

The Configuration of the Temple of the Ka'bah as The Secret of the Spiritual Life

according to the work of Qadi Sa'id Qummi (1103/1691)

I. *The Spiritual Forms*

The themes that we ponder together in *Eranos* from year to year have the virtue of inducing in us, during the preceding months, a state of premeditation which is peculiarly favourable to lucid reaction. It was in this manner, and with regard to this year's theme, that I found myself reacting over the winter to two works on Balzac which had just come out. For, in their respective interpretations of the work of our great novelist, these two books form a contrast as striking as it is instructive for what we are about to discuss.

The first of these works is meant to be addressed to "people who are human enough not to limit their attention to literature alone"; yet it then presents us with a Balzac so dependent on nineteenth-century society that he occupies some quite minor position in it, like that of a clerk, and his society could very well have done without him. Because of his bias, the interpreter keeps us on the ground, or, more accurately, he refuses to rise, in dealing with Balzac's work, higher than the ground floor of the "Studies of Manners" where the archives are stored. There is no question of going up to the first floor, the floor of the "Philosophical Studies", "where one can discover a hidden order of things", let alone of going up to the second floor, that of the "Analytical Studies", where it is possible to "meditate on natural principles, and to see in what ways societies fall away from or approach the eternal laws of truth and goodness." It would be hard not to define this mutilating interpretation as counter-sense, because—to go no further—it contradicts Balzac's express statements.

By contrast, the second interpreter addresses himself to "people who

are too human not to have been disheartened by the world", that is to say, by what is offered to them by sociology, demography and the economy; and if he leads us into the "Human comedy" as into a walled town, it is because "this walled town opens onto Heaven". It is this, and this alone, which is in accordance with Balzac's statements, when he foresaw that some people, faced with his painstaking collection and depiction of facts as facts, would imagine that he belonged to the school of the sensualists or the materialists. This is so far from being the case that he refutes such a school vigorously, adding: "I do not share the belief in the indefinite progress of societies. I believe in the progress of man over himself. Those who perceive in me an intention to consider man as a finite creature are therefore strangely deluded."

Here Balzac calls to witness his mystical masterpiece, *Seraphita*—"the actualization of the doctrine of the Christian Buddha", that is, of Swedenborg—as a sufficient response to all attempts to diminish the meaning of his work. In short, for the first interpreter Balzac is a prisoner of nineteenth-century society. He was created by it, and is therefore contingent and superfluous. For the second interpreter Balzac is the creator, he who "embraces within his work the society of the nineteenth century as well as that of other centuries. Society is his creation. It cannot do without him."¹

If my reaction to this contrast has led me to stress it here, it is because it appears to me typical and exemplary, in the sense that it is characteristic of the situation we face when we try to understand what is implied by the ability to outline a spiritual world, to grasp, in a form and a figure, a world which is not within the scope of sensory perception. Indeed, for several generations Western man has exercised inexhaustible ingenuity in enclosing himself within his experience of this earthly world, carefully shutting off all exits through which he might leave it, even though it means lamenting his solitude and the absurdity of his condition. At the same time he persistently refuses to recognize that it is his own philosophies which have reduced him to this state. He means to stay on the ground floor, and systematically ignore the fact that there are, or might be, upper storeys.

Religious fact in itself postulates the existence of these upper storeys—

i The first interpretation (the one which refuses to ascend any higher than the ground floor) is by Andre Wurmser, *La Comedie inhumaine*. The second is that of Maurice Bardeche, *Une lecture de Balzac*. For the terms in which the contrast is rendered, see Philippe Senart's review of the two works in 'Combat' (Thursday, February 4, 1965), p. 9.

they are implicit in it. We are not less aware of the current peremptory assertion that the scientific study of religious fact cannot accept any appeal to a Revelation or any recourse to the intervention of a transcendent power. Obviously, it is impossible to discover in a fact something which one has started by denying it possesses. Considerable ingenuity has been employed in converting the *interpretation* of facts into established *fact*. For example, we have passed from evolution as an interpretation of a collection of facts to "the fact of evolution" (neglecting to note that the *real fact* was evolutionism). In turn, equal ingenuity has been employed in converting a *fact* into an *interpretation*, in order to reduce the original phenomenon (the *Urphanomen*) to certain elementary facts which are supposed to explain it. Religious fact, for example spiritual fact, is "explained" sociologically by the conditions of production and consumption, or psychologically by reference to the misfortunes of infancy and childhood, lived as a series of catastrophes. What is striking about our time is that so many people accept these explanations without noticing their ludicrous inadequacy as regards the object being explained. From the start, in effect, we are presented with unbalanced and atrociously mutilated forms, because our fundamentally agnostic science denies us recourse to a suprasensible dimension which alone makes it possible to perceive the integrality of a form. In the same way, the visible dimension of a being, its terrestrial biography, only ever reveals an infinitesimal part of its potentialities. We can speak of the configurative action of the Spirit, of form as a task to be accomplished by the Spirit (which is our theme in *Eranos*), with full meaning only if we are in possession of a space into which we can project the totality of this form. Such a space was known to the science of religions and to traditional theologies as the eschatological dimension, in which the spring of the arch is achieved—a spring which will never be ours so long as we remain on this side of our "scientific" proof.

In this connection, it is not mere chance that a text by Balzac should represent Swedenborg as the "Christian Buddha".² My essay on comparative spiritual hermeneutics brought out a remarkable convergence between Swedenborg's hermeneutics and the hermeneutics practised in Ismaili gnosis. This convergence occurred with regard to the necessity of there

² Cf. my 'Hermeneutique spirituelle comparee', in *Face de Dieu, face de l'homme* (Paris, Fayard, 1984); D. T. Suzuki's statement accords literally with Balzac's feeling about Swedenborg.

being an intermediary world between the sensible and intelligible worlds, a world I designate as the *mundus imaginalis*, the kingdom of subtle bodies, the "eighth clime", the limit "where spirit takes on body and where the body is spiritualized" (the kingdom of the *Geistlichkeit*).³ In the absence of this world, the idea of subsistent spiritual Forms would be unthinkable. Yet prevailing opinion, philosophical or profane, maintains that what is spiritual does not possess form. Form is always that which confers a figure on matter, in the sense of "physical" matter.

In contrast to this, our first affirmation in connection with our present task must be the existence of spiritual Forms which subsist as such. This gives full weight to the thesis correctly propounded by a Swedenborgian thinker in the following terms:

"Here is the point in which philosophers and Christians have made the mistake, fatal not only to all *true* knowledge, but to *all* knowledge of spirit. It has generally been assumed that the only way to arrive at a true idea of spirit was to regard it as the opposite of matter in every respect. They reason in this way: Matter has form, therefore spirit has none. Matter has substance, therefore spirit has none. In this way they deny to spirit all possible modes of existence. The Christian stops here, and ends by simply affirming its existence, but denies that we can know anything more about it. But many push this destructive logic a step further, and deny the existence of spirit altogether. And this is the logical result, for denial can never end in anything but negation and nothing. This is inevitable; and the Christian escapes this conclusion only by stopping before he reaches it. We must admit that there is a spiritual substance, and that this substance has form, or we must deny the existence of spirit altogether. No other conclusion is possible."⁴

What emerges from the affirmation of such an unambiguous pneumatological thesis is the need for a space which, while remaining space, is not the space of the sensible universe—that is to say, of the universe identified by Cartesian dualists with spatial extension. Here we should bear in mind

3 On this theme, see my work *Corps spirituel et Terre celeste: de l'Iran mazdeen a l'Iran Shi'ite*, 2nd edn (Paris, Buchet/Chastel, 1979); tr. N. Pearson, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: from Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*, Bollingen Series XCI:2 (Princeton University Press, 1977). (Translator's note: this translation is not from the 2nd edition referred to by Corbin; however, this does not affect the work itself).

4 Chauncey Giles, *The Nature of Spirit and of Man as a Spiritual Being* (James Speirs, London, 1871), p. 6.

the thesis that Swedenborg reiterated so frequently in his vast work: in the spiritual world, as in the material world, there are spaces, even though nothing is evaluated there according to them. Everything is assessed according to states, "and as a result the spaces there cannot be measured as they are measured in the world; they are viewed in and according to the state of the interiors" (of the *internals*, rather).⁵ In other words, spaces which are measured by inner states presuppose, essentially, a qualitative or discontinuous space of which each inner state is itself the measure, as opposed to a space which is quantitative, continuous, homogeneous, and measurable in constant measures. Such a space is an existential space, whose relationship to physico-mathematical space is analogous to the relationship of existential time to the historical time of chronology.

Highly instructive, also, are the changes in the feeling for and expression of space in the figurative arts of Western man.⁶ The problem was how to suggest the third dimension that is lacking in a plane surface. The solution involves recourse to a certain number of subterfuges which, as such, reveal the conscious or unconscious aspirations of those who employ them, and acquire thereby the value of "symbolic forms". These forms symbolize different things, the difference being perceived first of all in their arrangement according either to the laws of the *perspectiva naturalis*, codified by Euclid, or to those of the *perspectiva artificialis* of the Italian Renaissance. Euclidian optics, on the one hand, establishes a space which is discontinuous, in the sense that each region differs qualitatively from the other, deriving its position and qualification from the being which occupies it. In its own right. An idea of this can be gleaned from the representation of landscape in some great Roman fresco or Pompeian decorative fragment, which gives us a sense of the great mural painting of Greece. Each section of space has its own horizon, and the detail depicted there is *real*, as depicted, *for* that horizon. (In the physics corresponding to this, we have the concept of "natural place" as essential to all qualitative space, and which as such links up with the concept of "existential place". Let us recall the division of levels in the final scene of the second part of Faust: the "existential place" of *pater extaticus* and that of *pater profundus*; for it is a

5 Swedenborg, *De Caelo et ejus mirabilibus* . . . , art. 198.

6 See the study by Mme Liliane Brion-Guerry, 'L'Evolution generate de l'expression de l'espace dans la peinture occidentale', in *Sciences de l'Art*, Annales de l'Institut d'esthetique et des sciences de l'Art (Paris, 1964), pp. 47—71.

7 Ibid., mainly pp. 50 ff. and plate 1 (Pompeian painting).

question of the place being *situated* by the inner state, the *internal*, the place where the being is "in its Truth", as it could not be *elsewhere*).

On the other hand, *perspectiva arteficialis* presupposes a whole preliminary effort to unify space, culminating in a unified and homogeneous universe. The classical, central perspective is obtained at the price of this systematic optical unity. What is disturbing is that the way now lies open to all the illusions of the Baroque, to the science and ingenuity of *trompe l'oeil*. Disturbing, because if we set the forms of expression of space side by side with the secret sense of space corresponding to them, and expressible in pictorial form as well as in mental representation or visionary figuration, we have a comparison which begs a new question. Is not the position of the spiritual hermeneut, whose interpretation of Scriptural verses or of the signs and forms of the sensible universe goes deeper than the letter or the appearance, similar to that of the artist who is obliged to make a third dimension appear on a plane surface? The task of the spiritual hermeneut also involves a deepening of perspective: how, aided by the letter of the text or by sensible objects, is he to suggest their suprasensible—their "polar"—dimension, and thereby the integrality of their form? But then what space must he have available so that mental representation may escape the fate of *perspectiva artificialis*, and so that the "polar dimension" may not, in the final analysis, prove to be nothing but *trompe l'oeil*? For many of our contemporaries, given over defencelessly to their agnostic reflex, any evocation of a suprasensible world, of spiritual Forms which are more substantial than material ones, is indeed no more than *trompe l'oeil*.

Yet, if it is no more than that—no more than the illusion of a reality not worthy of attention—should not the cause or symptom of it be sought first of all in the fact that, with the exception of the school of Jacob Boehme and the Cambridge Platonists to whom Swedenborg so closely approximated, Western philosophy has lost sight of that intermediary world which, following the Persian Platonists, I designate as *mundus imaginalis* ('*alam al-mithal*)?⁸ For the space of this world is, precisely, the *qualitative*

8 On this theme, cf. my two works *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, op. cit., and *En Islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, vol. IV (Paris, Gallimard, 1971-1972; re-edn 1978), general index s.v. *mundus imaginalis*. See also my "'Mundus imaginalis" ou l'imaginaire et l'imaginal', in *Face de dieu, face de l'homme* (*supra*, n. 2); tr. R. Horine, 'Mundus imaginalis, or the Imaginary and the Imaginal', in *Spring* (Zurich/New York, 1972), pp. 1-19, (reprinted by Golgonooza Press, Ipswich, 1975).

dimension of an inner state, and its substantial forms—Forms of light—do not constitute a *trompe l'oeil* beyond which abstraction is to be pushed even further, as though such a process must lead to a "liberating dematerialization" whose aim is to abolish forms and figures. One must indeed be deprived of this *mundus imaginalis* to believe that "dematerializing" forms amounts to abolishing them. On the contrary, the world of "subtle bodies" conceals the *true meaning* of immaterialization, and restores forms and figures to their archetypal purity. For what would a world without face or features—without, that is to say, a look—actually be? (One thinks of the Islamic precept: never strike at the face!)

In our day, there appears to be a tendency to think that by pushing abstraction *beyond* forms and figures, one is accomplishing something akin to the energy theories which, in physics, transform matter into energy. But in actual fact, Islamic theologians have always been aware of the different states of matter, culminating in a "spiritual matter" to which they have given the name *Nafas al-Rahman* (the Breath of the Merciful One). They have spoken of the *mundus imaginalis*, of "subtle or *imaginal* corporeity" (*jismiyyah mithaliyyah*), of spiritual matter (*maddah ruhaniyyah*), terms which are the equivalent of the *spissitudo spiritualis* of the Cambridge Platonists, or of Oetinger's *Geistlichkeit*. For this reason, it was so much the less difficult for them to admit the existence of spiritual forms, and that these forms possess a face and a look. By contrast, the confusion occasioned by the absence of this subtle world engenders the need to free oneself from forms, the need for a liberation conceived as liberation with regard to the *object* on which classical perspective was based; for the object appears now as the stabilizing and *coercive* element of the space at whose centre it is. But why speak of "coercion"?

With the help of a Persian Platonist, the seventeenth-century Qadi Sa'id Qummi,⁹ an eminently representative Shiite philosopher, let us try

9 Qadi Sa'id Qummi, almost completely unknown in the West until now, was one of the great Shiite philosophers and theologians of Safavid Persia. He was born in the sacred village of Qumrn, 140 kilometres south of Tehran, in 1049/1639. He spent most of his life there as a teacher, and died there in 1103/1691. His principal masters were Muhsin Fayd (a pupil and son-in-law of the great philosopher Sadra Shirazi) and Mulla Rajab 'Ali. His bibliography consists of about fifteen works, several of which are considerable in length. Only a few have been edited. He also had an excellent medical education. To distinguish him from his elder brother, also a philosopher, he is called in Persian by the alternative name of *Hakim-i Kuchak*, meaning something like *Philosophus junior*. See *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. IV, pp.

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to grasp the idea of these spiritual circles, which differ from material circles in that their *centre* possesses the property of being simultaneously the *circumference*: for there is no doubt that in this lies the secret of spiritual forms and of the stability of their configuration. Swedenborg expressed it by saying that "each Angel carries its Heaven within itself, while our Shiite philosopher expresses it in the image of the "Throne stabilized upon the Water" and which stabilizes the Water the same time. In the world of spiritual forms there are as many of these *centres* embracing, or totalling, a universe, as there are spiritual individualities. The perspective here, properly speaking, is a *hermeneutical perspective*; in the Middle Ages, the science of perspective was considered fundamental for the same reason that here makes the science of perspective essentially a science of correspondences considered as a fundamental science, postulating a plurality of levels or stages of the universe which are homologous with each other.¹⁰ This science of correspondences is equivalent to that elaborated in a treatise, entitled *De perspectiva*, in which the laws of optics are applied esoterically, that is to say, to suprasensible forms.¹¹ It enables us to witness the birth and amplification of forms and figures in correspondence with each other, recognizable even when they are transformed into each other, from level to level of the universe. To go "beyond" would be to pass into chaos and nothingness, to deny or violate the affirmation that all earthly things perish, whereas their Face of Light, or divine Face, lives forever (cf. Koran 28:88).

Iconographically, what is implied here is a *spatiality*, the sense and expression of which do not, it seems, figure in the evolution of the sense of space in the West. But I believe that I discovered recently, in a book by the Greek novelist Nikos Kazantzakis, evidence of such a figuration which is unexpected, appropriate and striking. The author tells how he once saw a Byzantine icon of St. George, in which "the fair-haired young hero, on his white horse and with his spear raised, hurled himself at the monster. All the bodies—St. George, the horse, the monster—were compact, muscular, crammed with intense matter. It was a real drama, a bloody

123-201, and Book III of my *La Philosophie iranienne islamique aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, Buchet/Chastel, 1980).

10 This science of correspondences, according to Swedenborg, derived from the immediate perception possessed by the men of the *Antiquissima Ecclesia*; cf. my *Hermeneutique spirituelle comparee*, op. cit., I, §§ 2 and 3.

11 Cf. *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 135 ff.

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struggle. But in the air above this real St. George there was another St. George on the same white horse, with the same spear, against the same monster. Yet on this higher level of vision, everything was dematerialized, the bodies transparent, and through them you could see the flowering meadows and the pale blue mountains in the distance. It was a *more real* St. George than the real one, the astral body of the action, the pale and immaterial flower of matter."¹²

In this manner, the anonymous painter of the Byzantine icon spontaneously expressed his sense of a suprasensible space, dominating and enveloping our own; a level or horizon of the universe where forms are not abolished but transfigured, every mode of representation being true for the stage or the horizon at which it appears. We are talking, therefore, about a spiritual space, where forms subsist even more substantially, and more clearly figured, than in ours, since their pure "matter of light" exempts them from the caducity of our own unstable and corruptible matter. Once form is transmuted into symbol, its meaning becomes transparent, just as the bodies in the icon have become transparent to the flowers and mountains, as if signifying that from now on it is the form which contains its universe, being itself "a world in which our symbols are . . . taken literally".¹³ What the painter of the St. George icon expresses here is the intimate sense that the figure, the object, far from being a "coercion", liberates him who Contemplates it and meditates on it to a higher state of being, by opening up to him the new space which corresponds to such a state.

This sense of an object which, when contemplated on a higher plane, "a higher level of vision", liberates its own space and transfigures its own form, is to be found, I think, wherever in one way or another access has been left open to the *mundus imaginalis*. For example, the manner in which our Shiite philosopher, Qadi Sa'id Qummi, exhorts us to meditate on the form of the Temple of the Ka'bah will prove a convincing illustration of this fact. First and foremost, however, it is important to bear in mind the premisses of this *figuration* of the Temple, a figuration which contains in itself the whole secret of the spiritual life, because it *figures* the stages of the mystical journey.

12 Nikos Kazantzakis, *Le jardin des Rochers* (Paris, 1959); tr. R. Howard and K. Friar, *The Rock Garden* (Touchstone Bks, New York, 1969).

13 Cf. *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, op. cit., p. XV.

Indeed, a meditation that transfigures its object from level to level of being is only possible if the schema of the world is one in which the universes rise in tiers of ever-increasing light and purity. This is exactly the cosmological configuration which is to be found in all Islamic theosophical tradition. In the work of the Shiite philosopher Qadi Sa'id Qummi, who, as we shall see, applies this figuration to the esoteric meaning of the form of the Temple of the Ka'bah and the rites of pilgrimage, this is the traditional schema employed, but with a few original details. There are three categories of universe. First, there is the phenomenal world (*'alam al-shahadah*), a realm where things are perceptible to the senses (*'alam al-mulk*). Then there is the suprasensible world (*ghayb*), the world of the Soul or Angel-Souls, commonly designated *malakut*: the "place" of the *mundus imaginalis*, whose organ of perception is cognitive imagination. And there is the intelligible world of the pure Intelligences or Angel-Intelligences, commonly designated *Jabarut*, whose organ of perception is the intuitive intellect.

Our philosopher relates these three categories of universe to three categories of space and three of time. There is the obscure, dense time (*zaman kathif*) of the sensible world; the subtle time (*zaman latif*) of the *imaginal* world of the *malakut*; and the even more subtle time, the absolutely subtle time (*zaman altaf*) of the world of the Intelligence. The differentiation of these categories of space and time originates in as many specific differentiations of *motion*, from the motion of natural things in the process of becoming, to pure spiritual motion (*harakah ma'nawiyah*). The differentiated spaces are themselves subsumed in the concept of an initial energy whose motion engenders the spatial form which is the origin of everything that assumes form in the world of being, whether spiritual or material. This energy is designated sometimes as *Nafas al-Rahman* (the Breath of the Merciful One), and sometimes as the primordial Cloud (*'ama'*).¹⁴ Having established this initial schema, our philosopher is now

¹⁴ These themes are fully developed by Qadi Sa'id Qummi in the monumental commentary he devoted to the *Kitab al-Tawhid* by Ibn Babuyah (died 381/992), one of the great classics of Shiite theology. I myself devoted a full year of courses to this commentary; cf. the report in *Annuaire de l'Ecole pratique des Hautes-études* (Sorbonne), Section des Sciences religieuses (1965-1966). The theme of time is elaborated in the commentary on the 2nd *hadith* of chapter II of the book (*Sharh Kitab al-Tawhid*, Persian ms. fol. 30 ff.; see *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 179 ff.). The arguments are reminiscent of, while differing from, the categories of time in Proclus, from whom they passed to the Ismaili theosopher Nasir-i Khusraw,

in a position to conceive the reality of events and forms which, while not ceasing to be events and forms, possess a time and a space that are in no way those of the sensible world to which we are accustomed exclusively to relate our notions of event and form.

There exists between these three categories of universe a certain number of essential relationships, in that each higher universe is the cause of the one below it, and contains, in a manner more subtle and elevated, the totality of universes below it. Moreover, while thus containing and enveloping the totality of the universes below it, each higher universe is also the esoteric aspect (*batin*) of this totality, its hidden, inner aspect or centre. Hence each being of the *mulk* has its own particular *malakut* which governs and surrounds it, and which is at the same time within it (its "esoteric" aspect), just as each being of the *malakut* has, in its turn, a *Jabarut* which dominates and surrounds it (envelops and contains it). In other words, each being has a *res divina* (*amr rabbani*), a divine Word (*Kalimah ilahiyah*) that is its own *malakut*, its "esoteric aspect", the inner Man or secret archetypal reality, and that is simultaneously its Watchman or Guardian in that it is the cause which contains and encloses it.¹⁵ As we will see shortly, this is the secret of the Pearl evoked by a Shiite *hadith* which accords strikingly with the celebrated hymn in the *Acts of Thomas* (see below, III, 2).

One must be aware of all this in order to know a human being in his "integral" form (as opposed to that mutilated form of which I cited an example when speaking of Balzac at the beginning of this study). For these three worlds, or three categories of universe, are invested in the human being. Both the *Jabarut* and the *malakut* are to be found in man; they constitute his essential, his real, his inner being, so that even when he withdraws from the phenomenal world which envelops him, he does not

and which have an exact correspondence in the cosmology of ancient Iran. Cf. my study 'Le Temps cyclique dans le Mazdeisme et dans l'ismaélisme', in *Temps cyclique et gnose ismaélienne* (Paris, Berg International 1982); tr. R. Manheim, 'Cyclical Time in Mazdaism and Ismailism', in *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis* (London, Kegan Paul International and Islamic Publications Ltd., 1983).

¹⁵ *Sharh Kitab al-Tawhid*, fol. 43 (the commentary on the 3rd *hadith* of chapter II and on the 35th *hadith* of chapter II). Qadi Sa'id Qummi is insistent on this point: the '*alam al-mithal*' is the world perceived by imaginative knowledge (*khayal*) but it has nothing imaginary (*amr khayali*) about it. It is perfectly existent (*mawjud*), and has its own real joys and griefs. It is the *imaginal* world (*mithali*). Our vocabulary must therefore be very precise, in order not to betray the intentions of our authors. See my article on the *Mundus imaginalis*, op. cit.

cease to subsist integrally as man. To comprehend the reality of the *malakut* in man, its configurative or so to speak "ideoplastic" power, is to comprehend, in the light of Qadi Sa'id Qummi's Shiite philosophy, that form is a work for which the Spirit is responsible. And in order to comprehend form in this way, we must envisage it in the dimension which, according to all our thinkers, situates man "in his Truth", his inalienable Truth or eschatological dimension.

Indeed, it is astonishing to note the way in which Qadi Sa'id Qummi and his colleagues understand the "tomb", when Islamic eschatology speaks of it as spacious or narrow. We are not dealing here with the macabre: this "tomb" is not in a cemetery. It is what our philosophers conceive as the subtle body which is the *malakut* within man, and with which man, after his *exitus* from the physical world, resurrects to this *malakut*; for from this "tomb" he will resurrect yet again, at the time of the Great Resurrection, in order to rise to a higher level in the spiritual worlds. Such is the theosophical meaning, in Islamic eschatology, of the term *barzakh* (in-between, intermediary), as the state of the essential inner man who is separated from the elemental body that envelops him, and returns to his world, to which he is introduced in the state of his essential body (*jism haqiqi*). The latter is designated as the essential body of light (*jism haqiqi nuri*) or *imaginal* body (*jism mithali*)—although this, to be sure, is not in the least "imaginary".¹⁶ The *imaginal* body of light is the *malakut* of the physical body; and the totality of all the incorruptible and permanent corporeity of light (*jismiyyah nuriyah*) makes up the *malakut* of the corruptible, material bodies of humanity.

The state of this subtle body of light depends on and results from the configurative or "ideoplastic" power of the soul. Its substance derives from all the soul's movements, that is to say from its habits and ways of being, its affections and behaviour, knowledge and wishes, aspirations, emotions, nostalgias and ardent desires. It is the body that the soul itself has formed and acquired for itself; it may be a body of dazzling light or of darkened light, a garden among the gardens of Paradise or a pit among the pits of Hell. This is what Islamic eschatology means in speaking of the width or the narrowness of a "tomb", and of "the interrogation in the tomb".¹⁷ So far are we from macabre realism that our theosophers do not

¹⁶ *Sharh Kitab al-Tawhid*, fol. 140b.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 139b—140, 140b—141b.

evade the question of what is meant by the current tradition according to which the bodies of the prophets and the Imams remain only "three days" in the tomb and are "taken up into Heaven". Does this mean that if one were to open the tombs of their sanctuaries one would find no remains? The idea would not even occur to him who has understood that it is not a question of such tombs or of such remains, **but** of the "body of light", and that the Heaven in question, as Qadi Sa'id Qummi says, "is not the astronomical heaven over our heads".¹⁸

This *imaginal* body (*jism mithali*), then, is as the soul has configured it. Throughout his earthly life, man is acting upon his own *malakut*, and through this upon all the lower *malakut*, that is to say upon the whole region of the spiritual world constituted by the fraction of humanity which, from century to century, is momentarily involved in the physical bodies of the phenomenal world. This, for our theosophers, is a conspicuous illustration of the concrete and formidable power of intervention which is described as the soul's configurative power—concrete and formidable because the eschatological dimension of the real man is dependent on it. We shall see how Qadi Sa'id Qummi envisions the *malakut* of the earthly Temple of the Ka'bah; and, since this *malakut* is the configuration itself of the inner man, the esoteric meaning of the origins and of the rites of pilgrimage to this Temple must ultimately be sought in the direct configurative action exercised by man on his own *malakut*. Because we moderns have lost the ability to imagine and envision, we must pay all the more attention to what is being said by the theosophers of Islam, to what is involved in the vision of the Temple that will be laid before us. We are confronted not merely with a conceptual representation, but with both a *vision* and a *configuration* of the *malakut*, all the more "objectively real", it must be said, in that they are realized in the world of the Soul.

For example, we can speak with our theosophers of a "cycle of prophecy". This is a clear and rational concept, even though it envisages *sacred history*. But for them it is configured and visualized in a real sense in the form of a Temple, homologous with the form of the earthly Temple, because this vision "takes place" in the *malakut*, in the spiritual world of the Soul. Where a sociologist sees men in procession around a stone temple, our theosophers see Angels in procession from Heaven to Heaven around

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 141b. Cf. also my *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, op. cit.

archetypal, celestial Temples. Where we see a gathering of sages in meditation, the visionary perceives chariots and knights of fire—in short, everything that in the spiritual world is a representative correspondence. This, ultimately, is the whole difference between the phenomenology of the Spirit in Hegel and the visions in Swedenborg's *Diarium spirituale*. The visionary of the *malakut* perceives the things of this world, but he perceives them as they are in the *malakut*; he perceives them, that is to say, as men desire and configure them in their secret reality, which is inaccessible to sensible perception but open to visionary perception. We should not be surprised, for example, by Swedenborg's concise description of a stroll through the streets of Stockholm as this town exists in the *mundus spirituum*, "in its Truth", which of necessity escapes sensible perception and rational understanding, for these are aware only of the hectic bustle of a city of this world. By contrast, its *real* state in the *spiritual* world inspires a dreary horror: most of the houses are shut up and silent, with lightless windows, because their owners are *spiritually* dead.

Such is the *real* state of things, which "trans-appears" on the "upper storey" of vision. Going back to the Byzantine icon of St. George described above, we recall that the reality of the young hero and his combat was shown to us on this upper storey of vision, as it "trans-appears" for the beings of light who people the *malakut*. In short, if we are to achieve a phenomenology which is integrally true, we must see things and perceive each other as we would if we were "decorporized", at least momentarily, so that the appearance would actually be the *apparition* of what *is* in reality, with nothing external to misrepresent what is inward.¹⁹ This is what our

19 One could go in depth into what there is in common between the *malakut* and the first degree of the spiritual world in Swedenborg. In connection with the idea that a phenomenology of the spirit implies, in the end, an integral pneumatology, I quote some lines here from a book which is now extremely rare, by the Abbot Pierre Fournie, a disciple of Martinez de Pasqualis, published in 1801 in London (where he fled during the Revolution to continue his theosophical studies) with the title: *Ce que nous avons e'te, ce que nous sommes et ce que nous deviendrons* (cf. the treatise by Martinez on *Reintegration*): "Now, we should have the less difficulty in conceiving that Swedenborg was really among the good and evil spirits, and that he reported what he heard while conversing with them, in that we would be in exactly the same state if God were suddenly to disembody us altogether. That is to say that, being thus disembodyed, we believe that since we are beings of eternal life, we could continue to see each other, and to speak of the divine and eternal realities as each of us sees, believes, lives and speaks of them in his present state." (Cf. *Arcana caelestia*, art. 1883). Quoted from M. Matter, *Saint-Martin le philosophe inconnu, sa vie et ses e'crits, son maitre Martinez et leurs groupes d'apres des documents inedits*, 2nd edition (Paris, Didier et Cie, 1862), p. 53.

theosophers wished to signify and achieve by the *mundus imaginalis*, in that its corporeity of light is the *malakut* within man. "To be in his Truth" for man depends on the configurative power that he derives from the *malakut*, and which enables him to configure or disfigure it according to his modes of being, thinking and acting.

With a form of meditation which envisages the Temple of the Ka'bah as a sort of *mandala*, we are faced with a specific case. Meditation on the Temple will bring out structures that will prove to be homologous with other states of the Temple in higher universes. But to imagine, or render perceptible, these homologies, presupposes certain methods of figuration, inasmuch as these methods actually form the specific structures belonging to "an irreducible aspect of integral being"—an aspect called by the philosopher F. Gonseth *homo phaenomenologicus*. Meditation on the plan and the cubic form of the Ka'bah, as pursued by Qadi Sa'id Qummi, presents us *par excellence* with a case where the structures in question, together with their homologies, "are realized through an elaboration which is geometric in character".²⁰

With the help of our theosopher, we will try stage by stage to understand what is figured by the Temple of the Ka'bah when it is perceived by the organ of the active imagination: the reasons and meanings of its structure that interconnect the sensible and* the suprasensible worlds, Nature and the *hierocosmos*. What, in consequence, is the esoteric significance of pilgrimage? What is accomplished, and to what does one give form "in the *malakut*", the world of the Soul, when performing the rites of pilgrimage to the earthly Ka'bah? How is the secret of the Black Stone as a corner stone the secret of the *malakut* within man? Lastly, we shall see how to enter the Temple is for the mystical pilgrim *eo ipso* to have "the power of the keys", the *potestas clavium* whereby spiritual man attains full self-realization. On the upper level of its icon, the Ka'bah rises as an invisible Temple of faith; it is the "place" of the spiritual exile (*gharib*) who communicates from there with the higher worlds, and who is the man through whom God can still watch over this world—watch over it and care for it.²¹

20 Ferdinand Gonseth, 'La Morale peut-elle faire l'objet d'une recherche de caractere scientifique?' in *Revue universitaire de science morale*, 1965, no. 2, and 'Homo phaenomenologicus', in the review *Dialectica* 19 (Neuchatel, 1965), pp. 40-69.

21 About twenty years ago, M. Fritz Meier made a full study in *Eranos* of the mystical aspects of the Ka'bah according to other authors; see 'Das Mysterium der Ka'ba,

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II. *The Structure of the Temple of the Ka 'bah*

i. *The Twelve Imams*. Very briefly, we must draw attention to the complexity which a study of this type of theme involves from the very beginning, since it has scarcely been explored before. Our goal could be defined as an application of the phenomenology of *form* (in the sense of the German *Gestalt*) to the traditional science of *correspondences* practised by all esotericists, from our Shiite theosophers, and their *ta'wil*, to a Swedenborg.²² The notion of a "field of perception" should be extended, and its objectivity established, so that it includes the notion of a "field of visionary perception". Imaginative perception could then be envisaged as laying hold of realities and events, both of this world and of higher worlds, in the forms which represent them in the intermediary world or *mundus imaginis*. To start with, a number of premisses must be established, i. First and foremost, the notion of form corresponds less to a given configuration which is the attribute of a thing, than to a functional definition of the *Gestalt* understood as a configurative ability or organizing principle, *vis configuratrix*. 2. It must be recognized that both notion and principle have their application well beyond the limits of sensory experience. 3. The "principle of transposition" must be acknowledged as fundamental, so that in passing from one level of the universe to another, the forms behave like a melody whose structure remains identical and recognizable when transposed into different keys.²³ 4. This is because the inner relationships of each whole, and the relationships between the wholes, are essentially functional relationships, so that geometrical relationships of the kind proposed by Qadi Sa'id Qummi—for the engendering of the cubic form of the Ka'bah—are, essentially, functional relationships enabling us to move

Symbol und Wirklichkeit in der islamischen Mystik', *Eranos-Jahrbuch* XI (1944), pp. 187 ff. I myself have already had occasion to treat this theme at length in my book *L'Imagination creatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabi*, 2nd edn (Paris, Flammarion, 1977); tr. R. Manheim, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, Bollingen Series XCI (Princeton University Press, 1969).^{*} There are long and rewarding comparisons to be made, which we may not even attempt in this study. ^{*} (Translator's note: again, this translation is from the earlier (1958) edition of the work, but this does not substantially affect it).

22 Cf. my *Hermeneutique spirituelle comparee*, op. cit.

23 Cf. *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 143 ff., where I refer to the researches, unique of their kind, of my friend Victor Zuckerkandl, whose death is deeply to be regretted.

THE CONFIGURATION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE KA'BAH from one figure to another and from one level of universe to another.²⁴ The traditional science of correspondences links up with the phenomenology of forms to become a science of metamorphoses, within the limits of the three categories of universe mentioned above.

Especially typical is the way in which the Shiite theosopher Qadi Sa'id Qummi, in the course of a monumental work which has hitherto remained in manuscript form, is led to envisage the causes and the engendering of the cubic form of the Ka'bah (the Arabic word *ka'b* denotes a cube). Our author is a Twelver Shiite, not an Ismaili Shiite. And among the traditional texts of Twelver Shiism that he commentates—among those of the *hadith* that go back to the prophet of Islam—there are certain traditions which limit the number of Imams to *twelve* only. These Imams are the spiritual Guides who, coming after the Prophet, were to be the "Preservers" of the sacred Book and of the esoteric meaning of the Revelations. The limiting of their number to *twelve*, as we have observed elsewhere, *eo ipso* implies that the twelfth Imam, the Imam of the present time, is the "hidden Imam", the "awaited Imam". Our author undertakes to discover, in the structures themselves of the cosmos—that is to say, by a detailed implementation of the science of correspondences—the necessity for this specific number of *twelve* Imams. To his first attestation in this respect he gives the name "proof of the Throne" (*burhan 'arshi*). Later on, we will see that the figure of the Throne is equivalent to that of the Temple. Here we must note the following:²⁵

The first being in the higher universe to emanate from the supreme Principle is a Light which contains all light (because all light is created from it). This Light of lights is described as the Throne (*'Arsh*), the Intelligence (*'Aql*, the *Nous*), Muhammadan Light (*NUR muhammadi*), be-

24 Cf. Wolfgang Kohler, *Psychologie de la forme*, Collection *Ide'es*, no. 60 (Paris, 1964); trans. S. Bricanier, from *Gestalt Psychology* (Bell & Sons Ltd., London 1930), especially pp. 177-180, 198, 207 ff. (although our own point of view in this context is not that of a psychologist).

25 For what follows, see Qadi Sa'id Qummi, op. cit., fol. 136b-138b. The text forms part of the commentary on the 35th *hadith* of chapter II of the book by Ibn Babuyah (see above, note 14), which reappears as the 68th *hadith* of another work by the same author, *Si'at al-shi'ah*, recently published in Tehran. This *hadith* is essentially a conversation between the tenth Imam, 'Ali Naqi (died 254/868), and a disciple who went to find him at Samarra, in the camp where the Abbasid government was holding him prisoner. The disciple wishes to be certain that he has the Imam's approval for each of the articles of faith that he professes in his heart, with the result that the entire *hadith* on its own forms a complete symbol of Shiite faith.

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cause it is the Intelligence of the Fourteen Aeons of light that will be manifested to the terrestrial world in the form of the prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatimah, and the twelve Imams. The first being to emanate in the lower world is named the primordial Water, understood as ontologically prior to Water as one of the four Elements of our physical world. This primordial Water signifies the entirety of spiritual and material creatures, inasmuch as they are the contents of the intellection (*ma'lumat*) of the Intelligence. Further, by reason of the unity *sui generis* formed by the Intelligence and the object of its intellection, this Water is likewise known as the Throne. Now, if it is correct to picture the Intelligence as *surrounded* by its objects of intellection, with itself as their centre, it is no less true to say that it surrounds, contains and envelops them. Here the difference about which our author is so insistent, and which he ponders with the aid of the Theology attributed to Aristotle, makes its appearance: the difference between the material orbs whose centre is *surrounded* by their periphery, and the spiritual orbs whose centre, paradoxically, has the property of being "that which surrounds" (*muhit*).

The Intelligence is the Light, the Throne, the centre, knowledge as a unique, unquantifiable point, and at the same time it is also Water, the peripheral whole of all the objects of its intellection. The relationship of the Intelligence, as centre, with itself as the periphery surrounding and enveloping all the objects of its intellection, is expressed in the phrase "the Throne rests on the Water"; and this relationship is consolidated by *twelve* functional relationships which determine the cubic form which is both the *imaginal* form of the cosmic Temple and the sensible form of the earthly Temple of the Ka'bah. In other words: for the Throne, the Muhammadan Light, to be both the centre of the universe and the periphery containing it—in order, that is to say, for "the Throne to rest upon the Water" which it also stabilizes—these *twelve* functional relationships must exist; and their existence, as we will see, is assured by twelve human creatures of light (*bashar nuri*), twelve sacrosanct persons of a superior humanity, namely the *twelve* Imams. Twelver Shiite Imamology is thus the *form* or *vis configuratrix* organizing the universe whose constitutive factors are represented by the two symbols of *Light* and *Water*.

We can now examine in detail the method whereby we proceed from the figuration of the orb of the Throne to the figuration of the *cube*. In considering the figure of a circle as it presents itself to our sensible

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perception, we see that several diversified aspects, or dimensions, appear as soon as we draw lines out from the centre to the periphery. Four of these aspects are essential, and result from the intersection of two lines that pass through the centre and are perpendicular to each other. They are essential because they divide the circle into four semi-diameters, and represent thereby the four metaphysical limits inherent in all creation, beginning with the Throne itself. The Throne is surrounded in this way by *four* limits that face each other, since it has a beginning (*awwal*) and an end (*akhir*), an inner or esoteric aspect (*batin*) and an external or exoteric aspect (*zahir*). The first two limits are understood from the extension of its total time (the *Aion*, *dahr*, "time of times"), and the second two from the extension of its total space ("space of spaces"). Thus the original point of Knowledge, of the Throne, ends in four points which are designated as the *supports of the Throne* (cf. fig. i).²⁶ It is commonly said that the supports or bearers of the Throne *Art* four in number, and in certain Shiite traditions they are signified or represented as lights, the "four lights of the Throne", whose colours indicate that they are, respectively, the origin of each region of being which is symbolically linked to this colour: red light, green light,

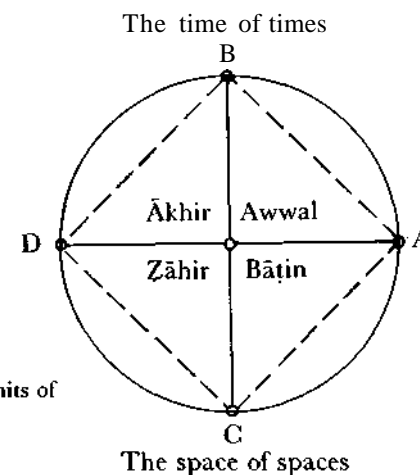


Fig. 1. The four limits of the creatural world

6 In all, Qadi Sa'id Qummi's manuscript contains, in the way of figures, only the little plan of the Ka'bah reproduced here as fig. 5 (ms. fol. 178b). But it seemed to us that the understanding of his system of correspondences and homologies would be greatly assisted by a very few diagrams. We have therefore included some in strict accordance with the indications given—as strict, that is, as his frequent allusiveness permits.

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yellow light, and white light. This is one of the great themes of Shiite theosophy.²⁷

Let us join up these four points by the chords underlying the arcs of the respective circles, and follow the three phases of the mental operation whereby Qadi Sa'id Qummi brings out the cubic form of the Throne or Temple. This operation is based on the principle that everything in the lower world is an image and a projection of something in the higher world, and that consequently the four limits are manifested in the suprasensible world before being manifested in the sensible world, in virtue of the correspondence establishing the "principle of transposition". Let us imagine that the square inscribed within the circle in fig. 1 (defined by the points ABCD), representing the suprasensible world (*ghayb*), accomplishes a "descent" (*tanazzul*) through a projection of itself onto the lower level which represents the world of sensible phenomena (*'alam al-shahadah*), and which is defined by the points A'B'C'D'. Four straight lines (AA', BB', CC', DD') join up, respectively, the four angles of the higher level with the four angles of the lower (cf. fig. 2). At this point the supports of the Throne which is Knowledge are doubled from four to eight, as alluded to in the Koranic verse 69:17: "On that day, *eight* bear the Throne of your Lord."

Secondly, we must note the four straight lines (AB, BD, AC, CD) that interconnect the four limits of the suprasensible world and mark the unity and coherence of the spiritual world, thus permitting the coherent procession of the multiple of the lower world from the unity of the higher. Thirdly we must take into account the four straight lines on the lower level (A'B', B'D', A'C', CD') which interconnect the four limits of the world below and mark thereby its organization and coherence.

