

**Al-Ghazālī's Al-Maqṣad Al-Asnā
and the Concept of God in Islām**



by

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thesis.

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The Abstract

Al-Ghazālī's Al-Maqṣad Al-Asnā and the Concept of God in Islām

Is the God of Islām transcendent and/or immanent? The thesis presented herewith basically is concerned with this question and endeavours to offer some answers through the witness of the Qur'ān and a text of one of Islām's leading theologians on the names of God.

The thesis consists of two sections. The first section of four chapters offers a study of some five-hundred Qur'ānic passages which speak to various aspects of God's transcendence and immanence. In the subsequent three chapters the concepts of Bi-lā kayf wa lā tashbīh, ta^cṭīl, kalām and taṣawwuf are presented primarily through the instrumentality of ibn-Ḥanbal, the Muṭaṣallites, al-Ash^carī and al-Ghazālī. Were one required to answer the question posed by this study, perhaps one would have to say that for Islām as such God is basically transcendent. At the same time, however, there were voices, particularly among the Ṣūfīs, which proclaimed a God who was as near to man "as his jugular vein". It was at this point that al-Ghazālī burst upon the scene. From the background of his own spirituality, mental acumen and a full ten years of penetrating study of Islām's four primary schools of thought, he injected into Muslim theology the stimulating and equalizing element of Ṣūfism, which brought the Muslim faith a new relevance and vitality.

It is to this emphasis that the major portion of the thesis is directed through the translation of the greater part of al-Ghazālī's Al-Maqṣad Al-Asnā, hitherto untranslated. This text has particular relevance to our subject, since the bulk of it concerns itself with an exposition of the "beautiful names of God" and the manner in which man can emulate them and thereby draw near to Him. One would imagine that a work of this nature, when digested and accepted by those who studied it, must have greatly influenced individual lives and made God much more relevant and meaningful.

The Arabic text consists of eighty-five pages and is divided into three major sections. With the exception of the first twelve and one-half pages, the entire translation is presented herewith. In preparing this translation we have endeavoured to remain faithful to the text, translating as literally as one possible can and still presenting the thoughts in acceptable English. An effort has also been made to translate key Arabic terms consistently, to the extent the context permits.

Chapter One

The Transcendence and Immanence of God in The Qur'ān

I. Goldziher begins his chapter on the development of Muslim theology with the provocative statement, "Prophets are not theologians." (1) To the extent that one finds in these words no apparent difficulty or abstruseness, they appear to be relatively simple. After all, one is here considering two obviously different categories of mankind. However, reflection upon the primary and literal meaning of the word "theologian", that is to say, one who concerns himself with words or statements about God, quickly brings one to quite a different stance. Using it in this manner and applying it to the person of Muḥammad, certainly one would have to say that he was a theologian in the fullest sense of the word.

Sir Hamilton Gibb describes the prophet's constant concern with the person of God in this manner, "Muḥammad's position was theistic in the highest degree and his theology theo-centric. It might be said that he was 'God-intoxicated' rather than having a theology." (2) As the following pages will emphasize, the quintessence of his theology is found in his constant assertion, "There is no god save God." (3) T. Izutsu states the matter in

(1) Vorlesungen, p. 71

(2) Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islām, p. 26

(3) S. 37, 36/4 (inter alii) A-2-4. Unless noted otherwise, the translation of M. M. Pickthall's The Meaning of The Glorious Koran is used throughout. The initial verse number is from the Cairo text, the second from Fluegel's. The chronological designation of the individual sūra follows the material to be found in Blachere's Le Coran, Paris, 1957, and Introduction au Coran,

this wise, "God is the highest 'focus-word' in the Qur'ānic system, which is surpassed by no other word in rank and importance. The Weltanschauung of the Qur'ān is essentially theocentric." (4)

Even a cursory reading of the Qur'ān must lead one to the conclusion that the concept of the supreme deity known in the Arabic language as Allāh by no means originated with Muhammad but rather existed and was used before the period of revelation began approximately in 610. For example, one reads in Sūra 29, "If thou wert to ask them (i. e., those who choose other patrons than God, vs. 41/9): Who created the heavens and the earth, and constrained the sun and the moon (to their appointed work)? they would say: God." (5) Down through the years a great deal has been said about the possible influence the older monotheistic systems exerted upon incipient Islām in respect of its theological development. History does record the presence of Monophysites west and north of Mecca, Nestorians east and north and other Christians in the southern part of the peninsula, and the Qur'ān itself bears ample witness of the prophet's contact with Jewish communities particularly after the hijra in 1/622. Then,

Paris, 1959, who, generally speaking, accepted the results of T. Nöldeke and F. Schwally as found in Geschichte des Qorans, Vol. I, Leipzig, 1909, and Vol. II, Leipzig, 1919. This material was collated by W. A. Bislefeld, Hartford, Conn. The system of transliteration used herein is the one approved by the Arabic Dept. of the University of Edinburgh. In this thesis hamza is transliterated ('); ḥayn (ḥ). It is to be noted that "God" is used rather than "Allāh", unless the context indicated otherwise. "Qur'ān" is also standardized except when used in titles and transliterated otherwise.

(4) God and Man in the Koran, p. 95

(5) S. 29, 61 (A-3-13)

too, Islām's holy book frequently refers to the Scriptures of these other communities of which it claims to be the confirmation. One of the many examples of this is found in Sūra 35 where one reads, "As for that which We inspire in thee of the Scripture, it is the Truth confirming that which was (revealed) before." (6)

But perhaps the more realistic approach to the subject of the source from which the name "God" came, and the approach that is based upon the Qur'ān itself, is to look to the culture and the history from which the original Muslim community originated. Returning once more to Sūra 29 as cited above, the sixty-third verse of this chapter reads, "And if thou wert to ask them (i. e., those choosing other patrons besides God): Who created the heavens and the earth, and constrained the sun and moon to their appointed work? they would say: God. How then are they turned away?" In other words, if these people recognize the creative acts of God, why, then, do they not recognize the fact that there is no God but He?

Furthermore, the Qur'ān indicates that at least some of the people of the Jāhiliyya period prayed to God in times of great stress and then forsook Him when the danger had passed. A verse from Sūra 31 reads in this fashion, "And if a wave enshroudeth them like awnings, they cry unto God making their faith pure for Him only. But when He bringeth them safe to land, some of them compromise." (7) One could go on to cite similar passages which seem to

(6) S. 35, 31/28 (A-3-18)

(7) S. 31, 31/2 (A-3-14)

present solid evidence for the fact that God was known, and His name was invoked, during the Jāhiliyya period, though at that time perhaps He was only the major Existent among the other gods. Thus one need not look farther than pre-570 Arabia to find the source of the Deity about whom Muḥammad built his theology. This is not to say, however, that the great emphasis upon the absolute unity of this God as one finds it in the Qur'ān could not possibly have been affected by other external influence. However, further speculation on this subject would be of little value. The supreme fact remains that Muḥammad's fathers knew the name "God", and the prophet's entire being was permeated by the fact that "there is no other god save He."

Before expanding on this subject and searching the Qur'ān and Muslim theology in order to determine whether He is transcendent and/or immanent, the Qur'ān itself necessitates the citing of the one time in the prophet's life when even he seemed to have experienced a personal crisis in respect of the person of God. The reference here is to Sūra 53 which includes the words, "Have ye thought upon al-Lāt and al-⁶Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?"⁽⁸⁾ W. M. Watt has dealt with this subject rather extensively, ⁽⁹⁾ and it remains for us only to cite a few of the more important facts in this connection.

All effective prophets down through the ages have experienced abuse and even invective at the hands of their adversaries. Certainly the Old Testament provides ample evidence of this. It was no different with Muḥammad. Mecca

(8) S. 53, 19/20 (A-1-30)

(9) Muḥammad at Mecca, pp. 101-9

was a thriving commercial centre at the time he began to receive his revelations, and not a few travelers came to this centre and others in the area to worship at the shrines of the deities whose cult had become popular during the Jāhiliyya period. Among their number were al-Lāt, al-^cUzzā and Manāt. In this type of religious milieu did Muḥammad lift his voice to cry, "There is no god but God!" That there should have been opposition to him, particularly from those who were profiting materially from the various accouterments that were attached to these worship centres, as one finds them around the world in every age, is not surprising in the least. Undoubtedly this opposition became most vocal, and with it the human temptation to expediency most compelling, as Muḥammad accelerated his efforts to call his fellowmen to Islām. That the prophet was under considerable pressure in this respect seems to be quite clear from Sūra 17, "And they indeed strove hard to beguile thee (Muḥammad) away from that wherewith We have inspired thee, that thou shouldst invent other than it against Us; and then would they have accepted thee as a friend." (10) Pickthall adds the interesting footnote in this connection, "The idolaters more than once offered to compromise with the Prophet." (11) It was in this context, then, that Muḥammad added the following words to the verses cited above from Sūra 53, "These are exalted females, and truly their intercession may be expected." (12)

There is another Qur'ānic verse which seems to speak to this situation.

(10) S. 17, 73/5 (A-3-5)

(11) The Meaning of The Glorious Koran, p. 209

(12) Ibid., p. 70 (note)

Sūra 22 includes the words, "We have sent no apostle, or prophet, before thee, but when he read, Satan suggested (some error) in his reading. But God shall make void that which Satan hath suggested; then shall God confirm his signs; for God is knowing (and) wise." (13) In his Tafsīr at-Ṭabari summarizes this matter well when he cites a tradition attributed to Abū-l-^cĀliya reading as follows:

"Quraysh said to the Messenger of God (God bless and preserve him), Those who sit beside you are merely the slaves of so-and-so and the client of so-and-so. If you made some mention of our goddesses, we would sit beside you; for the nobles of the Arabs (sc. the nomads) come to you, and when they see that those who sit beside you are the nobles of your tribe, they will have more liking for you. So Satan threw (something) into his formulation, and these verses were revealed, 'Have ye considered al-Lāt and al-^cUzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?' and Satan caused to come upon his tongue, 'These are the swans exalted, whose intercession is to be hoped for, such as they do not forget (or 'are not forgotten').' Then, when he had recited them, the Prophet (God bless and preserve him) prostrated himself, and the Muslims and the idolaters prostrated themselves along with him. When he knew what Satan had caused to come upon his tongue, that weighed upon him; and God revealed, 'And We have not sent before thee any messenger or prophet but when he formed his desire Satan threw (something) into his formulation' and God is knowing, wise." (14)

Perhaps one would not be charged with assuming too much when saying that

(13) G. Sale's translation. S. 22, 52/1 (B-17). In his introduction to this sūra Pickthall cites the fact that all authorities agree that vs. 11-13, 25-30, 39-41 and 58-60 were revealed at Medina. He adds that Nöldeke, "the greatest of the higher critics," held that much of the sūra belongs to the last Meccan period. On this basis the verse listed here is from the latter period.

(14) Muḥammad at Mecca, p. 102

this experience must have filled the prophet with even greater determination to proclaim the Qur'ān's central creed, "There is no god but God! " From this time forward the primary interest of Muḥammad and Islām as such was "to maintain the monotheism it had won after its experiences of paganism". (15)

Any study addressed to the subject of the God of Islām and asking the question, "Is He transcendent and/or immanent?" must necessarily go first of all and last of all to that source from which the subject originates, that is to say, the Qur'ān itself. To be sure, the theologians who subsequently devoted their lives to this and other related subjects and formulated the positions that are the basis of contemporary Muslim life and practice must also be given a hearing. But even they are given a hearing only to the extent to which they can substantiate their theological positions on the basis of the Qur'ān. It is true, of course, that the ḥadīth also played a vital role in these formulations, but they, too, ultimately return to the Qur'ān. Subsequently, as one addresses oneself to the subject of this study, the initial and ultimate question must and will always be, "What does the Qur'ān say about God? Is He transcendent and/or immanent?" which in the House of Islām is the equivalent of asking, "What does God say about Himself?" For the simple reason that one can cite more Qur'ānic passages alluding to transcendence than to immanence, perhaps it is logical to begin with the former, though at the same time it would be illogical to conclude on the basis of such a premise that the God of Islām is therefore transcendent to a greater degree than He is immanent. But what does the

(15) Islām and Christian Theology, Pt. I, Vol. II, p. 16

Qur'ān say in respect of these subjects?

A survey in depth of some five hundred Qur'anic passages dealing with the transcendence of God reveals that this concept is set forth in at least eight different patterns or forms. The first and most obvious one, and there are a minimum of one hundred and fifteen verses in this category, ninety-four of which are from the Meccan period of revelation, is the group that finds its basic expression in Sūrat at-Tawḥīd:

**"Say: He is God, the One!
God, the eternally Besought of all!
He begetteth not nor was begotten.
And there is none comparable unto Him." (16)**

Generally speaking, the other passages within this group either (a) simply state the fact of His unity, e.g., "God is only one God," (17) (b) imply this fact through the use of a rhetorical question, e.g., "Is there any God beside God," (18) (c) command the hearer to resist every temptation of shirk, e.g., "Set not up any other god along with God," (19) or (d) call attention to those who have fallen into this great sin, e.g., "Yet they chose beside Him other gods." (20) In this connection A. Baumstark's investigation should be cited,

(16) S. 112 (A-1-45). Pickthall adds to his introduction to this sūra, "It has been called the essence of the Qur'ān, of which it is really the last sūra. Some authorities ascribe this sūra to the Medinan period and think that it was revealed in answer to a question of some Jewish doctors concerning the nature of God. (But) it is generally held to be an early Meccan sūra."

(17) S. 4, 171/69 (B-10)

(18) S. 27, 60/1 (A-2-20)

(19) S. 51, 51 (A-2-1)

(20) S. 25, 3 (A-2-19)

since he arrived at the conclusion that the Qur'ān expresses the unity of God in three basic forms. (21)

The expressions of transcendence cited above concern themselves with the essence (dhāt) of God. The second group focalizes upon His will (irāda) and is derived from the verb shā'a. The majority of the minimum of one hundred and sixty-five verses concerned with this subject are from the Meccan period of revelation. A typical example is, "Say: I have no power to hurt or benefit myself, save that which God willeth." (22) A second example could well be, "Had God willed He would have made you one community." (23) The importance of this verse lies in the fact that it is from the very last of the sūras chronologically and therewith indicates that the prophet's witness on this particular subject was consistent throughout the years that he served as God's witness to his people.

Certainly the impact is great as one reads through these many passages. Considered in isolation, the verses clearly and definitely bring one to two basic conclusions. First of all, God is depicted as being free of the necessity of basing His actions and dealings with mankind upon any rationally acceptable basis or ethically moral standard, though one must hasten to add that such bases and standards could be described as being irrational and unethical only to

(21) "Zur Herkunft der monotheistischen Bekenntnisformeln im Koran", pp. 6-22

(22) S. 10, 49/50 (A-3-16)

(23) S. 5, 48/53 (B-24)

the extent that these descriptions apply to man. Again, the God of Islām is exalted far above the necessity of making Himself accountable to man. He is so far above and beyond man's reach or comprehension that any thought of our being able to influence or persuade Him is totally out of the question. As al-Ghazālī constantly uses the term in his al-Maḡṣad al-Asnā, God is absolute (muṭlaq) in the sense in which Webster describes that term, "free from limit, restriction, qualification or mixture." (24) Certainly one would have to conclude that the God of the Qur'ān is purely transcendent were these the only verses one had upon which to determine His basic characteristic.

In this connection it seems relevant to cite one of the problems evolving from this particular witness of the Qur'ān, though again one must immediately qualify the statement by saying that it could be a problem only as far as man is concerned, perhaps particularly the contemporary secular man. The difficulty would seem to be summarized sufficiently by the following three passages:

- (1) "Had God willed, they (i. e., the idolaters) had not been idolatrous." (25)
- (2) "Had God willed, we (i. e., the idolaters) had not ascribed (unto Him) partners, neither had our fathers." (26)
- (3) "The idolaters say, Had God willed, we had not worshipped aught beside Him." (27)

Perhaps the problem is obvious from man's point of view. Does and can

(24) Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

(25) S. 6, 107 (A-3-21)

(26) S. 6, 148/9 (A-3-21)

(27) S. 16, 35/7 (A-3-5)

the one God actually wish and determine man's eternal punishment? How does one reconcile this with other Qur'ānic passages speaking of the same God and saying:

(1) "Lo, my Lord is Nigh, Responsive." (28)

(2) "Both His hands are spread out wide in bounty." (29)

Obviously there is no logical and rational answer. God is the eternal Existent. Man is the limited and circumscribed created one. Infinity lies between the two. In comparison with the Former the latter is infinitely less than a single grain of sand on the endless sea-shores, and infinitely weaker than the dying gasp of a weakened octogenarian whispered into the howling gales of a raging North Sea storm. Is there any other answer than that which both Ibn-Hanbal (d. 241/855) and al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935) used so often a few centuries later, bi-lā kayf wa lā tashbih (without asking 'how?' or resorting to anthropomorphism)? God is transcendent, free from and above every human effort to grasp or comprehend Him.

The third group of Qur'ānic passages dealing with the transcendence of God is based upon the Arabic verb sharika, which basically means "becoming a partner with another". There are a minimum of one hundred and forty verses in this category, one hundred and five of which were revealed during the Meccan period. This group automatically concerns itself with that portion

(28) S. 11, 61/4 (A-3-7)

(29) S. 5, 64/9 (B-24)

of mankind which is ignorant of the unity of God or reject this fact. In this context the Qur'ān sets forth Abraham as the example for all men. "Follow the religion of Abraham, the upright. He was not of the idolaters." (30) The believers are commanded to "... withdraw from the idolaters." (31) Those who disregard God's will and command in this respect will certainly pay the price for their disobedience both in this life and in that which is to come, for the Qur'an witnesses, ".... God is free from obligation to the idolaters," (32) and ".... God punisheth idolatrous men and idolatrous women" (33) Upon the lives and destinies of such people fall the awe-full sentence, "... Woe unto the idolaters." (34)

The fourth group revolves about the second form of the verb dalla, meaning "to lead one astray". The Qur'an includes at least thirty-three verses of this nature, of which twenty-six are from the Meccan period. A typical example of this group might be, "Those whom God sendeth astray, there is no guide for them. He leaveth them to wander blindly on in their contumacy," (35) that is to say, those people whom God has purposely led away from the straight path of Islām, which is the worship and service of the one and only God, no power in the heavens or on the earth can alter or change their course. Another verse states the matter in this wise, ".... Who is able to guide him whom God hath

(30) S. 3, 95/89 (B-7)

(31) S. 15, 94 (A-2-10)

(32) S. 9, 3 (B-23)

(33) S. 33, 73 (B-13)

(34) S. 41, 6/5 (A-3-2)

(35) S. 7, 186/5 (A-3-19)

sent astray? For such there are no helpers." (36) Elsewhere, however, the Qur'ān seems to qualify this purely arbitrary action in respect of God by revealing, "It was never God's (part) that he should send a folk astray after He had guided them until He had made clear unto them what they should avoid . . ." (37) In other words, the action of God mentioned in the two previous verses is here qualified to the extent that God does give man ample warning of the evil and result of shirk before finally assigning him to eternal punishment.

At the same time the Qur'ān seems to indicate that other factors also play into man's ultimate punishment. For example, Sūra 25 includes the words, "On the day when the wrong-doer gnaweth his hands, he will say: Ah, would that I had chosen a way together with the messenger (of God)! Alas for me! Ah, would that I had never taken such an one for friend! He verily led me astray from the Reminder after it had reached me, Satan was ever man's deserter in the hour of need." (38) (Rodwell translates "betrayed") In other words, it is Satan, rather than God, who leads man astray.

Furthermore, there are other verses which seem to state quite clearly that man himself is responsible for the exclusion from Paradise and that God cannot be blamed for his ultimate lot. Examples of this one finds in the following verses:

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- (36) S. 30, 29/8 (A-3-6)
(37) S. 9, 115/6 (B-23)
(38) S. 25, 27-29/29-31 (A-2-19)

- (1) "And on the day when He will assemble them and that which they worship instead of God and will say: Was it ye who misled these my slaves or did they (themselves) wander from the way? They will say: Be Thou glorified! It was not for us to choose any protecting friends beside Thee; but Thou didst give them and their fathers ease (Rodwell translates "their fill of good things") till they forgot the warning and became lost folk." (39)
- (2) "Lo! God guideth not wrongdoing folk." (40) In other words, evil-doers exclude themselves from God's guidance to Paradise, and therefore God cannot be held responsible.
- (3) Among other things Sūra 16 speaks of the proud men in Muhammad's day who considered the prophet's revelations to be nothing more than "fables of the men of old". (vs. 24/6) The Qur'ān goes on to say of this people, "that may bear their burdens (Rodwell translates: 'their own entire burden') undiminished on the Day of Resurrection, with somewhat of the burdens of those whom they mislead without knowledge. Ah! evil is that which they bear!" (41) In other words, unbelieving man will be punished not only for his rejection of the unity of God but will also be held accountable for leading others into this great sin.

The final expression of this aspect of the transcendence of God perhaps is particularly relevant to the culture out of which Muhammad originated. The verse in question is, "They will say" (i.e., those in the fire of hell speaking in answer to question, 'Were not My revelations recited unto you, and then ye used to deny them' - (vs. 105/7)), "Our Lord! Our evil fortune (shiqwa-tunā) conquered us, and we were erring folk." (42) Seemingly a new element

(39) S. 25, 17. 18/18. 19 (A-2-19)
 (40) S. 6, 143/4 (A-3-21)
 (41) S. 16, 25/7 (A-3-5)
 (42) S. 23, 106/8 (A-2-17)

is introduced here. Neither God, Satan nor man is responsible for the unbelievers' assignment to the Fire. Rather is it man's fate that brings him to this end, a power over which one has no control whatsoever.

In one sense this subject anticipates that which is to follow immediately, but both, of course, are intimately related. Perhaps there is a sense in which human beings of every age and clime have felt that there is an area within everyone's life in which deterministic factors have played a major role. In the final analysis, it cannot be denied that skin pigmentation as well as other genetic factors, one's mother tongue, dietary habits, general philosophies and religious practices, or their absence, are determined by the time one is capable of rational thought and independent deductions and conclusions. Perhaps it is also true that there are some cultures and heritages in which such factors are more predominant and pronounced than in others. To the extent that this might be true of the people of the Near East, as well as vast numbers in other parts of the world, one might say that Muhammad also was reared unto such an aura. Watt speaks to this subject in the following manner:

"Underlying nearly all the lucubrations of the early Muslim theologians is one fundamental thought, like a deep steady bass, on which the whole superstructure of the harmony rests. It is the thought of the powerlessness of man in the face of circumstances, of the nature of his life as determined for him by something other than himself, and of his dependence on that other, whatever it may be In pre-Islamic times this deep underlying feeling found its expression in the view that everything is controlled by dahr, which is, as it

were, a combination of Time and Fate. So far as one can tell, the general attitude was what might be called a modified fatalism, rather than an absolute fatalism. In the ordinary affairs of life from day to day man might do as seemed good to him, but what he did was incapable of influencing the final outcome. The hour of his death, and his happiness or misery, were already written, and, strive as he might, he could not deflect ineluctable destiny a hairsbreadth from its path." (43)

With whom, then, does lie the ultimate responsibility for man's going astray? Does God, Satan or fate bear the burden for this, or does the responsibility finally lie at man's own feet?

The foregoing has intimated that there is another Qur'ānic concept which speaks to this subject. It is to be found in variations of the second form of the verb qadara, meaning "to determine, ordain or decree a specific lot or portion for one", a concept which in this context is used with God as the One who takes the initiative. The Qur'ān includes a minimum of seventeen passages of this nature, of which fourteen are from the Meccan period of revelation. Two typical verses from this group might be the following: He (God) hath created everything and hath meted out for it a measure," (44) and "See they not that God enlargeth the provision for whom He will, and straiteneth (it for whom He will)?" (45)

In this connection, too, one finds an interesting variation, if it may be called that. In Sūra 65 one reads, "Let him who hath abundance spend of his

(43) Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam, pp. 168.9

(44) S. 25, 2 (A-2-19)

(45) S. 30, 37/6 (A-3-6)

abundance, and he whose provision is measured, let him spend of that which God hath given him. God asketh naught of any soul save that which He hath given it." (46) Generally speaking, in the great majority of the passages included in this category, the Qur'ān merely states that God increases or decreases one's portion according to His will. In Sūra 65, however, the meaning seems to be that God does not expect of man more than that which He Himself enables man to do. Applying this to one's eternal destiny, one could conclude this to mean that God does not arbitrarily assign an individual to the everlasting Fire, but does so only after man of his own accord has rejected all that God has supplied to enable him to achieve Paradise.

This verse calls to mind Sūra 9, 115/6 as listed above which also seems to indicate a more subjective attitude on God's part. There we read, "It was never God's (part) that He should send a folk astray after He had guided them until He had made clear unto them what they should avoid . . . , " and here we are told that "God asketh naught of any soul save that which He hath given it". The interesting factor in this respect is that these two passages are from the Medinan period of revelation whereas the great majority of the passages from the two categories in which these two verses are found are from the Meccan period. Could this possibly indicate a change in or softening of position in Muḥammad's attitude on this subject later in life?

(46) S. 65, 7 (B-11)

Another significant expression of the transcendence of God which the Qur'ān uses in at least sixteen verses, all of which were revealed during the Meccan period, is the application to God of the word ta^cālā, the one who is exalted and high above all others. A typical example of this one finds in Sūra 27 where one reads, "High exalted be God from all that they ascribe as a partner (unto Him)." (47) In the great majority of the verses containing this expression the emphasis is placed upon the utter impossibility of any person or thing ever attaining the exaltedness and majesty which are exclusively the possession of His essence and rank. There is and can be no one like Him!

The seventh category of verses addressed to the subject of the transcendence of God revolves about the noun nidd, meaning "an equal, partner or like". Six verses of the nature were found, four of which are from the Meccan period. Perhaps they are summarized correctly by the verse from Sūra 2 which reads, "... Do not set up rivals to God when ye know (better)." (48) The others simply speak to the fact that mankind in general is wont to repay the goodness of God with infidelity and thereby lead others to destruction; for example, "... they set up rivals to God that they may mislead (men) from His way. Say: Enjoy life (while ye may) for lo! your journey's end will be the Fire." (49)

(47) S. 27, 63/4 (A-2-20)

(48) S. 2, 22/0 (B-1)

(49) S. 14, 30/5 (A-3-8)

The verb ʿadala, which includes the meaning 'to be equal to another', forms the basis of yet another group of verses addressed to the subject in question. Only three passages of this nature were found, all of which are from the Meccan period. An example of these one finds in Sūra 6, "Follow thou not the whims of those who deny Our revelations, those who believe not in the Hereafter and deem (others) equal with their Lord." (50) The opening verse of this same sūra offers a definition of the unbeliever in terms of this particular offense when it says, "Praise be to God, Who created the heavens and the earth, and hath appointed darkness and light. Yet those who disbelieve ascribe rivals unto their Lord."

As one reflects upon the many verses (approximately five hundred) considered in this initial section, one naturally wonders if the prophet's theological position moved to any extent during the course of the twenty-two years in which he proclaimed his revelations to his people. Perhaps this is a logical question in view of the fact that not a few of God's spokesmen down through the ages have altered their theological stance with the maturity of advancing years. Certainly a study of this nature could not possibly hope to speak to this subject authoritatively, but at the same time perhaps the following observation would not be considered completely inopportune particularly in view of A. J. Wensinck's conclusion that "the idea of the unity of God does not occupy so large a place in the earliest parts of the Qur'ān;

(50) S. 6, 150/1 (A-8-21)

later, however, it occurs many times." (51)

It is interesting to note that only about twenty per cent of the five hundred verses in question were revealed during the Medinan period; that is to say, from 622-632. The great bulk of them are from the Meccan period covering the years from 610-622, and of these a comparatively large number is from the third Meccan period. Were one to consider only this factor, perhaps one would have to conclude that Muhammad was particularly concerned with the transcendence of God during the Meccan period. At the same time, however, one must remember that of the one hundred and fourteen sūras to be found in the Qur'ān, only twenty-four were revealed during the Medinan period; that is to say, only some twenty per cent of the total Qur'ān was revealed during this latter period. This being the case, it would seem that one must go on to say that Muhammad was most consistent in stressing transcendence throughout the years he served as the messenger of God, though the following pages will indicate that he also thought and spoke of God in more human and mundane forms.

It is now necessary to turn our attention to those Qur'ānic passages which speak of God's immanence, the fact that He is not only completely other than and exalted far above man, but also the One who possesses human characteristics; that is to say, He is the One who speaks, hears, repents,

(51) The Muslim Creed, p. 4

loves, possesses hands, face and the like. Certainly a statement of this nature reveals nothing new concerning the witness of Islām's holy record. R. A. Nicholson has stated the subject in this manner, "Muhammad felt God both as far and near, both as transcendent and immanent, " (52) and D. B. MacDonald said, "(Muhammad's) God is depicted in the most anthropomorphic terms both of body and mind. Phrases are used of him which can mean nothing else than immanence His personal piety and feeling of spiritual contact with the unseen and divine lead him to (this position). "(53) In the study that follows an effort is made to classify this subject under some thirteen headings, though it remains possible that more are to be found. It should also be noted that the sequence of listing is not intended to indicate either frequency of mention or importance of the individual subject.

One of the more familiar topics in this respect is the throne of God, to which later theologians gave no little attention, as will be noted in the following pages. A minimum of twenty-three verses include this subject, twenty of which are from the Meccan period. Two typical examples of this group are the following; ". . . . this is in truth the word of an honoured messenger, mighty, established in the presence of the Lord of the throne, " (54) and ". . . . then He established Himself upon the throne, directing all things". (55) Perhaps

(52) The Mystics of Islam, p. 21

(53) "God - A Unit or a Unity?", p. 12

(54) S. 81, 19.20 (A-1-18)

(55) S. 10, 3 (A-3-16)

the best known of the number is the verse in Sūra 2 which reads, "... His throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and He is never weary of preserving them". (56) It is to be noted that in twenty-one of the verses under consideration the word Carsh is used, and in the other two (i. e., Sūras 2, 255/6 and 38, 34/3) kursī is found, though both are translated as "throne".

J. Redhouse supplies the following explanation of this matter:

"Al-Carsh is explained by scientific commentators to signify the 'heaven of heavens', i. e., the 'primum mobile' of all astronomers and al-kursī of 2, 256 to indicate the 'starry vault', i. e., the firmament or 'heaven of the fixed stars'. These two 'heavens' were supposed to be above the 'seven heavens' of the 'seven planets' which were in order from below upwards: the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. In all, nine 'heavens', al-kursī is eighth and al-Carsh the ninth and highest, beyond which God holds His state in unapproachable, inconceivable grandeur, majesty and splendor. The words kursī and Carsh are both explained as meaning a 'throne'. But as one throne is not placed on another, and since al-Carsh is several times mentioned in the Qur'ān as the most intimately approximate dwelling-place of God's glory, we may better look upon this as the representative of His 'throne', and then al-kursī would become 'His footstool'. Or, if the latter be taken for 'the throne', then the former may be understood to figure the pavilion, tent, tabernacle or roof over the throne. But in this case the divine glory would be considered as resting beneath the 'roof' and above the 'throne', whereas it is always spoken of as being beyond al-Carsh. I therefore prefer to consider this latter as the 'throne' and al-kursī as the 'footstool'." (57)

One of the basic tenets of the faith of Islām is the fact that from the beginning of time God has always spoken to man through His chosen prophets

(56) S. 2, 255/6 (B-1)

(57) J. R. A. S., Vol. XII, 1880

and that He made His will known to mankind in a special and final way in the Qur'ān through the instrumentality of Muḥammad. An example of this one finds in Sūra 7, 'He (God) said, O Moses! I have preferred thee above mankind by My messages and by My speaking (unto thee).' (58)

During the subsequent years when the faith of Islām was formalized by the various theologians, this particular tenet was given considerable emphasis. For example, Article 9 of Wasiyyat Abī-Ḥanīfa states the subject in this manner:

"We confess that the Qur'ān is the speech of God, uncreated, His inspiration and revelation, not He, yet not other than He, but His real quality The ink, the paper, the writing are created, for they are the work of men. The speech of God on the other hand is uncreated, for the writing and the letters and the words and the verses are manifestation of the Qur'ān for the sake of human needs. The speech of God on the other hand is self-existing, and its meaning is understood by means of these things. Whoso sayeth that the speech of God is created, he is an infidel regarding God, the Exalted" (59)

Al-Fiqh al-Akbar II explains the matter thus:

"The Qur'ān is the speech of God, written in the copies, preserved in the memories, recited by the tongues, revealed to the Prophet. Our pronouncing, writing and reciting the Qur'ān is created, whereas the Qur'ān itself is uncreated God was creating from eternity ere He had created the creatures; and when He spoke to Moses, He spoke to him with His speech which is one of His eternal qualities." (60)

(58) S. 7. 144/1 (A-3-19)

(59) The Muslim Creed, p. 127

(60) Ibid., p. 189

The God of the Qur'ān who speaks is also the God who hears. A minimum of twenty-two verses are addressed to this subject of which eighteen are from the Medinan period. (The prominence of the Medinan period here perhaps is worthy of mention in conjunction with other similar emphases to be made in the following material). In one sense, there is no striking diversity in this group. A typical example could be, " Lo! Thou, only Thou, are the Hearer, the Knower!" (61) One of the most striking verses in this group is found in Sūra 2, "And when My servants question thee concerning Me, then surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when He crieth unto Me. So let them hear My call and let them trust in Me, in order that they may be led aright." (62)

There are at least six Qur'ānic verses which speak of the sight of God and express this fact with various forms of the noun ḥaṣr. All of these are from the Meccan period. Two examples are: " (O Muḥammad) surely thou art in Our sight" (63) and " How clear of sight is He and keen of hearing!" (64) In this connection it is to be noted that God's speaking, hearing and seeing are three of the seven attributes (ṣifāt) which orthodox Islam attributes to the essence (dhāt) of God, the others being His animated state or life (ḥayy), will (irāda), power (qudra) and knowledge (ʿilm). Though one could probably detect some elements of immanence in

(61) S. 3, 35/1 (B-7)
 (62) S. 2, 186/2 (B-1)
 (63) S. 52, 48 (A-1-22)
 (64) S. 18, 26/5 (A-2-21)

the latter four of this group, perhaps it is correct to say that the first three speak much more clearly to that subject. Subsequently only they are included within this context.

The Qur'ān also speaks of the face (wajh) of God on nine different occasions, with seven of these verses to be found in the Meccan period of revelation. That God does wish man to seek Him is quite clear from Sūra 6 where one reads, "Repel not those who call upon their Lord at noon and evening, seeking His countenance" (65) Another interesting verse in this connection is "And cry not unto any other god along with God. There is no God save him. Everything will perish save His countenance" (66)

Though the meaning of the verses under consideration at this point in one sense seem to be quite clear and one would have no questions were they spoken in reference to a human being, the fact remains that here the Qur'ān is speaking about the eyes and face of the God with whom no human being can be compared. What did the prophet mean when he passed on these verses to his people, and how does orthodox Islām interpret them? Al-Ash^ḥarī gives us this explanation in his Ibāna and beyond it, of course, one cannot go, "We confess that God has two eyes, without asking how, as He said: 'Which moved along under our eyes.' " "We confess that God has a face, as He said: 'But

(65) S. 6, 52 (A-3-21)

(66) S. 28, 88 (A-3-11)

the face of thy Lord will endure, glorious and venerable." (67) In other words, God does have eyes and a face, since God Himself reveals these facts in his Word. How this can be and to what extent they are similar to man's eyes and face is of little importance. He has them "as He said (He does)", and this is the end of the matter.

The hands of God also receive attention in at least six Qur'ānic verses, four of which are from the Meccan period. The following passages give examples from both periods of revelation: "O Iblīs! What hindereth thee from falling prostrate before that which I have created with both My hands?" (68) and "... Nay, but both His hands are spread out wide in bounty" (69) The Ibāna defines this matter also when it states, "We confess that God has two hands, without asking how, as He said: 'I have created with my two hands,' and: 'On the contrary, both His hands are stretched wide.'" (70)

The actual proximity of God to His creatures, and therewith His constant involvement in man's total life, is clearly stated in revelation even though perhaps only five verses speak to this subject, three of which are from the Meccan period. In each of these instances forms of the verb qaruba are used. The passage which immediately comes to mind includes those famous

(67) The Theology of al-Ashcarī, p. 237

(68) S. 38, 75 (A-2-12)

(69) S. 5, 64/9 (B-24)

(70) The Theology of al-Ashcarī, p. 237

words from Sūra 50, "... We are nearer to him than his jugular vein," (71) that is to say, God is as close to and as intimately involved in man's very being as is his life's blood. Certainly it is not difficult to understand that the Sūfīs have always found great interest in this particular verse, as well they might. Another striking example of this subject is to be found in Sūra 2, where one reads, "And when My servants question thee concerning Me, then surely I am nigh" (72) ^{fact neither} ~~Reviewed that~~ the mere repetition of a statement, ⁿ or the number of people who find the statement particularly relevant and meaningful, ~~do not actually~~ validate its truthfulness and importance; ^{is explicit enough to make of} ~~but~~ ~~it must be said that on the basis of the Qur'ān~~ the proximity of God to man is an established tenet of Islām.

Closely allied to this concept is that of the presence of God with man in various and sundry circumstances and places. At least eight verses speak to aspects of this subject, five of which are from the Meccan period. The following three would seem to summarize this category adequately:

- (1) "... and He is with you wheresoever ye may be"
(ma^ʿakum) (73)
- (2) "He saith: Contend not in My presence (ladayya), when I had already proffered unto you the warning." (74)
- (3) "... There is no secret conference of three but He is

(71) S. 50, 16/3 (A-2-7)

(72) S. 2, 186/2 (B-1)

(73) S. 57, 4 (B-9)

(74) S. 50, 28/7 (A-2-7)

their fourth, nor of five but He is their sixth, nor of less than that or more but He is with them where-soever they may be" (75)

As God-fearing people of all faiths believe, so also Islām proclaims in the words of its holy book, ".... Lo! God is with us (ma^cana)" (76)

There are two interesting Qur'ānic verses which speak of God's laying hold of a physical object even as man would do. The first is from Sūra 11, "Lo! I have put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord. Not an animal but He doth grasp it (huwa ikhīdhun) by the forelock;" (77) and the second from Sūra 36, "And had We willed, We verily could have fixed them (lamsakhaⁿāhum; i. e., 'a folk whose fathers were not warned,' vs. 6) in their place, making them powerless to go forward or turn back." (78) In one sense, the latter verse is reminiscent of various expressions already listed under the transcendence of God, such as God's willing and decreeing that man be unable to go beyond a circumscribed limit. But here one finds God accomplishing that same purpose by physically holding man to that position or state in which He wishes him to remain.

The material that follows will depict the large number of verses which speak of God's love. But there are two, both from the Meccan period, which

(75) S. 58, 7/8 (B-16)

(76) S. 9, 40 (B-23)

(77) S. 11, 56/9 (A-3-7)

(78) S. 36, 67 (A-3-13)

also speak of His hatred (maqt). Sūra 40 includes the words, "Lo! (on that day) those who disbelieve are informed by proclamation: Verily God's abhorrence is more terrible than your abhorrence one of another, when ye were called unto the faith but did refuse," (79) and "Those who wrangle concerning the revelations of God without any warrant that hath come unto them, it is greatly hateful in the sight of God and in the sight of those who believe" (80) Even as man rebels against and hates that which is essentially evil in his sight, so also on the basis of these verses God rebels against and hates that basic of all sins, that is to say, disbelief in the cornerstone of Islām, "there is no god but He."

Perhaps that one quality which man most desires for his own heart, as well as the hearts of his kith and kin and mankind throughout the world, is love. One is forced to dwell upon this thought in our contemporary age which literally seethes with fear, suspicion, distrust and naked hatred. It is no exaggeration to say that the great majority of the world's problems today would be mitigated, if not solved fully and finally, if only love were the predominant quality in man's bosom. Furthermore, perhaps it is true that God-fearing people in the four corners of the world look to God, the Ultimate One, for the perfection of this quality. Were one not able to find it in Him, certainly one would have to despair of possessing even an image of it in his own being.

(79) S. 40, 10 (A-3-10)

(80) S. 40, 35/7 (A-3-10)

to say nothing of the world as such. Love makes possible understanding, trust and inter-communion, and therein lies its great potential. Love enables men to stand face-to-face, to have faith in each other, to confront the future with confidence and certainty. How good, then, to know that the God of the Qur'ān is not only the transcendent, incomparable and absolute Existent, but also the loving One who is concerned about His people and responds to those who know Him in faith and accept His guidance.

A culling of forty Qur'ānic verses on this subject, detailing both that which God loves and does not love, provides an adequate understanding of this subject as it exists in Islām. Perhaps the basic meaning of love is found in the words of Sūra 3, "Say, (O Muḥammad, to mankind): If ye love God, follow me; God will love you and forgive you your sins. God is Forgiving, Merciful." (81) On the basis of this verse, as well as the others that follow, God's love is reciprocal; that is to say, He loves those in whom He finds qualities and attitudes worthy of being loved. For example, "... do good. Lo! God loveth the beneficent;" (82) "... God loveth the steadfast;" (83) "... God loveth those whose deeds are good;" (84) "... Lo! God loveth those who put their trust (in Him); (85) "... Lo! God loveth the kindly," (86)

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- (81) S. 3, 31/29 (B-7)
(82) S. 2, 195/1 (B-1)
(83) S. 3, 146/0 (B-7)
(84) S. 3, 148/1 (B-7)
(85) S. 3, 159/3 (B-7)
(86) S. 5, 13/6 (B-24)

(Rodwell translates: those who act generously); ".... Lo! God loveth those who keep their duty (unto Him);" (87) ".... God loveth the purifiers," (88) (Rodwell - 'the purified'); ".... Lo! God loveth the just dealers," (89) (Rodwell - 'those who act with fairness'); and "God loveth those who battle for His cause in ranks, as if they were a solid structure." (90)

On the other side of the spectrum, however, the Qur'ān also goes to some length to describe those whom God does not love. For example, ".... Lo! God loveth not the aggressors;" (91) ".... God loveth not the impious and guilty;" (92) (Rodwell - 'no infidel or evil person'); ".... Lo! God loveth not such as are proud and boastful;" (93) "God loveth not the utterance of harsh speech save by one who hath been wronged;" (94) ".... God loveth not corrupters;" (95) ".... Lo! God loveth not the treacherous;" (96) ".... Exult not; Lo! God loveth not the exultant;" (97) ".... Lo! He loveth not the disbelievers (in His guidance);" (98) and ".... Lo! God loveth not each braggart boaster". (99)

In conjunction with this subject we are again confronted with an interest-

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- (87) S. 9, 4 (B-23)
(88) S. 9, 108/9 (B-23)
(89) S. 60, 8 (B-20)
(90) S. 61, 4 (B-8)
(91) S. 2, 190/86 (B-1)
(92) S. 2, 276/7 (B-1)
(93) S. 4, 36/40 (B-10)
(94) S. 4, 148/7 (B-10)
(95) S. 5, 64/9 (B-24)
(96) S. 8, 58/60 (B-5)
(97) S. 28, 76 (A-3-11)
(98) S. 30, 45/4 (A-3-6)
(99) S. 31, 18/7 (A-3-14)

ing possibility in terms of the time of revelation of these verses using the verb habba. A careful study of every Qur'ānic verse speaking of the love of God for man reveals that without exception all were revealed during the Medinan period. Furthermore, of the twenty-two verses speaking of those whom God does not love, only nine are from the Meccan period. The discussion of the transcendence of God on the basis of the Qur'ānic verb qaddara, as found on an earlier page of this chapter, has already intimated that there could possibly have been a softening of Muḥammad's theological position in the latter part of his life in respect of God's arbitrary action over against man. But even apart from that possibility, the study of these verses speaking of God's love of various types and categories of people, and the evidence that all of them were revealed during the Medinan period, seems to indicate that this phenomenon could hardly have been accidental particularly as one again recalls that only some twenty per cent of all the sūras were revealed during the last ten years of the prophet's life. Is it presumptuous to conclude that during these final years when the House of Islām had taken on its initial form, the messenger of God did begin to "soften", as it were, his position concerning the person of God? In any event, there does seem to be considerable distance between the God who "... verily sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will ...," (100) and the God who said, "Say, (O Muḥammad, to mankind): If ye love God, follow me; God will love you and forgive you

(100) S. 35, 8/9 (A-3-18)

your sins" (101)

At least one more category of Qur'ānic verses should be mentioned in this connection; namely, those dealing with the subject of God's willingness to forgive His people. The first three of this group are built around the verb tāba; for example, "... And if, when they had wronged themselves, they had but come unto thee and asked forgiveness of God, and asked forgiveness of the messenger, they would have found God Forgiving, Merciful." (102)

However, the larger number of verses speaking to this subject use the verb ghafara. A typical example of this group could be, "... Yearn ye not that God may forgive you? God is Forgiving, Merciful." (103) Again, various passages indicate that God is willing and ready to forgive every sin except shirk, as indicated in Sūra 3, "Lo! God forgiveth not that a partner should be ascribed unto Him. He forgiveth (all) save that to whom He will. Whoso ascribeth partners to God, he hath indeed invented a tremendous sin." (104)

There are twenty-two verses in this final category, of which eighteen are from the Medinan period, which again is an unusually large number in terms of the total Qur'ān. If nothing more, this fact would seem to indicate that the subject of forgiveness came more readily to the lips of Muhammad during the

(101) S. 3, 31/29 (B-7)

(102) S. 4, 64/7 (B-10)

(103) S. 24, 22 (B-15)

(104) S. 4, 48/51 (B-10)

latter portion of his life. This being the case and remembering again the two groups of verses which might possibly indicate a general "softening" of the messenger of God's position in respect of God's dealing with mankind, one might here anticipate still another indication in that direction. But the very opposite is true. In the final sūra given to Muḥammad one finds these words on the subject of forgiveness, "... He forgiveth whom He will, and chastiseth whom He will" (105) Though God is desirous of forgiving those who meet His qualifications and though He is ready and willing to forgive all save those who are guilty of shirk, yet in the final analysis "He forgiveth whom He will, and punisheth whom He will" (106)

(105) S. 5, 18/21 (B-24)

(106) S. 3, 129/4 (B-7)

Chapter Two

The Development of Muslim Theology With Particular Reference to the Mu^tazilite and Hanbalite Positions in Respect of the Essence of God

Throughout the life span of the prophet the Muslim community felt no need for precise theological formulae. Muhammad himself was the spokesman of God. Day by day he was on hand to explain and detail the meaning and relevance of God's word for the faithful. In fact, the Qur'ān bears witness to itself that it is sufficient for every possible need. "It is no invented story but a confirmation of the existing (Scripture) and a detailed explanation of everything, and a guidance and a mercy for folk who believe." (1) "... We have neglected nothing in the Book (of Our decrees)" (2)

In addition to this, there would seem to be at least two other logical reasons why the nascent family of Islām did not immediately find it necessary to formulate theological statements in addition to its very basic tenet, "There is no god but God and Muhammad is His prophet." First and foremost, the initial flush of victory over the forces of paganism still sizeable within the peninsula must have given great impetus to the faithful to promulgate this primary truth with all the strength and every opportunity at their command. That they not only took the necessary steps to consolidate their initial successes but also expended considerable effort in adding to their numbers is quite obvious

(1) S. 12, 111 (A-3-9)

(2) S. 6, 38 (A-3-21)

from the rapidity with which the House of Islām grew.

