You have already seen that he is the Seal of the qualified Muhammadan friendship, not the unqualified. The discussion here is about the Seal of friendship in time, but he is not a Seal in time, for the Mahdī will be found after him. In addition, his words do not allow this, for he is not of the most noble of the Arabs in root, because he was from Ṭayy, and Quraysh is more noble than Ṭayy. Moreover, he was not more noble with his hands than the Arabs. Even if we accept that he was an offspring of the dispositions of the Prophet, an offspring of both his clay and his dispositions is more noble than he. They do not even count him among the magnanimous Arabs, whom they count as four, but he is not among them. In addition, the attributes mentioned for him are realized in the Mahdī, not in him.

Then the ‘Allāma quotes other words from him and takes them also as an allusion by him to himself. In the fifteenth section of [the answers to al-Tirmidhī, Ibn al-‘Arabī] says,

So, there was sent down into this world someone whose station of election was worthy of being a Seal for [Muḥammad’s] specific friendship; his name coincides with his name and he possesses his character. This is not the well-known, awaited one named the Mahdī, who is one of his offspring and family, for this Seal is not of his sensory offspring, but rather an offspring of his dispositions and character traits. . . .⁸³

⁸³ Qayṣarī 465; *Futūḥāt* 2: 50.18 (Yahia 12: 127-28). In translating the first sentence of this quoted passage, I have followed the grammatical clarification made by Qumsha’ī (which I have

What is meant by “**station of election**” is the station of Muḥammad’s all-comprehensiveness, which comprehends all the divine names. “**His specific friendship**” is that which contrasts with the general friendship, both of which have been mentioned. This station is worthy of having a Seal who comprehends all the divine names and within whom [Muḥammad’s] unqualified, universal friendship would become manifest, just as it is worthy of having an all-comprehensive Seal within whom his universal prophethood would become manifest, comprising both knowledge-giving and Law-giving. It is necessary that this latter, all-comprehensive friend be an offspring of both his clay and his dispositions, for such is more

dropped from the translation, as indicated by the three dots). I am a bit skeptical, however, about the reading that it provides. When we look back at the text of the *Futūḥāt*, it seems that the first clause of the quoted sentence is conditional on the previous sentence, and that Qayṣarī has confused the matter by not quoting the passage in its entirety. Taking into account the previous sentences, I would be inclined to read the passage like this: “[Given that Muḥammad’s properties were different from the properties of the other prophets and messengers. . . , the property of every prophet after him turned into the property of a friend], so [each friend] was sent down into the world from the station of his election. He [Muḥammad] was worthy of having for his specific friendship a Seal whose name coincides with his name and who possesses his character.” Ibn al-ʿArabī is alluding here to the “prophets among the friends” (*anbiyāʾ al-awliyāʾ*), those who, following Muḥammad, receive the prophethood of knowledge-giving, but not that of Law-giving. Each of these friends partakes of the station of Muḥammad’s friendship, and the highest of them embraces all of his qualities, thereby being the Seal. On “the prophets among the friends,” see Chittick, *Sufi Path* 250-52; Chodkiewicz, *Seal* 54-58.

perfect than someone who is an offspring of his dispositions alone. This is the awaited, promised Mahdī, just as his words here let us know and indicate.

This is why [Muḥammad] was worthy of having a Seal in whom would become manifest his friendship as delimited by the diverse names. Inescapably, this Seal [i.e., Ibn al-ʿArabī] would be less than the first Seal, for this one is not of his clay. The names of both of them coincide with his, and both possess his character, for the first possesses the level of his friendship, and the second is near to him. The name corresponds to the named and points to it.

In order to dispel the suspicion that this one is the first, he says explicitly that he **“is not the well-known, awaited one named the Mahdī.”** He clarifies the distinction between the two when he says, **“who,”** that is, the Mahdī, **“is one of his offspring and family, for this Seal is not of his sensory offspring, but rather an offspring”** only **“of his dispositions and character traits.”** “Seal” here is grammatically definite, meaning “the Seal whom I am clarifying, not the Muhammadan Seal who is the Mahdī.” For, [Ibn al-ʿArabī] says explicitly in more than one place that [the Mahdī] is the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship. Some of these have been made known to you. He also says, in the page of deducing the manifestation of the Mahdī, from the pages of his *Jafr*,⁸⁴

When time circles around the letters

through “In the name of God,” then the Mahdī will stand forth

and become manifest in the wreckage, after the fast—

⁸⁴ Osman Yahia mentions six different manuscript works on *jafr* (roughly, “divination”) ascribed to Ibn al-ʿArabī, though he thinks that only one of these may have been written by him. See *Histoire et classification de l’oeuvre d’Ibn ʿArabī* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1964), pp. 260-62.

so, extend to him my *salām*!