This threefold operation gives us the *eight* angles that are the "supports of the Throne", plus *twelve* lines and *six* surfaces contained between each pair of lines. Qadi Sa'id Qummi observes that the four points or metaphysical limits, the four lights, arising from the central point, must therefore be at the origin of the cubic form of the Throne or Temple (*usul al-*

27 On these four lights or pillars of the Throne, see my work on Ibn 'Arabi, *Creative Imagination* . . . , op. cit., pp. 373-374. See also my edition of Mulla Sadra Shirazi, *Le Livre des Penetrations metaphysiques (Kitab al-Masha'ir)*, Bibliotheque Iranienne, vol. 10 (Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1964), pp. 166-167, 214 ff., 219 ff. of the French translation. Here again, a comparative analysis is needed. In connection with this, see *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. I, book 1, chapter V.

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muka"ab al-'arshi). These *twelve*, *six* and *eight* situate and stabilize this cubic form, thus bringing it about that "the Throne rests upon the Water".

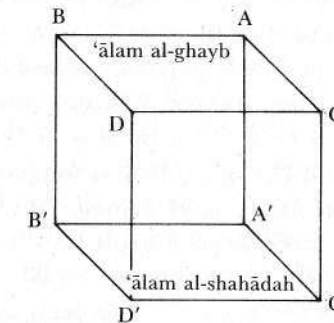


Fig. 2. The cube

Of what specific structures are we made conscious by this geometrical elaboration? Or, in Shiite terminology, what is here the consummation of the *ta'wil*, of the symbolic hermeneutic? Our author suggests the answer straightaway when he invites us to consider the cubic form of the Temple, which totalizes and interconnects spiritual and material realities, as a unique Emanation proceeding from the supreme Principle; that is to say, as a human person, as the *Anthropos* who is God's vicar with regard to what he envelops and contains eminently within himself. In other words, the figuration of the Temple of the Ka'bah is likewise the figuration of Shiite prophetology and Imamology, because in both cases the same functional relationships are preserved.

We should thus bear two things clearly in mind. On the one hand, we have the question: in what way is the figuration of the Temple an imitation of the structure of the spiritual orbs, in which the centre is also that which surrounds? On the other hand, we should remember that Shiite prophetology reproduces, broadly speaking, the main features of the Judaeo-Christian prophetology expressed in the idea of the *Verus Propheta*, who hastens, from prophet to prophet, towards his resting-place, a resting-place identified with the Last Legislative Prophet and the final Seal of prophecy. However, the essential and irremissible characteristic of Shiite

prophetology is that it bases the prophetic mission on the inner, esoteric meaning of the prophetic message. This is expressed in the idea of the *walayah*, the "divine dilection" that renders sacred all the "Friends of God" and invests the Imams as ministers of the esoteric meaning of the prophetic missions. In the case of the *Nabis* or prophets, the prophetic vocation (*nubuwwah*) is added to the *walayah* from which it derives and which is superior to it because it is at the "centre" of each "Friend of God". This, broadly speaking, is the relationship between *nubuwwah* and *walayah*.²⁸

Hence, when Qadi Sa'id Qummi invites us to reflect upon the general form of the Temple as the figuration of a human Person, the *Anthropos* or "Perfect Man", first divine Emanation and God's Vicar (*Khalifat Allah*) over all Creation, he specifies that by this we should understand him who was the final Seal of legislative prophecy (*Khatim al-nubuwwah*), and as such the plenary terrestrial manifestation (*mazhar*) of the *Verus Propheta*—of, that is, the "Muhammadan Light" (*Nur muhammadi*), *Nous* or *Logos* of the primordial Pleroma. Shiite prophetology sees the "Seal of Prophecy" as recapitulating and totalizing the entire body of previous prophets and their prophetic missions, because he is the Seal of the *cycle* of prophecy (*da'irat al-nubuwwah*). Hence the diagrams, as for example in Haydar Amuli, that arrange the series of prophets in the form of a circle. This, however, does no more as yet than give us the "peripheric" function of the primordial Muhammadan Light. It is the *walayah* inherent in it which is both the *central* point and the *circumference* of the Temple of prophecy.

We must thus envisage the Muhammadan Light as essentially a bi-unity, typified in the two persons of the Prophet and the Imam. The Prophet expresses the aspect of this Light that is turned towards men (the prophetic mission *ad extra*), whereas the Imam expresses the aspect that is

28 On the relationship between *nubuwwah* and *walayah*, and in general on the prophetology and Imamology here presupposed, see my *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, vol. I, Collection *Idees*, no. 38 (Paris, Gallimard, 1964); see also *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. I, book 1, chapter VI. On page 259 of this work, there is a diagram constituted by three concentric circles: the circle of the *walayah* is in the centre, surrounded by the circles of the *nubuwwah* (prophetic vocation) and the *risalah* (prophetic mission). However, since all prophetic missions and vocations have their source in the *walayah*, and there is no *nabi* who is not first a *wali* (one of the "Friends of God"), it is equally true to say that the *walayah* surrounds the whole. The word *walayah* has a Latin equivalent in the word *affinitas*. The link of *spiritual affinity* denoted by the *walayah* corresponds in Shiism to the Christian notion of *communio sanctorum* (cf. below, IV).

turned towards God (that is to say, the return to the source by means of the inner esoteric sense of the Revelations). The Muhammadan Light as the centre of the circle of prophecy is the esoteric aspect of all the prophecies recapitulated in the final prophecy, that of the Seal of the prophets; and this esoteric aspect is typified in the Shiite conception by the person of the Imam. In fact, the mission of each prophet includes an esoteric aspect: each legislative prophet has been followed by *twelve* Imams. But the Imam, or esoteric aspect, was sent only secretly to earth with each previous prophet. It is only with the final Seal of prophecy that the Imamate is made publicly manifest in the person of the twelve Imams. And it is precisely in the person of the twelve Imams, as constituting the centre and esoteric aspect of the final prophecy, that the Muhammadan Light is both centre and circumference of the Temple of universal prophetic religion. The *twelve* Imams of the present *cycle* of the *walayah*, which succeeds the previous *cycle* of prophecy,²⁹ are in effect the link between the prophetic religion of the cycle previous to the Seal of the prophets and that of the cycle of the *walayah*. The Twelve Imams are the *vis configuratrix* that confers its form on the Temple of permanent prophetic religion, because their Imamate is the esoteric sense of all prophetic Revelations.

Thus, just as we were shown, a short while back, that the point of origin, in virtue of its creatural nature, was surrounded by four metaphysical limits which it engenders (fig. 1), so here the point of origin which is the Muhammadan Light spontaneously develops four limits (aspects or dimensions, *jihat*), which circumscribe the previous cycle of prophecy and are typified in four of the great prophets: Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. In similar fashion, it develops four limits defining the cycle of the Imamate inaugurated by the closing of the cycle of prophecy with the Seal of the prophets. These four limits are here the Prophet himself (in his empirical person, *wujud 'unsuri*), together with the three first Imams: 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Hasan ibn 'Ali, and Husayn ibn 'Ali (fig. 3). So, just as earlier we had the *eight* angles of the cubic form designated as the "supports" of the cosmic Throne or Temple, here we have the *eight* supports of the Throne of the Muhammadan Light, the permanent pro-

29 Cf. the preceding note. It is possible to perceive here the fundamental difference (in principle and consequences) between the Imamology of Twelver Shiism, limiting the number of Imams strictly to *twelve*, and Ismaili Imamology (which does not recognize the force of the principle of the *ghaybah*). Cf. my *Trilogie ismaélienne*, Bibliothèque Iranienne, vol. 9 (Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1961), index s.v.

phetic religion of humanity. And as the inner cohesion of the higher level, then that of the lower level, and lastly the interconnection between them, were seen to be assured by the *twelve* straight lines and *six* surfaces that engender the cubic form, so here the *twelve* Imams homologically assume the same functional relationships for the cubic form of the Temple of prophecy. By means of the Imamate, which is the esoteric aspect of prophecy and its heart, the Throne or Muhammadan Light is "stabilized upon the Water". It is impossible to add or to take away anything from these *twelve*. Finally, just as the geometric figure of a cube comprises *six* surfaces, the names borne by the *twelve* Imams are *six* in number: three were called *Muhammad*, four were called *'All* two were called *Hasan*, one *Husayn*, one *Ja'far*, and one *Musa* (Moses).³

This, broadly speaking, is the geometric elaboration described by Qadi Sa'id Qummi as "the proof of the Throne", a proof that brings to light a structure which shows why of necessity the Imamate should consist of not more than twelve Imams. From here our author proceeds to deal with two further points, points which have equally been pondered by all Shiite theosophy and which I can only mention in passing.

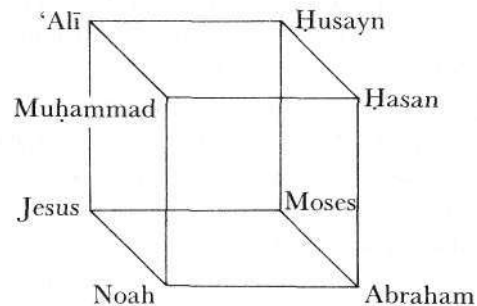


Fig. 3. The eight supports of the Throne

30 For the reader who is not necessarily familiar with these figures, the three Imams who have been named *Muhammad* are the fifth Imam (Muh. al-Baqir, died 115/733), the ninth Imam (Muh. al-Jawad, died 220/835), the twelfth Imam (Muh. al-Mahdi al-Qa'im, in "occultation" since 260/864). The four Imams who have been named *'All* are the first Imam ('Ali ibn Abi-Talib, died 40/661), the fourth Imam ('Ali Zayn al-'Abidin, died 92/711), the eighth Imam ('Ali Rida, died 203/818), and the tenth Imam ('Ali Naqi, died 254/868). The two Imams who have been called *Hasan*

From the first of these there results a homology of functional relationships between the supreme Heaven and the *twelve* strongholds or Signs of the zodiacal Heaven (the firmament) on the one hand, and between the supreme Heaven of prophecy and the pleroma of the *twelve* Imams on the other.³¹ The principle is invariable: everything in the lower world is a projection and an image of something in the higher world; everything in the higher world is the Spirit (*ruh*) and the essence-archetype (*haqiqah*) of something in the world below. From the supreme Heaven among the astronomical heavens, or ninth Sphere, emanate energies which are shared out between the twelve signs of the zodiacal Heaven that lie along the course of the Sun and Moon of the sensible world. In the same way, the universal Heaven of light of the higher world, which envelops the totality of intelligible and sensible Spheres and is the Throne of the essence-archetypes and of the divine Words (*Kalimat ilahiyah*), must necessarily create twelve strongholds of light, the dwelling-places or stopping-places of the Sun of the final prophetic mission and of the Moon of the esoteric aspect, or Imamate. These twelve Signs of light are the twelve Imams, in whom is ramified the existence of the Muhammadan epiphanic form (*taqasim wujud al-mashhad al-muhammadi*).

A second point emerges when we reflect on the position of the sun in the astronomical Heaven, which is the Throne in a form perceptible to the senses; when we reflect, that is to say, on the sun from the point of its rising at the time of the spring equinox to the point at which it terminates a twelve-month course—the Moon, on the other hand, completes its course in the space of one month. Similarly, the Sun of the final prophecy progresses and is made manifest by the twelve months which are the twelve Imams. Each Imam, therefore, corresponds to a lunar month, because the Imamate is the night of esotericism; and the Imam is a Moon in the heaven of the *walayah*, that is, the nocturnal heaven which is the esoteric aspect of prophecy (*batin al-nubuwwah*).

Thus, through the projection of a hermeneutical perspective—that is to say, of a disposition of correspondences, a field of vision arising no longer

are the second Imam (Hasan al-Mujtaba, died 49/669), and the eleventh Imam (Hasan al-'Askari, died 260/874). The third Imam, *Husayn* Sayyid al-Shuhada' (martyred at Karbala in 61/680), was the only one of his name, as were the sixth Imam, *Ja'far* al-Sadiq (died 148/765), and the seventh Imam, *Musa* al-Kazim (died 183/799).

31 For what follows, see Qadi Sa'id Qummi, op. cit., fol. 138b—139.

from sensible experience but from imaginative spiritual perception—we are induced to meditate upon a series of impressive applications of the principle of "the transposition of forms". We are induced to meditate upon the manner in which the functional relationships are preserved when one moves from the geometrical structure of the cube to the relationship of prophecy with the Imamate, which together make up the Temple of prophetic religion; or when one moves from the relationship of prophecy with the Imamate to the relationship of the supreme Heaven with the signs of the zodiac, or else to the relationship of the year with its twelve months. These last confer on Shiite Imamology the traits of what the history of religions designates elsewhere as "theology of the *Aion*". The spirit of Shiite theosophy is characterized, one might say, by a remarkable configurative power. This power reveals figurations and correspondences which we merely mention here, since to do anything more we would have to study them in the light of a phenomenology of Form (*Gestalt*), and for this purpose we would have to renew the traditional science of correspondences.

We can now anticipate the esoteric significance of the pilgrimage to the Temple of the Ka'bah as the *centre* of the terrestrial world, *containing*, homologically, all of creation. The form of the Ka'bah is the very form of the cosmic Throne or Temple, as it is also the form of the Imamate or *malakut* of this world, of its esoteric or suprasensible aspect. For the mystical pilgrim, the pilgrimage and the rites of pilgrimage performed at the Temple of the Ka'bah have a direct configurative action on the formation of his body of light, on his body's *malakut*—that is to say, on the attainment of his total form, in the sense that his body of light becomes simultaneously centre and periphery of his essential, total being. We must, therefore, go on to consider the plan and the construction of the Ka'bah.

2. *The Plan of the Temple of the Ka'bah.* Qadi Sa'id Qummi reflects on this plan in the course of some densely-packed pages of the same great work we referred to above, pages which follow those that we have already drawn from, and in which is revealed the totality of esoteric meanings of the pilgrimage to the Temple of the Ka'bah in Mecca.³² In the preceding

³² We explained above (note 25) how the *hadith* is introduced which is commented here by Qadi Sa'id Qummi. The profession of faith which the disciple makes known

figurations we moved from the cosmic Temple to the spiritual Temple of prophetic religion, whose edges and surfaces are the twelve Imams, and which is the *malakut*, or supra-sensible aspect, of this world. In the same way, while retaining the same figurations and functional relationships, we now move from the structure constituted by the archetypal figures of cosmogony to the plan of the earthly Temple of the Ka'bah,³³ thus discovering why this Temple takes on a cubic form, as indicated by its Arabic name. It is always the same principle that is called into play: the forms of light (*suwar nuriyah*), the higher figures, are imprinted on the realities below, which mirror them. (We should note that, geometrically speaking, the considerations here adduced would remain valid even if the object of meditation was the form of a Greek temple.)

On the higher plane of Reality-archetypes, which together constitute Nature—not, as yet, the specific Nature of our terrestrial world, but Nature as the epiphanic form of the divine Will of manifestation—we encounter four limits that correspond to the four metaphysical limits referred to above (fig. 1). Here these limits are named respectively universal Intelligence, universal Soul, universal Nature, and universal Matter (Matter which is not as yet that of our physical world, but which embraces all the subtle and "spiritual" states of the *Materia prima*). "When," says our author, "these aspects or dimensions of the higher Lights are reflected

to the Imam, and the explanation given by the latter, naturally lead the conversation round to the five fundamental religious practices of Islam: Prayer, Almsgiving, Pilgrimage, Fasting, and the *Jihad* as spiritual combat. On each of these articles Qadi Sa'id, in his role as commentator, has written a veritable treatise explaining the *asrar*, that is to say, the spiritual, inner and esoteric meaning. Together these five treatises form as it were a book which can be considered separately, and which has even been edited recently as such by M. Sayyid Muh. Baqir Sabzavari with the title *Asrar al-'ibadat wa haqiqat al-Salal* (Tehran, 1339 A.H.). We have given particular emphasis (see above, note 14) to the study of the third of these treatises, the *Kitab asrar al-Hajj*, or "The Book of the esoteric meaning of Pilgrimage", which contains seven chapters. For the study of the first chapter which follows, cf. ms. fol.177-179.

³³ Let us call to mind the Koranic verses concerning the Ka'bah, which our author does not fail to mention at the beginning of his elucidation. "The first Temple to be founded for men is that which is Bakkah, the blessed Temple" (3:96) (Bakkah is another name for Mecca). "God has made the Ka'bah into the sacred House, to be a station for men" (5:100). "Pilgrimage is incumbent upon man as an obligation towards God" (3:97) "Perform the circumambulation around the antique Temple" (22:29). And a remark made by the Imam Rida: "The Temple was founded as the centre of the terrestrial world, beneath which the Earth is spread like a carpet. Every wind that blows in this world comes from the Syrian corner of the Temple. It is the first demarcated field to be established on Earth; because it is the *centre*, the obligation to be fulfilled is equal for Orientals and Occidentals."

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on the Earth of receptiveness (*ard al-qabiliyah*) for the manifestation (*zuhur*) of the divine Lights, then the four corners of the blessed Temple of the earthly Ka'bah take form."

Furthermore, two of these four divine reality-archetypes (*haqa'iq muta'-assilah ilahiyah*)—namely, the Intelligence of the universe and the Soul of the universe (fig. 4)—are on the *oriental* side of the ideal Reality (*mashriq al-haqiqah*), "because they both belong to the horizon of the world of pure Lights, and are the Orient in which the Sun of the esoteric spiritual senses (*shams al-asrar*) arises". The two others—universal Nature and universal Matter—are on the *occidental* side. The Light rises with the first two—Intelligence and Soul—which are its Orient, the divine Day; and wanes, sets and is hidden in the last two quarters of the cycle—universal Nature and universal Matter—which are its Occident and correspond to the Night. The four limits together form the *nycthemeron* of cosmogony. Out of this night, from the occidental horizon, the Light will rise in a new dawn, when the "dense and obscure time" (*zaman kathif*) of our world comes to an end.³⁴ When the Koranic verse 55:17 speaks of the "Lord of the two orients and the two Occidents", it refers to these two oriental and two occidental horizons. Thus, the strict law of correspondences requires that, in the plan of the terrestrial Ka'bah, the corners should be arranged in accordance with the same order of relationships: two of them—namely the Iraqi corner, in which the Black Stone is embedded, and the Yemenite corner—are on the oriental side, and two of them—the Occidental corner and the Syrian corner—are on the occidental side (fig. 5).

We will now go through the same process as before (fig. 2), and be mental witnesses of the "descent" (*tanazzul*), or rather of the "projection", of the Reality-archetypes onto the earthly plan of the Ka'bah. Each corner of the higher plan enters into correspondence with a corner of the lower terrestrial plan by means of a straight line which represents one of the Elements. These straight lines (or pillars, *arkan*) themselves define the sides of an ideal Temple whose height, for the imaginative perception, enables Heaven and Earth to communicate with each other.

A. Let us picture the Temple of the Ka'bah as a person facing the pilgrim who approaches it from the north side (we have just been asked to think of the Temple as the theophanic person of the Seal of prophecy). It

34 On the symbol of the sun rising in the West, see Paul Kraus, *Jabir ibn Hayyan*, vol. I, in *Memories de l'Institut d'Egypte*, vv. 44-45 (Cairo, 1943), p. L.

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is the revealed divine Face that "faces" the pilgrim, who thus fulfils the injunction: Meet my face (*istaqbil wajhi*). To the *right* of the Temple envisaged as a person facing the pilgrim (but to the latter's left), that is to say, on the *oriental* side and towards the north, is the *Iraqi corner* in which the Black Stone is set, a symbol, as we shall see, which contains the whole secret of the Temple and of man's spiritual life. With regard to its position in the Temple building, it is said that the Black Stone is "God's right hand". On this corner rests the dimension which establishes a correspondence between Nature, meaning here our earthly physical world, and the Intelligence of the universe (fig. 6). We have already seen that the primordial Water symbolizes the objects of intellection of the Intelligence, the lights of this Light. It follows therefore that among the four Elements of our physical world, the element of *Water* is born of the dimension which links Nature *imaginally* with the Intelligence; and the vertical line that represents it in the cubic form of the Temple typifies this functional relationship (the Arabic word *rukn*, pi. *arkan*, serves to designate the stone as well as the column, or pillar, and each of the four Elements). In addition, it is beneath this corner that the living water rises up out of the well called *zamzam*.³⁵

B. Also to the right of the Temple, that is to say on the *oriental* side towards the south (the "back" of the Temple, envisaged as a person facing the pilgrim approaching it) is the *Yemenite corner* (or pillar) (fig. 6), corresponding to the dimension that links Nature with the Soul of the world or Spirit of the universe. It is situated at the end of the side contiguous with the corner of the Black Stone, which corresponds to the Intelligence, for it is through the "divine dimension" of the Intelligence that the Soul proceeds from it.³⁶ Thus the Yemenite corner (*rukn yamani*) is

35 The designation of this corner as *Iraqi* should be understood in a very broad sense, as encompassing not only Arab Iraq and Persian Iraq (*'Iraq 'ajami*), but extending the latter as far as the province of Fars (Persia). This is why our author quotes a *hadith* here, which is the pride of Iranians: "Were knowledge (v.l. religion) as far away as the Pleiades, there would always be men from Fars who would reach it." This *hadith* has a prominent position in the commentary on the prologue to Suhrawardi's "Oriental theosophy" (*Kitab Hikmat al-ishraq*).

36 In connection with this homologation, it is worth remembering the doctrine of the procession of the Intelligences in Avicenna. The first Intelligence (and after it each of the others) performs an act of triple contemplation. From the contemplation of its Principle there proceeds another Intelligence. From the contemplation of its own being as necessary through its Principle (what the author here calls its "divine dimension") proceeds a Soul which moves its Heaven. From the contemplation of

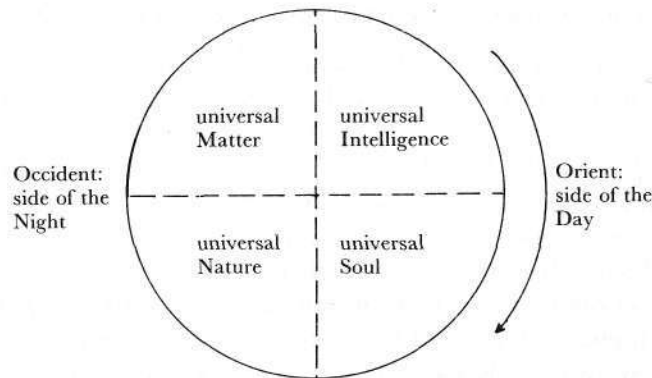


Fig. 4. The nycthemeron of cosmogony

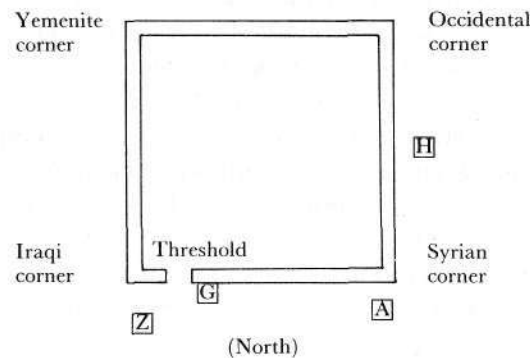


Fig. 5. The plan of the Temple of the Ka'bah according to Qāḍī Sa'īd Qummī. The Temple is envisaged as a person facing the person approaching it from the north side. The Orient is thus on the left-hand side of the diagram. H = the Hijr of Ishmael. G = the "station" of the angel Gabriel. A = the "station" of Abraham. Z = the well Zamzam (cf. below, §4)

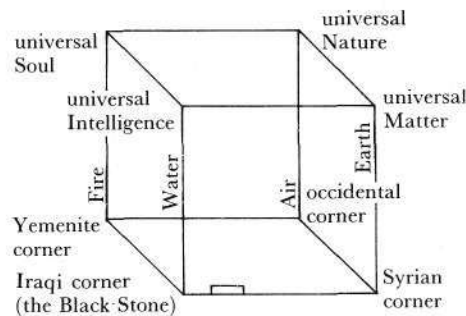


Fig. 6. Correspondence of the plan of the Ka'bah with the plan of the Reality-archetypes

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also to the "right of the Throne" (*yamin al-'Arsh*).³⁷ Moreover, the element of *Fire* is produced in our physical world from this dimension linking Nature with the Soul of the world or universal Spirit, a functional relationship typified by the Yemenite "pillar".

C. The *Syrian corner* on the *occidental* side, to the left of the Temple envisaged as a person facing the pilgrim, but to the latter's right when facing the Temple facade (fig. 6), corresponds to the dimension linking the Nature of our physical world to universal Matter; for this universal Matter, which embraces all creation both spiritual and material, proceeds from the Intelligence through its "creatural dimension" (in the way that the Soul proceeds from the Intelligence, as we saw, through the "divine dimension" of the latter). Now the principle of the Earth, the element Earth, is produced in our physical world by the relationship of Nature to universal Matter; indeed, this relationship engenders that which is most able, in our physical world, to manifest the Reality-archetypes with stability. It is typified by the Syrian pillar of the Temple.

D. There remains the *occidental corner* at the back and to the left of the Temple (still envisaged as a person facing the pilgrim). This corner corresponds to the dimension linking the Nature of our physical universe with itself as universal Nature, on the level of the Reality-archetypes. Its position in the *imaginal* functional space of the Temple is self-explanatory. It is situated between the Syrian corner, where the relationship between terrestrial Nature and universal Matter is established, and the Yemenite corner, where the relationship between terrestrial Nature and the Soul or Spirit of the universe is established. This is so because what we call Nature in our world results from the breathing into universal Matter of the Soul or Spirit of the world. Thus the element *Air* is born of the relationship of earthly Nature with itself as universal Nature; at the same time, given that the manifestation (the *vestigia, athar*, active traces) of Nature is produced in Matter, the effect of this relationship is made manifest in the Syrian corner. As one tradition has it: "The wind blows from the Syrian corner, south wind and north wind, west wind and east

the possibility of its non-being, should it regard itself as fictitiously separated from its Principle (what the author here calls its "creatural dimension"), proceeds the subtle matter of its Heaven. Cf. my *Avicenne et le Recit visionnaire*, new edn (Paris, 1979); tr. W. R. Trask, Berg International, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, (Texas, Spring Publications Inc., 1980).

³⁷ Hence the qualification of wisdom as "Yemenite theosophy"; cf. below, note 54.

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wind; that is why this corner (or "pillar") vibrates in winter as in summer, by night as well as by day; for the wind has its source in the Breath of the Merciful One (*Nafas al-Rahman*), and this Nature is the physical form of the manifestation of this Name (the Merciful One)."

In short, it is from these correspondences, when established and justified, that there emerges the image of a cosmic Temple, which itself is the form of manifestation of the "Sublime Throne" within the universal Nature of the "universal body" (*jism kulli*). These correspondences can be perceived with the help of a geometrical elaboration whose basis is the cubic form of the Temple of the Ka'bah, and which, according to Qadi Sa'id Qummi, is *eo ipso* the explanation of this Temple.³⁸

3. *The Celestial Archetype of the Temple.* In spite of all that we have already written, the mystical phenomenology of the form of the Temple is far from complete. We have been enabled to perceive the cubic form of the Temple of the Ka'bah, but a more difficult problem remains. This is the correspondence of the earthly Temple of the Ka'bah with its celestial archetype, the spiritual Temple in the spiritual universe. Qadi Sa'id Qummi knows that here he must deploy the powers of a form of thought that is essentially intuitive.³⁹ The problem is this: although unquestionably there are spiritual forms more real and more substantial than the material forms perceptible to the senses, how are their structures to be homologized with each other, given the difference between them, of which, as we saw, our author is so aware? In effect, the characteristic of spiritual forms is that their centre is both that which *is surrounded* and that which *surrounds*, that which is

38 Continuing to apply the principle that everything in the sensible world is a *form* (*surah*) belonging to the higher universes, Qadi Sa'id elucidates yet more traditional homologies. The Temple on earth corresponds to the Temple in the fourth Heaven (*al-Bayt al-ma'mur*, Koran 52:4), and it is square in form (*murabba'*) because the words on which Islam is founded are *four* in number, the four *tasbihat* or formulas of glorification (*tahlil, takbir, tasbih, tahmid*). The three dimensions of the cube are likewise homologized with the three aspects of the *Tawhid*: the aspect of the Essence (*tawhid dhati*), the aspect of the Attributes (*tawhid sifati*), and the aspect of the Operations (*tawhid fi'li*. Cf. op. cit., fol. 178b—179.

39 Here begins the second chapter of *Kitab asrar al-Hajj*, whose position in Ibn Babu-yah's *Shark Kitab al-Tawhid*, fol. 179-181 of our ms., was specified in note 32 above. According to the long title he gives to the chapter, Qadi Sa'id is well aware of his change of level. In all that follows, he will henceforth address himself to the intuition, through a method of exposition "foreign to rational understanding". The reflections which fill these chapters are "modest virgins, in no way suited to the vigorous maleness of men with rational knowledge".

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contained and that which *contains*, whereas in the case of material forms, the centre is purely and simply that which *is surrounded*. The form of the earthly Temple must, therefore, conform finally to this ambiguity of the centre in the spiritual forms; for only then can the material form be elucidated in a spiritual form, and the earthly Temple of stone be transfigured into a spiritual Temple of faith.

Apart from other sources, the celestial archetype of the Temple of the Ka'bah is to be found in traditions that go back to the Shiite Imams. Two motifs represent it: the Tent descended from Heaven, and the white Cloud.

A tradition going back to the fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir, recounts how when Adam fell from Paradise, he complained to God about the solitude and wildness of the places in which he found himself. God then caused a pavilion to descend, a single tent from among the tents of Paradise. The angel Gabriel set up this tent upon the site which was to be that of the Temple of the Ka'bah. The surface of the Tent exactly covered the area to be covered by the future Temple, and the corners of the Tent coincided with those of the Temple. The central pillar of this heavenly Tent was a rod of *red* hyacinth. The four tent-pegs were of pure gold, and were *yellow*. The ropes were woven of threads as silky as hair, and were *violet*. Here traditions vary. Sometimes it is the Angels who build the Temple of the Ka'bah in imitation of the celestial Tent. Sometimes it is God himself who builds it so that Adam, together with the seventy thousand Angels commanded by God to bear Adam company, might process around it. In any case, at the four corners of the earthly Temple were placed four foundation stones, originating respectively from Safa, Mount Sinai, Salem or Kufah, and Abu Qubays (the place where Adam halted on arriving in Arabia). We will shortly see how these four stones possess a decisive significance for the spiritual form of the Temple.

Another tradition, going back to the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, recounts how when Adam was "reconverted" to God, the angel Gabriel came to him and took him to the future site of the Temple. Here a white Cloud (*ghadmah*) descended and overshadowed them. The angel ordered Adam to trace with his foot a groove outlining on the earth the exact area covered by the shadow of the white cloud. This was to be the perimeter of the Temple of the Ka'bah. We will encounter the context of this *hadith* later on, in the elucidation of the esoteric meaning of the rites of pilgrimage.

As for the traditions which contain a reference to the secret of the Black Stone embedded in one corner of the Ka'bah, these likewise assume significance in the context of the first pilgrimage undertaken by Adam in the company of the angel Gabriel.⁴⁰ "In all this," declares our author, "there are mystical secrets, access to which is denied to the best-trained intelligences, let alone to those minds which delight in placid torpor. As regards us," he adds, "we will show here, with divine help, a ray of that light, for the benefit of him who decides to attempt the ascent of this mountain and to reach its lofty summit."

It is from this summit that one may discern how it is possible to establish the correspondence, or homology, between the forms of spiritual things or beings and the forms of material things or beings. The starting-point, says Qadi Sa'id Qummi, is the most perfect and stable form of all: the *sphere*. Let us at once observe with our author that in the present case we do not move from one category to another in moving from the spherical to the cubic form, because the latter simply locates certain functional relationships whose supports are inscribed within the sphere. In particular, in this respect, one must make no mistake when the spherical form is attributed to spiritual beings: what is being expressed in this manner is not a geometrical relationship as such, but a functional one. This is not to say that spiritual beings have the form of a ball with a certain diameter. It means that each Angel, or each human form of light, or the subtle *imaginal* body, is not "in Heaven" but carries its Heaven within itself, just as each demonic entity carries its Hell within itself.⁴¹ Qadi Sa'id Qummi is insistent upon this point: the spherical form, roundness, is not one which pre-exists and is imposed on spiritual beings. The spherical form which

40 We will find the context of this *hadith* below, section III, § 3. The author cites here two other traditions in which the symbol of the red hyacinth is substituted for that of the white Pearl (he himself remarks on their identity of meaning). According to one tradition: "The Black Stone has two eyes, two ears, a mouth and a tongue (which is why the Black Stone is *witness* to the "judgement" of man). It happened that as Adam passed by it in Paradise, he struck it with his foot. When he was forced to descend, as it was of gleaming red hyacinth, he kissed it. This is why the pilgrims today kiss the Stone as they pass it." According to the other tradition: "When Adam had descended close to the mountain of Abu Qubays, he complained to God about the wildness of the places in which he found himself, and that he no longer understood what he used to understand in Paradise. Then God caused a red hyacinth to descend. He placed it on the site of the Temple, and Adam walked around it. Its radiance was such that signals (or emblems) were made in its form, and it became a sacred object." *Sharh*, 179b.

41 Cf. my *Hermeneutique spirituelle comparee*, op. cit.

we perceive here below—the sphericity of the universe in its totality and of the heavens that compose it—is a form derived from spiritual beings, a form which is the manifestation in our own space of the intimate law of their being.

This being said, it may further be specified that if the most perfect and stable of forms is sphericity, this is because the relationship between spheres consists in the fact that they surround each other: the spheres of our universe (Heaven and Elements) are englobed by and encased in each other. Otherwise—if, for example, they were juxtaposed—there would either have to be another body between them or else a void, a hypothesis excluded by traditional physics. Furthermore, each of these spheres which are encased in each other possesses a superior degree of subtlety and light in relation to those below it and which it envelops; each sphere is duller and more opaque than the one within which it is encased. The truth of this law is made evident as one descends from the supreme Sphere, the manifested Throne of the Reality-archetypes—so pure that it is not even constellated—to the immense Heaven of the Fixed Stars (which contains, besides the mass of constellations, everything that we nowadays call the galactic universes), and then from planetary Heaven to Heaven until one reaches the elementary Spheres that surround the Earth.⁴² In the spiritual world also there are ideal Spheres that surround each other, in the sense that the cause completely surrounds that of which it is the cause.⁴³ "Down below" likewise, what is inferior has a lesser light, and appears duller in relation to what is spiritually superior.

Here we are faced with the question whose terms we defined above: in what sense can one speak of a correspondence or homology between the centres of the spiritual Spheres and the centres of the material Spheres, when in the spiritual Spheres the centre is both *that which is surrounded* and

42 Qadi Sa'id observes here that the Prophet never uses the word Heaven (*sama'*) to designate the Spheres (sing. *Kursi*, 'Arsh'), which are outside and above the planetary Spheres that form our solar system; *Sharh*, 179b.

43 All this accords perfectly with the *Theology* said to be by Aristotle and with Avicenna's commentaries. Cf. G. Vajda, 'Les Notes d'Avicenne sur la "Theologie d'Aristote"', in *Revue thomiste* II (1951); see also my *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, op. cit., p. 54. See also *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. IV, general index s.v. *Theologie dite d'Aristote*. Qadi Sa'id Qummi himself wrote a commentary on the famous *Theology*, which has hitherto escaped the attention of researchers. It should be edited, for it is a significant testimony to the Neo-Platonists of Safavid Persia. For more details, see my *La Philosophie iranienne*, op. cit.

that which surrounds (the Angel being the centre of the Heaven that he contains), while in the material Spheres the centre is by definition that which is surrounded? In our world, says Qadi Sa'id Qummi, what is below (i.e. the Earth) is the centre in relation to what is above it and surrounds it. This is the reverse of what happens in the world with respect to which it is "down below"—that is to say, the reverse of what happens in the spiritual world; for there it is what is above that is the centre, but a centre which is no less capable of being that which surrounds; while what is below in the spiritual world, although in the position of being *that which surrounds*, is as such *that which is surrounded*. So how is one to establish a homology of forms?

The answer to this question depends on the application of the phenomenology of Form to the traditional science of correspondences and, together with this, the possibility for spiritual forms to reveal themselves as such, as of right and in the plenary reality as forms. In order for this to happen, a double correspondence must in principle be established.

A. A correspondence between the centre of the material form and that of the spiritual form inasmuch as this is a *surrounded* centre; and B. a correspondence between the centre of the material form and that of the spiritual form inasmuch as this is a centre that *surrounds*. In order to perceive intuitively that the Ka'bah, being the centre of the earthly world, is also that which surrounds it (the surrounded-surrounding, the enveloped-enveloping),⁴⁴ one must perceive "imaginally" that its structure is homologous with the structure of the Temples of the spiritual world, the Temples of light. This is what the motifs of the celestial Tent and the white Cloud are intended to suggest. Finally, there enters into this very structure an element represented by the four corner-stones, an element which "dematerializes" and transforms the Temple of stone into a spiritual Temple of faith. The inner, spiritual form—the form of light—as the centre assembles and totalizes the "data"; it is itself the "giver of the data", the external data surrounding the centre of the material form. It is

44 On these expressions, see my *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, op. cit., pp. 279 ff. Like Haydar Amuli, Qadi Sa'id Qummi was steeped in the writings of Ibn 'Arabi, with whom the Shi'ite theosophers early discovered their affinity. Nevertheless, there was one point on which they were unable to compromise and over which they were forced to criticize him, namely the person of the "Seal" of the *walayah*, (*khatim al-walayah*) who can only be the Imam. Cf. my article 'Haydar Amuli, theologien Shi'ite du soufisme', in *Melanges Henri Masse* (University of Tehran, 1964), and *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. III, Book 4, chapter I.

not *in* the light, but is the light, the act of light, and this is the centre which as such possesses the virtue of surrounding. (The passage from material form to spiritual form corresponds to a process of intussusception, as when a glove is turned inside out: the inside becomes the enveloping surface.)

A. On the one hand, then, the material centre—the site of the Temple of the Ka'bah as centre of the terrestrial world and of the geocentric universe of the Spheres—by virtue of its homology with the centre of the intelligible Spheres, has the privilege of manifesting the Temple (*Bayt Allah*, the "House of God") in correspondence with the Throne of the sovereign Unity (*'arsh al-wahadanyah al-kubra*). This latter is the pure intelligible Temple (*al-Bayt al-'aqli*) around which the pure sacrosanct angelic Intelligences process (the *Angeli intellectuales*).

B. On the other hand, this terrestrial centre of the corporeal world corresponds to the Glorious Throne (*'Arsh majid*) in the world of the Soul, that is to say, the supreme Sphere, which is the first to be affected by the action of the World-Soul. This supreme Sphere is the body which surrounds and envelops the universe (*jism muhit bi'l-kull*). The Glorious Throne itself corresponds to the Sublime Throne (*'Arsh a'zam*) or Intelligence of the universe, a correspondence based on the fact that, if the Intelligence is the centre of the intelligible Spheres, it simultaneously envelops, surrounds and contains those same Spheres whose centre it is.

The homologation of category A establishes a correspondence between the centre, and the centre as *surrounded* (*muhdat*), between the earthly Temple of the Ka'bah, around which the pilgrims walk in procession, and the Temple of sovereign Unity, around which the Angels process. The homologation of category B establishes a correspondence between the centre, and the centre as *surrounding* (*muhit*): the Sublime Throne contains the intelligible Spheres, the Glorious Throne contains the astronomical Spheres, the Temple of the Ka'bah contains, homologically and within its "imaginal" structure, the totality. Thus, says Qadi Sa'id Qummi, this double correspondence is reflected from above down to the earthly Temple; and he adds: "All this contains a mystery about which no one up till now has, to my knowledge, said more than I have just said" (and we admit to sharing this opinion, so abstruse is our author's text at this point).⁴⁵

45 There are, besides, some variants between our ms. fol. 180 and the text edited by M. Sabzavari, p. 177. It appears as though the editor incorporated into this text certain marginal notes present in the manuscript he was using. I cannot make a

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Thus, no matter where the nature of the Throne or Temple (the notions overlap) is realized—whether in the spiritual or in the material world—it will always possess a comparable structure. The structure of the Tent which descended from Heaven, and which the angel Gabriel set up for Adam, is the structure of a spiritual form which contains its universe within itself. Our author undertakes a detailed examination of this. The *hadith* of the fifth Imam specified that the central pillar of the Tent that came down from Heaven was made out of *red hyacinth*. In fact, it typified the Throne of the sovereign Unity, whose central pillar is the Supreme Divine Form revealed (*al-uluhayah al-kubra*), which, in this context as in Ismaili theosophy, is the first Intelligence of the pleroma, the supreme *Nous*.⁴⁶ It is by virtue of this *Nous* that summits and abysses, Heavens and Earths, exist, as witnesses to this Unity. It is represented by the *red hyacinth* because it totalizes two aspects. It is *divine* because it is the initial theophany of the *Absconditum*, and this divine aspect is absolute light. But at the same time it is also *creatural*, and every creatural aspect is Darkness. It encompasses both the aspect of the worshipped and that of the worshipper, postulated by the very concept of divinity. According to the physics of our authors, the colour *red* derives from the mingling of *whiteness*, as an aspect or dimension of the Light, with *blackness*, as an aspect or dimension of Darkness. This is the motif which Suhrawardi introduces so arrestingly at the beginning of the mystical recital he entitles *The Purple Archangel*—that is, having the purple colour of the morning or evening twilight, when day is mingled with night.⁴⁷

This Tent is supported and stabilized by four tent-pegs (*awtad*)⁴⁸ typify -

detailed comparison here, so I limit myself to hoping for a forthcoming critical edition of Qadi Sa'id Qummi's great work.

46 On the word *uluhiyah* as a designation of the divinity manifest in the first Intelligence of the pleroma as a support for the name Allah (*Deus revelatus*), see my *Trilogie ismaélienne*, op. cit., pp. 160-161, and my book *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, op. cit., pp. 112 ff. and 293-294.

47 Cf. my translation of the 'Recit de l'archange empourpre', in *L'Archange empourpre: quinze traités et recits mystiques*, VI, Documents spirituels 14 (Paris, Fayard 1976), pp. 201-213. Compare, too, the symbolism of the two wings of the angel Gabriel, one of light and the other of darkness (ibid., VII, pp. 236 ff.). This should be related to the notion of the procession of the Intelligences; see above, note 36.

48 The *Awtad* also figure in the esoteric hierarchy, whose structure probably derives from the image of the celestial Temple. Cf. my *Trilogie ismaélienne*, op. cit., index s.v.; my book *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, op. cit., p. 45 note 15; my study on Ruzbihan Baqli of Shiraz in *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 35 ff.; and my

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ing universal Nature which, by means of its four aspects (cf. above figs. 1 and 4), maintains the order of the material universe. Their colour is the *yellow* of gold because universal Nature is both close to the intelligible Lights, and finds rest on the Earth of materiality (*ard al-hayulaniyah*), where it consolidates itself and leaves traces which take on the "tincture" of the laws of physical reality.