Secondly, though it is true that the Medinan community over which Muhammad ruled as prophet and statesman did include a Jewish element, perhaps it is correct to say that it was not until Islām had penetrated regions beyond the peninsula and therewith confronted other religious and philosophical milieus that it found it necessary to formulate theological statements as such. Macdonald states the matter in this wise, "In the first twenty or thirty years after Muhammad's death (in 11/632), the Muslims were too much occupied with the propagation of their faith to think what that faith exactly was. Thus it seems that the questioning spirit in this direction was aroused comparatively late and remained for some time on what might be called a private basis." (3)

Wensinck has suggested that the ḥadīth are our "chief source of information for the early development of the theology of Islām a series of sayings of Muhammad which must be regarded as the outcome of the theological labour carried out by the generation of the Companions." (4) Even as the fidelity of the early Muslims to Muhammad obviated the necessity of any formal theological statements during the course of his life, so also the waning of that fidelity following his death began to give rise to such statements. This is one of the reasons for early theological controversy as proposed by E. E. Elder. (5)

(3) Development of Muslim Theology, p. 122

(4) The Muslim Creed, p. 19

(5) A Commentary on the Creed of Islām, p. X sq.

A second reason that he cites is taken from Ibn-Khal^ḥdūn's al-Muqaddima. "It was the result of attempts to decipher the obscure and ambiguous passages (al-mutashābihāt) in the Qur'ān." The third was "the necessity for an apologetic" brought about by Islām's contact with Greek and Christian thought as Islām spread into lands beyond Arabia.

In his ʿIlm al-Kalām, Shiblī Nu^ḥmānī (d.1333/1914) analyses the various stages in the Muslim theological process and then proceeds to summarize them in the following manner:

"In the first stage God is held to be corporeal, seated on the Throne, possessing hands, feet and face. God set his hand on the shoulder of Muḥammad and the prophet felt that it was cold. In the second stage God is still held to be corporeal, having hands and face and legs, but all these are not like ours. In the third stage God is conceived to have neither body, hands nor face. Such words in the Qur'ān have not the real meaning at all but are metaphorical and allegorical. God is Hearer, Seer and Knower but all these attributes are in addition to His quiddity (māhiyya). In the fourth stage God's attributes are neither identical with His essence nor alien to it (lā ḥayn wa lā ghayr). In the fifth stage God's essence is absolutely simple. In it there is no multiplicity whatever. His essence does the work of all His attributes. His essence is Knowing, Seeing, Hearing, Powerful, etc. In the sixth and last stage God is conceived as Absolute Existence, i.e., His existence is His very quiddity. This takes the form of the Oneness of Existence (Wahdat al-Wujūd), where we arrive at the point where philosophy and Sūfism meet. It must not be supposed that these stages represent a chronological order in which the latter supersedes the earlier. Representatives of the different points of view were contemporaneous and still are." (6)

(6) Islam and Christian Theology, Pt. I, Vol. II, p. 13

Watt has this to say about dogma in his most recent publication:

"In the formative stages of the life of a community, dogma has an important positive function. It is the formula recording agreement reached after matters have been long disputed. After a dispute the parties concerned come to agree that a certain view of the matter is the true one. This agreed view is expressed in a concise formula. Once a point of view has been so defined, it is a dogma which generally is accepted and not further disputed. Dogma is not the Islamic vision itself, but the expression of a facet of that vision. The acceptance of the dogma by the bulk of the community is not a decision to hold a particular intellectual belief in dogged obstinacy through thick and thin. It is rather the decision that the agreed formula best expresses a facet of the vision by which the community is already living. In other words, dogma is not something new in itself but merely makes definite what has already been present vaguely or indefinitely in the vision accepted or followed by the community. To reject the dogma is tantamount to leaving the community, but one can sometimes avoid this by attaching oneself to a splinter community based on an alternate dogma." (7)

Among the many things one learns from the history of religion as such is that the formulation of theological statements inevitably gives rise to differences of opinion which sooner or later bring forth sects and with them accusations of heresy. It is not otherwise in the history of Islām. However, this statement must immediately be qualified by adding that in terms of the Christian definition of this word, there has never been, nor can there be, heresy in Islām. Goldziher has explained the matter thus:

(7) What Is Islam, pp. 230-1

"The role of dogma in Islām cannot be compared with that which it plays in the religious life of any of the churches. There are no councils or synods which, after lively controversy, lay down the formulae which henceforth shall be deemed to embrace the whole of the true faith. There is no ecclesiastical institution which serves as the measure of orthodoxy; no single authorized interpretation of the holy scriptures on which the doctrine and exegesis of the church might be built. The consensus, (ijmāʿ), the supreme authority in all questions of religious practice, exercises an elastic, in a certain sense barely definable jurisdiction, the very conception of which is moreover variously explained. Particularly in questions of dogma is it difficult to determine in unanimity what shall have effect as undisputed consensus. What is accepted as consensus by one party is far from being accepted as such by another." (8)

Be this as it may, during the period from the death of Muḥammad in 11/632 to the end of the Umayyad dynasty in 41/661, two main sects had already come into existence, the Khārijites and the Shīʿites, both of which may be said to have broken away from the mainstream of Islām for political reasons. As Watt has pointed out, the former group "seceded from ʿAlī (656-61) because they disapproved of some of his acts. Their primary contention was that affairs of the state should be managed in strict accordance with the Qurʾān. They expressed this in the slogan 'No judgment but God's', (lā ḥukm illā li-llāh). " (9) The latter group aspired to an order in which all Muslims would be equal and Arab birth would no longer carry special privileges. As B. Lewis indicates, it was with them that Islām's seventy-two and more heresies had

(8) Vorlesungen, pp. 183-4

(9) What Is Islām, p. 175

their beginning. (10)

However, it actually was not until the second and third centuries A. H. that the theological crisis within Islām came into sharp focus. Perhaps it is correct to say that the principle of cause and effect played a major role in the development of the Mu^Ctazilites, our primary concern in this chapter, from the Khārijites and the Qadarites. In both of the latter groups there was lively interest in and heated debate over the relative positions of faith and works in man's ultimate destination. Do the acts of man on earth determine where he shall spend eternity, or is this solely the decision of God himself? The ḥadīth, which were collated primarily during the first two centuries following Muḥammad's death, had no little to say on this vital subject and thus served as an additional impetus for the theological discussions which now became so important within Islām. An example of this one finds in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/874) in the section on qadar.

"When the embryo has passed two-and-forty days in the womb, God sends an angel, who gives it a form and creates his hearing, sight, skin, flesh and bones. This having been done, the angel asks, 'O Lord, shall this be male or female?' Then the Lord decrees what He pleaseth, and the angel writes it down. Then he asks, 'O Lord, what shall be his term?' Then the Lord will say what he pleaseth, and the angel writes it down. Thereupon the latter will go away with the scroll in his hand and nothing will be added to or subtracted from the decree."

"It may be that one of you performs the works of the people

(10) "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy", pp. 47-8

of Paradise, so that between him and Paradise is only the distance of an arm's length. But then his book overtakes him and he begins to perform the works of the people of Hell, the which he will enter. Likewise one of you may perform the works of the people of Hell, so that between him and Hell there is only the distance of an arm's length. This his book will overtake him and he will begin to perform the works of the people of Paradise, the which he will enter." (11)

Certainly in literature of this nature there was ample impetus for serious reflection and difference of opinion regarding the relative position of God's eternal decree and man's own works. And, of course, the Qadarites and the Mu^ctasilites after them insisted that man had within him the potential and wherewithal to work out his own destiny.

It is again Muslim who informs us that "the first who instituted discussions on the qadar at Basra was Ma^cbad al-Juḥanī" (d. 80/699). (12) It was he who one day approached al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and said, "O Abū-Sa^cīd, those kings shed the blood of the Muslims, and do grievous things and say that their works are by the decree of God." To this al-Ḥasan replied, "The enemies of God lie." (13)

There are various accounts of the origin of the Mu^ctasilites. A traditional one lays considerable emphasis upon the role played by Waṣīl ibn-ʿAṭā' who is reported to have withdrawn from the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

(11) The Muslim Creed, pp. 54-5

(12) Ibid., p. 53

(13) Development of Muslim Theology, pp. 128-9

over the status of the person who had committed a great sin, holding the opinion that such a person was in an intermediate position between the believer and unbeliever. This opinion prompted al-Ḥasan's reply, "He has withdrawn (istazala) from us," from which we have the name Muṭazila. For this and perhaps also other reasons Wāṣil is generally considered to be the founder of the Mu'tazilites. Of particular importance to us^{at} this juncture was their emphasis upon the absolute unity of God and the definition of "their position of justice and righteousness," as the result of which they referred to themselves as aṣḥab ʿadl wa-t-tawḥīd (the Maintainers of Justice and Divine Unity). Watt has given us a detailed discussion of this important subject. (14)

There is another area, too, in which the insurgent Muṭazilite position differed from the consensus of the House of Islām, and this concerned the question whether or not man shall be able to see God in Paradise. Certain ground for that hope lay with such authorities as Muslim who related, "When the people of Paradise have entered paradise, God will say to them: If you have any desire I will fulfill it. They will answer: Have you not made our faces bright, have You not made us enter Paradise, have You not saved us from Hell? Thereupon God will remove the veil and the vision of their Lord will be the most precious of the gifts lavished upon them" (15) But the Muṭazilites took the opposite position on this important subject as al-Ashʿarī

(14) Islamic Philosophy and Theology, pp. 58-71. Al-Taftāzānī's report on this subject is to be found in A Commentary on the Creed of Islam, pp. 8-9.
(15) The Muslim Creed, p. 63

informs us in his Maqālāt, "The Mu^Ctazilites are unanimously of the opinion that God cannot be seen by eyesight." (16)

Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that men of all ages who have believed in the existence of the one God have lived and died in the sure hope that they would see and revel in the glory of His presence. In the final analysis, it is most difficult, if not impossible, for human nature to consider the living God without automatically going on to the thought of His presence. One might add here, as Wensinck does, (17) that tashbīh (anthropomorphism) probably began at this very point. But for the dialectically philosophical minds of the Mu^Ctazilites this hope was beyond reason and therefore without foundation. In their holy fear of ascribing to God any attribute or characterization that could have the slightest possibility of degrading His unique position as the Absolute and Necessary Existent, they were forced into the use of ta^Ctīl (divesting God of all attributes), ta'wīl (the allegorical interpretation of the anthropomorphic literal meaning) and tanzīh.

To assist in clarifying the theological position of the Mu^Ctazilites as well as other groups that will follow, perhaps there would be some value in examining the way in which each of these interpreted the famous "throne verse" already cited in Chapter One. Al-Ash^Carī offers the Mu^Ctazilite stance

(16) The Muslim Creed, p. 64

(17) Ibid., p. 65

on this subject in his Ibāna, where he states, "Some of the Mu^ctazila and the Jahmiyya have said that God's words, 'The Merciful is seated on the Throne' means that He has the mastery and reigns and exercises power, and that God is in every place, and they deny that God is on His Throne, as the true believers say, and hold the opinion regarding God's being seated that it is God's power." (18) A. S. Halkin states the matter in this wise, "The Mu^ctazila deny the istiwa', explaining it to mean istawla, 'made himself master.'" (19)

Having been nurtured in the Mu^ctazilite school himself, surely there is no better authority than al-Ash^carī to define their true position in respect of the person of God. He does so in this manner:

"The Mu^ctazila agree that God is one, nought is there like Him; and He is the hearing One, the seeing One, and is not a substance or an object or a body or a form or flesh or blood or a person or an essence or an accident; nor has He colour or taste or odor or a pulse; nor has He heat or cold or moisture or dryness, or length or breadth or depth, or union or separation; nor does He move or rest; nor is He divided. He has no parts or atoms, or limbs or members; nor has He sides; nor has He right or left or front or back or above or below. He is not subject to the limitations of space or time. Contact and withdrawal are not possible for Him, nor descent upon this place or that. None of the predicates of creatures that prove their contingency is attributed to Him. Superlatives are not predicated of Him, nor measure, nor extension in various directions, nor is He defined. He is neither begetter nor begotten The senses do not attain to Him; nor is He to be compared with mankind, or likened to creatures in any way at all. . . . He is eternally first, antecedent, prior to contingent

(18) Al-Ibāna ^cAn Uḡl Ad-Diyāna, p. 84

(19) Muslim Schisms and Sects, p. 20 (note)

beings, existent before created things. He is eternally knowing, powerful, living, and thus He continues. Eyes do not see Him, nor does sight attain to Him. Thought does not embrace Him, nor is He heard by the hearing - a Thing unlike things, knowing, powerful, living, unlike the knowers, the potentates, the livers, He is the eternal One alone, and there is no eternal one besides Him, and no god is there but He He is not finite. Coming to an end is not possible for Him, and weakness and loss do not overtake Him (20)

There remains one other major area in which this group differed radically from Sunni Islam, and this involves the Qur'ān itself. In a certain sense one could speak of the Mu^ctazilites in this respect as being precursors by a full millennium of Christianity's schools of higher criticism. Furthermore and ironically, it was this emphasis which marked both the zenith of their power and the beginning of their demise as a recognized body. A. Guillaume states the matter in this way, "The controversy that most clearly marked off the Mu^ctazila from their co-religionists was their affirmation that the Qur'ān was created." (21)

That the Qur'ān itself and the early Muslim community taught and tenaciously held that every word of the one hundred and fourteen sūras is an exact replica of the Preserved Tablet is common knowledge. But even as the rational thought processes of the Mu^ctazilite mind demanded that they deny God's eternal attributes lest they be hypostatized into separate beings other than He, so also

(20) Ibāna, pp. 18-9

(21) "Some Remarks on Free Will and Predestination in Islām", p. 48

that same logical consistency necessitated their conclusion that the Qur'ān was created. As Watt has indicated, though it is impossible to state the precise time when this teaching was first pronounced, there is evidence to believe that its first adherent was al-Ja^cd b. Dirham who was put to death by caliph Hishām between 105/723 - 125/742. He was the teacher of Jahm and the first to propound the doctrine of ta^cṭīl. (22) Though we know very little about Jahm b. Ṣaifwān (executed in 128/746) and even less about the sect purported to be named after him, it is certain that Ahmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) "considered a Jahmī one who said the speaking (lafz) of the Qur'an was created or who denied God's knowledge". (23)

This same Ibn-Ḥanbal described Jahm's theology in the following words in which one can immediately detect the Mu^ctazilite position of a century later:

"Nothing is like God. He is below the seven earths as He is on the throne. (He is reported to have said of the throne verse, 'Could I scratch that out, I would.') (24) No place is empty of Him and He is not in one rather than another. He has not spoken and does not speak. He cannot be described, is not known by any attribute or act, has no limit or end, and is not comprehended by reason. All of Him is face, light and power; He is not two different things. In Him is neither upper nor lower, no parts or divisions, neither right or left. He is neither heavy nor light. Whenever you think that He is something which you know, then He is different from it." (25)

(22) "Early Discussions Concerning the Qur'ān", pp. 27-40
(23) E. I. 2, art. II, "Djahmiyya" (Watt)
(24) Muslim Theology, p. 62
(25) Ibid., p. 63

The Mu^Ctazilites reached the zenith of their authority in Baghdad under the ^CAbbāsīd caliph al-Ma'mūn who ascended the throne in 198/813. With the support of Qādi Aḥmad b. Abū-Du'ād, he affirmed the dogma of the creation of the Qur'ān and thereby recognized the teachings of the Mu^Ctazila as the state religion. (26) This situation persisted until 232/847 when al-Mutawakkil became caliph and reinstated Sunnism as the religion of his empire.

Wensinck summarizes the theology of the Mu^Ctazilites by saying that they, "The adherents of tawḥīd, reserved eternity for God and rejected it with regard to any other entity, decree, revelation or quality. This is the deep sense of their tawḥīd." (27) It is not within the scope of this study to analyze and reach conclusions concerning the effects of the Mu^Ctazilite presence and influence. Suffice it to say that this was a crisis period within Islām which caused the Muslim world as such to go back to its bases in the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth and restudy the nature of its faith. In one sense, the movement shook the very foundation of Islām and therewith incited an avalanche of rebuttal and theological pronouncements which in reality established the form of Islām as the world knows it today. Over and above everything else, it must be said that this group exalted the person and role of God to the ultimate degree and proclaimed His tanzīh in an absolute way. To that extent certainly they were people of tawḥīd.

(26) E. I. ¹, "Al-Ma'mūn" (K. V. Zettersteen)

(27) The Muslim Creed, p. 76

Guillaume offers various suggestions for the slackening of Mu^catazilite influence following the reign of al-Ma'mūn. (28) He is of the opinion that the source of their views, particularly in respect of man's free will, was influenced by being derived from Christian apologetics, particularly those of John of Damascus (d. 133/750). Secondly, the Umayyads, who claimed to rule by the qadar and will of God, quite naturally "discouraged all opposition to a patient acquiescence in the status quo Thus those who have been branded by the Muslims as a godless dynasty served orthodoxy well by crippling a sect which would have done more to preserve a connection between morality and religion than any other theological school which has ever risen in Islām." Again, even as extreme theological positions in all religions, and particularly those which seem to vitiate the clear voice of revelation, always incur a strong reaction from the masses, so also the extravagant notions of the Mu^ctazilites brought down upon their heads a general ill-will from the people as such. Finally, "the terrible bigotry, cruelty and intolerance exhibited by the Mu^ctazila in their short-lived day of triumph under al-Ma'mūn and his successors brought about a popular reaction so thorough as to sweep away practically all traces of their voluminous writings."

It was during this period that one of Islām's more famous sons came into the ascendancy and established a pattern of Muslim theology that was to have a lasting effect. The man in question, of course, was Aḥmad b. Hanbal

(28) "Some Remarks on Free Will", pp. 62-3

(d. 241/855), also known as "the imām of Baghdad". Though his most famous work actually was the Musnād, perhaps it is correct to say that his greatest influence within the family of Islām resulted from the position he so fervently espoused in respect of the Qur'ān at the height of Mu^ctazilite influence, a conviction for which he was both beaten and imprisoned. "To his mind revelation and tradition, accepted with no attempt to resolve their disharmonies, were the groundwork of religion. He was a fundamentalist, an obscurantist, an authoritarian. He could not abide speculation on theological questions." (29) Thus in him one again sees the pendulum swinging from one extreme to another, as this phenomenon has so frequently occurred during the course of history.

In respect of Ibn-Hanbal's position on the Qur'ān, al-Ash^carī's al-Ibāna has a very clear statement taken from the ḥaḍīth, which includes the following:

".... al-^cAbbās b. ^cAbd al-^cAsīm questioned Abū-^cAbdallāh b. Ḥanbal and he (i. e., ibn-Ḥanbal) said to him, Some people have newly arisen, saying, The Qur'ān is neither created nor uncreated. These are more harmful to men than the Jahmiyya. Al-^cAbbās said, What is your belief, O Abū-^cAbdallāh? He said, In my creed and madhhab there is no doubt that the Qur'ān is uncreated Then Abū-^cAbdallāh discoursed, wondering greatly at doubt concerning this, and so he said, Is there doubt concerning this? God has said, 'Are not the creation and the command His?' and He has said, 'The Merciful hath taught the Qur'ān, hath created men.' And so he distinguished between man and the Qur'ān; wherefore he said,

(29) Ibāna, p. 1

'taught, created' and kept repeating it, 'taught, created,' that is, he distinguished between them." (30)

Though it would be incorrect to include Ibn-Ḥanbal in the school as such, as Tritton states has been done, (31) it would seem in place at this point to address a few words to those who advocated tashbīḥ, a school of thought at times referred to as the Hashwiyya and Nābita (32) which spoke of God as a physical body. Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) refers to them in al-Maḥṣad al-Asnā and states that they can understand the concept "above" only in spatial terms (lā yafhamu min al-fawq illā l-makān). (33) That this group represented more than a passing fancy with Islām is known from Ibn-Rushd (d. 595/1198), who includes them in his listing of the four sects that existed in his day. Of them he says, "concerning the existence of God the Hashwites say this is known by revelation and not by reason. But this is not in accordance with the Qur'ān, which calls upon men to accept the fact of God's existence by rational proofs which are embodied in the Qur'ān." (34)

As one briefly pursues this ultra-conservative element through the early centuries of Islām's history and again uses the throne verse for this purpose, one does notice variations and gradations of the basic premise that was finally to be formalized by al-Ash'arī and therewith become the standard of Mus-

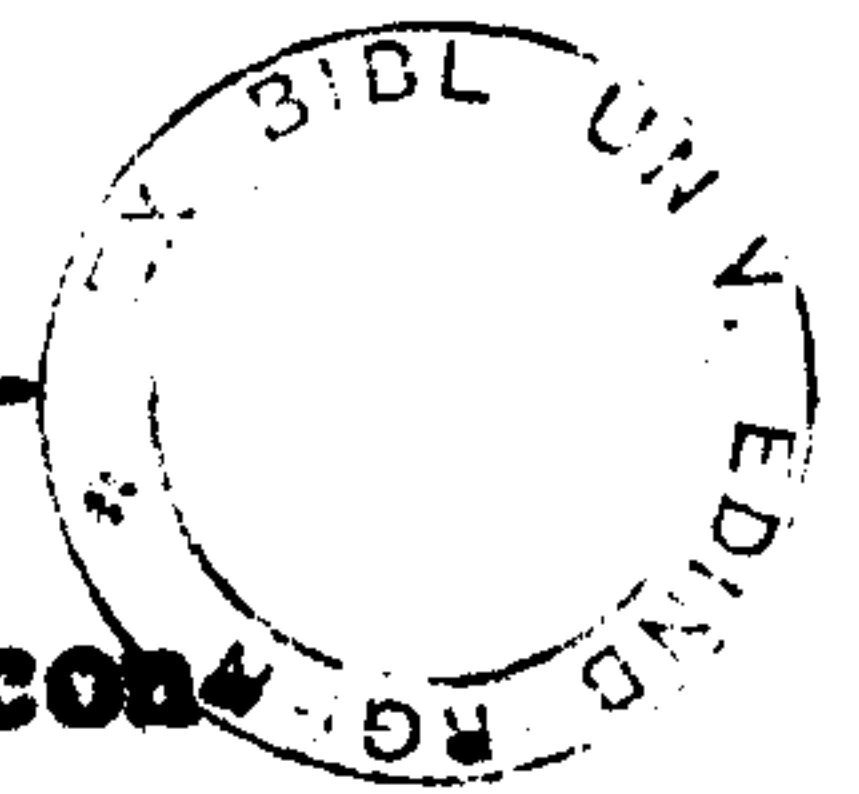
(30) Ibana, p. 75

(31) Muslim Theology, p. 104

(32) Cf. A.S. Halkin's "The Hashwiyya", J.A.O.S., Vol. 54, 1934, for a detailed discussion of this subject.

(33) P. 51

(34) Islam and Christian Theology, P. II, Vol. II, p. 83



lim orthodoxy. Islām's first formal statement of faith was Al-Fiqh al-Akbar I, ascribed to Abū-Hanīfa (d. 150/767). Article 9 of this brief confession states, "Whoso sayeth, I do not know whether God is in heaven or on the earth is an infidel." (35) An anecdote about Abū-Muṣṣ' al-Balkhī, a disciple of Abū-Hanīfa, states that "he asked his master's opinion of one who says: I do not know whether God is in heaven or on earth. Abū-Hanīfa answered, He is an infidel, for God says, 'The Merciful has seated Himself on the throne,' and His throne is above His heavens. I answered, He acknowledges that God seated Himself on His throne, but he declares himself ignorant whether the throne is in heaven or on earth. Abū-Hanīfa answered, If he does not affirm that the throne is in Heaven, he is an unbeliever." (36)

One finds a more elaborate statement on this subject in Wasiyyat Abī-Hanīfa. (It is generally agreed that the Wasiyya is falsely attributed to Abū-Hanīfa. Of the actual author Watt states, "In view of the title he was presumably a follower of Abū-Hanīfa. He has some resemblance to Ahmad b. Hanbal, but he was more favourable to kalām. A Hanafī pupil of Muḥammad b. al-Hasan ash-Shaybānī, of about the time of Ahmad (d. 241/855) might be suggested." (37)) "We confess that God has seated Himself on His throne, without any necessity. If there were any necessity on His part, He would not have been able to create the world and to govern it in the way of created beings; and if He should feel

(35) The Muslim Creed, p. 104.

(36) Ibid., pp. 115-6

(37) Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam, pp. 120-1

a necessity to sit down and to remain sitting, where then was He before the creation? He is elevated above such a supposition." (38) Thus one sees slightly different stances in these two early confessions in respect of the throne. The first, in effect, terms one an unbeliever who does not accept God's physical session on the throne, while the second merely alludes to that session and states that it is not necessary, though at the same time clearly intimating that such a session is possible.

There would seem to be a relationship between the statement of the Wasiyya and that of Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), who is reported to have said, "God's istiwa' (setting Himself firmly upon His throne) is known; how it is done is unknown; it must be believed; questions about it are an innovation (bid'at)." (39) Another person of a similar mind was Muḥammad b. Karrām (d. 255/869) who, as al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) pointed out, encouraged his followers to ascribe corporeality to the object of their worship. He held that God "is a body, possessing an end and limit below, where He comes in contact with His throne," and "that God touches His throne and that the throne is a place for Him," (40) whereas al-Baghdādī himself "translates istawā 'alā 'arshihi to mean that the rule was firmly in God's control." (41)

(38) The Muslim Creed, p. 127

(39) Development of Muslim Theology, p. 186

(40) Muslim Schisms and Sects, pp. 19-20

(41) Ibid., p. 20 (note)

Ibn-Ḥazm (d. 456/1063) states that there were four distinct interpretations of the throne verse within the Muslim community; that is, (1) that of the corporealists, (2) the Mu^ctazilites, (3) the disciples of Ibn-Kullāb, who spoke of this subject in terms of the negation of crookedness, and (4) the position adopted by Ibn-Ḥazm himself, who interpreted it to mean "that ^{Allah} God completed His creation with the throne, following the Rabbinical idea that God took His seat upon the throne for the Sabbath rest." (42) In this connection it is interesting to note that many years later Goldziher expressed his agreement with the interpretation of Ibn-Ḥazm.

Some three centuries later this school of thought found another spokesman in Ibn-Taymiyya (d. 728/1327). Shiblī offers the information that Ibn-Taymiyya "was consulted on the problem of tashbīḥ because he was reputed to believe in it, and it had been objected that to follow such a creed would reduce God to the category of mumkin al-wujūd, i.e., contingent existence, since if God is on the throne He must have a body which is a contingent thing, although He is really wājib al-wujūd, necessary existence. Ibn-Taymiyya replied that according to his opponents' creed God could not even be contingent existence but (must be) impossible, because anything which is in every place and in no place, neither outside nor inside the universe, neither continuous nor discrete, neither located nor in a direction, cannot possibly exist, since this is

(42) Islam and Christian Theology, Pt. II, Vol. II, p. 28, Sweetman quoting from Fiqal, II

a simultaneous rejection of contradictories which is absurd." (43)

The conservative point of view on this important subject seemed to find its level with Ibn-Ḥanbal who rejected the extreme position of Ibn-Karrām stated above and rather adopted the classic statement of Mālik, as Ibn-Tajmiyya cites it in his Rasā'il, "I know that God sits on His throne, but I do not know how (bi-lā kayf). " (44) It was this formula that attained the position of the official interpretation of the orthodox groups within Islām. The extremes on both sides of the spectrum gave way to the mediating formula, bi-lā kayf wa-lā tashbīh. As Sweetman has stated the matter, "all four of the great imāms, Abū-Ḥanīfa, Ash-Shāfi'ī, Ibn-Ḥanbal and Mālik b. Anas, agreed that the discussion of the anthropomorphisms of the Qur'ān was unlawful. Ibn-Ḥanbal declared that "Whoever moves his hand when he reads in the Qur'ān the words, 'I have created with my hands,' ought to have his hand cut off; and whoever stretches out his finger when repeating the words of Muḥammad, 'The heart of the believer is between the two fingers of the Merciful,' deserves to have his finger cut off." (45) Macdonald describes the difference between Ibn-Karrām and Ibn-Ḥanbal on this important subject in the following manner, "If we are to see in the Mu'tazilites scholastic commentators trying to reduce Muḥammad, the poet, to logic and sense, we must see in Ibn-Karrām one of

(43) Islām and Christian Theology, Pt. II, Vol. II, p. 59

(44) Muslim Schisms and Sects, p. 20 (note)

(45) Islām and Christian Theology, Pt. I, Vol. II, p. 28

those wooden-minded literalists, for whom a metaphor is a ridiculous lie if it cannot be taken in its external meaning. He was a part of the great stream of conservative action, in which we find also such a man as Ahmad b. Hanbal. But the saving salt of Ahmad's sense and reverence kept him by the safe proviso 'without considering how and without comparison.' (46)

Even as Ibn-Hanbal's position on the person of God in one sense represented a compromise between the extremes of the anthropomorphists and the Mu^ctazilites and therewith prepared the ground for the stance to be formulated by al-Ash^carī, so also Dirār ibn-^cAmr's doctrine of acquisition led in that direction in respect of the controversial subject of man's acts. Watt offers the information that it probably was Dirār who propounded this mediating view of man's acts in contradistinction to the extremes of both the traditionalists, who held that God alone was responsible for human deeds, and the Mu^ctazilites who placed the total responsibility on man's own shoulders. Confronted with the problem of not being able to accept either the total passivity or responsibility of man, Dirār, who probably lived during the early part of the reign of al-Ma'mūn, formulated his theory of acquisition. Using the eighth form of the verb kasaba, he subsequently spoke of man acquiring his acts, even though this term falls short of stating clearly precisely what role man does play in this matter. (47) It was al-Ash^carī himself who placed

(46) Development of Muslim Theology, pp. 171-2

(47) "The Origin of the Islamic Doctrine of Acquisition", pp. 234-47

kalām's final interpretation on this subject when he said,

"There cannot be, under the authority of God, any acquisition (iktisāb) on the part of human beings that God does not will, just as there cannot be any universally recognized act of God's own that He does not will, because, if any act of His occurred without His knowing it, it would imply a lack in God, and the same would be true if any human act occurred without His knowing it. Therefore, in the same way no human act can occur without His willing it, because that would imply that it occurred out of carelessness and neglect or out of weakness and inadequacy on His part to affect what He will, just as that would necessarily be true if there occurred any universally recognized act of God's that He did not will." (48)

(48) Ibāna, p. 103

Chapter Three

Al-Ash^Carī and His Position In Respect of the Essence of God

Reference has already been made to Abū-l-Hasan al-Ash^Carī's (d. 324/935) roots in the Mu^Ctazilite school in which he continued as a student of al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/915) until the age of forty years. Having been born in Basra in 260/873, not only was he closely attached to the Mu^Ctazila over a period of years but often served as the spokesman for his master "whose gift was for writing rather than for rough and ready disputation." (1)

At-Taftāzānī provides this interesting account of the crisis in al-Ash^Carī's life which forced him to leave the Mu^Ctazilites.

"Their school (i.e., the Mu^Ctazilite's) of thought spread among the people until al-Shaykh Abū-l-Hasan al-Ash^Carī said to his teacher, Abū Aḥī al-Jubbā'ī, 'What have you to say about three brothers, one of whom died obedient, another disobedient and the third in infancy?' He answered, 'The first will be rewarded with the Garden, the second will be punished with the Fire and the third will neither be rewarded nor punished.' Al-Ash^Carī answered, 'And what if the third should say, 'Lord, why didst Thou make me die in infancy, and not detain me until I grew up and believed on Thee and obeyed and thus entered the Garden?' What would the Lord, the Exalted, say then? He answered, 'The Lord would say, I knew that if thou shouldst grow up thou wouldst disobey and enter the Fire, so it was better for thee to die in infancy.' Al-Ash^Carī said, 'And if the second should say, Lord, why didst Thou not cause me to die in infancy so that I should not disobey and enter the Fire? What would the Lord say then?' Al-Jubbā'ī was confounded and al-Ash^Carī abandoned his school of thought." (2)

(1) Ibāna, p. 26

(2) A Commentary on the Creed of Islām, p. 9

Since most of the Mu^ctazila taught that God could do only that which is best for His creatures, al-Jubbā'ī's inability to answer satisfactorily on this occasion must have been a great blow to his student. If the account is to be believed, in this or a similar way al-Ash^carī finally became convinced that pure reason alone could not be trusted to lead one to God's eternal truths.

It is also related that during the month of Ramaḍān, 300/912, Abū-l-Hasan received three visions of the prophet in which he was commanded to "give your support to the opinions related on my authority, for they are reality." (3) Still another account relates that after seeking seclusion in his home for fifteen days, he made a public announcement of this great upheaval in his life from the pulpit of a mosque, (4) and thenceforth set his face to faithfulness only to the Qur'ān and the sunna.

Al-Ash^carī claimed that his theology in no sense of the word offered anything radically new to the House of Islām:

"The belief we hold and the religion we follow are holding fast to the Book of our Lord, to the sunna of our Prophet and to the traditions related on the authority of the Companions and the Successors and the imāms of the ḥadīth; to that we hold firmly, professing what Abū-^cAbdallāh Aḥmad ibn-Muḥammad ibn-Ḥanbal professed, and avoiding him who dissents from his belief, because he is the excellent imām and the perfect

(3) Ibāna, p. 27

(4) Ibid., p. 28

leader, through whom God declared the truth, removed error, manifested the modes of action and overcame the innovations of the innovators, the deviation of the deviators and the skepticism of the skeptics." (5)

It would now seem appropos to cite a few examples of al-Ash'ari's scholastic or dialectic theology (kalām) which not only illustrates his position concerning God but also demonstrates his reliance upon the revealed text of the Qur'ān and his dependence upon Ibn-Hanbal's convictions of nearly a century earlier. Concerning the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān itself, he was of the following position,

"If anybody asks concerning the proof that the Qur'ān is the uncreated Word of God, the answer is: The proof is His words, 'And of His signs also one is that the heavens and the earth stand firm by His command,' (6) and the command of God is His Word and His Speech; since He commands them to stand firm, and they stand firm without being hurled down, their standing firm is by His command. God has also said, 'Are not the creation and the command His?' (7) and therefore all that He created is included in 'the creation', ... wherefore since He has said, 'Is not the creation His?' this applies to all creation; and since He has said, 'and the command,' He speaks of the command as something other than all the creation; and so our account of this matter is a proof that the command of God is uncreated" (8)

Of considerable interest in this connection is the conversation between Ibn-Hanbal and Is'hāq b. Ibrāhīm (d. 235/849), governor of Iraq, who asked Ahmad for proof that the Qur'ān is the uncreated word of God. After citing

(5) Ibāna, pp. 49.50
(6) S. 30, 25/4 (A-3-6)
(7) S. 7, 54/2 (A-3-19)
(8) Ibāna, p. 66

Sūra 7, 54/2, Ibn Ḥanbal went on to point out that a distinction was made in this passage between the creation and the command. "Command (al-amr) in controversies of this kind refers to the eternal and heavenly word of God, just as does 'kun'. Is'hāq said, 'The command is created.' 'What!' exclaimed Aḥmad, 'the command created! Nay, it creates that which is created.'" (9)

The precise relationship between al-Ash^Carī and Ibn-Ḥanbal has been a matter of some interest. For example, in respect of the Ibāna Wensinck stated, "In all this there is scarcely a word that could not have been written by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal." (10) When comparing the Ibāna and the Luma^C, R. J. McCarthy makes the following observation, "I think it is obvious that the former is much more traditionalist than the latter. If al-Ash^Carī was the author of both, the difference could be explained on the score that the Ibāna really was a kind of conciliatory gesture which al-Ash^Carī made to the Ḥanbalites, either immediately after his conversion, or towards the end of his life, but it seems to me that Aḥmad never would have written such a work. And I think that Aḥmad would have shrunk in holy horror from the mere thought of writing such a work as the Luma^C." (11)

One of the primary areas of difference between the Mu^Ctazilites and

(9) Aḥmad ibn-Ḥanbal and the Miḥna, p. 139

(10) The Muslim Creed, p. 92

(11) The Theology of al-Ash^Carī, p. 232

the Ash^carites was the relationship of the attributes (sifāt) of God, that is, al-ḥayā, al-^cilm, al-qudra, al-irāda, as-sam^c, al-baṣar and al-kalām, to His essence. Al-Ghasālī defines the stance of the former group in these words, "... they deny the attributes (of God) and assert as valid only one essence, (but) they do not deny (His) deeds In their opinion all of the seven attributes are reducible to al-^cilm. Furthermore, al-^cilm is reducible to the essence. The explanation is that in their opinion as-sam^c is an expression for His perfect knowledge inasmuch as it is related to sounds, and al-baṣar is an expression for His (perfect) knowledge inasmuch as it is related to colours and the other objects-of-sight." (12) The Ash^carites, on the other hand, believed that God hears by a hearing and sees by a sight that are distinct from His essence. Al-Ash^carī explained and defended his thesis in this wise:

"Among the proofs that God is knowing by a knowledge is the fact that He must be knowing either by Himself or by a knowledge which cannot be Himself. Now if He were knowing by Himself, He Himself would have to be knowledge. For if one said that God is knowing by a quality distinct from Him, he would have to say that this quality is knowledge. But knowledge cannot be knowing, nor can the knower be knowledge, nor can God be identified with His attributes. Do you not see that the way in which one knows that knowledge is knowledge is that by it the knower knows? For the power of man, by which he does not know, cannot be knowledge. Hence, since the Creator cannot be knowledge, He cannot be knowing by Himself. And if that be impossible, it is certain that He is knowing by a knowledge which cannot be Himself." (13)

(12) Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā, p. 78

(13) The Theology of al-Ash^carī, pp. 18.9

Macdonald has summarized kalām's position on the attributes of God in these words, "the orthodox statement, after long controversy, is that they are eternal, subsisting in His essence, and that they are not He nor are they other than He (lā huwa wa la ghayruhu). " (14)

Does God possess a face, eyes, sight and hands as man does? For the Mu^ctazila such a thought was abhorrent, to say the least. One of al-Ash^carī's answers to this important question is the following:

"The rule of the Word of God is that it is to be interpreted literally and truly, and a thing is not transferred from its literal meaning to a metaphorical one except by proof God's words, 'before him whom I have created with My two hands,' are to be interpreted literally and truly, as being a proof of the existence of the two hands, and they may not be transferred from the literal sense of 'two hands' to that which our opponents maintain except by proof; for if that were permitted, one might maintain, without proof, that what has a universal sense in its literal interpretation is particular, and what has a particular sense in its literal interpretation is universal; and since one may not make this contention without evidence, you may not maintain that it is a metaphor unless there is proof; but, on the contrary, God's words, 'before him whom I have created with My two hands,' must be proof of God's possession of two hands in reality, and not two graces, since when two graces are in question, according to the lexicographers, nobody who follows their principles may say, 'I have done something with my two hands,' meaning two graces.' " (15)

Concerning al-Ash^carī's position on the throne verse, the famous historian of Damascus, Ibn-^cAsākir (d. 571/1176), gives us this lucid explanation:

(14) E. I. ¹, "Kalām", pp. 670-5 (Macdonald)

(15) Ibāna, pp. 93.4

".... The Mu^ctazila held that the 'descent' is the descent of some of God's signs and of His angels and that the 'being seated' (on the Throne) means God's dominion. And the Mushabbiha and the Hashwiyya (i.e., the anthropomorphists) held that the descent is the descent of God Himself, involving motion and movement from place to place, and that the being firmly seated is sitting on the Throne and localisation thereon. But al-Ash^carī followed a middle course between them and held that the descent is one of God's attributes, and that the being firmly seated is one of His attributes, and that the action of His action on the Throne is called 'being firmly seated'." (16)

But even more relevant are al-Ash^carī's own words on this important subject,

"If anybody says, 'What do you say regarding God's being seated on the Throne?' the answer is, We say that God is seated on His Throne as He said, 'The Merciful is seated on the Throne.' Then, too, see the Muslims all raising their hands, when they pray, towards heaven, because God is seated on the Throne, which is above the heavens; but if God were not upon the Throne, they would not raise their hands towards the Throne, just as they do not lower them, when they pray, to the earth It may be said to them, If He is not seated on the Throne but is in every place, then He is under the earth, over which the heaven is; and if He is under the earth and the earth above Him and the heaven above the earth, then this compels you to believe that God is under the depth, and created things are above Him, and that He is above the height, and created things are below Him; and if this is true He must be under that above which He is and above that under which He is, and this is impossible and self-contradictory. May God be very far above your calumny against Him!" (17)

Though the creeds of both the Maqālāt and the Ibāna clearly speak of

(16) The Theology of al-Ash^carī, pp. 172.3

(17) Ibāna, pp. 83-5

the believers seeing God in Paradise, the former in the words, "the Ahl al-Hadīth wa-l-Sunna hold that God will be seen by eyes on the Day of Resurrection as the moon is seen on the night of the full moon. The believers will see Him, but the unbelievers will not see Him, for they will be prevented access to God," (18) The Ash^carite school as such followed the lead of al-Ash^carī, "the most redoubtable champion of the Muthbitūn (i. e., the Affirmers, or those who affirmed the divine attributes in contradistinction to those who denied them, the Mu^ctazila, or those who made them too human, the anthropomorphists) who avoided the extremes of ta^cṭīl and tashbīh and affirmed of God what God affirmed of Himself, and denied of God that which is unworthy of Him," (19)

One again sees the scholastic theologian hard at work in al-Ash^carī's rationalistic explanation of the manner in which it will be possible to see God in Paradise without falling prey to the error of the Mushabbīha. He writes in the Ibāna,

"The Muslims agree that in Paradise there is such peaceful, pleasant, abiding life as neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor mortal heart conceived; and there is not a more pleasant thing in Paradise than God's visibility to sight. Most of those who serve God serve Him for the view of His countenance. Hence, if there is not, after the visibility of God, a better thing than the visibility of His prophet, and the visibility of God's prophet is the greatest delight of Paradise, the visibility of God is better than the visibility of His prophet. Since

(18) The Theology of al-Ash^carī, pp. 236 and 242

(19) Ibid., p. 148

that is so, God does not forbid the prophets He sends, or His attending angels, or the congregation of the faithful and just, the view of His countenance - and that because vision does not leave a mark upon the thing seen (for the vision of the beholder remains in him); wherefore, since this is so, and vision does not leave a mark upon the thing seen, it does not necessitate tashbīh or swerving from the truth, and it is not impossible with respect to God that He should show His faithful servants Himself in His Paradise." (20)

In these words al-Ash^carī clearly speaks of tashbīh as a "swerving from the truth". But by no stretch of the imagination dare one equate this stance with that of the Mu^ctazila who propounded a pure tanzīh and looked upon every indication of tashbīh as heresy. In another reference to the position of the Mu^ctazila and the Jahmiyya on the throne verse, al-Ash^carī makes the statement, "... they have not established any reality in their predication ... since all their reasoning amounts to ta^cṭīl, and all their predications prove rejection. Do you mean by that the assertion of tanzīh and the rejection of tashbīh? Then we take refuge in God from a tanzīh that necessitates denial or ta^cṭīl." (21)

One other significant aspect of al-Ash^carī's theological position comes to light in his creeds in both the Maqālāt and the Ibāna. In Article 9 of the former he affirms, "They (i. e., Ahl al-Hadīth wa-s-Sunna) confess that God has two eyes, without asking how (bi-lā kayf), as He said, 'Which moved

(20) Ibāna, pp. 62.3

(21) Ibid., p. 87

along under our eyes;'" (22) and in the latter he states, "We confess that God has two hands, without asking how, as He said, 'I have created with my two hands,' (23) and 'On the contrary, both His hands are stretched wide'." (24) (25)

Even as Ibn-Hanbal in his day used the bi-lā kayf formula to good advantage, so also al-Ash^Carī adopted it to help enunciate his position between the extremes of tashbīh and ta^Cṭīl. Perhaps it can also be stated that though Ibn-Hanbal used it primarily to emphasize his solid stance upon both revelation and the traditions, by the time the term was employed by al-Ash^Carī it would seem to have included the additional meaning of tanzīh, at least to the extent of barring any comparison between God and man. Or to state the matter alternately, God has two eyes but certainly not in the sense that mortal man does. However, since God has revealed this fact in the Qur'ān, man's only responsibility is to accept it and refrain from useless questions that no mortal can answer. Bi-lā kayf wa lā tashbīh - this is the formula that most succinctly illustrates the position of Sunnite Islām.