By “my *salām*” he means “my admission” [*taslīm*] that he is the Seal of the unqualified Muhammadan friendship. It is this meaning of *salām* that is meant. This is indicated by a rule in exegesis: If you know it—otherwise, “The sense of the speech belongs to the possessors of the heart.”

The ‘Allāma says, “**All of this is an allusion to himself.**”

I say: You have come to know that what is quoted first from him is an allusion to the Mahdī, and second is an allusion to himself. The second does not contradict the first, but rather confirms it.

Then he says, “**And God is more knowing of the truth.**”

I say: What God did not teach him of the truth, He inspired into me, by His munificence and generosity. “Praise belongs to God. . . , and we would not have been guided had God not guided us” [7:43].

[Ibn al-‘Arabī’s] words, “**The reason he saw it [as two bricks is that he is a follower of the Law of the Seal of the Messengers in the manifest realm, which is the place of the silver brick. This is its manifest side and its rulings that he follows. In the same way, in the secret realm he takes from God what he follows in the manifest form, for he sees the situation as it actually is, so inescapably he sees it like this. This is the place of the golden brick in the nonmanifest realm, for he takes from the same quarry from which the angel who reveals it to the Messenger takes it. . .].**”⁸⁵ The ‘Allāma has explained this. From his explanation and the explanation of what went before and what comes after, it is obvious

⁸⁵ *Fuṣūṣ* 63; *Qayṣarī* 465-66.

that his words, **“As for the Seal of the Friends, inescapably he has this vision,”**⁸⁶ do not pertain specifically to one Seal rather than another, as we have said.

[Ibn al-‘Arabī’s] words, **“In the same way, the Seal of the Friends was a friend while Adam was between water and clay, [but other friends only became friends after acquiring the conditions of friendship from the divine character traits and coming to be described by them, given that God is named ‘the Friend, the Praiseworthy.’ . . .]”**:⁸⁷ I say: By **“Seal of the Friends”** he means the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship in keeping with both level and time, for he is the possessor of the Muhammadan friendship, and it from the niche of his friendship that all the prophets and friends see the Real, for his friendship is the friendship of God’s Messenger without being curtailed by the curtain of prophethood, and he is the nearest of people to God’s Messenger. That is why his friendship pervades all the prophets, messengers, and perfect friends. His friendship is “solar,” and the friendship of others is “lunar,” so he is the secret of all the prophets and friends, just as the sun is the secret of the moon, and just as the sun’s light is the secret of the moon’s light. At one time it becomes manifest in its elevation [‘ulūw] in the ‘Alawī form, and it is the Commander of the Faithful [‘Alī]; again it becomes manifest in its authority [sultān] in the Mahdawī form, and it is the Sultan of the Worlds, so “he will fill the earth with equity and justice after it had been filled with injustice and wrongdoing.”⁸⁸ This is why [Ibn al-‘Arabī] says,

“Thus, in respect of his friendship, the Seal of the Messengers is related to the Seal of friendship just as the prophets and messengers are related to

⁸⁶ Quoted earlier, at the beginning of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s discussion of the Seal of the Friend’s vision.

⁸⁷ *Fuṣūṣ* 64; *Qayṣarī* 467.

⁸⁸ A standard formula in hadiths concerning the Mahdī.

him,”⁸⁹ that is, in the ascription of their friendship to him, not in taking and receiving it from him, for he is the Seal of the Messengers, and he is the root and source in friendship; all take all perfections from him, so he does not take anything from anyone else. And you have come to know that his inerrant executors are none other than he.