The ropes of the celestial Tent, described as being woven of threads as fine as hair, are the irradiations of the Light of the Soul (*ashi*"at *Nur al-Nafs*) as a hypostasis emanating from the Intelligence, and they originate in the "crenelles" (*sharafat*) of the higher world. They are *violet* in colour because of their intermediate position between the world of being at the level of the pure Imperative—that is to say, the world of the cherubic Intelligences—and the world of Matter and Nature. Just as for our authors the colour red results from the mingling of light with darkness (white with black), the colour *violet* results from the mingling of the colours *yellow* and *red*.

In short, the structure of the celestial Temple described in the *hadith* of the fifth Imam typifies the rank and position of the Supreme Intelligence or *Nous*, designated above as "Muhammadan Light", *Nur muhammadi*. It is the centre of the All, and as such it simultaneously surrounds and envelops the totality of the intelligible and material Spheres. As the central pillar of the Temple of sovereign Unity, it is the Sublime Throne which is God's Temple on the level of the intelligible world (*Jabarut*). It is the initial Temple, the Temple in its idea-archetype, founded for a seraphic humanity already in possession of the rank of Angel (*al-anas al-'aqliyun*, which designates the persons of light in the pleroma of the Fourteen Most Pure Ones), as well as for the Angels of the superior hierarchies, whom traditional theosophy describes as the *muhayyamun*, those who are "made ecstatic by love".⁴

Because all the universes symbolize with each other, this same Temple exists in every universe in a form that corresponds to that universe. Below

L'Homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien (Chambery, Ed. Presence, 1971; distr. Libr. de Medicis, Paris); pp. 87-88; tr. N. Pearson, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism* (Boulder and London, Shambhala 1978), pp. 56-57.

49 This should be compared with the use of the same term in Ibn 'Arabi; cf. my *Creative Imagination* . . . , op. cit., pp. 311 ff. and 314. One could also refer to other contexts, for example to the celestial Temple described in the *Book of Enoch*, XIV, 10 ff., LXXI, 5 ff.

the world of the Intelligence, and on the level of the world of the Soul (*malakut*), is the Glorious Throne (*'Arsh majid*), the Temple of God around which the Proximate Angels (*muqarrabun*) go in procession. Furthermore, the form of manifestation of this Glorious Throne, supreme Sphere or ninth Heaven, is the limit between the space in which we orientate ourselves in accordance with sensory data, and the *mundus imaginalis*. The world of the Soul is this *mundus imaginalis*, and it contains the Image-archetype of each thing and thence the Image-archetype of all the temples and sanctuaries where the name of God is celebrated. At the level of sidereal Nature, in the fourth Heaven (the heaven of the Sun and, in Jewish gnosis, of the archangel Michael⁵⁰) is the Temple called *Bayt al-Ma'mur* (the temple frequented by the Angels). Originally this was the Temple of the first earthly Ka'bah, but at the time of the Flood it was carried off by the Angels to the fourth Heaven and disappeared for good (like the Holy Grail) from the eyes of men;⁵¹ it became the Temple around which process the Angels who are the motive Souls of the Spheres (the *Angeli caelestes*: here heliocentrism assumes a role in angelology).

Finally, at the level of the earthly world there is the Ka'bah. But, as we have just observed, the present Ka'bah built by Abraham is only the imitation (or "history", *hikayah*) of the Ka'bah that was built in the time of Adam. It is the Temple of God in the world of sensible phenomena, on the material Earth, and it is homologous with the other Temples because it is the homologue on earth of the archetypal centre (*markaz asli*). The Prophet records, in one of the recitals of his celestial assumption (*mi'raj*): "It was as if I were then contemplating your own Temple here, for every archetype has its image". In the earthly Temple of the Ka'bah as the image of the archetypal Temple, explains Qazi Sa'id Qummi, the Black Stone corresponds to the pillar of red hyacinth (the mystical reason for this will shortly be seen, for the Black Stone is the secret of the Temple by virtue of being the secret of the spiritual life of man and of his pilgrimage). The Temple walls, and the veils with which they are covered at the time of the great pilgrimage, correspond to the violet tent-ropes, for in the macrocosm the "veils" signify the levels in the hierarchy of souls.

There remain the four mysterious corner-stones, whose provenance, as

50 Cf. W. Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im spathellenistischen Zeitalter*, 3rd edn (Tubingen, H. Gressman 1926), p. 327.

51 Cf. the *hadith* cited in my *Hermeneutique spiriluelle comparee*, op. cit., note 149.

we saw, are four different mountains: Mount Safa, Mount Sinai, Mount Salem, and Mount Abu Qubays. Their symbolic function is determinative: the transfiguration of the material Temple into a Temple of light, a spiritual Temple of faith. Qadi Sa'id Qummi explains that these corner-stones correspond to the four tent-pegs of the archetypal Tent, of gold in both substance and colour. They typify four lights from among the lights of the *walayah* (*anwar al-walayah*). It is thanks to these lights that the universe of being (*'alam al-wujud*) subsists at all, for the *walayah* is the "divine dilection" which sanctifies the "Friends of God", those through whom God still watches over and cares for this world. The four lights in question were those of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. In connection with this our author cites a tradition which makes its appearance fairly frequently in Shiite texts: "According to the Torah, the *Light* came (or as one variant has it: the Lord [*al-Rabb*] came) from Mount Sinai. This light arose over Sa'ir. It shone from the mountain of Faran." It is of value to us to be able to identify in this tradition, where the proper names are simply Arabized, the exact translation of two Biblical verses (Deuteronomy 33:2-3).⁵²

For our Shiite theosophers, this *light* is the light of the eternal prophetic Reality, of the *Verus Propheta* who found support from prophet to prophet, down to Muhammad who was the Seal of prophecy (see above, fig. 3). That it comes from Sinai is a reference to the mission of Moses. Its rising over the mountain of Seir (Sa'ir) is the symbol of the mission of Jesus; its splendour shining on the top of Mount Paran (Faran) typifies the final prophetic mission of Muhammad. It is this light, also, which confers upon the four corner-stones the mystical significance that elevates the transparent spiritual Temple above the form of the earthly one.

A. The epiphany (*zuhr*) of the Light of prophecy began with Adam and attained perfection in Abraham, through whom the religion of the pure believers (*millah hanifiyah*) was made manifest. Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian; the religion of Abraham corresponds to the fundamental constitution of man as originally willed by his Creator (the *fitrah*). The stone in the *Syrian corner* comes from Safa because it was on Safa that Adam appeared to Eve (after their exile from Paradise), and because it was here too that Abraham halted at the end of the migration which he undertook

52 Cf. Deuteronomy 33:2/3 (Moses' great prophetic benediction): "... the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran ..."

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in obedience to the divine summons for him to leave his country. This is indicated by the Koranic verse 14:37: "Oh our Lord, I have established a part of my posterity in "a barren valley, close to your sacred Temple" (cf. fig- 7).

B. The stone from Sinai clearly alludes to the rank and mission of Moses with respect to proclaiming the pure prophetic religion and the institution of the divine Law (*shari'ah*). It is in the *Occidental corner*, which is reserved for Moses as a result of a subtle exegesis of the Koranic verse 28:44, where Muhammad is told: "You were not on the *occidental* side (of Sinai) when We charged Moses with his mission."

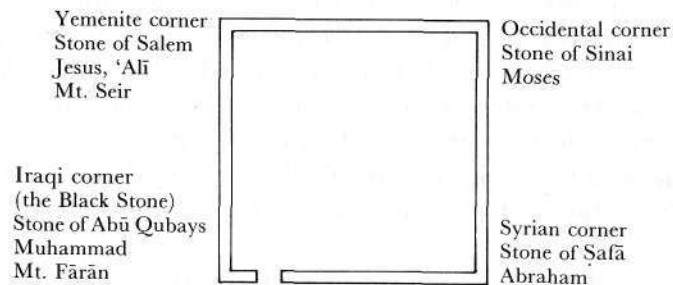


Fig. 7. The four corner-stones of the Temple of the Ka'bah, each one corresponding to a prophet

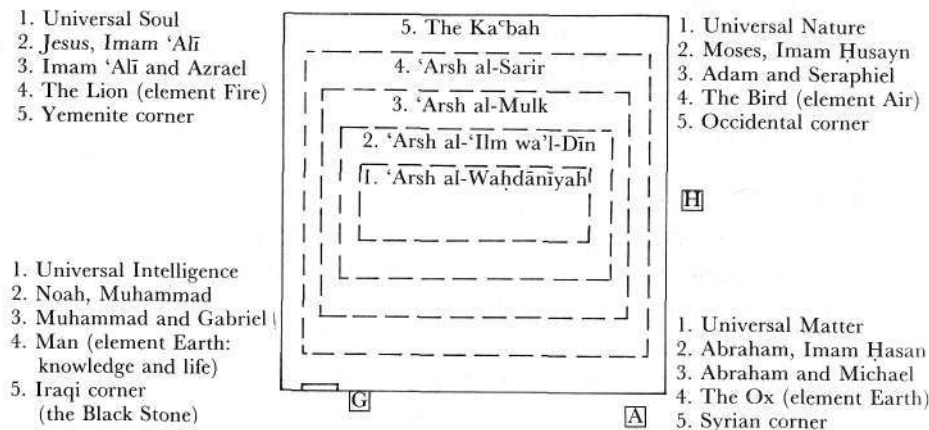


Fig. 8. The correspondences between the corners of the Ka'bah and the corners of the higher Thrones or Temples

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C. The stone from Salem (Salam) symbolizes the rank and mission of Jesus. This is in the *Yemenite corner*, which is to the south and on the *oriental* side. A Koranic verse states: "Maryam retreated from her family towards a place situated in the *Orient*" (19:16), and we already know that in this retreat of Maryam's "towards the Orient", Ismaili gnosis sees one of the esoteric moments which are at the origin of Christ's mission.⁵³ The Yemenite corner also suggests the reason why the mystical qualifications of "Yemenite" and "Oriental" should be bestowed on one and the same theosophy.⁵⁴ Here, Twelver Shiite gnosis stresses another aspect: just as Jesus was the Seal of the *walayah* (divine dilection and initiation) imparted to the prophets who succeeded each other after Adam, so the first Imam, 'Ali ibn Ali-Talib, was the Seal of the universal *walayah* imparted to *all* the "Friends of God" (*Awliya' Allah*), prophets and non-prophets. Thus, he is a substitute for Jesus (*Qa'im maqam, locum tenens*), he who "answers for" him, just as the twelfth Imam, the Imam of the Resurrection, in his turn "answers for" the entire line of the prophets. In other words, the Imam 'All is in the same relation to Jesus as the twelfth Imam is to all the Imams and prophets. (Hence the names of Salem and Kufah associated in the attestation of the stone's origin.) Thus at the Yemenite corner of the Temple, on the oriental side, Shiite meditation brings about the unification of a prophetic Christianity with its own Imams, a unification also heralded in the fact that Christ's return must of necessity be preceded by the appearance of the twelfth Imam. Moreover, the plan of the heavenly Jerusalem with its *twelve* gates corresponds to that of the Temple with its *twelve* Imams.

D. Still on the oriental side, there remains the *Iraqi corner*, the corner in which the Black Stone is embedded, and whose "pillar" typifies the relation between all earthly things and the higher world of the Intelligence. Since Abu Qubays was the place where Adam halted, this provenance is doubtless a reminder that the secret of the Black Stone is linked to the drama itself of Adam (see below). But Qadi Sa'id Qummi essentially

53 On Ismaili christology, see my *Hermeneutique spirituelle comparee*, op. cit., 10.

54 In virtue of the tradition stating that "faith is from Yemen and wisdom (theosophy) is Yemenite (*al-iman yamani wa'l-hikmah yamaniyah*)". Hence, for example in Mir Damad, the notion of "oriental theosophy" (*mashriqiyah* or *ishraqiyah*) coincides with that of "Yemenite theosophy", meaning a theosophy which is inspired: a mental vision of the beings of light, not simply theoretical speculation. Like Maryam, the theosopher goes "towards the Orient", in the direction marked by the corner where the meeting takes place between Jesus and the first Imam. Cf. note 37 above.

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considers that this corner marks the completion of the Temple (*tamam al-Bayt*), and that it typifies the perfection attained by the *res religiosa*. The function assumed by the Iraqi corner within the Temple as a whole corresponds in this way with that of the Seal of prophecy, with whom the mission of all the previous prophets is finally completed.

This is how the configuration of the Temple of the Ka'bah is shown to be homologous with that of the Temples of the spiritual universes. This Temple, the centre of the terrestrial world, is the centre *surrounded* by the procession of believers in this world; but at the same time it is the centre *which surrounds*, because it is the Temple of the eternal prophetic Religion. From being a material form situated at the centre of our world, the Temple becomes the spiritual form that surrounds and contains our world in its totality. Its corner-stones, the four great prophets, elevate it, as the immaterial Temple of faith, above its material configuration, so that it overhangs it (as in the Byzantine icon of St. George the immaterial body of the young hero contained the whole universe of his combat). The thought of Qadi Sa'id Qummi shows a similar elan: as the material Ka'bah rests on its corner-stones, so the Throne or Temple of eternal Religion, the hierocosmos, subsists through its great prophets; and this is why the eighth Imam, 'Ali al-Rida, said: "The divine Religion will never perish so long as the Temple of the Ka'bah endures", the Temple, that is, of faith which is the religion of the prophets. The same statement is made in the Koranic verse 5:97: "God established the Ka'bah as the sacred Temple to be erected in perpetuity for human beings."

The Temple of the Ka'bah, explains our author, is so perfectly the spiritual Temple of faith that it could only disappear if the Imam ceased to exist—the "hidden Imam", that is, who is the mystical *pole* of the earthly world of men, without whose existence humanity would not even be able to keep itself in being; for the hidden Imam is *the pole* that invisibly gathers around himself those through whom God still "cares for" this world.⁵⁵ This precisely is the spiritual Temple which remains forever in this world, by virtue of the invisible presence of the hidden Imam. Here *par excellence* it is proper to speak of the "Cloud over the sanctuary"

55 Cf. *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. IV, Book 7. The existence of the invisible Imam as the mystical *pole* of humanity is absolutely necessary if humanity is to continue to exist. This idea is affirmed over and over again in the *hadith* (especially by Kulayni) as in all the Shiite authors.

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(Eckhartshausen). Finally, when we have understood the secret of the Black Stone, we will understand that the secret of the Temple is the secret of man, and that he who has grasped it has the keys of the Temple in his possession: on him has been bestowed the *potestas clavium*.

4. *The area surrounding the Temple: the "stations" of the angel Gabriel and of Abraham.* The little plan drawn by Qadi Sa'id Qummi (see above, fig. 5) contains three hitherto unremarked attestations.⁵⁶ To the left of the Temple when facing it, and thus to the *right* of the Temple envisaged as a person facing the pilgrim—in the *oriental* part of it, therefore—just beside the threshold, is a site marked by the letter *G*. This is the place or "station" (*maqam*) of the angel Gabriel. In the *occidental* part of the Temple, to the left of the "person" of the Temple (but to the right of the person facing it), in front of the Syrian corner, is a site marked by the letter *A*. This is the place or "station" of Abraham. Finally, still in the occidental part, is a site marked by the letter *H*. This is the *hijr* of Ishmael, or the house of Ishmael (*Bayt Isma'il*), where he buried his mother Hagar and where he himself is buried.⁵⁷ These three sites possess an outstanding significance in connection with the structure and function of the Temple of the Ka'bah as a spiritual Temple, that is to say, as a Form whereby the mystic attains to the fullness of his being. Our author consequently sets about discovering the reason for their respective *situs*.

The place of the angel Gabriel is explained by the prominent part played by this Angel with respect to Adam, when, after his exile from Paradise, Adam discovered the secret of the Black Stone (cf. below, III, 2). The Stone is embedded exactly there, in the pillar establishing a communication between the earthly Temple and the world of the Intelligences (fig. 6) whose most eminent figure is the angel or archangel Gabriel. As the initiating angel of the prophets in general, and particularly of the Seal of the prophets to whom he transmits or dictates the text of the Holy Book, the angel Gabriel figures largely in the writings of Islamic theologians and philosophers. He is both the angel of Knowledge and of Revelation, Holy Spirit and active Intelligence.⁵⁸ It follows that his place

56 Here begins the third chapter of *Kitab asrar al-Hajj*, op. cit., fol. 181—182.

57 Cf. *Safinat Bihar al-Anwar* I, p. 225.

58 One could write a sizeable monograph on the figure and role of the angel Gabriel in the theology, philosophy and theosophy of Islam, as well as in Islamic spiritual life

should be at the threshold of the Temple, on the *oriental* side, by the pillar of the Black Stone, because, explains Qadi Sa'id Qummi, it is he who receives the mystical pilgrims on their arrival there. "He makes their perfect spirits mount up to the world of the beings of pure light, he brings them into the presence of the Master of the house." He it is who brings them "into the neighbourhood of the Temple of God which is in the world of the Intelligence (see above, II. 3) ... Those who take refuge in the Temple enclosure the Angel leads into delicious shade (Koran 4:57), into a place of safety (44:51). On those that possess the aptitude for it he sheds knowledge which derives from the Principle who is the source of all Emanation (*al-Mabda' al-fayyad*). He leads those who thirst after high spiritual knowledge (*ma'arif haqiqiyah*) to the wells of sweet clear Water, to the living waters of the *Kawthar* (108:1)".

Furthermore, on the *occidental* side of the Temple is the house of Ishmael. Our author sees this as a symbol of what is frequently expressed in Arabic by saying that the son is the secret (*sirr*, the esoteric meaning) of his father. This is how the person of Abraham is to be approached in order to understand his place and function on the occidental side of the Temple of the Ka'bah, in front of the Syrian corner or "pillar". It is here that the symbolic justification of this "station" of Abraham's leads our author into a full-scale recapitulation of the homologies whereby the visible and invisible universes symbolize with each other, in the course of which the supports or "bearers" of each of these "Thrones" are also homologized with each other. The nomenclature differs somewhat from the previous one (see above, II, 3), but the correspondence is easily established.

1. There is what Qadi Sa'id Qummi here calls '*Arsh al-Sarir*, and which is identifiable without difficulty as the eighth Heaven, the immense heaven of the Fixed Stars (the *Kursi* or *Firmamentum*). This is the "Throne in the firmament" where the constellations of the zodiac are distributed. Furthermore, and most remarkably, we see the reappearance here, in our Shiite theosophers, of explicit traces of Ezekiel's famous vision. Mulla Sadra Shirazi, for his part, has preserved a tradition explaining the division of the signs of the zodiac by the four figures of Ezekiel's vision.⁵⁹ These four

in general. In the *Diarium spirituale* where Ruzbihan Baqli described his visions, this figure often recurs, entrancing the visionary with the beauty of his features. Cf. *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 47, 48, 50–52 and 63.

59 Cf. Ezekiel 1:10 and Revelation 4:7 (the vision of the four "living creatures", *hayyoth*).

figures—Man, Lion, Eagle, and Ox or Bull—are here the four supports of the Throne or Temple of the firmament (fig. 8).

2. There is the Throne or Temple of the visible cosmos (*'Arsh al-Mulk*), the Throne in the Sphere of Spheres or supreme Sphere, which englobes the totality of the universes that are manifest to the senses. We may recall that this universe is defined by four limits (fig. 1, the limits which engender the cubic form). These four limits, which apply to all beings, are respectively designated here as the volume of a being (*jism*, or its configuration, *surah*); its spirit (*ruh*); its nourishment and growth; and its level of realization. These are the four corners of the Temple or Throne of the *Mulk*. Their homologues and also their supports are an archangelic tetrad and a tetrad of prophets (that is, in the *malakut* and also in the hierocosmos): a. Adam and the archangel Seraphiel are the supports of the forms of beings at the moment when the spirit is breathed into them; b. Muhammad and Gabriel are the supports of the spirits and of their realization; c. Abraham and Michael ensure the subsistence of beings; d. the Imam 'Ali and Azrael determine eschatologically their final level of realization.⁶⁰ There are *eight* supports, therefore, for the '*Arsh al-Mulk* (fig. 8).

3. There is the Throne of Knowledge and Religion (*'Arsh al-'Ilm wa'l-Din*) which, as we already know, also possesses *eight* supports (see above, fig. 3). These are four great prophets from among the ancients—Noah,

Sadra Shirazi develops this theme at length in his monumental commentary on Kulayni's *Usul mina't-Kafi*, in connection with the verse of the Throne (*Ayat al-Kursi*) referred to in the *hadith* of the Imams (cf. *Kafi*, K. *al-Tawhid*, chapter XX, on the '*Arsh* and the *Kursi*, and Sadra Shirazi's commentary, lith. Tehran n.d., pp. 309 ff., 314 ff.). It is evident that Qadi Sa'id Qummi, fol. 181b, was familiar with this commentary. A comparison should one day be made between all that has been written in Islamic theosophy about the "Throne" and the mystique of the "Throne" (the *Merkabah*) in Jewish gnosis. Cf. Gershom G. Scholem, *Les Grands Courants de la mystique juive* (Paris, 1950), pp. 53 ff; tr. *Major trends in Jewish mysticism* (New York, Schocken, 1976). See also 5 *Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch*, ed. and trans. H. Odeberg (Cambridge, 1928), index s.v. Ezekiel's vision and the vision of the Apocalypse are the source of the "tetramorph" in Western iconography; magnificent examples of it exist in Coptic and Carolingian art, signs of a Christendom in which the initiatic tradition was still alive.

60 In order to simplify the schema, Azrael is here allotted the function which our author doubles in the functions of Ridwan and Malik. The Imam's eschatological function should be returned to the body of Shiite doctrine; cf. for example Abu'l Hasan Sharif Isfahani, *Tafsir Mir'at al-Anwar* (Tehran, 1375 A.H.), p. 9 (on this work, see my report in *Annuaire de l'Ecole pratique des Hautes-Etudes*, cited in note 14 above). Shiism, as the religion of the *walayah*, is the religion of love as regards the theophanic persons or forms (*mazahir*) who are the twelve Imams. The love or the hostility he bears them *makes* the paradise or the hell within man.

Abraham, Moses and Jesus—and on the other side the four Muhammadan figures: the prophet Muhammad and the first three Imams, 'Ali ibn Abi-Talib, Hasan ibn 'Ali, and Husayn ibn 'Ali.⁶¹

4. There is the Throne of Sovereign Unity (*'Arsh al-wahdaniyah al-ku-brd*), whose supports (see above, fig. 6) are four in number: Intelligence, Soul, Nature and Matter (the Intelligence or Sublime Throne is the central pillar of red hyacinth).

Thus, there is symmetry between *'Arsh al-wahdaniyah* and *'Arsh al-Sarir* (of Ezekiel's vision), in that they each have *four* supports, and there is symmetry between *'Arsh al-Mulk* and *'Arsh al-'Ilm wa'l-Din*, each of which possesses *eight* supports. This in no way compromises the correspondences of all the Thrones or Temples amongst themselves.

With this recapitulation completed, and Abraham's rank among the supports of the other Thrones or Temples specified, the meaning of his place in the area surrounding the earthly Temple of the Ka'bah should be quite clear.

This meaning is linked essentially to the function of the spiritual Temple. Abraham is there first of all because the prophets and the Imams are the "Face of God" (*Wajh Allah*), and by orientating oneself towards them one turns towards God. But more precisely, Abraham's place is there on the left, on the *occidental* side of the Temple envisaged as a person *facing* the pilgrim, because this occidental *situs* conceals Abraham's exemplary mystical significance, whereby Abraham, builder of the Temple, makes the pilgrim fit to approach the Temple (*poestas clavium*) and to be introduced by the angel Gabriel into the spiritual world. His place is there in front of the Syrian corner, whose stone comes, as we saw, from Safa, where Abraham dwelt in exile. He is associated "functionally" with the archangel Michael because, although the subsistence and growth of beings in general devolve mystically upon the archangel Michael, the subsistence and growth of believers and the children of believers devolve upon Abraham the prophet. Now, in the physiology of the human body, nutrition is a process pertaining to the "left (or occidental) side", because food travels, or "emigrates" (*ightirab*), in the person whom it nourishes, by way of the left side—which is the side of the heart.

61 M. Sabzavari, ed. cit., p. 184, note 1, refers, in connection with this theme, to texts by Kulayni, Nasiruddin Tusi and Ibn Abi Jumhur Ahsa'i. Unfortunately, we cannot expand on this here.

Moreover, Abraham is called the intimate Friend of God (*Khalil*) because the ground of his being is intimately involved with his love for God and the love of his God is intimately involved with his being,⁶² in an intimacy comparable to that of food when it mixes with and is assimilated into the body of him whom it nourishes. Seen in this light, Abraham's position with regard to the mystical physiology of the Temple envisaged as a person is surely on the left side, the *Occident* or *maghrib*. The *maghrib* is the place of *setting* and *exile*: thus, the double implication of the root of the Arabic word (*gh-r-b*: the setting star and the exile who emigrates) gives rise to the whole mystical meaning of the personage of Abraham. Abraham is he who goes into exile towards the "supreme horizon" (*al-ufq al-mubin*, the horizon where the Angel appeared to the Prophet, Koran 81:23); he disappears from himself and is concealed from both universes. A *hadith* of the sixth Imam declares "Islam began in exile and will once more be in exile as at the beginning. Happy are the exiles!" Abraham typifies the spiritual exile whose place is not in this world; and the spiritual exile, the stranger to this world, becomes the instrument through which God still watches over this world. As one tradition has it: "It is through the prophets that God watches over men", and according to an inspired (*qudsi*) *hadith*, famous among the mystics of Islam, it is of this exile and stranger that God said: "I am the eye through which he sees, the hearing through which he hears, the hand with which he feels, the foot with which he walks. . ."

The mystic whom Abraham typifies by the involvement of his intimate being with divine love is the spiritual man whose person, in concealing itself from this world, simultaneously becomes the West or Occident of the divine Light (*maghrib Nur Allah*), that is to say, becomes the mystical place where this Light declines, exiles itself, and conceals itself in this world in order to dwell in this world. Thus the drama of Adam exiled *into* this world achieves its denouement in Abraham exiling *himself from* this world; for it is in Abraham exiled *from* this world and a stranger to it that the divine light will itself be exiled *into* this world. If the divine Light did not thus exile itself into this world, concealed in those who exile themselves

62 On the reasons for associating the prophet Abraham with the archangel Michael—reasons which also make him worthy to be called an intimate friend (*Khalil*), and thereby illuminating with the light of Islamic mysticism the "philoxenia" of Abraham in the famous icon by Andrei Rubliev—see my *Creative Imagination . . .*, op. cit., pp. 315-316

from this world in order to be, without men's knowledge, the receptacles of this Light, God would cease to watch over this world, to "care for" it. It would be hard to find a more beautiful symbol than this placing of Abraham on the "occidental side" of the Temple to signify that man, in contemplating the form of the spiritual Temple of faith, configures his own inner form of light, after the example of Abraham the exile building the Temple of Light. This is what we have called the *potestas clavium* bestowed on the believer. From this point onwards, the mystical meaning of the pilgrimage and the rites of pilgrimage present themselves in all clarity to the inner vision.

III. *The esoteric meaning of the pilgrimage to the Temple of the Ka'bah*

I. *The procession "in Heaven"*. A traditional teaching among the spiritual masters of Islam says that there are two sorts of pilgrimage: one is the pilgrimage of the community of the faithful (*'awamm*), who travel in order to visit the Holy Places, and the other is the pilgrimage of the initiated mystics (*khawass*), and is the desire for the Face of the divine Friend. Just as exoterically there is a Temple of the Ka'bah which orientates the gaze of created beings (a Ka'bah which is their *Qiblah*), so esoterically there is a Ka'bah which is the object of contemplation of the divine gaze, and this is the heart of man. The material Temple is the Ka'bah around which the pilgrims walk in procession; the Ka'bah of the heart is the place where the divine graces process. The first is the goal of pious travellers, and the second is the place where the pure Lights descend. The former is the house, the latter the Master of the house. For each of us there is a direction (*Qiblah*) towards which he orientates himself, and which is his personal Ka'bah. Whichever way he turns, he meets the face of the Friend, the Face, that is, with which the *Deus absconditus* is revealed to him and becomes for him the *Deus revelatus*. This Face, which mysteriously reveals the Ineffable in the lineaments of the Friend, is what is known in Shiism as the Imam, and could be said to be the secret at the heart of Shiite spirituality⁶³—the secret that we will discover when the pilgrimage has been explained.

63 This is a faithful summary of a long Persian annotation by M. Sabzavari, op. cit., p. 184, and it testifies to the spiritual sense of a present-day Iranian theologian. The Koranic verses with which it concludes are among the most popular in Shiite

The earthly Temple of the Ka'bah, being a centre, is the place around which the ritual circumambulations are performed. The Temple possesses a celestial archetype, and the ritual too possesses one, since every centre is homologous with every other, and the circumambulation is associated with the actual idea of the centre. Qadi Sa'id Qummi explains⁶⁴ how around the archetypal centre, the initial Temple in the intelligible world, goes the procession, made up—as we saw above (II, 3)—of a seraphic humanity of pure Light and of the Angels of the highest hierarchies who, through unassuaged nostalgia and an ecstasy of love, encircle in their flight the area surrounding the Sublimity. In the same way, the pilgrims walk in procession around the Temple on the Earth of absence and separation, in commemoration and as a reminder of the state of this superior seraphic humanity (the Fourteen Most Pure Ones). The initial divine Intention manifests itself from universe to universe by manifesting *eo ipso* the constant correspondence between the things above and the things below.

Nevertheless, between the supreme degree of the Temple in the world of the Intelligence and the plane of terrestrial Nature where the Temple of the Ka'bah rises, there are many intermediate stages, and it is here that the drama is played out, the symbolic story whose denouement is the building of the earthly Ka'bah. There is a long traditional recital on this theme which goes back to the fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir. The drama "in Heaven" begins at the moment when God announces to the Angels: "I will install a vicar on Earth" (2:30), thus announcing the appearance of Adam, of the earthly human Form, in the capacity of God's Caliph in the universe of Nature.

This episode "in Heaven", as meditated in Ismaili gnosis, is the key to sacred history; but for Ismaili as for Twelver Shiite gnosis, the Angels to whom God makes this announcement are not the Angels of the higher hierarchies.⁶⁵ For Qadi Sa'id Qummi, the Angels in question are those of

spirituality: "Everyone has a part of heaven towards which he orientates himself (2:148), and "Whichever way you turn, there is the Face of God" (2:115): the Face which is the Imam, he who *guides*, because in it is revealed the Friend. Herein is contained the sum of Shiite mysticism.

64 Here begins the fourth chapter of *Kitab asrar al-Hajj*, op. cit., fol. 182 and 182b.

65 Cf. my *Hermeneutique spirituelle comparee*, op. cit., note 149, on the interpretation given by Ismaili gnosis, using the text of the *hadith* of the Imam Ja'far, of the episode "in Heaven", where his father, the Imam Muh. al-Baqir, beside the Ka'bah itself, teaches a mysterious stranger about the Temple's celestial origin.

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the physical universe (*Mala'ikah tabi 'iyah*), who are the *malakut* of our visible world—the *malakut*, as we said, "where our symbols are taken literally". These are the Angels who are seized with amazement and fear in the face of the divine announcement of the *khalifah* entrusted to terrestrial Man. For it seemed to them that because of the purity of their nature there was nothing that could surpass it in nobility, and that this spiritual *khalifah* should have come to them. "Will you," they ask, "establish on Earth a being who will create disorder and shed blood?". . . "I know," came the reply, "what you do not" (2:30). Then they understood the limit of their knowledge and the insufficiency of their power. The divine reply is seen by them as the effect of a divine displeasure, as though the divine Light were being veiled from them. That is why, explains the recital of the Imam, they sought refuge close to the Throne where seventy thousand Angels come each day; they went around it in procession for *seven* days or *seven* thousand years. This variant of days or years possesses little significance when it is a question of "subtle time" (*zaman latif*); only the number *seven* is important, because it always symbolizes in this episode the interval of lost time to be made up, the "lost time of eternity" which is redeemed by the *seven* periods or "millenia" of the cycle of prophecy.⁶⁶ This, explains our author, is why *seven* ritual circumambulations are performed around the earthly Ka'bah, one for each *millenium*.

Since the Angels are those of the physical universe, the Throne around which they go during this episode is the Temple of the Soul of the universe; the Temple, that is, in the world of the *malakut*, described in the form of its physical manifestation as the Glorious Throne (the ninth Sphere; see above, II, 3). Its symbolic description signals both its difference from and its similarity to the Temple or Throne of the Sovereign Unity, symbolized in the Tent descended from heaven. The Throne of the *malakut* or Temple in the world of the Soul is made, explains the Imam's recital, of a marble of immaculate *whiteness*, exempt from all the impurities of physical material modalities (a Temple, therefore, made of the all-subtle matter of the *mundus imaginalis*). Its roof is of *red* hyacinth. We have already seen how the colour red derives from the mingling of Light with Darkness, and that it symbolizes the state of being in which the Divine, that is light, mingles with the creatural darkness. Furthermore, this roof is

⁶⁶ On this point, cf. my *Trilogie ismaélienne*, op. cit., index s.v. sept.

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the reality itself of the world of the *malakut*, its "soul" (*al-nafs al-malakuti-yah*), because the soul is like a diadem placed on the body, like the flowerhead of a plant or the roof in relation to the Temple. The columns of the Temple are here made out of *green emerald*, because they are the traces emanating from the outpouring of the Soul of the universe over the universal body, and because the colour *green* is more or less the mean between *white* and *red* (as in the Temple of the Sovereign Unity the *violet* colour of the ropes was the mean between the *yellow* gold of the world of Intelligences and the *red* resulting from the mingling of the Divine with the Creatural).

Every detail, every colour, of the structure of the Temple is rich with a symbolism that should be explained with the help of many comparisons. We cannot do this here; we can only emphasize some suggestive points. God looked with love on the initiative taken by the Angels of the *malakut*, and commanded them to "descend to Earth" in order to build a Temple there which would be the image (the imitation, *hikayah*, the "history") of the Temple in the world of the Soul. This was the Temple around which Adam, and then his children, performed their perambulations in imitation of the Angels of the *malakut*. Yet at the time of the Flood, the Angels carry off this Temple on earth and transfer it to the fourth Heaven.

The profound significance of the Flood, not as a geological event but as a spiritual cataclysm, is made apparent in this transference of the Temple. Brought to earth by the Angels, like the Holy Grail of our Western traditions, the Temple is swept away by the Angels from men's gaze when the latter have become incapable or unworthy of seeing it.⁶⁷ Abraham, the spiritual exile, will rebuild a Temple on earth on the foundations of the vanished Temple. This is how the Abrahamic pilgrim, in performing the external rituals, knows that his true pilgrimage is being accomplished around an invisible Temple within the space of the *malakut*.

2. *The secret of the Black Stone and the motif of the Pearl.* From here we pass to the ultimate and decisive question: what is the function of the spiritual Temple with respect to the esoteric meaning of the rites of pilgrimage, when these are perceived as configuring the Temple's spiritual form? In

⁶⁷ On the spiritual meaning of the *Flood* and the story of the removal of the Ka'bah to Heaven by the Angels, see note 65 above. See also §§ 6 and 9 of the same study (the theme of Noah and the Flood as it is treated by Swedenborg and in Ismaili gnosis).

the absence of this form the pilgrimage would not possess an esoteric meaning, for man configures both his own spiritual form through that of the Temple, and the Temple's spiritual form in accordance with his own inner form. This conformity or *symmorphosis* of the spiritual Temple with man, by virtue of which the invisible Temple is man's spiritual form, is the secret of the Black Stone. The Black Stone is the secret of the Temple and the secret of man, the esoteric aspect of both. The configuration of each of them, in the state of a spiritual form that is more truly subsistent than the material form which is temporarily visible, depends on a pilgrimage accomplished throughout an entire lifetime; for an entire lifetime is needed to "give form" to the spiritual Temple. The Black Stone is in some sense the key to the celestial Temple.

In the course of a conversation with one of his disciples,⁶⁸ the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, asks: "Do you know what the Stone (*al-hajar*) was?" No, the disciple does not know, and the Imam goes on to explain it to him in a symbolic recital which, for all its seeming simplicity, possesses a remarkable density of allusion. The undertaking or pact (*mithaq*) mentioned in the recital is, in Shiite terms, the triple attestation of the Unique of Uniques, the exoteric mission of the prophets, and the esoteric mission of the Imams;⁶⁹ this is the totality expressed, as we saw, by the spiritual form of the Temple. Moreover, in order to understand the recital of the Imam Ja'far, we must perceive, like Qadi Sa'id Qummi, the allusion it makes to three levels of universe to which this undertaking is proclaimed, because the reality of Man is manifested successively at each level of the descending hierarchy of the universes: in the world of the Intelligence, in the world of the Soul—the subtle corporeity of the *mundus imaginalis*—and in the physical terrestrial world. Shiite hermeneutics has reflected on this undertaking—the pact and its consequences—by joining together two Koranic verses: that in which God asks all humanity, which is mystically gathered together, "Am I not your Lord?" (7:172), and the verse containing the statement: "The trust that we offered to sky, earth and mountains, all have refused to shoulder, they trembled to receive it. Man has agreed to shoulder it: he is violent and ignorant" (33:72). If indeed, as Haydar Amuli explains, man had need of a sublime folly in order to accept the burden of such a trust, this sublime folly was to degenerate into a folly

68 Here begins the fifth chapter of *Kitab asrar al-Hajj*, fol. 1820-184.

69 Cf. *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. IV, general index s.v. *mithaq*.

pure and simple which made him violate it. The secret of the trust confided to him is what all Shiite gnosis has attempted to express in its esoteric Imamology. I recall this very briefly here, because Adam's betrayal and the secret of the Black Stone are connected.

"The Stone," explains the Imam,⁷⁰ "was once an Angel among the princes of the Angels before God. When God received the Angels' undertaking, this Angel was the first to take his oath and agree to the pact. So God chose him to be the trustworthy follower to whom he could entrust all his creatures. He caused him to absorb, to "swallow", the pact and confided it to him in trust, and on men He laid the charge of renewing each year in front of this Angel their agreement to the pact and to the promise He had received from them. Thus God placed this Angel with Adam in Paradise, to make Adam mindful of his undertaking and so that he could renew his agreement every year before the Angel. When Adam had betrayed and had departed from Paradise, he forgot the promise and the undertaking that God had received from him . . . And when God had returned to Adam (Koran 2:37), he gave to this Angel the appearance of a *white pearl*, and he cast the pearl out of Paradise towards Adam, when Adam was still on the Earth of India." The tradition according to which the man Adam appeared in Ceylon is common in Shiism; in Ismaili gnosis it is applied to a primordial and universal Adam, *Pananthropos*, who is not yet the initial Adam of our present cycle.⁷¹ The island of Ceylon signifies only an initial stage in the coming of physical terrestrial man.

The recital continues. Adam notices this *pearl*; he becomes familiar with it but does not recognize it, seeing it as nothing but a stone. But with divine permission, *the pearl* begins to speak: "Oh Adam! do you recognize me?"—"No."—"Surely Satan (*Shaytan*) has triumphed within you, since he makes you forget the memory of your Lord." At this moment the *pearl* assumes his original form, as the Angel who was Adam's companion in Paradise. "Oh Adam! where are your promise and your undertaking?" Adam starts; the memory of the divine pact returns to him, and he weeps. He kisses the white pearl—the Angel—and renews his agreement to the promise and the pact. Then God gives to the white pearl, pure and

70 The text of this *hadith* is given in the great encyclopaedia of Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. VII (Tehran) p. 339, and *Safinah* I, p. 225.

71 On the differentiation between the spiritual Adam (*Adam ruhani*), the universal Adam (*Pananthropos*), and the partial Adam who inaugurated our present cycle of occultation, see my *Trilogie ismaelienne*, op. cit., index s.v. Adam.

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splendid, the appearance of the Stone (for such is the appearance it wears in a world given over to Darkness), and this is the Stone that Adam carries on his shoulder as far as Arabia. He makes this journey in the company of the angel Gabriel, a fact whose significance will shortly become apparent. When he is tired by the weight of the Stone, the angel Gabriel relieves him of it and takes his turn at carrying it—a magnificent symbol, seeming to say that only another Angel can momentarily relieve man of the burden of the Angel, that is to say of the pact that involves all his destiny with regard to the spiritual world. Each day and each night, Adam renews his mystical undertaking to this Stone that had been the testimony of his Paradise, and in whose company he advances until he arrives at the site of the Temple in Mecca. Here, as we know, in obedience to the divine command, the Angels of the *malakut* of our world erected a Temple in the image of the Temple that had been their refuge "in Heaven", and the Black Stone is embedded in the corner of the Temple whose mystical correspondences have already been pointed out to us. On this spot, the recital continues, God received the undertaking of the sons of Adam, and we are present at the repetition—or the continuation—on earth of the drama that took place "in Heaven".

We are in agreement with Qadi Sa'id Qummi that there is no doubt that the Imam's recital explains the secret of the white Pearl ("white" here meaning wholly pure and splendid) by the deployment of this secret in three settings: the world of the Intelligence, the world of the Soul, and our physical world. On each level, human beings exist in a form whose subtlety progressively decreases; on each of these levels, they utter the triple undertaking in a language that corresponds to their modality of being on that level. On the level of the world of pure angelic Intelligences, their utterance is in the language of these Intelligences. This is the first episode in our recital, where it is said that the Angel who was later to be concealed in the form of the Black Stone was the first of the Angels to reply. Next, we pass to the level on which corporeity comes into existence still in its wholly subtle form, the form of the body of light (*jismiyah nuriyah*) of the *mundus imaginalis*. The "clay" out of which the human creature is made on this level is the subtle clay of the "Earth of light" (*tinah ardiyah nuriyah*; cf. the *Terra lucida* in Manichaean gnosis). But because the corporeal form now exists, there is a *centre* which is distinguished from the surrounding periphery (cf. above, the difference between spiritual and

material orbs). This plane of subtle corporeity is symbolized in the traditions by *red hyacinth* or *white pearl*, and it is one aspect of the celestial Throne or Temple (cf. above, II, 3 and III, 1, on the symbolism of *red hyacinth*).

At this level of manifestation of the human being, the *central* part of his clay of light is precisely the Angel whom God gave to Adam to be his companion and witness, who was charged with making him remember the divine pact, and before whom he had every year to renew it "in Paradise"; for this was the Angel whom God had caused to absorb or swallow the pact—the Angel, in other words, to whom He had confided the pact in trust. The jewel at the centre of man, says Qadi Sa'id Qummi, is designated as the "Angel" (*malak*), because his rank or degree of being is the esoteric and the invisible, the *malakut* of the world which is manifest to the senses. The jewel that utters and remembers the divine pact is the *malakut* within man, both the corner-stone of the Temple (the Black Stone embedded in the Iraqi corner), and the Angel concealed within man's apparent material form (the *centre*, the *Earth of light*, the *Paradise* within man, or else that which holds the *keys* to it). According to Qadi Sa'id Qummi, "To all that is inner and esoteric pertains authority over what is outer and exoteric, to educate and direct it (whence the question asked of Adam by the Angel: Has Satan, then, triumphed within you? . . .) And by the Angel we mean that which possesses this anteriority and authority, by virtue of the fact that he is the *centre* of the human being, before the other parts were constituted according to the norms proper to them." In Shiite terms, this centre is the Imamate within man. For this reason the jewel, as it is in itself, retains its purity, white pearl or red hyacinth, in its state as "body of light", unalloyed by any foreign admixture.