In this connection Goldziher offers the following observation:

"In order to escape crass anthropomorphism, al-Ash^Carī included in his creed the reservation that God's face, hands,

(22) S. 54, 14 (A-1-30)

(23) S. 38, 75 (A-2-12)

(24) S. 5, 64/9 (B-24)

(25) The Theology of al-Ash^Carī, p. 237

feet, and the like in this context are not to be understood in terms of members of the human body but must rather be understood bi-lā kayf, without asking how. However, the matter was not actually settled in this manner, since the orthodoxy already in existence understood the subject in this precise way. Rather than settling the issue between the Hanbalites and Mu^ctazilites, it represented an unconditional surrender of the Mu^ctazilite deserter to the point of view of the inflexible imāms of traditionalism and their followers. By this far-reaching concession which he made to the faith of the masses, he made many more of the Muslim people aware of the momentous achievements of the Mu^ctazilites. As a result of his point of view the existing belief in magic and sorcery, not to mention the miracles of the holy men, remained untouched, whereas the Mu^ctazilites had done away with these things." (26)

It is to be added that in this instance Goldziher was drawing upon material from al-Mas^cūdī (d. 345/956).

Since it is generally recognized that kalām, which Macdonald^d describes as "the idea representing the problem of the personality of God as a combination of a dhāt with ḡifāt," (27) found its most articulate exponent in al-Ash^carī and through him became the standard of Sunni Muslim theology, it would seem in order to hear al-Ghazālī's opinion on the subject.

"If this were said to you by an adherent of Tradition or of anthropomorphism, you might think people usually hate what they do not understand. But I speak as one who has descended to the bottom of kalām and has been inspired with a hatred of it Certainly in some cases kalām is not void of all light and guidance, but usually it is profitable only in questions that can also be understood

(26) Vorlesungen, p. 121

(27) E. Lⁱ, "Kalām", pp. 670-5

without scholastic reasoning. Nay, it may be said that its use is limited to a single case; that is, kalām may serve to prevent the dogmatic belief of the masses from being disturbed by disputations with schismatics. For the masses are weak-minded and easily troubled by the disputes of schismatics If it should thus be clear that kalām may be useful or obnoxious, its application must be like the application of a dangerous medicine by a skillful doctor, who makes use of it only in the appropriate place, time and measure. Consequently the masses must be left alone with their sound dogmas To teach them the kalām would be utterly harmful. For often it arouses doubts in them and shakes their faith beyond recovery." (28)

W. C. Klein seems to summarize this subject quite aptly when he says, "Al-Ash^carī succeeded, while professing to be an adherent of Ahmad's, in drafting the kalām into the service of Sunnite theology. When his work was done, institutionalism and rationalism had come to terms. It remained only for al-Ghazālī to introduce the third element, mysticism, into their union." (29)

(28) The Muslim Creed, pp. 97.8

(29) Ibāna, p.1

Chapter Four

Tagawwuf and Its Position
In Respect of the Essence of God

Perhaps it is correct to say that no theological system, regardless of the degree of order, consistency and rationality it is able to attain, has or will ever fully satisfy the masses of people. In the final analysis, inherent within the very concept of religion as such is a personal and emotional element that not even the ultimate degree of mental acumen and philosophical nuances can fully placate. It would seem that one can see some comparison in the contemporary Christian milieu in which the considerable emphasis upon the transcendence of God, though attracting no little attention particularly from the intellectuals throughout the Christian world, is at the same time almost driving another element to an even more vigorous insistence upon their proximity to Him. This phenomenon as seen in a Muslim context in one sense almost demanded and necessitated the rise of Tagawwuf. Though this particular religious expression, which perhaps had and has its counterparts in all major religions, did not begin to include in its number the majority of Muslims of any given period, it nonetheless provided a haven to counterbalance the unrelenting philosophical and dialectical approaches of the Mu^Ctasilites and Ash^Carites, respectively. R. A. Nicholson states the matter in this way, "the Sūfīs would not have succeeded so thoroughly in bringing over the mass of religious Muslims to their side unless the champions of orthodoxy had set about constructing a system of scholastic philosophy

that reduced the divine nature to a purely formal, changeless and absolute unity, a bare will devoid of all affections and emotions, a tremendous and incalculable power with which no human creature could have any communion or personal intercourse whatsoever." (1)

One cannot understand the development of Sūfism accurately without taking into consideration the asceticism that existed in Arabia and other lands during and after the life of Muḥammad. In fact, there is evidence to believe that he himself was acquainted with and impressed by various individuals who devoted their lives to this pursuit. Goldziher is of the opinion that two factors which played into this phenomenon were an exaggerated consciousness of sin and an overwhelming dread of divine retribution, (2) which factors one perhaps automatically associates with an awareness of God's proximity and one's accountability to Him. Ibn-Khaldūn informs us that the practice of these people included "persistence in acts of worship, living uniquely for God, turning away from the adornments of the world, abstinence from pleasure, wealth and ambition and separation from mankind in solitude for the purpose of worship". (3)

The term Sūfī was in use before the end of the second century/ca. 815, being first applied to Abū-Ḥāshim of Kūfa (d. 150/767). (4) Nicholson

(1) The Mystics of Islām, pp. 22-3

(2) Quoted from Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry," p. 304

(3) The Religious Attitude and Life in Islām, p. 166

(4) "A Historical Enquiry", p. 305

is of the opinion that "Sūfism of the ascetic and quietistic type owes comparatively little to Christianity or any foreign source It seems to me that this type of mysticism was the native product of Islām itself and that it was an almost necessary consequence of the Muslim conception of God, a conception which could not possibly satisfy the spiritually-minded Muslim. Though early Sūfīs carried asceticism and quietism to great lengths, their mysticism was very moderate. They loved God but they feared Him more, and the end of their love was apathetic submission to His will, not perfect knowledge of His being. The word that best describes their attitude is quietism (riḍā). " (5) In other words, Islām's initial expression of Sūfism had a great deal in common with the asceticism already practiced by adherents of other faiths.

However, by the beginning of the third century it had assumed quite another character as exemplified by the definition ascribed to Ma^crūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815), that is to say, "the apprehension of divine realities." (6) Al-Ghazālī states in his al-Munqidh min ad-Dalāl that "the mystic 'way' includes both intellectual belief and practical activity; the latter consists in getting rid of the obstacles in the self and in stripping off its base characteristics and vicious morals, so that the heart may attain to freedom from what is not God and to constant recollection of Him." (7) In his al-Maqṣad

(5) "A Historical Enquiry", p. 305-6

(6) The Mystics of Islām, p. 14

(7) The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī, p. 54

al-Asnā he supplies this additional information, "the name of God Most High that is on the lips of the Ṣūfīs in most states is al-Haqq (the Real One), since that which is uppermost in their experience is their self-annihilation (fanā') in terms of their essence, for they can glimpse the real essence to the exclusion of that which in itself is perishing." (8)

Theosophical Ṣūfism, which reached the height of its influence during the early part of the third century was "the product of the union of Greek thought and Oriental religion, and in particular of Neo-Platonism, Christianity and Gnosticism." (9) Its first exponent was Dhū-n-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859), who when asked about the manner in which he knew God replied, "I know Him by myself." (10) He also was of the opinion that true praise of God involves an absorption of the worshipper in the object of his worship.

The extreme pantheistic ideas which also find a place within Ṣūfism and were introduced by Abū-Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 261/874) were either of Persian or Indian origin. It is reported that one day a man knocked at his door and asked for al-Biṣṭāmī. The answer he received was, "Is there really anyone in the house other than God?" To another similar request he replied, indicating that his personality was lost in God, "I have sought Abū-Yazīd for many years, and I cannot find him." (11) Al-Biṣṭāmī expressed

(8) P. 61

(9) "A Historical Enquiry", p. 320

(10) Ibid., p. 310

(11) "A Sketch of the Development of Ṣūfism", p. 99

the relationship between God and man in the words, "Information about God is in man, knowledge of Him is in man, love of Him is in man and His heart is the heart of man." It is also related that he said, "I am a sea without bottom, without beginning, without end I am Abraham, I am Moses, I am Jesus. All that is swallowed up in God is God." (12) The passing away of the individual self in the Universal Being is generally referred to as fanā'. This stage, which includes different grades and meanings, Nicholson has described in the following manner:

- "1. A moral transformation of the soul through the extinction of all its passions and desires.
2. A passing-away of the mind from all objects of perception, thoughts, actions and feelings through its concentration upon the thought of God.
3. The cessation of all conscious thought. The highest stage of fanā' is reached when even the consciousness of having attained fanā' disappears. This is what the Sūfīs call 'the passing-away of the passing-away' (fanā' al-fanā'). This final stage of fanā' forms the prelude to baqā', 'continuance' or 'abiding' in God." (13)

Another towering figure among the esoteric Sūfīs was al-Junayd (d. 298/910). At the heart of his teaching was the state of tawḥīd and divine unification, which he defined as follows, "In this state (i.e., the state in which the Sūfī realizes that his own attributes in reality are the attributes of God and thus his own attributes have actually vanished) of absolute purity he

(12) "A Sketch of the Development of Sūfism", p. 100
(13) The Mystics of Islām, p. 60-1

has lost his personal attributes; by this loss he is wholly present (in God). By being wholly present in God, he is wholly lost to himself. Thus he is present before God while absent in himself; absent and present at the same time. He is where he is not, and he is not where he is Then, after he has not been, he is where he had been (i.e., before creation). He is himself, after he had not been really himself. He is present in himself and in God, after having been present in God and absent in himself. This is because he has left the intoxication of God's over-whelming (ghalab) and has come to sobriety (sahū), and contemplation is once more restored to him so that he can put everything in its right place and assess it correctly." (14)

Nicholson has given us a concise summary of Ṣūfism through this point:

"Ṣūfism, in the sense of mysticism and quietism, was a natural development of ascetic tendencies which manifested themselves in Islām during the Umayyad period.

This asceticism was not independent of Christian influence, but on the whole it may be called a Muslim product, and the Ṣūfism which grew out of it is also essentially Muslim.

Towards the end of the second century a new current of ideas began to flow into Ṣūfism. These ideas, which are non-Islāmic and theosophical in character, are discernible in the sayings of Ma^cru^f al-Karkhī.

During the first half of the third century the new ideas were greatly developed and became the dominating element in Ṣūfism.

The man who above all others gave the Ṣūfī doctrine its permanent shape was Dhū-n-Nūn al-Miṣrī.

(14) "The Doctrine of Junayd", p. 168

The historical environment in which the doctrine arose points clearly to Greek philosophy as the source from which it was derived.

Its source must be sought in Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism.

As the theosophical element in Sūfism is Greek, so the extreme pantheistic ideas, which were first introduced by al-Bisṭāmī, are Persian or Indian. The doctrine of fanā' is probably derived from the Buddhistic Nirvāṇa. (15)

During the latter part of the third century Sūfism became an organized system with teachers, pupils and rules of discipline; and continual efforts were made to show that it was based on the Qur'ān and the traditions of the prophet." (16)

Perhaps it is correct to say that theosophical Sūfism reached its apex in the life and sayings of al-Ḥallāj (d. 310/922). Following some eight years in a Baghdad prison, he was finally crucified and burned for his teachings which the majority of the Muslim world considered heretical, particularly his well-known words, "Anā l-Ḥaqq", "I am the Real One." As Louis Massignon pointed out, it was al-Ḥallāj "who was to explain how this transforming union was to be realized, namely, by a sudden transposition of the roles between God and man, an exchange between the tongue and the heart of the mystic in which sometimes it is still God who inspires the heart and man who gives testimony by his tongue, and other times it is man who aspires in his heart and God who gives testimony by His tongue, the concord

(15) It is to be noted that elsewhere (i.e., The Mystics of Islām, p. 59) Nicholson qualifies this statement by adding, "We cannot identify fanā' with Nirvāṇa unconditionally."

(16) "A Historical Enquiry", pp. 329-30

remaining perfect and constant between them both, 'I and You.' " (17)

A contemporary Mu^ctazilite theologian, Abū-l-Qāsim al-Ka^cbī (d. 319/931) defined the theology of al-Hallāj in this fashion,

"He maintained that the one who disciplines his body by obedience to rites, keeps his heart busy in pious works, bears the privation of pleasures and possesses his soul by forbidding himself desires, by so doing rises to the position of those who have come near to God. In this manner he slowly and continuously descends the degrees of distance (between himself and God) until his nature is purified of that which is carnal. When he reaches the point where he is free of carnal attachments, then that Spirit of God from which Jesus was conceived descends upon him. It is at this stage that he becomes the one whom everything obeys, he does not want anything except that which executes God's commands, and thereafter everyone of his acts is the act of God and his commands are God's commands." (18)

As Massignon has indicated, this summary distinguishes the three distinct phases in the mystical life, that is to say,

"General ascetic exercises - tahdhīb (self-correction or purification), tagrīb (nearness) and tafrīd (detachment of the soul from all desires and affections) The ascetic is the murīd, he who desires God.

Passive purification - iqṭirār (compulsion); the one purified is the murād, he whom God desires; the wahdānī adh-Dhāt, he whose essence God unifies.

The life of union - ḥayāt al-jam^c, the reality of the state of union between man and God." (19)

A theological formulation of this nature automatically and indubitably

(17) La Passion D'al al-Hallāj, pp. 514-5

(18) Ibid., p. 515

(19) Ibid., pp. 516-7

expresses a proximity to God that is foreign to the mainstream of Muslim theology as such. As al-Ghazālī has stated, "In general what they manage to achieve is nearness to God," (20) an immediate experience (dhawq) of Him.

In this connection three new concepts appear in the theology of Tapawwuf which in one sense endeavor to explain the manner in which this proximity is achieved. Al-Ghazālī addressed himself to this subject when he said, "Some (i.e., those who achieve nearness to God) would conceive of this as 'inherence' (ḥulūl), some as 'union' (ittihād) and some as 'attaining' (wuṣūl). All that is erroneous." (21) One finds quite a lengthy refutation of the first two of these concepts in al-Maqṣad al-Aṣnā, in addition to al-Ghazālī's interpretation of these words.

"The fourth alternative is (the possibility) of uniting (man and God). This is even more obviously false (than the transfer of the attributes of divinity to man), because to say that man has become the Lord is in itself contradictory If both X and Y exist, one of the two cannot become the very self of the other If one of the two is non-existent and the other existent, there would not be a union for an existent cannot be united with a non-existent One's speaking of a union (between two objects) and saying 'the one is the other' is not possible except by expanding (the meaning of the words) and using them metaphorically which is in accordance with the practice of the Sūfīs They speak metaphorically as did the poet (al-Hallāj) when he said, 'I am the one I love, and the one whom I love is I.' He does not mean by these words that he is really the other but rather that it is as if he were

(20) The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī, p. 61

(21) Ibid.

he In the same way one must construe the words of Abū-Yasīd (al-Bisṭāmī) when he said, "I am (completely stripped of my (former) self just as the snake is stripped of its skin. I looked and realized that I am He." The meaning of this is that the one who strips himself of his appetites, passion and desire in such a way that he no longer has room (in his person) for anything except God he does become as if he were He but not in the sense that he is actually He." (22)

"The fifth alternative is inherence (ḥulūl). This (concept) is represented by one saying that the Lord is inherent in man or man is inherent in the Lord. May the Lord of lords be exalted above the assertions of such false ones! We say that inherence must denote one of two things. One of them is the relationship that exists between the body and the place in which the body is. That (relationship) can only exist between two bodies, for such a relationship is inconceivable for that which is free of the abstract form of corporeality. The second is the relationship that exists between the accident and the substance. For the accident subsists by virtue of the substance. This may be expressed by saying that the accident inheres in the substance, but that is inconceivable of anything that is self-subsisting. One need not even mention the Lord Most High in this context! For anything that is self-subsisting can inhere in something else that is self-subsisting only in terms of the proximity that may exist between the (two) bodies. If ḥulūl is inconceivable with respect of two men, then how is it possible between man and the Lord Most High?" (23)

However, it is to be noted that the situation is different in respect of wuṣūl. In al-Maqṣad al-Asnā al-Ghazālī approves the use of this term when he states in answer to his question, "What is the meaning of wuṣūl (attaining)?" that it is achieved when "the beauty of the truth is revealed to man in such a way that he becomes completely absorbed in it. As far as knowledge is con-

(22) Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā, pp. 73-4

(23) Ibid., pp. 75-6

cerned, he has none except for Him. His whole being is occupied with the whole of Him, (that is to say), beholding and desiring (Him) The end is that he strips off his (former) self altogether and devotes himself exclusively to God. In fact, he is as if he were He, and that is the 'Attaining'." (24)

But in his Munqidh min ad-Dalāl, as noted above, al-Ghazālī includes this term, too, with those he considers erroneous. A possible explanation for this incongruity has been suggested: "It is not unlikely that this inconsistency can be resolved by noting the ambiguity of the word. He (al-Ghazālī) would accept the mystical goal as a state of attainment, but would reject it as a state of connection or contact which the crude mind imagines to take place between man and God." (25) Another possibility comes to mind in respect of Watt's assignment of al-Ghazālī's authentic works to four distinct periods. Al-Maqqad al-Asnā falls into the second period dominated by Ihyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn and other works with similar ideas, whereas the Munqidh is to be found in the later fourth period set apart by the use of dhawq (mystical experience). (26) Were time a factor in attempting to explain al-Ghazālī's contrasting attitudes over against wuṣūl in these two instances, one could possibly conclude that he grew more conservative theologically late in life, though this does not seem likely in view of his other works produced at this time.

(24) Al-Maqqad al-Asnā, p. 76

(25) Ghazālī's Unique Unknowable God, p. 34 (note)

(26) "The Authenticity of the Works Attributed to al-Ghazālī", p. 30

It would now seem in order to direct our attention to the man who not only gained for Sūfism a recognized role within the House of Islām but also infused Sunnite theology with a Sūfī element that brought to Islām a new vitality and effervescence. That man, of course, was Abū-Hāmid Muḥammad ibn-Muḥammad al-Tūsī al-Ghazālī (450/1058-505/1111). Following his ten years of intensive study of the four primary groups seeking to find ultimate truth, namely, the theologians, the Bāṭiniyya or those who were willing to accept the definition of truth as defined by their authoritative imām, the philosophers and the Sūfīs, he came to this conclusion, "I learnt with certainty that it is above all the mystics who walk on the road of God; their life is the best life, their method the soundest method, their character the purest character The purity (of the mystic 'way' (tarīqā)) is the purification of the heart from what is other than God Most High; the key of it is the sinking of the heart completely in the recollection of God; and the end of it is complete absorption (fanā') in God." (27)

In the latter portion of this study one will find a translation of the greater portion of al-Ghazālī's al-Maqsad al-Asnā, which is of considerable help in understanding his theology, particularly in respect of the essence of God and man's relation to Him. Of particular interest and importance are the admonitions he attaches to the various names in which he describes the manner in which man can attempt to simulate the attributes of God and there-

(27) The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī, pp. 60-1

with gain his place in Paradise. By his own admission the incentive for such an approach was provided by the sayings ascribed to Muhammad, "Be characterized by the characters of God Most High," and "God Most High has such-and-such characteristics, and he who is characterized by one of them enters heaven." (28)

However, he quickly goes on to emphasize that "the meaning of it (that is, the application of the names to men) is that he has attained (qualities) corresponding to these characteristics, even as one says that so-and-so has attained the knowledge of his teacher, whereas the student (in reality) does not attain the knowledge of the teacher but attains (only) a likeness of his knowledge. If anyone should think that what is meant by this is not that which we have mentioned, he definitely is wrong." (29)

Earlier in this text al-Ghazālī makes the same emphasis though in a different context. Having referred to man's median role between the animal kingdom and the angels, of whom the latter are privileged in being near to God, he goes on to say, "The one who is near to the one who is near must himself be near. If you were to say that the obvious meaning of this statement implies the assertion of a resemblance between man and God Most High, because if man is characterized by the characteristics of God Most High then he must (also) resemble Him, let me assure you that both revelation and reason

(28) Al-Maqṣad al-Aṣṣaḥ, p. 72

(29) Ibid., p. 73

clearly testify that God Most High is not similar to anything. He does not resemble anything and (absolutely) nothing resembles Him." (30)

Perhaps the technical term that is most apt in conjunction with this aspect of al-Ghazālī's theology is mukhālafā, that is to say, the assertion of the essential difference between the qualities of God and the similarly-named qualities of man.

The portion of his creed listed herewith, incorporated in the second volume of his Ihyā', would seem to indicate this quite clearly:

"He in His essence is One without any partner, single without any similar, eternal without any opposite, separate without any like. He is one, prior (qadīm) with nothing before Him, from eternity (azalī) without any beginning, abiding in existence with none after Him, to eternity (abadī) without any end, subsisting without ending, abiding without termination We witness that He is not a body possessing form, nor a substance possessing bounds and limits. He does not resemble bodies, either in limitation or in accepting division. He is not a substance and substances do not exist in Him; and He is not an accident and accidents do not exist in Him. He does not resemble an entity, and no entity resembles Him; nothing is like Him, and He is not like anything. Measure does not bound Him, and boundaries do not contain Him. The directions do not surround Him, and neither the earth nor the heavens are on different sides of Him He hears and sees Distance does not curtain off His hearing, and darkness does not dull His seeing. He sees without eyeball or eyelid and hears without earholes or ears, just as He knows without a brain, seizes without a limb and creates without an instrument, since His qualities do not resemble the qualities of created things just as His essence does not resemble the essences of created things." (31)

(30) Al-Maqṣad al-Aṣnā, p. 72

(31) The Development of Muslim Theology, pp. 303, 307

In his ar-Risāla al-Qudsiyya, also from the Ihyā' period, al-Ghazālī addresses himself to the four pillars upon which the structure of the Islāmic faith stands. The first of these concerns itself with the essence of God and the fact that "He exists (wujūd), is pre-existent (qidam), everlasting (baqā'), not a substance (jawhar), not a body (jism), not an accident (ʿarad), is not limited by direction (jiha), is not settled in a place (makān), can be seen and is one. (32)

In keeping with our previous practice of citing an individual's interpretation of the throne verse as at least some indication of his general theological stance, we now turn to two references which indicate al-Ghazālī's position in this respect. His creed in the Ihyā' contains these words,

"Lo, He is seated firmly upon His throne (ʿarsh) after the manner which He has said and in the sense in which He willed a being seated firmly (istiwā), which is far removed from contact and fixity of location The throne does not carry Him, but the throne and those that carry it are carried by the grace of His power and mastered by His grasp. He is above the throne and the heavens and above everything unto the limit of the moist earth, with an aboveness which does not bring Him nearer to the Throne and the heavens, just as it does not make Him farther from the earth Nay, He is exalted by degrees from the throne and the heavens just as He is exalted by degrees from the earth and the moist earth" (33)

One finds this additional explanation in his al-Iqtisād fī-l-ʿItiqād:

"Furthermore, we claim that God is too sublime for one to ascribe to Him a physical session upon the throne. Everything

(32) "Al-Ghazālī's The Jerusalem Tract", p. 95

(33) The Development of Muslim Theology, p. 304

that is contained in a material body unquestionably is limited quantitatively. Either it is larger, smaller or of the same size as the body, and with all this there is attached a definite quantitative limitation. Moreover, were it possible for a body to come into contact with Him on one side, it would also be possible for another to come into contact with Him on the other side in such a way that He would be (physically) surrounded. This conclusion which necessarily follows their position they (i.e., the anthropomorphists) themselves would not accept. Briefly, only a body can sit upon (another) body and only a (material) object can be contained, and it is evident that God is neither a body nor an object." (34)

Of considerable importance in this respect is the common Muslim hope and certainty of seeing God in Paradise, as indicated by the quotation from ar-Risāla al-Qudsiyya. The basis of this expectation is found in Sūra 75 where one reads, "That day (i.e., in Paradise) will faces be resplendent looking toward their Lord." (35) However, some time later Muḥammad was led to qualify this statement to some extent by sharing these words with his people, though it must be recognized that the following verse concerns itself with the possibility of seeing God in this life, "When Moses came to Our appointed tryst and his Lord had spoken unto him, he said, My Lord! Show me (thyself) that I may gaze upon Thee. He said, Thou wilt not see Me, but gaze upon the mountain! If it stand still in its place, then thou wilt see Me. And when his Lord revealed (His) glory to the mountain He sent it crashing down...." (36)

(34) Der Islām, Mit Ausschluss Des Qur'āns, p. 69

(35) S. 75, 22-3 (A-1-27)

(36) S. 7, 143/39 (A-3-19). Rodwell translates the final portion of this verse, "He turned it into dust."

Quite obviously al-Ghazālī addressed himself to the hope of seeing God with reference to the latter verse when he said, "Mūsā heard the speech of God without a sound and without a letter, just as the pious see the essence of God in the other world without a substance or an attribute." (37) In his Kitāb al-Luma^c al-Ash^carī defined the seeing of God in Paradise in this manner, "The affirmation of the vision of God involves no likening the Creator to creatures, no classifying Him under a genus (so that He would be 'like' visible creatures) and no essential alteration in Him." (38) In one sense al-Ghazālī's position on this subject is identical. It is true that the believers will see God in Paradise but not in the sense that a servant beholds his king in this life, for it must be remembered that God possesses a unique quality termed al-mukhālafah lil-hawādith by means of which He is always and ever different from originated things. Thus He will be seen in Paradise with the understanding that He is Mukhālif lil-Hawādith. He will and cannot be seen as one mortal sees another.

However, it would be both incorrect and unfair to state that al-Ghazālī's theology stopped at this point. The above would seem to give some indication of his theology in respect of the essence of God; that is to say, the essence of God as revealed in both the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth to the extent that it can be comprehended by man. However, as one might well expect of a

(37) The Development of Muslim Theology, p. 308

(38) The Theology of Al-Ash^carī, p. 46

man possessing such a high degree of both spirituality and mental acumen, his theology did not end with the ontological aspect. The God of Islām, matchless and unparalleled as He is, is vitally and constantly involved not only with the inanimate structures of this universe but also with the total life of human beings. What, then, is the role of man in this divine-human encounter? Is he simply an automaton, a pawn on the chess-board to be sacrificed, if necessary, to the arbitrary will and decree of his Mover? It is particularly in this respect that one finds al-Ghazālī's theology so challenging. To state the matter concisely, he does hold out to his fellow Muslims, and all those who would seek the God of the Qur'ān, not only the hope of exercising at least some degree of enterprise in his spiritual life but also the enchanting prospect of being able to draw near to God.

When seen in its totality, al-Maḡad al-Asnā cannot but lead one in this direction. First of all, al-Ghazālī very frequently refers the reader to the various grades (darajāt) and ranks (rutab) that exist in the universe in general and among men in particular. Even as there are seven heavens upon which rest the footstool (al-kursī) and the throne (al-ʿarsh), so also are there grades among both inanimate and animate beings. Man is higher than the vegetable and animal kingdoms but lower than the angels. The learned man is higher than the unlearned but lower than the saints, who have mystic vision, and the prophets.

As indicated above, al-Ghazālī was impressed by the tradition related from the prophet in which he said, "God Most High has such-and-such characteristics, and he who is characterized by one of them enters heaven." The following examples would seem to provide ample evidence of the manner in which he envisaged man climbing from the slough of darkness and ignorance into various degrees of light emanating from the presence of God. The admonition attached to the definition of the name al-Hakam (the Arbiter) includes these words, "There are various grades of men in respect of seeing the judgment (of God). There is the one who looks to the ultimate result, judging the judgment according to that which ultimately results to him; and the one who looks to the beginning, judging it by that judgment which was passed upon him in the beginning. The former is the higher of the two since the end follows the beginning. There is (also) the one who leaves aside the past and the future. He is a creature of the present. He looks to the judgment and is content with that which occurs from the predestination of God and (also) with that which results from it. He is higher than those who went before him. Then there is also the one who forsakes the present, past and future; his heart is completely absorbed in the judgment, and he perseveres with his witness. This is the highest grade (of all)." (39)

The explanation of the name al-Hakīm (The Ultimately Wise One) includes this description, "The one who knows all things but does not know

(39) Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā, p. 45

God Most High is not worthy of being called hakīm, for he does not know the most sublime and best of all things The sublimity of knowledge is commensurate with the sublimity of the things known, and there is nothing more sublime than God The one who knows God speaks differently from other men. He does not concern himself with temporal advantages, but rather does he concern himself with that which will avail him in the hereafter" (40)

To his definition of the name al-Walī (The Patron), al-Ghazālī appends this advice, "Al-Walī among men is the one who loves God and His friends, the one who helps God and His friends and the one who treats God's enemies as his enemies. Both self and Satan are among the enemies of God. The one who forsakes these two and (thereby) causes the affair of God Most High to triumph, the one who is a friend of the friends of God and an enemy of God's enemies, he is al-Walī among men." (41)

The God of the Qur'an is also known as al-Qayyūm (the Self-Subsisting One). Al-Ghazālī concludes his discussion of this name by adding that "man's access in respect of this characteristic is commensurate with his independence of things other than God Most High." (42)

Late in life al-Ghazālī wrote a letter in which he again referred to the

(40) Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā, p. 58

(41) Ibid., p. 62

(42) Ibid., p. 63

various ranks existent among men. "Know that men are divided into three groups in turning towards what is their Qibla. (There are, first of all,) the people at large, who limit their consideration to this transient world, and of these the prophet expressed his disapproval when he said, 'No wolves attacking the sheepfold are more destructive to the faith of the Muslim than the love of wealth and honour.' The second are the elect, who give their chief attention to the next world, knowing that it is more excellent and enduring than this, and they do good works for its sake The third are the elect of the elect, and they are those who know that beyond everything is something else They are convinced that this world and the world to come are but the creation of God and the most important things in them are eating and procreating Therefore they have turned away from both and turned towards their Creator To them has been revealed the meaning of 'God is more exalted and abides', (43) and they are convinced of the truth of, 'There is no god but God.' " (44)

In his Kitāb al-Arba'īn al-Ghazali further states, "When the worshipper thinks no longer of his worship or himself, but is altogether absorbed in Him Whom he worships, that state, by the gnostics, is called fanā', when a man has so passed away from himself that he feels nothing of his bodily members nor what passes within his own mind. He is absent from all that, and

(43) S. 20, 73/5 (A-2-8), Rodwell. Pickthall translates, "God is better and more lasting."

(44) Al-Ghazālī, The Mystic, pp. 33-4, M. Smith quoting from Mi'cyār al-ʿIlm, pp. 11-2

all that is absent from him. He is journeying first to his Lord, then (at the end) he is in his Lord." (45)

In words such as these do we hear al-Ghazālī, the Ṣūfī, speaking, and there can be little doubt of their meaning. It would seem to be true that his veneration of both the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth, in addition to his own intellectual prowess, would not permit him to go beyond mukhālafa in defining the essence of God. But he was much more than a scholastic and an intellectual. By experience he was also a Ṣūfī. His years of searching for truth, self-examination and self-deprivation brought him to the point where he found God through experience, that experience which in one sense must be realized in order to be understood. And to this extent he knew a nearness to God that could be understood only by one who has walked the same path (ṭarīqa). Thus, were one required to define his theology, it would seem that there could be no other answer than that God for al-Ghazālī was both transcendent and immanent, in the sense that the above lines have attempted to explain.

(45) Quoted from M. Smith, Al-Ghazālī, The Mystic, p. 190

Kitāb Al-Maqṣad Al-Asnā Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh Al-Ḥusnā

by

Abū-Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Al-Ṭūsī Al-Ghasālī

(450/1058 - 505/1111)

The Second Part (1)

**An Explanation of The Names that Have Meanings
Which are Approximately the Same, (and A
Discussion of) Whether It is Possible that These
Meanings are Identical or Whether the Subject
Material Referred to by These Names Must be
Different**

In this connection I must say that those who have plunged into the explanation of these names did not turn their attention to this subject and did not recognize the fact that there can be and are two names with one and the same meaning. Examples of this are al-Kabīr and al-ʿAẓīm, al-Qādir and al-Muqtadir, and al-Khālīq and al-Bārī'. This, however, I consider to be extremely unlikely whenever the two names in question are a part of the ninety-nine, since by the name is not intended the letters of the words but (rather) the meanings. One might be of the opinion that these synonymous names differ only in terms of their

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- (1) This text of eighty-five pages consists of three major sections. The first is divided into four parts, the second into three and the third into three. The first part of the second section is of particular importance since it concerns itself with the explanation of the ninety-nine names of God and occupies the major portion of the text, namely, pages twenty-four to seventy-two. The only portion that has been omitted in this translation is Part I of Section I, the first twelve and one-half pages of the text, in which al-Ghasālī addresses himself to general principles related to the acts of naming and being named. The translation here presented begins on page thirteen, line fifteen, and continues through the end of the text, page eighty-five, line twenty-eight.

letters. Yet their significance is to be found only in the (inherent) meanings they convey. If a name is destitute of meaning all that remains are its expressions.

The meaning indicated by a thousand names is not superior to the meaning which is indicated by a single one. Furthermore, it is unlikely that this number (i. e., ninety-nine) could be made up even by repeating the names (alāfā) expressing one meaning. It is more likely that there is a special meaning referred to by every expression. If we see two similar expressions, we must choose one of two alternatives. Firstly, it may be unclear that one of the two expressions is excluded from the ninety-nine. For example, al-Aḥad or al-Wāḥid. Al-Wāḥid is found in the well-known version of Abū-Hurayra, and in another version al-Aḥad is found instead of al-Wāḥid. The meaning of "unity" (tawḥīd) completes the number (of ninety-nine) either by the expression al-Wāḥid or by al-Aḥad. The possibility of these two expressions standing for two names in completing the number of names, even though their meaning is one, to me seems to be very unlikely.

Secondly, we may undertake the task of making clear how one of these expressions goes beyond the other, by showing that one of them contains a meaning (dalīla) not indicated by the other. Examples of this would be as follows. If al-Ghāfir, al-Ghafūr and al-Ghaḥfār occurred (in the ninety-nine), it would not be inappropriate that these would be considered three names, since al-Ghāfir

indicates the source of forgiveness only, whereas al-Ghafūr indicates an abundance of pardon in relation to an abundance of sins. (This being the case), the one who forgives only one category of sins could not be called al-Ghafūr. (The expression) al-Ghaffār indicates an abundant pardon of sins by way of repetition; that is to say, he forgives sins time after time. In other words, the one who forgives all sins but only the first time they are committed and does not forgive the one who returns to sin time after time, does not deserve the name al-Ghaffār.

This also holds true for al-Ghanī and al-Malik. Al-Ghanī is the one who is not in need of anything. Al-Malik, also, is not in need of anything, but everything is in need of him. Thus al-Malik conveys the meaning of al-Ghanī and something more. The same type of parallel exists between al-ʿAlīm and al-Khabīr. The name al-ʿAlīm indicates only one who possesses knowledge, whereas al-Khabīr refers to one who possesses knowledge of hidden things. This measure of difference removes the possibility of these names being synonymous. This being the case, they fall into the category of as-Sayī, al-Muhannad and as-Sārim and not into that of al-Layth and al-Asad.

If we are unable to follow either of these two paths in respect of similar names, then it becomes necessary for us to believe in a difference between the meanings of the two words, even if we are unable^{to} specify clearly exactly where the divergence lies, as is the case, for example, with al-ʿAlīm and al-Khabīr.

It is difficult for us to specify the nature of the difference between two meanings in the case of God Most High. Yet at the same time we have no doubts at all that basically there is a difference. For this reason God Most High says, "Al-Kibriyā[†] is My cloak and al-^cAgama is My waist-band." (2) God distinguished between them in a way that indicates the difference separating them. Though both the cloak and the waist-band are ornaments for man, still the fact remains that the cloak is more noble than the waist-band.

In a similar manner God made the expression Allāh Akbar the introductory words of the salāh. For those who possess discriminating understandings the expression Allāh A^cgam does not stand in the place (of Allāh Akbar). In a similar fashion the Arabs distinguish between these two expressions since they use al-Khabīr where al-^cAsīm is not used. If they were synonymous, certainly both would have been used in every instance. Thus the Arab people say that so-and-so is akbar of age than so-and-so, and they do not say that he is a^cgam of age.

Furthermore, al-Jalīl is different from both al-Khabīr and al-^cAsīm. Al-Jalīl indicates the attributes of nobility. In view of this, one does not say that so-and-so is ajall of age than so-and-so. Rather is it said that he is akbar of age. Once again, it is said that the horse is a^cgam than man, and it is not said that it is ajall than man. These names are not synonymous even though they have

(2) Hadīth qudsī

similar meanings. Generally speaking, absolute synonymity of names included in the ninety-nine is unlikely since what is intended by the names is not letters nor sounds but what is understood from them and their meanings. This is a principle which one certainly must believe.

The Third Part

In Respect of the Individual Name Which is
Capable of Different Meanings in
Relation to Which the Name (Itself) is Equivocal

This is the case with al-Mu'min, for example, for by it may be intended the act of considering something true, or it may be derived from amn. Were the latter the case, the sense would be the giving of safety and security. Can it be referred to both meanings in the same way as one refers (words) to the objects named? For example, in the case of al-ʿAlīm, the reference is to the knowledge of things both absent and present, manifest and hidden and the many other objects-of-knowledge.

When this subject is considered from the point of view of language, it is unlikely that the equivocal name can have reference in a general way to all its denominates. It must be remembered that the Arabs use the noun ar-Rajul and by it mean every single man. This is reference in a general way.

Furthermore, when they utter the name al-ʿAyn, they do not mean by it

the eye of the sun and of the dinar and of the balance and the spring of water and the dazzling eye of the animal. This is an equivocal term. Rather do they use a word of this nature intending a single one of its meanings which is obvious from the context. It is related on the authority of ash-Shāfi'ī - may God have mercy upon him - in his General Principles (of Jurisprudence) that he said the equivocal name is referred to all its denominates, even as al-ʿAlīm is referred to knowledge when it occurs absolutely and when the context does not indicate a specific reference. If this really is true of him, it is unlikely. The absolute use of the term al-ʿAyn is obscure in language until the context indicates a specification.

As for the general reference, it may well be that the usage of revelation in respect of it differs from usage of human language. Revelation is excellent in what it arranges and what resembles that; one must rely upon it in explaining the names. For each name we mention only one meaning which we consider nearest (i.e., most likely), and we neglect everything else. But when revelation disposes of the terms in respect of it, then it is not unlikely that its usage and disposition will be the absolute (use of) the term intending all its meanings. Thus the name Mu'min in revelation is applied to the one who counts true and the one who gives security, by the usage of revelation, not by linguistic usage.

Similarly the names ṣalāh and ṣawm have been particularized by the disposal and usage of revelation for certain matters, though this (particularization) is not

determined by the usage of language. Certainly this is possible where proof is available. However, when there is no proof that revelation has altered its usage in respect of it, in my opinion it is much more likely that revelation did not alter it and that those writers who claim that if one of the names of God Most High is capable of several meanings and reason does not indicate the impossibility of any of them, then the name should have reference to all (the meanings) in a general way. But they have gone too far in this opinion.

To be sure, some of the meanings are so close to one another that the differences between them are almost reduced to the relationships. (This) likeness (that exists between them) is close to a general application, and (in a situation of this nature) making it general is best. This is the case, for example, with as-Salām. There are two possible interpretations of this term. It may refer either to his freedom from dishonour and want or to the thought that by and from him (i. e., as-Salām) people may attain security. Other examples of this nature (could be cited) and would lead one to take the word generally. If it is established, however, that the more prevalent inclination is in the direction of forbidding generalization, then the search for a specification (of the word) to one of the meanings can take place only by independent personal effort. That which drives on the independent thinker to specify a particular meaning is one of the following alternatives.

The first possibility is that one of the two meanings is more appropriate,

as is the case, for example, of "the giver of security" (al-Īmān) which is more appropriate for praise in the case of God Most High than is "counting true" (at-taḍdīq), for the latter sense is more appropriate when used in reference to others; since both faith (al-imān) in God and the act of counting His word true (at-taḍdīq) are incumbent upon everyone, and surely God's rank is above the rank of the believer.

The second possibility is that one of the two meanings avoids the actual synonymy between the two names. A case in question here is al-Muhaymin which is construed as if there were no concept synonymous with it, for this is preferable to construing it as ar-Raḡīb. This is true since ar-Raḡīb has already occurred and synonymy is unlikely, as we have mentioned.

The third possibility is that one of the two meanings is easier to recognize and comes more readily to mind because it is better known or more indicative of perfection and praise. In this and similar cases we ought to rely up it (i. e., this principle) when explaining the names, and for every name we should mention only one meaning, that which we consider to be closest, and we should disregard any other unless we see that it approximates, in degree, to the one we have already mentioned. We see no real advantage in the many differing opinions on this subject and certainly do not favour taking equivocal terms generally.

The Fourth Part

**An Explanation of the Manner in Which the Perfection of
Man and His Happiness Consist in Being Characterized by the
Characters of God Most High and Being Furnished with the Forms
(ma^cānī) of God's Attributes and Names to the Extent
This is Conceivable in Man's Case**

Be sure that if a man has no portion of the forms of the names of God Most High except that he hears the utterance of it, understands the interpretation of it and its usage and in his heart believes in the existence of the form of it in respect of God Most High, then he has a reduced portion and a low grade, and it is not fitting that he should prosper through what he has received. The hearing of the expression entails no more than soundness of the sense of hearing by which sounds are apprehended, and this rank even the animals share.

As for the understanding of the ~~consequence~~ of this term in language, nothing is required except that (a man) should know Arabic; and this level is shared by the one schooled in languages, indeed, by the ignorant Bedouin.

As for believing, without kashf, that the form of God Most High exists, nothing is required except the understanding of the meanings of these expressions and counting them as true. This rank is shared by the common man, even by the boy, for if these meanings are placed before him after he has understood the speech, certainly he will learn, understand and believe them in his heart and will persist in them. These are the grades of the majority of the

scholars, to say nothing of others. The excellence of these people in comparison with the others sharing in these three grades is not to be denied. However, even with them there remains an obvious failure to reach the summit of perfection, for the good deeds of just men are the sins of those brought near to God.

In reality, the portions for those brought near to the forms of God's beautiful names are three in number. First of all, there is the knowledge of these forms by way of disclosure and observation so that the realities become evident by an infallible proof; and the characterization of God Most High by (the forms) is disclosed to them with such clarity and lucidity that it resembles the certainty one has of one's own inner attributes which are perceived by inner observation rather than by outer sense. What a difference between this and the faith which is derived from the fathers and the teachers by an unquestioning acceptance (taqlīd), and persistence in it even when it is accompanied by dialectical theological proofs!

The second portion of (those who have been brought near) lies in their admiring that which was disclosed to them of the attributes of majesty in such a way and to such an extent that this admiration excites within them the desire to acquire that part of the attributes which is possible for them in order that they might be brought near to the Truth qualitatively, though not spatially, and that through their being characterized by (these attribute) in this manner they

might receive a resemblance of the angels who are near to God Most High. It is inconceivable that the heart could be full of admiration and veneration for an attribute without there following the craving for this attribute and the passionate longing for this majesty and perfection, and the eager aspiration to be adorned by this quality, if that is wholly possible for him; and if it is not wholly possible for him, then most certainly he will desire that amount of it which is possible.

No one would lack this desire unless for one of two (reasons). Either he is deficient in knowledge and certainty whether the character known is one of the characters of majesty and perfection, or his heart is filled with and engrossed in another desire. When the student observes the perfection of the knowledge of his master, there arises within him the desire to be like him and to follow his example; assuming, of course, that everything else is in order. But if, for example, he is overcome by hunger, then his inner being becomes totally absorbed in the craving for food, a condition that may well hinder the expression of his desire for knowledge. For this reason it is essential that the one who reflects upon the attributes of God Most High should have his heart empty of the wish for anything other than God Most High. Knowledge is the seed of this yearning (for God) whenever it encounters a heart free from the grip of carnal desires. But if it is not free (from these desires), the seed cannot be productive.

The third portion is the effort to acquire what is possible of these attri-

butes, and to be characterized by them and adorned by their beauty. In this way man becomes godly (rabbānī); that is to say, he draws near to the Lord Most High, for he becomes a companion of the heavenly host of angels who are on a level of nearness to Him. He who strives for a resemblance of their attributes attains something of their nearness to God Most High, (but this is true only) to the extent that he acquires those of their attributes which bring them near to the Truth Most High.

You may say, "The quest of nearness to God Most High by the attributes is a mysterious subject, (to say the least). Human hearts almost shrink from accepting and believing such a thought. Explain it further and perhaps you may be able to overcome the vehemence of all those who deny (this possibility). For if you do not reveal the true nature of this thought, it will become like something objectionable in the eyes of the majority." I would reply, Surely you and the others who are a little removed from the general grade of the scholars are not unaware that all existent things are divided into (those that are) perfect and imperfect. The perfect, of course, is more excellent than the imperfect. Whenever the grades of perfection differ and the utmost degree is limited to one in such a way that he alone possesses absolute perfection, while other existent things have not absolute perfection, then the most perfect is certainly nearest to that which has absolute perfection; that is to say, it is nearer in rank and grade, though not spatially.

Furthermore, all existent things are divided into the living and the dead,

and you know that the living is more noble and perfect than the dead. The grades of living creatures are three in number; (namely), the grade of the angels, the grade of man and the grade of animals. The grade of the animals is lower in respect of the very essence of life by virtue of which its honour exists, because the living being is the perceptive and active one. There is a deficiency in both the perception and efficacy of the animal. The deficiency in its perception lies in its limitation to the senses, and the perception of the senses is defective since they cannot perceive things without either touching or being near to them. Sense without touching and nearness does not perceive. Thus touch and taste require contact, and (the senses of) hearing, sight and smell require nearness. Every existent being in respect of which contact and nearness are inconceivable cannot be perceived by sense.

As for the activity of the animal, it is restricted to those things which appetite and anger require. Its motivation is to be found only in these two (drives). It does not possess reason to prompt it to actions which differ from those which appetite and anger require.