His words in what the ‘Allāma quotes from him here, “[As for the One Pole, that is the spirit of Muḥammad, and it is he who replenishes all the prophets and messengers. . . . This Muhammadan Spirit has loci of manifestation in the cosmos.] Its most perfect locus of manifestation is in the Pole of the Time, [in the Solitaries, in the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship, and in the Seal of the general friendship, who is Jesus]”:⁹⁰ It is necessary to know that its manifestation within them is also diverse, for he who is not upon his heart is not like him who is upon his heart. This is obvious. So, its manifestation in the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship, who is upon his heart, is more complete and more perfect than its manifestation in the Seal of the general friendship. . . .⁹¹

The Shaykh takes Jesus as the Seal of the unqualified friendship in the answers to the Imam, Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Tirmidhī, with his [already quoted] words, “As for the Seal of friendship in the unqualified sense, that is Jesus.” Here, that is, at the end of Chapter 14 of the *Futūḥāt*, he makes him the Seal of the general friendship, with his words, “in the

⁸⁹ *Fuṣūṣ* 64; *Qayṣarī* 467

⁹⁰ *Qayṣarī* 467; *Futūḥāt* 1: 151.31 (*Yahia* 2: 363).

⁹¹ Here both editions of the text, in what may be a scribal error, quote a passage from *Qayṣarī* that is quoted again in its entirety later on a few paragraphs down, beginning “**Know that friendship is divided into unqualified and qualified.**” There seems no reason for it to be located here, since the author does not refer to it until it is quoted the second time.

Seal of the general friendship, who is Jesus.” So, by “generality” and “unqualifiedness” he means the same thing. Nonetheless, he mentions generality and unqualifiedness in two places along with the Muhammadan friendship.

When the general is mentioned in conjunction or disjunction with the specific, what is meant is beyond [*mā warāʾ*] the specific; as when we say, “Animal and man are both such and such”; or, “The thing is either animal or man.” Hence, the general or unqualified friendship is other than the Muhammadan friendship and does not comprise it, nor is it contrasted with it. So, its Seal is not upon the heart of Muḥammad, whereas the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship is upon his heart. Hence, the Seal of the Muhammadan friendship is more perfect than the Seal of the unqualified or general friendship, because he is upon his heart, and the Seal of the general friendship is not upon his heart.

He is the “secret of all the prophets” because the perfect is the secret and nonmanifest of the defective. The prophets are friends, so he is the secret of all the prophets. The Shaykh has said explicitly that he is ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in what we quoted from him—where he said, “And the nearest of people to him was ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the leader of the world and the secret of all the prophets.” So, the Seal of the Friends, from the niche of whose friendship the friends, prophets, and messengers see the Real, is ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, as we have already explained. His authority becomes manifest in the Qāʾim of the Imams.

The ‘Allāma al-Qayṣarī, however, supposes that “**unqualified**” in the Shaykh’s words is a description of the universal, divine friendship; and that when he says, “**As for the Seal of friendship in the unqualified sense, that is Jesus,**” his words mean that Jesus is the Seal of the universal, divine friendship, from whom all prophets and friends take. He is heedless of the Shaykh’s words where he says about ‘Alī, “the leader of the world and the secret of all the prophets.” This is why he supposes that the friends and the prophets

see the Real from the niche of [Jesus'] friendship and he understands this to be the meaning of the Shaykh's words here. This has already been explained.

Here [Qayṣarī] also says,

Know that friendship is divided into unqualified and qualified, or general and specific. For, in respect of itself, it is a divine, unqualified attribute; and in respect of its attribution to the prophets and the friends, it is qualified. The qualified stands through the unqualified, and the unqualified becomes manifest in the qualified. So, in friendship the prophets and friends are all the particulars of the unqualified friendship, just as in prophethood the prophets are all the particulars of the unqualified prophethood.

Now that you have come to know this, know also that by the “friendship of the Seal of the messengers” the Shaykh means his qualified, individual friendship. There is no doubt that this friendship is related to the unqualified friendship just as the prophethood of the other prophets is related to the unqualified prophethood.⁹²

He explains unqualified to mean general in order to allude to the fact that unqualifiedness and generality in the words of the Shaykh have the same meaning. Then he turns the discussion toward the ascription of unqualified and qualified, and he says, “**The qualified stands through the unqualified, and the unqualified becomes manifest in the qualified,**” and so on. I say: He wants to clarify that the friendship of all the prophets and friends is taken from the friendship of the Seal of the unqualified, general