However, we read that after Adam left Paradise, the divine mercy cast this white pearl towards him. This means that this priceless pearl descends "from the hieratic world of the Throne and of the body of light" into the elemental physical world. Of necessity, therefore, it puts on the "robe", or appearances, of the dark world into which it is cast. The earth of India where it lands has a precise significance: among all the levels of the manifestation of being, it is the level which is the *Occident* of spiritual entities (*maghrib al-arwah*), the level where their nature of light is occulted. That is why Adam fails to recognize the pearl: on this level it is veiled, occulted, by the darkness of men's sins, by their obsessive pursuit of the

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pleasures of their ephemeral, physical existence. He recognizes it only when it assumes its original form; that is to say, when he has himself stripped it, divested it of its garment of darkness, in the same way as he strips the object perceived by the senses in order to attain to the vision of the intelligible. But he is capable of this stripping off only when the Stone has prompted his remembrance. His senses merely perceive the Black Stone; it is through his imaginative spiritual perception that he attains the vision of the Angel, of the white pearl, and remembers.

It would be impossible for us not to recall here a famous chapter of the Gnostic book of the *Acts of Thomas*, entitled *The Hymn of the Soul* or *The Song of the Pearl* (several episodes of which have their exact equivalent in Suhravardi's *Recital of the Occidental Exile*). The recital of the Imam Ja'far Sadiq is a striking example of the Pearl motif in Twelver Shiite gnosis. Without doubt this motif has characteristics peculiar to it, which a detailed comparison would reveal. The "pearl" in the *Acts of Thomas* can be seen as a symbol of the soul itself, and as a symbol of the gnosis⁷² that the soul must attain and which is the soul's salvation. In our Shiite text, the "pearl" symbolizes man's spiritual *centre*, his Angel: that is, both what his remembrance must make him rediscover, and that which prompts the remembrance. The recovery of the "pearl" is this act of remembering. The object of the act is expressed in Shiite terms as the pact, the triple Attestation referred to earlier; but such an Attestation is the expression of a spiritual totality (see above, II, i) which, figured in the form of the Temple, possesses as its corner-stone the Black Stone—the Stone, that is to say, in which man rediscovers the jewel or Angel concealed within himself. The homology or correspondence between the configuration of the Temple and the form of the spiritual life is therefore perfect.

The pilgrimage that leads Adam, in the company of the angel Gabriel, into Arabia and to Mecca, is the preparation for the third and final scene, in which the secret of the Black Stone is revealed on the level of our present earthly world. For an Islamic theosopher, the symbolic significance of this journey is immediately obvious, as a journey in the course of which spiritual entities finally decline in their Occident. In this theosophy, the function of the angel Gabriel is a primordial one. He stands, as we know,

⁷² Cf. Reinhold Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (München und Berlin, 1962), pp. 310 ff., 315 ff. See also my book *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, op. cit., pp. 22 ff.

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at the Temple threshold, close to the corner in which the Black Stone is embedded; he is the Holy Spirit and the Angel of humanity; human souls in this world emanate from his "wing of light";⁷³ and he is the angel of Knowledge, whose illumination projects the intelligible forms onto our intellects. It is thus altogether appropriate to typify, in the pilgrimage where Adam and the angel Gabriel are associated, the entire process of the descent of the white Pearl into this world, where it is metamorphosed into the appearance of the Black Stone—the form, that is, in which it appears to sensible perception and in which man must learn to recognize it, unless he is unfortunate enough to live his whole life through without doing so. The Black Stone, says the recital, was placed in the corner of the Ka'bah (where we located it in our previous figurations). And it was there that God received the undertaking of the sons of Adam, "to warn us," writes Qadi Sa'id Qummi, "that all begins again from the beginning". The "drama in Heaven" in fact begins over again on earth with each man:⁷⁴ his divine pact, his departure from Paradise, his act of recollection, and his search for the lost Paradise. It is the Angel within him that makes the undertaking, the Angel whom God caused to "swallow" the pact in his celestial pre-existence; and it is he, the external man, who betrays it. Each son of Adam must in his turn complete the pilgrimage, that is to say, he must rebuild the spiritual form of the Temple, in order to attain his own centre. He must rediscover the secret of the Black Stone which is also the secret of the Angel; for this Stone—which the pilgrims kiss in passing, as did Adam when he recognized it—fulfils the same function in the material Temple of the Ka'bah as does the Angel at the centre of man. The "functional relationship" is identical on both sides, and permits meditation to pass spontaneously from one to the other (cf. above, II, 1).

Then the Black Stone turns back into the white Pearl, the signature of Paradise, the Angel or Imamate within man. It depends on man whether

⁷³ Cf. notes 47 and 58 above.

⁷⁴ This is the sense in which the Imam Ja'far's *hadith* should be understood, as Qadi Sa'id has fully realized (fol. 183b). In the last part the "terms" are repeated, precisely because the same drama happens over again. The *hadith* finishes with these words: "Because of his love for Muhammad and his people (the Imams), God chose this Angel from among all the Angels and caused him to swallow (*alqama-hu*) the pact (*mithaq*). And this Angel will come on the day of the Resurrection; he will have a tongue which speaks, eyes which look; he will witness to those who come to him in that place and who have kept the pact." *Sharh*, fol. 183. Cf. the text cited above, note 40.

he recovers his centre, or whether he loses it and remains forever in a state of disequilibrium. The arrival at this centre is the esoteric meaning of the rites of pilgrimage. These are performed in the same way as the rites of an initiation mystery, at the end of which the mystic enters the Temple, because he has repossessed himself of the *potestas clavium* that offers him access to the lost spiritual world.

3. *The esoteric meaning of the visits to the Holy Places.* At the start of this recital of initiation, we are once again in the situation that arose previously (II, 3), in the recital of the white Cloud.⁷⁵ It is the whole of this recital, as reported in a tradition that also goes back to the Imam Ja'far, which now makes its appearance as a recital of initiation. The moment evoked here was (in the recital of the White Cloud) that in which the angel Gabriel had led Adam to the site of the Temple of the Ka'bah, and a white Cloud above them had cast its shadow on the ground. This Cloud was the image of the Glorious Temple "in Heaven", and the Angel had commanded Adam to trace with his foot a groove which outlined on the earth the exact area covered by the shadow; the future, earthly Ka'bah would coincide with its dimensions and would thus be the image of the celestial Temple. The intervention of the angel Gabriel at this point is particularly significant. For all our theosophers, the drama of Adam, his "descent" from Paradise, is the drama itself of Knowledge. As we recalled a moment ago, Gabriel is the angel of Knowledge. It is his illumination (*ishraq*) which, when we perceive sensible objects, brings forth in the soul the intelligible form of these objects which is the form of knowledge: that which we know in reality, that which is grasped by our act of knowing. His initiatory role with regard to the Adam who has understood the secret of the Black Stone becomes immediately comprehensible. He initiates Adam into the esoteric meaning of the visit to the holy places which surround the site of the Temple. This visit then becomes the inner pilgrimage, the pilgrimage of

⁷⁵ Here begins the seventh chapter of *Kitab asrar al-Hajj*, fol. 186-187b. We have been unable to include in our text the contents of chapter 6, which nevertheless comprises several most interesting points. Noteworthy among these are the question of the meaning of pre-existence, and the question of the exclamation made by the pilgrims as they enter the sacred territory: *Labbayk! Labbayk!* (I am here! I am here! offering myself for Thee). Where, and in what world, does this cry resound? In the sensible atmosphere or in the pure spiritual air?

the heart just referred to: the pilgrimage of an entire lifetime, whose goal is the construction of the Temple's spiritual form.

Shiite theosophical traditions, both of Ismaili theosophy and of Twelver Shiism, are agreed that the drama of Adam is *the* drama of Knowledge.⁷⁶ Qadi Sa'id Qummi gives us the broad outlines of this drama, and we know by what has already been said that it is continuously being performed (it attains its denouement only at the end of the pilgrimage). The violence done by Adam to the trust reposed in him, which he wishes to lay hold of for himself; the betrayal of the undertaking which the Shiite terms relates to the triple Attestation: this constitutes the drama of Knowledge. For what Adam wished to lay hold of for himself was Knowledge that he, Adam, was not in a position to possess, because its object was as yet not manifest on the level on which it needed to be manifest in order for the knowledge of it to be actualized. For such knowledge to be actualized, its object would have had to be manifest on a level lower than that on which it was in fact manifest. For Ismaili gnosis, Adam's act of violence is a wish to attain to pure esotericism without the intermediary of symbolic figures. For Shiism in general, what was at issue was the knowledge reserved for the seraphic humanity of the Muhammadan Imams, the eschatological secrets that could be revealed only by the twelfth and last Imam. All other objects of knowledge, all the other trees in the Garden of Knowledge, were accessible and permitted to Adam, except for this one forbidden Tree.

When an object of knowledge is actualized for the knowing subject, it becomes a part of him, as food becomes part of the subject who feeds on it (as in the example of Abraham, whose intimate being is nourished by his divine love; see above, II, 4). By "eating" of the forbidden knowledge, Adam becomes in some sense heavy or pregnant with the subtle realities (*lata'if*) of this knowledge; and these realities demand to be manifested by Adam, to be brought to light, as they are known by him. But this cannot happen on the level of Paradise (the *mundus imaginalis*), because on this

⁷⁶ On the drama of Adam as the drama of Knowledge according to Ismaili gnosis, see my *Hermeneutique spirituelle comparee*, op. cit., the whole of § 8. For Twelver Shiite gnosis, see *En Islam iranien*, op. cit., vol. IV, general index s.v. Adam—la faute d'Adam (sens esoterique de la) selon le shi'isme. A similar conception occurs in what amounts to an entire Western theosophical tradition (van Helmont, Swedenborg, and others). Cf. van Helmont's thesis of the *Intellectus adamicus* (that the drama of Adam, by forcing knowledge to "descend", shattered the integrity of the soul's organs which enabled it to perceive directly the spiritual and celestial equivalents of things).

level they *are* the forbidden Tree. It can only happen on the level of the world of sensible phenomena (*'alam al-shahadah*). But this *eo ipso* presupposes the simultaneous descent of the knowing subject, so it is in fact inadequate to say that the descent from Paradise was Adam's punishment. One should say, rather, that by "eating" of the forbidden Tree, Adam *eo ipso* descended from Paradise, descended, that is, into the world of illusion and deceit (*dar al-ghurur*).

In other words, we could say that for Adam, for man, to "eat" of the forbidden Tree is to perpetuate the violence that consists in *naturalizing* the things of the spirit. It is to wish to make the spiritual world knowable in the manner and on the level of natural things, to wish to possess it by force as material objects are possessed. But because the attempt is doomed to failure, man becomes in return a prey to his deep-seated agnosticism. His desire for conquest is turned against himself in the form of his doubt: does this spiritual world exist? It is thus assuredly *the* fundamental drama of Knowledge, its *permanent* drama, which can be confronted only by the *witness* of spiritual forms subsisting on the level and in the world proper to them. It is thus possible to see, with our authors, a profound meaning in the Imam's recital which, on the "morrow" of Adam's departure from Paradise, puts him into the safekeeping of Gabriel, the angel of Knowledge. It is also why the angel Gabriel is at the centre of so many recitals of personal spiritual initiation in Islam, for he is designated, by Qadi Sa'id Qummi and his colleagues, as "the help of souls, their instructor, he who bears God's messages to their destination, the guide who leads back to Paradise".

The initiation is an initiation into the esoteric sense of pilgrimage and its rites: an initiation into the "first" pilgrimage completed by the "first" earthly human being. We have been made aware of the mystical significance of the journey from India to Arabia undertaken by Adam in the company of the Angel, up until the moment where they are both "in the shadow of the white Cloud". They will travel together to the holy places around Mecca visited today by pilgrims: from Mina to al-'Arafat, from al-'Arafat to al-Muzdalifah, from al-Muzdalifah to Mina, to return to the site where the Temple will henceforth stand. But through the initiation imparted by the Angel, each of these stages is transfigured and becomes a stage of the heart's pilgrimage towards the personal Ka'bah. They are

thus the elements of what methods of meditation know as "composition of place".

We will follow the itinerary of the mystical pilgrimage from its beginning, as it is described in the *hadith* of the Imam Ja'far. When the angel Gabriel was sent to Adam, who was in despair about his exile from the world of the realities of light, he led him towards the place where the Temple was to stand. Qadi Sa'id Qummi explains: the world in which Adam now finds himself is constituted by the *traces* of the realities of light, the images of spiritual archetypes. But one can only arrive at the sources of the archetypes through their derivatives; to approach the "divine Face" is to walk round about the sanctuary, to seek refuge in its enclosure. As we know, sanctuaries of God exist in every universe, and in each case their constitution is homogeneous with the universe in question. In this way, each Temple is the image-imitation (the *hikayah* or "history")⁷⁷ of the Temple that exists on the level of the universe superior to it: the exoteric (*zahir*) is always as it were the frontispiece or title-page (*'unwan*) of the esoteric. In our world, constituted by the four Elements, the Temple of God that corresponds to earthly needs is the Ka'bah. To go there is the equivalent of what, on the level of pure knowledge, is described as the initial representation of a form (*tasawwur*); for as long as a thing has not *taken form*, as long as one does not *represent* it to oneself, it is not possible to orientate oneself in its direction. Symmetrically, on the level of mystical vision (*shuhud*) and spiritual realization (*tahaqquq*), this corresponds to the entry upon the Way, the undertaking of the "journey leading from God to God" (*suluk mina'llah ila'llah*).⁷⁸ This is the moment, we may recall, in which there comes down over Adam and his angelic companion the mysterious white Cloud, defined by our author as "the Cloud of mercy, heavy with the beneficent rain which aids

77 On the implications of the Arabic word *hikayah*, see the prologue to *Hermeneutique spirituelle comparee*, op. cit.

78 The idea of this "journey" corresponds to a traditional schema. Mulla Sadra Shirazi's great philosophical and theosophical encyclopaedia is entitled "The high theosophy (or higher philosophy) concerning the *four* spiritual journeys". These are 1) The journey from the created world towards God. 2) The journey from God towards God through (or with) God. 3) The journey from God towards the created world through (or with) God. 4) The journey from the created world towards the created world, but through (or with) God. The mystical journey to which Qadi Sa'id Qummi here refers (see also note 88 below) would correspond to the second journey in Sadra Shirazi's terminology. Cf. my edition and translation of the *Livre des Penetrations metaphysiques*, op. cit., p. 30 of the French text.

THE CONFIGURATION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE KA'BAH the growth of the new creation".⁷⁹ On the instructions of the Angel, Adam traces with his foot a mark in the earth which is the outline of the future Ka'bah, to the exact measurement of the shadow cast onto the ground by the Cloud "descended from the spiritual Heaven". In this way, the form or configuration of the Temple of God in the world of the Intelligence is imprinted onto the terrestrial world. Moreover, Adam's action in tracing the outline of the earthly Temple in the exact image of the celestial Cloud, signifies that the form of the earthly Temple must homologically enclose all that is enclosed by the celestial Temple. "Nothing in the world of light was left out, was not configured in the most beautiful of forms."⁸⁰ It is already being suggested here that the form of the Temple, as the homologue of the spiritual Forms, is a *centre* which, as such, simultaneously envelops and contains all things.

Following this, on the Angel's instructions Adam traces the limits of the sacred territory (*haram*) surrounding the Temple as centre; that is to say, explains Qadi Sa'id, the limits reached by the light of the red hyacinth whose colour has been explained as a conjunction of the divine with the creatural. In fact, it is through the intermediary of the knowledge within man that his universe receives its light. This knowledge is the Throne and the Light within him; and it is through man as the knowing subject that the universe is felt, imagined, and becomes intelligible. It is thus through man and for man that a sacred landscape is created, whose *imaginal* topography is marked by the hierophanic places. And as Adam's initial action in tracing the groove corresponds to the representational knowledge (*'ilm tasawwuri*) through which a form comes into being, ever since then the pilgrims, on arriving at the Temple, walk around it once before visiting the places of devotion that surround it. These are the places to which the angel Gabriel takes Adam, in order to initiate him into the esoteric meaning of the rite he is made to perform.

i. The Angel first took Adam to *Mina* (a valley near Mecca), which is the chief place of devotion. Qadi Sa'id Qummi attributes this priority to

79 The text continues: ". . . and aids the growth, out of the Earth of receptivity, of the plant which is man, as this Koranic verse has it: God has caused you to grow out of the Earth like a plant" (71:17). *Shark*, fol. 186b.

80 It is in these very words (*fi ahsan surah*) that the Prophet characterizes his personal theophanic vision. Cf. my book *Creative Imagination* . . . , op. cit., pp. 272 ff.

THE CONFIGURATION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE KA'BAH the actual name of the place, which he interprets as meaning *desire*.⁸¹ All movement, whether spontaneous or voluntary, is preceded by the desire to attain to the object envisaged. To contemplate the traces of the divine response to Adam's tears—to contemplate, that is, on the terrestrial soil, the projection of the shadow cast by the white Cloud, and the course of the groove which defines the site of the Temple of the Ka'bah in its image, to ponder on the order of procession around it—all this is exceedingly apt to arouse the desire to advance and approach. Hence we learn, as a first eloquent testimonial, that what the angel Gabriel shows Adam in this place is the site of the mosque of Mina, because, explains our author, "in following the road that leads to God, the first thing to manifest itself in the *heart*—God's 'greatest Temple' (*Bayt Allahi'l-akbar*, *Domus Dei Maxima*)—is ardent desire. After that come the methods of approach and their implementation". Here, then, is Adam, or more simply man, engaged, under the Angel's guidance, "in the heart's pilgrimage" towards the personal, spiritual Ka'bah. And the first stage, which determines the entire subsequent pilgrimage, is ardent desire.

2. From Mina, Adam and the Angel go to *al-'Arafat*, a mountain about twelve miles from Mecca, as today's pilgrims continue to do. To go to al-'Arafat, explains our author, is to have escaped from the place and level at which one was. It signifies entry upon the Way, completion of the first step in the process of uprooting oneself from the Earth of exile, in redeeming the distance implied by the transgression of the undertaking. The pilgrim arrives at al-'Arafat at the *hour of sunset*. Adam stands at the head of the valley, while the Angel tells him: "Now that the sun is on the point of setting, acknowledge your fault." This means, explains Qadi Sa'id Qummi: "Now that the Sun of truth (the spiritual Sun) is veiled from your eyes because of the betrayal you have perpetrated, your own hour is the hour of the evening twilight, for the darkness of your fault is around you and your sun is on the point of disappearing in the West. Acknowledge that you are estranged from your Friend only because you considered that you yourself were yourself (that you were sufficient to yourself in order to be yourself, *bi-hisabi-ka anna-ka anta*)." There is an arresting contrast here.

81 The root *mna* has the meaning of to determine or to test. The fifth form, *tamanna*, means to wish or to desire. Obviously, one must place oneself within the perspective of Qadi Sa'id's use of names.

Abraham, as we saw, was to be the Occident of the divine Light; but this was so because the violence of his love had exiled him from himself. Because he was spiritually exiled *from* this world, the divine Light *exiled him to himself*: he was the mystical Occident in which this Light was occulted and dwelt invisible. Abraham, or the mystic whom he typifies, carries this Light within him. Adam, on the other hand, was exiled *into* this world, because he had loved himself. Thus the Abrahamic symbol is inverted: it is no longer the divine Light which is exiled *into* him; it is he, Adam, man, who is exiled *from* this Light, and his "occidental exile" will last until the "dawn" (the hour of *Ishraq*), at the end of the night of vigil which marks the next stage of the pilgrimage to al-Muzdalifah.

' First the mystical pilgrim descends from al-'Arafat; that is to say, he leaves behind him the viewpoint at which his own self was under the illusion that it was sufficient to itself in order to be itself. He passes by a group of *seven* mountains, typifying for him the *seven* or *seventy* thousand veils of light or spiritual stations that remain between man and his God after he has freed himself from the level of the carnal soul and nature. On each mountain, Adam, in obedience to the angel Gabriel's instructions, utters the *takbir* four times (the formula, that is, of *Allah akbar*: God is supremely great), in order to abolish *the four* limits that determine them,⁸² and so that the "Face" of his Lord may reveal itself beyond the veils of his occultation.

3. The pilgrim then arrives at *al-Muzdalifah*. Geographically speaking, this is a hill situated between al-'Arafat and Mecca, at about an equal distance from Mina and al-'Arafat, where the pilgrims go on their return from al-'Arafat to spend the night (from the 9th. to the 10th. of the month of pilgrimage or *Dhu'l-Hijjah*), setting out again next day at dawn for Mina. A Koranic verse (2:200) expressly prescribes that the pilgrims must here perform a rite of "recollection" of God (*dhikr*). This station of the pilgrimage has several names.⁸³ The actual root of the name al-Muzdalifah (*zlf*, '*zdlf*') means to advance or approach. If, therefore, it is also named *Jam'*, meaning "reunion", the mystic at once understands it as an allusion

⁸² Here one should call to mind the properties of the tetrad in the Pythagorean arithmetic known to our authors, which are such that the number four determines the structure of all forms of being: the four supports of the Throne, the four Elements, the four natural Qualities, the four ages of human life. Cf. M. Sabzavari's note in op. cit., pp. 223—224.

⁸³ Cf. my introduction to the *Livre des Penetrations metaphysiques*, op. cit., pp. 43 ff.

signifying that this mystical station is the station of approach, coming after the station of separation that preceded it. Qadi Sa'id also explains the name *Jam'* by the liturgical fact that the pilgrims here "reunite" two canonical Prayers, the Prayer of the sunset (*maghrib*) and the Prayer of the coming of night (*'asha'*) (the hours corresponding to the hours of Vespers and Compline in the Christian liturgy). It is thus self-evident that the "approach" must take place at the station of "reunion". In his treatise "on the esoteric meanings of Prayer"⁸⁴ our author has already explained that these two Prayers are prayers of "vigil, in the period of waiting for the spiritual Sun to rise in the Orient of proximity and conjunction" (*mashriq al-qurb wa'l-wuslah*). Adam, and in his person the mystical pilgrim, spends the night of vigil at al-Muzdalifah in waiting for this dawn, the dawn of the "Morning of the Presence" (*subh al-hudur*), rising among the glories of the "Face" of the divine Reality (*subhat wajh al-haqiqah*) over the Darkness of the world of Nature.

At the hour of the coming dawn, the Angel instructs Adam to make a sevenfold confession of his fault, in order that all trace of the Darkness that held him prisoner may disappear; and he instructs him to ask God, in a sevenfold adjuration, to "return to him". Each of these *seven* acts removes one of the *seven* veils between man and the divine Face; or it marks the symbolic completion, one by one, of each of the seven millenia or periods of the prophetic cycle, which are the measure of the "delay of eternity" signified by the descent from Paradise. With each of these seven acts Adam, the mystical pilgrim, ascends to a level of proximity, mounts towards the theophanic vision which blazes forth in the morning splendour of the dawn, in the spiritual "Orient" or *Ishraq*, which has become, since Suhrawardi's time, the name of mystical theosophy that deeply pervades, even today, the thought and spirituality of Islamic Persia.

The denouement of the pilgrimage, as meditated by Qadi Sa'id Qummi, concurs with the denouement to which the meditation of Ibn 'Arabi bears equal testimony: the meeting with the divine *Alter Ego*,⁸⁵ the celestial pole in the absence of which the human *ego*, terrestrial pole of the bi-unity, would possess neither being nor truth. This is the very bi-polarity that

⁸⁴ This is the *Risalah fi asrar al-Salat*, the first of five treatises which together make up the *Kitab asrar al-'ibadat*, op. cit. Avicenna and the great Shiite theologian Zaynuddin 'Amili, *Shahid-i thani*, also wrote a treatise on this theme. We hope one day to make a comparative study of them.

⁸⁵ See my *Creative Imagination* . . . , op. cit., pp. 383-385.

configures the Form in which the *Deus revelatus* is revealed to the heart of the mystic; for this Form must of necessity correspond to the norm of being of him to whom it is revealed. Without such a Form, there would never have been a theophanic vision for any prophet, not even for the Seal of the prophets.⁸⁶ Qadi Sa'id here shows us Adam mounting through seven stages of ascent to the personal theophanic vision, to the moment, that is, in which the pilgrim *sees* that "he who is epiphanized, he to whom he is epiphanized, and the Form into which he is epiphanized (the theophanic Form) are one and the same reality (form a Unity)." This denouement can also be expressed in the terms suggested by the story of the white Pearl. Because the Pearl is the Angel within man—the Angel whom God "caused to swallow" the personal undertaking towards Him, and who in each man is the guardian entrusted with the divine secret concerning that man—this "Angel" is also the *Form* necessarily assumed by God in revealing himself to man (which is why the Pearl is both gnosis *and* the Soul itself). This is the Form contemplated by the Shiite mystic as the *Imam*. Henceforth Adam is worthy to enter into the Temple (*istahaqqa dukhul Bayt Allah*) and to be perpetuated with the perpetuity of God (*al-baqa' bi-baqd'i'lldh*). The secret of the Black Stone, as we said earlier, is the key to the Temple.⁸⁷

4. Next, the angel Gabriel, the angel of saving Knowledge or of gnosis, takes the road to Mecca again in the company of Adam. They pass by Mina once more, for Adam has now attained the goal of his *desire*. The rites performed there by Adam and by the pilgrims of today are of course rites in the spiritual sense. In the valley of Mina a peregrination is accomplished, in the course of which one makes a gesture of defiance at a figure representing Iblis-Satan, at which one also throws stones (a ceremony known as the *jamrah*). Here it signifies that "the arrival at the sanctuary of the divine Sublimity" is the last moment in which Iblis-Satan can try once again to triumph over the pilgrim, by making him stop at the awareness of being carried away, annihilated (*fana'*) to himself and perpetuated with the divine perpetuity; for to contemplate oneself thus is still to contemplate one's self, while attributing to it the predicate of its divine

⁸⁶ Cf. note 80 above. There are *hadith* on this subject by the Imams, commented by Sadra Shirazi, which we propose to speak of elsewhere.

⁸⁷ A comparison could be made here with the statements of 'Abdul-Karim Jili and of Ibn 'Arabi, but this would occupy an entire book. See my *Creative Imagination . . .*, op. cit., pp. 386-387.

Alter Ego; so that instead of being *absolved* of its ego-ness, the self is exalted to the status of the *absolute*. The danger is an infinitely subtle one, and "the journey towards God *in the company of God*"⁸⁸ risks remaining unfinished. This is why the *salik*, or mystical pilgrim, must annihilate even his annihilation, meaning that he must refuse so to consolidate himself in the awareness of a Unity that he no longer keeps *company* with his divine Companion in the mystery of their bi-unity. (If he did not annihilate his annihilation, the mystic would need only to consent to the exclamation of al-Hallaj: I am God!) Thus the angel Gabriel, "helper of souls", ordered Adam to stone Iblis seven times, each time pronouncing a *takbir* (whose esoteric meaning, as we saw earlier, has reference to the *seven* veils between man and God).

5. "Then Iblis departed . . .", says the recital of the Imam Ja'far. "And the Angel took Adam to the Temple, where he ordered him to walk around it seven times." Our commentator explains: "This is the journey from God *in the company of God* towards created beings."⁸⁹ These final words convey to us the esoteric meaning of the pilgrimage. Let us observe, to start with, that the angel Gabriel and Adam had made a first visit to the future site of the Temple which, as another tradition informs us, was built on Earth by the Angels. Then Gabriel and Adam departed to visit the holy places, whose esoteric meaning, stage by stage, has just been imparted to us. Now, on their return, they come before a Temple, around which Adam is asked to walk seven times. This is the Temple whose future area Adam had defined by tracing with his foot a groove in the earth, which exactly outlined the shadow cast by the white Cloud. Everything happens, therefore, as though the time needed for the completion of the spiritual pilgrimage, the heart's pilgrimage towards the personal Ka'bah, was a measure of the time—the "subtle time"—during which the Angels erect the form of the Temple (see above, III, 1). The "form as a work of the spirit" is here the Ka'bah or Temple of the heart, invisibly built by the Angels.

⁸⁸ Cf. note 78 above.

⁸⁹ This mystical journey would correspond to the third journey in Sadra Shirazi's terminology: see note 78 above. For the sake of brevity we have not mentioned the three days called *Ayam al-tashriq* (fol. 187b and p. 229 of the printed edition). Since the word *tashriq* means "to turn towards the Orient", Qadi Sa'id's hermeneutic finds a straightforward application. During these nights, Adam conducts the darkness of *ego-ness* to its permanent place of *setting*, and the spiritual Sun (*shams al-haqiqah*) rises over Adam's person.

This is the Temple that the pilgrim, Adam, circles seven times. These seven circumambulations can correspond to the seven organs or subtle centres of the inner man as the "greatest Temple of God", the inner man being clothed successively with the seven divine Attributes whose names are the "Imams of the Names".⁹⁰ Likewise, explains Qadi Sa'id Qummi, to complete these seven circumambulations is successively to put on the "seven veils" which, as we were told earlier, mark the distance between God and created being. Several of the previous rituals were aimed at eliminating the veils interposed by Creation between the divine Face and created being. But now that the divine Face has appeared with the "Morning of the Presence", the pilgrim puts on these same veils. What does this mean? The reply to this question lies in calling the seven circumambulations "a journey from God, *in the company of God, towards created beings*". Everything happens, in fact, as though the arrival at the centre which is the Temple were the re-entry, or at any rate the potential re-entry, into Paradise, in such a way that creation is not simply returned to its origin, but everything begins again from the beginning. This *re-creation* is the "journey towards created beings",⁹¹ but this time it is creation as it would have happened if Adam, man, instead of departing from Paradise, had remained from the beginning to make this journey "in the company of God". This is why the new creation necessarily escapes men's eyes in the visible world, for it is an event that takes place in the *malakut*; it is the creation of spiritual forms which in essence are visible only to the eyes of the heart.

Thus the pilgrim, Adam, walking round the sacrosanct *pole* which is the Temple, embraces in his mystical procession the totality of intelligible and sensible circles. In so doing, explains Qadi Sa'id Qummi, it is as though he had at his disposal the higher and lower universes. As our author has persistently reminded us all along, this is precisely the virtue of the centre in spiritual circles (the Throne stabilized upon the Water): in them the

90 Cf. my *Creative Imagination* . . . , op. cit., p. 387 note 20.

91 Cf. note 89 above. This new creation is symbolized in the fact that at the end of Adam's pilgrimage of initiation, "his wife was once more permitted to him. Then the nuptial unions were legitimate between the primordial Reality-archetypes, from the Principle of Principles to the horizon of the universe in the process of becoming, that from these unions might derive the derivations foreseen in the cosmic order", fol. 187b. These are the "five nuptial unions", the great cosmogonic acts; see my *Creative Imagination* . . . , op. cit., p. 362 note 20, and H. S. Nyberg, *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-'Arabi* (Leiden, 1919), p. 87.

centre as such is what envelops and englobes that which surrounds it. Herein lies the secret of the configuration of the Temple as a spiritual form, imitating and reproducing the "Sublime Temple" in the world of the Intelligence. No one enters the Temple save he who possesses the "power of the keys", and this "power of the keys" (*potestas clavium*) is none other than the "ardent desire" typified in the station at Mina, the station which marked the entry upon the Way. The Way is that which leads to the truth of the personal theophanic vision, in the form, that is, which corresponds to the level and to the norm of the being to whom it is revealed. This is the secret of the white *Pearl*, the heart and centre of the personal Ka'bah, restored to the radiance of its original form after having been the Black Stone embedded in the material Temple. This is why we said that the secret of the Black Stone is the secret of the Temple as the secret of man—the secret of the Temple which man builds in building his own invisible inner form, his "body of light" or, in the *malakut*, his "Temple of light".

It would thus appear that, under the guidance of Qadi Sa'id Qummi, we have extracted all the substance of the spiritual instruction contained in the *hadith* of the Imam Ja'far, and have understood what is meant by pilgrimage as "the pilgrimage of the heart", whereby man attains within himself to the plenitude of his spiritual form.

iv. *Potestas clavium*

If we have understood it correctly, the symbolic recital of the Imam Ja'far should appear to us as something quite other than a curious or edifying document, and the work of Qadi Sa'id Qummi as something quite other than an interpretation addressed exclusively to Iranian initiates of seventeenth-century Shiite theosophy. To sum up very briefly what is intimated, we may say that the transformation of the material Temple of the Ka'bah into a spiritual and personal Temple of the Faith; the virtue of a secret being made explicit from stage to stage and leading to the personal theophanic vision as the entry itself into the mystical Temple; the fact that this secret is also the secret of the "power of the keys", the keys of the personal, spiritual Temple—where the pilgrim penetrates only after a long Quest, which is the reconquest of his Paradise (and it is no mere chance that so many of the works by our authors have similar titles,

beginning with a Persian book by Qadi Sa'id Qummi entitled *Kalid-i Bihisht*, the Key of Paradise): all this ultimately delineates a Way which, as we cannot but remark, converges with that which, in Western traditions centred on the Holy Grail, has been called the Way of "the secret Church", in the sense of the Church concealed in the "secret shrine" of the soul.⁹² In the work of our Shiite theosopher we have likewise encountered the idea of the secret Temple, to which all mystical pilgrims make a pilgrimage—all who together form the *corpus mysticum* of the *walayah* (Ismaili gnosis speaks of the "Temple of light" of the Imamate), that is to say, all the "Friends of God" (*Awliyid' Allah*), all the prophets, all the Imams and all their "friends". The uninterrupted succession of this mystical Assembly is still described as *silsilat al-'irfan*, the "affiliation of gnosis".

To be sure, neither the "Secret Church" nor the *silsilat al-'irfan* denotes a constituted body or a form of social institution, with offices and archives, registers and degrees. In one of its aspects, the Shiite concept of the *walayah* corresponds to the idea of the "communion of saints" in Christianity. Affiliation to this mystical body presupposes neither ritual nor initiation ceremony. It is in fact the "candidate" who commits himself, as people once committed themselves to the quest for the Grail, or the pilgrim Adam formulated and renewed his undertaking to the "Angel", the secret of the Black Stone that he carried with him. The reality of the heart's pilgrimage is realized invisibly, in the *malakut*. Its effects are realized in the formation of the *jism mithali* or *imaginal* body, and all these "bodies of light" together make up the invisible brotherhood. This brotherhood possesses a form, and even an organization and a structure, but all in the *malakut*: the members of the esoteric hierarchy spoken of in Shiite theosophy are known to God alone. It has been said of this invisible Church, the *Ecclesia spiritualis*, that "the powers of Hell will not prevail against it", and Qadi Sa'id Qummi, in a similar vein, reminds us of the words of the Imam al-Rida: "Divine Religion will not perish so long as the Temple of the Ka'bah endures"—words referring to the immaterial Temple of faith, whose guarantor and guardian is the twelfth Imam, the *Hidden Imam*. Guardian of this Temple, he is concealed from the eyes of men, as is the Holy Grail since its disappearance in the spiritual city of "Sarras", on the border, that is, between the *malakut* and our world. The reason given

⁹² I am thinking particularly of the work by A. E. Waite, *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal* (London, 1909), pp. 639 ff.

in both cases for this occultation is the same: men were no longer able or worthy to see the Grail, as they had become unworthy and unable to *see* the Imam. In both cases, there is the same invitation to ponder on an occultation that bears upon the actual situation of our world.

In the present context, what is in question is a world in which the awareness it is possible to have of spiritual Forms subsisting in a spiritual universe, and preserved from the vicissitudes of our changing fashions, has been so ravaged, devastated, even annihilated, that there is scarcely any point even in wondering whether the Byzantine icon of St. George, mentioned at the beginning of this study, can still possess a meaning for it, or whether this meaning could be the *true* meaning. For it is possible currently to read certain phrases alluding to "the fires of the spirit which today illuminate only an empty Heaven", or referring to the Paradise whose meaning Qadi Sa'id Qummi has just revealed to us as something "in which the Church no longer believes, and of which she no longer dares to speak". I quote from memory and without references, but only because these statements, gathered at random, also lacked them. And it is symptomatic of our world that statements such as these should merely register the facts accepted by the common consciousness. How can one propose, to a world which has lost all sense of the *malakut* and for which the *mundus imaginalis* is no more than imaginary, that it should meditate on the configuration of the Temple under the guidance of Qadi Sa'id Qummi, seeing that for such a world there is no longer even a Temple upon which to meditate? This is the reason why, also at the beginning of this study, I spoke of the mutilation inflicted by a recent interpretation on the work of Balzac, because it was peculiarly symptomatic of the ravages which have annihilated in our consciousness all traces of a spiritual universe.

For this reason, the theme of the "power of the keys"—the keys which would enable man to open up the way to himself once more—confronts us with ever-increasing urgency, as does the true meaning of what Qadi Sa'id has shown to be the esoteric meaning of pilgrimage. This pilgrimage becomes identified with life itself once it is understood that the secret of the Temple and of the Temple's form is the secret of man: of the inner man, that is, or spiritual individuality, the goal of whose quest is the attainment of his Truth, of the theophany that corresponds with his being, when the dawn of the spiritual Sun rises over al-Muzdalifah. Only he who has understood this holds the keys of the Temple and may enter it; and "to

enter" means to go towards God or towards created being "in the company of God". Thus, where sociology envisages and analyses only the collective rite of a social religion, drawing crowds of pilgrims to Mecca each year, the Shiite mystic perceives the invisible reality of an altogether different pilgrimage. This is the return of Adam to his Paradise, by means of which he restores to the *malakut* all that he had forced to descend from it when he "ate" of the forbidden Tree, when, that is, he himself descended from the *malakut*. What is implied here is both the re-establishment of knowledge of the spiritual world, and its re-establishment on the level proper to it. Yet instead of this, the "descent" is continually aggravated because all our science, all our system of knowledge, is directed towards the unlimited exploitation of the Nature that "descended" from Paradise with man, and such an exploitation is accompanied by a radically agnostic attitude with regard to all that is signified by the *malakut*. The further man extends his dominion—the more his ambition seeks to deploy itself on the scale of what it terms *cosmos* and *cosmic*—the more man is condemned to introduce into his own life so-called scientific rigour, with the result that the forces of collectivization and socialization exert themselves unopposed, and the human being is given no initiative to enter upon the quest for his spiritual individuality, for *his* Temple. Indeed, the very idea of such a quest is done away with, and with it all idea of a *potestas clavium* which would enable individual man to find a way out of the circle to whose constraint that which used to be called the *soul* has now succumbed.

There has been no lack of warnings over the centuries; they form, indeed, a long Western tradition denouncing the dangers which threaten the spiritual individuality, a tradition represented by those who are known world-wide as the Spirituals of Protestantism. In the sixteenth century Maitre Valentin Weigel wrote an entire treatise on the question of *potestas clavium*, centred on the hermeneutic of the evangelical verses (Matt. 16:18-19). Weigel, too, affirmed that the inner man, the new creature, is himself the Tabernacle or Temple, and that every believer, by virtue of the faith in his heart, possesses the *potestas clavium*. This is because the *key* of the kingdom is the Holy Spirit, which is granted to all believers, and the key is *eo ipso* given to all those who possess the faith typified by the Apostle Peter. Thus the words addressed to Peter are addressed in his person to all who have such a faith, since every believer, through his faith, *is* Peter.⁹³

93 Gf. Valentin Weigel, *Von der Vergebung der Sunden oder vom Schilssel der Kirchen*, in

The same doctrine is affirmed with equal strength by him whom Kant himself, in his private correspondence at any rate, called "the divine Swedenborg". Swedenborg teaches that, for all those who live according to the inner meaning of the divine Word, there is no doubt that everything said concerning the *potestas clavium* applies to the power possessed by the faith that is in every believer. This is so because what the person of Peter represents and typifies is the faith that proceeds from love, as the Truth proceeds from the Good. This is the rock, the *petra* (let us recall the secret of the Stone according to the Imam). The "power of the keys" is the power of faith, because it is the faith proceeding from ardent desire that opens the kingdom. This faith is designated by the Latin word *fervor*, fervour. It does *not* mean that certain men have the power to admit other men "into Heaven" or to exclude them from it.⁹⁴

Is humanity, then, condemned to fall unceasingly behind or below itself, too feeble to sustain the victories of fervour? Its *lack of desire* so effectively prevents it from choosing the way out which ardent desire for the kingdom (*malakut*) could alone open for it, that what it increasingly manifests seems to be less the "nostalgia for Paradise" explored by Mircea Eliade, as a scornful aversion to the whole idea of it. This aversion is expressed, among other things, in the "agnostic reflex", so deeply rooted in Western man that it has overcome even present-day theologians, and has largely contaminated Oriental man. If Qadi Sa'id Qummi and his Shiite colleagues saw the drama of Adam as *the* drama of Knowledge, is it not in fact the drama that is acted out when the only goal envisaged by knowledge is power, and when the so-called "human" sciences are envisaged as "techniques of man", regulating every detail of his life?

In our time the Grand Inquisitor has been secularized; he no longer speaks like a theologian, in the name of a transcendent God and of a magisterium whose power extends to the beyond. He speaks like a sociologist and a technocrat, in the name of collective norms, limiting all finality to this world. And by the same token, something has grown worse since the time of Weigel, of Swedenborg, of Dostoevsky even. For the "secret Church" of the soul, the *Ecclesia spiritualis*, could once fight against

Samtliche Schriften, ed. W. E. Peuckert und W. Zeller, Part II (Stuttgart, F. Fromann, 1964), chap. VIII, pp. 30 and 33; chap. IX, pp. 35 and 38, and the final dialogue, pp. 88, 93, 95.

94 Cf. Swedenborg, *Arcana caelestia*, art. 9410 (Exodus 24:11) and *Apocalypsis explicata secundum sensum spiritualem*, art. 8.

the Grand Inquisitor with the superior weapon of high spiritual knowledge. It possessed the free power capable of configuring spiritual forms, and this was its own *potestas clavium*, its own guarantee of the objectivity and superiority of the invisible world it was configuring. But today it is this very knowledge that lies in ruins. Once, one fought against the Grand Inquisitor with the superior weapon of personal faith. How can the man disarmed by agnosticism fight against a Grand Inquisitor who is both secularized and a sociologist?

This is the tragedy of our times, and it makes what we read in the works of a Shiite theosopher such as Qadi Sa'id Qummi eminently pertinent. It is a tragedy so fundamental that the opposing forces are symbolized quite spontaneously in the consciousness of the most clear-sighted among us. In conclusion, I will call on the witness of one of those exceptional books which have scarcely appeared before they are forgotten, and which must then be given into your hands by a friend. I allude to the book by Hans Schmid-Guisan, the French translation of which appeared shortly before the war with the title *Comme le jour et la nuit*.⁹⁵ It cannot be summarized here; the main theme only can be indicated. From beginning to end, this book is permeated by a spirit possessing a rare power to configure symbols. In it, the opposing forces of which we are speaking are grouped and confront each other under their respective symbols: *Collectivopolis* and *Individua*.