As for the grade of the angel, it is the highest of all since (angel) is a term for an existent whose perception is affected by neither nearness nor remoteness. Indeed, its perception is not restricted to those things with regard to which nearness and remoteness are conceivable. For nearness and remoteness are conceived of in terms of concrete bodies, which are the least

important class of the things that exist. Furthermore, it is elevated above appetite and anger and his actions do not proceed from what appetite and anger require. On the contrary, that which prompts him to action is a matter much more noble than appetite and anger, that is, the search for nearness to God Most High.

As for man whose grade lies between the (other) two grades, it is as if he consisted of (traits to be found in both) the animals and the angels, though that which predominated in him initially are those pertaining to the animals. For at the beginning (of his life) he possesses no part of perception except the senses, in respect of perception by which he is required to seek nearness to the object-of-sense by effort and movement, until the light of reason dawns upon him eventually, (that reason) which moves freely in the kingdom of the heavens and the earth without the necessity of bodily movement and the seeking of nearness to or contact with the (object) perceived. Rather does it perceive matters too exalted to be capable of being spatially near or distant.

Likewise, that which has dominion over (man) initially is his appetite and anger, and his motivation is commensurate with that which they require. (This condition continues) until there becomes manifest within him the desire to seek perfection, the consideration of consequences and the resistance to that which appetite and anger require. If he conquers appetite and anger to

the point that he controls them and they are too weak to move him or keep him at rest, he thereby acquires a likeness to the angels. Furthermore, if he trains himself to be indifferent towards objects-of-~~imagination~~ and the objects-of-sense-perception and accustoms himself to perceive things that are above the reach of the senses or imagination, he (thereby) acquires another likeness to the angels.

Both perception and reason are the ^especial characteristic of (human) life, and to these two (concepts) one may apply notions of deficiency, mediocrity and perfection. To the extent that he follows the example of the angels in respect of these two characteristics will he be more distant from the animal kingdom and nearer to the angel, and the angel is near to God; and that which is near to that which is near is itself near.

You may say, "The obvious meaning of this statement implies the assertion of a resemblance between man and God Most High, because if man is characterized by the characters of God then he resembles Him, and yet it is knowⁿ by both revelation and reason that nothing is like God Most High, that He does not resemble anything and nothing resembles Him." I would reply, When you know the meaning of the resemblance which is denied of God Most High and know that nothing resembles Him, then it should not be necessary for one to suppose that sharing necessitates resemblance in respect of every characteristic. Do you not see that the two opposites do not resemble each other,

since between them there is such a great distance that it is impossible for one to imagine a distance greater than it, and at the same time the two (i.e., God and man) sharing in many characteristics? For blackness shares with whiteness in respect of being an accident (ʿaraḍ), being a colour and in being perceptible by sight and other things besides them. Do you consider that the one who says that God Most High exists but not in place, and that He is hearing, seeing, knowing, willing, speaking, living, powerful and active, and that man also (can be described in this fashion) has assimilated (man to God) and has asserted something (to be) like (God)? It is not thus! If the matter were thus, then all men would be "assimilators" (i.e., anthropomorphists), since at the least (they all) assert the sharing in existence (between man and God), and this is a fanciful (basis) for similarity. Rather is resemblance an expression for sharing in the species and the quiddity (māhiyya). Thus, even if the horse attains the ultimate degree of cleverness, it still does not resemble man because it is different from him in respect of species. It is similar to him only in respect of cleverness which is something accidental and external to the quiddity which constitutes the essence of humanity.

The special property (of God) is that He is the Existent whose existence is necessary by virtue of His essence from which is produced all whose existence is possible according to the best way of ordering and perfecting. No sharing in respect of this property is conceivable at all; a resemblance would

depend on sharing in it.

Man's being merciful, patient and thankful does not necessitate resemblance, as is also the case with his being hearing, seeing, knowing, powerful, alive and acting. On the contrary, I assert that the divine property belongs only to God Most High, no one knows it except God Most High and it is not conceivable that anyone could know it except Him or one who is like Him. (Furthermore), since no one is like Him, no one other than He can know it. Therefore, Junayd - may God have mercy upon him - spoke the truth when he said, "No one knows God except God Most High." It is for this reason that He did not give the most exalted one of His creatures (i.e., Muḥammad) anything except a name by which he is veiled in that He said, "Praise the name of thy Lord, the Tremendous." (3) By God, no one knows God in this world or the next except God Himself!

One said to Dhū-n-Nūn when he was on the verge of death, "What do you desire?" He replied, "That I might know God before I die, even if for only a moment." This now confuses the hearts of the majority of those who are weak and creates in them the wrong impression that the opinion expressed is a negative and invalidating one because they are incapable of understanding an argument of this nature. My view is, if someone asserts, "I do not know anything except God Most High," he is telling the truth. And if he says, "I do not know

(3) S. 56, 74/3 (A-1-23)

God Most High," he would also be speaking the truth, even though it is known that both denial and affirmation are not true at one and the same time. Rather do they share between them (both) truth and falsehood. If the denial is true then the affirmation is false and conversely. However, if the sense in which words are used differs, then the truth of both alternatives can be conceived. It is as if one man said to another, "Do you know the upright Abū-Bakr?" and (the other) replied, "As-Sidīq is not one of those of whom men are ignorant, not one who is not known. It is inconceivable that there could be anyone in the world who does not know him in view of the fact that he is so prominent, famous and widely-known. Is there anything in the pulpits but talk about him? In the mosques is there anything but mention of him. Do not the tongues praise him and his characterization?" Certainly the man who says this speaks the truth.

If (the question) is put to another, "Do you know him?" and (this other) replies, "Who am I that I should know as-Sidīq? Far from it! Far from it! As-Sidīq is known only by one as upright as he is or even more upright. How, then, do I claim knowledge of him or aspire to it? Rather can such a one as I only hear his name or his attribute. As for my claiming knowledge of him, that is impossible." Such a person is also speaking the truth, there is something in what he says and he comes even closer to exalting and respecting (Abū-Bakr). In this manner must one understand the assertion of the one who said, "I know God," and also the words of the one who said, "I do not know God Most High."

If you were to submit a line of orderly (writing) to a discerning person and say, "Do you know the writer of this?" and he were to answer, "No!" he would be correct. And if he were to say, "Yes! The writer is a man who is living, capable, hearing, seeing, one whose hand is unimpaired and one who is skilled in the art of writing. When I know all of this about him, then how is it possible that I do not know him?" This is also true. But the more accurate and true assertion concerning the man is, "I do not know him," because in reality he does not know him but only that orderly writing requires a writer who is living, knowing, capable, hearing, seeing, in possession of an unimpaired hand and skilled in the art of writing. But he does not (really) know the writer himself.

Likewise the most that any creature can know is that this orderly perfect world requires a maker who is a manager, living, knowing and powerful. This knowledge (ma^Crifa) has two aspects. One is connected with the world, and what is known here is that it requires a manager. The other (aspect) is connected with God Most High. What is known here is the names derived from attributes which are not included in the real nature of (His) essence and its quiddity. For we have already made clear that whenever anyone points to something and says, "What is it?" the mention of the derived names is no answer at all. If one points to an individual animal and says, "What is it?" and the reply is, "It is tall or white or short;" or if one points to water and asks, "What is it?" and the reply is, "It is cold;" or if one points to fire and asks, "What is it?" and

the reply is, "It is hot;" none of this is a (real) answer at all in respect of the quiddity (of these things).

The knowledge (ma^crifa) of a thing is the knowledge of its real nature and quiddity, not the knowledge of the derived names. Our assertion is that the knowledge of a thing is the knowledge of its real nature. The quiddity of "hot" means some thing indeterminate which has the characteristic of heat. Likewise when we say "knowing" or "capable" the meaning of this is some thing indeterminate which has the characteristics of knowledge and power. If you say that our assertion, "the Necessary Existent is the One from whom alone all that is capable of existence derives its existence," is an expression of His real nature and that we know this, then we reply, "Far from it! Far from it!" Our assertion, "that which is necessarily existent," is an expression of His independence of a cause or an agent, and this goes back to negating a cause for Him. Our assertion, "every existent derives its existence from Him," amounts to the relation of the action to God (Himself). If one says to us, "What is this thing?" and we reply, "It is the agent," this is not an answer. If we say, "It is that which has a cause," this is not an answer (either). Just imagine how much less there is an answer when we say, "It is that which does not have a cause," because all of that would indicate something other than its essence and a relationship it has to its essence either in terms of denial or affirmation and all of this in respect of names, attributes and relationships.

If one asks, "What is the way to the knowledge of Him?" I would reply, If a boy or an impotent man says to us, "What is the way to the knowledge of the pleasure of intercourse and the apprehension of its real nature?" we would say that there are two ways. One is that we describe it to you in order that you might know it. The other is that you wait patiently until the instinct of sexual desire becomes manifest within you, (and) then engage in intercourse when the pleasure of intercourse will become manifest within you, and you will have knowledge of it. This second way is the real way leading to real knowledge. As for the first way, it leads only to fancy; and its (only) similarity (tashbīh) to the subject (shay') is that it is called pleasure. However, when the desire became manifest and he (actually) tasted (of it), then he knew definitely that it is not similar to the sweetness of sugar and that that which he fancied about it was not really as he had fancied it. To be sure, that which he heard of its name and attribute, and its being delightful and good, is true. But these (terms, that is, delightful and good) were more true of it than of the sweetness of sugar.

In a similar fashion does the knowledge (ma'rifā) of God come in two ways, one of which falls short and the other is blocked. As for the (way) that falls short, it is the mention of the names and the attributes and the method of comparison with that which we know of ourselves. For we know ourselves as being capable, doing (things), living, and speaking. Then we hear these (terms) in respect of the characteristics of God and know (them) by way of proof, (but) we

understand them (only) imperfectly even as the impotent man understands the pleasure of intercourse by that which is described to him of the pleasure of sugar. Indeed, our life, power and knowledge are further removed from the life of God and His power and knowledge than the sweetness of sugar is removed from the pleasure of intercourse. Indeed, there is no relationship (whatever) between the two distances. The result of characterizing God Most High by this characteristic is also a producing of fancy, a comparison (tashbīh) and a sharing in the name with that which does not resemble it. For our aim has been to represent the pleasure of intercourse for him with something of the joys which the impotent man perceives, such as the pleasure of a delightful meal, for example. We say to him, "Do you not know that sugar is delightful? For when you eat it you experience a pleasant condition, and you sense within you a fragrance." He would say, "Yes!" We would say that intercourse is also like that. Do you think that we have made him understand the real nature of the pleasure of intercourse as it (really) is so that in respect of the knowledge of it he is in the position of the one who tastes that pleasure and perceives it? Never! Rather the aim of this characterization is (only) a producing of fancy, an erring comparison, an orientation and a sharing in^a name (i.e., the pleasure).

As far as the producing of fancy is concerned, he fancies this to be a delightful thing in general. As for the comparison, he has compared it (i.e., the pleasure of intercourse) with the sweetness of sugar in respect of the name,

but we limit the comparison (in God's case) in that it is said, "there is no one like Him." For God is living not as (other things) are living and He is powerful though not as others are powerful, even as we have said, "Intercourse is as delightful as sugar," but that pleasure is not to be compared with this one at all, even though it shares the same name. For when we know that God Most High is living, knowing and powerful, first of all it is as if we do not know anything except our own saying, and (therewith) we do not know Him except by ourselves. For it is inconceivable that the deaf person should understand the meaning of our saying that God hears and that the blind person should understand the meaning of our saying that God sees. The same truth also applies when one says, "How does God know all things?" and we say to him, "Just as you yourself know things;" and when one says, "How is He powerful?" and we say, "Just as you yourself are powerful." For it is impossible for him to understand anything unless there is in respect of that subject something that is related to him.

First of all, he must know his own characteristic and then he will know the other's by means of an analogy (qiyās) with it. For when God has a characteristic and a peculiar property (khāṣṣa) for which there is nothing in us that is related to it or that shares its name, be it only the sharing (of the name) by the sweetness of sugar and the pleasure of intercourse, then it is inconceivable that it should be understood at all. For no one (really) knows anything except himself. Then he makes an analogy between the attributes of God Most High

and his own attributes. May the attributes of God Most High be exalted and sanctified above and beyond a comparison with our attributes! This knowledge falls short, and fancy and comparison predominate in it. Furthermore, it is necessary that there be joined with it the knowledge of the denial of any resemblance at all and the denial of any connecting (basis) at all, despite the fact of the sharing of the name.

As for the second way which is blocked, it is that man should bide his time until all the attributes of lordship come into being for him and he thereby becomes a lord, even as the boy bides his time until he attains puberty. It is then that he attains that pleasure. (But) this way is blocked and unattainable because it is impossible that this reality should occur to anyone but God. This and no other is the way of real knowledge (al-ma^crifa al-muhaggaqa). (But) it is definitely blocked except to God alone - may He be exalted and hallowed! Therefore it is impossible that any other but God should have real (i.e., in its ultimate sense) knowledge of God.

Indeed, it is impossible for anyone to know the prophet except the prophet. As for the one who is not called to prophethood, he does not know anything about prophethood except its name, and that is a peculiar property existing only for a man by which he is set apart from the one who is not a prophet. But the quiddity of this peculiar property is not known except by the prophet specifically. As for the one who is not a prophet, he does not know prophethood at all, and he

does not understand it except by comparing the prophet's attributes with his own.

Furthermore, I go on to say that one does not know the reality of death, the reality of Paradise and the reality of the Fire except after death and after entering either the Fire or Paradise, because Paradise is an expression for certain pleasure-giving causes. If we were to postulate a person who has not attained any joy at all, it would be totally impossible for us to cause him to understand Paradise in order that he might desire to seek it. The Fire is an expression for certain pain-inducing causes. If we were to postulate a person who has not suffered any pain at all, it would be totally impossible for us to cause him to understand the Fire. But when he experiences it, then we can make him understand it by way of comparison with the most intense pain that he has suffered, and this is fire (as one knows it in this life).

Likewise, when he has attained some of the pleasures (of this life), our aim is to make him understand Paradise by means of comparing it with the greatest pleasures that he has experienced; namely, eating, marrying, seeing, et cetera. If in Paradise there is a pleasure different from these pleasures, there is no way at all of making him understand it except by comparing it with these pleasures, just as we have already mentioned in respect of comparing the pleasure of intercourse with the sweetness of sugar. The pleasures of Paradise are farther removed from any pleasure we might have attained in

this life than the pleasure of intercourse from the pleasure of sugar. The correct expression for this is that it is something which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and something that has not occurred to the human heart. If we were to compare it with food, we would say it is not like food, and if we compare it to intercourse, we would say it is not like intercourse as it is well-known in this life.

How is it, then, that some people wonder at our saying that the people of the earth and the heavens do not attain knowledge of God Most High except on the basis of the attributes and the names? We ourselves say that they do not attain Paradise except on the basis of the names and the attributes. The same is also true in respect of everything of which man hears the name and attribute without having tasted it, apprehended it, attained to it or having been characterized by it.

If you were to say, "What is the ultimate knowledge of those who know⁽⁴⁾ God Most High?" we would say that the ultimate knowledge of the knowing ones is their incapacity for the knowledge and their real knowledge is that they do not know Him, and that (real) knowledge of Him is not possible for them at all. For it is impossible for one other than God Most High to have real (haqiqi) knowledge of God, (knowledge) that includes the core (kunh) of His attributes of lordship. If this (fact) is disclosed to them by way of proof,

(4) This could possibly be a reference to "the gnostics".

as we have mentioned, then they have known the attainment of the highest degree of knowledge which is possible for man to have. It is that to which the grand Abū-Bakr alluded when he said, "The inability of comprehending perception is perception (itself). Moreover, it is that which the chief of mankind (i.e., Muhammad) meant - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - when he said, "I do not give You such praise as You give Yourself." He did not mean that he had knowledge of Him which his tongue did not express. Rather did he mean, "I do not know in a comprehensive way the deep meaning of Your attributes so that I might praise You properly, but You alone have a comprehensive knowledge of then and only You." Thus a creature is not in error in respect of grasping the real nature of His essence when he is uncertain and amazed.

As for extending (5) the knowledge (of God), this can only take place in respect of the knowledge of His names and attributes. If, then, you say, "If knowledge of Him is unconceivable, in what way are the grades of the angels, prophets and the saints different in respect of the knowledge of God?" then I would reply, You know that knowledge is achieved in two ways. One of the two is the real way and that is blocked except in the case of God Most High. Not a single person tries to perceive it without the glories of (God's) splendor turning him back to uncertainty, and no one aspires to consider Him without his eye being closed in amazement.

(5) Reading ittisā^c

As for the second way, it is the knowledge (ma^Crifa) of (His) names and attributes. This is the way that is open to creatures, and in respect of it there are different ranks. For he who knows (only) in a general way that God is knowing and capable is not like the one who witnesses the wonders of His signs in the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, the creation of the spirits and bodies and has an insight into the wonders of (His) kingdom and the marvels of (His) workmanship, looking intently at (their) detail; (nor is he like) the one who penetrates deeply the intricacies of (His) wisdom, taking full measure of the particulars (in respect of) the planning, being characterized by all the angelic attributes which bring one close to God Most High, perceiving of these attributes what one may perceive when being characterized by them. Rather is there between them a difference so great that it almost cannot be calculated, and (certainly) not in respect of the details of this nor the degree of difference in respect of the prophets and friends (of God).

(The explanation of this) cannot reach your understanding except by means of examples. ".... God's is the Sublime Similitude." (6) But you know that the wise, pious and perfect person for example, like al-Shāfi^C - may God have mercy upon him - is known by the gate-keeper of his house. and is known by al-Muzanī, his student. The gate-keeper knows that he is learned in respect of the revealed-law (ash-Shar^C) and is an author (of books) about it, and that he guides the creatures of God Most High to Him, generally speaking. But

(6) S.16, 60/2 (A-3-5). Rodwell: "... God is to be likened to whatever is loftier."

al-Musanf knows him in a fashion quite different from the gate-keeper. Rather does he know him with a knowledge that comprehends the details of his attributes and the objects of his knowledge. In comparison with the wise one who has command of ten types of knowledge, his student who has only one type of knowledge does not really know him (at all), let alone his domestic servant who has not attained any of his sciences. Moreover, the one who has attained (only) one (of his ten types of) knowledge, knows only one-tenth of him, provided that he is equal to him in respect of this (one) knowledge and thus does not fall short of him. But if he falls short of him, he will not really know that in which he has fallen short except by name and a general fancy. It is that (the student) is aware that he (the scholar) knows something apart from that which he himself knows.

The difference of creatures in respect of the knowledge (ma^crifa) of God Most High is similar to this. For to the extent that there is revealed to them some of the objects of God's knowledge, the wonders resulting from His power, the marvels of His signs in respect of this world and the next and His rule over the (material and spiritual) kingdoms, does their knowledge in respect of God Most High increase and approximate the knowledge (ma^crifa) of (absolute) truth (haqīqa).

If you were to say, "If they do not know the real nature of (God's) essence and their knowledge (ma^crifa) of it is impossible, then do they really have a

perfect knowledge of His names and attributes?" we would reply, How preposterous is this also! No one knows Him perfectly and in truth except God Most High Himself. For when we know that a person is knowing, we know something indeterminate about him. We do not understand his true nature, but we do understand that he has an attribute in terms of knowledge. If the attribute of knowledge is really known to us, then our knowledge that He is knowing is a perfect knowledge by means of the real nature of this attribute. If (it is) not (really known), (then ours is) not. No one knows the real nature of the knowledge of God except one who has knowledge like His, and that is not possible except for God, No one (really) knows Him except God Himself. One other than He knows Him only by the likeness with his own knowledge, as we mentioned when using the example of comparing (the pleasure of intercourse with that of) sugar. The knowledge of God Most High does not resemble the knowledge of creatures at all! In respect of Him ⁽⁷⁾ the knowledge of creatures is not a perfect real knowledge but rather comes by inspiration (and is dependent upon) comparisons.

Don't be surprised by this! For I assert that no one knows the sorcerer except the sorcerer himself or ~~a sorcerer superior to him~~ ^{or} like him. As for one who does not know sorcery and its real nature and quiddity, he does not know anything of the sorcerer except the man himself. He knows that he has a science and a peculiar property, but he does not comprehend what that science

(7) Reading fī rather than bi

is, for he does not comprehend its object and what that peculiar property is. To be sure, he comprehends the fact that even if it is obscure that property belongs to the class of the sciences, and the fruit it bears changes hearts, alters the characteristics of individuals and (even) separates married people. But this is isolated from the knowledge of its real nature. He who does not know the real nature of sorcery does not know the real nature of the sorcerer, because the sorcerer is the one who has the property of sorcery. The gist of the name "sorcerer" is that it is a name derived from an attribute. If that attribute is unknown, then he is (also) unknown. If it is known, then he is (also) known. That which is known of sorcery to one who is not a sorcerer is a general characterization remote from (its) quiddity. It is that it is one of the known sciences, for the name "science" is appropriate to it.

In a similar fashion the gist of what we know of the power of God Most High is that it is a characteristic (of Him). The fruit and effect of it is the existence of (all) things. The name "power" is given to this characterization because it is related to (our) power⁽⁸⁾ (just as) the pleasure of intercourse is related to the pleasure of sugar. But all of this is isolated from the real nature of that (divine) power. To be sure, as man increases his grasp of the details of (God's) objects-of-power and the wonders of the workmanship in the kingdom of the heavens, his portion of the knowledge of the attribute of power (also) increases because (the existence of) fruit shows what produces the fruit. It is as

(8) Al-Ghazālī's argument seems to require "(our) power" in this instance.

when the student increases his grasp of the details of the sciences and writings of (his) teacher, his knowledge of him (i. e., the teacher) is more perfect, and his admiration for him is more complete.

This goes back to the difference of the knowledge of those who know and is open to an infinite difference. For that which a human being is not able to know of the infinite objects of God's knowledge and that also which he is able to know, is infinite, even if that which enters into existence is finite and the object of man's power in respect of the sciences is infinite. To be sure, that which comes into existence is different in respect of multiplicity and fewness and by it the difference of people in respect of knowledge is manifest. It is just like the difference between the power accruing to them by means of wealth and possessions. For one of them possesses a (single) dānaq and drachma and the other possesses thousands. It is the same way with objects-of-knowledge. But the difference in respect of the sciences is greater because the objects-of-knowledge have no limit. Individual pieces of money are matter and matter is finite. It is inconceivable that matter is infinite. For if you know how creatures differ in respect of the ocean of God's knowledge and that this has no limit, then you will (also) know that the one who says, "No one knows God except God (Himself)" certainly speaks the truth. Furthermore, the one who says, "I do not know anyone except God," has (also) spoken the truth, for there is nothing in existence except God and His deeds. If one looks upon God's deeds in respect of the fact that they are His deeds and (if one's) looking is limited to them, or

if one does not see something which is the firmament, the earth or the trees, but (only sees it) as His workmanship, then his knowledge (ma^crifa) does not go beyond the Holy Lordship. ⁽⁹⁾ It is possible for him to say, "I know nothing except God, and I see nothing except God." If a person imagines that he does not see anything except the sun and its light spread over the horizons, it would be correct for him to say, "I do not see anything except the sun." For the light emanating from it is a part of it and is (in no sense) external to it. Everything that exists is one of the lights of the eternal power and one of its effects. Just as the sun is the dispenser of light, pouring it forth upon all that seek light, so also the meaning for which no expression is adequate, is necessarily expressed as "the eternal power", and ⁽¹⁰⁾ it is by division of the existence which pours forth upon everything that exists. Is not God the only One who (truly) exists? For this reason it is permissible for "the gnostic" to say, "I know nothing except God." It is a remarkable thing that he should be able to say, "I know nothing except God" and be truthful, and also to say, "I do not know God" and (still) be truthful. That (first statement is true) in one sense, and this (second) in another. If you consider false any contradictory statements even when the aspects in which they are considered are different, then the words of God Most High, "And thou (Muhammad) threwest not when thou didst throw, but God threw," ⁽¹¹⁾ would be false. But He was speaking

(9) Hadrat in this instance expresses only respect.

(10) Reading wa

(11) S. 8, 17 (B-5)

the truth because the thrower (is to be understood) in two senses. In one it is applied to man, and in the second it is applied to the Lord. Therefore, there is no contradiction. Let us now come to the heart of the matter. We have (herewith) plunged into the waves of a sea that has no shore. Such secrets as these should not be cheapened ⁽¹²⁾ by writing them in a book. If their exposition unintentionally occurs here, let us refrain from (further mention of) it. Let us (rather) return to the detailed explanation of the meanings of the beautiful names of God.

(12) Reading tubtudhila

The Second Section,
Consisting of Three Parts,
Concerning (Our) Intentions and Objectives

The first part (of this section) concerns itself with an explanation of the meanings of the ninety-nine names of God which are included in the report of Abū-Hurayra in which he states, "The messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - said that God has ninety-nine names, one hundred minus one. He is the Odd and loves the odd number. The one who enumerates them enters Paradise." He is Allāh and there is none other than He, (literally, the One other than whom there is no God), ar-Rahman, ar-Rahīm, al-Malik, al-Qudūs, as-Salām, al-Mu'min, al-Muhaymin, al-ʿAzīz, al-Jabbār, al-Mutakabbir, al-Khāliq, al-Bārī', al-Muṣawwir, al-Ghaffār, al-Qahhār, al-Wahhāb, ar-Razzāq, al-Fattāh, al-ʿAlīm, al-Qābiḍ, al-Bāsīt, al-Khāfiḍ, ar-Rāfiʿ, al-Muʿizz, al-Mudhill, as-Samiʿ, al-Baṣīr, al-Hakam, al-ʿAdl, al-Laṭīf, al-Khabīr, al-Ḥalīm, al-ʿAsīm, al-Ghafūr, ash-Shakūr, al-ʿAlī, al-Kabīr, al-Ḥafīz, al-Muqīt, al-Ḥasīb, al-Jalīl, al-Karīm, ar-Raqīb, al-Mujīb, al-Wāsiʿ, al-Ḥakīm, al-Wadūd, al-Majīd, al-Bāʿith, ash-Shahīd, al-Ḥaqq, al-Wakīl, al-Qawī, al-Matīn, al-Walī, al-Ḥamīd, al-Muḥṣī, al-Mubdī', al-Muʿīd, al-Muḥyī, al-Mumīt, al-Ḥayy, al-Qayyūm, al-Wājid, al-Mājid, al-Aḥad, as-Samad, al-Qādir, al-Muqtadir, al-Muqaddim, al-Mu'akhkhir, al-Awwal, al-Ākhir, as-Zāhir, al-Bāṭin, al-Wālī, al-Mutaʿālī, al-Barr, at-Tawwāb, al-Muntaqim, al-ʿAfū, ar-Ra'ūf, Mālik al-Mulk, Dhū-l-Jalāl wa-l-Ikrām, al-Muqsit, al-

Jāmi^c, al-Ghanī, al-Mughnī, al-Māni^c, ad-Dārr, an-Nāfi^c, an-Nūr,
al-Hādī, al-Badī^c, al-Bāqī, al-Wārith, ar-Rashīd (and) aṣ-Ṣabūr.

Allāh is the name of the existent, the one who is entitled ⁽¹⁾ to the divine attributes, the one who is qualified by the qualities of lordship. He is unique in terms of authentic existence. Certainly no other existent can properly be said to exist by virtue of its essence; and that which acquires existence from it in respect of its essence is perishable, and in respect of the one who follows an existent it is perishable. (In fact, everything is perishable) "save His countenance." ⁽²⁾ It is most likely that (the name Allāh) occurs as an indication of this abstract entity in the same way that proper nouns (denote particular beings). Everything that has been said in respect of etymology and derivation is arbitrary and artificial.

A useful lesson (in this respect): You should know that this name is the greatest of the ninety-nine names because it indicates the essence that brings together all the divine attributes in such a way that no part of them is lacking. Each of the other names indicates a single attribute (ma^cnā) such as knowledge, power, action and others, whereas (Allāh) is specifically the name (of God). No one applies Allāh to any other but God himself, neither literally nor metaphorically, whereas the rest of the names, such as al-Qādir, al-^cAlīm, ar-Raḥīm and the like, may be used to designate one

(1) Reading mustahiqq

(2) S. 28, 88 (A-3-11)

other than He. For these two reasons this name is the greatest name of all.

An important detail: In respect of the meanings of the rest of the names, such as ar-Rahīm, al-^cAlīm, al-Halīm, aṣ-Ṣabūr, ash-Shakūr and others it is conceivable for man to be characterized (by these names) to the extent that they may be spoken of him, even though this is done in a fashion different from the application of (these) names to God. As for the meaning of this name (Allāh), it is so specific that it is inconceivable that there could be any sharing of it either metaphorically or literally. In view of this specificity, the rest of the names are described as being the names of God and are defined in relation to Him. (For this reason), one may say that aṣ-Ṣabūr, ash-Shakūr, al-Jabbār and al-Malik are among the names of God, (but) one can not say that Allah is one of the names of aṣ-Ṣabūr and ash-Shakūr. (This is true) in view of the fact that this name is more indicative of the true nature of the meaning of divinity and (subsequently) is more specific, (the name of God) that is best known and most prevalent. (As the result) one dispenses with trying to define it by something else, (whereas) the other (names) are defined in relationship to it.

An admonition: That portion of this name which man (may possess) is ta'alluh. By this I mean that his heart and concern should be so completely engrossed in God Most High that he does not see, pay attention to or hope

for anyone except Him. How can he not be so when he understands from this name that God Most High is the Authentic Existent, the Real One, and that everything and everyone that is apart from Him is doomed to destruction and perdition and is worthless except through Him. Thus, first and foremost, he sees himself as the chief (of those who are) doomed to destruction and (utterly) worthless, even as the messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - saw him when he said, "The truest verse the Arabs spoke was the saying of Labīd, 'Everything except God is worthless.'"

Ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm - The Merciful and Compassionate One (3) (4)

These two names are derived from raḥma (mercy). (The concept of) mercy necessitates one who is an object of mercy, for no one is an object of mercy unless he is in need. Ar-Raḥmān is the one by means of whom

(3) S. 1, 2 (A-1-47); 2, 163/58 (B-1); inter alii.

(4) S. 7, 180/79 (A-3-9) speaks of "the fairest names" (Pickthall) of God. Redhouse notes that the Qur'ānic commentary Tafsīr al-Jalāla adds to its mention of "the most comely names" the remark "which are 99 in number." Thus the number 99 is not a European invention. Most of the names were originally culled from the Qur'ān and are found there either in esse or in posse, though some were introduced later. In view of the Qur'ān and existing lists of names, it is erroneous to speak of the 99 names of God. Each existing list of 99 is a selection based on the preference of some eminent man. Redhouse has listed 552 names and adds that "there is every probability that 1,000 can be collected and surpassed." Other collators of names were Meninski, Hottinger, E.T. Rogers, Herklot and M. Rabadan. In those instances in the following pages where an individual name cannot be traced to the Qur'ān, the collator who has included it will be cited by his initial.

the needs of the needy person are satisfied in such a way that neither intent, volition nor solicitude are involved. The one in need is not called rahīm. Furthermore, the one who intends the satisfaction of a need but does not in fact satisfy it, though he is able to do so, is not called compassionate. For if his intention had been perfect, he would have carried it out. On the other hand, the one who (for valid reasons) is unable (to carry his intention to fruition) may still be called a merciful one in view of the empathy that motivated him. In spite of this, however, he falls short (of his goal).

Perfect mercy is that which actually bestows good upon those in need. The willing of good for the needy is concern for them. All-inclusive mercy gives to both the worthy and unworthy. The mercy of God is perfect and all-inclusive. It is perfect in the sense that He not only wills the satisfaction of the needs of the needy but actually satisfies them. It is all-inclusive in that it includes the worthy and the unworthy, this life and that which is to come and encompasses the essentials, needs and advantages which go beyond them. Thus He is in truth the Compassionate absolutely.

An Important Detail: Mercy implies a pain-inducing empathy which lays hold of the compassionate one. This moves a merciful person to satisfy the wants of the object of mercy. The Lord Most High is free of this. Perhaps you are of the opinion that this is an imperfection in respect of the meaning of mercy. On the contrary, however, this is a perfection and not an imperfection

(in respect of the meaning of this concept). As for its not being an imperfection, this is because the perfection of mercy lies in the perfection of its fruit. Whenever the needs of the needy one are perfectly satisfied, the object of mercy has no share in the empathy of the one showing mercy and his feeling of distress. On the contrary, the feeling of distress on the part of the one showing mercy is caused by his own weakness and imperfection and does not (at all) increase his weakness in respect of the aim of the needy one after his needs have been perfectly satisfied.

That this is perfection in respect of the meaning of mercy lies in the fact that the compassionate one (whose mercy) originates from empathy and distress almost desires by his act to repel empathy from himself. Certainly that falls short of the perfect meaning of mercy. On the contrary, the perfection of mercy lies in the fact that he looks upon the one requiring mercy for the sake of this one requiring mercy and not for the sake of being relieved of the pain of empathy (in himself).

A Useful Lesson: Ar-Rahmān is more specific than ar-Rahīm and therefore is applied only to God whereas ar-Rahīm may be applied to one other than He. In this respect it approximates the name "God" which functions as a proper noun, even though (ar-Rahmān) is definitely derived from rahma. For this reason God combined the two when He said, "Say (unto mankind): Cry unto God, or cry unto the Beneficent (ar-Rahmān), unto whichever ye cry (it is the

same). His are the most beautiful names." (5)

From this point of view and the fact that we have forbidden the synonymy of the names that are enumerated, it follows that a distinction should be made between the meanings of these two names. One would prefer that the basic meaning understood from ar-Rahmān be a kind of mercy. It is a quality quite beyond the reach of human potential. Rather is it related to the bliss of that life which is to come. The ar-Rahmān is the one favourably disposed towards man, firstly, by creating him; secondly, by guiding him to faith and the causes of happiness; thirdly, by making him happy in the life to come; and, fourthly, by bestowing upon him the vision of His gracious face.

An Admonition: Man's portion of the name ar-Rahmān is that he should have mercy upon the servants of God Most High who neglect Him. He should turn them from the way of negligence to God by public preaching and private counsel and do this gently, not harshly. He should look upon the sinners with eyes of mercy, not eyes of censure. This he should do in view of the fact that every act of disobedience occurring in the world is as it were his own disobedience. He must go to any length to remove it, to the fullest extent his ability permits, and do this out of mercy for that sinner, because he is now exposed to the anger of God and merits being removed from nearness to Him.

Man's portion of the name ar-Rahīm is that he does not leave the poverty

(5) S.17, 110 (A-3-4). It is to be noted that in this instance Pickthall translates al-asmā' l-husnā "the most beautiful names" whereas in S.7, 180/79 he translates "the fairest names".

of the needy person without satisfying it to the best of his ability. He will not abandon the poor person in his neighborhood and city until he has provided for that person's maintenance and staved off his poverty. This he will do either by means of his own wealth, his influence in the area or the effort to intercede with a third party on behalf of the needy one. If he is unable to satisfy him, the merciful one will ^{help} ~~single out~~ the needy person ^{by} ~~in~~ his prayers. Furthermore, he will manifest his sorrow on account of the poor man's need out of empathy and sympathy until he becomes, as it were, one who actually shares in his suffering and want.

A Question and Its Answer: Perhaps you ask, "What is the meaning of God Most High being a compassionate one and His being the most merciful of all those who have mercy? No compassionate person who is able to remove disabilities can tolerate the sight of the afflicted, the one who suffers hardships and torments and the physically ill without using his power to deliver them from their disabilities. The Lord Most High possesses the ability of dealing with every affliction, staving off all poverty, relieving every illness and removing every hardship. The world overflows with illnesses, severe trials and tribulations. He is capable of removing all of them. Nevertheless, He leaves without help those of His creatures who are afflicted with calamities and sufferings."

Your answer is that the mother of the little child may feel tenderness for

her child and protect him from the cupping, whereas the wise father forced him to it. The ignorant person thinks that the mother is the compassionate one and not the father. But the wise person knows that the father's infliction of pain upon the child by means of the cupping belonged to the perfection of his mercy, sympathy and compassion, whereas the mother actually was the enemy disguised as a friend. He also realized that a little pain is a blessing rather than an evil when it ultimately serves as the cause of great joy.

Ar-Rahīm most certainly intends nothing but good for the object of mercy. All existing evil has some good in it. If that evil is removed, surely the good inherent within it will become ineffectual. Subsequently by means of the nullity of the evil itself, an even greater evil results. Since this is the case, even though the amputation of the leprous hand appears to be an evil, inherent in this act is ample good, namely, the well-being of the total body. Furthermore, if the amputation of the hand is omitted, the destruction of the entire body would ensue, and then (certainly) the (ultimate) evil would be greater. The amputation of the hand for the sake of the soundness of the entire body is an evil within which there is good. The primary intention behind the consideration of amputation is the well-being of the body as such, and certainly this is genuine good.

Moreover, when a sound body cannot exist except by amputating the hand, then the way to health is the amputation. The soundness of the body is

desired for its own sake, in the first place, whereas the amputation is desired for the sake of something else, in the second place, not for its own sake. Therefore, both are comprised in the volition. But the one is willed for its own sake and the other for the sake of something else. Undoubtedly that which is willed for its own sake has precedence to that which is willed for something else. For this reason God Most High says, "My mercy precedes My anger." His anger is His will to do evil, and the evil comes into existence by means of His will. His mercy is His will to do good, and the good comes into existence by means of His will. However, He wills good for the good itself, whereas He wills evil not for itself but rather for the good that is within it. Good is determined essentially (bi l-dhāt), but evil is required accidentally (bi l-ʿarāḍ). Both of them are predetermined, and there is nothing at all in that which is contrary to mercy.

Now if some kind of evil occurs to you in which you see no possible good, or if it occurs to you that the attainment of a good which contains no evil is possible, then be sure you suspect your mind of being inadequate in respect of one of these two notions.

The first is your view that this evil has no good within it. Surely this must be a part of that which the mind simply cannot understand. In this respect perhaps you are like the boy who considered cupping a pure evil, or the stupid man who considered killing in retaliation a pure evil. (The man)

primarily considered the person killed for whom, of course, the act was pure evil. However, he overlooked the general good accruing to the community as such resulting from the act. Such a person does not understand that the achievement of a general good by means of a specific evil is, in fact, a pure blessing. This (truth) the good (man) ought not disregard.

The second notion (to be held suspect) is your view that the attainment of good is possible without being involved with evil. Surely this (truth) also is subtle and obscure. The possibility and impossibility of everything possible and impossible cannot be apprehended by intuition and superficial examination. On the contrary, this can often be known only by deep, subtle thought of which the majority of men are incapable. This being the case, let your mind be suspect in respect of these two extremes and do not doubt that God is the most merciful one of those who are merciful. His mercy always precedes His anger. Have no doubt at all that the one who wills evil for evil's sake, rather than for good, does not deserve the name "merciful". He is incapable of removing the veil that covers this secret, an uncovering which in his case is made impossible by evil. You must be content with faith. Do not covet the uncovering. You have been shown by a symbol and an allusion if you are one of his people worthy of it.

Consider this bit of poetry: "If the person you have been addressing were alive, you would have made him hear. But the one whom you have called is not

alive." Certainly this is the condition of the majority of the people. But as for you, O brother, for whom this explanation is intended, I believe you are one of those trying to perceive and understand the secret action of God in respect of your destiny and therefore one who can dispense with these revolving thoughts and admonitions.

Al-Malik - The King (6)

Al-Malik is the one whose essence and attributes are independent of all existing things, but everything in existence is dependent upon (in need of) Him. To be sure, nothing can exist without Him, whether it be in respect of its essence, its attributes, ^{its existence} or its continued existence (baqā'). Each and every thing derives its existence from Him or from that which is derived from Him. Everything other than He Himself is subject to Him in respect of both its attributes and essence. But He has no need for anything. This, indeed, is the absolute al-Malik.

An Admonition: It is inconceivable that man could be an absolute king since he is not independent of anything. To the contrary, he is always a pauper before God Most High, and this would be the case even if he were independent of everyone except God. By the same token it is also unthinkable that everything in the universe should have need of him. Rather he should know that the majority of things in existence have no need of him. Man begins

(6) S. 20, 114/3 (A-2-8); 23, 115/7 (A-2-17); inter alia^a

to understand the limited degree to which he can accept the title of king only when he knows that whereas he might be independent of some things, he shall always be totally dependent upon others. The true king among men is the one who realizes that in reality only God is the absolute king. For this reason he is always and ever totally dependent upon God (though he might be independent in certain human relationships).

Nevertheless, he governs his own kingdom in such a manner that his troops and his subjects obey him. That kingdom which is his in a very specific way is his heart and his physical body. His troops are his appetite, anger and passion. His subjects are his tongue, eyes, hands and the remainder of his organs. He achieves the rank of a king in the world when he controls them and they do not control him; when they obey him and he does not obey them.

If in addition to this he can become independent of all men whereas mankind as such remains in dire need of him in respect of this life and that which is to come, then surely he becomes a king as far as this terrestrial world is concerned. This is the rank of the prophets - may the blessings of God and peace be upon them - for they could dispense with guidance in respect of the next life from everyone except God Himself, while everyone remained in need of their direction.

Next in order concerning this kingship are the scholars, the heirs of the

prophets. Their supreme authority lies in the extent to which they have the ability of supplying spiritual guidance for men and at the same time remain independent of seeking guidance from them. In this manner man is able to approach the angels and their characteristics and thereby draw near to God Most High.

This kingship is a gift to man from the true king whose own kingship is shared with no one. The perceptive person was absolutely correct when one of the ~~amfōra~~ said to him, "Ask of me that which you need," and he replied, "Do you ask this of me when I have two servants who are your masters?" The chief asked, "Who are they?" He answered, "Greed and vain desire. I have conquered them, but they have conquered you; though I hold sway over them, they hold sway (rule) over you."

One of the (the mystics) said to a senior, "Give me some advice." He replied, "Be a king in this world and in that life which is to come." The other asked, "How is this possible?" The senior answered, "The meaning is this. If you put an end to your greed and appetite for this world, you will be a king in both this world and the next. For certainly kingship consists of freedom and independence."

Al-Qudūs - The Most Holy One (7)

Al-Qudūs is the one who is above every description which human percep-

(7) S. 59, 23 (B-12); 62, 1 (B-4)

tion could apprehend, the imagination could grasp, the fancy could reach, the innermost consciousness could pervade and thereby have an understanding of Him, or the reflection could determine. I do not merely say that He is free of faults and deficiencies, for the mention of this would be akin to a breach of propriety. Certainly it is not a part of propriety for one to speak of the king of a country and say, "He is not a weaver," or "He is not a cupper." For to deny the existence of an object in one sense of the word almost suggests that this object may exist and together with that suggestion there is a deficiency.

I would rather say that the Most Holy One is totally free from all of the characteristics of perfection as the majority of people commonly understand this concept. This is the case since man normally looks to himself, first of all, in order to become acquainted with his own characteristics and thereby realizes that only some of them are perfect. The perfection he sees is related to his knowledge, power, hearing, seeing, speech, will and choice. In conjunction with these faculties he applies the term, saying that these are the names of perfection.

But this self-inspection also reveals areas of imperfection in respect of his ignorance, incapacity, blindness, deafness and dumbness, and vis-a-vis these faculties he applies the term imperfection. The aim of his praise and characterization of God Most High is that he might portray Him in terms of the qualities of his own perfection, such as his knowledge, power, hearing,

sight and speech, though at the same time he withholds from Him the characteristics of his imperfections.

But God Most High is completely free from characterization in terms of man's perfection, even as He is free from characterization in terms of man's imperfections. God Most High is free from and exalted above every attribute that one could possibly ascribe to man, and above everything resembling them. Unless there is special permission to use (names) and it is proper (to do so), the majority of these attributes cannot be ascribed to God Most High. But you already understand this subject from the fourth section of the introduction, and therefore it is not necessary to repeat it here.

An Admonition: Man is holy to the extent that he sublimates his will and knowledge. As far as his knowledge is concerned, he should sublimate it from all objects-of-imagination, from things perceived through the senses as well as those merely fancied, and from all those perceptions in which the animal kingdom shares. Rather the activities of his reflection and his knowledge should be concerned with those things which are above being (either) near and apprehensible by sense or distant and inaccessible to sense. In fact, he must rid his inner being of all objects-of-sense perception and imagination and must acquire such forms of knowledge that, even were he deprived of the instruments of his sense perception and his imagination, it would continue to be noble, universal, divine, knowledge related to the eternal and everlasting

objects-of-knowledge, not personal (knowledge) subject to change and alteration.

As far as his will is concerned, he should keep it free from concern for human fortunes which in the final analysis are reduced to the pleasures of passion, anger, eating, marrying, dressing, feeling and gazing upon things, and the remainder of the pleasures he may attain by means of his sensory perception and the desires of his heart. Rather will he desire God alone. He will find pleasure only in God. His only real desire will be his meeting with God, and he will rejoice only in his proximity to God. If Paradise and all its delights were offered to him, he would not concern himself with them. He will not be satisfied with anything in the house except the Lord of the house Himself.

In short, the sensory and imaginative perceptions are shared by the animal kingdom. This being the case, it is imperative that he advance beyond them to those things which are the particular characteristics of man. Appetitive, human satisfactions the animal kingdom knows also. Therefore, it is necessary that he free himself from these. The dignity of the seeker is commensurate with the dignity of that which he seeks. The one whose concern is with that which enters the belly will discover that his value is found in that which goes out of it. But the one who has no aspiration at all except for God

Himself, will have a rank commensurate with his aspiration. The one who raises his knowledge above the stage of mere sensory perceptions and imaginations and dedicates his will to that which is above the demands of appetite, certainly he has entered the fulness of the realm of holiness.

As-Salām - The Sound One ⁽⁸⁾

As-Salām is the One whose essence is free from imperfection, His attributes from any trace of deficiency and His actions from evil. Since this is the case, there is no perfect, unimpaired state of being in existence except that which is ascribed to and emanates from Him. Certainly you must understand that the actions of God are free from evil; that is to say, absolute evil which is desired for its own sake and not for a greater good resulting from it. There is no evil in existence which has this description, as we have indicated to you before.