⁹² Qayṣarī 468. For “*the unqualified prophethood*” in the last sentence, the printed edition of Qayṣarī has “*his unqualified prophethood.*”

friendship, for the latter is its owner and source; and he is Jesus, son of Mary, because of the words of the Shaykh, “**As for the Seal of friendship in an unqualified sense, that is Jesus**”; and his words, “**the Seal of the general friendship, who is Jesus.**” But you know that when the general is mentioned along with the specific, what is meant is beyond the specific; as when we say, “We saw an animal and a man”; or we say, “That is either an animal or a man.” By animal we mean what is beyond man. Thus the unqualified or general friendship that is mentioned along with the Muhammadan friendship means what is beyond the Muhammadan friendship. The Shaykh mentions the two together and he means what is beyond them. So, Jesus is the Seal of the unqualified friendship, which is opposed to the Muhammadan friendship. The friendship from which the prophets, messengers, and perfect friends take their friendship and from whose niche they see the Real is the unqualified, Muhammadan friendship, and its owner and Seal is the Commander of the Faithful, a point alluded to by the Shaykh’s words, “the secret of all the prophets.”

Next I say: When someone is a locus of manifestation for the all-comprehensive divine name—and that is Muḥammad and whoever is upon his heart—how could he take the most complete of his divine perfections, which is the Muhammadan friendship, from him who does not have the all-comprehensive name and who is Servant of the Ever-Merciful [ʿAbd al-Raḥīm]? Jesus is a locus of manifestation for the ever-merciful mercy [*al-raḥmat al-raḥīmiyya*], not the all-merciful mercy [*al-raḥmat al-raḥmāniyya*], given the all-comprehensiveness of the All-Merciful and the lack of all-comprehensiveness of the Ever-Merciful.⁹³ But Muḥammad is

⁹³ The two sorts of mercy, sometimes called the general and the specific, are much discussed in treatises on the divine names, where *al-raḥmān* is often taken as referring to a mercy that embraces all of creation, and *al-raḥīm* to a mercy that is specific to some creatures rather than

Servant of God and Servant of the All-Merciful, according to His words, “We sent thee only as a mercy to the worlds” [21:107], and the general mercy is the all-merciful mercy. So he is the locus of manifestation for the All-Merciful, and a thing’s locus of manifestation is its servant. The Muhammadans take from that. Concerning them it is said, “Call upon God, or call upon the All-Merciful: whichever you call upon, to Him belong the most beautiful names” [17:110].

[Ibn al-‘Arabī’s] words, **“He is one of the beauties of the Seal of the Messengers”**:⁹⁴ He had said, **“Thus, in respect of his friendship, the Seal of the Messengers is related to the Seal of friendship just as the prophets and messengers are related to him.”** It is likely that someone might suppose that the Seal of the Friends is more perfect than the Seal of the Messengers, though this is not the case. So he rejects that supposition with these words.

His words, **“On the footsteps of Seth will be the last child [born to this human species, and he will carry his secrets. There will be no child of this species after him, so he is the Seal of the Children. . .]”**:⁹⁵ The Shaykh has spoken about friendship in terms of rank and level and looked at some of its characteristics. In terms of birth in this human species, friendship has a Seal who will be on the footsteps of Seth. Hence he desired to complete the chapter on Seth by mentioning him. So he mentions him, and he mentions some of his characteristics—this is what one of the verifiers takes his words here to mean, and the commentator, the ‘Allāma, quotes his words.⁹⁶

others. These are the already mentioned two sorts of mercy that Ibn al-‘Arabī calls *raḥmat al-imtinān*, the mercy of free-gift, and *raḥmat al-wujūb*, the mercy of necessity.

⁹⁴ *Fuṣūṣ* 64; *Qayṣarī* 468.

⁹⁵ *Fuṣūṣ* 67; *Qayṣarī* 487.

⁹⁶ *Qayṣarī* 488-89.

At this point his words are in no need of interpretation and self-exertion [*takalluf*], but the commentator, the ‘Allāma, takes them to mean the Seal of unqualified friendship, who is Jesus. He calls forth as witness for this the words of the Shaykh in the *Futūḥāt*, the fifteenth section of the answers to al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, but there is no reason whatsoever for him to take them to mean this. Rather, [Ibn al-‘Arabī’s] words refuse that, as will not be hidden from anyone who considers them. For [the commentator’s words] contradict the conventions of the book, which is about unveiling the secrets, not about curtaining what has no need to be curtained and hidden. He says that explicitly more than once, as the commentator himself admits and as he quotes from him.

This is what I wanted to clarify in the chapter on Seth.