There is an island, somewhere in an unnamed sea, divided into two halves by a mysterious high wall. On one side is *Collectivopolis*, whose strictly geometrical layout gives an impression of coldness and force. On the other side is *Individua*, looking not so much like a virgin forest as a huge abandoned park—something like a sacred wood. For a long time the island was governed by two kings, brothers who resembled each other so closely in physical appearance that their subjects believed they were serving under one and the same king. Then a terrible revolution made it manifestly impossible to maintain the *condominium*. Henceforth, one brother reigns over *Collectivopolis*, where the life of the individual has no other goal or *raison d'être* than to serve the good of the collectivity. The

⁹⁵ This is a posthumous publication: Hans Schmid-Guisan, *Comme le jour et la nuit*, a translation of *Tag und Nacht*, with a foreword by C.-G. Jung (Paris, Denoel, n.d.). It is unfortunate that there should be neither the date of printing nor the date of the edition. The introductory note, signed M. Schmid-Guisan, is dated Basel, 1937.

other reigns over *Individua* where, by contrast, everything is directed towards fostering the growth of the individual. Henceforth, too, the great majority of the population leads a double life, divided between the two provinces of the island. At different points in the high wall are secret doors, heavily bolted, through which one passes from one province to the other: one finds them disguised behind a chapel altar, in a hospital room, even in the office of the sovereign of *Collectivopolis*. This is because there are very few people who can abstain from leading a double existence and can spend their life in one half of the island. But the most difficult thing to decide is the appropriate moment for passing from one half to the other. For he who lives as a free man in the town of *Collectivopolis* is a slave in *Individua*. Conversely, he who has gained his freedom in the country beyond the wall is reduced in *Collectivopolis* to a state of slavery.

These are the broad outlines of something that cannot be summarized, and they speak sufficiently for themselves. Their inner meaning is no less clearly signified by the symbolic forms which delineate the topography of each half of the island, as well as the beings who inhabit them or who pass secretly from one to the other: pass from the world of Day and the norms of consciousness to the world of Night, where these norms are abolished by the passionate pressure of the forebodings of the unconscious. For *twelve* days and *twelve* nights, the narrator takes us on a journey like that of Dante. We have not the time here to go with him on this twofold and fearful excursion, nor to explain the symbols inspired by his genius. I retain only the final scene, which is played out on the highest peak of *Individua*, whence one can survey all the symbolic landscapes at a glance.

We are on the edge of the crater of a still-active volcano, whose full extent we are prevented from taking in by the swirling smoke that rises from the furnace. And yet the road of *Individua* goes up to it, goes through it and beyond. On the approaches to the crater one comes across people lying here and there in exhaustion, people who had not the strength to stand *Collectivopolis*, but who for all that have not succeeded in gaining total freedom in *Individua*. Here is an apparently resolute man who has got as far as the crater. In spite of the solemn command whose echo resounds through the rocky hollow, he throws himself into the furnace and is swallowed up. Is this, then, to be the sole ending reserved for the supreme effort of those who have arrived at the highest peak of *Individua*? Not so; but he alone will cross the abyss whose firm resolution is not the illusion of

despair. And this is the ultimate lesson that the book has to teach us. Once again a man is advancing towards the furnace. His moving dialogue with the voice of the Invisible enjoining him to stop is evidence of supreme renouncement and of a supreme act of love. While the narrator, seized with giddiness, turns away his eyes, his guide tells him: "Look!" And indeed, "the man is not swallowed up. His foot rests upon a miraculous bridge thrown over the furnace." Where is he going? The narrator may not follow him, for he is told: "It is forbidden to anyone who—like you, and like the gentle reader—has only followed this road as a disinterested observer, to go any further along it." If only his guide would at least explain to him where this bridge *leads*, but he is merely told: "To a place where there is no wall to divide our lives inexorably into two opposing halves . . . where harmony, triumphing over struggle and conflict, makes the heart blossom with pure joy; where at last, surmounting the darkest clouds, merciful to just and unjust alike, shines an unchanging sun."

The whole meaning of this poignant book appears to me to lie in this *bridge* which is finally thrown over the abyss; and it is not by chance that this bridge should awaken in our mind the image of the Chinvat Bridge, as it is configured in the eschatology of ancient Zoroastrian Persia.⁹⁶ For in the image of the bridge, which takes shape spontaneously in the consciousness of the author at the end of the vision of the twelfth night, I believe we can perceive *the present* meaning of all that we learned from the pilgrimage of our Shiite theosopher, up until the moment when the spiritual Sun dawned over al-Muzdalifah, and the pilgrim was worthy to approach the Temple.

At this point, before the bridge flung miraculously over the abyss, we must once more ask ourselves the question: will the inner man give way before he has attained his victory? Will he prefer instead the multiple disguises of the agnosticism which leaves him finally weaponless in the presence of the Grand Inquisitor sitting in *Collectivopolis*? The "country beyond the wall", *Individua*, with all its topographical details (shade and rivers, oratories and secret temples, valleys and high peaks, and so on) is one of the most perfect symbols of the unconscious to spring from the imaginative perception of a present-day author—a perception that itself enables him to discern the "bridge leading to the beyond". Why, then,

96 Cf. my *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, op. cit., pp. 26 ff., 42 ff., etc.

should it be the case, according to others, that the "modern" discovery of the unconscious (not in fact as "modern" as one would like to make out) should have closed a door forever, that it should exclude man permanently from the possibility of knowing "a reality spiritual in itself? An agnostic statement as peremptory as this one does not simply appear out of proportion to the metaphysical methods at its disposal. It also carries an infinitely serious responsibility, for it can cause the so-called liberating discovery to collapse under its own triumph. If man owes his personal *potestas clavium* to this discovery of the unconscious, a *potestas clavium* powerful enough to configure the bridge over the abyss, how, at the same time and in the name of this same discovery, can one try to deprive him of this power, having just given it back to him? This is the deprivation brought about by the agnosticism which dares not pronounce its name, when it says that the keys do not open any door, or that the door opens onto nothing, or that the bridge leads nowhere . . . Or, since the "modern" discovery disowns itself in this way, is it not likely that it reveals to man something for which he had already been long indebted to a different authority?

This other authority lies, perhaps, in all that we have learned to call the *malakut* of this world, as a spiritual world at once invisible and concrete, both because it is peopled by substantial spiritual forms, and because it shows that the meaning of this life for man lies in being able to exercise a configurative action on his own *malakut* or "body of light". Our Shiite theosophers, such as Qadi Sa'id Qummi, see the supreme stage of personal initiation or trans-consciousness (*sirr*) as being the revelation that every theophanic form corresponds to the being of him to whom it is revealed; but they never confuse this correlation with a causality devolving solely upon him to whom the form is revealed, any more than Swedenborg's notion of correspondence abolishes the existence "in itself of the higher level when symbolizing with the lower. The confusion would be as absurd as the confusion of supra-existence in the *malakut* with a claim to attain immortality by preserving the status of the natural physical body (through a perfect equilibrium of secretion, elimination, etc.). It would be to confuse a precarious perpetuity with what is called eternity.

It is in the *malakut* that the essential work of man is accomplished, for the phenomenon of the world, as man reveals it to himself, depends above all and in the final analysis on the vision he has of his own *malakut*. One

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can only act upon the external form assumed by the phenomenon of the world by acting upon the inner form or *malakut*, and such action is only possible where there is an affinity of *ardent desire*. In the language of Qadi Sa'id Qummi, we would say that in order to change something together, we must set out together on the pilgrimage to *Mina*. So I can conclude no better than with the words of the great Swabian mystic, Friedrich Oetinger, who belongs to the tradition of the other spiritual masters mentioned here. His words have all the virtue of a motto: "My God, grant me the boldness to change what it is in my power to change, and grant me the modesty to bear what it is not within my power to change."⁹⁷

Paris, July 31, 1965.

⁹⁷ I know these beautiful words of Oetinger's only from a citation in a note in the review *Offene Tore* (Zurich, Swedenborg-Verlag, 1965), part I, p. 13 (ed. note); a citation which is given, if not textually, at least in accordance with the sense.

The Science of the Balance and the Correspondences Between Worlds in Islamic Gnosis

according to the work of Haydar Amuli, 8th/14th century

I. *The Science of the Balance*

In Islamic gnosis, the metaphysical and mystical basis of the science of correspondences is called the "science of the Balance" (*'ilm al-Mizan*). This science, with which the name of Jabir ibn Hayyan is particularly associated, was practised *par excellence* by the alchemists. This being the case, it is important to free as far as possible the actual concept of alchemy from the ambiguities surrounding it; for only thus can we understand how the alchemical process, and the hermeneutical processes that are the subject of this study, both pertain to the "science of the Balance".

To be sure, we know from Jabir that "the idea of the Balance comprises a number of aspects, and varies according to the objects to which it is applied. There are balances for measuring the Intellect, the Soul of the World, Nature, Form, the Celestial Spheres, the stars, the four natural qualities, the animal world, the vegetable world, the mineral world, and lastly there is the Balance of letters, which is the most perfect of all."¹ There will be occasion to study here several examples of this last type of Balance. But there is something still more important: if "the Balance is the principle that measures the intensity of the Soul's desire during its descent through Matter", or if, in other words, the Balance "is the principle which measures the quantities of the Natures that the Soul has appropriated for the purpose of forming their bodies",² then it seems to us both exaggerated and improper to take the word "measure" in the sense in which it is used by the science of today, and to regard the science of the Balance as

¹ Cf. Paul Kraus, *Jabir ibn Hayyan*, II: 'Jabir et la science grecque' (Cairo, 1942), pp.187-188.

² Ibid., p. 161.

"having as its purpose the reduction of all the data of human knowledge to a system of quantity and measure, thereby conferring on them the character of an exact science."³ Such an attitude stems from the desire to discover, at all costs, precursors of the exact sciences. There are other ways of valorizing and justifying these so-called precursors.

The numbers used or formulated by the science of the Balance do not conduce to the constitution of an exact science as we understand the term today. They possess a value and significance that are themselves qualitative, totally different from the function of number in our statistics. To reduce these to one identical concept is, in short, to confuse the task of the chemist with that of the alchemist. Formerly, both the chemist and the alchemist could work wholly or in part on the same material; but the hermeneutical level of their respective operations was completely different. "To measure the desire of the Soul of the World" is essentially to release transmutative psycho-spiritual energies; as Jaldaki (fourteenth century A.D.) says, it is to transfer gold from its natural mine to the mine of the philosophers, or in other words *extrahere cognitionem*—to free the thought, the spiritual energy, which is immanent in the metal.⁴ This is something quite other than the "chemical" analysis carried out nowadays. The science of the Balance does not make alchemy a chapter in the pre-history of our modern chemistry; it does not lead to the formulation of "mathematical laws" any more than it leads, in the examples we are about to study, to conclusions precursive of our philosophies of history.

Yet this, precisely, is where its interest lies, in the very real degree to which the now forgotten science of correspondences offers us a recourse against so-called "modern" ideologies, which are altogether devoid of the

3 Ibid., p. 187. Cf. the reservations that I have already expressed in my study 'Le Livre du Glorieux de Jabir ibn Hayyan', *Eranos-Jahrbuch* XVIII (Zurich, 1950), pp. 83-84; to be published with the article "De l'alchimie comme art hieratique: Le Livre des sept statues d'Apollonius de Tyane, conserve en arabe par Palchimiste Jaldaki", Editions de l'Herne, with an introduction by Pierre Lory.

4 I am thinking here of the commentary by the alchemist Jaldaki (a native of Jaldak in the Khurasan, not of Jildak) on the "Book of the seven statues" (K. al-asnam), attributed to Apollonius of Tyana. The statue of the "Sun's son", who delivers the first of the seven sermons that compose the work, is made out of philosophical, not natural, gold. On this statue, see my report in *Annuaire* of the Section des Sciences religieuses de l'Ecole pratique des Hautes-Etudes, 1973-1974; see also my article 'De l'alchimie comme art hieratique: Le Livre des sept statues d'Apollonius de Tyane, conserve en arabe par l'alchimiste Jaldaki, to be published by Editions de l'Herne (*supra*, n. 3). On the Soul's alchemy and energetics, cf. my 'Livre du Glorieux', loc. cit.

dimension represented by such a science. Thus, although real balances were of course used in antiquity (such as the one mentioned by Zosimus, or Archimedes' hydrostatic balance), these are not what we mean when we speak about the basis of the science of correspondences. We mean a Balance the very concept of which expresses essentially the harmony and equilibrium of things: a concept exalted, as Jabir ibn Hayyan very well understood,⁵ to the level of a metaphysical principle—so much so, in fact, that the principle of the Balance is superior to all our categories of knowledge, in the sense that it is the cause of all determinations and the object of none.

By the same token, one can grasp its importance in the vocabulary of religion and in all speculative theosophy. The idea of the *equilibrium* of things and that of divine equity ('*adl*) go together, affirming themselves in the symbol of the Balance as an eschatological symbol (cf. Koran 21:49 and *passim*). In Islamic gnosis, the Balance signifies the equilibrium between Light and Darkness. In Ismaili gnosis, for example in the writings of Hamiduddin Kirmani (died c. 408/1017), the Balance of things religious (*mizan al-diyana*) makes it possible to specify the correspondence between the earthly esoteric hierarchy and the celestial angelic hierarchy and, more generally, the correspondences between the spiritual and corporeal worlds.⁶ The visible aspect of a being presupposes its equilibration by an invisible and celestial counterpart; the apparent and exoteric (*zahir*) is equilibrated by the occulted and esoteric (*batin*). Modern agnostic dissent, by ignoring this law of integral being, simply mutilates the integrality of each being. Against those who think that a being's invisible and celestial counterpart is merely the object of a hypothesis or an act of faith, the science of the Balance affirms the principle which creates and ensures this counterpart's ontological necessity. Viewed in this way, the analogical form of knowledge that typifies the science of correspondences is always an *anaphora* (the act of raising up), an *anagoge* (the act of lifting up or elevating); the *analogical* method follows the *anagogical* path, the path which leads upwards. In other words, it follows the gradations of the hierarchy of beings which is itself determined by the spiritual or esoteric function assigned to each level.

5 Cf. P. Kraus, op. cit., p. 311.

6 Ibid., p. 313 ff. Cf. my *Trilogie ismaelienne*, Bibliotheque Iranienne, vol. 9 (Tehran/Paris 1961), index, s.v. Balance, hierarchic

This, broadly speaking, is what we will try to elicit from a work of Twelver Shiite theosophy which is currently being edited in Tehran. The author, a great thinker and spiritual master of fourteenth-century Iranian Shiism, was Haydar Amuli (born 720/1320, died after 787/1385). Spiritually, Haydar Amuli was a disciple of the great Andalusian visionary theosopher, Ibn 'Arabi (died 638/1240), in whose voluminous work he was able to rediscover the positive elements present in Imamite Shiism, although he maintained a spirit of great critical freedom with regard to Ibn 'Arabi's own Imamology. As a result, Haydar Amuli's writings are of great significance in the relationship between Shiism and Sufism. This considerable work, written partly in Persian and partly in Arabic, had for long remained unpublished; it was only a few years ago that we were able to make a start on its reconstruction and publication.⁷ In this study, we will analyse several chapters of one of his works written in Arabic. It is entitled "The Text of Texts", and is an immense commentary on the *Fusus al-hikam* (The Gems of the Wisdom of the Prophets), a book in which Ibn 'Arabi had condensed the doctrines spread over the tens of thousands of pages in his other writings.⁸

The prolegomena to this "Text of Texts" are characterized by, among other things, a large number of diagrams (twenty-eight, to be precise), ingeniously constructed by the author. The purpose of these diagrams is to make the structure of the spiritual worlds perceptible on the level of the *imaginal*, which is intermediary between sensible perception and intellectual intuition. They thus possess the virtue of being experimental verification *sui generis* of metaphysical exploration. The function they fulfil in the work of Haydar Amuli is the same as that fulfilled by the "Book of Figures" in the work of Joachim of Fiore. Several of them constitute an illustration relevant to the "science of the Balance". Their circular form invites us,

7 On Haydar Amuli, see my *En Islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, III (Paris, Gallimard, 1971-1972; new edition, 1978), pp. 149-213. See also Haydar Amuli, *La Philosophie Shi'ite: 1. Somme des doctrines esoteriques (Jami al-asrar); 2. Traité de la connaissance de Vetre*; published, with a double introduction, by H. Corbin and O. Yahya, Bibliothèque Iranienne, vol. 16 (Tehran/Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1969).

8 See Haydar Amuli, *Le Texte des Textes (Nass al-Nusus*, abbreviated henceforth to N. al-N.), *prolegomenes au commentaire des "Fusus al-hikam" d'Ibn 'Arabi*, published with a double introduction by H. Corbin and O. Yahya, Bibliothèque Iranienne, vol. 22 (Tehran/Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1974). In spite of its size, this compact work contains only the prolegomena to the commentary. An edition of the entire commentary would run to three or four volumes of equal length.

particularly where sacred history is concerned, to an apprehension of things by means of an Image. This Image is altogether different from that of the indefinite, rectilinear progression of time presupposed by evolutionist theory, and by explanations of things in terms of historical causality.

This Image is of circles, cycles, or "cupolas", as they are called in certain Nusayri texts,⁹ which not only show us temporal succession finally stabilized in the order of spatial simultaneity, but are also unique in their capacity to make possible and illustrate an application of the science of the Balance to sacred history. They can do this because the figures and personages distributed respectively within the circles do not constitute the historical causes of their succession to one another, but are the homologues of each other and assume a permanent function according to their respective places and ranks. Only this mode of perception effectively makes possible something like a science of correspondences.

Still speaking in general terms, we could say that Haydar Amuli's subject-matter weighs three great books "in the balance".¹⁰ By virtue of a Koranic verse (41:53), he calls one of these books the "Book of Horizons" or of the macrocosm (*Kitab afaqi*); then there is the "Book of Souls", the book of the microcosm or the world of man (*Kitab anfusi*). These two books correspond to what Paracelsus, in his *Astronomia Magna* or *Philosophia Sagax*, calls the "exterior Heaven" and the "interior Heaven"; and we could also refer to Swedenborg. Finally, there is the third book, which is the revealed book, the Koran. When the science of the Balance is applied to the homologous figures that correspond with each other in the three books, it formulates not "mathematical laws" as we understand them today, but arithmological relationships, which alone are able to "measure" the place and function of these homologous figures.

We shall examine, in succession, the "Balance of the Seven and the Twelve" (the correspondences between the astronomy of the visible Heaven and that of the spiritual Heaven, between the esoteric hierarchy and its cosmic correspondences); the "Balance of the Nineteen", which "measures" the epic of divine Mercy descending and ascending from world to world; and the "Balance of the Twenty-Eight", which is an aspect of the balance of sacred history. Finally, the mysterious personages known as the

9 On this Nusayri concept of the "cupolas" of sacred history, see my article 'Une liturgie Shi'ite du Graal', in *Mélanges H.-C. Puech* (Paris, 1974).

10 Cf. N. al-N (see above, note 8), §§ 669, 736.

"horsemen of the Invisible" may enlighten us more fully as to the nature of the world of correspondences.

II. *The Balance of the Seven and the Twelve*

The different applications of the science of the Balance induce us to study six of the great diagrams constructed by Haydar Amuli. Each of these presupposes an entire preliminary study with the diagram presented at the end of it, because it is only then that its purpose and structure become comprehensible. The first two bring into operation the Balance of the Seven and the Twelve, illustrating, as we have just seen, the theme of the esoteric hierarchies and their cosmic correspondences. Such a theme requires that we bear in mind the inspired *hadith* in which God declares in person: "My Friends are beneath my tabernacles (or beneath my cupolas). No one knows them, other than myself." In addition, then, to acknowledging the existence of these mysterious personages whom eighteenth-century occidental esotericism designated as the "unknown Superiors", such a *hadith* tells us that their function and qualification are purely spiritual. It follows, too, that one speaks only of categories of persons, without being permitted to apply the *hadith* to any particular individual currently known among men in this world. Hence we should not expect the schemas outlining the hierarchy of these "Friends of God" to be as precise and uniform as an administrative blue-print. Besides, there are many points on which all the Shiite and Sufi writers on this subject differ considerably.¹¹ An entire book would be needed to expound these variants and to co-ordinate them.

In addition to his personal inspiration, Haydar Amuli is guided on this point mainly by two great masters, Ibn 'Arabi and Sa'duddin Hamuyah (died 1252 A.D.). The first question to be posed is one of vocabulary, that is, of the meaning of the terms used to indicate the degrees of the esoteric hierarchy. As all its members are called the "Friends of God" (in Persian, *Awliya-yi Khuda*, *Dustan-i Haqq*, a term found among the *Gottesfreunde* of the Rhenish mystical school, as I have remarked elsewhere), what in the first place is the exact significance of the term *wall*, pi. *awliya*?

It has most commonly, and totally inadequately, been translated by the

11 For a brief survey of these variants, see my *En Islam iranien* . . . op. cit., I, pp. 120-127; IV, pp. 280 ff.; index, s.v. hierarchies.

term "saint", a translation that opens the door to endless confusion and ambiguity, so much so that when the word is applied to God it is frequently translated as "protector". In fact, as is indicated by the Persian term *dust* which is its translation in current usage, it always bears the sense of *Friend*. The idea originates in the verb form *tawalla*, which means "to take as a friend". Hence the definition given by Haydar Amuli: the *wall* is "he whose case God takes up in friendship".¹² A Koranic verse (7:196), for example, declares: "My Friend is God . . . He befriends the just." The idea of protection simply derives from this divine dilection.

The *walayah*, as a spiritual qualification established by this act of predilection, is the equivalent of the term *mahabbah*, meaning love or friendship. It is present in the *wall* under a double aspect. When the *wall* is regarded as the object of divine love (the *mahbub*, the beloved of God, he whom God has chosen to be his friend),¹³ his *walayah* is neither something he has acquired by himself, nor is it instigated by his own efforts. It is pre-eternal, being a gift of pure divine grace, in the sense that the first Imam—the Seal of the *Awliya*—was able to say: "I was already a *wall* (a beloved of God) when Adam was still between water and clay" (that is to say, did not yet exist). When the *wall* is regarded as the subject of love, as he who loves (the *muhibb*, he who chooses God to be his friend),¹⁴ he is obliged to "model the whole pattern of his behaviour (his ethos) on the divine pattern" (*al-takhalluq bi-akhlaq Allah*). It is on this condition alone that he can be called a friend in the true sense. The *walayah*, then, consists in the servant (*'abd*), the man, assuming the divine condition by ceasing to exist himself in order to arise again and exist in God; and he does this precisely "because God has chosen him to be his friend".¹⁵ There is thus a distinct Johannine reminiscence in the spirituality of Islamic gnosis, which echoes

12 *N. al-N.*, § 606.

13 This is the state designated by the term *mahbubiyah*, an abstract noun formed from the word *mahbub*; it is the condition of the beloved, or *al-maqam al-mahbubi*, the *mahbubiyah* as a mystical station or dwelling (*maqam*).

14 This is designated by the term *muhibbiyah*, an abstract noun formed from the word *muhibb*: *al-maqam al-muhibbi*, the condition of the lover as a mystical station or dwelling.

15 Hence the reply of the Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq to the impertinent man who wished to accuse him of pride: "Not at all! I am not proud, but since my own qualities have been obliterated by those of God, His greatness has banished mine and has taken its place." Cf. *Traite's des compagnons-chevaliers* (*Rasa'il-e Javanmardan*). *Recueil de sept "Fotowwat-Nameh"*, published by Morteza Sarraf, with an analytical introduction by Henry Corbin, Bibliothèque Iranienne, vol. 20 (Tehran/Paris, 1973), p. 35.

the evangelist's verse: *jam non dicam vos servos sed amicos*. It is as though this reminiscence disclosed the secret tradition transmitted at the very origins of Islam by Khadijah, the Prophet's wife, and the monk Waraqah, her initiator.

It is by virtue of purely spiritual criteria which exceed the competence of men that the esoteric hierarchy is constituted within the entirety of these "Friends and Loved ones of God". At each period of the cycle of prophecy, the prophet, the *Nabi*, is at the summit of this hierarchy. He is the man who is "raised up (*mab'uth*) by God for men in order to call them to God and deliver them from the darkness of ignorance". The prophetic mission takes two forms: there is the prophecy of instruction (*nubuwwat al-ta'nf*), which consists in the initiation into the gnosis of the divine Essence, the divine Attributes and the divine Operations; and there is legislative prophecy (*nubuwwat al-tashri'*) which, in addition to this, comprises the mission of reforming morals and of communicating a divine command. That is why we have, first the *Nabi* pure and simple (the equivalent, in the early periods of prophecy, of the *wali* of the Muhammadan period); then the *Nabi-mursal* (sent to a people, a town or a family); and above all, the *Nabi-rasul*, the Envoy charged with the mission of revealing a new Law (*shari'ah*).

For each *nabi*, the *walayah* is the presupposition of his prophetic charisma, since without it there would be no grounds for seeing in him a manifestation of the Perfect Man. It is by virtue of this *walayah* that his heir and successor, the Imam, may be regarded in his turn as a manifestation of the Perfect Man, and it is equally the intervention of the *walayah* which marks the difference between the Shiite and the Sunnite conception of the Imam. The idea of the Imam (the "Guide" or *hegoumenos*) comprises *eo ipso* that of Caliph (*khalifah*, a vicar, successor). This word may be understood to signify a succession from the Prophet in accordance with an order that is purely exoteric. In this case, the Caliph's mission is essentially the social and political one of a temporal leader, and it excludes any notion of the *walayah*. This is the Sunnite conception. It is also possible, however, to understand the Caliph's function according to the sense in which it is said that Man, the *Anthropos*, is God's Caliph on Earth. Thus it was for the seven great legislative prophets, from Adam to Muhammad, and thus it was, too, for the Imams of each of the periods of the prophetic cycle. The caliphate function, being the result of the divine *walayah*, is

altogether independent of men's choice, and as such it invests the Imam with a sacral, metaphysical function, which is recapitulated in the idea of the "pole". Hence every Imam, like the Prophet whose successor he is, must be impeccable and immaculate (a notion that corresponds to the idea of the *anamatetos* in Judaeo-Christian prophetology). This is the Shiite conception.¹⁶

As we can see, this Shiite conception is not to be reduced to the idea of a fleshly descent or a political legitimacy. That is why it does not need any official acknowledgement on the part of men: the Imam is the Imam, even if confined to secrecy. If—like every previous prophet—the prophet of Islam (according to Twelver Shiism) had twelve Imams as successors, this is because together they form the eternal, metaphysical Muhammadan Essence (the *Haqiqah muhammadiyah*); the only meaning, function and basis of their earthly parentage, by fleshly descent, is the manifestation of their pleromatic and pre-eternal union. Consequently, it does not spring from the juridical or political contingencies of dynastic histories.

Just now we mentioned the term "pole" (*qutb*). The notion is fundamental to the esoteric hierarchy, the keystone of the arch; and it dominates all attempts to establish correspondences. It is indeed possible to say, with Ruzbihan Baqli of Shiraz, for example, that the *Awliya'* are the eyes through which God looks at the world; and that consequently they are the mystical guarantors thanks to whom, unbeknown to men, our world can continue to be. The *pole* dominates their entire hierarchy; it is *par excellence* that on which the gaze of God rests in looking at the world, in every epoch; and therefore the pole, from which the whole esoteric hierarchy depends, is secretly but absolutely necessary in preserving the existence of the world. If it ceased for one instant to exist, our entire world would crumble. This is why it is homologous with the archangel Seraphiel who, in the archangelic tetrad which supports the cosmic Throne, possesses the function of maintaining *life* in general, the life of the cosmos. The *pole* has the task of maintaining life in the interior, spiritual sense, life in the true sense for man. This is the life which is henceforth invulnerable to the peril of the

16 This is why the Imamate is both a necessity and a divine grace, on the model of what is implied by the verse: "To Himself has your Lord prescribed Mercy" (6:54). Cf. *N. al-N.*, §§ 609-611. On the categories of the prophets, the concept of the Imam, and the relationship between prophecy and the Imam, cf. *En Islam iranien* . . . op. cit., IV, index, s.v.

second death, for it has passed the test of the mystical death, from which man arises capable now not of suffering his *exitus* but of living his death—that is, of passing through it as a living man. In short, "the pole is the cause of life—life in the true sense—for the men who people this world; it is the *place* where God looks for the vision that God has of the beings belonging to the visible and invisible worlds."

This polar function culminates in that of the major Pole, the major polar function (*qutbiyah kubra*) of the "pole of poles". This is the esoteric dimension of prophecy, and as such it can belong only to the Imam. Every Imam of each of the great prophets has had his turn at being the pole of poles. In the present, post-Muhammadan period, the qualification belongs to him who, as the esoteric dimension of the Seal of the prophets, is the Seal of all the Friends of God: the twelfth Imam, at present occulted, invisibly present to this world until the day of his advent. It is certainly on this point that the Shiite and Sufi conceptions of the esoteric hierarchy differ from each other, for the non-Shiite Sufis have separated the two notions, transferring to their idea of the pole the function originally reserved by Shiism to the Imam. Sunnite Sufism has thus managed somehow to found an Imamology without an Imam, something which would be akin to Christianity founding a Christology without Christ. As a result, there is a certain ambiguity at the summit of the esoteric hierarchy.

For example, Sufism refers to a personage below the major pole who is designated as *al-ghawth* (the help or aid), and we are told that he is the pole for so long as one looks to him for refuge and receives help from him. He is assisted by two Imams: one on his right whose gaze remains fixed on the *Malakut* (the spiritual world), and the other on his left, whose gaze is fixed on the *Mulk* (the visible, phenomenal world), and who is called upon to succeed the *ghawth*. It is hard to see how these two Imams could belong to the prophetic pleroma of the Twelve. Moreover, one might well ask oneself what exactly is the relationship between the pole called *ghawth* and the major pole. Haydar Amuli hints at least at the answers to these questions. It is understood that supposing there has been a pole in correspondence with each of the seven great prophets, then the seventh pole is the "pole of poles", the most eminent and perfect of them all. At present he is the Muhammadan Seal of the Friends of God, the twelfth Imam, the Mahdi to come, announced by the Prophet when he said, "If there were only one day left to the world, God would prolong that day

until the appearance of a man of my lineage, whose name will be my name and who will fill the earth with peace and justice, just as until then it had been filled with violence and tyranny." We are told that the nearer someone approaches to this pole of poles, the greater is his authority, and such is the case with regard to the pole called *ghawth* and its two Imams. It is as if Shiism were to integrate to its own esoteric hierarchy this triad composed of the *ghawth* (temporarily called pole) and its two Imams, subordinating it to him who, mysteriously and invisibly present, remains until the end of our cycle the "pole of poles", the twelfth Imam.¹⁷

The other members of the esoteric hierarchy may now be distinguished. There are the four *Awtad* (plural of *watad*), the four pillars or cosmic "tent-posts", who stand at the four cardinal points of the world and on whom rests God's gaze when he looks at the world. Their persons are the centre of a whole network of correspondences which "balance" the symbolism of the cosmic Temple and that of the Temple of the Ka'bah transfigured into a spiritual temple. These four *awtad* in fact correspond to the four archangels who support the cosmic Throne or Temple: Seraphiel, Michael, Gabriel and Azrael. In the same order, each of them corresponds to the heart of one of the four great prophets, Adam, Abraham, Jesus and Muhammad. Each represents one of the four corners (or pillars, *arkan*) of the Temple of the Ka'bah: the Syrian, the Occidental, the Yemenite and the Iraqi, in which the Black Stone is set.¹⁸

There are the seven *Abdal*, literally the "substitutes", "those who permute". They are called this for several reasons: first because they are the "substitutes" of the *poles* of the seven climes; then because, withdrawn into their subtle bodies, they can abandon their physical bodies whenever they wish, without anyone noticing their absence or the fact that that physical body is merely a substitute for their real presence; or, again, because as one of them is recalled to the superior worlds, a member from the rank below takes his place, or is substituted for him.¹⁹ All this hierarchy is thus penetrated by a continuous ascending movement.

17 Cf. *N. al-N.*, §§ 612, 626-627. On the "pole of poles", see *En Islam iranien* ... op. cit., IV, book VII: 'Le XII^e Imam et la chevalerie spirituelle'.

18 *N. al-N.*, §§ 612-618. Compare this with the structure of the correspondences between the corners of the earthly Temple of the Ka'bah and those of the Temples of the higher worlds; see below, the study 'The Configuration of the Temple of the Ka'bah as a secret of the spiritual life, according to the work of Qadi Sa'id Qummi (1103/1691)', pp. 212 ff., 224 ff., 229 ff.

19 *N. al-N.*, §§ 612, 616-617.

There are also the forty *Nujaba'* or spiritual princes, and the three hundred *Nuqaba'* or spiritual leaders, whose name is the same as that designating the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. For the time being, I will leave the mysterious personages who are called the *Rukban* or *Rukkab*, the horsemen or knights of the Invisible (see below, section V).

As we must confine ourselves here to a brief exposition, without going into the details of the many variants, I will only call attention to the schema of the esoteric hierarchy established by a great Iranian Sufi Shiite of the thirteenth century, Sa'duddin Hamuyah, as reported by Haydar Amuli. This hierarchy of *Awliya'* or Friends of God comprises seven degrees: 1. The group of three hundred *Nuqaba'*, men of God who, like all the *Awliya'*, remain *incognito* for the majority of men. 2. The group of forty *Nujaba'*. 3. The seven *Abdal*. 4. A group with five members, of whom we are told simply that they assure the continuity of being. 5. The four *Awtad*. 6. The triad formed by the *ghawth* and its two auxiliary Imams. 7. The supreme pole or pole of poles. The total gives the figure of 360, which corresponds to the 360 degrees of the celestial Sphere.

This hierarchy of seven ranks is the support of multiple correspondences: 1. The supreme Pole, being the first theophanic manifestation (*mazhar*), corresponds to the First Essence of the spiritual world which is the First Intelligence. 2. The triad of the *ghawth* and its two Imams corresponds to Nature, the *Materia Prima*, and the body; while its two Imams, considered separately, are set in correspondence with the Spirit and Soul of the world. 3. The correspondences of the four *Awtad* were noted above. 4. The group of five symbolize respectively those unities of the universe constituted by the *Jabarut* (the world of the archangelic Intelligences); the *Malakut* (the world of heavenly Souls); the *Mulk* (the world of phenomena); the *mundus imaginalis* (*'alam al-mithal*) or world of absolute Imagination (*'alam al-khayal al-mutlaq*); and finally, the Perfect Man. 5. The seven *Abdal* correspond to the seven stars and other heptads. 6. The forty *Nujaba'* correspond to the "forty dawns during which the clay of Adam was fermenting". 7. The 300 *Nuqaba'* correspond to the 300 remaining degrees of the Sphere, the 300 days of the year.²⁰

But in fact Haydar Amuli, with Shiite inspiration, prefers to think that the entirety of these hierarchical degrees can be reduced to two groups:

20 Ibid., §§ 622-623, 628.

one of *seven*, which is the number of the great prophets, and one of *twelve*, the number of the twelve Imams, the *Awliya' par excellence*, who, as all initiates (*khassah*) know, are the causes of the persistence and order of the spiritual world.²¹ Moreover, this schematization facilitates an application of the science of the Balance that enables us to establish more rigorously a system of correspondences which are not simply metaphors. Indeed, just as the order and persistence of the exterior world or "exterior Heaven" are due to the *seven wandering stars*, or planets, and the *twelve* fortified castles (*burj* = πύργος, a high tower) or signs of the zodiac, so the persistence and order of the spiritual world or "interior Heaven" rest on the *seven* prophets and the *twelve* Friends of God *par excellence*. This rhythm of seven and twelve, heptad and dodecad, is expressive of a fundamental law of being, the very "balance" of being. Thus, as the planets have their "houses" in the twelve zodiacal constellations, each prophet had his twelve Imams, spiritual dwellings of the religion revealed by him.²²

While he follows his master Ibn 'Arabi very closely, Haydar Amuli nevertheless tends to lay an emphasis of his own on the correspondences of these hierarchies. Both of them, however, agree in placing at the origin of the group of seven the "seven Angels ecstatic with love" (*al-Mala'ikah al-muhayyamah al-sab'ah*) whom God created in the eighth Heaven. These seven Angels are the theophanic forms of the seven divine Names, called the "seven Imams of the Names", of which the seven great prophets were also, in virtue of their high level of knowledge, the forms of manifestation (*mazahir*) in this world, just as the seven climes receive from the seven planets the influx and signatures that they communicate to their inhabitants. On the other hand, at the origin of the group of twelve are twelve Angels whom God created in the ninth Heaven, the unconstellated Sphere (the Heaven *Atlas*), and of whom the signs of the zodiac in the eighth Heaven or Heaven of the Fixed Stars constitute not the effigies, but the forms of manifestation, or dwellings. It is from these twelve Angels that the twelve Friends of God *par excellence*—that is to say, the group of twelve Imams—receive the higher knowledge which they transmit to men, in the same way that the twelve zodiacal signs communicate to the inhabitants of the different climes the influx and energy they receive from the twelve angelic entities of the ninth Heaven.²³

21 Ibid., § 629.

23 Ibid., § 630.

23 Ibid., §§ 631, 637.

When the science of the Balance is applied to prophetology, it necessitates in this way the interiorization of angelology and astronomy. Yet the identical rhythm disclosed by these exalted sciences proceeds from the very mystery of the theophany, and this is the point emphasized by Haydar Amuli. In the case of the group of *Seven*, we have to take into account the following. To re-ascend to the mystery of the theophany is to re-ascend to the secret of the pluralization of the unique Essence into multiple forms of manifestation or multiple theophanies. The sacrosanct divine Essence—true Being in its true abscondence—has "infinite perfections of essence; by virtue of each perfection it has an Attribute or qualification; by virtue of each Attribute, it has a Name; by virtue of each Name it has an Operation (determined and determining); by virtue of each Operation, it assumes a particular theophanic form (*mazhar*); by virtue of each theophanic form, it conceals a certain esoteric secret (*sirr*); by virtue of each esoteric secret there is a certain science which corresponds to it; by virtue of each science there is a certain wisdom (*hikmah*, theosophia) which corresponds to it; by virtue of each wisdom there is a certain statute (*hukm*) known to the divine Essence alone." This is why a Koranic verse declares, "He gives wisdom to whom he pleases. He who has been given wisdom has been given an immense good. But only those gifted with intelligence give thought to it" (2:269). Those "gifted with intelligence" are the *Nabis*, the Imams, the whole assembly of the *Awliya'*, the gnostics—in short, humanity's spiritual elite.²⁴

The divine Names and Attributes form, therefore, a hierarchy which corresponds to the perfections of the divine Essence; and although they are infinite, their sources are determined. These consist of seven fundamental divine Attributes: Life (*hayah*), Knowledge (*'ilm*), Power (*qudrah*), Will (*iradah*), Speech (*kalam*), Hearing (*sam'*), and Sight (*basar*). These Attributes postulate seven Names: the Living (*hayy*), the Knowing (*'alim*), the Powerful (*qadir*), the Willing (*murid*), the Speaking (*mutakallim*), the Hearing (*sami'*), the Seeing (*basir*). These seven Names are what are called the "seven Imams of the divine Names", and are so many major theophanic modes in the spiritual and exterior worlds. In fact, the list of these

²⁴ Ibid., § 632.

²⁵ Cf. *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-'Arabi* ed. H. S. Nyberg (Leiden, 1919), pp. 73 (the seven Imams of the Names), pp. 113-114 (the pole, the Imam), and pp. 30, 33-36, 48-49, 170 of the Arabic text.

seven Imams includes variants (see the table below). In the spiritual world, these epiphanic forms are the seven great prophets: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad. In the exterior world, and corresponding to the "seven Angels ecstatic with love" of whom the seven prophets are the forms of manifestation, there are the seven planets: the Sun, Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Venus, Mercury and the Moon. There are also the seven climes, corresponding to the order of the seven planets; the seven Earths and the people who inhabit them; the seven degrees of hell (see below, section IV); the seven days of the week, and various other heptads.

On the one hand, then, there are the seven great prophets, whose mission is to reveal a Book, and who correspond to the seven Imams among the divine Names: 1. Adam is the form of manifestation (*mazhar*) of the divine Name "the Living".²⁶ 2. Noah is that of the divine Name "the Willing". 3. Abraham, that of the divine Name "the Powerful". 4. Moses, that of the divine Name "the Speaking". 5. David, that of the divine Name "the Hearing". 6. Jesus, that of the divine Name "the Seeing". 7. Muhammad, that of the divine Name "the Knowing". On the other hand, says Haydar Amuli, "if you have studied this deeply, you will have understood that each of the seven celestial Spheres is equally the form of manifestation of a divine Name", and that together they manifest seven divine Names which, with one exception—the Knowing—are different from the seven Imams named above. 1. The Heaven of Saturn is the form of manifestation of the Name "the Provident" (*razzaq*). 2. Jupiter's Heaven is that of the divine Name "the Knowing". 3. Mars' Heaven, that of the divine Name "the Triumphant" (*qahhar*). 4. The Sun's Heaven, that of the divine Name "the Light" (*Nur*). 5. Venus' Heaven, that of the divine Name "the Configurator" (*musawwir*).²⁷ The Heaven of Mercury (Hermes), that of the divine Name "the Shaper" (*bar'i*). 7. The Moon's Heaven, that of the divine Name "the Creator" (*khaliq*).²⁸

²⁶ "Adam is the epiphanic form of the Name *the Living*, because he is the first individuality of the human species to be made manifest in visible existence; he lives by the Life of the Creator, and through him the whole world is alive, in accordance with the verse: 'I have breathed my Spirit into him' (15:29), and with the *hadith* of the Prophet: 'God created Adam according to his image'" § 634.

²⁷ Cf. the Koranic verse 59:24: "He is the Creator (*khaliq*), the Shaper (*bar'i*), the Configurator (*musawwir*)".

²⁸ *N. al-N.*, §§ 633-634. Elsewhere, Haydar Amuli indicates certain variants that he finds perfectly acceptable. For example: "Each of the prophets, *Awliya'*, Imams, is

Following the order in which the author enumerates the correspondences, we can recapitulate them in the following table.

The 7 Heavens	7 Imams of the divine Names	The 7 prophets	7 Imams of the divine Names
Saturn	the Provident	Adam	the Living
Jupiter	the Knowing	Noah	the Willing
Mars	the Triumphant	Abraham	the Powerful
Sun	the Light	Moses	the Speaking
Venus	the Configurator	David	the Hearing
Mercury	the Shaper	Jesus	the Seeing
Moon	the Creator	Muhammad	the Knowing

It should be added that each of the seven climes is the form of manifestation of one of the seven planets, and that the temperament of that clime's inhabitants corresponds to the temperament of the planet. Each of the seven climes corresponds to one of the seven prophets, to one of the seven poles. Haydar Amuli is of the opinion that no one before him has established such a complete system of correspondences. However, one might remember that the Ismailis have excelled in this art. In associating prophetology and astronomy, our author's profound conception is that if the order and system of the universe are regulated by the course of the seven planets through their zodiacal houses, then the order and system of the spiritual world rest on the seven prophets, whose twelve Awliya'—those called the Imams, poles, or heirs (*awsiya'*)—are the stages in the course of its religion. This profound unity is revealed and justified by the balance of

in actuality the form of manifestation of one of the divine Names, and to all intents and purposes he is the form of manifestation of the totality of Names, in accordance with the verse: He taught Adam the totality of the Names (2:31). In actuality Adam was the form of manifestation of the Name *the Knowing* ('*alim*), and in potentiality he was the form of manifestation of all the Names. In actuality Noah was the form of manifestation of the Name *the Clement* (*hatim*); Abraham was that of the Name *the Provident* (*razzaq*); David was that of the Name *the Strong* (*qawiyy*); Moses was that of the Name *the Manifested* (*zahir*); Jesus was that of the Name *the Hidden* (*batin*); Muhammad was that of the Name *the Wise* (*hakim*)" § 745. Or again: "If you say that Adam is the form of manifestation of the Name *the Living* (*hayy*); Noah that of the Name *the Powerful* (*qadir*); Abraham that of the Name *the Hearing* (*sami'*); David that of the Name *the Seeing* (*basir*); Moses that of the Name *the Speaking* (*mutakallim*); Jesus that of the Name *the Willing* (*murid*); Muhammad that of the Name *the Knowing* ('*alim*), this is perfectly acceptable" § 746.

the epiphanic forms: the seven Attributes correspond to the seven divine Names or Imams of the Names; to the seven Names correspond the seven planets, the seven prophets, the seven poles, and so on."