An Admonition: The one who comes to God with a pure heart is the one whose heart is free of fraud, hatred, envy and the desire for evil, whose limbs are free of sin and forbidden things and whose attributes could not possibly be inverted or reversed. Among men he is the sound one, the description of whom brings him near to the absolute and true soundness which simply cannot be approached or matched by any other. When I refer you to an ~~an~~ ^{inverse} of his attributes, I speak of the possibility of his intellect becoming a prisoner

(8) S. 5, 16/8 (B-24); 59, 23 (B-12)

of his passion and anger, whereas the truth is the very opposite of this, namely, that greed and anger ought to be and are subject to his intellect and obey it. If this truth is reversed, certainly a relapse will result. There is no soundness at all when the ruler becomes the one who is ruled, and the king becomes the servant. No one is described by the terms soundness and Islām except the one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe. How can the one who is not safe from himself be characterized by soundness and Islām?

Al-Mu'min - The Author of Safety and Security (9)

Al-Mu'min is the one to whom safety and security are attributed in view of the fact that he supplies that which brings them into being and therewith blocks the avenues leading to fear. The concept of safety becomes of prime importance only in a place of fear, and there is no real fear except where the possibility of non-existence, want and destruction exist. The one who provides safety and security in the absolute sense is such a one that safety and security are inconceivable unless they are derived from Him, that is to say, from God Most High.

It is a well known fact that the blind person is afraid of suffering destruction in as much as he cannot see; but his seeing eye (basīra) gives him a degree of security from it. In a similar way the one-armed man fears the evil

which only the hand can ward off, for the sound hand is security against it. This also is the case with all the senses and limbs. The Author of safety and security created, formed, supports and strengthens them.

Let us imagine that a man is wanted by his enemies and is put into a place of restriction which so limited him that he could not use his limbs. But even if he could make use of them, he has no weapons; and even if he had weapons, he would not be able to resist his enemies single-handedly; and even if he had troops under his command, he could not be absolutely certain that they would not be defeated. To add to this stringency he did not have a fortress to protect him. But one comes to deal with this man's weakness. He makes him strong by supplying troops and weapons and erecting around him an invulnerable fortress. In such a way he provides adequate safety and security and therewith becomes worthy of being called a mu'min.

By nature man is physically weak and subject to sickness, hunger and thirst from within and the evils of burning, drowning, physical injury and killing from without. The only one who protects him from these dangers is the one who prepares remedies which repel his sickness, food which frees him from hunger, drink which slackens his thirst, limbs which protect his body and the five senses which serve as spies, warning him of impending dangers.

Furthermore, his greatest fear is eternal destruction in that life which

is to come. There is nothing that protects him from this except the confession of the unity. God Most High is the One who guides him to this and caused him to desire it when He said, "There is no god except God, that is, my Fortress. And the one who enters My Fortress is safe from my punishment." (10) There is no safety in the world except that which is acquired by causes which God alone has created, and He alone guides to the use of them. "Our Lord is He who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it aright." (11) Indeed, He alone is the absolute Mu'min.

An Admonition: Man's portion of this characterization lies in the fact that all mankind is safe at the side of him (the Muslim). Even more, every timid soul should hope for and anticipate help from him in staving off destruction from himself in respect of both religious and secular affairs, just as the messenger of God said - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - "If one believes in God and the last day, his neighbor is safe from his evils." (12) The one among men who is the most worthy of the name al-Mu'min is the one who protects man from the punishment of God by guiding him to the way of God and leading him to the path of escape. This is the vocation of the prophets and the theologians. Therefore the prophet said - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - "Verily, you rush towards the fire like moths, but I am the one who holds you back." (13)

(10) Hadīth qudsī

(11) S. 20, 50/2 (A-2-8)

(12) Muslim, Imān, p. 83

(13) Al-Bukhārī, Riqaq, p. 26

A Premonition and an Admonition: Perhaps you are saying, "In reality fear is from God. In fact, there is ~~nothing who causes fear~~ except God Himself. He is the One Who causes His servants to fear, and He is the One Who created the causes of fear. How, then, can safety be ascribed to Him?" Your answer is that both fear and safety originate with Him. He creates the causes of fear and safety at one and the same time. His being the cause of fear does not prevent His being the cause of safety just as His being the One Who humbles does not prevent His being the One Who exalts. Rather is He both the One Who ~~exalts~~ and the One Who ~~exalts~~. In a similar manner He is both the Author of safety and the One Who causes fear. But al-Mu'min in particular is included in the enumeration of the names whereas al-Mukhawwif (the One Who causes fear) is excluded.

Al-Muhaymin - The Protector and Guardian (14)

The meaning of this term in respect of God Most High is that He brings about the actions, sustenance and life span of His creatures. Moreover, He brings (these) about for them through the instrumentality of His knowledge, control and preservation of them. Everyone who has supervision over the essence of some matter and both controls and preserves it certainly is the guardian of it. This supervision is derived from knowledge, the control from the perfection of power and the preservation from the mind. The one in whom these qualities are combined is called al-Muhaymin. But there is no one who

possesses all of them in an absolute and perfect manner except God Most High. For this reason it is said that al-Muhaymin is one of the names of God in the ancient records.

An Admonition: That man is a muhaymin in respect of his heart who observes it carefully in order to apprehend its depths and secrets, who controls its various conditions and characteristics and in addition to that continuously concerns himself with its preservation in accordance with its creation. If his supervision and control are so comprehensive that he undertakes to keep God's creatures upon the path of soundness after he has acquainted himself with their hidden thoughts and secrets by means of his detection and deduction from their outer appearance, then certainly his share of this concept is the most ample that one can have.

Al-^cAsīz - The Incomparable and Unparalleled One ⁽¹⁵⁾

Al^cAsīz is the important one who has few like (him). The need for him is great, and the approaching of him is difficult. That which does not have these three properties cannot be designated by the name al-^casīz.

There are many things in the universe of which it can be said that their existence is rare. But their importance is not great and their usefulness is limited, and therefore they cannot be called casīz. Once again, there are many things which have great importance, abundant usefulness and are with-

(15) S. 59.23 (B-12) inter alii

out a peer in this world. However, if approaching (such a) thing is not difficult, one cannot call it Casîz. An example of this is the sun which has no peer, as is also true of the earth. The usefulness of and need for each of them is acute, to say the least. Yet the fact remains that they cannot be characterized in terms of sublimity since the approach to the observation of them is not difficult. Therefore it is necessary that these three properties be combined before one can refer to a given subject and speak of its being Casîz.

Furthermore, for each one of these three properties there exist both a perfection and a deficiency. Perfection in respect of the rareness of existence goes back to a (single) one, for one is the least. This is attained where the existence of one like it is utterly impossible. Only God is (unique). As far as the sun is concerned, though it certainly is unique in respect of its actual existence, it is not unique in respect of the possibility of existence, since it is possible that there exists one similar to it in terms of perfection and preciousness. The urgency of the need for it lies in the fact that everything and everyone requires it for everything, certainly for his existence, continuity and attributes. This (absolute need) does not exist^{completely} except for God Most High. For we have explained that no one really knows God Most High except God Himself. He is the truly absolute Incomparable and Unparalleled One, and there is no one comparable to Him in respect of this name.

An Admonition: Al-^Caxī among men is the one whom the servants of God Most High have need of in respect of their most important objectives, the life that is to come and eternal happiness. The achievement of these goals certainly is rare since their attainment is difficult. Those among men who lead others to these goals form the rank of the prophets - may the blessings of God be upon them. Those who are unique in approximating the rank of the prophets during the course of their life span are the caliphs and the scholars, the heirs of the prophets. Each one of them is given responsibility commensurate with the height of his rank, the ease of his attaining and sharing it and in proportion to his efforts in guiding the people.

Al-Jabbār - The One Who Compels His Creatures to Do as He Wills ⁽¹⁶⁾

Al-Jabbār is the one whose will is effective in respect of everyone by way of compulsion, whereas the will of no one is effective in respect of Him. He is the one from whose grasp no one is free, but the hands of men fall short of His inaccessible presence. The absolute al-Jabbār is God Most High. Certainly He coerces everyone, but no one coerces Him. There is not a single person in the world who approximates His power and inaccessibility.

An Admonition: Al-Jabbār among men is the one who has risen from being a follower and has attained the grade of one who is followed. He is unique in the height of His rank in as much as he coerces mankind by his

(16) S. 59, 23 (B-12)

shapes and form to imitate and follow him in respect of his manner and way of life. He benefits mankind, but he does not gain benefit from them. He influences them, but he himself is not influenced by others. He commands a following from others, but he does not follow them. No one beholds this one without ceasing to have regard for himself and becoming one who yearns for al-Jabbār without paying any attention to himself. No one could possibly hope to make him a dependent or a follower. The chief of mankind alone attained this characterization - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him. He said, "If Moses were living he could do nothing else but follow me. For I am the chief of the sons of Adam, and I say this without boasting."

Al-Mutakabbir - The One Supreme in Pride and Greatness (17)

Al-Mutakabbir is the one who considers everything base in comparison with his own essence. He does not consider majesty and glory to be the property of anyone other than himself. He looks upon others as the kings look upon their servants. If this evaluation is true, then this is pride in the purest sense of the word; and the one who makes it certainly is a proud person. That conclusion in an absolute sense is inconceivable of anyone except God Most High.

However, if that self-glory and self-magnification are false and his conclusion in respect of his uniqueness in magnificence is not as he believes it to

(17) S. 59, 23 (B-12)

be, then pride is false and reprehensible. The one who considers magnificence and glory to be his own particular properties, to the exclusion of others, must know that his evaluation of it is false and his opinion useless. The truth of the matter is that these two characteristics are the property of none but God Most High.

An Admonition: Al-Mutakabbir among men is the one who is abstemious and a "gnostic" (al-^Ḡārīf). The significance of the abstinence of the "gnostic" lies in the fact that he is free from created things which might occupy his heart. He considers himself above everything except the Truth Most High so that he becomes contemptuous of both this world and that which is to come. He is one who considers himself above being distracted by either of them from the Truth Most High.

The abstinence of one who is not a "gnostic" is only a transaction and an exchange by which the individual hopes to purchase enjoyment in the next life by means of forfeiting enjoyment in this life. He is ready to forsake a thing now in the hope of receiving it many times over in the hereafter. Certainly this is only forward buying (salam) and bargaining. The one who is enslaved by the appetite for food and marriage is contemptible even though these (pleasures) are lasting. However, al-Mutakabbir is contemptible of every appetite and portion in which the animal kingdom can conceivably share.

Al-Khāliq - The Creator (18)

Al-Bārī' - The Maker

Al-Muṣawwir - The Fashioner

One may think that these names are synonymous and that each one is derived from (the act) of creating and bringing into being. But this is not necessarily true. (The fact of the matter is that) everything which emerges from nonexistence into existence requires a planning stage, first of all; the actual bringing into existence in accordance with the plan, secondly; and the fashioning of the created matter, thirdly. God Most High is the Creator in as much as He is the One who plans and determines; He is the Maker to the extent that He is the One who invents and brings into being; and He is the Fashioner in view of the fact that He arranges the forms of His inventions in the best possible manner.

In one sense of the word this sequence of action reminds one of a building which requires a planner to estimate accurately what is needed in terms of timber, bricks and land area, not to mention the number of buildings plus their length and width. This work is the responsibility of the architect who sketches and fashions it. Following this a builder is required who will assume responsibility for the work by which the buildings actually come into existence. The next step requires a decorator to paint the outside of the buildings and thereby improve their appearance. The responsibility for this

is assumed by someone other than the builder. This is the customary procedure in respect of the planning, erection and decoration of a building. However, this is not the case with God Most High. In every instance He Himself is the Planner, Builder and Decorator. For this reason He is the Creator, the Maker and the Fashioner.

An example of His work is man, one of God's creatures. Various things are required in respect of his existence. First of all, the substance from which his existence is to be derived must be determined. This is, of course, a body endowed with special characteristics. Certainly there must be a body first of all in order that it might be characterized by attributes, even as a building requires various tools if it is to be erected. Furthermore, man's physical constitution cannot be sound without a combination of water and earth. But earth alone is altogether rigid and cannot be folded or bent in such a way as to make movement possible. And, of course, water in itself is absolute liquid. It does not hold together, nor can it have a firm shape. This being the case, the wet and the dry must be blended together in such a way that they are balanced. The result is termed clay.

At this point cooking heat must be added so that the mixture of water and earth might solidify and not break apart. This is necessary since man is not moulded from pure clay but rather from that which has been baked, as is the case with pottery. Pottery consists of clay that has been made into paste

by the addition of water and subsequently was subjected to the action of fire in order that its union might become solid.

Furthermore, man requires an accurate estimate of the particular amount of both water and clay to be used. For example, if the amount is too little, human actions will not result. Rather the actions will be on the level of the grubs and the ants which the wind will scatter and the least thing will destroy. At the same time, however, he does not require a mountain of clay either, for that would certainly be in excess of his actual need. Rather does he require precisely the correct amount, not too much and not too little, that amount known only to God. This fact, of course, is most relevant to the planning.

In respect of the planning of these things and the creation carried out in accordance with the planning, He is al-Khāliq. In respect of the actual creation, that transfer from nonexistence to existence, He is al-Bārī'. The mere act of bringing something into existence is one thing, but the act of bringing something into existence on the basis of a pre-arranged plan is quite another subject. The understanding of this difference is quite necessary for the one who finds it difficult to attribute the act of creation primarily to the planning stage, although apparently there is the possibility of philological support for this since the Arabs do call a skilled and experienced person a creator (khāliq) for his planning of some work on the basis of another. Therefore the poet

said, "You certainly have cut that which you measured (khalagtu), but some people measure and then will not cut."

The name al-Mugawwir is God's in view of the fact that He arranges the shapes of things in the best possible order and gives them the best possible form. This name is one of the characteristics expressing activity. Its real nature is known only to the one who knows and understands the form of the world in general and then also in detail. For the whole world is like a person who consists of various limbs which work together harmoniously in achieving an end required of him. His members and the constituent parts of his body find their counter-parts in the world in the heavens, the stars and the earth, not to mention the water, the air and other matter. The various parts of his body are arranged in perfect order. If that order is changed in any wise or manner, inevitably it ceases to function. Those members and organs specified for the upper part of the body are the ones that ought to be in the upper area, and those members and organs specified for the lower part must be found there.

Perhaps one can find a parallel to this in the person of the builder who lays the stones under the wall and the wood above it, a procedure he follows in something more than an accidental fashion. To the contrary, this is his common practice, and his only aim is the soundness of the wall. If one were to reverse this process and place the stones above the wall and the wood be-

low it, certainly the structure would be demolished, and its form would not be permanent in any wise or manner.

In a similar manner we must understand the necessity of the height of the stars and the lower position of the earth, water and the other kinds of order in the more important parts of the world. If we were to describe and enumerate the various parts of the world and then go on to describe the soundness in respect of their order, certainly our report would be lengthy, to say the least. The one whose knowledge of this detailed description is more ample, has a more complete understanding of the name al-Mugawwir.

This arrangement and fashioning exists in conjunction with every single part of the world, even if it is the size of an ant or an atom. In fact, it is even applicable to the individual member of the ant's constitution. Many words would be required to give an explanation of the eye which is the smallest organ of living creatures. If one does not know the layers of the eye, the number of its forms and shapes, its measures, its colours and the kind of wisdom inherent within it, then one does not really know its form and therefore knows its mugawwir only in a very general way. The same thing can also be said of every form of the animal and plant kingdom; in fact, of every part of every animal and plant.

An Admonition: Man's portion of this name lies in his acquiring the

knowledge of the form of all existence, in terms of both its shape and ordering, in order that he might comprehend and truly understand the composition of the world just as if he were looking at it. Furthermore, he steps down from (the concept of) the whole to (a knowledge of) details so that he might have a comprehensive view of the form of man. He will give particular attention to his body and physical members in order that he might learn their types, number, constitution and the wisdom they reveal in their creation and order. Then he will take a comprehensive look at his moral (ma^caswiyya) attributes and his nobler qualities (ma^cānī) which give rise to his (acts of) perception and volition.

In a similar manner will he become acquainted with both the outward and inner form of the animal and plant kingdoms to the very best of his ability, an undertaking that he will pursue until he has acquired within his heart (mind) the concept (naʿis) and form of the whole. All of this is derived from the knowledge of the forms of corporeal things. This (knowledge) is slight in comparison with the knowledge of the order of spiritual beings, which includes knowledge of the angels and their ranks, in addition to the role of authority assigned to each one of them in respect of control over the heavens and the stars. The authority of these beings also extends to human hearts and is expressed in terms of guidance and direction, not to mention their authority over against the animal kingdom through the instincts which guide them to the

most likely place in which to satisfy their physical needs.

This, then, is man's portion of this name; namely, the acquisition of that cognitive form which corresponds to that existential form. Knowledge is a form in the mind corresponding to the form of the thing known. God's knowledge of the forms is the cause of the existence of the forms in individual (things). Furthermore, the forms, existing in the individual things, are the cause by which occur the cognitive forms in the mind of man. In this very manner does he acquire the knowledge of the significance of the name al-Muṣawwir, which is one of the names of God. By the acquisition of these forms in himself he also becomes one similar to a muṣawwir, even if only metaphorically. For that form comes into being within him, strictly speaking, only by the creation of God and His origination, and is not the result of man's efforts. But man will endeavor to expose himself to the flood-waters of God's mercy, as it were. For surely God Most High "changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts." (19) Likewise (the prophet) said - may peace be upon him - "Certainly your Lord has gifts of mercy for you in the days of your life. By all means expose yourself to them."

Concerning al-Khāliq and al-Bārī', man cannot hope to penetrate these two names (either) without using some kind of ^{remote} figurative expression. The reason for this is that creation and origination go back to the use of power

which is based upon knowledge. God Most High created knowledge and power for man. Man (now) has a means for attaining this power to a degree commensurate with his planning and knowledge. All existing things are divided into those whose occurrence is not at all dependent upon the capacity of man, such as the heavens, the stars, the earth, the animal and vegetable kingdoms and others, and into those things whose occurrence is dependent upon the capacity of man. These are the works that have come into being through the deeds of men, such as the things he has manufactured, various forms of administrations, acts of worship and various efforts of one kind and another. If man is (really) able to attain a degree of success by doing battle with himself in terms of constant practice and self-control and at the same time is able to direct both himself and others, he attains a position in which he is unique among men by discovering things not discovered before; and if at the same time he is able to do certain things and cause others to desire them, then he is like the person who creates something that did not exist before.

One says of the person who invented chess that he is the one who invented and devised the game when he invented something that did not exist before that time, even though the invention of something which has no real value is not a laudable attribution. This also applies in respect of religious exercises, struggles of one kind and another, administrations and the various crafts which are the source of many blessings, the forms and orders of which some people

learn from others. Inevitably these are traceable to the original developer and inventor, and that inventor may be said to be the one who devised those forms. Al-Khāliq is the one who planned them so that it is possible to apply this name to Him metaphorically. Among the names of God there are some that can be transferred to man metaphorically - actually this applies to the majority of them; and there are some which truly belong to man and are used in respect of God only metaphorically, as is the case with as-Ṣabūr and ash-Shakūr. It is not right that we should recognize the sharing that exists in respect of some of the names and neglect those differences that we have just mentioned.

Al-Ghaffār - The Very Forgiving One⁽²⁰⁾

Al-Ghaffār is the One who makes manifest what is noble and veils what is disgraceful. The sins (of man) are among the disgraceful things which He veils by placing a veil upon them in this world and disregarding their punishment in the hereafter. Al-Ghafr means veiling. The first of God's veils for man is to be found in the fact that the opening^s in his body that has been created for that which his eyes consider ugly has been hidden within him and is concealed within the beauty of his exterior. How great is the difference between the interior of man and his exterior in terms of cleanliness and dirtiness, and ugliness and beauty! Just look at that part

(20) S. 38, 66 (A-2-12); S. 39, 5/7 (A-3-12). Redhouse notes in respect of this name that whereas Caḡū simply refers to remitting the responsibility of an offense, the second form of ghafara also implies the further consequence of admitting the forgiven one to bliss and glory.

of him which God exposes and that part which He covers!

God's second veil for man is the human heart which He has made the seat for his reprehensible thoughts and disgraceful desires so that no one might know about this veil. If mankind were aware of the things that occurred in (a man's) mind in terms of repeated temptations, thoughts of corruption, deception and evil thinking in general, certainly they would detest him. No, rather would they lay hold of him and destroy him. But behold how his secrets and weaknesses are veiled from all people but himself!

God's third veil for man is the forgiveness of the sins for which he deserved to be disgraced in the sight of mankind. God has promised that He will exchange good deeds for man's misdeeds so that he might cover the repulsive qualities of his sins with the reward of his good deeds when he has proved his faith.

An Admonition: Man's portion of this name lies in his veiling for the next man that part of him which needs to be veiled. (Muhammad) said - may the peace of God be upon him - "The one who veils the imperfections of a believer, his imperfections will God cover on the day of the resurrection."⁽²¹⁾ The slanderer, the spy, the avenger and the one who requites evil with evil are far removed from this characterization. However, the one who is characterized by it is the one who does not divulge anything about God's

(21) Al-Bukhārī, Maṣālim, p. 3

creation except those things which are best in them. There is no creature totally free from perfection and imperfection, from ugliness and beauty. The one who disregards the repulsive qualities and remembers the good ones is the person who possesses a share of this name, even as it is related of Jesus - may peace be upon him - that he and his disciples passed by a dead dog, and the stench of it was over-powering. His disciples exclaimed, "How this corpse smells! " But Jesus - may peace be upon him - replied, "How lovely is the white of his teeth! " In this way he pointed out that they ought to mention only that which is good.

Al-Qahhār - The Dominating One (22)

Al-Qahhār is the One who breaks the backs of His powerful enemies. He dominates them by killing and humiliating them. Everything in existence is subjected to His dominance and power and is helpless in His grasp.

An Admonition: The dominating one among men is the one who dominates his enemies. Man's greatest enemy is man himself, that is to say, his own inner being. In fact, he is even a greater enemy than Satan who deceived him. When man has dominated his own carnal appetites he has actually dominated Satan. For Satan would like nothing better than to hand man over to destruction through the means of his carnal appetites, and one of his snares is women. It is impossible to imagine that one who has no desire for women could be caught

(22) S. 12, 39 (A-3-9); 13, 16/7 (A-3-22), inter alii

in this snare. This also applies to the one who has gained dominion over this desire by the authority of religion and the counsel of reason. To the extent that one dominates his carnal desires he has dominated all of mankind, and then surely no one dominates him. The aim of his enemies is their effort to destroy his body. (But the purpose of dominating one's carnal desires is nothing less than) the revival of his spirit. The one who puts to death his desire during his life will live after his death. "Think not of those who are slain in the way of God as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision." (23)

Al-Wahhāb - The One Who Gives Freely, without Thoughts of Compensation (24)

A gift is a present that is free from thoughts of compensation and other selfish interests. The one who gives many gifts of this nature is known as a generous giver. Generosity, gifts and presents (of this kind) are truly inconceivable except from God Most High, for He is the One who gives every needy person that which he needs, and He does this not with thoughts of compensation or other selfish interests either now or later. The one whose giving is motivated by selfish interests, believing that sooner or later his gift will earn for him commendation, praise, friendship or the avoidance of censure, or that by it he will acquire honour and a good reputation, (in reality) such a person is ^{seeking compensation, and is neither freely} ~~a trader. (Real) giving and generosity are non-~~

(23) S. 3,169/3 (B-7)

(24) S. 3,8/6 (B-7); 38,9/8 and 35/4 (A-2-12)

giving nor generous.
~~existent (as far as he is concerned).~~ *Not every aim is* His ~~total purpose is not always~~ *an (specific)*
object which he hopes to ^{ob}attain. Rather ~~is it~~ anything not ~~yet acquired~~ *an (instance of)*
which the giver intends to acquire by his giving. ~~Therefore it is~~ a com-
pensation. The one who gives and is generous so that he might be honoured
or praised or not be criticized for his failure to give is a trader. (On the
other hand), however, the truly generous person is the one from whom bless-
ings pour forth upon the one who derives benefit from them, and certainly his
intention is not that they be returned to him. Indeed, the person who does
something in order to escape the blame for not doing it, is one who frees
himself from possible censure, and that (also) is an aim and a compensation.

An Admonition: (In the pure sense of the word) generosity and gifts
cannot exist in man, for if the performance of a (given) deed were not more
important (to him) than its non-performance, he would not take initiative in
the matter. Therefore his performance of it is for his own purposes. But
the person who freely spends everything he possesses, including his very
life, for the sake of God Most High, though not for the purpose of achieving
the blessings of Paradise or protection from the punishment of hell or for
anything considered desirable now or later of the human portions, (certainly)
such a one is (considered) worthy of being called a giver and a generous
person.

Below him (in rank) is the one who has been liberal in order that he

might attain the blessings of Paradise. And below him is the one who has been liberal in order that he might attain a good reputation. Everyone who has sought to receive (some kind of) compensation is called a liberal person by the one who believes that compensations consist only of material things.

If you were to say, "That person who is generous with all that he possesses for the sake of God (alone) and is (completely) free from the anticipation of his (own) portion either now or later; how, then, is he not generous since the man has no portion at all?" we would reply, This man's portion is God Most High, pleasing Him, meeting Him, and attaining to Him. That is the greatest happiness which man can (possibly) achieve by his voluntary actions. It is that portion in comparison with which all others are to be disdained.

You may ask, "What is the meaning of their teaching that the one who knows God is the one who serves God for the sake of God alone and not for anything else besides Him? If no action of man is free from the desire for a portion, what is the difference between the one who serves God purely for the sake of God and the one who serves Him for some portion?" My answer to this would be, (Certainly) you must know that the portion is an expression for the totality of purposes known among (men). The one who is untouched by these has no other objective except God Most High (Himself). Therefore one says that he is absolved from the suspicion of (seeking) portions; that

is to say, he is absolved from that which people mean by a portion. Thus people say that the servant shows regard for his master not for the master's (sake) but for the portion he might receive from the master in terms of blessings and gifts; and the master shows regard for his servant not for the sake of the servant but for the sake of the service that he might receive from him.

As far as the father is concerned, he shows regard for his son for (the lad's) own sake and not because of the portion he might receive from him. Indeed, even if there is to be no portion from him at all, he will continue to show regard for him. The one who seeks an object not for the sake of the object itself but with another purpose in mind is like the one who (actually) does not seek it (at all). (The ultimate) intention of such a one is not to seek the object (in question) but rather something else. This is the case, (for example), of the one who seeks for gold. He does not seek it for its own sake, but rather that he might purchase clothing and food with it. And even these two objects are not desired for their own sake but rather that by means of them he might achieve pleasure and the avoidance of pain. But pleasure is desired for itself and not for any other purpose beyond it, as is also true of the avoidance of pain. Therefore gold is the means by which one obtains food, and food is the means by which one obtains pleasure. Pleasure is the (ultimate) goal, and it is not the means to something else. Similarly the child is not (merely) a means in respect of the father. Rather the well-being

of the child is sought for the sake of the child, because the child itself is (the father's) portion.

The same holds true for the one who serves God in order that he might gain Paradise. God Most High has made it (i. e., the desire for Paradise) the means of this search, and has not made it the end of his search. The distinguishing mark of any means lies in the fact that if the end is achieved without it, then one need not seek it. Precisely the same situation would exist if one's ends were achieved without gold, for then one would neither desire nor seek it. This being the case, that which is really desired is the end sought and not the gold. If one who serves God for the sake of Paradise could attain it without serving God, then he would not serve God. That which he (truly) desires and seeks is Paradise and nothing else.

As for the one who desires nothing but God and seeks nothing but Him, the one whose portion lies in the (anticipated) joy of meeting God and being near to Him, and his association with the heavenly host of angels who are near His presence, (certainly) one says of such a person that he serves God for the sake of God, not in the sense that he seeks no portion but rather in the sense that God Most High is his portion and in addition to Him he seeks no portion (at all).

He who does not believe in the joy of the magnificence of meeting God,

knowing and seeing Him and being near to Him, is not (really) one who yearns for Him. Furthermore, if one does not yearn for God, it is (quite) inconceivable that (the hope of meeting God, knowing and seeing Him and being near to Him) was his goal at all. Therefore his service (of God) is no better than that of the evil hireling who works only for the fee he hopes to receive.

The majority of people have never tasted this joy and (therefore) do not know it and do not understand the rapture of gazing into the face of God. They believe in this rapture only in respect of verbal expressions. As far as their inner being is concerned, it is much more attracted to the anticipated pleasure of meeting the black-eyed ones (i.e., the virgins of Paradise), and they are believers in this only.

You must understand from this that it is quite impossible to be free from the portions altogether if you admit the fact that God Most High exists; that is to say, meeting and being near to Him is a part of that which is called a portion. On the other hand, however, if by a portion you refer to that which the common people believe and towards which they incline, (you must know that) it is not this portion (i.e., God). But if (the portion) is an expression of that whose attaining is more important than the failure to attain it, in the case of man, then it is a portion.

Ar-Razzāq - The One Who Provides All Sustenance (25)

He is the One who created the means of sustenance and those who need them. The purpose of the former is to satisfy the latter. (Ar-Razzāq) also created for them the causes of enjoying this sustenance. (Actually) there are two kinds of sustenance. One is manifest sustenance and it consists of nourishment and food. These exist for that which is manifest, namely, the physical bodies. The other is hidden (sustenance) consisting of various types of knowledge and disclosures. These exist for (human) hearts and inner beings. The latter is the more noble of the two kinds of sustenance, for the fruit of it is eternal life. The fruit of the manifest sustenance is strength for the human body for a limited period of time. God (Himself) is the One who has assumed the responsibility for the creation of both types of sustenance, and He graciously makes them available to both categories, (that is to say, human bodies and hearts). But He grants it (amply) to whom He will and He measures (it to another).

An Admonition: The utmost that man can hope to achieve of this characterization are (the following) two (possibilities). The first is that he recognizes the real nature of this characterization, and that no one (really) deserves it except God Most High; and does not expect the sustenance except from Him and relies only upon Him in respect of it, even as it has been reported from

Hātim al-Aṣamm. A man asked him, "From what source do you eat?" He replied, "From God's treasury." The man (went on to) ask, "Does God throw bread down to you from heaven?" Hātim answered, "If the earth did not belong to God, then certainly God would throw it down from heaven." The man continued, "But you people play with words." (To this) Hātim answered, "Nothing has ever come down from heaven except the word." The man said, "I am not strong enough to argue with you." Hātim replied, "That is because falsehood does not exist with truth."

The second (possibility that man can hope to achieve in respect of this characterization) is that God might give him a knowledge to guide (others), a tongue that is able to direct and teach, and a hand capable of giving alms. Such a person becomes a channel in bringing noble sustenance to (men's) hearts by his words and actions. When God Most High loves a man, He makes many people dependent upon him. Whenever a man is an intermediary between God and man in respect of supplying their sustenance, he achieves a portion of this attribute. The prophet said - may peace be upon him - "Certainly the faithful treasurer who carries out - one may possibly say 'who gives' - that which he is ordered to do, gives all that is expected of him, does this plentifully and in good spirits, and who gives it to the man to whom he is ordered to give it, (he also) is one of those who give alms." (26)

(26) Muslim, Kitāb al-Zakāt, p.111. It is to be noted that the text used as the basis of this translation presents only a partial and unintelligible portion of the complete ḥadīth listed above.

The hands of man are God's treasuries. The one whose hand is made a treasury of the sustenance for human bodies and whose tongue becomes a treasury of the sustenance for (human) hearts - (Oh!) how distinguished will be the rewards of one characterized in this manner!

Al-Fattāḥ - He Who Opens All Things (27)

He is the One by Whose concern everything that is closed is opened, and (the One) by Whose guidance everything that is obscure is made manifest. At times He causes kingdoms to be opened (i. e., conquered) for His prophets, and He takes them out of the hands of His enemies and says, "Lo! We have given thee, (O Muḥammad), a signal victory (literally, opening), that God may forgive thee." (28) At times He lifts the screen from the hearts of His friends, and He opens to them the gates to the kingdom of His heaven and the beauty of His grandeur. He says, "That which God openeth unto mankind of mercy none can withhold it." (29) The one in whose hand are the keys to the invisible world, as well as the keys to the means of sustenance, he is the one who is truly worthy of being an opener.

An Admonition: In order that man might have a portion of the name al-Fattāḥ it is necessary that he longs for the time when he will reach the stage where the locks upon the divine problems are opened by his tongue and those religious and worldly subjects which have been difficult for man-

(27) S. 34, 26/5 (A-3-17)

(28) S. 48, 1.2 (B-18)

(29) S. 35, 2 (A-3-18)

kind will become easy by means of his knowledge.

Al-^cAlīm - The Omniscient One (30)

The meaning of this name is obvious. The perfection of it lies in the fact that He fully comprehends the knowledge of everything, the manifest and the hidden, that of both little and great importance, the first and the last, the end and the beginning. This (comprehensive knowledge) in terms of both clarity and disclosure is the most perfect (knowledge) possible in view of the fact that observing and disclosing one more manifest than it is inconceivable. Furthermore, (His knowledge) cannot be derived from the objects-of-knowledge. To the contrary, the objects-of-knowledge are derived from Him.

An Admonition: Man has a portion of the characterization of al-^cAlīm which is hardly hidden. However, his knowledge is distinct from the knowledge of God Most High in respect of three properties. One of them concerns the number of the objects-of-knowledge. For the things that are known by man, regardless of how extensive they might be, are still limited and few (in number). How, then, can we compare them with those that are infinite?

The second (property) concerns his spiritual vision (kashf). Even if it is clear, it still does not reach the ultimate point beyond which there is nothing more possible. Rather does he see things as one would see them from behind

(30) S. 2, 32/0; 127/1; 137/1 (B-1), inter alii

a thin veil. Do not deny the difference between the (various) levels of spiritual vision, for the power of internal perception is like (the power of) the external vision. (You must) distinguish between that which is disclosed at the time of day-break and that disclosed at high-noon.

The third property consists of the fact that the knowledge of God Most High is not derived from (the observation of) things. Rather are the things derived from Him. The knowledge of man (comes into existence) by means of things, is dependent upon them and results from them. If the understanding of this difference is difficult for you to comprehend, then compare the knowledge of the men learned in chess with the knowledge of the inventor of chess. (Certainly) you must know that the inventor is the cause of the existence of chess, and the existence of chess is the cause of the knowledge of the man learned (in chess). The knowledge of the inventor preceded chess, and the knowledge of the man learned (in chess) both preceded and followed (his learning the game). In a similar fashion God's knowledge of things both preceded them and caused them. But our knowledge is not like this. The eminence of man is due to his knowledge and results from the fact that it is one of the attributes of God Most High. But the most illustrious knowledge is that subject whose object - of - knowledge is most illustrious, and the most illustrious one of all (those objects - of - knowledge) is God Most High. For this reason the knowledge (ma^crifa) of God Most High is the most excellent of

all knowledge. Moreover, the knowledge of other things also implies a knowledge of the deeds of God Most High or the knowledge of the way by which man approaches God or the authority which facilitates the attainment of the knowledge of God and proximity to Him. All (other) knowledge outside of that is of no great honour.

Al-Qābid Al-Bāsīt - The One Who Withholds and Provides the Means of Subsistence as He Wills (31)

Al-Qābid al-Bāsīt is the One Who takes the souls of people at the time of death and the One Who places souls in human bodies at the time of (the inception) of life. He takes alms from the rich, and He provides the means of sustenance to those without resources. He provides means of sustenance for the rich to the point that no need can (possibly) exist, and He takes from the poor to the point that they have no ability (at all to leave Him in favour of another). He oppresses (human) hearts and makes them heavy by revealing to them how unconcerned, exalted and majestic He is, and (then) He delights them by His charitable gifts, kindness and beauty that He brings near to them.

An Admonition: **Al-Qābid al-Bāsīt** among men is the one who is inspired with wonders of wisdom and has been given the ability to put words together (in such a way as to convey real meaning). Sometimes he makes the hearts of men happy by that which he causes them to remember of the blessings of God and His favour, and sometimes he makes them sad by warning them of God's

(31) The name **al-Qābid** does not appear in the Qur'ān but was included in the list of names in reference to S.2, 245/6 (B-1). The meaning of **al-Bāsīt** is expressed in verbal form in S.13, 14/5 (A-3-22).

splendor and grandeur and His various kinds of punishments, afflictions and vengeance upon His enemies, even as did the messenger of God - may peace be upon him - when he caused the hearts of his companions to be sad in respect of his scrupulous observance of the details of worship at the time when he reminded them that God Most High will say to Adam on the day of the resurrection, "Send (to me) the delegation who are destined to be in Hell." Adam will say, "How many?" God will reply, "Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every one thousand people." (32) In this way the hearts of the people were broken to the point that they became indifferent to worship. When Muḥammad came the next day and saw how sad and listless they were, he refreshed their hearts and made them happy by reminding them that in comparison with all the people who had gone before them, they were like a black birthmark on a white bull.

Al-Khāfiḍ Ar-Rāfi^c - The One Who Abases the Unbeliever and Exalts the Believer (33)

He is the One who abases the unbelievers by means of misfortune and the One who exalts the believers by means of good fortune. He exalts His elect by drawing them near to Him, and He abases His enemies by isolating them from Himself. The one who raises his vision above the things that are perceptible and within the potential of human imagination and who guides his will away from

(32) Al-Bukhārī, Anbiyā', p.7

(33) Though both concepts are used in S. 56, 3 (A-1-23) in respect of the last day, only ar-Rāfi^c is used in respect of God. This occurs in S. 55/48 (B-7). But Redhouse has found al-Khāfiḍ in the lists of the collators referred to earlier in this study.

the reprehensible objects of human appetites is the one whom God lifts up to the vision of the angels who are near to Him. The one who limits his vision to sensory things and limits his concerns to the appetites which the animal kingdom shares with him is the one whom God reduces to the lowest possible status. Only God Most High does that, for He is al-Khāfiq al-Rāfi^c.

An Admonition: Man's portion of this name lies in his exalting the truth and abasing falsehood. That happens when he champions the one in the right and restrains the one in the wrong. He becomes an enemy of the enemies of God so that he might abase them. He allies himself to the chosen ones of God so that he might exalt them. Therefore God said to one of His friends, "As for your renunciation of the world, you have earned your ease by it. As for your remembrance of Me, you have been honoured by Me. Have you allied yourself to anyone for My sake? Have you made an enemy for My sake?" (34)

Al-Mu^cizz Al-Mudhill - The One Who Raises to Honour and Abases (35)

He is the One who gives dominion to whom He wishes and the One who takes it from whom He wishes. True dominion is (to be found) in the liberation from the humiliation of (physical) needs, the subjugation of appetite(s) and the fault of the disgrace of ignorance. Therefore (in the case of) the one from whose heart the veil is lifted so that he can know the beauty of God's presence

(34) Hadīth qudsī.

(35) Though these two names as such do not appear in the Qur'an, their verbs are to be found in S. 3, 26/5 (B-7)

and the one who is granted the ability to be abstemious so that as the result of it he has no need for (the things of) God's creation, and is provided strength and support so that by means of them he controls his own attributes (sifāt), God has raised this man to a position of honour and gives him dominion in this world. God will (also) raise him to honour in the hereafter in terms of this person's gaining access to Him, and God will call for him, saying, "Ah! thou soul at peace! Return unto thy Lord!" (36) The one whom God causes to look to human beings in such a way that he is dependent upon them and is so much under the dominion of greediness that he is not content even when he has sufficient to satisfy his needs, and the one who advances gradually by his cunning until he is deceived about himself and (thus) remains in the darkness of ignorance, God abases such a one and dispossesses him. That is the workmanship of God Most High, as and when He desires (it). For He, al-Mu^cizz al-Mudhill, (is the One of Whom it is said) "Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt and Thou Abasest whom Thou wilt." (37) And this lowly one is the one to whom God speaks and says, "But ye tempted one another, and hesitated, and doubted, and vain desires beguiled you till the ordinance of God came to pass; and the deceiver deceived you concerning God; so this day no ransom can be taken from you." (38) This is the utmost limit of abasement. Each person who acts by means of his hand and his tongue so as to make the causes of honour easy possesses a portion of this characterization.

(36) S. 89, 27.28 (A-1-43)

(37) S. 3, 26/5 (B-7)

(38) S. 57, 14/3 (b) and 15/4 (a) (B-9)

As-Samīʿ - The All-Hearing One (39)

He is the One from Whose perception nothing audible escapes, even if it is hidden. He is conscious of the black ant creeping upon the massive boulder in the pitch-dark night. He hears the praise of those who praise Him, and He rewards them; He hears the invocations of those who invoke Him, and He answers them. He hears without (the usual) auditory channels. He listens without ear-holes and ears, even as He acts without hands or feet and speaks without a tongue. His hearing is not to be compared with that hearing to which ordinary speech can gain access. No matter how much you consider (this) hearing (that is to say, God's hearing) to be free of a change that may affect it when audible things occur, and (no matter how much) you consider this hearing to be above that which is heard by the (human) ear or some device and instrument, you must know that intrinsically this hearing is of such a nature that by it the perfection of the attributes of all of the things heard is disclosed. The one who does not examine this view closely will certainly fall into the snare of anthropomorphism. Therefore, you must be on your guard and watch carefully in this matter.

An Admonition: Man in respect of (his) sense has a portion of hearing, but his portion is limited in view of the fact that he does not apprehend all of the things that are heard but only those sounds that are near-by. Moreover, his perception is dependent upon an instrument (the ear-drum) which is susceptible

(39) S. 3, 35/1 (B-7); 5, 76/80 (B-24) inter alii

to damage. (Once more), if the sound is hidden, he will not perceive it and if it is far way, it will not be heard. Even if the sound is great, the hearing may be impaired and it will fade away.

However, his portion of the religious aspects of this subject consists of two things. One of them is that he knows that God hears, and therefore he guards his tongue. The second consists of the fact that he knows that God created (the sense of) hearing for him in order that he might hear the word of God Most High and His Book which He sent down in order that man would derive guidance through it to the way of God. (This being the case), man will use his hearing only in connection with it.

Al-Basir - The All-Seeing One (40)

He is the One who watches and observes in such a way that (even) that which is under the earth does not escape His attention. Moreover, His seeing this also is free of dependence upon the pupil of the eye and the eyelids, as well as being free of the necessity of relying upon the stamping of forms and colours upon His eye as they are imprinted upon the eye of man. For human vision results from the receiving of impressions and the changing (of colours), and this necessitates (the presence of various) accidents. If God is free of this necessity, sight in this case is an expression for the attribute by means of which there is disclosed a perfection which differentiates between the things that are seen.

(40) S. 17,1 (A-2-4); 42,11/9 (A-3-15) inter alii

(Certainly) this is more evident and obvious than what can be understood by one whose perception is (a sense of) sight which is limited to such degrees of existence as are manifest.

An Admonition: In respect of sensory perception man's portion of the characterization of sight is self-evident. But it is weak and inadequate. For man's sight does not extend to (those objects) which are distant, and it does not penetrate the hidden object which is near-by. Rather does it only reach the things that are obvious, and it falls short of those things that are hidden, including (man's) secret thoughts. However, man's portion of seeing spiritual matters consists of two things. One of them is that he knows that God created vision for him so that he might behold the signs and wonders of the kingdom and the heavens. And his vision is a warning. A (certain) man said to Jesus - may peace be upon him - "Is there any creature who is similar to you?" He answered, "The one whose vision amounts to a warning and his silence indicates that he is thinking and whose speech consists of remembering (God), he is similar to me."

Man's second portion of seeing spiritual matters consists of the fact that he knows that God sees him and is aware of him, and therefore he does not take lightly this fact that God sees him and is aware of him. The one who hides something from one other than God when he does not hide it from God Most High is the one who makes light of God's sight. Watching one's step is one of the fruits of faith in this characterization. The one who draws near to sin while

knowing that God Most High sees him, O! what a reckless man he is! And if he thinks that God Most High does not see him, O! what an unbeliever he is!

Al-Hakam - The Arbiter (41)

He is the One who passes judgment, the Arbitrator, the Judge whose judgment is accepted, the One whose judgment is not rejected and whose decree is not revised. One of His judgments in respect of man is that "man hath only that for which he maketh effort and that his effort will be seen," (42) and that "the righteous verily will be in delight. And lo! the wicked verily will be in hell". (43) The meaning of the righteous and the wicked in terms of happiness and distress is that (God) makes good or evil to be a cause which leads on the one who practices them to happiness or distress even as God makes medications and poisons the causes which lead those who take them to recovery and destruction. If the meaning of wisdom is the ordering and directing of the causes to the effects, then He is an absolute arbiter because He is the one who causes all causes in general and in particular.

The divine decree and predestination branch out from this judgment. His planning the origin of the setting of the causes in such a way that they are directed to the effects is His judgment. His setting up the universal, original,

(41) This name as such does not appear in the Qur'ān in respect of God. But the concept is presented either in verbal form, e.g., S. 40, 48/51 (A-3-10) or in nominal form, e.g., S. 6, 62 (A-3-21).

(42) S. 53, 39. 40/40. 41 (A-1-30)

(43) S. 82, 13. 14 (A-1-15)

established and fixed causes which neither disappear nor change, such as the earth, the seven heavens, the stars, the celestial bodies and their harmonious and eternal movements which do not change and do not cease to exist "until (the term) prescribed is run", (44) is His decree, even as He says, "Then He ordained them seven heavens in two days and inspired in each heaven its mandate." (45)

The directing by these causes, (that is to say,) (46) of their harmonious, circumscribed, foreordained and calculated movements towards the effects resulting from them minute after minute is God's predestination. For judgment is the first and universal planning and the first command which is "a twinkling of the eye". (47) The decree is the universal setting of the universal and eternal causes. Predestination is the direction of the universal causes with their foreordained and calculated actions to the effects which are circumscribed and limited to a determined quantity which neither increases nor decreases. For this reason nothing escapes from His decree and His predestination.

But this can be understood only through an example. Perhaps you have seen the clock which informs one of the hour of worship. If you have not seen it, then, generally speaking, (it is constructed in this manner). There must be a mechanism in the form of a cylinder which contains a known amount of water.

(44) Literally, "until the book reaches it" - S. 2,235/6 (B-1)

(45) S. 41,12/1 (A-3-2)

(46) Adding ay at this point

(47) S. 16,77/9 (A-3-5)

There must also be another hollow mechanism which is placed within the cylinder (but) above the water, and a string which has one of its ends tied to this hollow mechanism. The other end is tied to the lower part of a small container which is placed above the hollow cylinder. In (this container) there is a ball. Under the ball there is another bowl (placed) in such a manner that if the ball drops it will fall into the bowl, and its jingle will be heard. Then the bottom of the cylindrical mechanism must be pierced to a determined extent so that the water can escape through it little by little. When the water-(level) subsides, the hollow mechanism placed on the surface of the water also subsides. Then the string becomes taut as the result of that action. This will cause the container which has the ball in it to begin to tip and then to completely tip over. (When that happens) the ball will roll out of it and fall into the bowl and jingle. At the end of each hour one ball falls (in this manner). But the interval between the two falls can be calculated by determining the (amount of) water that escapes and the lowering (of the surface of the water). And that is determined by the size of the puncture through which the water escapes, and this is known by calculation. The reason for the escape of the water in a determined amount can be determined by the width of the puncture (also) to a determined extent, and the water subsides to the extent of the width of the puncture. By means of the subsiding of the water the extent to which the hollow mechanism subsides is (also) determined, as well as the extent to which the string is made

taut and the extent to which the end moves which has the ball attached. All of this can be determined by a determination of the extent of cause which neither increases or decreases. It is possible to make the falling of the ball into the bowl a cause of another action and this other action a cause of a third action, and to continue this process indefinitely so that from it are generated remarkable and predetermined movements (actions) of circumscribed extent. The first cause was the falling of the water in a determined quantity. If you can picture this image (in your mind's eye), then you must know that the one who created this plan is in need of three things.

The first (requirement) is the planning, namely, the judgment about what it is that must exist of the mechanisms, causes and movements in order to bring about the goals that are intended. That is the judgment (al-hukm). The second (requirement) is the gathering of the mechanisms which are required to achieve (the objective). They are the mechanism made in the form of a cylinder so that it might hold water, the mechanism that is hollow so that it might be placed under the water, the string that is attached to the container ⁽⁴⁹⁾ which has the ball, and the bowl into which the ball falls. That is the decree. Thirdly the establishing of its cause, which is the puncture of the lower part of the mechanism to a determined extent, necessitates predetermined, calculated and circumscribed movement so that by the foreordained escape of the water from

(49) Reading garf

it there occurs a movement in the water which leads to a movement on the surface of the water, and then to the movement of the hollow mechanism which had been placed on the surface of the water; then to the movement of the string; then to the movement of the container which has the ball in it; then to the movement of the ball; then to its impact in the bowl for the ball fell in it; then to the jingle resulting from its fall; then to the rousing of those who were present and making it audible to them; and then to their activity in being busy with (their) prayers and their work in view of their knowledge that the hour (of prayer) had concluded. All of that happens in a determined quantity and to a determined extent which causes the determination of all of it by (adding bi at this point) the determination of the first movement which is the movement of the water. When you understand that these mechanisms are the principles from which movements must result and that the movement must be determined if the result is to be regulated, then certainly that which has been determined must proceed from them.

Similarly you must understand the occurrence of the determined events, not one of which is advanced or retarded "when its term comes", ⁽⁵⁰⁾ that is to say, when its cause is present. All of that took place by a known measure. "Lo! God bringeth His command to pass." For "God hath set a measure for everything."⁽⁵¹⁾ The heavens, the celestial bodies, the stars, the earth, the

(50) S. 63, 11 (B-14)

(51) S. 65, 3 (B-11)

sea and the air and these great bodies in the world are like those mechanisms (described above). The cause moving the celestial bodies, the stars, the sun and the moon to a known extent is like that puncture which was the reason for the escape of the water in a known amount. The movement of the sun, the moon and the stars leads to the occurrence of certain events on the earth just as the movement of the water led to the occurrence of those movements causing the fall of the ball which is known to have marked the end of the hour.

An example of the movements of the firmament provoking changes on the earth can be found in the movements of the sun. When it reaches the east the world is illuminated, and it becomes easy for the people to see. This ease (also) permits them to scatter to (their) work. But when the sun reaches the west, work becomes difficult for them and they return to their dwelling-places. When the sun is near the middle of the firmament and stands over the heads of the people, the air becomes warm, summer arrives and the fruits ripen. When the sun is more distant (from the middle), winter sets in and the weather becomes much colder. When the sun is half-way (between the two extremes), (a period of) moderation results, (the season of) spring appears, the earth brings forth vegetation and a green hue is apparent (everywhere).

By these very familiar facts with which you are well acquainted, (try to) measure those wonders which you do not know. The variety of all these seasons is determined by a known measure because it is dependent upon the movements

of the sun and the moon. The sun and the moon are (also calculated) by a reckoning, that is to say, their movements (are dependent upon) a known reckoning. This is the determination (taqdīr), and the laying down of the universal causes is the decree. The first planning which is similar to a glance of the eye is the judgment. God Most High is a just judge in these matters. Even as the movement of the mechanism, the string and the ball are not external to the will of the inventor of the mechanism - on the contrary, that is what He willed when He invented the mechanism - so also all the events which occur in the world, both the evil and the good and the beneficial and harmful, are not external to the will of God Most High. Rather (all of) that is the intention of God Most High for the sake of which He has planned its causes. This is what is meant by His saying, "and for that did He create them." (52) The explanation of divine matters by means of conventional examples is difficult. But that which is intended from the examples is comparison. Therefore set aside the example and take notice of the aim! Beware of (both) exemplification and comparison (tashbīh).

An Admonition: You have understood from the example already mentioned what share man has of wisdom, planning, decreeing and determining. That is a (comparatively) simple matter. However, the important things pertaining to him are those dealing with the planning of religious and spiritual exercises and the determining of policies which will produce benefits both religious and secular.

(52) S. 11, 119/20 (A-3-7)

In this way God appoints His servants as agents on the earth and settles them in (this capacity) so that He might observe how they act. As for his religious portion dealing with this characterization of God Most High, it consists in your knowing that the matter is concluded. It is not (a matter) for new initiative. The pen (that is to say, God's pen) is dry from writing what is to be; (knowing) that the causes have been directed towards their effects and (that) the movement (of the causes) towards (the effects) in respect of the beginning and end of their lives is absolutely necessary.

Whatever comes into existence comes by necessity. It is necessary that it should exist, and it is not necessary by its essence; yet it is necessary by means of the eternal decree which cannot be reversed. It is known that that which has been decreed exists and that anxiety is superfluous. In respect of his sustenance man should act well in seeking it, he should be free from excitement and agitation should not disturb his heart.

But you may say, "Two difficulties are implied by this subject. One of them concerns anxiety. In what way is it superfluous, seeing that it is decreed? Its cause has been determined and when it takes place, the occurrence of anxiety is necessary. The second point is this. If the matter is settled, then why is there any activity at all, seeing that the cause of (both) happiness and distress is settled?"

The answer to the first (point) is that when they say that that which is decreed

exists and, (therefore), that anxiety is superfluous, this does not mean that it is superfluous beyond that which has been decreed or that it is extraneous to it, but rather that it is superfluous, that is to say, it is ineffectual and without advantage. It does not turn aside that which has been decreed, because the cause of worry about that which is expected to happen is pure ignorance since if (it is true that) the coming into being has been decreed, then precaution and worry (certainly) will not turn it aside. This (ignorance) is rather the precipitation of a kind of pain through fear of the occurrence of pain. (But) if it has not been determined that it will happen, then worry is pointless. In consideration of these two aspects (of the subject), anxiety is superfluous.

As far as (the second point about) activity is concerned, the answer^{is} (to be found in) his (Muhammad's) words - may blessings and peace be upon him - "Work! Everyone is helped to that for which he was created." The meaning of this is that when happiness has been decreed for a man, it has been decreed by means of a cause, and the causes of (happiness) are made easy for him, namely, obedience. When distress has been decreed for a man, it has been decreed by means of a cause, namely, his idleness in not engaging in the causes of (happiness). The cause of his idleness may well be found in his thinking that "if I am (to be) happy, there is no need for activity; and if I am (to be) wretched, activity will be of no advantage to me." But this is ignorance, for he is not aware of the fact that if he is (to be) happy, he will be happy only because the knowledge and

activity which cause happiness were given to him. If they are not made easy for him and are not given to him, it is a sign of his distress.

An example of this (may be found in) the one who desires to be a jurist and to reach the grade of the imām. One says to him, "Exert yourself! Learn! Persevere!" He answers, "If God has decreed the imamate for me from the beginning of time, the effort will not be necessary. If God has decreed ignorance for me, the effort will be of no advantage to me." One says to him (in reply), "If this thought gains mastery over you, it will indicate that God has decreed ignorance for you. But he for whom the imamate has been decreed from the beginning, he has been decreed it (only) through its causes." The causes will be given to him and he will put them to use, and the inclinations which induce him to laziness and idleness will be driven away from him. But the one who does not make an effort definitely will not attain the grade of the imamate at all, whereas the one who makes an effort and has the causes of it made easy for him, (finds) his hope of attaining the imamate coming true if he perseveres with his effort to the end and does not meet an obstacle that will block his path.

Similarly it is necessary to understand that a man does not attain happiness unless he comes to God with a sound heart. Soundness of the heart is a attribute that is acquired by effort, even as is the understanding of oneself and the understanding (of law required for) the imamate; there is no distinction (between them). Certainly there are various grades of men in respect of seeing the judgment (of

God). There is the one who looks to the ultimate result, judging the judgment according to that which ultimately results to him, and the one who looks to the beginning judging it by that judgment which ~~was decreed~~^{was decreed} for him in the beginning. The latter one is the higher of the two since the end follows the beginning. There is (also) the one who leaves aside the past and the future. He is a creature of the present. He looks to it (the judgment) and is content with that which occurs from the predestination of God and (also) with that which results from it. He is higher than those who went before him. Then there is also the one who forsakes the present, past and future; his heart is completely absorbed in the judgment and he perseveres with his witness. This is the highest grade (of all).

Al-^cAdl - The Just One (53)

The meaning of this name is the just one. He is the one from whom the work of justice emanates which is the opposite of injustice and inequity. The one who does not know his justice cannot know the just one, and the one who does not know his work cannot know his justice. In order to understand this characterization, one must have a comprehensive knowledge of the works of God Most High (ranging from the highest kingdom of the heavens to the furthest reaches of the earth. (This knowledge results) "when one does not see a fault in the Beneficent One's creation; and then looks again ^{He sees no flaw.} (at it).[^] Then he looks yet again, and his sight returns unto him weakened and made dim," (54) having been dazzled by the Holy Lordship

(53) This name is not found in the Qur'ān. Ht. 29; Rs. 63

(54) Al-Ghasālī here draws heavily upon S. 67, 3.4 (A-2-16) but has adapted the basic thought of these verses to conform with his presentation.

and bewildered by its symmetry and systematic order. In this condition he loves (God) since he knows something of the "meanings" of God's justice. This is because God created the parts of everything in existence, both the corporeal and the spiritual as well as the perfect and imperfect in their number, and gave to each one its own character. In doing this He showed His generosity. (He also) placed each one in the rank suitable to it, and in doing this He was just. Some of the important bodies in the world are the earth, water, the atmosphere, the heavens and the stars. He created them and placed them in their (proper) rank. He placed the earth in the lowest position, and He put the water above it, the atmosphere above the water and the heavens above the atmosphere. If this order were reversed, certainly the system would be ineffective.

Perhaps the explanation of the way in which this order is validated in respect of (both) justice and the system (itself) would be too difficult for most intellects to understand. Let us, therefore, condescend to the grade of the common people. We suggest that man would do well to direct his attention to his own body. It is composed of different members even as the body of the world is composed of different bodies. Its first difference is that God made it of bone, flesh and skin. He put the bones (in the body) as an inner support, the flesh as a case to surround it and the skin as a case for the flesh. If this order were reversed and that which is hidden were made visible, certainly the system would become ineffective. Should (this fact) be concealed from you, then (it would be well to remember) that man is created of different mem-

bers; for example, the hand, the foot, the eye, the nose and the ear. By His creation of these members al-^cAdl is generous, and by placing them in their specific positions he acts justly. Thus He placed the eye in that position of the body which was most suitable for it. If He had created it on the nape of the neck, or on the foot, the hand or the crown of the head, its failure to serve its intended purpose, as well as its vulnerability, would be (quite) evident. Similarly He suspended the arms from the shoulders. If they were suspended from the head or from the groin or knees, the defectiveness resulting from this would (again) be (quite) evident. Similarly He placed all the senses in the head, for they are spies, in order that they might control the entire body. If He had placed them on the foot, certainly the (entire) system would be defective.

An explanation of this nature in respect of all the members (of the body) would be too long. In general, it is necessary for you to know that not a (single) thing was created in its position unless this position was inevitable for it. Had it been placed farther either to the right or left-hand side, or lower or higher, certainly it would be deficient, ineffective, repulsive, out of balance or offensive in appearance. The same would apply to the nose, which was created on the middle of the face. If it had been created on the forehead or the cheek, certainly a deficiency would have affected its utility. Perhaps your understanding is able to perceive His wisdom.

You must (also) know that the sun, too, was not created in the fourth

heaven, which is the middle one of the seven heavens, as the result of a whim. Rather did God create it only in accordance with that which was fitting for it, and He placed it only in that position in which it could achieve that for which He intended it. Nevertheless, perhaps you are unable to comprehend the wisdom in respect of it because you (have given) little reflection to the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and their wonders. If you would consider them, certainly you would see that the wonders of your body are paltry in comparison with theirs. And how could it be otherwise since the creation of the heavens and the earth is so much greater than the creation of people? If only your knowledge of the wonders concerning yourself were complete, and if only you would free yourself for pondering over them and the (other) bodies surrounding them, then you would be one of those of whom God Most High said, "We will show them Our portents on the horizons and within themselves." (55) How can you be one of those of whom He said, "Thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those possessing certainty," (56) and how can "the gates of heaven be opened" (57) to the one who is completely absorbed in the anxiety of this world, the one who is enslaved by greed and passion?

This is the hint to the understanding of the first steps leading to the knowledge of this one name. A (complete) explanation of it would require volumes, as is the case with the explanation of the meaning of every name. (The fact

(55) S. 41, 53 (A-3-2-)

(56) S. 6, 75 (A-3-21)

(57) S. 54, 11 (A-2-2)

remains that) nouns are derived from verbs and are gradually understood only after understanding the verbs. Everything in existence has resulted from the actions of God. He who does not have a comprehensive knowledge of these actions either singly or in general has a knowledge that does not go beyond (the point of) mere exegesis and lexicography. But no one can hope to acquire a knowledge of each and every one of them since there is no end to their number. But there is a way in which man may attain a general knowledge of them, and his portion of the knowledge of the names will be commensurate with the extent of this general knowledge which (automatically) involves all the sciences. However, the intent of such a book as this is merely to allude to some of the introductory and knotty points (that are involved.)

Man's portion of al-^cAdl is well known. The first thing that is (incumbent) upon him in respect of the justice of his own attributes is that he makes appetite and anger prisoners under the command of his reason and religion. Whenever he causes reason to be subject to appetite and anger, he does wrong. In a general sense this is what is implied by justice in respect of his own person. The particular implications of it amount to compliance with all the requirements of the divine law.

In respect of all the members of his body, his justice requires that he use them in the way in which the divine law permits.

if he happens to be

numbered among the men of authority, His justice in respect of his people, his children and beyond these his subjects, is well known. Sometimes it is thought that inequity is harm, and justice is that which conveys benefit to the people. (But) it is not so. Indeed, if the king opens his treasury which contains arms, books and various types of possessions but distributes the possessions among the rich and the arms are given among the people of learning and the fortresses are (also) turned over to them, and the books are given to the soldiers and fighters to whom the mosques and schools are also turned over; (to be sure), he has conferred benefits, but (in reality) he has been unjust and has turned away from justice, for he has placed things in positions not appropriate to them. On the other hand, if he causes hurt to the sick by giving them medicines to drink and by forcing cupping and blood-letting upon them; and if he causes hurt to the criminals by means of the death-penalty, amputation and beating, then he is just, for in each case he has administered the appropriate action.

In order to view this characterization (correctly), man's sacred obligation is to have faith that God Most High is just so that he does not object to God's planning, judgment and all of His actions, whether they agree with man's desires or not, for everything that He does is just. (His actions) are just as they ought to be and (are performed) on the basis of that which (He knows) is necessary. If God had not done that which He did, certainly the result would have been quite another story; in effect, an even greater harm would have

resulted. For example, if the sick person does not permit the cupping, certainly the harm that he will suffer (eventually) will exceed the (actual) pain of the cupping.

In this manner God Most High is a just one. Faith in this fact precludes denial and resistance, either outward or inward. When such faith is complete, one does not curse Fate, one does not attribute things to (the influence of) heavenly bodies, and one does not object (to what happens) as is commonly done. Rather must one know that all of these things are causes which are subservient (to Him). He arranged and directed them to the effects in the best possible way by means of the utmost justice and kindness.

Al-Latīf - The Subtle One (58)

The one worthy of this name is the one who knows the fine points of those things that are beneficial, (as well as) their obscurities, niceties and subtleties, and who then makes them available to the deserving one in a gentle rather than a harsh manner. The (real) meaning of al-Luṭf results from the joining of gentleness in action with subtlety in knowledge. The perfection of that (i. e., al-Luṭf) in respect of knowledge and activity is inconceivable except for God Most High.

A detailed exposition of His comprehension of the fine points and the secrets is (quite) impossible. Suffice it to say that the hidden (object) is as

(58) S. 6, 103 (A-3-21); 67, 14 (A-2-16)

open to His knowledge as is the exposed one. There is (absolutely) no distinction (between them). His gentleness and subtlety in His deeds are also boundless. The only one who knows the subtlety in respect of His work is the one who knows the details of His deeds and the fine points of His gentleness in respect of them. One's knowledge of the meaning of the name al-Latif is commensurate with one's knowledge of these things.

The explanation of (all) this is necessarily lengthy. Moreover, it is (quite) inconceivable that (even) many volumes could do justice to one-tenth of one-tenth of it. However, it is possible to draw attention to some generalities (concerning this subject). A part of His kindness is His creation of the fetus in the womb of the mother in a three-fold darkness, His preservation of it and His feeding it through the umbilical cord until the time that it is separated and becomes independent by taking food through the mouth. At that time God prompts the child to take the mother's breast into its mouth and suck it, and to do this even during the darkness of night and in spite of the fact that the child has not been taught to do so nor has never seen it done.

Moreover, God causes the egg containing a bird to break, and He immediately prompts it to pick up seeds. Again, God does not give man teeth from the outset of his creation but (rather) delays them to the time when he needs them, for a baby has no need of teeth while he is receiving milk (from his mother). Then God causes teeth to grow when the need for grinding food exists.

Then God causes a differentiation of the types of teeth, the molars for grinding, the eye-teeth for breaking and the middle incisors for cutting (the food). Then He causes the tongue, concerning which the most obvious purpose is pronunciation, to be used like a shovel in directing the food to the place where it is to be ground. If only one would remember God's subtlety in preparing the morsel (of food) which man eats without experiencing any inconvenience (on his part), when innumerable people have collaborated in preparing it, including those who prepare the earth, sow it, water it, reap it, separate the grain from extraneous matter, grind it, mix it into dough, bake it, et cetera! The explanation of this subject is so detailed that there actually is no end to it. But generally speaking, God is wise in respect of His planning these things; He is generous in respect of bringing them into being; He is a fashioner in respect of the manner in which He arranges them; He is just in respect of His placing each thing in its (correct) place; and He is subtle in respect of the fact that not a single one of the fine points of gentleness is omitted (in this entire structure). The one who does not understand the real nature of these deeds will never understand the real nature of these names. A part of His subtlety over against His creatures lies in the fact that He gives them more than they need and demands of them less than they can do. Another portion of (that same) subtlety lies in His making the attainment of the happiness of eternity easy for them by means of (only) a little effort over a (comparatively) brief period of time which is his life-span. Certainly that period cannot be compared

with eternity.

The production of pure milk from the nursing mother's stomach and blood, the production of precious gems from hard stones, and the production of honey from the bee, silk from the worm and a pearl from the sea-shell are (also) the result of His subtlety. (But) the most wonderful subject of all is God's creation of man from the impure semen and His making him the repository of His knowledge, the bearer of His trust and the witness of the kingdoms of His heavens. This, too, is gentleness that simply defies definition.

An Admonition: Man's portion of this characterization lies in his gentleness over against the people of God Most High and his graciousness shown in calling them to God and guiding them to the happiness of the life to come without (exhibiting any evidence of) contempt, harshness, contention and fanatical enthusiasm. The best way in which man can manifest his portion of subtlety is by drawing (others) to the acceptance of the truth through the instrumentality of one's good qualities, satisfying behavior and pious actions. For certainly they are more effective and more subtle than embellished expressions (which one might utter).

Al-Khabīr - The All-Cognizant One (59)

He is the one from whose mind no hidden information escapes. Nothing occurs in either (His) physical or spiritual domain, not an atom is set into

(59) S. 6, 18 (A-3-21); 34, 1 (A-3-17); inter alii

motion or becomes still, not a breath is disturbed nor quieted without His knowledge of it. This term is equivalent to al-^cAlīm. (But) when knowledge is related to hidden secrets, it is called cognizance, and the one possessing it is called a cognizant one.

An Admonition: Man's portion of that (name) lies in his being cognizant of those things which take place in his world, and his world is his heart and his body. The secrets by which his heart is characterized - deception, treachery, worldliness, the concealment of evil, a public display of that which is good and fine behaviour which endeavors to present a facade of faithfulness whereas (in reality) one is (completely) bankrupt of it - are known only to the one who has tested his soul and applied himself to the study of it, one who has come to know its cunning, deceit and deception and who therefore girds himself to combat it and takes precaution against it. (Only) such a person is worthy of being called a cognizant one.

Al-Halīm - The Non-Precipitate and Forbearing One (60)

Al-Halīm is the One who witnesses the disobedience of the disobedient, the One who sees the violation of the command (amr). But anger does not rouse Him and rage does not seize Him. He is not one who is prompted by haste and recklessness to take swift vengeance, even though He has unlimited power to do so, even as God Most High said, "If God took mankind to task by that which they deserve, He would not leave a living creature on the surface

of the earth." (61)

An Admonition: Man's portion of the characterization of al-Halīm is obvious, for forbearance is one of the good qualities of the disposition of mankind, and it does not require a lengthy explanation.

Al-^cAḡīm - The Great One (62)

(You must) know that (the word) "great" was applied to physical bodies in its original coinage. Thus one says, "This body is great and this body is greater (a^cḡām) than that body" if it is more extended in respect of length, width and depth.

Then (you must also) know that it is divided into (a) the "great" (ness) of which the eye received an impression and (b) that whose extremities it is inconceivable that vision could grasp completely, such as the earth and the heavens. Thus one says that the elephant is "great" and the mountain is "great", and yet vision is able to grasp their extremities completely. Either of these is "great" in comparison with that which is smaller than it. As far as the earth is concerned, it is inconceivable that vision should be able to grasp its extremities completely, and this is also true of the heavens. It is to these objects in the realm of those things subject to physical vision that the term "great" is applied in an absolute sense.

(61) S. 35, 45/4 (A-3-18)

(62) S. 2, 254/6 (B-1); 4, 13/7 (B-10); inter alii

(You must) understand that there is also a difference in respect of those things that are apprehended by the powers of mental perception. Human reason grasps completely the core (kunh) of the real nature of some of them and falls short in the case of others. That portion of them which reason falls short of completely is divided into (a) that which some may ⁽⁶³⁾ conceivably grasp although the understanding of the majority falls short of it, and (b) into that concerning which reason cannot conceivably grasp the core of its real nature completely. This last one is the absolute "Great One" who exceeds all the limits of human understanding so that the comprehension of His essential being (kunh) is inconceivable. And that One is God Most High. The explanation to this effect is to be found in the first section.

An Admonition: The "great" among men are the prophets and the scholars. When the wise man knows something of their attributes, his bosom is filled with veneration and his heart is so replete with veneration that no room remains in it (for anything else). The prophet is "great" in respect of his people, the shaykh in respect of his disciple and the teacher in respect of his student, since the reason (of these subordinates) is incapable of comprehending the core of the master's attributes. (But) if (the subordinate) equals or surpasses (the master), then the latter is (no longer) "great" in comparison with the former. Every greatness applied to one other than God is deficient and not absolutely "great", because it manifests itself in relation to one thing and not another - apart from

(63) Omitting lā here

the greatness of God Most High. Certainly He is the absolutely "Great", not (only) relatively.

Al-Ghafūr - The Most Forgiving One (64)

Al-Ghafūr has the same meaning as al-Ghaffār, but it (i. e., al-Ghafūr) denotes an extensiveness of a different kind from that denoted by al-Ghaffār. Certainly al-Ghaffār denotes an extreme (degree) of forgiveness in respect of forgiveness that is repeated time after time. (The difference lies in the fact that the paradigm) al-fa^cḡl denotes an abundance of the action (al-fi^cl) (expressed by the root), and al-fa^cūl denotes the excellence, perfection and the inclusiveness of the action. Thus He is al-Ghafūr in the sense that He forgives perfectly and completely and thereby reaches the ultimate degree of forgiveness. (But) we have spoken of this before.

Ash-Shakūr - The One Who Expresses Thankfulness by Rewarding Bounteously (65)

Ash-Shakūr is the one who rewards trivial pious deeds with many grades, and the one who gives unlimited happiness in the life to come for activity during a limited period (in this life). The one who rewards the good deed with multiples of it is said to be thankful for that good deed, and the one who praises the performer of this good deed is also said to be thankful for it. If you consider multiple rewards (to be the criterion in this matter), then there can be no

(64) S. 12, 98/9 (A-3-9); 15, 49 (A-2-10); inter alii

(65) S. 35, 30/27 (A-3-18); 42, 23/2 (A-3-15); inter alii

absolute ash-Shakūr except God Most High, because His increase of the reward is not restricted and limited since the blessings of Paradise are infinite. God Most High says, "Eat and drink at ease for that which ye sent on before you in past days." (66)

(Furthermore), if you consider the concept of praise (to be the criterion), (you will discover that in the human realm) one's praises are directed to a second party, whereas when the Lord Most High praises the actions of His people, He is actually praising His own actions, since man's actions are a part of His creation. If one is given something and then praises (the giver), one may say that he is thankful. But the one who gives and then goes on to shower praises upon the recipient (certainly) is more worthy of being called a thankful person. The praise of God Most High upon His people is exemplified by His saying, "... Men who remember God much and women who remember, (God hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward)", (67) and by His saying, "How excellent a slave! Lo! he was ever turning in repentance (to his Lord)" (68) and by other verses of this nature.

An Admonition: It is conceivable that man may be a thankful person in respect of another man, either by praising the second person for his good treatment of him or by rewarding the second person with a greater (benefit)

(66) S. 69, 24 (A-1-24)

(67) The text concludes with the words "women who remember", but the Qur'ān continues with the second clause. S. 33, 35 (B-13)

(68) S. 38, 45/4 (A-2-12)

than he received. (Actions of this nature) spring from man's praiseworthy qualities. The messenger of God said - may God bless him and grant him salvation! - "The one who does not thank man does not thank God." As far as thanking God is concerned, one can use this term only metaphorically and then only loosely. For even if man praises God, his praise is inadequate since the praise God deserves is incalculable. If man (expresses thankfulness by being) obedient, (even) his obedience is another one of the blessings of God Most High upon him. To be sure, man's thankfulness in itself is another blessing in addition to the blessing for which he is offering up his thanks. However, the best way of manifesting thankfulness for the blessings of God Most High is to make use of these blessings in obeying, and not disobeying, Him. And even this can only happen with God's help and by His making it easy for man to be a thankful person to his Lord. The idea underlying that statement is subtle. We have expounded it in Kitāb ash-Shukr from Kitāb Ihyā' ^ʿUlūm ad-Dīn. The full exposition of it must be sought in that source since this book does not have the capacity for it.

Al-^ʿAlī - The Most High One ⁽⁶⁹⁾

He is the One above whose rank there is no rank, and all the other ranks are inferior to Him. This is the case since al-^ʿAlī is derived from al-^ʿUlūw and (this) highness refers to (the concept of) highness which is the (very) opposite of lowness, whether this occurs in the perceptible grades such as a

(69) S. 2, 255/6 (B-1); 22, 62/1 (B-17)

flight of stairs and the staircase and all (other) bodies placed one above the other, or (whether it occurs) in grades apprehended by reason in relation to beings arranged in some sort of rational order. Everything that can be described as being "above" in respect of space possesses spatial highness, and everything that can be described as being "above" in terms of rank may be said to have a highness exceeding all others. The rational grades are understood just as the sensory grades. An example of the rational grades is the difference that exists between the cause and the effect, the ground (Cilla)⁽⁷⁰⁾ and the thing grounded, the doer and that which is done, the one who receives and that which is received, and the perfect and the deficient. When you have determined a cause, it is a cause for a second thing and that second thing becomes a cause for a third and the third (becomes a cause) for a fourth until (one reaches) ten grades, for example. The tenth falls into the last rank and it is the lowest, the most inferior (cause). The foremost cause is to be found in the first grade of causality. It is the highest of all. The foremost (cause) is (said to be) above the second, but its being "above" is conceptual and not spatial. The highness is an expression for being "above".

If you understand the meaning of rational gradation, then you must understand that the mind cannot divide all existing being into different grades without placing God Most High in the highest grade of the grades that were divided so that it is inconceivable that there could be a grade above Him. He is the

(70) In this instance "ground" is used in the sense of founding or establishing a principle or reason.

absolute al-^cAlf. Everything else is high (only) in relationship to that which is beneath it, but is low and base in relationship to that which is above it.

An example of a division of reason is (the fact that) all things in existence are divided into that which is a cause and that which is an effect. The cause is above the effect, and it is above in terms of rank. This state of being above in an absolute sense belongs only to the causer of (all the other) causes. Similarly all things in existence are divided into the dead and the living. The living (beings) are divided into that which possesses the perception of only that which is sensory, and this is the animal kingdom, and into that which possesses the perception of the rational together with the sensory. That which possesses the perception of the rational is divided into that which has experience derived from the things known of appetite and anger, and that is man, and into that whose perception is free of being involved with these disturbing elements. That which is free (of such disturbing elements) is divided into that which is susceptible to them but has been vouchsafed this freedom as a blessing (of God), such as is the case with the angels, and into that in respect of which such (disturbance) is impossible, and this one is God Most High.

In respect of this graduated division you know very well that the angel is above the man and the man above the animal and that God Most High is above all of them. He is the absolute al-^cAlf. Certainly He is the living One, the One who gives life, the Knowing One in an absolute sense, the One who creates

the knowledge of the scholars, and the One exalted and sanctified above all kinds of deficiencies. The dead have fallen into the lowest of the grades of perfection. At the other end of the scale is no one but God Most High. It is in this manner that you must understand His condition of being "above" and His highness.

These names were coined, first of all, in relation to the perception of (physical) vision, and (this is the manner in which they are understood in) the grade of the common people. When the elite became aware of the things that are perceived by the powers of mental perception and found (certain) parallels between them and physical vision, they borrowed the absolute expressions from them. The elite understand them but the common people whose perceptions do not go beyond their senses, which is the class of the animal kingdom, deny them. They do not understand exaltedness except in terms of area, nor do they understand highness or the state of being "above" except in terms of space.

When you understand this you will understand what is meant by His being on the throne, because the throne is the most important of all bodies and is above all others. It is the transcendent existent, the (absolutely) holy one which is infinitely above delimitation and determination by means of the limitation of bodies and their capabilities. It is above all (other) bodies in respect of rank. But the throne is specified by saying (that "God established Himself upon the throne") ⁽⁷¹⁾ because it is above all bodies and that which is above it is

(71) S. 10,4/3 (A-3-16)

above them all. This is similar to someone saying, "the caliph is above the sultan," and indicating that since he is above the sultan he is also above all the people who are under the sultan.

The amazing thing about the Hashwiyya who can understand the state of being "above" only in spatial terms is that when one (of them) is asked about two senior-ranked persons, "In what way do these two men sit in the place of honour at the assembly?" he replies, "This one sits above that one," even though he knows that one is sitting only at the side of the other. For one may be said to be sitting above another (in the literal sense of the word) only if he is sitting on the man's head or on some type of physical structure erected over the man's head. If one says to him, "You are lying, for the man is sitting neither above nor beneath the other but (rather) at his side," this denial is repulsive to him and he replies, "I am referring to the state of being "above" in respect of rank and of (the man's) proximity to the place of honour, for that place which is closest to the place of honour, the highest of all the places, (must be referred to as being) above in relation to those which are more distant." In spite of this, this very person cannot understand that every order has two extremes, to one of which may be applied the connotation "above" and highness and to the other the exact opposite.

An Admonition: It is inconceivable that man should be an absolute Calif, for the only grade he can achieve is one which has another above it. This is

(also) the grade of the prophets and the angels. To be sure, it is conceivable that he might attain a grade to which there is none superior in the (entire) genus of mankind, and this is the grade of our prophet - may blessings and peace be upon him. But even this one falls short in relation to the absolute highness (of the grades), because it is a highness in relation to some of the things in existence whereas the other is a highness in relation to that which exists in fact and not by necessity. Indeed, (the latter) is associated with the existence of a man above him. The absolute al-^cAlī is the one who possesses the state of being "above" (inherently) and not by means of a relationship and the necessity of being "above", nor does he possess this state in terms of an (actual) existence with which there is associated the possibility of contrast.

Al-Kabīr - The Grand One (72)

Al-Kabīr is the one who possesses grandeur. Grandeur is an expression for the perfection of the essence, by which I mean the perfection of existence (dhāt), and the perfection of existence is traceable to two things. One of them is its perpetuity, both past and future. Every existence is deficient which sooner or later is interrupted by a period of nonexistence. For this reason one says of a man whose period of existence is lengthy that he is a kabīr, that is to say, great of age, one who has lived long on this earth, and one does not say that he is ḡaṣīm of age. Al-kabīr is used in ways in which al-ḡaṣīm cannot be used. If, then, the being whose period of existence is lengthy, even

(72) S. 13,9/10 (A-3-22); 22,62/1 (B-17); inter alii

though its actual duration is limited, is (said to be) a kabīr (i. e. , aged), then the one who always will be and always has been eternal, the one in relation to whom nonexistence is inconceivable, is more worthy of being called a kabīr.

The second is that his existence is the existence from which the existence of all existing things emanates. If the one whose existence is complete in itself is perfect and grand, then the one from whom the existence of all existing things originated is more worthy of being called perfect and grand.

An Admonition: Al-kabīr among men is the perfect one whose attributes of perfection are not restricted to himself. Rather do they extend to others besides himself. No one sits next to him without his pouring out upon the other (one) something of his own perfection. Man's perfection lies in his reason, piety and knowledge. Al-kabīr is the god-fearing wise one who leads people, the one who is fit to be a pattern (for others), the one from whose lights and knowledge others draw (learn). For this reason Jesus said - may peace be upon him - "The one who knows and acts (accordingly) is called mighty (ʿazīm) in the kingdom of the heavens."

Al-Hafīz - The Preserver⁽⁷³⁾

Al-Hafīz is the one who preserves very many things. That can be understood only by understanding the meaning of preservation, which may be taken

(73) S. 11, 57/60 (A-3-7); 12, 55 (A-3-9); inter alii

in two ways. One of them is the permanence of the existence of all existing things, as well as their continuation, which is the opposite of (their) annihilation. God Most High is the preserver of the heavens, the earth, the angels and all things in existence, regardless of whether the period of their continuation be long or short, such as animals, vegetation and other similar things.

The second way (in which this term can be understood), and it is the better way, is (in terms of) keeping from each other (natural) enemies and those things that are inherently opposites. Here I am referring, (for example), to the mutual enmity that exists between water and fire which certainly are natural enemies. For either the water extinguishes the fire, or else the fire by prevailing causes the water to change (in such a way) that it becomes steam and then air.

The contrast and natural hostility are (also) obvious between heat and cold, for the one overcomes the other. An identical situation exists between dampness and dryness and the rest of the earthly bodies which are composed of hostile elements. Certainly the animal must have some inherent heat. If this heat ceases to exist, surely its life will also cease. Again, definitely the animal must have some moisture which (actually) is the nourishment for his body, such as the blood and that which is analogous to it. (Furthermore), surely there must also be some dryness by means of which the members of

his body are held together, particularly those members, such as the bones, which are solid. There must also be some coldness to break the force of the heat and temper it so that its skin does not burn and its inner moisture does not quickly disintegrate. These contending components (within the animal) are in constant dispute with each other. God unites these contrasting and contending forces within the frame of man and the body of the animals, the plants and the rest of the composite bodies. Had He not preserved them they would have diverged and repelled one another, their blending would have been vitiated, their composition would have become weakend and the idea by means of which the composition and admixture (within the body of man) was acceptable would have been nullified. Sometimes God preserves them by adjusting their strengths and at other times by assisting that part among them which has been overcome.

As for the adjustment, it takes place when the extent of the strength of the fire becomes equal to the extent of the strength of what is heated in such a way that when they come together one of them cannot overcome the other. Rather do they counter-balance each other, for neither one is more worthy of overcoming the other than it is of being overcome. Therefore they resist each other, and the proper condition of the vessel remains constant by means of their mutual resistance and balance. This is what is termed the balancing (or tempering) of the mixture.

Secondly, the assistance for those component parts which are overcome is supplied by that which restores their strength so that they may resist that which has overcome them. An example of this is the heat causing the moisture to be absorbed, and inevitably it does dry it up. If the heat overcomes, then the coldness and moisture are weakened and the heat and dryness overcome. The assistance for the weak (elements) would then be (given) by means of a cold and moist body which is water. The meaning of thirst is the need for (something) cold and moist. God Most High created the cold and moist with coldness and moisture as their means of assisting when they are overcome. He (also) created nourishment and medicines and the other contrasting substances so that when one thing overcomes, it is countered by one other than it (in such a way that the overcoming element) is neutralized. That is what is meant by compensation. ^(73a) However, that is achieved only by the creation of nourishment and medicines, corrective instruments and the knowledge that is necessary to use them. All of these things (God created) for the preservation of the bodies of the animals and of (anything) compounded out of conflicting (elements). These are the causes which preserve man from internal destruction.

He is also exposed to destruction from external causes, such things as ferocious beasts and militant enemies. His preservation from them takes place by means of the spies that are created for him (which serve as) warning

(73a) Literally 'supplying what is needed'

signals of the proximity of the enemy. Such things as the eye, ear and others are his scouts. Furthermore, God has also created for him the gallant hand and weapons which repel (the enemy), such as armor and the shield, as well as those (weapons) which cause death, such as the sword and the knife.

However, sometimes he is still unable to defend himself. (To cover that eventuality) God has provided him with the instrument of flight which is the leg for the earth-borne animal and the wing for the bird. Similarly His preservation includes every atom - His power is great! - in the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that (even) the core of the herbs which springs up from the earth is preserved by a hard hull, and its freshness is preserved by means of moisture. That which is not preserved by means of a hard hull is preserved by the thorns which grow from it so that some animals which would normally destroy (such growths) are repelled (by these thorns). The thorns are the weapons for the plants even as the horns, claws and fangs are the weapons for the animals.

Moreover, together with every drop of water there is that which preserves it from its counter-part, the air. For when water is placed into a container and left there for some time, it is converted into air. The air deprives it of its attribute of fluidity. If the finger is dipped into water and then raised and inverted, a drop remains suspended from the inverted finger and

is not separated from it, even though it is part of its natural order to fall down. Yet if it were separated while it is a small (particle), the air would capture and transform it. Instead, it does not leave the finger but remains suspended until the remainder of the moisture joins it and increases the size of the drop. It is then emboldened to pass through the air, and the air is powerless to transform it. (Surely) that (condition) could not exist as a result of the drops preserving itself, (or as a result of) knowing its own weakness, the power of its opposite and its need to seek the help of the remaining moisture. However, that (condition) was preserved by an angel who is in charge of it through an abstract form (ma^cnā) that is a part of its essence.

It is related in a story that a drop of rain does not fall unless it is accompanied by an angel who preserves it until it reaches its resting place on the earth. That is a truth (established by) esoteric seeing (vouchsafed) to the possessors of the powers of mental vision. They were given indication and guidance to (this truth) and therefore believed the account (of the angel) not by a blind acceptance (of the idea) but by the power of mental perception. One could also speak at length about the explanation of God's preservation of the heavens and the earth and that which is between them, even as is the case with the rest of His deeds. The meaning of this name is known by this explanation and not by the knowledge of linguistic derivations or by struggling with the meaning of preservation in general.

An Admonition: The preserver among men is the one who preserves his limbs and his heart. He (also) preserves his religion from the assault of anger, the attraction of appetite, self-deception and the delusion of Satan. For (man) is on the edge of a crumbling bank, ever surrounded by these dangers (which) lead to ruin.

Al-Muqīt - He Who is Cognizant and Capable of Providing His Creation With Everything It Needs (74)

The meaning of al-Muqīt is that He is the creator of nourishment. (The nourishment) He conveys to the bodies is food and (that which) He conveys to the hearts is knowledge. Thus it has the same meaning as ar-Razzāq except that al-Muqīt is more specific than ar-Razzāq. For sustenance includes nourishment and that which is not nourishment, nourishment being that which is sufficient for the support of the body. If, however, it is taken to mean one's taking possession of a thing, having power over it, with the appropriation being achieved by the power and knowledge - and the argument for this (interpretation) is in the words of God Most High, "God overseeth all things," (75) that is to say, He is cognizant of and has power over everything - its meaning would then go back to (what is meant by) power and knowledge. As for (the topic of) knowledge, it has already been discussed. As for (the topic of) power, it is to be discussed below. In terms of this meaning, His characterization

(74) Although Pickthall translates the final statement in S. 4, 85/7 (B-10), "God overseeth all things," and Rodwell translates, "God keepeth watch over everything," Redhouse informs us that commentators interpret muqīt as found in this verse as "God the feeder or preserver." Ht. 39; V. 134

(75) S. 4, 85/7 (B-10). Muqīt is an hapax legomenon.

as al-Muqīt is more complete than His characterization as al-Qādir alone and al-Ālīm alone because it indicates a composite of the (other) meanings.

Therefore this name is not synonymous (with either of these two).

Al-Hasīb - He Who Satisfies The Needs of All Creation ⁽⁷⁶⁾

Al-Hasīb is the one who suffices. He is of such a nature that when one has his blessing one has everything. God Most High is the One who satisfies and suffices everyone. The real nature of this characteristic is inconceivable of anyone other than He. For the one who is sufficed requires this sufficiency for his existence, for the continuity of his existence and for the perfection of his existence. There is nothing in existence sufficient to another thing other than God Most High. For He alone is sufficient for everything, not only for some things. That is to say, He alone is sufficient, by means of Him the existence of things results, by means of Him their existence continues and by means of Him their existence is perfected.

Do not think that when you need food, drink, the earth, the sky, the sun, and the like that you are in need of one other than He. Do not think that He is not the One who satisfies you. He is the One who suffices you by creating food, drink, the earth and the heavens. He is the One who satisfies you. Do not think that the child who requires his mother to breast-feed him and take care of him is not satisfied and sufficed by God. To the contrary, God was

(76) S. 4, 6/7 (B-10); 4, 86/8; 33, 39 (B-13)

sufficient for him since He created the child's mother, the milk in her breast, the guidance to breast-feeding and the pity and love in the heart of the mother by which she allowed him to feed at her breast and (even) urged and led him to it. The sufficiency (of the child) was brought about by these causes. But God alone is the One who single-handedly created them for the child's sake.

If one were to say to you that the mother alone is the sufficiency for the child and that she satisfies him, (perhaps) you would accept the statement. You would not say, "she is not his sufficiency because he is in need of her milk; where is the sufficiency of the mother when there is no milk?" Rather would you say, "Certainly the child needs the milk, and the milk also is from the mother and therefore he needs only his mother." (Carrying this line of thought even farther, you must) know that the milk is not from the mother. Rather both the milk and the mother are from God and are the results of His grace and bounty. He alone is the One who satisfies everyone. In all existence there is not one thing that satisfies anything by itself except God Most High. Rather are things dependent upon each other and all of them are dependent upon God.

An Admonition: The only way in which one can share in this characterization is by using a far-fetched metaphor and (by using this term) "without reflection" (77) and (in accordance with) the premature thinking of the common

(77) S. 11, 27/29 (A-3-7)

people. As for the use of a metaphor, even if man is sufficient in terms of carrying out the support of his child or in terms of teaching his student in such a way that he does not require assistance from a second party, he still remains only an intermediary in respect of the sufficiency. He is not one who suffices (by his own power) because God Most High is the sufficer. Within his own potential there exists the possibility of neither subsistence nor sufficiency. How, then, can he be the sufficiency of a second party? As for the use of the term (in accordance with) premature thinking, which centres upon the conclusion that man is independent in terms of sufficiency and not merely a means to another's sufficiency, the fact (still) remains that he is not sufficient since (the very least) he requires is a place receptive of his activity and sufficiency. This (place) is of the least importance in respect of the heart, which is the place of knowledge. (But) it is of primary importance if he is to be sufficient in respect of training (a child). (This is also true) in respect of the stomach, which is the resting-place of the food. It is necessary if he is to be sufficient in conveying the food to his body. This is necessary for him, as well as the many other things which he cannot number, none of which are a matter of his (own) choice.