In reality, the thought of Haydar Amuli is too close to that of Ibn 'Arabi for there to be any serious difference of opinion between them, on this point at any rate. Thus, having presented his own point of view with regard to the system of seven, Haydar Amuli limits himself to mentioning a schema proposed by Ibn 'Arabi and based on the seven *Abdal*. These are the seven mysterious personages committed respectively to the safeguarding of the seven climes. They are assisted by the angelic being that rules over each of the seven Heavens, and they receive the influx of spiritual energy emanating respectively from each of the prophets who, according to the recital of the *Mi'raj* (the Prophet's heavenly ascent during a night of ecstasy), dwell in each of these Heavens. Here, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Idris (identified with Enoch and Hermes), Joseph, Jesus and Adam are named. In the heart of each of the seven *Abdal*, each *day* and each *hour*, there occurs a theophany which is determined according to the patron saint of that hour and day, that is, according to the esoteric secrets concealed in the movements of the seven Heavens, and their assignment to their respective prophet.³⁰ This would seem to indicate something in the nature of an hourbook or an esoteric liturgical calendar.

This, broadly speaking, is what Haydar Amuli has to teach us about the Balance of the Seven. Where the Balance of the Twelve is concerned, he proceeds in the same way, starting with his own point of view, and continuing with an exposition of an extremely complex system of angelologic astronomy to be found in the writings of Ibn 'Arabi. He has already shown us how the Twelve originate in the twelve angels created primordially in the ninth Heaven or *atlas* Heaven.³¹ These angels receive the spiritual influx from, and thus correspond to, both the twelve Friends of God who are the twelve Imams, and the twelve signs of the zodiac. This dodecad marks the equilibrium and equity which conform to a primordial divine ordinance: it is the very balance of being. One finds it again in the

29 Ibid., § 635.

30 Ibid., § 636.

31 The root *tl*s connotes the idea of erasing (writing for example); the word *tils* signifies a page from which the writing has been erased; *atlas* means that which is totally bare, glabrous, like the ninth Sphere which is non-constellated.

number twelve of the leaders (*nuqaba'*) of the tribes of Israel,³² in the twelve springs which gushed from the rock of Horeb when it was struck by Moses' rod. It is also the reason why each of the great legislative prophets was succeeded by twelve heirs (sing *wasi*) or Imams. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad each had their twelve Imams—the list of them, already established by Mas'udi,³³ is well-known in Twelver Shiism. Unfortunately, even though the names of the twelve Imams of the Seal of the prophets are well-known, the names of the others have largely been disfigured by the copyists and can be recognized only with difficulty. Nonetheless, it is possible, Bible in hand, to identify some of them. And it is this which is disconcerting. For it is hard to believe that our Shiite gnostics could have invented this altogether; they must in this respect have been heirs to a Judaeo-Christian gnostic tradition, passed on by the Prophet himself, and which as yet we have been unable to trace.³⁴

Thus, each of the seven legislative prophets had the duty of preparing and educating a spiritual heir (*wasi*) or Imam, to whom he would confide the esoteric secrets of his prophecy, of the Book which had been revealed to him. In this way the heir would succeed him as a witness and a guarantor (*hujjah*) before his people, and his community would not dispose arbitrarily, at the whim of each man's caprice and fantasy, of the Book and its hermeneutic. (As a Shiite, Haydar Amuli holds that it was the rejection of the Imam by an entire section of the community which has unfortunately brought on the confusion and corruption reigning in Islam.) The twelve heirs (*Awsiya'*) or Imams (guides) of each prophet had thus to preserve his Word, his Logos, and to keep alive his *shari'ah* for the entire cycle during which his *da'wah* (his call, *kerygma*) prevailed, until the coming of a new prophet or, in the case of the twelve heirs of the

32 Cf. the verses 5:12: "God received the promise of the children of Israel. We have raised up twelve leaders from among them"; and 7:160: "We divided them into twelve tribes." Cf. Nicolas Sed, *La Cosmologie Juive. I. La mystique cosmologique* (Sorbonne thesis 1970, typescript), pp. 374 ff., "Le symbolisme zodiacal des douze tribus".

33 In his *Kitab ithbat al-wasiyah* (Najaf, n.d.).

34 *N. al-N.*, §§ 638–645. Needless to say, this transmission of every prophet's heritage (*wasiyah*) through the medium of twelve Imams must not be confused with the Prophet's ancestry back to Adam, and the transmission of the "Muhammadan Light" from prophet to prophet. The question of Judaeo-Christian antecedents has been reappraised in new terms in Jean-Claude Vadet's 'Les Hamfs, "La plus grande Loi de Moïse", les Saintes Myriades et la naissance de l'exegese islamique', in *Revue des Etudes juives* (April–December 1971), pp. 165–182.

Muhammadan period, until the final appearance of the twelfth of them. They are the guardians of the divine cause.³⁵ The Book is a silent Imam; the Imam is the Book speaking, because he proclaims its *ta'wil*, its hermeneutic. The pleroma of the twelve Muhammadan Imams is the Seal of the *walayah* of all the Imams who are the heirs of the previous prophets. And the Seal of the Muhammadan Imamate is the twelfth Imam, the Mahdi to come, announced by the Prophet himself.³⁶

This use of the Balance of the Twelve is in fundamental correspondence with the concerns of a Twelver Shiite thinker. Haydar Amuli goes on to show us how it is used by Ibn 'Arabi, in the deployment of his angelologic astronomy. In the beginning the Most-High God established an archangelic heptad, known as that of the "Angels ecstatic with love", who are apparently identical to the Cherubim (*Karubiyyun*). He appointed one of these Cherubim to be a chamberlain, and confided to him the whole science of his Creation. This Angel is the epiphany of this very science. One is inevitably reminded here of the "Cherub on the Throne" in Hebraic Gnosis, called also Metatron, Yahohel.³⁷ Here the Cherub, prince of the celestial Court, is designated, by a letter of the Arabic alphabet, as the Angel *Nun*, in reference to the Koranic verse 68:1 which contains the adjuration: "By the *Nun* and by the Pen, and by that which they write." In fact, appointed to this Angel, God has established beneath him another Angel, the Pen (*qalam*) or Scribe (*katib*), who receives the epiphany of divine science through the mediation of the Angel *Nun*. In its transmission from one Angel to the other, the divine science becomes more limited: it passes from a state of knowledge that is global and synthetic to an order of analytical understanding concerned with the details of beings. Whereas for the Angel *Nun* the divine epiphany is brought about by the Name "the

35 The *ulu'l-amr*, in preference to the banal translation "the holders of authority". *Amr ilahi* here signifies the *res divina*, the divine object—the "cause", according to the etymology of the word.

36 *N. al-N.*, §§ 646–650. There are numerous *hadith* in which the Prophet announces that twelve Imams will come after him, or that after Husayn (the third Imam) there will be nine Imams, of whom the ninth will be the *Qa'im*, the Imam of the Resurrection. On the dodecad, or group of twelve, as a law of being, bringing into correspondence the structure of the Imamate and that of the Temple of the Ka'bah, cf. my study on Qadi Sa'id Qummi, cited above (note 4).

37 Cf. Gershom Scholem, *Les Origines de la Kabbah*, trans. Jean Loewenson (Paris, 1966), index, s.v. Cherubin, Yahohel; see also 3 *Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch*, ed. and trans. Hugo Odeberg (Cambridge, 1928), pp. 82, 189 ff. of the Introduction, and pp. 172 ff. of the translation.

Knowing", in a unique and universal theophany, for the Angel who is the Pen or Scribe it is brought about by the divine Name "the Powerful", in a double theophany. In fact, as one descends in the hierarchy of the Intelligences, the number of theophanies is multiplied, uniqueness being a sign of ontological superiority. The Angel who is the Pen or Scribe is appointed to compile and write the great Book of being. A sacrosanct Tablet (*Lawh*) has been prepared for him, on which he has to write all that will come to pass, up till the day of the Resurrection. Elsewhere, Ibn 'Arabi says that the sacrosanct Tablet bears the same relation to the Intelligence called the Scribe as Eve bore to Adam.³⁸ The number of the forms of knowledge and science that the Angel scribe is commanded to write correspond to the figure of the 360 degrees of the celestial Sphere multiplied by itself.³⁹

Next, God has established twelve governors of his Creation, whom he impelled to descend from the supreme Sphere (the ninth Heaven), giving them as dwelling-places twelve fortified castles similar to the tall towers built onto the ramparts of a city. These castles are the twelve zodiacal constellations in the eighth Heaven. He removed all the veils between them and the "sacrosanct Tablet", so that they are able to see, written on the Tablet, their names and respective ranks; just as they are able to see, written in themselves, all the events to come until the day of the Resurrection.⁴⁰

Below these twelve governors dwelling in the supreme 'Heaven are established twenty-eight chamberlains who are in their service. Their respective dwellings are the twenty-eight stations occupied successively by the Moon in the course of each lunar month. Their number corresponds to the number of letters in the Arabic alphabet, and it will of course recur later in the "balance of the twenty-eight".⁴¹ The twelve chamberlains, in their turn, have established their delegates, who are seven *nuqaba'* (or spiritual leaders) in the seven Heavens (the moving Intelligences or Souls of the seven Heavens). These *nuqaba'*—a term we have already encountered in the nomenclature of the esoteric hierarchy—have the task of extracting and actualizing that which is potential in the twelve governors. Also in the service of the latter are those whom Ibn 'Arabi calls the

38 Cf. *Kleinere Schriften* . . . , op. cit., p. 49 (on the *Arwah muhayyamah*, the Spirits ecstatic with love) and p. 55 of the Arabic text.

39 *N. al-N.*, §§ 651—652.

40 *Ibid.*, § 653.

41 *Ibid.*, § 654.

"guardians of the Temple" or "templars" (*sadanah*) ,⁴² in addition to myriads of auxiliaries comprising twelve categories which correspond to the twelve governors. Their names appear in the Koran, and Ibn 'Arabi is thus in a position to systematize Koranic angelology for the first time. The names of the twelve categories of angelic beings are as follows. There are "those who repulse" (37:2); "those who recite" (37:3); "those who distribute" (51:4); "those who are sent" (77:1); "those who disperse" (77:3); "those who seize" (79:1); "those who extract gently" (79:2); "those who precede" (79:4); "those who swim" or "float" (79:3); "those who deliver the word" (77:5); "those who conduct the affairs of the universe" (79:5); "those who are ranged in order" (37:i).⁴³

The idea is, then, that everything inscribed on the "sacrosanct Tablet" requires the intervention of these angelic hierarchies in order to pass into a state of actualization in this world. It is they who are responsible for the penetration into this world of the dispositions of the "decree" (*qazda'*) and the "destiny" (*qadar*) inscribed on the sacrosanct Tablet, but they have no power to allow the penetration of anything which is not written on this Tablet. All these hierarchies are subordinate to the twelve chamberlains, excepting, of course, the "Seven Spirits ecstatic with love", who are God's intimates. The majority of men sees only the dwellings of these intermediaries; but, says Ibn 'Arabi, it is given to the spiritual elite to see them in their dwellings, in the same way that most men see the heavenly bodies without seeing either the persons of the chamberlains or the *nuqaba'*.⁴⁴

42 On this term *sadanah* (templars), cf. *Kleinere Schriften* . . . , op. cit., p. 74, and pp. 36-38 of the Arabic text.

43 *N. al-N.*, § 658. Nevertheless, Haydar Amuli cuts short the quote from Ibn 'Arabi and does not go into detail in naming the twelve categories of Angels. This does not make it less important to know their names in order to understand diagram no. 8 (here, fig. 1). The quote is taken from Ibn 'Arabi's *Futuhat* I, p. 296. "There are those who, day and night, each morning and evening, rise up from God and from us to God, and speak only good about us. There are those who intercede for whoever is on Earth, and there are those who only intercede for believers, because they are filled with divine zeal (or divine jealousy), just as those who intercede for anyone on Earth are filled with mercy (...). There are those who are in charge of inspiration and who send knowledge into the heart (. . .). There are those who are in charge of the formation of that which God causes to happen in the womb; there are those who are in charge of breathing life into the Spirits; those whose function it is to cherish and provide . . . There is nothing in the world whose occurrence God has not entrusted to the Angels' care." Ibn 'Arabi goes on to enumerate the twelve categories of angelic entities mentioned in our text, and which are also mentioned in *Kleinere Schriften* . . . , op. cit., pp. 76-78 of the Arabic text.

44 *N. al-N.*, §§ 657-665.

Haydar Amuli apologizes for having quoted Ibn 'Arabi at such length, but he had to do this in order to authenticate the manner in which he himself conceives of the place of the Twelve Imams of Shiism in terms of the "balance of the seven and the twelve". He is now in a position to construct a first diagram (fig. i = diagram no. 8; cf. below, the detailed description in the Appendix), in which he brings the spiritual world of the seven prophets and the twelve Imams into correspondence with the heptads and dodecads of the exterior world.

The following is a very brief description of this first diagram.⁴⁵ Beginning at the top and reading from right to left, we read in sequence, in the twelve small circles inscribed on the circumferent ring, the names of the twelve Signs of the Zodiac—the respective dwellings of the twelve Angel-governors—entered in the exterior hemicycle of each circle (the Ram, the Bull, the Twins, and so on). In the interior hemicycle of each little circle are the names of the twelve angelic categories in the service of the twelve Angel-governors who dwell in the twelve signs of the zodiac (those who repulse, those who recite, those who distribute, and so on). The twelve are arranged in groups of three. On the outer part of the ring, between each triad, is inscribed one triad from among the twelve months of the year. At the top on the right are Muharram, Safar, Rabi' I, etc. On the inside of the ring are four of the divine Names: the First, the Last, the Revealed, the Hidden. In the centre is a double circle also forming a ring, with seven small circles inside it. In the outer hemicycle of each small circle are the names of the seven planets. Beginning from the top, these are: the Sun, Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, the Moon, Mars, Saturn. In correspondence with these, with their names inscribed in the inner hemicycle, are the Intelligence, the Soul, Nature, the *Materia Prima*, the body, the Throne, the Firmament. At the centre is a little circle bearing the inscription: the manifested world (whose system of correspondences is represented by the diagram). To the side, in the corners of the figure, are four circles, each with a double inscription: 1. The Intelligence. Man. 2. The Soul. The Angel. 3. Nature. The *Genie* (*Djinn*). 4. The body. The animal (the living creature).

Before proceeding to the next diagram, which shows the system of

⁴⁵ This is described in more detail at the end of this essay, in the Appendix which accompanies the reproduction of the diagrams as they appear in the Arabic context of *N. al-N*. Note the absence in this first diagram of the "twenty-eight chamberlains".

correspondences in the spiritual world, we must follow the deliberations of Haydar Amuli.⁴⁶ Here the balance of the seven and the twelve will in some way establish the balance between the temporality of spiritual, esoteric time, and that of historical, exoteric time.

Like our authors Haydar Amuli and Ibn 'Arabi, we must bear in mind the idea which in Islamic theosophy corresponds to the idea of the pre-existence of the *Logos* in Christian theology. Here, this pre-existing Logos is called the *Haqiqah muhammadiyah*, the eternal Muhammadan Reality, Logos, Light and Holy Spirit of Muhammadan prophecy (in the Shiite perspective, it is composed of Fourteen Aeons of light: those of the prophet, of his daughter Fatimah, and of the Twelve Imams). This Muhammadan Spirit, designated as the *Spiritus Rector* (*al-Ruh al-mudabbir*), pre-exists in the world of Mystery (*'alam al-ghayb*), the non-manifested spiritual world; and this was the Prophet's meaning when he said: "I was already a prophet when Adam was still between water and clay [did not yet exist]."

This idea imposes another: that of the *reversal* of time, which itself presupposes that the form of time is cyclical. A first cycle runs its course bearing the Name "the Hidden" (*al-Batin*: the Hidden in relation to us), in the sense that the prophetic Muhammadan Reality or Essence is present in an occult, secret and esoteric way in the mission of all the prophets of the "religions of the Book" who preceded the manifestation of Muhammad. This can be seen as an exemplification of the motif of the *Verus Propheta* in Judaeo-Christian prophethood. In saying "I was already a prophet before Adam was created", not simply a "man" or a "being", the Prophet meant that he was already the holder of the prophetic charisma *before* all the prophets who were, respectively, so many "forms of manifestation or epiphany" (*mazahir*) within which the eternal Prophet, the *Verus Propheta*, was secretly *hidden*. This cycle is fulfilled with his corporeal manifestation in this world. There then comes about a reversal of time with the inauguration of a new cycle, that of the Name "the Manifested" (*al-Zahir*: the Manifested in relation to us). If the Prophet himself has declared that "time has a cyclical form" (*istiddrat al-zaman*), it is in order to denote that at the moment of his terrestrial epiphany, time returned to its original condition, as it was when God created it (this relates to the idea of the *thema mundi*). The metaphysical Muhammadan Essence was at the origin

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, §§ 663-665.

of the mission of the prophets, and in its earthly epiphany it is the final Seal of both prophecy and the prophets. The point which is simultaneously the final point of the cycle of prophecy, where Muhammadan prophecy remains occulted, and the initial point of the cycle of its manifestation, marks a moment of privileged equilibrium between the Hidden and the Manifest.

This idea of a point which is at once both initial and final, and which as such involves the idea of a return to equilibrium by means of the movement of time conceived as cyclical—this idea orients the analysis towards a perspective within which, under the notion of time (*zaman*), is seen to lie **that** of the balance (*mizan*). The analysis is facilitated by a process made possible by philosophical algebra, or the philosophical science of letters (*'ilm al-huruf*)—a process equally familiar to the Jewish Cabbalists. In effect, there is scope for the consideration that the consonants forming the word ZaMaN (time) are exactly the same as those forming the word MiZaN (balance). Now, the value of a word does not alter when one inverts the order of the consonants of which it is composed. In this case, the equivalence thus found between the concept of *time* and that of *balance* is corroborated by many Koranic verses where allusion is made to the Balance and the eschatological significance of the Balance.⁴⁷ The conclusion is that the beginning and the end of time relate to the zodiacal sign of the Balance. "Every cycle of time ends in the Balance"; and it is from the Balance that the other Signs are manifested. The Balance is the sign of the harmony of things and of divine equity, the notions of equilibrium and

47 Ibid., § 665. Ibn 'Arabi, in the context quoted by Haydar Amuli, introduces the Koranic verses as follows: "The prophet has said: I and the final hour are like these two (fingers). And God himself has said: We will establish the *balances* in equilibrium on the day of the Resurrection (21:47). And we are told: Weigh justly, and do not falsify the *balance* (55:9). And again: He has raised the Heavens and established the *balance* (55:7). Thus, by means of the *balance*, God has revealed in each heaven the function of that heaven (41:12). And by means of the *balance* he has distributed proportionately over the earth the foods that the earth produces (41:10). And God Most High has set up a *balance* in the universe for each thing: a spiritual balance and a material balance. The balance never errs. In this way the *Balance* enters into speech and into all the arts whose object is perceived by the senses. In the same way, it enters into Ideas, for the primary origin of terrestrial bodies and celestial bodies, and of the Ideas which they support, is found in the law of the Balance. Similarly, the existence of time and of that which is above time proceeds from the *Mensura divina* (*al-wazn al-ilahi*) to which the Name *the Wise* (*hakim*) aspires, and which is made manifest by the equitable Judge. After the Balance Scorpio is manifested, together with the *res divina* which God has placed in it. Then come Sagittarius, Capricorn, and so on."

equity being two aspects of the Balance. It might seem that Haydar Amuli ought to have constructed his diagrams in terms of the primary role played by the Balance. If he has not done so, it is because in reality, in this context, the Balance is more than a zodiacal sign. It is that metaphysical principle of which we spoke at the start, and which as such organizes the totality of the diagram and establishes the system of correspondences.

We can, in fact, read the next diagram without difficulty (fig. 2 = diagram no. 9, cf. Appendix). In the preceding diagram, we had the names of the twelve Signs of the zodiac (the dwellings of the twelve Angel-governors in the ninth Heaven), and in the little circles inscribed on the circumferent ring these were coupled with the names of the twelve categories of angelic beings in their service. Here, corresponding to them, and distributed in four triads, are the names of the twelve Imams of the period of Adam (Seth, Abel, Gainan, etc.; the other names, apart from Idris and Enoch, have suffered such mutilation graphically that we **will** not go into them here; see Appendix). Corresponding to these twelve Adamic Imams are the twelve Muhammadan Imams, from 'Ali al-Murtada, the first Imam, to the twelfth who is at present hidden: Muhammad al-Mahdi. Also in the circumferent ring, grouped into four intercalary triads and inscribed both above and below the line, are the twelve Imams of the Mosaic period and those of the period of Jesus.

We pass now to the central circle. In the preceding diagram, the seven planets were brought into correspondence with the seven unities of the universe or the universe-principles: the Intelligence, the Soul, Nature, etc. Here, we find the seven great prophets sent to reveal a Book. Each of them is doubled by the mention of whoever was the "pole" (*quthb*) of his period; the seventh pole is the "pole of poles", the twelfth Imam of the Muhammadan period. The arrangement is slightly different from that of the central circle in the previous diagram. The little circle in the middle of this central circle bears the name of the prophet Muhammad, and the six others are grouped all around. This is because—as announced by the small tangential circle above—we are dealing with the spiritual world (*'alam ma'nawi*). The position of Muhammad is right at the centre of the prophets, because throughout the cycle dominated by the name "the Hidden", these prophets were his epiphanic forms (*mazahir*).

Thus this position is intended to suggest to us that in spiritual circles the centre has the virtue of being the circumference as well (this is a

peculiarity affirmed in the *Theology* attributed to Aristotle, and one whose consequences our spiritual masters have explored to the full).⁴⁸ Like the seven planets of the astronomical Heaven, the seven prophets are in some sense the "motive forces" in the spiritual Heaven, by means of which the spiritual being (*ruhaniyah*) of the *Verus Propheta* continues to grow until the moment of his plenary terrestrial manifestation in the person of Muhammad.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the rhythm of the prophetic periods, and hence the limits which, by marking the beginning and the end of each, distinguish the one from the other, are conditioned by the twelve Imams who constitute the pleroma of each period of prophecy. Thus the same science of the Balance enables us to grasp the correspondences between the function of the *seven* and the *twelve* in the astronomical Heaven (fig. 1) and in the spiritual Heaven of prophecy (fig. 2).

We grasp *eo ipso* the consequences and potentialities that arise in this way from the conjunction of the concept of *time* and the idea of the *balance*. In effect, it is the idea of the balance which gives time its cyclical form. The balance returns to equilibrium at the end of the cycle, and this equilibrium is the return of time to the starting point which then becomes once more the starting point of a new cycle. We said at the outset that the science of the Balance is the very foundation of the correspondences between the worlds: without the idea of the *balance*, there can be no worlds in correspondence with each other. The correspondences established by our authors would be impossible if the only image they possessed was of time as rectilinear and unlimited, like that of present-day evolutionism. Thanks to the Balance, it is possible to set in correspondence the figures which are found in every cycle, for they are then seen to be homologous. Our current schema of history possibly permits certain analogies to be made, but these in fact remain metaphorical because they lack both what establishes and what permits the science of the Balance.

Moreover, it is not enough to substitute (as did Oswald Spengler) the schema of a cyclical conception of history for the perspective of a linear evolution—the schema of a continual genesis, regulated by a historical causality immanent in the uninterrupted succession of phenomena. For then the question arises: how is understanding (the act of understanding)

48 Cf. the last part of my article, 'Le Motif du voyage et du messager en gnose irano-islamique' (unpublished).

49 *N. al-N.*, § 666.

possible from one cycle to another, if each cycle is self-contained? The science of the Balance permits an understanding which effects the passage from one cycle to the next; and it does so by stabilizing the flux of History and by establishing, through the system of correspondences that it equilibrates, a level of transhistorical permanence between homologous *dramatis personae*. The science of the Balance spatializes the succession of time by substituting for the order of succession the order of simultaneity, the unity of the "cupolas" of which we spoke at the start.

It is this that makes the diagrams constructed by Haydar Amuli, as well as the correspondences inscribed on them in the form of homologous figures, perceptible to us on the level of the *imaginal*. Thus, too, is revealed the eschatological significance of the Balance. In effect, it returns time to its origin, to that origin, we were told, which it is itself. It brings about a *reversal* of time, and hence there is nothing that is "irreversible" (that word which has been so abused in our day!). The science of the Balance does not, to be sure, permit a philosophy of history, because a philosophy of history can be perfectly agnostic and its mode of perception may stem from brute realism. On the other hand, it permits a historiosophy which is *eo ipso* a gnosis, and whose mode of perception is essentially a *visionary* one. If our authors speak of the growth of the "spiritual being" of Muhammad, in other words, of the *Verus Propheta*, this growth is operative and perceptible not on the level of common historical reality, but on the level with reference to which early primitive Christologies spoke of *Christos Angelos*.

This, broadly speaking, is what is suggested by the balance of the *seven* and the *twelve*, applied to the manifested world and the spiritual world, to the astronomical Heaven and the interior Heaven. Together they total *nineteen*, and it is on this number that the two universes are constructed, as Haydar Amuli will now attempt to show by deploying the "balance of the nineteen".

III. *The Balance of the Nineteen*

The deployment of the "balance of the nineteen" comprises three stages, traversing the "three Books" of which we spoke in the opening section of this chapter. A. In the first of these stages, the science of the Balance brings the "Book of Horizons" into correspondence with the "Book of Souls". B. In the second stage, the science of the Balance clarifies the

corresponding structure of the third Book, the revealed Book: the Koran. C. During the third stage, the science of the Balance brings the structure of the interior Paradise into correspondence with that of the interior Hell.

A. Like the "Book of the Koran" (*al-Kitab al-Qur'ani*), both the "Book of Horizons" (*Kitab afaqi*) and the "Book of Souls" (*Kitab anfusi*, cf. Koran 41:53)—in Paracelsian terms the "interior Heaven" and the "exterior Heaven"—are each seen to possess a numerical structure based on the number nineteen. Thus the hermeneutic of all three Books will among other things be directed towards establishing their correspondences with regard to the three numbers involved in their respective structures.⁵⁰ True, these three Books were written by the Angel who is the Scribe, at the dictation of the Angel *Nun*, the "Cherub on the Throne"; but it goes without saying that our author considers their structure to be based on the actual nature of the numbers, and for this reason he refers at some length to the arithmosophy of Pythagoras, as expounded in the celebrated Encyclopaedia of the "Brothers of the pure heart" (*Ikhwan al-Safa'*).⁵¹

"Know," he writes, "that the wise Pythagoras was the first to discourse on the nature of number. He said beings come into existence in conformity with the nature of number. Consequently, he who understands the nature of number, its species and properties, is in a position to know the various genera and species of beings." Necessarily, things are *one* with respect to Matter (*hayuli*) and multiple with respect to Form (*surah*). There must be dyads (matter and form, the subtle and the gross, the luminous and the dark, etc.); triads (surface, line and volume; past, future and present, etc.); tetrads (the four natures, the four Elements, the four *awtad* or pillars of the cosmic tent); there must be pentads, hexads, heptads, decads, etc. Unfortunately, the dualists were fascinated by the dyad; Christians by the triad; natural philosophers by the tetrad; and so on. Pythagoras and his followers, on the other hand, dispensed justice where justice was due. They saw very clearly that the One is the cause of number, and that all numbers, small or big, even or odd, are constituted by the One. The One gives its name to every number; number persists because the One persists; number grows and augments by the repetition of the One. It is because a

50 Ibid., §§ 669, 688, 736. Haydar Amuli is referring here (§ 669) to his *Ta'wilat*, for which he made nineteen diagrams. I believe him to mean his great spiritual commentary on the Koran (*al-Muhit al-a'zam*); cf. my introduction to *La Philosophie Shi'ite* . . . , op. cit., pp. 46 ff.

51 Ibid., §§ 670-674.

dyad is a dyadic unity, for example, that it is different from a triadic unity, and so on.

We find here, therefore, a reaffirmation of the old saying, *Ens et Unum convertuntur* : the concept of being and the concept of One are reciprocal, for each being only comes into being because it is *one* being. This ontological unity is invariable and has no second; the formula which expresses it is 1×1 . Consequently, it makes possible the series of arithmetical unities which are constituted into unities subsequent to the arithmetical unity of the number One—that is to say, $1 + n$.

Thus, explains our author, two is the number of the First Intelligence (as the second existence); three is the number of the universal Soul; four is the number of Nature; five, the number of the *Materia prima*; six, that of corporeal volume; seven, that of the Celestial Sphere; eight, that of the Elements; nine, that of the three natural kingdoms, that is to say, the mineral world (corresponding to the order of tens), the vegetable world (corresponding to the order of hundreds), and the animal world (corresponding to the order of thousands). We can now grasp the full significance of the statement that "every number contains in itself an esoteric secret which is not to be found in any other number." Now, the system of the World is ordered according to the number nineteen. When the theosopher ponders on the esoteric secret of the number nineteen, he discovers that if this number regulates the structure of the world, it is because the entire universe is in the image of God (*'ala surat al-Haqq, secundum Formam Dei*). It is in the justification of this concept of the universe as *Imago Dei* that the secret of the number nineteen resides, as it is also in the same justification that there resides the secret of the law of correspondence between the three great Books written at the dictation of the "Cherub on the Throne", in other words, the Balance of a hermeneutic which is common to all three Books.

For our author, Haydar Amuli, it is evident that when the prophetic tradition states that "God created Adam in His image", one should understand Adam to mean the universe, the cosmos in its entirety, the *Makranthropos* (*al-Insan al-Kabir, Homo Maximus*), that is counterbalanced by earthly Man as the microcosm. Since the cosmos itself is in the form of Man—of the *Anthropos*—and since Man is himself a universe, the *Imago Dei* must have reference to both: they are two homologous forms of the same theophany.

At this point, Haydar Amuli provides an excellent hermeneutic of the Koranic verse 41:53, where God declares: "We will show them our Signs on the horizons and within their souls, so that it will be clear to them that He is Being." It is a hermeneutic which, on the initiative of the verse, he puts forward in the first person.⁵² "This verse," he says, "alludes to the two forms of the theophany (*zuhur Allah*). Its esoteric meaning is the following: *We will show them our Signs*, that is to say, our tokens and emblems which, in the world above and in the world below, together constitute the horizons, and which in the human world constitute the world of souls. *Until it is clear to them* that being in its entirety is composed of the epiphanic forms of my Essence, my Names and my Operations; and that in reality there can be nothing other than Myself, or, rather, that the *Other* does not possess being in reality, because the *Other* signifies, precisely, my own individualized and particularized theophanic forms, which subsist by virtue of my real, universal and absolute being, in the same way as what is limited subsists by virtue of the absolute, as the shadow subsists by virtue of the sun, and as the form of manifestation subsists by virtue of that which it manifests. For this reason I have said: *He is the First and the Last, the Manifested and the Hidden* (57:3). And I have said: *Whichever way you turn, there is the Face of God* (2:115). And I have also said: *All things are perishable except his Face . . . and it is to him that you return* (28:88). This is why the gnostics have said: Only God is able to be—God, his Names, Attributes and Operations." And here Haydar Amuli cites two well-known quatrains: "My Beloved has shown himself to me in every aspect / Thus I have contemplated him in every Idea and in every form / He said to me: Thus it is good. But when / Things are contemplated by me, it is you who are a copy of me." "Glory be to him who has manifested his humanity / Like a hidden secret of the brilliance of his resplendent divinity / And who has then appeared to us in the manifest state in his creation / In the form of someone who eats and drinks."⁵³

52 Ibid., §§ 675-676.

53 .L. Massignon attributes this quatrain to Hallaj, but neither Ruzbihan nor Haydar Amuli confirms this. It is not necessary to read a Christian meaning into the quatrain, although of course a Christian is at liberty to do so. It is even more permissible for a Shiite thinker to see in it an obvious allusion to the Imam, or else as envisioning the secret of divinity manifested in the beauty of ephemeral human beings (which is how Haydar Amuli understands it); for that is the secret of their "imperishable Face" (28:88), in virtue of which they are the epiphanic forms of divinity.

What is the reason for all this? Why this apparent digression? Haydar Amuli anticipates the reproach: the point of it all is that what is designated on the one hand as the universe, the cosmos, and on the other hand as Man, forms a Whole which is one and the same, constituted of all the theophanic forms. The supreme secret (*al-sirr al-a'zam*) is that the universe is "in the image of God" and that, for the gnostic, the Whole from one point of view is the divine Being, and from another point of view is the cosmic Adam or *Anthropos*, because the Whole reflects the Image of the hidden Treasure that created the world because it aspired to be known—to know itself in the mirror of creation. This is the secret of the first two Books, the "Book of Horizons" and the "Book of Souls".⁵⁴

The science of the Balance can then effect a detailed proof of this. The exterior or manifested world obeys the rhythm of the number nineteen; it is in fact constituted by the Intelligence of the universe, the Soul of the universe, the 9 Celestial Spheres, the 4 Elements, the 3 natural kingdoms and, finally, Man. The total gives 19. Or again, as we saw earlier, it is constituted by the 7 planets and the 12 signs of the Zodiac, which also total 19. This figure is also the number of man, of anthropology. Man is constituted by his personal intellect, his personal soul, ten faculties designated as the five external senses and the five internal senses, four souls—designated in Koranic terminology as "the soul which orders (evil)" (*al-nafs al-ammarah*), "the soul which censures" (*al-lawwamah*, the conscience), "the inspired soul" (*al-mulhamah*), "the pacified soul" (*mutma'annah*)—and lastly, three pneumas or spirits: vegetative (*ruh nabatiyah*), vital (*r. hayawaniyah*), and psychic (*r. nafsaniyah*). The total is nineteen. In the same way, the spiritual world is constituted by the seven great prophets and their twelve Imams, that is to say, . . . by the seven poles and the twelve *Awliya'* or Friends of God. The total is again 19.⁵⁵

The correspondence between the world as *Homo maximus* and man as microcosm justifies the attribution to both of the *Imago Dei*, manifested respectively in their two theophanic forms. This correspondence is further expressed by the fact that the cosmos can be designated as God's major caliph, and man, the *Anthropos*, as the minor caliph. The inverse is equally true: man's caliphate function also embraces the universe, since the latter is manifested to and for man. It is this which effects the correspondence

54 Ibid., § 677.

55 Ibid., §§ 678, 684.

between the hermeneutic of the "Book of Horizons" and that of the "Book of Souls", to such a point that a cosmological verse like the Koranic verse 13:2, "God is He who has raised the Heavens without pillars that you can see", is equally applicable to the spiritual Heaven, the Heaven within. These invisible pillars are an allusion to the Perfect Man as the cosmic *Anthropos*, through whom the celestial Spheres subsist together with the Angels who are their moving Souls, like the visible pillars upholding a palace or a dome.

As for the invisible pillars which support the spiritual Heaven, they are to be understood as that which constitutes the Spirit, the Heart and the Soul of the world, that is to say, the metaphysical reality of that Perfect Man who is unknown to all save God, since "My friends are beneath my tabernacles (my cupolas, my domes). No-one knows them except myself." This *hadith* again affirms itself here in order to remind us that the Perfect Man is exemplified at all the various levels of the esoteric hierarchy, which are these invisible pillars supporting the spiritual Heaven. We noted at the beginning of this study the terms by which they are designated. They are the prophets (*Nabi*), the Messengers (*nabi-mursal*), the Friends of God, the Imams, the poles, the caliphs, the pillars (*awtad*), the *abdal*, and so on. But it is understood that the most eminent among them, those who determine the others, are the nineteen already mentioned—the seven prophets and the twelve Imams—who correspond to the nineteen of the external world, and on whom ultimately depends the movement of the periods which articulate a cycle; for this movement is the movement of the Balance brought back to the initial equilibrium.⁵⁶

This, broadly speaking, is the "Balance of the nineteen" as a hermeneutic which brings into correspondence the two first Books: the "Book of Horizons" and the "Book of Souls". We must now apply it to the third Book, which is the revealed Book—the "Book of the Koran"; and we will see how the hermeneutic brings it into correspondence with the first two Books by means of the secret of the same number, 19.

B. We can approach it initially by way of an analysis of the word with

56 Ibid., §§ 680, 683, 685. Cf. also the *hadith* of the first Imam: "Know that the human Form is the greatest token (*hujjah*) of God before his creatures. It is the *Book* which he wrote with his hand. It is the *Temple* which he built with his Wisdom. It is the witness who bears witness for all the invisible, the evidence against all who deny. It is the *straight Road* that leads to all Good. And it is the road that lies between paradise and hell." § 682.

which Being expresses itself in the imperative mode. This is the KN (= *Esto!* not *fiat*) which, addressed to the thing already mysteriously present in its eternal virtuality, commands it *to be*. More precisely, the analysis involves the three consonants which make up the root of the verb KWN (to be): *kaf*, *waw*, *nun*.⁵⁷ When these three letters are multiplied by the three letters which compose, respectively, the name of each, the resulting figure is 9. It is this number that regulates the structure of being with regard to both the esoteric and the exoteric, the visible world, or *Mulk*, and the world of the Soul, or *Malakut*. Hence, on the one hand there are the nine celestial Spheres, and on the other the nine Angels who are the Souls which move them, giving a total of 18. And this is what the theosophers mean when they speak of 18,000 worlds (a figure, moreover, as well-known in Ismaili gnosis as in the Jewish Cabbalah.)⁵⁸ Indeed, for Haydar Amuli the number 18 designates the "unities of the universe" or universe-principles, the order of thousands, symbolizing the multitude of parts which make up each one. When the Perfect Man is added to the number 18, the total figure of 19 is obtained.

We are led to the same conclusion when we analyse the *hexaemeron*, the six days of Creation, taking into account the Koranic verses: "One day for your Lord is like *one thousand* years in your reckoning" (22:47); and: "It is He who created the Heavens and the Earth and that which is between them, in six days" (25:60). The Heavens are the world of the *Jabarut* (the world of the Intelligences and the divine Names). The Earth is the *Mulk*, the world of visible things. That which is between them is the *Malakut* or world of Souls. The six days assigned to each of these three worlds gives a total of 18. Since one day is equal to a thousand years, we arrive once again at the figure 18,000.⁵⁹ We shall see how in establishing certain correspondences, this figure possesses a decisive importance according to whether it

57 Ibid., §§ 686-687.

58 On the 18,000 worlds, see my book *L'Homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien* (Paris, 1971), p. 162 [*The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, trans. Nancy Pearson, Boulder & London, Shambhala Publications, 1978, p. 109.] Cf. G. Scholem, *Les Origines de la Kabbah*, op. cit., pp. 476, 490; Nicolas Sed, *La Cosmologie juive*, op. cit., pp. 212 ff.

59 *N. al-N.*, §§ 702, 719-721. Haydar Amuli anticipates the possible objection: "Why not admit that the totality of the three worlds was created in six days, rather than that they were each created one by one in six days (whence $6 \times 3 = 18$)?" "I will reply: Because God Most High tells us in another place that such is the case; this he does in the following verse: Will you be unbelieving towards Him who created the Earth in two days? . . . and in four days he distributed proportionately over the Earth the foods which the Earth provides to those who require them (. . .) Next he

is thought to include Man, or whether, instead, Man is added to it so as to make a total of 19. Here, Haydar Amuli observes that being (*kawn*), in relation to the nine levels deduced from it, is homologous to unity in relation to numbers (from one to ten, the progression starting again *ab initio* after ten), or to substance in relation to the nine accidents. Each time we have ten plus the nine levels, giving a total of 19. Thus, we have the First Intelligence and the nine celestial Spheres, making up 10, to which are added nine levels—the nine Intelligences which govern the Spheres—giving a total of 19. Or again, we have the ten Intelligences, together with the nine celestial Souls that move the nine Spheres in an act of love towards the Intelligences from which they proceed; and here the total is again 19.

Now it is on the basis of this same number—19—that, in correspondence with the "Book of Horizons" and the "Book of Souls", the "Book of the Koran" (*al-Kitab al-Qur'ani*) is constructed. It is true that the letters of its script number twenty-eight (the letters in the Arabic alphabet). Nevertheless, 14 of these (half of them, that is) belong to the world of the *Mulk*, the

disposed (Heaven) into seven heavens (in the space of) two days, and he revealed to each heaven its function . . . ' (41:9—12). The questioner may now say triumphantly: "So God created Heaven and Earth in eight days (2 + 4 + 2), not in six!" But he has his answer ready: "Your conclusion is without value. The four days refer only to a complementary and supplementary creation, the creation of material substances. The separate spiritual substances transcend such measures." And this, for him, is the heart of the matter: where is the sense in taking these *days* to mean what the literalist commentators take them to mean, since "when" the Creation took place, neither day nor time existed? It is more to the point to understand the six days as six stages: mineral, vegetable, animal, man, genie, Angel; or, the *Jabarut*, the *Malakut*, the *Mulk*, the Living, the Genie, the Angel; or again: the Intelligence, the World-Soul, Nature, Matter, the Body, the Elements. The whole question, moreover, is dominated by the meaning of the word *day*. This can only mean the "divine day", which possesses two aspects: the days of lordship (*ayyam al-rububiyah*), and the days of divinity (*ayyam al-uluhiyah*). Divinity is God's link with the man whose God He is in the spiritual order of things (*ma'nan*). Lordship is God's link with the man whose Lord (*rabb*) he is in the manifested (*suratan*) order of things. That is why the gnostics say: lordship has a secret (*sirr*); if this secret were made manifest (and thus abolished), the relationship of lordship would be destroyed. Now the "day of lordship" is the day which, according to the verse 22:47, is equal to a thousand years in our reckoning, so each day of the hexaemeron can be reckoned as a millenium of lordship; while the "day of divinity" is equal to 50,000 years, which is the figure of a total cycle in Ismaili gnosis as well. This is attested by the verse: "The Angels and the Spirit ascend towards him in a day whose measure is 50,000 years" (70:4). §§ 722-725. These are brief observations on a theme which calls for the making of numerous comparisons. See *En Islam iranien* . . . , op. cit., IV, index, s.v. hexaemeron, jour.

visible world; these are the letters which possess diacritical marks. The remaining 14 belong to the world of the *Malakut*; they are without diacritical marks and are the original letters. These are the letters which appear as mysterious sigils enclosed in a frame at the beginning of certain surahs of the Koran; sometimes they appear singly (monoliteral), and sometimes in groups of two (biliteral), three (triliteral), four (quadriliteral) or five (quintiliteral). There are thus five grades which, added to fourteen, give a system of 19 grades of letters.

Such is the system of letters in the Arabic script in which the Koran is written. But this is not all. Each surah is headed by a set phrase—the same phrase which is repeated by the believer before any undertaking: *Bism Allah al-Rahman al-Rahim*: in the name of God the Compassionate, the All-merciful. This phrase is regarded as a recapitulation of the entire Koran. Now, in the Arabic script, it comprises 19 letters. Philosophical algebra sees in each of these letters the symbol of a stage in the descent of divine Mercy from one level of being to another. When added together, the seven and the twelve which we encountered in the preceding diagrams thus confirm the properties of their correspondences.