Thus the lowest grade of action requires a doer and a receiver. By no means can the doer exist without the receiver. But this is (possible and) true in respect of God Most High, because He is the creator of the action and the

place where it occurs, and He creates the conditions (necessary) to receive the action and all the accompanying circumstances. But sometimes "hasty opinion" (78) reaches a premature decision about the doer, takes cognizance of another condition and comes to the conclusion that the doer alone is sufficient to that condition. But it is not true. Indeed! The portion that falls to man (who believes) is that God alone is man's sufficiency with regard to his endeavour and desire. (This portion) consists of the fact that he has no desire except for God. He does not desire Paradise, and his heart is not pre-occupied with hell (in the sense) that he must guard himself against it. Rather is his concern completely absorbed in God alone. If God is revealed to him in His majesty, he says, "That is my sufficiency. I do not desire one other than He. Nor do I care if one other than He escapes me or does not escape me."

Al-Jalīl - The Sublime One (79)

Al-Jalīl is the one who is characterized by the qualities of sublimity. The qualities of sublimity include wealth, dominion, holiness, knowledge, power and other attributes that we have mentioned. The one who combines all of them (in his person) is the absolute al-Jalīl. If one is characterized by (only) some of them, his sublimity is commensurate with his attainment of these qualities. The absolute al-Jalīl is God Most High alone. It may be said

(78) S. 11:27/2 (A-3-7). Rodwell's translation

(79) Ht. 71; Rs. 50

that al-Kabīr is traceable to the perfection of the essence, al-Jalīl to the perfection of the attributes and al-ʿAzīm to the perfection of the essence and the attributes, and all of this is in relation to that which is apprehended by mental perception. The one (described) in this manner engulfs mental perception and is not engulfed by it.

Furthermore, when the attributes of sublimity are related to the mental perception which apprehends it, it is called beauty and the one who is characterized by it is termed beautiful. The name al-Jamīl originally was coined for the visible (whatever it might be) that is discerned by the sight and is such as to harmonize and agree with sight. Then it was transferred to the inner form which is perceived by the powers of mental perception, and thus one speaks of conduct as being good and beautiful and one says that one's character is beautiful. That (beauty) is perceived by the powers of mental perception and not by (physical) sight. (Indeed), inner forms, if they are perfect and proportionate, and combine all the perfections suitable to them as they ought to do and in such a manner as they should be (combined), are (beautiful) in relation to the inner powers of perception which comprehend them and are so suitable for them that when one gazes upon them the observer experiences greater joy, delight and emotion than are experienced by the one who through his external sight gazes upon beautiful forms. Therefore the absolutely and authentically beautiful one is God Most High alone, for all the beauty, perfection, splendour

and loveliness in this world is from the lights of His essence and the traces of His attributes. Nothing in the whole of existence has absolute perfection, which in no sense is adulterated either actually or potentially, except God alone. For that reason the one who knows Him and gazes upon His beauty experiences such delight, happiness, joy and bliss that in comparison with them the blessings of Paradise and the beauty of the visible form would be considered contemptible.

Moreover, there is no comparison between the beauty of the visible form and the beauty of the hidden ideas that are perceived by the powers of mental perception. This meaning we have revealed in the chapter in Kitāb al-Maḥabba from Kitāb Iḥyā' ʿUlūm ad-Dīn. If, then, it is established that He is sublime and beautiful and since everything that is beautiful is both desired and loved by the one who perceives its beauty, therefore God Most High is the One who is desired but (only) by those who know, even as the beautiful and visible forms are desired by those who see but not by those who are blind.

An Admonition: The one among men who is termed al-Jalīl al-Jamīl is the one whose inner attributes are good, (those attributes) in which discerning hearts take pleasure. As for the beauty of the visible forms, (this is something which is) of little value.

Al-Karīm - The Selflessly Generous One (80)

Al-Karīm is the one who forgives when he has power (to exact retribution), the one who lives up to his promises when he promises and the one who exceeds the utmost one could desire when he gives. He is not concerned about the amount he gives and the one to whom he gives. If some one other than himself is in need, he is not pleased. When he is displeased (with a friend), he reproaches him but does not carry this to the limit. The one who seeks refuge and shelters with him is not lost and is spared the need of entreaties. The one who gathers to himself all of these descriptions and does this in a most natural way is the absolute al-Karīm, and that one is God Most High alone.

An Admonition: Man may adorn himself by acquiring these characteristics, but (he may do this only) in respect of some things and (only) with a kind of affectation. For that reason he may be characterized by the term al-Karīm, but he (still) remains deficient in comparison with the absolute al-Karīm. And why should man not be called al-Karīm since the messenger of God said-may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - "It is not the grape-tree that should be called generous, for certainly the generous one is the Muslim." (81) And it has also been said, "The grape trees are characterized as being generous because, unlike the date palm, its fruit is delicious, picking it is simple, reach-

(80) S. 23, 115/7 (A-2-7); 82, 6 (A-1-15)

(81) Muslim, Alfaḥ, 10

ing it is easy and it is free of thorns and other sources of harm."

Ar-Raqīb - The One Who Watches All (82)

Ar-Raqīb is the one who knows, the one who preserves, the one who watches for a given object so that it is never ignored and who observes it so closely and constantly that if the one to whom it is forbidden knew of it, he would refrain from approaching it. Such a one is called a raqīb. (This word) may be said to be derived from knowledge and preservation, though (coupled) with the consideration that it is close and constant and that it is related to something that is forbidden, the approach to which is guarded.

An Admonition: The characteristic of watchfulness in man is praiseworthy only if his observation is directed to his Lord and his heart. That takes place when he knows that God is his watcher and observer in respect of everything, and if he recognizes the fact that he himself and Satan are his enemies and that these two enemies avail themselves of every opportunity to induce him to fall victim to negligence and disobedience, as the result of which he is on his guard against these things by observing their ambushes, deceit and their starting places in order that the outlets and avenues (available to them) might be blocked off. This is his observation.

(82) S. 4,1 (B-10); 5,117 (B-24); 33,52 (B-13)

Al-Mujīb - The One Who Responds To Every Need (83)

Al-Mujīb is the one who responds to the request of those who ask with help, the one who (responds to) the prayers of those who pray by giving answers, the one who (responds to) the necessity of those disturbed by reason of their insufficiency by giving sufficiency. In fact, He bestows (His gifts) even before the appeal, and he gives favours even before the prayer. There is no one like that except God Most High. Certainly He knows the needs of the needy before they ask. (In fact), He knew them already in eternity and therefore planned the causes necessary to satisfy existing needs by creating food and nourishment and facilitating the causes and the instruments which made all of these requirements possible.

An Admonition: Man ought to be a mujīb, first of all, to his Lord in respect of that which He has commanded and forbidden him to do and in respect of that which He has urged and appealed to him to do. Then man (should be a mujīb) to his fellow-man in respect of that power over them that God has bestowed upon him, by making every petitioner happy by complying with his request if he has the ability to do so and in the graciousness of his reply if he cannot (actually comply with the request). God Most High said, "Therefore the beggar drive not away." (84) The messenger of God said - may blessings and peace be upon him - "If I am invited to eat trotters, certainly I will answer

(83) S. 11, 61/4 (A-3-7)

(84) S. 93, 10 (A-1-4)

favourably; if one presents to me the shank (of a beast), certainly I will accept it." (85) His attendance at (functions to which he received) invitations and his acceptance of gifts were (done with) the utmost of honour and positive responsiveness. How many a vile and proud person considers himself too great to receive every gift (that is offered) and will not condescend to accept every invitation! He would rather preserve his dignity and pride, and he does not take into consideration the trouble taken by the one inviting him, even if he hurts (the feelings of) the person in this manner. Such a person has no portion (at all) in respect of the meaning of this name.

Al-Wāsi^c - The One Whose Capacity Is Limitless (86)

Al-Wāsi^c is derived from capacity. Sometimes capacity is related to knowledge, as it is extensive and embraces a great number of things that are known. At other times it is related to beneficence and the spreading of blessings. (But) no matter how it is understood and to what it is applied, the absolute al-Wāsi^c is God Most High, because if one contemplates His knowledge one knows that there is no shore for the sea of His objects-of-knowledge. Rather would the seas be depleted if they were used as ink for His words. (Furthermore), if one were to contemplate His beneficence and blessings, (one would know that) there is no limit to His objects-of-power. Every (other) capacity, even if it is great, ultimately reaches its limit, and that which does not reach such a limit

(85) Muslim, Nikāh, 104

(86) S. 2, 115/09; 247/8 (B-1); inter alii

is more deserving of the name capacity. God Most High is the absolute al-Wāsi^c because every (other) extensive (subject) is restricted in comparison with that which is more extensive. (Furthermore), any capacity which ultimately reaches a limit (is of such a nature) that it is possible (for one) to conceive a further extension of it, whereas an extension is (absolutely) inconceivable (of that which is) infinite and limitless.

An Admonition: The capacity of man concerns the things that he knows as well as his character. If his knowledge (ʿulūm) is extensive, then he is a wāsi^c in proportion to the capacity of his knowledge; and if his character has expanded to the point that the fear of poverty, the irritation of those about him who are envious, the victory of greed and other attributes of this nature do not harass him, then he is a wāsi^c (in both knowledge and character), even though all of that has its limitation. However, the true al-Wāsi^c is God Most High.

Al-Hakīm - The Ultimately Wise One (87)

Al-Hakīm is the one who possesses wisdom, and wisdom consists of the knowledge of the most excellent things gathered through the instrumentality of the most excellent branch of knowledge. The most sublime subject of all that is known is God Most High. It has been shown above that no one other than He knows the essential nature of His knowledge. He is the true al-Hakīm because

(87) S. 2, 32/0; 129/3 (B-1); inter alii

He knows the most sublime things by means of the most sublime (type of) knowledge. The most sublime of (all) knowledges is the eternal and everlasting knowledge, the extinction of which is inconceivable, a knowledge that corresponds with all that is known in such a way that there can be no doubt or uncertainty. Only the knowledge of God Most High can be characterized in this manner. The name ḥakīm is (also) applied to the one who has mastery over and command of the finer points of the various crafts. The perfection of this, too, is possible only for God Most High. He (alone) is the true al-Ḥakīm.

An Admonition: The one who knows all things but does not know God Most High is not worthy of being called ḥakīm, for he does not know the most sublime and best of all things. Wisdom is the most sublime (kind) of knowledge. The sublimity of knowledge is commensurate with the sublimity of the thing known, and there is nothing more sublime than God. (Therefore), the one who knows God is wise even if he is weak in intelligence in respect of the remainder of the conventional sciences, tongue-tied and deficient in explaining these matters. At the same time, man's wisdom as compared with the wisdom of God is in the same proportion as man's knowledge of (God) when compared to God's knowledge of Himself. What a difference there is between these various types of knowledge! And subsequently what a difference there is between these various kinds of wisdom! Yet as remote as (i.e., human knowledge) is from (God's), it nonetheless remains the most precious and most profitable (kind of) of knowledge. The one

who has been vouchsafed wisdom has been vouchsafed much good. To be sure, the one who knows God speaks differently from other men. He seldom concerns himself with particulars; rather is his discourse universal and all-inclusive. He does not concern himself with temporal advantages, but rather does he concern himself with that which will avail him in the hereafter. Perhaps it is because this characteristic of the wise man (i.e., to concern himself^{with} universal matters) is more obvious to (common) people than his knowledge of God that they apply the name "wisdom" to such general statements, and they describe the one who utters them as being wise. An example of that is the saying of the chief of the prophets - may the blessings of God be upon them - "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God." "The astute man is the one who brings himself to judgment and works for that which is after death." "The impotent one is the one who makes himself follow his own desires and keeps hoping that God will grant him his wishes." "That which is little but sufficient is better than that which is plentiful but distracts." "The one who awakes in the morning healthy in his body, secure in his household and has his daily bread, it is as if he has the whole world in his grasp." "Be pious, and you will be the most worshipful of the people; be abstemious, and you will be the most thankful of all people." "Calamity is dependent upon speech." "A part of the beauty of one's Islām is the avoidance of that which does not concern him." "The happy one is the one who is admonished by (the example of) a second party." "Silence is wisdom, but there are few who practice it." "Contentment with little is a

wealth that is never consumed." "Endurance is one-half of faith, and certainty is the totality of faith." These and similar sayings are termed wisdom, and the one who (practices) them is termed wise.

Al-Wadūd - The Objectively Loving One⁽⁸⁸⁾

Al-Wadūd is the one who desires good for all mankind; he does good for them, and he praises them. This name approximates the concept underlying ar-Rahīm. But compassion is related to the object of mercy, and the object of mercy is the needy one and the one under compulsion. The deeds of the compassionate one presuppose an object of mercy who is weak, whereas the deeds of al-Wadūd do not require that. Indeed, acts of kindness from the outset belong to the products of love. Just as the meaning of the compassion of God Most High is His desiring good for the object of mercy and His being sufficient (to bring) it (about) while remaining above the empathy (usually associated with human) compassion, likewise His love is His desiring honour and favour (for man), and is His (actual) beneficence and His bounty, while He remains above the feeling of love. But love and mercy are desired in respect of their objects only for the sake of their fruit and benefit and not because of empathy of feeling. Thus the benefit is the quintessence of mercy and love and the spirit of these two. That is the conception (of these two characteristics) in respect of God Most High to the exclusion of that which (in human experience) accompanies them but is

(88) S. 11, 90/2 (A-3-7); 85, 14 (A-1-44)

not a condition of producing the benefit.

An Admonition: Al-Wadūd among men is the one who desires for the creatures of God everything which he desires for himself. Even higher is the one who prefers the others to himself, even as one of them said, "I wish that I were a bridge over the fire upon which the people might pass over (safely) and not be harmed by it." The perfection of that (characteristic in man) is that one should not be restrained from affection and beneficence by anger, hatred or (resentment of) that harm done to one, even as the messenger of God said - may blessings and peace be upon him - when his teeth were broken and his face was bloodied (at the Battle of Uhud), "O, God, guide my people for they do not know." (Even) their evil action did not prevent (the prophet) from desiring (only) good for them; or again as he - may the blessings of God be upon him and his family - commanded 'Alī when he said, "If you desire to be before even the angels, remain friendly to the one who has denied you, give to the one who has deprived you and forgive the one who has dealt unjustly with you." (89)

Al-Majīd - The Most Glorious One (90)

Al-Majīd is the One noble in his essence, beautiful in his deeds and liberal in his gift and favour. Even as nobility of essence when joined to goodness in deeds is "glory" so that He is called al-Majid as well as (al-Majīd), yet one of the two (i. e., the latter) is more indicative of magnification. Al-Majīd appears

(89) Ahmad ibn-Hanbal, 4

(90) S. 11, 73/6 (A-3-7)

to combine the meaning of the names al-Jalīl, al-Wahhāb and al-Karīm, and we have spoken about them previously.

Al-Bā^cith - The Quickener (91)

Al-Bā^cith is the one who will bring people to life on the day of resurrection, the one who will resurrect those in the graves and will cull what is in the breast (i.e., man's secrets). Resurrection is the latter formation. (92) The knowledge of this name is dependent upon the knowledge of the real nature of the resurrection, and that is one of the more obscure knowledges (known to man). The majority of people know about it only in terms of general suppositions and obscure imagination. Their utmost capacity in this respect lies in their imagining that death is nonexistence and that the resurrection is (actually another) bringing into existence initiated after the (period of) nonexistence, as was the case with the first creation. But their notion that death is (equivalent to) nonexistence is mistaken, and their thinking that the second (act of) bringing into existence will be like the first one is (also) mistaken.

As for their thinking that death is nonexistence, this is invalid. Rather the grave is either one of the pits of the fires (of Hell), or one of the bowers of the gardens of Paradise. As for the dead, either they are happy and such are not dead - and "think not of those who are slain in the way of God as dead.

(91) The Qur'ān uses this concept only in verbal form; e.g., S.22,7 (B-17) *inter alii*

(92) The most obvious translation of nash'a in this context would seem to be "creation". However throughout the text "creation" has been used for khāq and at times for ijād. Subsequently "formation" is used here, though perhaps either "birth" or "constitution" would have been equally acceptable.

Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision. Jubilant (are they) because of that which God hath bestowed upon them of His bounty" (93) - or they are wretched, and these also are alive. For this reason the messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - called out to them in the battle of Badr and said, "Certainly I have found that which my Lord has promised me to be true. Have you also found that which your Lord has promised you to be true?" And when someone said to him, "But how do you call people who have died?" he answered, "You do not hear what I say any more clearly that they do, only they are not able to answer."

Inner vision has shown the masters of insight that man was created for eternity and that non-existence has no access to him. True, freedom of action may at one time be cut off from the body, and then one says, "He has died;" at another time it may be returned to the body and then one says, "He lives and is resurrected," that is to say, his body has been brought back to life. (But) this book does not have the capacity for a true revelation of this (matter).

As for their thinking that the resurrection is a second creation which is just like the first creation, this is not correct. Rather is the resurrection another formation not related to the first formation at all. For man there are numerous formations and not only two. Therefore God Most High said, "We

are able to substitute others like unto you in your stead and to produce you again in the condition or form which ye knew not." (94) Likewise God Most High said, 'After the creation of the little lump (of flesh) and the clot (of blood) et cetera, "then we produced it (ansha'nāhu) as another creation." (95) Thus the drop (of seed) is a formation from the dust and the little lump (of flesh) is a formation from the drop (of seed) and the clot (of blood) is a formation from the little lump (of flesh) and the spirit is a formation from the clot (of blood). Because of the magnitude and majesty of the formation of the spirit, and because it is something divine, God said - He who is mighty and great - "Then (we) produced it as another creation. So blessed be God, the Best of Creators!" (96) He also said, "They will ask thee concerning the Spirit. Say: The Spirit is by command of my Lord." (97) Then He created the sensory perceptions after He created the source of the spirit - another formation. Then He created discernment (tamyiz) (98) which became apparent after the age of seven years - another formation. Then He created the mind after the age of fifteen years or so - another formation. Every formation is a stage. "He created you by (divers) stages." (99) Then the appearance of the characteristic of saintliness in such as have this characteristic bestowed upon them - that is another formation. Then the appearance of the characteristic

(94) S. 56, 61 (A-1-23), Sale's translation

(95) From S. 23, 14 (A-2-17)

(96) S. 23, 14 (A-2-17)

(97) S. 17, 85/7 (A-3-4)

(98) I.e., the sensus communis

(99) S. 71, 14/3 (A-2-5)

of prophethood after that - it is another formation and a type of resurrection. God Most High is the one who raises the messengers even as He is the one who raises the day of resurrection.

Even as it is difficult for an infant to understand the real nature of discernment before attaining discernment (so also) is it difficult for one possessing discernment to understand the real nature of reason and those marvels that are revealed in this state before one attains (the stage) of reason. Likewise it is difficult for one to understand the state of saintliness and prophethood while still in the stage of reason. For certainly saintliness is a state of perfection over and above the formation of (the state of) reason just as (the state of) reason is a state of perfection over and above the formation of the (age of) discernment, and the (age of) discernment is a state of perfection over and above the formation of the senses.

Even as it is one of the peculiarities of people to deny that which they have not seen and that which has not happened to them so that (eventually) everyone denies that which he cannot see nor attain and disbelieves that which is hidden from their eyes, so also one of their peculiarities is to deny saintliness and its wonders, as well as prophethood and its marvels. Indeed, among their peculiarities is (also) the denial of the second formation and the life in the hereafter because they have not yet reached it. (This is comparable to the fact that) if the state of reason and its realm and the wonders that appear

therein were expounded to the one who has reached (no more than) discernment, he would deny and reject it and declare its existence impossible. The one who believes in any of the things that he (himself) has not reached (certainly) believes in the unseen. That (i. e., belief in the unseen) is the key of all happiness.

Even as the state of reason and its perceptions and formation (can hardly be compared) with the perceptions that precede this state, so likewise is the second formation even farther removed (from the first). One must not (try to) understand the second formation by an analogy with the first. This formation consists of stages of the one essence and is the ladder by which one climbs up the steps of the grades of perfection until one approaches the presence which is the ultimate (height) of all perfection. One is then with God Most High, suspended between rejection and acceptance, separation and admission. If one is accepted, one ascends to the highest of the heights; and if one is rejected, one falls to the lowest of the depths. By this we mean that the only comparison that exists between the two formations (i. e., creation and resurrection) lies in the name (formation) itself. He who does not know what formation and resurrection are does not know the meaning of al-Ba^cith. But the explanation of that would be (too) lengthy, and therefore we must pass it by.

An Admonition: The real nature of the resurrection goes back to the re-

vival of the dead by forming them a second time. Ignorance is the greatest death, and knowledge is the most sublime life. God has mentioned knowledge and ignorance in the Book and called them (respectively), life and death. Now to raise someone from ignorance to knowledge is tantamount to forming him a second time and bringing him to a pleasant life. If man has a possibility of conferring knowledge upon people and calling them to God Most High, then that is a kind of revival. This (role) belongs to the rank of the prophets and the theologians, their heirs.

Ash-Shahīd - The One Who Witnesses and Knows Everything Manifest ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

The meaning of ash-Shahīd goes back to al-^cAlīm together with a particular application. God Most High is the "Knower of the invisible and the visible." (101) The invisible consists of that which is hidden, and the visible consists of that which is manifest. He is the One who witnesses (all things). If one considers knowledge in an absolute sense, then He is al-^cAlīm. If one relates (knowledge) to the invisible and hidden things, then He is al-Khabīr. If one relates (knowledge) to the things that are manifest, then He is ash-Shahīd. Along with this one must consider the fact that He will bear witness (yashadu) concerning mankind on the day of Resurrection on the basis of that which He knows and has witnessed of them. The discussion of this name approximates (our) discussion of al-^cAlīm and al-Khabīr, and (therefore) we will not repeat it (here).

(100) S. 2,282 (B-1); 3,98/3 (B-7); inter alii

(101) S. 6,74 (A-3-21)

Al-Haqq - The Real One (102)

Al-Haqq is the one who stands in contradistinction to the unreal. At times things may become evident by means of their opposites. Anything of which one may speak is either absolutely false or absolutely true, or it is true in one respect and false in another. That which is incapable of existing by its essence is absolutely unreal. That which is necessary by its essence is absolutely real. That which is possible by its essence (and) necessary by something else is real in one aspect and unreal in another. In respect of its essence it has no existence and therefore is unreal; in respect of the other it acquires existence. In respect of its relation to the giver of existence, it does exist, and in that respect is real, though in respect of itself it is unreal. For that reason everything is doomed to destruction except His countenance, and He is like that (i. e., as He is) eternally and forever. He is not in one state to the exclusion of another, because everything except He is eternally and forever unqualified for existence in terms of its essence, but by virtue of Him it is so qualified. It is unreal in terms of its essence and real by virtue of one other than it.

From this you know that the absolute Haqq is the One who really exists by virtue of His essence, that (essence) from which everything real derives its reality. It may also be said of the intelligible (concept), which existent reason has encountered in such a way that it (i. e., reason) corresponds with

(the concept), that it is real. In respect of itself it (i.e., the intelligible) is called an existent, and in respect of its relationship with the reason which has apprehended it as it is, it is called "true". Therefore the existent who is most deserving of being called haqq is God Most High, and the knowledge which is most deserving of being called haqq is the knowledge (ma^crifa) of God Most High; for it is true in itself, that is to say, it corresponds with the object known eternally and forever. Furthermore, it is derived through itself and not through another, not like the knowledge of the existence of an other, for that (knowledge) exists only as long as that other exists, so that if that other ceases to exist, then belief in it becomes false. Again, that (kind of) belief is not true by virtue of the object-believed, since it exists not by virtue of itself but by virtue of an other.

The term (haqq) may also be applied to assertions (as such). (Thus) one may speak of "a true assertion" and "a false assertion". On this basis the assertion that is most true is the assertion that "there is no god save God", (103) because it is forever and eternally true by virtue of its essence and not of an other.

Thus the term al-haqq is applied to existence in individual things; to existence in the intellect, that is, knowledge and to existence on the tongue, that is, utterance. That one which is most worthy of being haqq is that

(103) S. 37, 35/4 (A-2-4) inter alia^a

(subject) whose existence is established eternally and forever by virtue of itself, the knowledge of which is true eternally and forever, and the witnessing to which is true eternally and forever. All of that belongs to the essence of the real Existence and not to any other.

An Admonition: Man's portion of this name consists of his seeing himself as something unreal and seeing God alone as real. If man is real, he is real not by virtue of himself but by virtue of God, for he exists by virtue of Him and not of himself. To be sure, were it not for his being brought into existence by the Real One, man in himself would be unreal. The one who said, "I am al-Haqq," (i.e., al-Ḥallāj) is mistaken unless (the statement is qualified) by one of the two following interpretations. The first of these is that he means that he exists by virtue of al-Haqq. However, this interpretation is far-fetched because the expression does not indicate it, and because that (statement) is not peculiar(ly applicable) to him; rather is it the case that everything other than al-Haqq exists by virtue of al-Haqq.

According to the second interpretation, (he is al-Haqq in the sense that) he is so completely absorbed in al-Haqq that there is no space in him for one other than He. One may say of that which acquires and absorbs the totality of a subject, "he is he," even as the poet says, "I am the one I love, and the one I love is I." By this (statement) the poet means the condition of being completely absorbed in (something). The name of God Most High that is on

the lips of the Sūfis in most states (ahwāl) is al-Haqq, since that which is uppermost in their experience is their self-annihilation (fanā') in terms of their essence; for they can glimpse the real essence to the exclusion of that which in itself is perishing. On the other hand, the name al-Bārī¹, which has the same meaning as al-Khāliq, is most commonly on the lips of the theologians since they are far off in the "station" (maqām) of deducing (the nature of God) from (His) actions. The majority of mankind see everything except God. They seek evidence of Him in that which they see, and they are the ones who are addressed by God's words, "Have they not considered the dominion of the heavens and the earth and what things God hath created?" (104) The devout (on the otherhand) do not see anything except Him, and thus it is in Him that they seek evidence of Him, and they are the ones addressed by God's words, "Doth not thy Lord suffice, since He is witness over all things?" (105)

Al-Wakīl - The Ultimate and Faithful Trustee (106)

Al-Wakīl is the one to whom the matters have been entrusted. But one who has received such a trust may be either one to whom some matters have been entrusted - that one is deficient, or one to whom all matters have been entrusted - and that pertains only to God Most High. Again, those who are so entrusted are classified (first of all) as the one who is worthy not by virtue

(104) S. 7,185/4 (A-3-19)

(105) S. 41,54/3 (A-3-2)

(106) S. 3,173/67 (B-7); 11,12/5 (A-3-3); inter alia^a

of himself but by virtue of his appointment as an agent and his delegation (to that post), and such a one is deficient in view of the fact that he needs the appointment and the delegation; and, (secondly), as the one who by virtue of his essence is worthy of having (all) matters entrusted to him and of having (all) hearts place reliance upon him, not by virtue of an appointment and a delegation coming from one other than he. That one is the absolute Wakīl. Al-Wakīl may be either the one who carries out perfectly and without any shortcomings that which is entrusted to him or the one who does not carry out everything perfectly. The absolute al-Wakīl is the one to whom the matters are entrusted, the one who is conscientious in dealing with them and the one who is faithful in carrying them out. That one is God Most High alone. From this discussion you should now understand how it is possible for man to enter into the (abstract) quality (ma^cnā) (inherent in) this name.

Al-Qawī Al-Matīn - The Perfectly Strong and Firm One (107)

Strength is indicative of perfect power, and firmness is indicative of the intensity of the strength. Inasmuch as God Most High has the utmost of power and is perfect therein, He is strong; and inasmuch as He has intense power, He is firm (to the ultimate degree). (But) that is derived from the concepts of strength, and that (subject) will come later.

(107) Al-Qawī: S. 11, 66/9 (A-3-7) and 42, 19/8 (A-3-8)
Al-Matīn: S. 51, 58 (A-2-1)

Al-Walī - The Patron (108)

Al-Walī is the friend and helper. The meaning of His love and His friendship have already been stated. The meaning of His help is obvious, for He subdues the enemies of the faith and He helps His friends. God Most High said, "God is the patron of those who believe," (109) and He (also) said, "That is because God is patron of those who believe, and because the disbelievers have no patron;" (110) that is to say, they have no helper. He, the Most High, went on to say, "God hath decreed: Lo! I verily shall conquer, I and My messengers." (111)

An Admonition: Al-Walī among men is the one who loves God and his friends, the one who helps God and his friends and the one who treats God's enemies as his enemies. Both self and Satan are among the enemies of God. The one who forsakes these two and (thereby) causes the affair of God Most High to triumph, the one who is a friend of the friends of God and an enemy of God's enemies, he is the al-Walī among men.

Al-Hamīd - The Ultimately Praiseworthy One (112)

Al-Hamīd is the one who is praised and extolled. God Most High is al-Hamīd by virtue of His praising Himself from all eternity and by virtue of man's praising Him to all eternity. This (fact of His being praised) stems

(108) S. 2,107/1 (B-1); 42,28/7 (A-3-5); inter alii

(109) S. 2,257/8 (B-1)

(110) S. 47,11/2 (B-6)

(111) S. 58,21 (B-16)

(112) S. 22,64/3 (B-17); 31,26/5 (A-3-14); inter alii

from (His) attributes of majesty, exaltedness and perfection in relation to (i. e., from the point of view of) those who make mention of Him. For (the essence of) praise is (to be found in) mentioning the qualities of perfection inasmuch as He is perfection.

An Admonition: Al-Hamīd among men is the one whose beliefs, character, activities and words are praised without reservation. That one is Muḥammad - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - and those who approximate him among the prophets and also among the elect and the theologians. Every one of them is praiseworthy to the extent that his beliefs, character, ^{and words} works are to be praised. And since no one is free of blame and deficiency, even though his praiseworthy actions are numerous, the (only) absolute Hamīd is God Most High.

Al-Muḥṣī - The Absolute Reckoner (113)

Al-Muḥṣī is the knowing one. But when knowledge is related to the objects-of-knowledge in respect of the fact that it reckons, counts and comprehends them, it is called a reckoning. The absolute al-Muḥṣī is the one to whose knowledge the definitive of everything known, as well as its quantity and extent, lie open. Though it is possible for man to reckon by virtue of his knowledge some of the objects-of-knowledge, yet he is incapable of reckoning the majority of them. (Therefore the possibility) of his acceding to this name

(113) This concept is used in respect of God only in verbal form.
S. 58, 6/7 (B-16); 72, 28 (A-2-15); inter alii

is weak, as is the case with his participating in the basic attribute of knowledge.

Al-Mubdī' Al-Mu^cīd - The Originator and Restorer (114)

The meaning of al-Mubdī' al-Mu^cīd is the one who brings (another) into being, but when this bringing into being has no precedent in terms of an act similar to it, it is called an origination. If there is a precedent in terms of an act similar to it, it is called a restoration. God Most High began the creation of people. Then He (115) is (also) the one who restores them; that is to say, He resurrects them. All things first originated from Him and are restored to Him, and by Him all things are originated and by Him they are restored.

Al-Muhyī Al-Mumīt - The One Responsible For Both Life and Death (116)

This name also is derived from (the original act of) bringing into being. But when the existent is life, bringing into being is called ihyā'; and when it is death, its bringing into being is called imāta. No one creates death and life except God Most High. There is no muhyī or mumīt except God Most High. An indication of the meaning of life was presented before in the name al-Bā^cith, and we do not return to it here.

(114) Both concepts are found in verbal form in respect of God in S. 85, 13 (A-1-44).

(115) Reading huwa

(116) Both concepts occur in verbal form in S. 2, 28/6 (B-1). The former is also found, again in verbal form, in S. 30, 50/49 (A-3-6) and 41, 39 (A-3-2).

Al-Hayy - The Absolutely Percipient One (117)

Al-Hayy is the one who acts and perceives so that that which is devoid of action and perception altogether is (said to be) dead. The lowest grade of perception exists when the perceptive being becomes cognizant of itself. That of which it is not cognizant of itself is the inanimate body and the dead. The perfect and absolute Hayy is the one under whose perception all (objects-of-perception are marshalled, and all existing things are under His action so that no object-of-perception strays away from His knowledge and no deed (strays away from) His action. All of that is (descriptive of) God Most High. He is the absolute al-Hayy.

As for every living being except He, its life is commensurate with its perception and action, and all of that is restricted to narrow limits. Moreover, there are gradations of living beings. Their ranks are commensurate with their gradations (in perception and action), even as we have indicated before in respect of the ranks of the angels, man and the animals.

Al-Qayyūm - The Self-Subsisting One (118)

You should know that things are divided into those which require a substrate (mahall) such as accidents and qualities - one says of them that they are not self-subsistent , and into those which do not require a substrate -

(117) S. 2,255/6 (B-1); 3,2/1 (B-7); 40,65/7 (A-3-2); inter alii

(118) S. 2,255/6 (B-1); 3,2/1 (B-7); 20,111/0 (A-2-8).

one says of them that they are self-subsistent - such as substances; yet even if the substance is self-subsistent and even if it is independent of a substrate on which to subsist, nevertheless it is not independent of certain matters that are necessary for its existence and are a precondition in respect of its existence. Therefore it is not (truly) self-subsistent because its subsistence ⁽¹¹⁹⁾ requires the existence of one other than it, even if it does not require a substrate. If there is in existence an existent whose essence is self-sufficient, whose subsistence does not come from one other than it, and the perpetuity of whose existence is not conditioned by the existence of one other than it, (certainly) this existent is absolutely self-subsistent. Furthermore, if every other existent would subsist by means of it in such a way that the existence and the perpetuity of the existence of things are inconceivable except by it, then it is al-qayyūm because it subsists by its own essence, and the subsistence of everything is by means of it. That one is no other but God Most High. Man's access in respect of this characteristic is commensurate with his independence of (things) other than God Most High.

Al-Wājid - He Who Has No Needs ⁽¹²⁰⁾

Al-wājid is the one who does not need anything. The term is the (very) opposite of "the one in want". Perhaps (one may also say that) the one who is missed by the existence of that which he does not need would not be called one in want, and that the one who has within his reach that which is not relevant to

(119) Reading qiwām

(120) Ht. 64; R. 77

his essence or the perfection of it would not be called a wājīd. Rather al-wājīd is the one who does not lack any of the things that are necessary for him. Every thing necessary for the attributes of divinity and their perfection are present in the existence of God Most High. From this standpoint, therefore, He is a wājīd; in fact, He is the absolute al-Wājīd. But any one other than He, even if he is a wājīd in the sense that he has some of the attributes of perfection and their causes, yet he (still) is in want and is not a wājīd except relatively.

Al-Mājīd - The Glorified One (121)

Al-Mājīd has the same meaning as al-Majīd, even as al-^cĀlim has the same meaning as al-^cAlīm. But (the paradigm) al-Fa^cīl indicates an even greater extensiveness, and the meaning of that we have shown previously.

Al-Aḥad - He Who is Uniquely One (122)

Al-Aḥad is the one who can neither be separated into component parts nor reduplicated. An example of that which cannot be separated into component parts is the substance which is one (in number). One says of that which is indivisible that it is one in the sense that it has no component parts. Similarly a (geometric) point has no component parts. God Most High is one in the sense that it is impossible to conceive of division in respect of His essence. As for that which cannot be reduplicated, it is that which has no peer; such as the sun,

(121) S. 11, 73/6 (A-3-7)

(122) Though the Qur'an very frequently bears witness to the unity of God, aḥad is used in respect of God only in S. 112, 1 (A-1-45).

for example. For even though it is capable of division in imagination and (though) in its essence it is made up of component parts since it is one of the species of (finite) bodies, nevertheless, in fact, it is without peer, though it is indeed possible for it to have a peer. If there is in existence an existent that is so unique in respect of its existence that it is entirely impossible to conceive of another sharing in its existence, then such (an existent) is the absolute al-Wāḥid eternally and forever. Man is a wāḥid only in the sense that he has no peers among his fellow-men in respect of some good quality. (Therefore he is) that (i. e., a wāḥid) only in relation to his fellow-men and in relation to a particular time, for it is possible that one like him might appear at another time; and in relation to some, but not all, qualities. (In other words), there is no absolute "one" except God Most High.

As-Samad - He To Whom One Turns In Every Exigency (123)

As-Samad is the one to whom one turns in respect of (one's) needs and the one to whom one goes in respect of (one's) desires, since the ultimate degree of sovereignty is his. The one whom God has made the object of men's (quest) in respect of their requirements for both this life and the next, the one by whose tongue and hand God has ensured the needs of His people, he is the one upon whom God has bestowed a portion of the meaning of this characterization. But the absolute as-Samad is the One to whom one turns for every need, and this is (only) God Most High.

(123) S. 112,2 (A-1-45)

Al-Qādir Al-Muqtadir - He Who Acts, Or Does Not Act, As He Pleases (124)

The meaning of these two (names) is "the possessor of power", but al-muqtadir does (this) to a greater extent (than al-qādir). Power is tantamount to the "abstract principle" (ma^cnā) by means of which a thing comes into being according to the determination and in agreement with the will and knowledge. Al-qādir is the one who does what he wishes (to do); and if he so wishes, he does not do it. It is not a part of the condition that he should inevitably wish (to do something and therewith exercise his power). Thus God Most High is qādir of effecting the resurrection now, because He would effect it if He wished to do so. But if He does not effect it because He does not wish it, and He does not wish it because of His knowledge of the fixing of its appointed time and span, that does not detract from (His) power (to do so). The absolute al-Qādir is the One who created every existent by himself, independent of the assistance of another, and He is God Most High.

As far as man is concerned, (certainly) he does have power in a general sense, but it is deficient. For he is able to deal with only some of the things that are possible, and he is not capable of creation. Rather does God Most High create the objects of man's power by means of his (own) power whenever there are present all the causes of (man's) object-of-power. Beneath this there is an abyss which is impossible for a book of this nature to uncover.

(124) Al-Qādir: S. 6, 37(A-3-21); 17, 99/101 (A-3-4); inter alii
Al-Muqtadir: S. 18, 45/3 (A-2-21); 54, 42 (A-2-2); inter alii

Al-Mugaddim Al-Mu'akhkhir - The One Who Causes Men To Be Both Near To And Distant From Him (125)

Al-Mugaddim al-Mu'akhkhir is the one who causes (some) to be near (him) and others to be distant from (him). The one whom He has caused to be near, He has advanced him; and the one whom He has caused to be distant, He has removed him. He has advanced his prophets and his friends by drawing them near to him and guiding them, and He has caused his enemies to be distant by separating them from himself and by placing a veil between himself and them. For example, when the king causes two persons to be near (to him) but at the same time effects a situation in which one of the two is nearer to him (than is the other), one says that the king has caused him to be set forward; that is to say, he has caused him to be put in front of the other one. Sometimes one speaks of being in front in respect of place and sometimes in respect of rank. Inevitably the term is used in relation to something else further back. Necessarily involved (in this concept) is something sought, which is the goal, in relation to which the one set forward is (said to be) forward and the one set behind is (said to be) behind. This is the goal of God Most High. In respect of God the one who is set forward is the one who is brought near. Thus He has put forward the angels, then the prophets, then the friends of God and then the theologians. Anyone said to be behind is put behind in relation to that one who

(125) Al-Mugaddim: The name as such is not used in the Qur'ān, but the verb is applied to God in S. 50, 28/7 (A-2-7).

Al-Mu'akhkhir: This name is not found in the Qur'ān, but the verb is applied to God in eleven verses; e.g., S. 11, 8/11 (A-3-7).

is before him, (though at the same time) he is forward in relation to the one who is behind him.

God Most High is al-Mugaddim al-Mu'akhkhir for if you were to attribute their being put forward and their being put behind to their accomplishments and shortcomings and the perfection and deficiency of their attributes, then (you would have to answer the objection): who is it who has led them to their accomplishments in terms of knowledge and to worship by stimulating their (good) motives, and who is it who has led them to falling short (of these goals) by deflecting their motives to the (very) opposite of the straight path? All of that comes from God Most High, for He is al-Mugaddim al-Mu'akhkhir. What is intended (by Him) is (both) advancement and retardation in respect of rank. There is in these (names) an indication that the one who takes a place of precedence does not do so by virtue of his knowledge and work; rather does he reach this position through God sending him forward. The same is true of the one who is put back. This is made clear by the saying of God Most High, "Lo! those unto whom kindness hath gone forth before from us, they will be far removed from thence;" (126) and His saying, "And if We had so willed, We could have given every soul its guidance, but the word from Me concerning evil doers took effect: that I will fill hell." (127)

An Admonition: Man's portion of (these) active attributes is obvious.

(126) S. 21,101 (A-2-18)

(127) S. 32,13 (A-3-1)

Therefore we will not busy ourselves by repeating it in respect of each name out of fear of falling into prolixity. After all, there is in what we have already mentioned an indication of the way in which the discourse (is to develop).

Al-Awwal Al-Ākhir - He Who Is Both First And Last (128)

(You should) know that that which is first is first in relation to something and that which is last is last in relation to something. These two are opposites. It is inconceivable that one thing can be both first and last in the same respect and in relation to the same thing. Rather when you observe the order of existence (as such) and observe the chain of the ordered existents, (then you must know that) God Most High is first in relation to them since each and every existent acquires (its) existence from Him.

As for God Himself, He exists by means of His (own) essence, and has not derived (His) existence from another. (At the same time), no matter how much you consider the order or progression and observe the gradations in standing of those who are moving towards Him, (you must conclude that) He is last. For He is the ultimate to which the grades of the knowing ones (129) ascend. Every knowledge that is attained before the knowledge of Him is a step towards the knowledge of Him, and the ultimate knowledge is the knowledge of God. He is last in relation to the progression (mentioned above) and first in relation to existence. From Him is the beginning, first of all, and to Him is the return and

(128) S. 57,3 (B-9)

(129) Or "the gnostics"

result, last of all.

As-Zāhir Al-Bāṭin - The Manifest and Hidden One (130)

These two characterizations also are among those that are relative, for that which is manifest is (at one and the same time) manifest (in relation to) one thing and hidden (in relation to) another. (But) from the same point of view it cannot be both manifest and hidden. Rather it is manifest from one point of view and hidden from another, for it is only in relation to perceptions that things are manifest and hidden.

(Certainly it is true that) God Most High is hidden if He is sought through the perception of the (five) senses and the treasure house of the imagination, but He is manifest if sought through the treasure house of the mind and its reasoning faculties. You may (object to this and) say, "As for His being hidden in relation to the perception of the senses, that is (quite) obvious; but as for His being manifest in relation to (that which is perceived by) reason, that is abstruse. For (one terms) manifest that about which there is no dispute, that in the perception of which people do not differ. But this is a point on which men have had great doubt. How, then, is it possible for him to be a manifest one?"

(At the same time), however, you must realize that He is hidden in spite of his manifestness in view of the degree of his manifestness. (Or to state the matter in another way), his (very) manifestness is the cause of his hiddenness

and his (very) light is the veil of his light, for everything which goes beyond its own limits must (eventually) turn to its opposite. Perhaps you are astonished by this teaching, consider it (quite) remote and will not understand it unless we cite an analogy.

Let me assure you that if you were to consider a single word written by a certain author, from it you would be able to infer that he is learned, capable, and able to hear and see, and you would also reach the position where you were very certain about the existence of these attributes. Indeed, if you saw a written word, (from it) you would attain unmistakable evidence of the existence of its writer who is learned, capable, able to hear and see and, (of course), is alive, and the only evidence (of his being such a person) would be the formation of the single word (in question). Even as this word is unmistakable evidence of the attributes of (its) author, so (also) there is not an atom in the heavens and the earth, not a celestial body, star, sun, moon, animal or vegetation, not a characteristic or anything that is characterized which does not bear witness of its own need for (the) manager who planned it, determined it and endowed it with its particular attributes. Moreover, man cannot contemplate any of his own external or internal members or parts, or any of his attributes or states which pertain to him by necessity and not by his own choice, without finding them to be outspoken witnesses for their Creator, Realizer and Planner.

This same truth applies in respect of everything which he perceives by

means of all his senses, whether it be within or without his own person. If (some of) the things differed in respect of the witness (they brought), in that some of them bore witness and others did not, surely certainty would result in respect of all of them. But since the witnesses are so numerous that they have overlapped and (therewith) become indistinct, they have (in fact) become obscure due to (the) excessive clarity. An illustration of this is that the most manifest of (all) things are those which are perceived by the senses, and of these the most manifest things are those that are perceived by the sense of sight, and the most manifest of (all) the things perceived by sight is the light of the sun which shines upon (worldly) bodies, that light by which everything becomes manifest. How could that by which everything is made manifest not (itself) be manifest?

This (is a question that) has confused many people and caused them to say, "As far as the coloured objects are concerned, only the colouring - (that is to say) black and red - exists in them. As for the possibility of there being together with the colour a radiance and a light associated with the colour, this is not true." These people become conscious of the existence of light in the coloured things by the difference they perceive between the shade and the place of the light and between nighttime and daytime. Since it is possible to conceive of the sun being concealed during the night and its being veiled from sight by (various) dark bodies during the day, (you know that) its effect is distinguish-

able by the things that are coloured, and thereby the difference is perceived between that which is affected and illuminated by it and between the shaded objects concealed from it. Thus the existence of the light is (actually) known by the nonexistence of the light. (The same result would also obtain) if existence were placed vis-a-vis nonexistence and the difference were perceived, with colours remaining constant in either case. If the light of the sun fell upon all the bodies that are manifest to a person and if the sun did not set and so enable him to notice the difference (made by its setting), surely it would be impossible for him to know that the light is something of consequence, existing and distinct from the colours; and this in spite of the fact that it is the most manifest of all things; indeed, it is that which makes all things manifest.