A rigorous transliteration of the nineteen letters of the Arabic script which constitute the *Basmallah* gives the following: BSM ALLH AL-RHMN AL-RHIM.

The Prophet expressed himself in a striking manner on the virtues of this invocation: "He who desires immunity from the 19 henchmen of Hell needs to recite the *Basmallah*; for on the day of the Resurrection, God will make a paradise out of each of its constituent letters." Shortly, we will examine the practical implications of this statement. For this invocation does indeed recapitulate the entire Koran, and the first of its letters, *B* (the Arabic *ba'*) is itself the recapitulation of the *Basmallah*. Again, as the Prophet said: "God has made one hundred and four books descend from Heaven. The knowledge contained in one hundred of these books he stored in four of them: the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel, and the Koran. The knowledge contained in the first three of these four books, he set down in the fourth, the Koran. He set down this knowledge in the *Mufasssal* (the part from surah 49 to the end). This he set down in the *Fatihah* (the first, "opening" surah of the Koran). Lastly, he set this down in the *ba'* (B) of the *Basmallah*." Thus, the letter *ba'* recapitulates (totalizes) all that is in the Koran and in all the revealed celestial books. This is why it merits the

observation made about it by the Prophet and the first Imam, and which is also attributed to several *mashayikh*: "I see nothing without seeing the letter *ba'* written into it." And because all beings have been made manifest as from the letter *ba'*, the first Imam also said: "I call God to witness that, if I wished, I could produce a commentary on the letter *ba'* of the *Basmallah* equal to the load of seventy camels." Being is manifested by the letter *ba'*, and by the dot beneath the letter *ba'* the Creator is differentiated from the creaturely (the letter *ba'* on its own consists of a horizontal stroke with a dot underneath). To quote the first Imam once more: "I am the dot beneath the letter *ba'*."⁶⁰

The letter *ba'* comes at the origin of being, and its esoteric secret makes it a symbol of the First Existence, designated as the First Intelligence, the Reality of Realities (*Haqiqat al-Haqa'iq*), the Supreme Spirit. Whereas the letter *alif* (which consists of a simple vertical stroke, with no ensuing ligature possible) symbolizes the unique divine Essence, alone and unseconded, the letter *ba'* symbolizes the primary Unity of all subsequent unities.⁶¹ In the same way, each letter of the *Basmallah* gives its name to one of the existences of the higher and lower worlds. Haydar Amuli refers here to the long *khutbah* (homily) with which he opens his vast spiritual commentary on the Koran, a homily which is a typical example of "narrative theosophy". It begins as follows:⁶²

"Glory be to him who has made the letter *alif*, alone, the origin of All and the symbol of the pure and absolute Essence; who has made the letter *ba'* the cipher of the First Determination, the First of all limited beings beneath absolute being, the first of its epiphanies; and who has made the other letters the symbols, respectively, of the other existences. He has written the entirety *qua* entirety on the pages of the invisible universes with the Pen of the primordial Will. He has given the name of *The Mother of the Book* (the archetype of archetypes) to the letters of the eternal

60 *N. al-N.*, §§ 689-690.

61 There is a serious problem implicit here. The first Intelligence is designated as the "Primary Existence", and as such is symbolized by the letter *ba'*. The pure divine Essence as the source of being, symbolized here by the letter *alif*, is thus beyond being, *hyperousion*. Elsewhere, as in the writings of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i for example, this state of things makes the letter *alif*, precisely, the symbol of the initial Determination, which is the Intelligence. Cf. *En Islam iranien* . . . , op. cit., IV, index, s.v. *etre*, *theologie apophatique*.

62 The author refers here to his *Ta'wilat* (§ 690), and his *Ta'wil* (§ 691); cf. above, note 50.

quiddities and individuations. He has composed its Verbs, perfect and imperfect, of the existence of beings. He has ordained the Signs of the universes of the Invisible and of the Visible in the Book of Horizons, to which refer the verses: By Mount Sinai! By a Book written on an unrolled parchment (52:1-3)."⁶³

'This Book is precisely the cosmic epic of Mercy propagating itself through all the stages of the revelation of being. The phenomenon of the world is thus a phenomenon of writing, a phenomenon of the Book. Hence the *ta'wil* (the hermeneutics of symbols), when applied to this Book as the implementation of the Science of the Balance, is no other than the *ta'wil* applied to the revealed Book; for the universe, unfolding to the rhythm of the *Basmallah*, is itself the book, the song or epic, of Mercy.

The following is a detailed presentation of the correspondences between the manifested world and the spiritual world, between the "Book of Horizons" and the "Book of Souls"—a presentation made possible by the letters of the *Basmallah*, which is itself the recapitulation, the quintessence, of the whole of the "Book of the Koran".⁶⁴

a) With respect to the exterior manifested world, the schema of correspondences is as follows (see above for the 19 letters of the actual Arabic script for *Bism Allah al-Rahman al-Rahim*).

1. B (the *ba'*) corresponds to the first Intelligence (the world of the *Jabarut*);
2. S (the *sin*) corresponds to the Soul of the universe (the world of the *Malakut*);
3. M (the *mim*) corresponds to the Throne (*'Arsh*): the ninth Sphere;
4. A (the *alif*) corresponds to the Firmament (*Kursi*): the eighth Sphere;
5. L (the first *lam*) corresponds to the seventh Sphere: the Heaven of Saturn;
6. L (the second *lam*) corresponds to the sixth Sphere: the Heaven of Jupiter;
7. H (the *ha'*) corresponds to the fifth Sphere: the Heaven of Mars;
8. A (the *alif*) corresponds to the fourth Sphere: the Heaven of the Sun;
9. L (the *lam*) corresponds to the third Sphere: the Heaven of Venus;

63 *N. al-N.*, §§ 692-694.

64 *Ibid.*, §§ 696-697, 728-729.

10. R (the *ra'*) corresponds to the second Sphere: the Heaven of Mercury;
11. H (the *ha'*) corresponds to the first Sphere: the Heaven of the Moon;
12. M (the *mim*) corresponds to the Sphere of Fire: the first Element;
13. N (the *nun*) corresponds to the Sphere of Air: the second Element;
14. A (the *alif*) corresponds to the Sphere of Water: the third Element;
15. L (the *lam*) corresponds to the Earth: the fourth Element;
16. R (the *ra'*) corresponds to the animal: the first of the three natural kingdoms;
17. H (the *ha'*) corresponds to the vegetal: the second of the three natural kingdoms;
18. I (the *ya'*) corresponds to the mineral: the third of the three natural kingdoms;
19. M (the *mim*) corresponds to Man, who recapitulates the Whole.

The author sets this forth in a diagram (fig. 3 = diagram no. 10, cf. Appendix). In the centre, a small circle bears the words: *al-'alam al-suri* (the manifested world). On the circumferent ring, the nineteen "unities of the universe" which we have just enumerated are each symbolized by one of the 19 letters of the *Basmallah*, and balanced by the total of 19 made up of the 12 Signs of the Zodiac and the 7 Planets, which have already figured in the preceding diagram. However, through the inaccuracy or carelessness of the draughtsman, the celestial Spheres of the primary series are not exactly opposite the planets which correspond to them. There is a discrepancy weighing on the whole diagram (see Appendix), unless one is supposed to think of it as an adjustable figure (drawn on pieces of cardboard which revolve independently). But what counts first and last is, needless to say, the structure of the whole.

b) With regard to the spiritual world, each of the letters of the *Basmallah* is made to correspond respectively both with the *haqiqah* (the spiritual or metaphysical reality), and with the form of manifestation of each of the 7 great prophets and each of the 12 Imams of the Muhammadan period,⁶⁵ who, together with the Prophet and his daughter Fatimah, make up the pleroma of the *Haqiqah muhammadiyah*. The schema of correspondences is as follows:

⁶⁵ The *haqiqah* or metaphysical reality of each Imam is specified by an adjective formed from his name (*murtadawiyah*, *hasaniyah*, *hasayniyah*, *baqiriyah*, *ja'fariyah* and so on), which can also serve as an abstract noun to designate his essence.

1. B (*ba'*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of Muhammad;
2. S (*sin*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of Adam;
3. M (*mim*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of Noah;
4. A (*alif*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of Abraham;
5. L (*lam*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of David;
6. L (*lam*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of Moses;
7. H (*ha'*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of Jesus;
8. A (*alif*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the first Imam, 'Ali al-Murtada;
9. L (*lam*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the second Imam, Hasan ibn 'Ali;
10. R (*ra'*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the third Imam, Husayn ibn 'Ali;
11. H (*ha'*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the fourth Imam, 'Ali al-Sajjad;
12. M (*mim*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir;
13. N (*nun*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq;
14. A (*alif*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the seventh Imam, Musa al-Kazim;
15. L (*lam*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the eighth Imam, 'Ali al-Rida;
16. R (*ra'*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the ninth Imam, Muhammad al-Jawad;
17. H (*ha'*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the tenth Imam, 'Ali al-Naqi;
18. I (*ya'*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the eleventh Imam, Hasan al-'Askari;
19. M (*mim*) corresponds to the *haqiqah* of the twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi.

This schema of correspondences is presented to the imaginative perception by another diagram (fig. 4 = diagram no. 11, see Appendix). The small circle in the centre signifies the spiritual world (*'alam ma'nawi*). On the circumferent ring, in the outer segment of each epicycle, are the 7 great prophets and the 12 Imams of the Adamic period (Seth, Abel, Cainan and so on), each of whom is indicated by one of the 19 letters of the *Basmallah*. In the inner segment of the epicycles are the 7 poles of the great prophets and the 12 Imams of the Muhammadan period. (As in the preceding diagram, however, there is a certain discrepancy in the correspondences, although the structure as a whole remains unchanged; cf. Appendix).

These diagrams, then, disclose to our imaginative perception a vast system in which the correspondences are effected between the 19 degrees or levels of cosmology, and the 19 levels of prophetology and Imamology, each of which is indicated by one of the 19 letters of the *Basmallah*. In other words, we are shown the correspondences between the "exterior Heaven" and the "interior Heaven", between physical astronomy and spiritual astronomy, the "Book of Horizons" and the "Book of Souls". It is worth recalling at this point a statement by Paracelsus such as the following: "Should you wish to investigate the composition of man in its entirety, then you must realize that the bodies of the firmament are contained in the body of the microcosm. For the stars in the body of man, like the external stars, possess their properties, natures, courses and *situs*, and differ from them only in the substance of their form."⁶⁶ Similarly, the great mystical theosopher Simnani spoke of the "prophets of your being".⁶⁷

It is the nineteen letters of the *Basmallah* that enable Haydar Amuli to effect the correspondences between the Heavens of cosmology and the Heavens of prophetology, since they recapitulate both the manifested and the spiritual universes. If the *Basmallah* is here the Balance which verifies this correspondence, it is because the secret of the theophanies, the secret of the manifestations of the pure Essence (which, as we saw, is symbolized by the letter *alif*, there being no ensuing ligature possible), is ultimately identical with the secret of the manifestations, in the other letters, of this same *alif*. Haydar Amuli subjects this fundamental and original correspondence to an analysis of great subtlety, based on the Arabic spelling of the three words *bism*, *Allah*, and *Rahman*, in which three *alifs* are in fact occulted or disguised.⁶⁸

If we consider the Arabic spelling which is transliterated by BSM ALLH AL-RHMN, we will realize that between the *B* and the *S* (the *ba'*

66 Cf. Paracelsus, *Paramirum* I, in *Sammtliche Werke in zeitgemässer Kurzung* (!), ed. J. Strebel (St. Gallen, 1947), vol. V; p. 94. "He who has knowledge of the lower Sphere is called a philosopher, whereas he who has knowledge of the upper Sphere is called an astronomer. But they are both philosophers and astronomers, for they possess in common an art that is one and the same (. . .). Saturn is not only in Heaven but in the depths of the sea and in the deepest cavities of the Earth (. . .). He who has knowledge of Mars knows the property of fire, and *vice versa*. The philosopher apprehends in the one the essence of the other." Ibid., pp. 78—79.

67 On Simnani, see *En Islam iranien* . . . , op. cit., III, pp. 275 ff., and IV, index, s.v. prophetes (les sept) de ton etre.

68 *N. al-N.*, §§ 698-701, 730.

and the *sin*) there should be an *alif* which current usage of Arabic spelling has abolished. Between the second *L* and the *H* (*lam* and *ha'*), there should be the *alif* of a *scriptio plena* (= *a*), which is omitted in the spelling. Finally, between the *M* and the *N* (*mim* and *nun*) of the word RHMN (*Rahman*), strict orthography requires an *alif* which current spelling omits.

These three occulted *alifs* symbolize respectively the pure divine Essence, the divine Attributes, and the divine Operations. This same Essence is the cause of three levels: 1) the Unitude (*ahadiyah*) of absolute, unseconded being; 2) the Unity (*wahidiyah*) which is the first in the series of unities and which marks the first limitation of being; this is the median level of the First Intelligence as the second hypostasis; 3) the limitation of the terminal being, which corresponds to the third hypostasis, the Soul, the level of the divine Operations designated as the level of the *rububiyah* or lordship. On this level is established the reciprocal relationship between the personal God or lord (*rabb*) and his vassal (*marbub*), a relationship which renders them interdependent; it is the level of the "God created in the faiths".⁶⁹ How, then, in the three words *Bism*, *Allah* and *Rahman*, is the letter *alif* able to "symbolize" with the theophanies?

It is in this way. Divine Being manifests itself in the multitude of its theophanies (*mazahir*). But this multiplicity is only such in virtue of the relationships and additions which are precisely what one eliminates when one affirms the esoteric or ontological *tawhid*, in other words when one affirms that divine Being alone *is*, in the true sense of the word. At the level of the theophanies, there is multiplicity and the *Other*, there is the relationship between the personal lord and his vassal—a relationship typified in the traditional words: "I was a hidden Treasure. I desired to be known, therefore I created Creation." At the same time, the essential, absolute occultation and secrecy of divine Being are affirmed in the verse: "God can dispense with [both] the universes" (29:6); and it is here that the symbolic pre-eminence of the letter *alif* becomes evident.

As we have already observed, the *alif* is formed by a simple vertical

69 On the designation of the first Intelligence—the second hypostasis—as the Merciful (*al-Rahman*), the metaphysical Anthropos, and of the Soul—the third hypostasis—as the All-Merciful (*al-Rahim*); and on the identification of *al-Rahman* with the Makranthropos (*al-Insan al-kabir*), and of *al-Rahim* with the Mikranthropos (*al-Insan al-saghir*), cf. *La Philosophie Shi'ite*, op. cit., pp. 567-568. Moreover, the Imam is metaphysically identified with *al-Rahman*, *Homo maximus*, the "Light, father of Lights" (*al-Nur abu'l-Anwar*); ibid., index, s.v. Imam.

stroke, of which one may regard the other Arabic letters as the horizontal elongation, incurvation, torsion, and so on. There is scope, consequently, for envisaging that the letter *alif* manifests itself in the other letters, and that this manifestation results in its determination by the form of each of the other letters. This implies the establishing of a relationship which, in its turn, entails both a multiplication and the fact that there are letters *other* than the letter *alif*. There is thus a perfect correspondence between the manifestation of divine Being in its theophanic forms and the manifestation of the letter *alif* in the diversified forms of the other letters. Consequently, every existing thing can be defined according to its correspondence with one of the letters: one may be designated by the *ba'*, another by the *jim*, another by the *dal*, and so on. The divine Essence (*dhat ilahiyah*, the divine Ipseity) is brought into relationship with each existing thing, and from this bringing into relationship arise the multiplication and the denomination of divine Being by the name of each existing thing (the name of the first Intelligence, the name of the Soul of the World, and so on). In the same way, a relationship is established between the letter *alif*, and each of the other letters, resulting in the multiplicity of the ABJAD (a, b, c, d), and in the denomination of the *alif* by the name of every letter (the *ba'*, the *jim*, the *dal* and so on are the names of the *alifs* forms of manifestation).

Thus the manifestation of divine Being through the forms of the universe (*suwar al-'alam*) corresponds to the manifestation of the *alif* through the forms of the other letters. At the same time, here can be seen the ontological basis of the system of correspondences established in the last two diagrams (figs. 3 and 4) between the nineteen letters of the *Basmallah*, the nineteen levels of cosmology, and the nineteen levels of prophetology.

The three *alifs* occulted in the spelling of the three words *bism*, *Allah* and *Rahman* can also be viewed as emblems of the three universes which are veiled within the *Basmallah*. These are the three "unities of the universe", the multiplicity of each of which is symbolized by the figure of one thousand. They are the mystical body of the *Basmallah*, in the same way that the angelic "holy myriads" are the mystical body of the Supreme *Namus*, the "Law of fire" which was the first vision vouchsafed to the Prophet by the Angel—a vision that overwhelmed him and whose meaning was revealed to him by the monk Waraqah.⁷⁰ This "mystical body" of the

Basmallah likewise leads us back to the nineteen worlds. In effect, the three "veiled universes" postulate the existence of three other worlds: the world of Knowledge (*'alam al-'ilm*), the world of Will (*iradah*), and the world of Power (*qudrah*), each of which is ordained for another world that is its receptacle (*qawabil*): the Known (*ma'lum*), the Willed (*murad*) and the Predetermined (*muqaddar*). The total number of worlds is 9. In virtue of the Balance which requires equilibrium between the hidden or esoteric (*batin*) and the manifest or exoteric (*zahir*), we should also take into account the three levels in the world of Intelligences (*Jabarut*), the world of Souls (*Malakut*), and the world of material bodies (*Mulk*). Here, once again, $9 + 9 = 18$. When man's own universe is added, we have a total of

In short, Haydar Amuli is of the opinion that the totality of worlds, from whatever angle and in whatever mode it is viewed, is 19, including Man. And he is fully aware of disclosing in this way the most extraordinary meanings (*ma'ani*, ideas), "inspired by the Invisible, and for which there exists no precedent among the Ancients".⁷² This is also the dominating sentiment in the third deployment of the "Balance of the nineteen", which equilibrates the levels of the interior paradise and the interior hell.

C. We have read, above, the advice of the Prophet: "He who desires immunity against the 19 henchmen of Hell needs to recite the *Basmallah*." This is an allusion to the Koranic verse 74:30, which says that "above Gehenna stand nineteen [guards]." Haydar Amuli meditated at length on this verse, with regard to which two questions immediately arise: 1. What are these henchmen of Hell? 2. Why is their number limited to 19?

1. In order to reply to the first question, one must bear in mind the correspondence between the exterior Heaven and the interior Heaven, and hence between the exterior paradise and hell on the one hand, and the interior paradise and hell on the other; for it is in the inner meaning of paradise and hell as internal states of man that the answer will be found. It depends on man whether the Angels of his paradise are changed into the demons of his hell. All connection and attachment engender a perma-

71 A'. *al-N.*, § 703. The Koranic verse 27:12, which commands Moses: "Put your hand inside your breast, and you will take it out all white without its being diseased; this will be one of the nine signs", is interpreted as referring to the nine exterior corporeal worlds, and the nine hidden spiritual worlds whereby Moses exercises his miracle-working powers over the former. § 704.

72 Ibid., § 705.

nent disposition or *habitus* (*malakah*, *ἐξῆς*) which "possesses" (*milk*) his interior being and becomes its "dominant".

Theology calls these *habitus* by the name of "Angels". But there are *habitus* which are excellent, valiant and beautiful, and it is these which are properly called "Angels"; and there are *habitus* that are vicious, craven and ugly. These go by the name of "henchmen" (*zabaniyah*) of hell, while the former are called by one of the names of Paradise—*Ridvan* whose Angels they are. The correspondence between the two worlds is clear. The Angels signify the Powers (*al-quwa* or *al-quwwat*, *δυνάμεις*) who are active both in the macrocosm and in the microcosm. As Ibn 'Arabi puts it, the Angels are the Powers of the *makranthropos*, of this "Great Man" (*insan kabir*) who is the universe, just as in the microcosm, in the interior Heaven, the spiritual and psychic Powers are the Angels of man's existence; for within man the Powers of the cosmos are assembled and recapitulated in a condensed manner. It is with respect to these Powers that the *habitus*, the permanent dispositions of man, are ordered. The more a man is attached to this world, the more vicious and vile is his *ethos* or inner state. The less his attachment to this world, the more beautiful, strong and subtle his inner state. Why, then, is mention made of 19 connections and 19 *habitus*, based on the number of Angels who guard the threshold of paradise and the number of henchmen who are the guardians of hell?

It is because the interior paradise and hell; precisely because of the correspondence between the exterior Heaven and the interior Heaven, are not extrinsic to this world. As the Prophet reminds us: "Paradise and hell are closer to each one of you than the clasp of his sandals." Inevitably, therefore, there is a correspondence between this paradise and this hell and the "nineteen" of the exterior Heaven, that is to say, the 12 signs of the zodiac and the 7 wandering stars. Our author stresses that this is clearly what astrology teaches when it relates man's attachments and his permanent dispositions to the signs of the zodiac. This is why, in one case as in the other, the whole complex forms a series of nineteen. The object of the mission of all the prophets, as of the contents of all the sacred Books revealed by Heaven, is the same: to induce man to free himself, to break all links with the nineteen. This was the meaning of the Prophet's utterance recommending the recitation of the *Basmallah* with its nineteen letters, so

73 *Ibid.*, §§ 706-707.

that each of these letters might become a paradise for man on the day of his resurrection. Once he has broken his attachments, he escapes the nineteen henchmen who are hell and rejoins the nineteen Angels who are paradise.⁷⁴

All worldly links must be severed in the name of an exclusive devotion to the service of the divine. Here indeed may be understood the traditional teaching of the mystics which originates in the utterance of the Prophet: "Die before you die." This mystical anticipation of death, this "death before death", is rooted in the idea that at the outset man's natural life is not, in this world, the life of his true nature. In order to live according to his true nature, he must undergo this voluntary mystical death, which is actually his second birth. Another utterance of the Prophet's states: "Human beings are asleep; it is when they die that they awaken." By means of this same utterance, Ibn 'Arabi (see below, section V) will finally offer us a dazzling insight into the meaning of the "science of correspondences". Here, sleep is ignorance and unawareness. Wakefulness is gnosis, the awareness of being awake;⁷⁵ it is to be an *Egregoros*.

A Koranic verse refers to this: "He who was dead and to whom we gave life, and whom we have set as a Light, so that he should walk with it among men—is this man like him who walks in darkness, and who will never emerge from it?" (6:123). Haydar Amuli comments on this: "He who has undergone the voluntary death of mystical initiation, whom we have made alive with the true life which is knowledge, gnosis, visionary power (*mushahadah*), and whom we have set among men as someone who possesses knowledge, as a gnostic, as someone who sees (*mushdhid*)—is he like the man who is no more than a corpse amid the darkness of ignorance?" Life in the true and authentic sense is not life in the biological sense; it is Light, the Light which in the Koran always signifies knowledge, life, being.

Light is Being itself, and as such it is invulnerable to darkness and death. In order to liberate this Light and restore it to its invulnerability, it

74 *Ibid.*, § 708.

75 *Yaqazah*. Cf. the name Hayy ibn Yaqzan, which forms the title of one of Avicenna's mystical recitals, edited and translated in my *Atiicenne et le recit visionnaire*, Paris, 1980, Berg International [*Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, trans. Willard R. Trask, Spring Publications, Inc., 1980; University of Dallas, Texas. This translation has been made from the original 1954 French edition, not from the 1979 Berg International edition to which Corbin refers. The arrangement, however, of the text is the same in both cases.]

is necessary to pass through voluntary death, the mystical death. Our author understands the following Koranic verses (3:169—170) in their purely spiritual sense: "Do not think that those who have been killed on God's pathway are dead. No! they are living with their Lord; from him they receive their subsistence, and are filled with joy by the favour with which God overwhelms them." Thus, according to the *ta'wil*, death is to be understood in a spiritual sense: one dies to the darkness and hence to death itself, in the natural sense, for this mystical death leads to a higher form of existence, to the immortal life which is maintained by the spiritual nourishment of knowledge, gnosis, inner revelation (*kashf*).⁷⁶ This is the significance that Haydar Amuli gives here to the "martyrs" fallen on the pathway of God; and in so doing he is perhaps close to the meaning ascribed to "martyrs" by a hermetic alchemist such as Zosimus, who was well aware that the birth and growth of the subtle body—of the body of resurrection within man—presupposes that the "martyr" passes through the dissolution represented by the stage of *nigredo*. This dissolution is here that of the many connections concealed in the nineteen.

Hence the conclusion: "He who in this world does not dissolve the ties resulting from his dependence on the twelve signs of the zodiac and the seven planets, remains, after his physical *exitus*, in the power of the *habitus* produced in him by those attachments which are designated as the nineteen henchmen of hell."⁷⁷

2. Our first question has been answered by these considerations. It may appear that, because of the correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm, we have at the same time received the answer to our second question, as well: why is the number of these henchmen limited to 19? But in fact the question is one of far greater complexity, and there might even be something ridiculous in limiting these *habitus* to 19. In limiting the number of the *habitus* of man's inner being—that is to say, the Angels of his paradise or the henchmen of his hell—to 19, one is taking into account only global categories, the "unities of the universe" (as is the case when one speaks of the *Jabarut* or the *Malakut*); but when it comes to going into detail, and to visualizing particular things in all their singularity, only God knows their number and limits. As the Koranic verse 74:31 puts it: "No one knows the armies of your Lord save He alone." For this reason,

⁷⁶ *N. al-N.*, §§ 709-711.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, § 713.

the multitude of these partial realities is not the object of our author's enquiry. The object of carrying out his enquiry into the number 19, encountered in the three great Books, is suggested to him by two references. One of these, in the Koran (69:32), alludes to a chain of 70 cubits; the other is contained in this utterance of the Prophet: "God has 70,000 Veils of light and darkness; if He were to raise them, the splendours of His Face would set alight any creature who met His gaze."⁷⁸ Are not this chain and these Veils related in some way to the 19, and especially to the 19 demons of hell, against whom one must guard by the recitation of the *Basmallah* and by substituting for them the 19 Angels of paradise?

Our author observes, firstly, that if the 19 letters of the *Basmallah* are, as the preceding diagrams have illustrated, an adequate cipher of the graduation of the system of the worlds—the manifest world and the spiritual world—a detailed realization of them is only achieved according to the system of the letters as a whole. He has already alluded to this when he recalled that of the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet, the fourteen undotted letters relate to the *Malakut* or spiritual world, while the other fourteen, which are furnished with diacritical marks, relate to the *Mulk* or manifest world. This is the system that we will be considering in conclusion, when we examine the "Balance of the twenty-eight". The theme of the 70,000 Veils of light and darkness has promoted a considerable body of literature among the mystical theosophers. What Haydar Amuli wishes to envisage here is the idea that both chain and veil denote all connection and attachment to this world, of which man must be free before his *exitus*. He considers that his great forbears, such as Ghazali, Fakhruddin Razi, Najmuddin Kubra, Najmuddin Dayah Razi, and Fakhruddin 'Iraqi⁷⁹ were not able, in spite of their efforts, to explain the figure 70. By contrast, he says, "it happened that God opened the eye of our inner vision ... so that we discovered and contemplated the state of things as it is in reality, and wrote a treatise in Arabic and a treatise in Persian on the subject, in which we explained it in various ways."⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, §§ 714-715.

⁷⁹ On all these figures, see my *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, part II: 'Depuis la mort d'Averroes jusqu'à nos jours'. (A shortened version of this can be found in *Encyclopedie de la Pleiade, Histoire de la philosophie*, III).

⁸⁰ *N. al-N.*, § 716. This is most probably a reference to the treatise entitled *Risalat al-hujub wa- khulasat al-kutub* (Treatise on the veils and the quintessence of books). Cf. my introduction to *La Philosophie Shi'ite*, op. cit., pp. 40 ff, no. 15 of the bibliographical sketch.

His explanation as he presents it here is as follows. He recalls how one arrives at the total of 18 levels of cosmology (18 or 18,000 worlds), and how by adding the world of the Perfect Man one obtains the total of 19. Needless to say, as the science of the Balance demands, it must be understood that these 18 "unities of the universe" each comprises an exoteric and an esoteric dimension, that is to say, one aspect which pertains to the *Mulk*, the world manifest to the senses, and a counterpart which pertains to the spiritual world or *Malakut*. When their double aspect is taken into account, the 18 "unities of the universe" give a total of 36. In accordance with the preceding method of calculation, these 36 "unities of the universe" are to be added to man's own universe, since this latter was added to the 18 levels of cosmology to give $18 + 1 = 19$. Here, if we understand him correctly, Haydar Amuli proceeds by another course, inverse and complementary. The 18 universes are regarded as being the chains and the veils in relation to man, and it is with man that they become 19. Now, however, it is a question not of adding man to the sum of these universes, but of extracting him from it. To extract man from these universes so that he may constitute his own universe, free of chains and veils, amounts then, from the point of view here envisaged, to subtracting him from their totality. This gives $36 - 1 = 35$.⁸¹ These 35 are to be taken into account both in the "Book of Horizons" and the "Book of Souls", and this gives us the figure of 70—that is to say: 70 worlds, 70 veils, 70 chains, with respect to the global unities, but 70,000 Veils and 70,000 chains with respect to the detail symbolized, as before, by the order of thousands. *Quod erat demonstrandum*.⁸²

This, broadly speaking, is how the "balance of the nineteen" is elaborated, verified as it is in the correspondence between the "Book of Horizons", the "Book of Souls" and the "Book of the Koran". Our author has indicated in passing how the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet are linked to the 19 letters of the *Basmallah*, thus "ciphering" the genesis of the worlds. We will encounter this number 28 again in connection with the way in

81 If this were not so, it would be hard to see how, since man is not included in the 18 (he is added to make the 19th), the author could subtract him from the 36 ($= 18 \times 2$) to get 35. If he is not there, how can he be subtracted? Haydar Amuli returns to the number 36 in connection with the "Balance of the 72" (that is to say, the 72 religious schools or groups before and since Islam), which for lack of space we cannot go into here. Cf. §§ 872 ff.

82 Ibid., § 717.

which, like Dante, Ibn 'Arabi apportions the 28 dwellings of Hell. But in Haydar Amuli, the "balance of the twenty-eight" fits into a vast whole which is one of the culminations of his prophetic historiosophy. Another culmination is the "balance of the seventy-two", which embraces the totality of the history of religion, both before and after Islam, in an inspired and grandiose perspective. Unfortunately, we have no room to describe it here.

iv. *The Balance of the Twenty-Eight*

The "balance of the twenty-eight" could be said in some sense to function at the heart of prophetology in general. It aims particularly at manifesting the pleroma constituted by the Muhammadan period of the prophetic cycle, and it does this by distinguishing the ideal topological correspondence between the levels that denote, respectively, the ancestors and the descendants of the Prophet of Islam. The undertaking is something quite different from that of a linear construction, vector of a philosophy of history that envisages either a necessary causality immanent in facts, or a purely contingent succession of these facts. In our case, "facts" are envisaged as ordered and dominated by a transcendental law, the superior law of a structure which determines things in the form of cycles (or "cupolas", as we said before). A homology exists between the respective stages of each cycle, and this makes it possible to bring the personages they locate into correspondence with each other. In conformity with a distinction which we have already established, the law itself, transcendental and transhistorical, is that of a historiosophy, not of a simple philosophy of history.

Prophetology in general acknowledges the existence of 124,000 prophets: not *Nabis* who perforce have possessed the quality of Messengers, but *Nabis* pure and simple. For each of these *Nabis* there was a Friend of God (a *wali*) who was his spiritual heir (his *wasi*). According to this order of things, there were 124,000 *Awliya'* corresponding to the 124,000 *Nabis*. But, as we already know, prophetology proper sees the seven great legislative prophets as occupying an incomparable rank. As we also know, each of them was succeeded by twelve Imams who were their spiritual heirs until the coming of a new prophet.⁸³ This applied also to the prophet of 83 Ibid., § 731.

Islam who, unlike previous prophets, was the *Seal* of prophecy and of prophetology, and whose twelfth Imam was and will be the "Seal of the *Awliya*" of his period. If this is the case, how is the Balance which equilibrates the ancestry and descendancy of the last of the legislative prophets to be established?

Our authors applied themselves to reconstructing the family tree of the prophet Muhammad back to Adam. Altogether it forms a chain of 51 links. Prominent positions are occupied by 'Abdul-Muttalib, common ancestor of the Prophet and the first Imam; by al-Nadr ibn Kinanah, from whom originated the tribe of the Qurayshites; and by Ishmael, son of Abraham, through whom we go back to Arphaxad, of the line of Shem. After this, it only remains to identify, beneath an orthography that is more or less accurate, the names which occur in the book of Genesis.⁸⁴ Haydar Amuli observes that of these 51 ancestors, 17 were prophets, 17 others were kings, and 17 more were *Awliya*⁸⁵—a remark bearing witness to the perpetuation in Islamic gnosis of the arithmological virtues of the number 5/, considered as a multiple of 17 (17 X 3). The famous alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan already regarded the corporeal world as "governed by the number 17, which is supposed to reproduce here below the image, admittedly distorted, of the celestial man".⁸⁶

There are two further things to be noted, a) The ancestry of the prophet traced through the male line, from father to grandfather, is still an exoteric one; it leaves untouched the problem of his esoteric ancestry through the line of Khadijah, his wife, and of her cousin the Christian monk Waraqah,

84 Ibid., § 732. In fact, although 51 names are mentioned, Haydar Amuli lists only 46 of them. After the line of ascent from Ishmael to Arphaxad, the list accords with the Book of Genesis n: 10—32.

85 Ibid., § 733.

86 Cf. Paul Kraus, *Jabir ibn Hayyan*, op. cit., II, pp. 216-217, 222-223, who has gathered together some suggestive comparisons. In the Nusayri tradition, 51 (= 3 X 17) dignitaries stand at the gates of the town of Harran (the town of the Sabian hermeticists, described in the manner of the heavenly Jerusalem) to receive the just who will inhabit Heaven (cf. the *Revelation of John*, 21:10 ff). According to certain Jewish gnostics, there are 17 primordial Beings. According to the Shiite gnostic Mughirah ibn Sa'id (died 119/737), 17 is the number of people who will be resurrected at the appearance of the Mahdi, "and each of them will be given one of the letters of the alphabet composing the supreme Name of God". In the 153 fishes of the miraculous draught of fish (John 21:11), St. Augustine discerns a triangular number whose base is 17. The number 51 is the number of daily prayers said by the first Imam; it is also the number of treatises (17 of them on physics) in the Ismaili Encyclopaedia of the "Brothers of the pure heart" (*Ikhwan al-Safa*'), and so on.

who initiated Muhammad into the meaning of his first vision, b) It is important to emphasize the position occupied by al-Nadr, first ancestor of the Qurayshites; he is fourteenth in line, a position that will make it possible to establish, on the basis of the figure 28, the balance between the Prophet's exoteric ancestry and his esoteric descendancy in the person of the Imams.

Because the male ancestry described above is still exoteric, it does no more than retrace the line of the Muhammadan Light (*Nur muhammadi*) which lies at the source of Muhammad's prophetic charisma. This pre-eternal, spiritual Light was transmitted from prophet to prophet, as a single Light unique to prophecy and to the Imamate ("I was, together with 'Ali, a single Light before God, before He created Creation"), until, from 'Abdul Muttalib onwards, it splits into the two persons of the Prophet and the Imam. The purity of this Light excludes all tarnishing during the stages of its transmission, to such a degree that one must in passing exercise a certain precision with respect to the true identity of Abraham's father.⁸⁷

The balance, then, of the Prophet's ancestry and descendancy is established on the basis of the figure 28. The importance for prophetology of the figure 28, already encountered in this context, is revealed at once. Indeed, the prophets mentioned in the Koran are 28 in number, and this number is *eo ipso* a distinguishing mark of the prophetology common to the "religions of the Book", to the Abrahamic "ecumenism" which covers the prophetic continuity from the Bible to the Koran. It is this continuity that permits the prophet of Islam to revive the scriptural antecedents of his own Revelation. The teachings to be inferred from the figure 28 are more easily foreseeable in that they have already been outlined. The number of prophets mentioned in the Koran conforms to the number that regulates

87 *N. al-N.*, §§ 733—734. The precision which our author brings to bear in passing is prompted by the Koranic verse 6:75, where it is said that Azar was the father of Abraham. Azar had been a worshipper of idols before being converted by Abraham, and it is absolutely out of the question that the Muhammadan Light, transmitted from prophet to prophet—which is, needless to say, a mystery deriving from subtle physiology—should reside in loins that are impure. In fact, Azar was Abraham's uncle, and the Koranic verse, says Haydar Amuli, merely confirms the Arabic usage of calling an uncle by the name of "father". Actually, Abraham was the son of Terah, and on this our author is in agreement with the Book of Genesis, 11:26. It is by virtue of the impeccability (cf. the concept of ἀνάμάρτητος in Judaeo-Christian prophetology) required of the prophets and the Imams that Haydar Amuli defends the memory of Abu Talib also, who was both the father of the Imam 'Ali and the adoptive father of the Prophet.

the common structure of the three great books. The "Book of Horizons" comprises 14 levels: the 1st Intelligence, the 9 celestial Spheres, and the 4 Elements. Taking into consideration both the exoteric and the esoteric aspects, at the level of the *Mulk* and the *Malakut* the total obtained is 28. The same is true of the "Book of Souls" and of the "Book of the Koran", which consists of the 28 letters. Equally, when one considers the 7 prophets in the "world of horizons" and in the "world of souls", taking into account both their metaphysical and their manifested aspects, the total obtained is again 28 (7 X 4).⁸⁸

There is more than this. We have noted that the 19 henchmen of hell mentioned in the Koran had to be counterbalanced by the 19 Angels of paradise. In a similar manner, Ibn 'Arabi (whom Haydar Amuli quotes again at this point) saw a structure of hell counterbalanced by the structure of paradise organized in terms of the figure 28. The inhabitants of hell fall into four categories, for Iblis-Satan's strategy is to assail men "from before and from behind, from their right and their left" (7:17).⁸⁹ Moreover, Gehenna is said (15:44) to have "seven gates", seven levels or circles, among which are distributed the four categories of "infernals". When this number (4) is multiplied by the number of circles (7), the result is 28. Ibn 'Arabi's topography of Hell has been compared, by the great Arabist Asm Palacios, to that described by Dante.⁹⁰

These 28 infernal dwellings correspond to the 28 letters which make up the *kalimat*, the words whereby unbelief and faith are manifested in this world; for God speaks and addresses each man through the faith or the lack of faith which is in that man, through his sincerity or mendacity; and evidence of God subsists in the world in the very words men utter, even if they utter them only to deny God. We have already seen how hundreds and thousands can serve to denote—symbolically, not statistically—the plurality concealed in each "unity of the universe". Here, each infernal dwelling is regarded as being made up of one hundred levels, which gives

88 Ibid., §§ 736-737.

89 Ibid., §§ 738-739. Cf. *Futuhat*, chap. 62: "Iblis appears to the *mushrik* from in front; he appears to the atheist from behind; he appears to the proud man from his right; he appears to the hypocrite from his left, for that is his weakest side, and it is also the weakest of the four groups".

90. Cf. Miguel Asín Palacios, *La Escatología musulmana en la Divina Comedia*, 2nd edition, (Madrid/Granada, 1943), pp. 144—148. The relationship of 4 X 7 is brought out in the diagrams on p. 147, showing the correspondence between the Islamic circles of hell and Dante's circles of hell.

a total of 2,800 dwellings. 28 hundred paradisiac dwellings correspond symmetrically to these 28 hundred infernal dwellings, for it is said: "Like a grain which produces seven ears, every ear bearing a hundred grains" (2:261), giving a total of 700. The blessed also fall into four categories: the prophet-legislators, the *Nabis* pure and simple, the *Awliya'*, and the ordinary believers. Once again, the number obtained is 2,800 (700 X 4). Thus, the scales which weigh Creation in the two worlds of paradise and hell are absolutely accurate. Consequently the figure of 28 prophets mentioned in the Koran conceals a profound wisdom, the same wisdom as that which has established between the two worlds correspondences of which we know practically nothing.⁹¹

There is, then, an essential connection between the science of the Balance as a science of correspondences, and the recognition of theophanies; for there is not a creature that is not the theophanic form (*mazhar*) of one of the divine Names, and the science of correspondences consists in homologising the theophanies of a single divine Name at all levels of the universe as well as in each cycle of prophetic hierohistory. It is in this respect that the number 28 demonstrates its arithmosophical virtues, for, as well as denoting the number of the prophets mentioned in the Koran, it determines the structural homology between the two cycles formed by the ancestry and the descendants of the prophet of Islam. Haydar Amuli derives inspiration here from the subtle clues provided by a thirteenth-century author, Muhammad ibn Talha.⁹²

While speaking above of the Prophet's 51 ancestors that go back to Adam, we mentioned the significance to be assigned to al-Nadr ibn Kinanah as the founder of the tribe of the Qurayshites. This is because the Prophet declared that "the Imams who come after him shall be of the Quraysh". Thus, the Imamate of an Imam, even though he were an Arab, would be neither legal nor legitimate if he were a non-Qurayshite. Such a privilege doubtless bestows an incomparable dignity and nobility on the tribe of the Qurayshites, but it means *eo ipso* that in the Prophet's ancestry,

91 *N. al-N.*, §§ 740-741. On the number 28 as a perfect number in arithmology, see P. Kraus, op. cit., p. 199.

92 At that time, Muhammad ibn Talha (Kamaluddin Abu Salim) was one of the leaders of the Shafi'ite school (he appears, in fact, to have been a crypto-Shiite, like so many others). He died at Aleppo in 652/1254-1255, at the age of 70. His main work, on the person of the Imams, *Matalib al-sul Ji manaqib Al al-Rasul*, was lithographed in Iran. He is also reported to have written a treatise on the supreme Name of God. Cf. *Rayhanat al-adab*, III, p. 385, no. 96.

the line beginning with al-Nadr, father of the Qurayshites, must be distinguished and set apart from the others.⁹³ Between the Prophet and al-Nadr there are 12 links in the ancestral chain (to which links correspond the 12 Imams), from 'Abdullah, the Prophet's father, to Malik, al-Nadr's son. Thus, Malik ibn al-Nadr, at the summit of the ancestral line, corresponds symmetrically with the final point of the line of prophetic descendancy, which is marked by the twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi. If we now complete the twelve links of the ancestral chain with the two extremes of the Prophet and al-Nadr, we obtain a total of 14 people.

This is clearly set out in the diagram provided by our author (fig. 5 = diagram no. 12; see Appendix). In the circumferent ring are the 51 names representing the line of ascent from Muhammad back to Adam; the names of these two last culminate at the highest point (for the end is a return to the beginning). In the central circle are inscribed the names of the 14 Qurayshites; in the small central circle is the name of the Prophet, linked by a written stroke to the name of his father. Round about, and reading from right to left, are the names of the 12 ancestors ending with Malik al-Nadr, whose name is joined by a written stroke to the small circle at the side which bears the name of al-Nadr ibn Kinanah.⁹⁴

In its turn, the diagram schematizing the Prophet's descendants corresponds strictly with the preceding diagram. Here we are once again reminded of the reason why the number of the Imams is limited to *twelve*. This necessary limitation possesses four aspects: a) It is symbolized in the 12 letters which make up respectively the double affirmation of the Islamic faith: the Affirmation of the Unique (LA ILH ILA ALLH = *La ilaha illa, Allah*), and the affirmation of the Prophet's mission (MHMD RSUL ALLH = *Muhammad rasul Allah*). Now the Imamate derives from this dual

93 On al-Nadr ibn Kinanah, ancestor of the Qurayshite tribe, see *Safinat Bihar al-anwdr*, II, p. 424, s.v. *qrs*. He is not to be confused with al-Nadr ibn al-Harth, *Safinat*, II, p. 594, whose name is associated with a strange recurrence of Iranian fervour. He had gone to "Persia, and announced to the Qurayshites on his return: Muhammad told you the story of 'Ad and Thamud; I shall tell you the story of Rustam and Isfandiyar. His audience found the story so beautiful that they ceased to listen to the Koran. It seems that he was a companion of Abu Jahl, and was killed by 'Ali after the battle of Badr, *ibid.*, II, 210.

94 *N. al-N.*, §§ 747—751. The *situs* of the Prophet thus determines the equilibrium between his twelve Qurayshite ancestors and his twelve Imamic descendants. In connection with this, it will be observed that the first Melchizedek, who comes into *Enoch* II, is preceded by 12 priests (13 counting Nir, Noah's brother), and that the second Melchizedek, king of Salem, was the originator of a line of 12 priests. Cf. *Le Lime des secrets d'Henoch*, ed. and trans. A. Vaillant (Paris, 1952), pp. 115-117.

principle, and those who assume it are 12 in number, b) The second aspect is the Prophet's choice of twelve men, and his announcement that twelve Imams would come after him.⁹⁵ c) The third aspect is represented by the prototype of the twelve leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel, of the twelve springs which gushed from the rock of Horeb, struck by Moses' rod. d) Finally, there is an aspect based on the equivalence, established earlier by the "science of letters" or philosophical algebra, between the words *Za-MaN* (time) and *MiZaN* (balance).

The progression of time marked by the revolution of the stars, especially by the revolution of the ninth Sphere, is necessary if the benefits which result from the stars' course are to propagate themselves in the terrestrial world. The course of the stars is regulated with reference to the computus of the twelve months and the twelve hours of the day and of the night. In the same way, by virtue of the perfect correspondence between the two worlds, the invisible action of the Imams on the spiritual world is regulated with reference to their number, which is *twelve*.⁹⁶ The time (*zaman*) of the Imamate is the balance (*mizan*) which equilibrates the esoteric aspect of the Imamic lineage of the twelve Imams with the exoteric aspect of the lineage of the Prophet's twelve Qurayshite ancestors. When typified in the form of a cycle homologous to the preceding one, the time of the Imamate is to such a degree a "liturgical time" that each of the twelve hours of the day and of the night is under the protection of one of the Twelve. In contrast to chronological time, which flows in irreversible succession, liturgical time establishes that level of transhistorical permanence to which we referred earlier. It is perpetually there; it does not conceal a past which has passed away. Its very succession ensures not its flowing away, but its return. The present time of the Imamate is the mean-time of the hidden Imam, whose liturgical recurrences will continue until the "Day of the Resurrection".

In this way, the structure of the diagram showing the Imamic lineage, in correspondence with the line of Qurayshite ancestry, becomes immedi-

95 *Ibid.*, §§ 753-754. "And that is why, on the night of the 'Aqabah (the summit of Mina where the Prophet was first acknowledged publicly), when the Messenger of God received the oath of his companions, he told them: Pick me out from amongst yourselves *twelve* leaders like the twelve leaders of the children of Israel. Which they did. So this became a custom to follow and a special number. Hence this saying of the Prophet's, expressed in different ways: the Imams after me will be twelve in number. The first of them will be 'Ali; the last will be the Mahdi."

96 *Ibid.*, § 755.

ately recognizable (fig. 6 = diagram no. 13; see Appendix). In the circumferent ring are the 12 Imams starting with the twelfth, followed by those belonging to the line of the 51 who make up the lineage from Muhammad to Adam. The two names at the highest point—the point of origin and return—are here no longer those of Adam and the "Seal of the Prophets", but of Adam and the "Seal of the *Awliya'* (*Khatim al-Awliya'*), the twelfth Imam. In the preceding diagram, the central circle was inscribed with the names of the 14 Qurayshites—that is to say, of the twelve ancestors together with al-Nadr, their origin, and the Prophet himself in the small circle in the middle. Here, in the small central circle, is the name of Fatimah, daughter of the Prophet and origin of the line of Imams. But because Fatimah is called the "mother of her father" (*Umm abiha*), she is the origin both of the Prophet's ancestors and of his descendants. All around the little circle with her name are distributed circles containing the names of the twelve Imams; reading from left to right, these go from the 12th to the 1st Imam, who rejoins their source in the person of the Prophet. The Prophet's name occupies a small circle at the side, symmetrical to the one that in the preceding diagram contained the name of al-Nadr ibn Kinanah, origin of the Qurayshite line.

On the one hand, then, there are the 12 Qurayshite ancestors, in addition to the initial figure of al-Nadr and the final figure of the Prophet Muhammad. These give a total of 14. On the other hand there are the 12 Imams, together with the Prophet and his daughter Fatimah, the Imams, origin who links their line with that of the Qurayshites. These, too, total 14 (the "Fourteen Immaculate Ones", the Fourteen Aeons of light of the *Haqiqah muhammadiyah*). The balance is exact: $14 + 14 = 28$. The equilibrium of the balance is established on the basis of this number, which thus authenticates itself as the esoteric number of the Muhammadan period of the prophetic cycle, corresponding with the 28 letters, the 28 phases of the Moon, and so on.⁹⁷

In conclusion, we will quote our author: "The light of the Imamate guides hearts and intelligences along the way of Truth (or the way of God, *tariq al-Haqq*), showing them clearly the goals on the road to salvation, just as the light of the Sun and the Moon guides the eyes of creatures along the ways of the visible world. It shows them clearly those ways which are well-

97 Ibid., § 758.

marked and easy, so that they can follow them, as well as those which are abrupt and perilous, so that they can avoid them. Both are guiding lights: one directs the eyes of the interior vision, and is the light of the Imamate; and the other guides the eyes of the exterior vision, and is the light of the Sun and the Moon. Each of these two lights possesses stations for its transference, its migration. The stations of the light which directs the eyes of exterior vision are the twelve Signs of the zodiac, of which the first is Aries and the last the sign of Pisces. This light is transferred from one to another of the twelve Signs, until it reaches the last Sign, the twelfth. Similarly, the stations of the light which directs the "eyes of the interior vision, the light of the Imamate, are also limited to twelve, and are the twelve Imams: "We offer these parables to men; only the Wise understand them" (29:43).⁹⁸

This Koranic verse, cited by our author in conclusion, confronts us with the ultimate question: what, basically, *is* this science of correspondences—correspondences which engender symbols and thus form the substance of the only true stories that are, perhaps, the parables? How is such a science of correspondences possible, and who therefore is capable of it? The answer, or at any rate an answer, to this question can be found in some extraordinary pages—yet are they not all extraordinary?—of the great work of Ibn 'Arabi.

v. *The horsemen of the Invisible and the science of correspondences*

At this point, let us take up some of the themes left to one side in the course of this study. We have been told that throughout their life in this world, men's mode of being is one of sleep. Could they, during this sleep, perceive the meaning and have an understanding of parables which, as the Koranic verse has just told us, are only understood by the Wise Ones? Who then are these Wise Ones? They are described to us by Ibn 'Arabi, in three marvellous chapters, as the "horsemen" or the "knights of the Invisible", and it is thanks to them that there can exist in this world a "science of correspondences".

In addition, when we made our brief survey of the esoteric hierarchy in Shiism and Sufism, we came across the categories of the *Awtad*, the *Abdal*,

98 Ibid., § 757.

the *Nujaba'*, the *Nuqaba'* and so on (see above, section 2). There was one category that we deliberately omitted for the time being, since the appropriate moment to discuss it had to be deferred until now; and this, precisely, is the category designated by Ibn 'Arabi as the *Rukban* or *Ruk-kab*, the "horsemen".⁹⁹ Needless to say, it is a cavalry, or knighthood, whose function is strictly esoteric, a "cavalry of the invisible worlds" which is *incognito* to the eyes of men.

There are two categories of these horsemen. The first is made up of those who are mounted on great contemplations and sublime visions; the second is formed of those mounted on great actions, great enterprises. The two categories could be said to correspond on the one hand to a speculative, contemplative knighthood, and on the other to one devoted to practical activity. The first category, composed of contemplatives, is designated as that of the *Afrad*: the Peerless, the Incomparable, the Unique. On the level of man, they correspond to those Angels who were previously described to us as the "Angels ecstatic with love" for the divine beauty and glory (cf. *supra* the seven Cherubim who, in the Dionysian hierarchy, would more likely be the Seraphim; cf. also the *Seven* in the books of Enoch, the book of Tobias, the Apocalypse, the seven Source-Spirits in Jacob Boehme, and so on). These Angels are essentially dedicated to the celestial liturgy. The second category of knights, those devoted to practical activity, corresponds, on the level of man, to the Angels whose task it is to rule over a world and to govern the things of this world. As we shall see, it is thanks to them and to their equitation that something like a "science of correspondences" can exist.

We are told that to the knights of the first category God has entrusted a supernatural power,¹⁰⁰ and that this is why they conceal themselves beneath the veil of the pavilions of the Invisible (*suradiqat al-ghayb*), or even beneath the veil of ways that are contrary to their state. In a sense

99 Cf. Ibn 'Arabi, *Kitab al-Futuhāt al-Makkiyah* (The Book of the spiritual Conquests of Mecca), I, pp. 199 ff., chapters 30–32. The vast critical edition of this, undertaken by Usman Yahya, has not yet reached the passage in question. Ibn 'Arabi distinguishes between the *fursan*, the horsemen, and the *rukban*, those who ride on camels or, to be exact, dromedaries (*hujun*), a sport at which the Arabs of Arabia are expert. Their group is associated with the taste for eloquence, for heroic poetry, for generosity—in short, for whatever is characteristic of the "chivalry of the desert". This is why Ibn 'Arabi chose the name of *rukban*. In fact, throughout these pages as well as in the dictionaries we are concerned simply with "horsemen".

100 Ibid., p. 201.

they are "volunteers of disapprobation" (*malamatiyah*) should they judge it expedient in order to preserve their incognito; they are *Fityan* (plural form of *fata*), a term whose appearance in this context is all the more distinctive in that it designates the members of the *futuwwah*—that is to say, of the Islamic equivalent of our Western phenomenon of chivalry and comradeship.¹⁰¹ They are men who are absolutely free (*abriya'*), free even of the authority of the Pole (*Qutb*) that is the summit of the esoteric hierarchy: they are not at the Pole's disposal. On the contrary, they are themselves designated as *poles*, not because they are in charge of a group and rule over it as leaders—they are too highly placed for that—but because of their mystical status and their service to the divine. They exercise no command because they achieve full realization of their being in serving the divine. They are horsemen who move without movement, carried away by the sheer spontaneous impulse of their mounts. If they cover at great speed the distances which they are ordered to cover by divine command, the credit belongs to the steed which bears them, and on which they sit motionless in their contemplation. This is expressed by the Koranic verse 8:17: "When you shoot the arrow, it is not you, but God who shoots it." One cannot claim glory for something which is negative, and immobility is simply the negation of movement. They traverse spiritual distances, those perilous wildernesses, in their souls and by means of their souls, but they do not place their trust in their souls, for they are the Transported (*majdhubun*) by the divine attraction. Each night they undergo a spiritual ascension (*mi'raj ruhani*). Like Abraham, their vision of the *Malakut*¹⁰² is direct, and it is to this that their immobility is due. They have no "bridge" to cross, for direct vision has no need of interpretations. We would say that they do not have to engage in "hermeneutical rides".

These "hermeneutical rides" devolve upon the horsemen in the second

101 Cf. *Traites des compagnons-chevaliers (Rasa'il-i Javanmardan)*, Recueil de sept "Futuwwat-Ndmah", published by Murtaza Sarraf, with an analytical introduction by Henry Corbin, Bibliothèque Iranienne, vol. 20 (Tehran/Paris, 1973).

102 Ibid., pp. 205–206. Cf. the Koranic verse 6:76: "This is how we caused Abraham to see the *malakut* of Heaven and Earth". There exists a famous conversation on the subject of this verse between the fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir, and his disciple Jabir ibn 'Abdullah, who asked the Imam in what sense it should be understood that the *malakut*—the supra-sensible world of Heaven and Earth—had been shown to Abraham. The Imam, by giving his disciple a brief visionary perception, *caused him to see* the Veils of light that are the respective spiritual universes of the twelve Imams. Cf. my *En Islam iranien* . . . , op. cit., IV, index, s.v. Jabir ibn 'Abdillah, Voiles de lumière.

category. What exactly are they? Ibn 'Arabi puts us on the right track when he expresses his admiration for a Koranic verse that he continually re-reads and meditates upon. All the creatures in the universe are so many divine Signs, and "among these Signs", says the verse in question, "is your sleep during the night and during the day, and your expectation of the blessing of this sleep" (30:23). Why does Ibn 'Arabi consider this verse to refer *par excellence* to the second category of the "horsemen of the Invisible"? The reason is that in addition to speaking of sleep during the night, which is natural, it speaks of sleep during the day, excluding thereby all mention of a state of wakefulness. Herein lies the secret of that state of things described by the Prophet when he said, in a remark already quoted: "Human beings are plunged into sleep; it is when they die that they awaken". Contrary to profane opinion, death is not a falling asleep but an awakening. This can apply both to death in the mystical sense and to death in the physical sense of an *exilus*; and, as Haydar Amuli has explained, the purpose of the first death is that the second one should be a resurrection.

It is precisely this that is important for Ibn 'Arabi. Man's present condition in this world is such that the visions we see in sleep in the world of Night, and what we think of as our perceptions in the world of Day, are similar in that both visions and perceptions take place in a state of sleep, equally in the world of Night and in the world of Day. Thus both visions and perceptions, by the same token, require an interpretation, a hermeneutic; and it is for this reason that Ibn 'Arabi views this world as a *bridge*, as a stage to be traversed.

One Arabic root (*'br*) conceals in effect a valuable ambiguity. It means to cross, to traverse. In the second form (the causative, *'abbara*) it means to cross a bridge, to traverse a river, for example. In designating the act of crossing over from one side to another, the same verbal noun *ta'bir* designates *eo ipso* the act of interpreting—the hermeneutic—because the *ta'bir* or hermeneutic consists in making the crossing from the apparent to the hidden, from the exoteric (*zahir*) to the esoteric (*batin*). *Ta'bir al-ru'ya*, the interpretation of visions and dreams, is one of the chief applications of the "science of the Balance". It is to make the crossing from the forms perceived in vision to the secret meaning of their appearance. The visions we see in sleep in the world of Night, as well as the perceptions we have in what we call the world of Day, require the same crossing to be made

before we can perceive their secret meaning. The reason for this is that both are motivated by a secret purpose deriving from another world. This is why our present world—the world of Night and the world of Day—is a *bridge* which must be crossed. A bridge is a place of passage, not a stopping-place or a dwelling-place. One crosses over it, and it must be crossed if one is to understand the secret meaning, the invisible "correspondence" of what "takes place" on this side of it. This is the task assigned to the interpreters, the hermeneutists of the esoteric who are promoted to the rank of "horsemen of the Invisible".

Ibn 'Arabi goes on to recapitulate the situation which, in this world, keeps us in a state of slumber both at night and during the day. It may happen that someone sees visions in his sleep and dreams, still asleep, that he has woken up; and he dreams—thinking himself awake—that he is telling his dreams to someone who is also part of his dream. He goes on sleeping the same sleep, dreaming that he is interpreting what he has seen while asleep. Then he wakes up, and realizes that he has not ceased to be asleep, both while dreaming and while interpreting the visions of his dream.

The same thing is true in the case of the man the eyes of whose inner vision are opened while he is still in this world, before his *exitus*. From the moment of his great awakening, he realizes that he has always been dreaming, but he thanks God for granting him this sleep, as well as for the fact that he has lived in sleep both his visions and the interpretations of these visions. This is, perhaps, what we do when, like Haydar Amuli, we construct great diagrams of worlds and intermediary worlds; yet this, precisely, is the hidden meaning of the Koranic verse which speaks of "your expectation of the blessing of this sleep". To be forearmed against the decadence of dreams is to be capable of *crossing the bridge* with regard both to the dreams of Night and to those of the Day, since such is our condition in this world; and this crossing is effected by the "knighthood devoted to practical activity", a knight hood dedicated, as Ibn 'Arabi has told us, to great actions, great enterprises. Could there, indeed, be any undertaking greater than to dedicate oneself to the search for the correspondences between what we see in this world and the Invisible, the *ghayb*, the world of Mystery? For only this search can abolish the frontier which keeps our destiny captive.

Thus Ibn 'Arabi not only perceives that the Koranic verse (30:23),

which speaks of the sleep of the night and the day, is a verse whose hidden purpose concerns above all the "horsemen of the Invisible"; he also perceives that the *lime* of their undertaking is typified in the Koranic surah which is entitled "Night of Destiny", for their undertaking is the realization of the hidden meaning of this Night. The "Night of Destiny" (liturgically speaking, one of the nights in the month of Ramadan) is the night on which the sacred Book, the Koran, descended into this world: the sacred Book whose homologies and correspondences with the "Book of Horizons" and the "Book of Souls" Haydar Amuli set out to discover.

The Koran says of this "Night of Destiny" that "it is worth more than a thousand months. On this Night, the Angels and the Spirit descend into this world together with all things. Peace accompanies this Night until the dawn" (97:1—5). Because the Night of Destiny is the descent of the Invisible into our world, it is during this Night, which continually recurs, that the "horsemen of the Invisible" ride; for it may be said that their ride is a *crossing of the bridge* to meet the Angels and the Spirit descending invisibly into this world. Of course, the bridge has always to be crossed again; but it is in this crossing that the "science of correspondences", as a hermeneutic of the Invisible, consists.

Paris, Saturday of Pentecost
June 9, 1973

Appendix

Explanation of the diagrams

The figures are numbered from 1 to 6. For each figure I have given the number of the corresponding diagram in my edition of *Nass al-Nusus* (the Text of Texts) by Haydar Amuli (see above p. 58, note 8).

A. Diagrams of the Seven and the Twelve

Figure 1 = Diagram no. 8 (cf. p. 76).

I. *The Twelve*. 1. The circumference is made up of a double circle forming a ring. This ring contains twelve small circles or epicycles, each one cut in half by the inner circle of the ring. These epicycles are grouped in threes, each triad being separated by a space.

2. The outer section of each epicycle bears the name of one of the twelve Signs of the zodiac; the inner section bears the name of one of the twelve categories of Angel mentioned in the Koran and by Ibn 'Arabi.

The top group of three has: Aries (*Hamal*), Taurus (*Thawr*), Gemini (*Jawza*). Corresponding respectively to these are: those who repulse (*zajir-
rdt*, 37:2), those who recite (*taliyat*, 37:3), those who distribute (*muqassimat*, 51:4).

The left-hand group of three has: Cancer (*Saratan*), Leo (*Asad*), Virgo (*Sunbulah*). Corresponding respectively are: those who are sent (*mursalat*, 77:1), those who disperse (*nashirat*, 77:3), those who seize (*nazi'at*, 79:1).

The bottom group of three has: Libra (*Mizan*), Scorpio (*'Aqrab*), Sagittarius (*Qaws*). Corresponding respectively are: those who extract gently (*nashitat*, 79:2), those who precede (*sabiqat*, 79:4), those who swim (*sabihat*, 79:3).

The right-hand group of three has: Capricorn (*Jady*), Aquarius (*Dalw*), Pisces (*Hut*). Corresponding respectively are: those who deliver (*mulqiyat*, 77:5), those who conduct the affairs of the universe (*mudabbirat*, 79:5), those who are ranged in order (*saffat*, 37:1).

In the section of the ring between the right-hand triad and the triad at the top are inscribed the names of the first three months of the year: *Muharram*, *Safar*, *Rabi' I*. Below, within the circle, are the words: *Huwa al-awwal*, "He is the First".

In the section of the ring between the top triad and the left-hand triad are the names of the months: *Rabi' II*, *Jumada I*, *Jumada II*. Below, the words: *wa'l-Akhir*, "and the Last".

In the section of the ring between the left-hand triad and the triad at the base are the names of the months: *Rajab*, *Sha'ban*, *Ramadan*. Below, the words: *wa'l-Zahir*, "He is the Manifested".

In the section of the ring between the triad at the base and the right-hand triad are the names of the months: *Shawwal*, *Dhu'l-Qa'dah*, *Dhu'l-Hijjah*. Below, the words: *wa'l-batin*, "and the Hidden".

II. *The Seven*. In the centre of the diagram is a double circle forming a ring, with seven small circles or epicycles, each one divided into two by the inner circle of the ring. In the outer section of each epicycle (starting at the top and reading from right to left) are inscribed the names of the seven planets in succession; in the inner section of each are the names of the seven Principles.

The Sun (*Shams*): the Intelligence (*'Aql*)
 Jupiter (*Mushtari*): the Soul (*Nafs*)
 Venus (*Zuhrah*): Nature (*Tabi'ah*)
 Mercury (*'Utdrid*): the *materia prima* (*Hayuli*)
 The Moon (*Qamar*): the body (*Jism*)
 Mars (*Mirrikh*): the Throne (*'Arsh*)
 Saturn (*Zuhal*): the firmament (*Kursi*)

In the centre is a little circle bearing the definition of the diagram: "the manifested World" (*al-'alam al-suri*).

III. To the side, in the four corners of the ideal square in which the diagram is drawn, are four little circles, each with two inscriptions. Top right: the Intelligence (*'Aql*); Man (*Insan*). Top left: The Soul (*Nafs*); The

Angel (*Malak*). Bottom left: Nature (*Tabi'ah*); The Genie (*jinn*). Bottom right: The Body (*jism*); The Animal (*hayawan*).

Figure 2 = Diagram no. 9 (cf. p. 79)

I. *The Twelve*. 1. As in the preceding diagram, the circumference is made up of a double circle forming a ring. This ring has twelve small circles or epicycles, each one cut in half by the inner circle of the ring. These epicycles are likewise grouped in threes, each triad separated by a space.

2. The outer section of each epicycle bears the name of one of the twelve Imams of the Adamic period. The inner section bears the name of one of the twelve Imams of the Muhammadan period.

The top triad has: Seth, Abel, Cainan. Corresponding respectively to these are: Ali al-Murtada, Hasan al-Mujtaba, Husayn *al-Shahid*.

The left-hand triad has: Misham (*sic*), Shisham (*sic*), Qadis (*sic*). Corresponding respectively are: 'Ali al-Sajjad, Muhammad al-Baqir, Ja'far al-Sadiq.

The triad at the base has: Qidhuf (*sic*), Imalyakh (*sic*), Enoch. Corresponding respectively are: Musa al-Kazim, 'Ali al-Rida, Muh.-Taql al-Jawad.

The right-hand triad has: Idris, Dinukh (*sic*), Nakhur. Corresponding respectively are: 'All-Naqi al-Hadi, Hasan al-'Askari, Muhammad al-Mahdi.

In the space between each triad, inside the ring, are the names of three Imams from the Mosaic period (total: 12). Below these, inside the circle, are the names of three Imams from the period of Jesus (total: 12). Unfortunately, the names are mutilated and disfigured, and do not even tally with those given in the body of the text. What is essential to bear in mind is that the twelve Imams from each period of the prophetic cycle, from Adam to Muhammad, are brought into correspondence.

II. *The Seven*. In the centre of the diagram is a double circle forming a ring, with six epicycles, each cut in half by the ring's inner circle. In the outer section of each epicycle is inscribed the name of one of the six great legislative prophets who preceded Muhammad; in the inner section the "pole" (*Quthb*) of each period is specified. The names, successively, are Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Moses, Jesus. The name of the seventh legislative prophet, Muhammad as "Seal of the prophets", here occupies

the small circle at the centre which, in the preceding diagram, was inscribed with the definition of the diagram. Here, the circle with the definition is transferred to above the circle of Adam, and is inscribed "the spiritual world" (*al-'alam al-ma'nawi*).

III. To the side, in the corners of the ideal square, are four small circles, also bearing two inscriptions. Top right: *al-Nabi* (the prophet); the Pole (*Qutb*). Top left: *al-Rasul* (He who is sent); *al-Ghawth*. Bottom left: *al-Wali* (the Friend, the Imam); *al-Fard* (the Solitary One, the Peerless One). Bottom right: *al-Khalifah* (the Caliph); *al-Watad* (the Tent-Post).

B. Diagrams of the Nineteen

Figure 3 = Diagram no. 10 (cf. p. 92)

I. 1. As in the preceding diagrams (figs. 1 and 2), the circumference is made up of a double circle forming a ring. This ring has *nineteen* small circles or epicycles, tangential to each other, and each cut in half by the inner circle of the ring. The epicycle at the base, figuring the Heaven of the Moon, is isolated from the others, possibly because the draughtsman made an error in his calculations.

2. The outer section of each epicycle is inscribed with the name of one of the *nineteen* worlds. The inner section is inscribed with the name of one of the *seven* planets, and then with that of one of the *twelve* signs of the zodiac (total: 19).

3. Finally, forming a basis for the system of correspondences, above each epicycle and outside the circumference, is written one of the *nineteen* letters which make up the Arabic spelling of the *Basmallah*: BiSM ALLaH AL-RaHMaN AL-RaHIM.

Above (p. 91 ff.) we reproduced the order of correspondence as set out by Haydar Amuli in his book (§ 696, pp. 312-313). This diagram, however, is irregular in one detail which we cannot explain: Saturn is relegated to the 19th position. The following is the order as it stands:

- B: The world of the *Jabarut*—The Sun
- S: The world of the *Malakut*—Jupiter
- M: The Throne (*'Arsh*)—Mars
- A: The Firmament (*Kursi*)—Venus
- L: Heaven of Saturn—Mercury

- L: Heaven of Jupiter—The Moon
- H: Heaven of Mars—Aries
- A: Heaven of the Sun—Taurus
- L: Heaven of Venus—Gemini
- R: Heaven of Mercury—Cancer
- H: Heaven of the Moon—Leo
- M: Sphere of Fire—Virgo
- N: Sphere of Air—Libra
- A: Sphere of Water—Scorpio
- L: Sphere of Earth—Sagittarius
- R: The mineral kingdom—Capricorn
- H: The vegetable kingdom—Aquarius
- I: The animal kingdom—Pisces
- M: The world of Man—Saturn

II. At the centre is a small circle explaining the meaning of the diagram: "The manifested World" (*al-'alam al-suri*).

III. To the side, in the corners of the ideal square (as in the preceding diagrams) are four little circles, each with two inscriptions. Top right: the *Jabarut*; the Intelligence (*'Aql*). Top left: the *Malakut*; the Soul (*Nafs*). Bottom left: the *Mulk* (visible world); Nature (*Tabi'ah*). Bottom right: man; the Body (*jism*).

Figure 4 = Diagram no. 11 (cf. p. 93 ff.).

I. 1. As before, the circumference is made up of a double circle which forms a ring, and which has *nineteen* small circles or epicycles. These are tangential to each other, and each is cut through the middle by the inner circle of the ring. The bottom epicycle, however, as in the preceding diagram, is isolated from the others.

2. The outer section of each epicycle is inscribed with the name of one of the *seven* great prophets, and then with the name of one of the *twelve* Imams of the Adamic period, as these are spelt in the text and made unrecognizable, as we said, by a succession of copyists (cf. *Genesis* 5:1—32, the posterity of Adam: Seth, Enoch, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah). On the inner section, "the pole" (*qutb*) is mentioned *seven* times, followed by the names of the twelve Muhammadan Imams.

3. Lastly, as in the preceding diagram, we have the key to the system of correspondences: above each epicycle and outside the circumference is written one of the *nineteen* letters which compose the Arabic spelling of the *Basmallah*, as above.

The diagram offers the following order, starting at the top and reading from right to left. Here again, there is a discrepancy between this order and that described above (p. 93 ff.), where we followed the order set out by Haydar Amuli in his text.

B: Adam—The pole
 S: Noah—The pole
 M: Abraham—The pole
 A: David—The pole
 L: Seth—the first Imam, 'All ibn Abi-Talib
 L: Abel—The second Imam, al-Hasan ibn 'Ali
 H: Cainan (Qinan)—The third Imam, al-Husayn ibn 'Ali
 A: Misham (*sic*)—The fourth Imam, 'Ali al-Sajjad
 L: Shisham (*sic*)—The fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir
 R: Qadis (*sic*)—The sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq
 H: Qidhuf (*sic*)—The seventh Imam, Musa al-Kazim
 M: Ilimikh (*sic*)—The eighth Imam, 'Ali al-Rida
 N: Inwkh (Enoch)—The ninth Imam, Muhammad-Taqi
 A: Idris (Enoch, Hermes)—The tenth Imam, 'Ali-Naqi
 L: Dinuk (*sic*)—The eleventh Imam, Hasan al-'Askari
 R: Nakhur—The twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi
 H: Jesus—The pole
 I: Moses—The pole
 M: Muhammad—The pole

II. At the centre is a small circle with the inscription: "The spiritual world" (*al-'alam al-ma'nawi*).

III. To the side, in the four corners of an ideal square, are four small circles each with a double inscription. The names are the same as those in the corresponding circles in fig. 2.

c. *Diagrams of the Twenty-Eight*

Figure 5 = Diagram no. 12 (cf. p. 108).

I. 1. Once again, the circumference is a double circle forming a ring. In a small circle at the top is written: "Cycle of the ancestors of the Prophet" (*da'irat al-ansab*).

2. Starting just to the left of this little circle, and reading from right to left, we find: first, the name of the Prophet (*Khatim al-anbiya'*, the Seal of the prophets); next—continuing to read the names written in the ring—we go through the entire cycle which leads back finally to the name of Adam, written just to the right of the small circle at the top. Thus, the names of Muhammad and Adam open and close the cycle of ascent from ancestor to ancestor. Whichever direction is taken, the finishing-point of a cyclical vision of things leads back essentially to the starting-point. In this way, a fully-realized whole is achieved, a pleroma.

N.B. We read in Haydar Amuli's text (§ 733) that the total number of these ancestors is 51 (17 X 3). In fact, the text of § 732 gives only 46 names. In the rings of diagrams nos. 12 and 13, we find a further 2, 'Amir and Ghabir, between the names of Saruj (34th) and Arphaxad (35th); yet in spite of this, three more names are needed to bring the total up to 51.

II. The large central circle shows the Prophet's Qurayshite ancestry, which is contained within the Adamic descent shown in the circumferent ring, but it stops at the name of al-Nadr ibn Kinanah, with whom the true genealogy of the Qurayshite tribe begins. Inside the large central circle are twelve small circles tangential to each other, together with a small circle in the middle which is linked by a written stroke to the one which is opposite and beneath it. A similar written stroke links the circle tangential to this last circle with another small circle on the outside, itself tangential to the large central circle.

This must be read as follows. We start with the small central circle inscribed with the name of Muhammad, and follow the written stroke downwards linking it with the circle inscribed with the name of 'Abdullah, father of the prophet Muhammad. From here we continue upwards from the base, going from right to left. Inscribed in succession in each small circle are the names 'Abdul-Muttalib, son of Hashim, son of 'Abd Manaf, and so on until we end up at the base once more, at the small tangential circle to the left of the circle of 'Abdul-Muttalib, in which is written the name of Malik. A written stroke links this with the small outside circle which is tangential to the large central circle, and which is inscribed with the name of al-Nadr ibn Kinanah, founder of the Qurayshite line.

Thus the large central circle betokens the Prophet's *twelve* ancestors of Qurayshite lineage. When we add al-Nadr and the Prophet himself to these, we obtain a total of *fourteen* figures; and this number forms the basis of the correspondence with the Prophet's descendancy (see following diagram).

III. To one side, in the corners of a perfect square, are four small circles, each with two inscriptions. Top right: Adam; al-Sadiq (Abu Bakr). Top left: Abraham; al-Faruq ('Umar). Bottom left: Moses; Dhu'l-Nurayn ('Uthman). Bottom right: Jesus; al-Murtada ('Ali).

Figure 6 = Diagram no. 13 (cf. p. 110)

I. 1. The circumference is composed of a double circle forming a ring. As in the preceding diagram, we are told: "This is the cycle of ancestors" (*hadhihi da'irat al-ansab*). But the ancestry here is the Muhammadan Imamic lineage, "the Imams before they were Qurayshites".

2. Starting just to the right of the small circle at the top, and reading from right to left, we read first the name of the twelfth Imam [*Khatim al-Awliya'*, the Seal of the Friends of God], Muhammad al-Mahdi, then Hasan al-'Askari, and so on until we come to the first Imam. 'All ibn Abi-Talib, son of 'Abdul-Muttalib, son of Hashim, son of 'Abd Manaf, and so on. Here in succession are all the names which have already figured (fig. 5) in the Prophet's genealogy back to Adam, comprising in theory 51 names.

II. The large circle corresponds to that in the preceding diagram, where it showed the Prophet's Qurayshite ancestry. Here it shows his Imamic descent, the line of twelve Imams descended from Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter. Thus here, too, twelve small circles, tangential to each other, are inscribed in the large central circle. In the preceding diagram, these circles betokened the twelve ancestors intermediary between the Prophet and al-Nadr ibn Kinanah; here they represent the twelve Imams of Muhammadan lineage. The small circle at the centre of the preceding diagram betokened the prophet Muhammad; here the same small circle is inscribed with the name of Fatimah his daughter. At the base of the preceding diagram was a small circle tangential to the large central one, with the name of al-Nadr ibn Kinanah, founder of the Qurayshite line, and linked by a written stroke with the circle with the name of Malik ibn al-Nadr. The corresponding circle in this diagram is at

the top, tangential to the large central circle, and inscribed with the name of the prophet Muhammad; it is linked, by a written stroke on the right, to the circle containing the name of the first Imam.

We read this as follows. Starting from the small circle at the top of the large central circle, and reading from right to left, we read in succession the names of Muhammad al-Mahdi (the twelfth Imam), son of Hasan al-'Askari (the eleventh Imam), son of 'Ali al-Naqi (the tenth Imam), and so on, ending with al-Husayn (the third Imam), brother of al-Hasan (the second Imam), both sons of 'Ali (the first Imam, whose circle is joined by a written stroke to the small outer circle containing the Prophet's name).

In this way, the equilibrium of the Balance is based on the number 28 (cf. the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet, the 28 phases of the Moon, and so on):

The 12 Imams	the 12 Qurayshite ancestors
Fatimah	al-Nadr, father of the Qurayshites
the Prophet	the Prophet
Total: 14	Total: 14 14 + 14 = 28
(the "Fourteen Immaculate Ones")	

III. To one side, in the four corners of a perfect square, are four small circles, each with two inscriptions. Top right: al-Murtada (the first Imam); the Pole (*Quthb*). Top left: al-Hasan (second Imam); *al-Ghawth*. Bottom left: al-Husayn (third Imam); *al-Fard* (the Solitary One, the Peerless One). Bottom right: al-Mahdi (twelfth Imam); *al-Watad* (one of the four pillars of the cosmic tent).

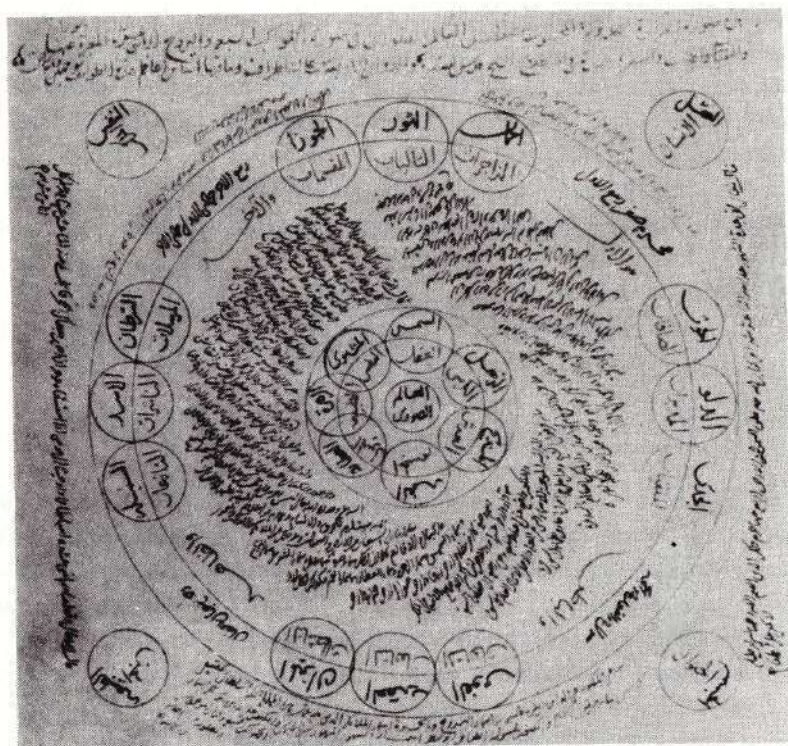


Figure 1 Diagram No. 8

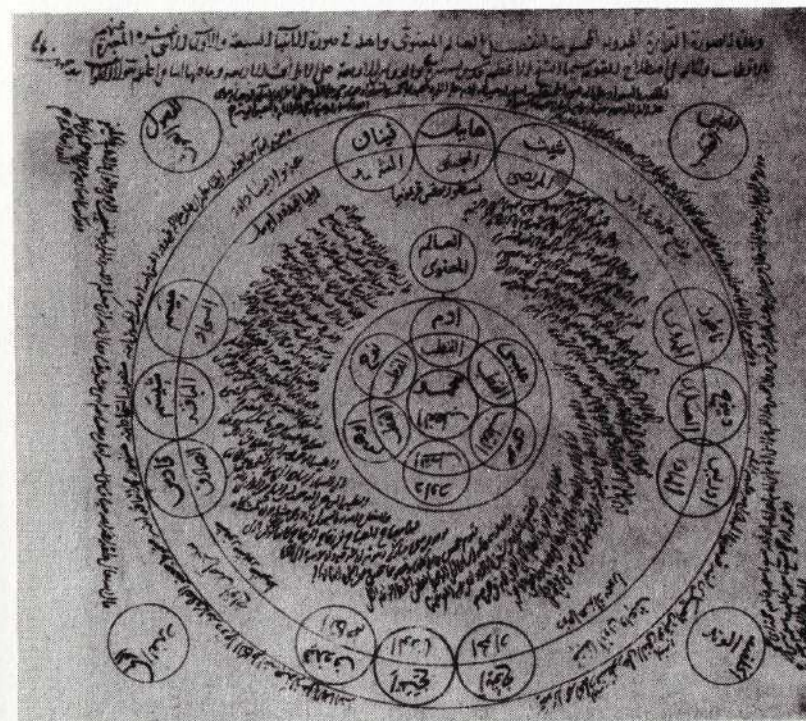


Figure 2 Diagram No. 9

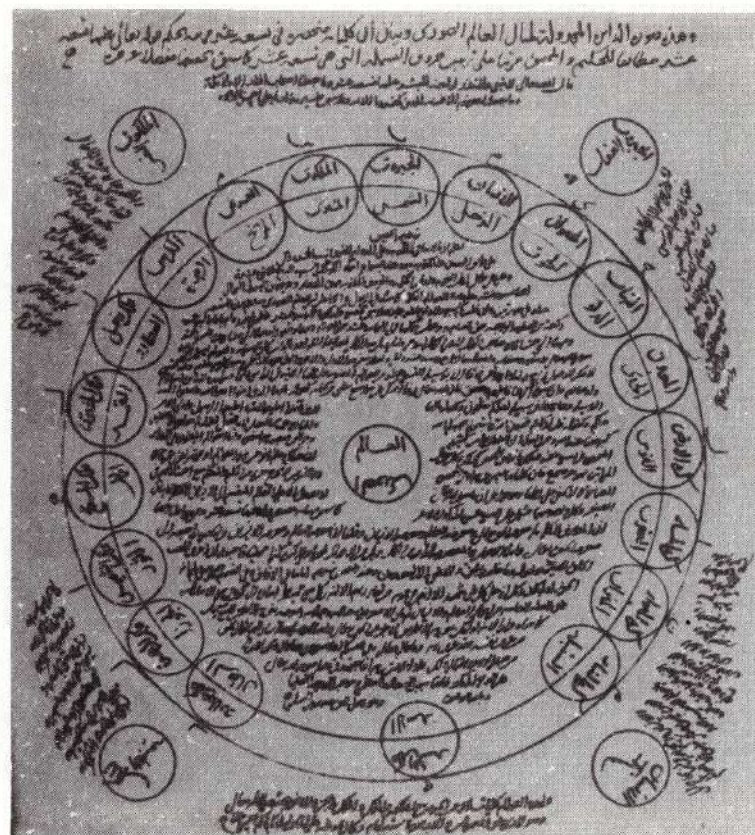


Figure 3 *Diagram No. 10*



Figure 4 *Diagram No. 11*

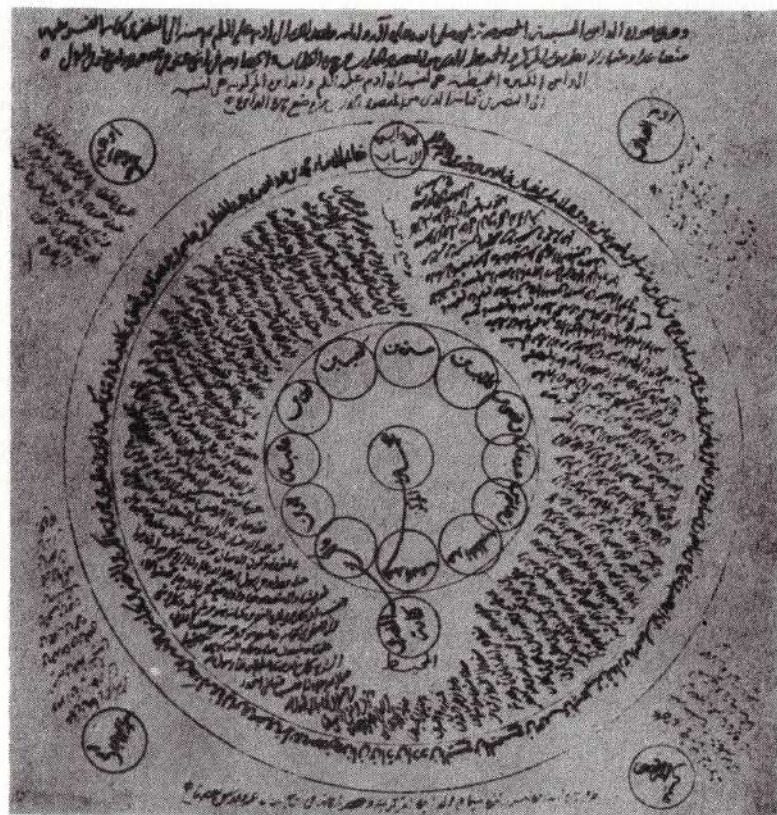


Figure 5 Diagram No. 12



Figure 6 Diagram No. 13