(Similarly), if the nonexistence or absence of God Most High, the Holy One, from some things were conceivable, certainly the heavens and the earth and everything that would be cut off from His light would perish, and (then) surely the distinction between the two states (of existence and nonexistence) would be comprehended. (In such an eventuality which, of course, is impossible) His existence definitely would be known. But since all things are in agreement in respect of the witness (of Him) and all of the various states are uniformly constant, that is the cause of His being hidden. Praise, then, be to the One who is concealed from mankind by His light, the One who is hidden from them by the degree of His manifestness! He is as-Zāhir, the One (in comparison with whom) there is no

one more manifest; and He is al-Bāṭin, the One (in comparison with whom) there is no one more hidden.

An Admonition: Do not be surprised at this (admonition) in respect of the attributes of God Most High, for the sense in which man is (said to be) man is both manifest and hidden. It is manifest in that one may infer it by looking at his orderly (and) wise deeds; (but) it is hidden if it is sought through sensory perception. For sensory (perception) is concerned only with his external form, but (the fact remains that) man is not man (simply) by virtue of his visible form. For if that form is changed - indeed, if all his component parts are changed - he is still he, (a man). And (it is an indisputable fact that) the (various) parts (of the body) do change. When he has grown old perhaps the parts of every man's body are no longer the same as they were when he was a youth. They disintegrate with the passing of time and are exchanged for similar parts as a result of the nourishment (one receives). But man's nature has not changed. That (inner) nature is hidden from the senses, (but) it is manifest to reason by deduction from the evidence of its effects and deeds.

Al-Barr - The Dutiful One (131)

Al-Barr is the beneficent one. The absolute al-Barr is the One from whom comes every good deed and every beneficence. Man, however, is a doer of good in the measure that he keeps himself busy doing good things especially towards

his parents, teacher and elders. It is said that Moses - may peace be upon him - on the occasion of his Lord's speaking with him, saw a man standing by the leg of the throne, and he was amazed at the gradeur of his position. Thus he asked, "O Lord, by what means did this man attain this place?" The Lord replied, "Verily, he is one who did not begrudge any of My servants that which I bestowed upon him, and he was (ever) dutiful to his parents." This is the way in which man does good. As for a detailed exposition of the goodness and beneficence of God Most High over against His creation, the explanation of it would be too lengthy. (But) there is some indication of this subject in some of the things already mentioned.

At-Tawwāb - He Who Constantly Turns Man To Repentance (132)

At-Tawwāb is the One who keeps on facilitating the causes of repentance for His creatures time and time again by showing them some of His signs, by conveying to them some of His warnings and by revealing to them some of His deterrents and cautions with the intent that they, having been apprised of the dangers of their sins, might be filled with fear by His frightening them and subsequently turn to repentance. Through (His) accepting (the evidences of their penitence), the favour of God Most High (once again) reverts to them.

An Admonition: He who accepts over and over again the excuses of those who do wrong among his subjects, friends and acquaintances is characterized by

this (type of) character and has received a share of it.

Al-Muntaqim - The Avenger (133)

Al-Muntaqim is the One who breaks the back of the arrogant, the One who severely punishes the perpetrators and presses punishment upon the tyrants. He does that after excusing them (that is to say, after forgiving earlier sins), (after giving them many) warnings, making (repentance) possible and (granting them) time to reconsider and a brief respite. This is stronger vengeance than the quick infliction of a penalty, for if the penalty is hastened one does not sink deeper into disobedience and one does not incur extremely severe punishment.

An Admonition: Man's revenge is praiseworthy only when he takes revenge upon the enemies of God Most High, and the worst of (God's) enemies is man himself. Man ought to take revenge upon himself whenever he commits an act of disobedience or falls short in an act of worship, even as it is related of Abū-Yazīd who said, "One night I was (too) lazy to perform certain prayers. Therefore I punished myself by depriving myself of water for one year." It is in such a way that man should take revenge (upon himself).

Al-ʿAfū - The One Who Erases Sin (134)

Al-ʿAfū is the One who erases sins and disregards acts of disobedience.

(133) S. 32,22 (A-3-1); 43,41/0 (A-2-14); 44,16/6 (A-2-6). In each instance this concept appears in plural form, though it is obvious that God is speaking only of Himself.

(134) S. 22,60/59 (B-17); 58,2/3 (B-16); inter alii

This concept approximates the sense of al-Ghafūr, (the One who forgives much), though the former is more far-reaching than the latter. For al-Ghufrān indicates a veiling (of the sin) whereas al-^cAfw indicates an erasing, and the erasing (of sin) is more far-reaching (than the simple veiling of it).

An Admonition: Man's portion of this is self-evident; it consists in his forgiving everyone who has done him wrong. Moreover, he (willingly) does good to such a person even as he sees that God Most High is the One who does good to the disobedient and the unbelievers in this life and is not one who quickly punishes them. On the contrary, sometimes He forgives them by ^{restoring} turning them ^{(from sin) favour} to repentance. When He turns them (in this manner) He erases their sins, for when one turns from (his) offense, (he becomes) as one who has no offense. This is the ultimate (that is attainable) in erasing the crime.

Ar-Ra'ūf - The Very Indulgent One (135)

Ar-Ra'ūf is the One who has pity (on others), and pity is the intensification of mercy. Therefore it has the same meaning as ar-Rahīm though in an intensified form, and the discussion of ar-Rahīm has already been presented.

Mālik al-Mulk - The One Who Has Perfect Power Over His Kingdom (136)

Mālik al-Mulk is the One who carries out His will in His kingdom in the manner and as He wishes (to do so), bringing into being, destroying, perpetuating and annihilating (as He pleases). (The word) al-Mulk here has the meaning of

(135) S. 2, 207/3 (B-1); 3, 30/28 (B-7); inter alii
 (136) S. 3, 26/5 (B-7)

'kingdom', and (the word) al-Mālik has the meaning of 'the potent one, the one who possesses perfect power'. The totality of everything in existence forms a single kingdom, and He is the one who rules and has power over it. The totality of existing things are a single kingdom because they are dependent upon each other; for even if they are numerous in one respect, they still remain a unit in another. An example of this is the body of man. Certainly it is a kingdom for the real nature of man. It consists of different members, but they (all) give the appearance of cooperating in attaining the goal of a single manager, (and thus) the kingdom is one.

Similarly the entire world is like a single person, and the (constituent) parts are like the members of His (body). They all cooperate in attaining a single goal which is the perfection of the greatest blessing that is possible in accordance with divine generosity. Because the systematic arrangement (of the universe) is based upon an harmonious order and because it is held together by one bond, it, therefore, forms a single kingdom, and God Most High alone rules over it.

The kingdom of every man is particularly his body. When his will is effective in respect of the attributes of his heart and limbs, he may be said to be a mālik of his own kingdom in a way commensurate with the power given to him.

Dhū-l-Jalāl wa-l-Ikrām - The One Possessed of Majesty and Honour (137)

Dhū-l-Jalāl wa-l-Ikrām is such a One that there is no majesty and perfection

which does not pertain to Him and no honour nor honourable quality (makrama) which does not emanate from Him. Majesty pertains to Him in respect of His essence, and honour overflows from Him upon His people. The variety of the ways in which He honours His people is almost unlimited and unending. The saying of God Most High is indicative of this, "Verily We have honoured the children of Adam." (138)

Al-Wāḥid - He Who Has Charge Over All (139)

Al-Wāḥid is the one who plans the affairs of mankind and has assumed control of them; that is to say, he is in charge of them, being capable, as he is, of discharging the trust. It would seem that al-wilāya suggests planning, power and activity. When all these are not included, one cannot be designated by the name al-Wāḥid, and there is no wāḥid of things except God Most High. First of all, He is without peer in His planning of things; secondly, He is the One responsible for and the One who carries out the planning by actually bringing into effect (everything that was planned); and, thirdly, He is the One who is in charge of them by perpetuating and continuing (all these things that were planned and effected).

(138) S. 17, 70/2 (A-3-4)

(139) Ht. 76; Rs. 90.* (Though al-Wāḥid does not appear in the Qur'ān as a name of God, wāḥid appears eleven times as a divine title; e. g., S. 2, 107/1 (B-1); 42, 9/7 (A-3-15).)

* See p. 128, n. 4.

Al-Muta^cālī - The Highly-Exalted One (140)

Al-Muta^cālī has the meaning of al-^cAlī in an intensified form, and the meaning of al-^cAlī has already been given.

Al-Muqsiṭ - The Ultimately Equitable One (141)

Al-Muqsiṭ is the one who demands justice for the one who has been wronged from the one who has done wrong. Its perfection lies in procuring not only the satisfaction of the one wronged but also the satisfaction of the one who did wrong. That is the ultimate of justice and equity, and it is not possible for anyone except God Most High. An example of this (is to be found) in that which is related of the prophet - may the blessing of God be upon him and his family and peace be upon all of them - "(One day) while sitting he laughed so much that his teeth showed. ^oUmar said, 'My father and my mother be your ransom, O messenger of God, what is it that makes you laugh?' Muḥammad replied, 'Two men from my community fell to their knees before the Lord of power. One of the two said, 'O Lord, get revenge for me for the wrong this one did to me.' God replied - to Him be might and majesty! - 'Make restitution to your brother for the wrong you did to him.' He said, 'O, Lord, not a single one of my good deeds remains.' Then He - to Him be might and majesty - said to the supplicant, 'How will you deal with your

(140) H. 57; Ht. 77; Rs. 97. The name as it appears in our text is not to be found in the Qur'ān. But one does find al-Muta^cāl in reference to God in S. 13, 9/10 (A-3-22). Concerning this matter Redhouse states, "The full grammatical form is al-Muta^cālī. However, veneration for the smallest peculiarities of the original codex of the Qur'ān has perpetuated the present form." If this deduction is correct, then al-Ghasālī in this instance deferred to correct grammatical usage.

(141) Ht. 85; V. 134; R. 40; Rs. 45. Though this name is not found in the Qur'ān, Redhouse notes that the expression qa'im bil-qisṭ (persistent in just distribution) is applied to God in S. 3, 18/6 (B-7).

brother when not a single one of his good deeds remains?' He replied, 'O Lord, let him bear for me some of my burden (of faults).' Then the messenger of God - may the blessing of God and peace be upon him - began to weep and said, 'Surely that will be a great day when people will be in need of others to carry their faults for them.' Muhammad said, 'God - to Him be might and majesty - said to the one complaining of injustice, 'Lift your eyes and look to the gardens (i. e., Paradise).' He said, 'O Lord, I see cities of silver and palaces of gold, all adorned with pearls. For what believer or martyr is this?' God - to Him be might and majesty - said, 'For the one who pays the price.' He asked again, 'O Lord, who has this in his power?' To this came the reply, 'You possess it.' He went on to query, 'In what way, O Lord?' Forthwith came the reply, 'By your forgiving your brother.' The man went on, 'O Lord, I have forgiven him!' God - to Him be might and majesty - said, 'Take your brother by the hand and lead him into Paradise.' Then Muhammad - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - said, 'Fear God and make peace among yourselves, for God Most High will make peace between the believers on the day of the Resurrection.'"

This is the way of claiming and affecting justice. (But) no one has the power of acting like this except the Lord of lords. He among men is most amply endowed with a portion of this name who first of all demands justice from himself (for another), who then seeks justice for another from a third party, but who does not demand justice for himself from another.

Al-Jāmi^c - He Who Combines All Things in The Universe To Accomplish His Purposes (142)

Al-Jāmi^c is the one who joins things that are similar, things that are dissimilar and things that are opposed to each other. As for God Most High bringing together similar things, one finds an example of this in His bringing together many (creatures who are a part) of the human race on this earth and gathering them in the realm of the resurrection. As for His bringing together dissimilar things, one finds an example of this in His bringing together the heavens, the stars, the air, the earth, the seas, the animals, the plants and the different minerals, all of which have different shapes, colours, tastes and characteristics. He has brought (the animals, plants and minerals) together on the earth, and He has brought everything together in the universe, (and this includes the earth, heavens and air). (Another) example of this is His bringing together the bone, nerve, vein, muscle, brain, skin, blood and the rest of the component parts (to be found) in the body of the animal.

As for His bringing together things opposed to each other, one finds an example of this in His bringing together heat and cold, moisture and dryness in the physical constitution of the animals, those things that are mutually repellent and hostile one to another. This (latter phenomenon) is the most comprehensive aspect of (His ability) to bring (things) together. (In reality) one does not know all the details of His (ability to) bring (things) together unless one knows every instance

in which He has (every) brought (things) together (both) in this life and in that which is to come, and the explanation of all that would be (far too) lengthy.

An Admonition: The combiner among men is the one who brings together the external propriety in respect of (man's) physical members, and the truths that are hidden in (men's) hearts. The one whose knowledge is perfect and whose behaviour is proper is (worthy of being called) al-jāmi^c. For that reason it has been said that the perfect person is such a one that the light of his knowledge does not extinguish the light of his piety. (Experience has taught us that) it is difficult for one to combine (in his person both) self-restraint and insight. For that reason we (usually) find either men who display self-restraint in asceticism and piety but have no insight, or men who have insight but no self-restraint. Al-jāmi^c is the one who combines (both) self-restraint and insight.

Al-Ghanī Al-Mughnī - The Rich, The Enriching One (143)

Al-Ghanī al-Mughnī is the one who is not dependent upon anyone else in respect of his essence or the attributes of his essence. Rather is he exalted above (any) connection with others. The one whose essence or the attributes of his essence are connected with something external to his essence in such a way that his existence or his perfection is dependent upon that other, is poor (that is to say, in the sense of being dependent) and needs to acquire something. That

(143) Al-Ghanī: S. 10, 68/9 (A-3-16); 22, 64/3 (B-17); inter alii
Al-Mughnī: Ht. 88; R. 58; Rs. 67. Though this name as such is not to be found in the Qur'ān, the concept expressed in it is used in respect of God in S. 9, 28 (B-23); 24, 32 (B-15); inter alii.

(complete independence) is inconceivable except for God Most High. God is also the One who satisfies (the needs of others).

But it is inconceivable that the one who is made free of want should become rich absolutely as a result of his being enriched, for at the very least he remains in need of the One who enriched him. (Therefore) he is not (truly) rich. Rather (is it true that) he can dispense with everyone but God in view of the fact that God supplies him with that which he needs, and not in view of the fact that his basic neediness has been removed.

The really rich (man) is the one who does not need anyone at all. The one who is in need and at the same time possesses that which he needs is called rich figuratively. This (possession of what one needs) is the utmost (form of riches) attainable by one other than God. As far as losing (this) need is concerned, this does not occur. But when one has no need for anything except God Most High, one is called rich. If it were not that the basic neediness remains, then the saying of God, "And God is the Rich, and ye are the poor," (144) would not be true. (On the other hand), if it were inconceivable that one could become independent of everything except God - to Him be might and majesty - then it would be incorrect to characterize God Most High as al-Mughnī.

(144) S. 47.40 (B-6)

Al-Māni^C - He Who Repels Those Things Detrimental To His Creation (145)

Al-Māni^C is the one who repels those things which cause destruction and deficiency in one's religious and physical life by creating (those) causes which are intended to preserve them, and the meaning of al-Hafīz was given before. All preservation necessarily implies a hindering and a repelling. The one who understands the meaning of al-Hafīz (therewith also) understand the meaning of al-Māni^C. (The same process is spoken of as) man^C in respect of the destructive cause and as hifz in respect of the one protected from destruction. The latter is the object and aim of the hindering. Since (all) hindering is intended for the sake of preservation whereas preservation is not sought for the sake of hindering, it follows that every preserver is one who resists and hinders, whereas everyone who hinders is not a preserver unless he is one who hinders in an absolute manner all the causes of destruction and deficiency in such a way that preservation follows of necessity.

Ad-Dārr An-Nāfi^C - He Who Is Responsible For Both Good and Evil (146)

Ad-Dārr An-Nāfi^C is the one from whom emanates the good and the evil, that which is beneficial and harmful. All of that is attributed to God Most High either through the mediation of the angels, men or inanimate bodies, or without any mediation. Do not think that poison kills and harms by itself, or that food satis-

(145) This name is not found in the Qur'ān, and neither Redhouse nor Lane include it.

(146) These names are not in the Qur'ān. Zwemer states that "they belong to God's attributes on the authority of the Prophet and are used especially in invocations and incantations".

flies or is beneficial by itself, or that an angel, a man, a devil or any created thing, such as sky or star or something else, is itself capable of producing a good or an evil or something beneficial or harmful. Rather (is it true that) each one of these is (only) a subservient cause from which nothing comes forth except that for which it has been made subservient. And all of that is related to the eternal power just as the pen is related to the writer in the belief of the ordinary man; and just as when the sultan records his signature authorizing either an honour or a punishment (for one), one does not ascribe the harm or benefit of that to the pen; rather (does one ascribe this) to those to whom the pen is subject. In a similar manner (the same principle applies for) the rest of the means and the causes.

We used the words "in the belief of the ordinary man" because the ignorant person is the one who considers the pen to be something that is subject to the writer, whereas the understanding person knows that even though it is in the hand (of the writer) it is (actually) subject to God Most High and that He is the one to whom the writer is subject. As a result of God's creating the writer and creating in him the ability (to write) and having brought to bear upon him those imperious and firm impulses (to write), the movement of the fingers and the pen inevitably results regardless of whether he wills or disdains it; to be sure, it is impossible for him not to will it. This being the case, the one who (actually) writes by means of the pen and the hand of man

is God Most High. If you know this in respect of an animal endowed with the power of choice, (surely) it must be even more obvious in respect of inanimate beings.

An-Nūr - The Light (147)

An-Nūr is the visible One by means of whom all visibility exists. For that which itself is visible and makes others visible is called a light. When existence is contrasted with nonexistence, (it becomes obvious that) visibility pertains to existence and that there is no darkness darker than nonexistence. That which is free of the darkness of nonexistence, rather from the possibility of nonexistence, and brings everything (else) from the darkness of nonexistence to the visibility of existence is worthy of being called light. Existence is a light which flows freely upon all things from the light of His essence. Therefore He "is the light of the heavens and the earth". (148) Just as there is not a particle of the light of the sun which does not point to the existence of the illuminating sun, so also there is not a particle of all the things that exist in the heavens and the earth and that which is between them which does not by the (mere) possibility of its existence point to the necessary existence of its creator.

That which we have mentioned in respect of the meaning of as-Zāhir

(147) S. 24, 35 (B-15)

(148) Ibid.

should help you to understand the meaning of an-Nūr, and it should spare you from the far-fetched things that have been mentioned in respect of its meaning.

Al-Hādī - The Guide (149)

Al-Hādī is the One, first of all, who guides His elect servants to the knowledge (maʿrifa) of His essence in order that they might use it as (their) witness of the knowledge of His essence; (secondly), He is the one who guides the common people among His servants to the things that He has created in order that they might be able to use them as (their) witness of His essence; and (finally) He is the one who guides every creature to that which is indispensable for the satisfaction of its needs. He guides the infant to nursing at (his mother's) breast from the time of its birth. He guides the young bird to pick up seeds from the time of its hatching, and He guides the bee to building its house in hexagonal form since this is the most appropriate form for the bee's body, (that form) which is the most cohesive and the least likely to be affected by (150) deep gashes. This subject, which is lengthy, is (best) defined in the saying of God Most High, "He (is the One) who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it aright," (151) and in His words, "(He is the One) who measureth, then guideth." (152)

(149) S. 22, 54/3 (B-17); 25, 31/3 (A-2-19)

(150) Reading yatakhalluhā

(151) S. 20, 50/2 (A-1-8)

(152) S. 87, 3 (A-1-16)

The guiding ones among men are the prophets and the theologians who direct men to happiness in the hereafter and guide them to the straight path of God. But (in reality) it is God who guides through the tongues (of these leaders), and they are (only) instruments subject to His power and planning.

Al-Badi^c - The Matchless, Unequalled One (153)

Al-Badi^c is the one (of whom it can be said that) there was never one like Him in all previous knowledge. The absolute al-Badi^c is the one for whom previous knowledge has no parallel in respect of his essence, attributes, deeds or anything ascribed to him. If there is any such thing previously known, he is not absolutely matchless, unequalled. No one is worthy of this name in an absolute sense except God Most High. There was nothing before Him, so that one like Him could have been known before Him. Every existent (which has come into being) after Him results from His producing it and is in no way analogous to its producer. Therefore, He is from eternity to eternity.

Every man who in respect of prophethood, sovereignty or knowledge is distinguished by a characteristic previously unknown either in all the ages that have gone by or in his own epoch is matchless, unprecedented (only) in relation to that (gift) and that period of time which are peculiarly his.

(153) S. 2,117/1 (B-1); 6,101 (A-3-21)

Al-Bāqī - The Everlasting One (154)

Al-Bāqī is the existent whose existence is necessary by means of His essence. But when the human mind thinks of Him in terms of the future, He is called the everlasting One, and when it thinks of Him in terms of the past He is called the pre-eternal One. The absolute al-Bāqī is the One whose existence in the future cannot be conceived of as coming to an end, and this is expressed by the term abadī, and the absolutely pre-eternal One is the One whose existence in the past cannot be extended back to a beginning, and this is expressed by the term azalī. The phrase "necessarily existent by means of its essence" implies all of that. However, these names (i. e., bāqī and qadīm) are (applicable only) in the measure that the human mind relates this existence to the past or the future. But (in reality only) changeable things pertain to the past and the future, because these are two expressions of time and nothing pertains to time except change and movement, for movement in itself divides into past and future and the changeable comes within the scope of time by means of the change. Therefore, that which is above change and movement is not included in time and (subsequently) has no past and future, and there is no separation in respect of the apposition of past and future.

We have (a past and a future) only when certain events have occurred to us and in us and (other) events will be repeated. There must be (certain)

(154) H. 80; Ht. 96; Rs. 72. Though the name as such is not found in the Qur'an, its basic meaning is implied in S. 28, 88 (A-3-11). Redhouse states that "the opening phrase of all Muslim inscriptions on tombstones is huwa-l-Bāqī."

events happening one after another in order that they might be divided into a past that has ceased to exist and is concluded, into the present time and into that of which the renewal is anticipated afterwards. When there is no renewal and no termination there can be no time. And why should it not be so since God Most High existed before time? Since He created time not a thing pertaining to His essence has changed; before He created time it could have no relevance for Him, and after He created time He remained as He existed before. The words of the one who said, "Duration is an attribute in addition to the essence of al-Bāqī," are quite wrong, and even more wrong are the words of the one who said, "Pre-existence is an attribute in addition to the essence of al-Qadīm." Sufficient as proof of the incorrectness of these positions is the confusion that has resulted in respect of the everlastingness of the everlastingness and the everlastingness of the attributes, and the pre-existence of the pre-existence and the pre-existence of the attributes.

Al-Wārith - The Inheritor (155)

Al-Wārith is the one to whom the possessions return after the passing away of the owner, and that one is God - praise the Lord! For He is the One who remains after His creatures pass away. Everything returns and reverts to Him. At that time He is the One who asks, "To whom do the possessions belong today?" And He is the One who answers, "To God, the One, the All-

Powerful." This is in reference to the opinion of the majority of the people who consider that they themselves are owners. But on that day the real nature of the situation will be revealed to them. This call (i.e., "To whom do the possessions belong today?") expresses the real nature of that which will be revealed to them at that time.

As for those who are endowed with the powers of spiritual perception, they are constantly aware of the meaning of this call; they hear it without a (single) sound or letter being uttered. They are certain that every day, every hour and every moment (all) possessions belong to God, the One, the Powerful. *So it has* ~~For that reason~~ (156) *forever been and shall forever be.* ~~He is eternal and everlasting.~~ (But) this is comprehended only by the one who comprehends the real nature of at-tawhīd in respect of action and who knows that He who is alone in the action in respect of the possession and the sovereignty is one. But we have (already) indicated that in the beginning of Kitāb at-Tawakkul in Iḥyā' ʿUlūm ad-Dīn. Let it be sought there, for this book has no room for it.

Ar-Rashīd - The Absolutely Judicious Guide (157)

Ar-Rashīd is the One whose dispositions lead on to their ultimate aims as a result of right ways-of-behaving without the advice of a counsellor, the directions of a director, or the guidance of a guider; and (this one) is God Most

(156) Reading kadhālika

(157) S. 11, 87/8 (A-3-7)

High. A man may be (said to be) a guider to the extent that he is guided in his dispositions to the attainment of right conduct in respect of his religious and secular ends.

As-Ṣabūr - He Who Times All Things Perfectly (158)

As-Ṣabūr is the One whom haste does not induce to rush into an action prematurely. Rather does He bring matters about in a determined measure, and makes them happen according to definite ways-of-acting. He does not delay them beyond their appointed time as a lazy one might do, and He does not hasten them ahead of their appointed time (that is to say, He does not act precipitately in this respect) as an impatient one might do. Rather does He bring about everything in its proper time, in the manner that is necessary that it be and just as it ought to be. He does all of that without permitting himself to be subjected to a motive force opposed to his will.

As for the patience of man, it is not free of this disciplining because the meaning of his patience lies in the constancy of his intellectual or religious motivation vis-a-vis the motivation of greed and anger. If two opposite motives pull him in different directions and he turns from the one calling him to boldness and rashness and turns to the one that causes a delay, (then) he is called a patient man for he has caused the inclination to haste to be overcome.

In respect of God Most High the inclination to haste is non-existent. God is farther removed from haste than the mortal in whom the motive exists but is overcome. He is more worthy of this name, since one has dismissed from consideration any conflict of motivation and any overcoming of it by effort.

A Conclusion to This Part and an Apology

You should know that what has caused me to mention these admonitions is only the accordance of these names and attributes with the saying of the messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace be upon^{him} - "Be characterized by the characters of God Most High," and his saying - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - "God Most High has such-and-such characters, and he who is characterized by one of them enters Paradise." The words commonly expressed by the ṣūfīs point to that which we have already mentioned but in such a manner that those who are unlearned assume from them something of the concepts of inherence (ḥulūl) and unification (ittihād).

But that is not the supposition of him who has attained the use of reason, to say nothing of those who discern the particular (features) of mystic vision. I have heard Shaykh Abū-^cAlī-l-Fārmadhī relate from his Shaykh Abū-l-Qāsim al-Karakānī - may God make their spirits holy - that he said, "Certainly the ninety-nine names become a description of the man who follows the spiritual path of ṣūfism, while he is still on his way and has not reached his destination."

If by this saying is meant something compatible with what we have (already) asserted, then it is correct and nothing else need be surmised concerning it; and there will be in the expression some kind of latitude and metaphor, for the meanings of the names are the attributes of God and His attributes do not become the attributes of one other than He. But the meaning of it (i. e., the application of the names to men) is that he has attained (qualities) corresponding to these characteristics, even as one says that so-and-so has attained the knowledge of his teacher, whereas the student (in reality) does not attain the knowledge of the teacher but attains (only) a likeness of his knowledge. If anyone should think that what is meant by this is not that which we have asserted, he definitely is wrong. My argument, (therefore), is this: To say that the meanings of the names of God have become characteristics of a man can only (be understood to) mean that (he is characterized by) attributes either other than these or similar to these. If he meant (attributes) similar to these, then he must have meant either a likeness that is absolute in every respect or a likeness in respect of the name and a sharing in the attributes in general but not in the peculiar properties of the "meanings".

Here, then, are two alternatives. If, (on the otherhand), he meant by it the attributes themselves, then this can occur either by an (actual) transfer of the attributes from the Lord to man or in a way other than by such a transfer. If this does not happen by such a transfer, then it can only occur either by the

uniting of the essence of man with the essence of the Lord in such a way that the one becomes the Other and the attributes of the one become the attributes of the Other, or else this takes place by the inherency (of God in man). These are the three alternatives; namely, a transfer of the attributes, the unification (of man and God) and the inherency (of beings).

(In all) there are five alternatives of which (only) one is correct, and it is that certain matters are established in man which broadly correspond to these attributes and share in the name. But they are not perfectly assimilated to them as we have pointed out in the (various) admonitions.

The second alternative, namely, that (attributes) genuinely similar (to God's) should be established for man is impossible, for amongst them (is the one indicating) that he should have a knowledge that comprehends all things that are known to such an extent that even the weight of an atom either in the earth or heavens does not escape him; another is that he should have a single power which comprehends all created beings in such a way that by means of it he is the creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. (But) how is this conceivable for one other than God Most High? How is it possible for man to be the creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them when he is one of those who is between them? How can he create himself? Furthermore, if these attributes are established in two men, then each of them is the creator of the other and each of the two would be a creator of his (own)

creation and all of these (propositions) are absurdities and impossibilities.

The third alternative, namely, the transfer of the attributes of Lordship themselves, is also inconceivable because it is impossible for the attributes to be separated from the things that are characterized (by them). This does not concern the pre-eternal essence (alone), for it is inconceivable that the knowledge of X itself can be transferred to Y. Indeed, the attributes have no subsistence except in relation to the things that are characterized, because a transfer (of anything) necessarily implies the divesting of that from which the transfer was made. (It would follow in the present argument) that the essence from which the attributes of Lordship are transferred would necessarily be divested of Lordship and its attributes, and that also obviously is impossible.

The fourth alternative is (the possibility) of the uniting (of man and God). This is even more obviously false, because to say that man has become the Lord is in itself contradictory. Rather is it necessary that the Lord - may He be praised - be far removed from the (mere thought) of the (human) tongue mentioning such impossibilities about Him or making (similar) unrestricted statements. To say that one thing can become another thing is absolutely impossible, because we say that if one conceives of X by himself and of Y by himself, then one may say that X has become Y or has become unified with him, and when this union has occurred, the situation can only be such that either both of them exist or both of them do not exist, or that X exists and Y does not exist or vice-

versa. An alternative beyond these four is out of the question.

If both of them exist, one of the two cannot become the very self of the other. Rather does each one of the two himself exist. The utmost (that can happen) is that the locale of both of them becomes one, but this does not necessitate the union (of the essences). It is possible for knowledge, will and power to come together in one essence in such a way that their locales cannot be distinguished, but still power does not become knowledge or will and one is not united with the other. If the two are nonexistent there is no union but rather a nonexistence. Perhaps what does result is a third thing, (different from the other two). If one of the two is nonexistent and the other existent, there would not be a union for an existent cannot be united with a nonexistent. (In other words), unification between any two things is absolutely impossible. This applies to similar essences, to say nothing of different ones. It is impossible that this black colour should become that black colour, even as it is impossible that this black colour should become that white colour or that knowledge.

Now the difference between man and the Lord is greater than the difference between black and knowledge. Therefore the basis of union is (inherently) false. One's speaking of a union (between two objects) and saying, "the one is the other," is not possible except by expanding (the meaning of the words) and using them metaphorically which is in accordance with the practice of the Sūfīs and

poets. In order to embellish the effect that words have on one's understanding, they speak metaphorically as did the poet ⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ when he said, "I am the one I love, and the one whom I love is I." That is (something to be) interpreted from the perspective of the poet (himself). He does not mean by these words that he is really the other, but rather that it is as if he were he, that he is as completely engrossed with him as the other is completely engrossed with himself. He expresses this condition loosely as "union". In the same way one must construe the words of Abū-Yazīd ⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ when he said, "I am (completely) stripped of my (former) self just as the snake is stripped of its skin. I looked and realized that I am He."

The meaning of this is that the one who strips himself of his appetites, passion and desire in such a way that he no longer has room (in his person) for anything except God and has no desire for anyone except for God Most High, when (such a one reaches the position that) nothing occupies a place in (his) heart except the sublimity and beauty of God to such an extent that he is completely engrossed in Him, (then) he does become as if he were He but not in the sense that he is actually He. There is a difference between our saying that it is as if he were He and our saying that he is He. But we may say "he is He" to express "it is as if he were He", even as the poet at times says, "It is as if I were the One whom I love," and at other times he says, "I am the One whom I love."

(159) Al-Hallāj, d. 309/922

(160) Abū-Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, d. 261/875

But there is a pitfall here, for one who does not have a firm foothold in respect of things rational may not be able to distinguish the one from the other. Thus he may look upon his own perfection and being adorned with that portion of the appearance of the Truth that shines forth in him, he may (actually) suppose that he is He and therefore say, "I am the Truth." He makes the mistake of the Christians who, having seen that (i. e., a portion of the truth) in the essence of Jesus - may peace be upon him - therefore say that he is God. Indeed, he commits the same error as the one who looks into a mirror in which a coloured form appears and therefore thinks that that form is the form of the mirror and that that colour is the colour of the mirror. How preposterous is that! On the contrary, the mirror in itself does not have a colour; its only property is to receive the forms of the colours in such a way that it gives to those looking at these things the superficial impression that this is (actually) the form of the mirror. Thus it is that when a youth sees a man in the mirror he thinks that the man is (actually) in the mirror.

Similarly the heart in itself is free of forms and shapes. But its physiognomy is (such as) to be capable of receiving the ideas of shapes, forms and realities. That which dwells in it becomes as if it were identified with it, though it is not actually identified with it. When seeing a drinking glass filled with wine, the one not knowing glass and wine is unable to comprehend the difference between the two. Sometimes he says, "There is no wine," and other times, "There is no glass," just as this was expressed by the poet when he said,

"The glass is thin and the wine is pure." Thus they resembled each other, and matters became confused. It is either as if there were wine and no glass, or glass and no wine.

Concerning the saying of the one who said, "I am the Real One," either its meaning is the meaning of the poet who said, "I am the one I love, and the one I love is I," or he was mistaken in this respect, even as the Christians were mistaken in their supposing the union of divinity and humanity. (The same is true) of the saying of Abū-Yasīd, if he actually said it, "Glory be to me, how important am I." Either he said this as a direct quotation from God Most High, just as if He had been heard saying, "There is no God save Me. So serve Me," (161) in which case he would certainly have been understood to be quoting, or, (on the otherhand), he actually caught a glimpse (162) of a perfection having the attribute of holiness, that (holiness) which we have (already) mentioned in respect of (the possibility of) rising by knowledge (ma^Crifa) above the things that are imagined and sensed and (rising) by ambition above pleasure and greed. Therefore, he spoke of his own holiness when he said, "Glory be to me." He also saw the greatness of his own condition in comparison with the condition of the common people. Therefore he said, "How great is my condition! "

At the same time, (however), he knew that his holiness and the greatness

(161) S. 20,14 (A-2-8)

(162) Reading yakūn

of his condition existed only in relation to human beings and not in relation to the Lord Most High and the greatness of His condition. This expression occurs on his tongue in the ṣūfī state of inebriation and ecstasy. Certainly the recovery from this state of inebriation and the return to a normal condition necessitate that one guard one's tongue from suggestive statements, an impossibility while in a state of inebriation. To go beyond these two interpretations to (real) "union" is definitely impossible. You should not have such regard for men's rank that you (finally) believe the impossible. You must know men by the truth and not truth by means of the men.

The fifth alternative is the inherence (of beings) (ḥulūl). This (concept) is represented by one saying that the Lord inheres in man or man inheres in the Lord. May the Lord of lords be exalted above the assertions of such false ones! If this were correct, it would not necessarily involve unification (of the two) or that man should be characterized by the attributes of the Lord, for the attributes of one who inheres (in another) do not become the attribute of the One in whom he inheres. Rather does the attribute of the one who inheres (in another) remain as it was.

Why inherence is impossible cannot be understood unless one understands the meaning of inherence; for unless one comprehends individual abstract forms conceptually, it is quite impossible for either their denial or affirmation to be known. If one does not know the meaning of inherence, how can one possi-

bly know whether inherence actually exists or is impossible? For this reason we say that inherence must denote one of two things. One of them is the relationship that exists between the body and the place in which the body is. That (relationship) can only exist between two bodies, for such a relationship is inconceivable for that which is free of the abstract form of corporeality.

The second is the relationship that exists between the accident (ʿaraḍ) and the substance (jawhar). For the accident subsists by virtue of the substance. This may be expressed by saying that the accident inheres in the substance, but that is inconceivable of anything that is self-subsisting. One need not even mention the Lord Most High in this context! For anything that is self-subsisting can inhere in something else that is self-subsisting only in terms of the proximity that may exist between the (two) bodies. If inherence is inconceivable in respect of two men, then how is it conceivable between man and the Lord Most High?

If inherence, the transfer (of attributes), unification and being characterized by the likes of the attributes of God Most High are all invalid in the light of (absolute) truth, then no (sound) meaning remains to their view except that which we have indicated in our admonitions. This (fact) prevents one from asserting in an unrestricted fashion that the meanings of the names of God (actually) become characteristics (of man) except in a very qualified way which

excludes delusion; otherwise the unrestricted use of these terms is a delusion.

You may ask, "What is the meaning of his saying that man is still in via (sālik, i. e., a ṣūfī 'traveler') and not one who has already attained, in spite of his being characterized by all of that? What is the meaning of 'traveling' (in this context)? What is the meaning of attaining?" I reply that 'traveling' is a refining of one's character, one's actions and the things one knows, and that means being busy with the cultivation of both one's outer and inner self. In doing this man is occupied with himself and diverted from his Lord; yet he is occupied with the purification of his inner being in order that he might prepare himself for the "attaining".

"Attaining", (on the otherhand), (is achieved when) the beauty of the truth is revealed to man in such a way that he becomes completely absorbed in it. As far as knowledge is concerned, he knows no one except God Most High. As far as desire is concerned, he has none except for Him. His whole being is occupied with the whole of Him, that is to say, beholding and desiring (Him). In so doing he pays no attention to himself, not (even) to the extent of enriching his outer being with worship and his inner being with the refinement of character. All of that is purity and it is only the beginning. The end is that he is stripped of self altogether and devotes himself exclusively to Him. In fact, he is as if he were He and that is the attaining.

You may say, "The assertions of the Ṣūfīs speak of visions that are unfolded to them when they are in a state of 'election' (wilāya) and reason is incapable of comprehending (this) 'election', whereas everything you have said consists of the exercise of the faculties of reason." (I reply) that nothing which reason has concluded to be impossible can become evident (when one is) in the state of "election"; to be sure, something may become evident in the state of "election" of which reason falls short in the sense that it cannot be reached by reason alone. An example of this is that it is conceivable that a holy man might have revealed to him that so-and-so will die tomorrow even though this cannot be comprehended by the faculties of reason. On the contrary, reason is incapable of (such a phenomenon). But it is inconceivable that it should be revealed (to the elect) that tomorrow God will create a Being like Himself, for this is something that reason shows to be impossible (and) not something of which reason falls short.

More remote than that is one's saying "God will make me to be like Himself," and even more remote is one's saying, "God will make me Himself," that is to say, "I will become He." For the meaning of this is that (though) I am originated, yet God is to make me pre-eternal; and (though) I am not the creator of the heavens and the earth, yet God is to make me the creator of the heavens and the earth. This is the meaning of his (i. e., Abū-Yazīd's) words, "I looked and lo! I am He!" if the words are not interpreted but (simply) understood in their literal sense. The one who believes an absurdity of this nature

(certainly) has been deprived of the natural faculty of reason, and as far as he is concerned that which may be known is no longer distinguishable from that which may not be known. He might as well believe that it is possible for a holy man to have revealed to him that the Shari'ah is false, or that even if it were true, God may change it and make it false; that He has made all the sayings of the prophets lies and that the one who says it is impossible that the truth should be changed into a lie is speaking on the strength of the faculties of reason. For the transformation of the truth into a lie is no more remote than the transformation of the originated being into an eternally pre-existent one, or man into a Lord. The one who does not differentiate between that which reason shows to be impossible and that which reason cannot attain is not worthy of being addressed. Let such a one be abandoned in his ignorance!

The second part (of this section) concerns itself with the meanings and the aims and includes an explanation of the manner in which these many names are reducible to an essence and seven attributes according to the doctrine of the people of the Sunna. Perhaps you will say, "These names are numerous. You have declared their synonymity impossible, and you insist that every one embraces a meaning different from any of the others. In what way, then, are all of them reducible to seven attributes?"

(I reply) that even if there are only seven attributes, yet actions, characteristics and negations (in their generic sense) are all (so) numerous that they

are almost incalculable. Furthermore, it is possible to form compounds from the total meaning implied by a given attribute and a relationship, or from a given attribute and a negation, or from a negation and a relationship and then to assign to each (compound) a name. The names become numerous in that way and all of them would then be reducible to (a) those which indicate the essence, or (b) those which indicate the essence together with a negation, or (c) those which indicate the essence together with a relationship, or (d) those which indicate the essence together with a negation and a relationship, or (e) those which indicate one of the seven attributes, or (f) those which indicate an attribute and a negation, or (g) those which indicate an attribute and a relationship, or (h) those which indicate an attribute of an activity, or (i) those which indicate an attribute of an activity and a relationship, or (j) (those which indicate an attribute of an activity) and a negation. These are the ten classes.

(1) The first class is what indicates the essence as when you say "God"; the name al-Haqq approximates if by it one intends the essence in so far as it is necessarily existent.

(2) The second (class) is what indicates the essence together with a negation. Examples of this are al-Qudūs, as-Salām, al-Ghanī, al-Aḥad and comparable (names). For al-Qudūs is that which is without anything which could conceivably be known by the mind or could enter into the imagination,

as-Salām is that which is without faults, al-Ghanī is that which is without need and al-Aḥad is that which is without a peer and (without) division.

(3) The third (class) is what is reducible to the essence together with an additional notion, such as al-^cAlī, al-^cAsīm, al-Awwal, al-Ākhir, az-Zāhir, al-Bāṭin and comparable names. Al-^cAlī is the essence which is above all other essences in respect of rank. This is an additional notion. Al-^cAsīm indicates the essence in respect of the fact that it exceeds the limits of everything that is apprehended. Al-Awwal is the one who precedes (all) existing things. Al-Ākhir is the one to whom all existing things revert. As-Zāhir is the essence in relation to rational indication. Al-Bāṭin is the essence in relation to being apprehended by the senses and imagination. You may work out the others (yourself) on this basis.

(4) The fourth (class) is what is reducible to the essence together with a negation and an additional notion, such as al-Mālīk and al-^cAsīx. Surely al-Mālīk indicates an essence which does not need anything and of which everything is in need. Al-^cAsīx is the one who has no parallel and is difficult to reach and attain.

(5) The fifth (class) is what is reducible to an attribute, such as al-^cAlīm, al-Qādir, al-Hayy, as-Samī^c and al-Basīr.

(6) The sixth (class) is what is reducible to knowledge together with an

additional notion, such as al-Khabīr, al-Hakīm, ash-Shahīd and al-Muḥṣī, for al-Khabīr indicates knowledge in relation to the things that are hidden, ash-Shahīd indicates knowledge in relation to that which is witnessed, al-Hakīm indicates knowledge in relation to the most illustrious objects-of-knowledge, and al-Muḥṣī indicates knowledge inasmuch as it comprehends limited and numbered objects-of-knowledge.

(7) The seventh (class) is what is reducible to the power (of God) together with an additional relationship, such as al-Qaḥār, al-Qawī, al-Muqtadīr and al-Manīh, for qūwa is the perfection of power and matāna is its forcefulness and qahr is its effect upon the object-of-power by (its) superiority.

(8) The eighth (class) is what is reducible to the will together with a relationship or an action, such as ar-Raḥman, ar-Raḥīm, ar-Ra'ūf and al-Wadūd. Thus raḥma is reducible to the will in relation to the satisfying of the needy and weak. Ra'fa is the intensity of mercy and a going to the utmost in respect of mercy. Wadd is reducible to the will in relation to doing good and showing kindness. The action of ar-Raḥīm presupposes one who is in need; the action of al-Wadūd, (however), does not presuppose that but rather the showing of kindness first (to another), is reducible to the will in relation to doing good and satisfying the need of the weak. The meaning of that you (already) know from what has gone before.

(9) The ninth (class) is what is reducible to the attributes of action, such as al-Khāliq, al-Bārī', al-Muḡawwir, al-Wahhāb, ar-Razzāq, al-Fattāḥ, al-Qābiḡ, al-Bāsīt, al-Khāfiḡ, ar-Rāfi^c, al-Mu^cizz, al-Mudhill, al-^cAdl, al-Muqīt, al-Mujīb, al-Wāsi^c, al-Bā^cith, al-Mubdi', al-Mu^cfd, al-Muhyī, al-Mumīt, al-Muḡaddim, al-Mu'akhkhir, al-Wālī, al-Barr, at-Tawwāb, al-Muntaqim, al-Muḡsiḡ, al-Jāmi^c, al-Māni^c, al-Muḡhnī, al-Hādī, and others similar to these.

(10) The tenth (class) is what is reducible to an indication of action together with an addition, such as al-Majīd and al-Karīm, for al-Majīd indicates the One who is honoured greatly and is noble in (His) essence, and al-Karīm does the same. Al-Laṭīf indicates a gentleness in the action. These names and the others do not deviate from these ten classes. Apply the principles we have mentioned here to those that we have not mentioned. Surely that (method) will indicate how these names escape synonymity and yet at the same time are reducible to these limited and well-known attributes.

The third part deals with the manner in which all of that (i.e., the attributes) are reducible to one essence according to the view of the Mu^ctazila and the philosophers. Even though this part is not (exactly) appropriate in this book, nevertheless I will briefly write these words in view of the fact that I have been requested to do so. Let the one who wishes to exclude them from this book do so, for they (actually) are not of great importance in respect of

this book.

I say, even though these people deny the attributes (of God) and assert only one essence, still they do not deny the acts (of God) nor the multiplicity of negations and of relationships. (Furthermore), they support our classifying the names in these (ten) classes. As for the seven attributes which are al-payā, al-^cilm, al-qudra, al-irāda, as-sam^c, al-baṣar and al-kalām, in their opinion all of them are reducible to al-^cilm. Furthermore, al-^cilm is reducible to the essence. The explanation is that in their opinion as-sam^c is an expression for His perfect knowledge inasmuch as it is related to sounds, and al-baṣar is an expression for His (perfect) knowledge inasmuch as it is related to colours and other objects-of-sight.

(As for) kalām, the Mu^ctasila are of the opinion that it is reducible to His action and (consists of) (the speech) He created in some inanimate body. The philosophers are of the opinion that it is reducible to the hearing which He created in the essence of the Prophet - may blessings and peace be upon him - in such a way that he heard an orderly speech without (this discourse) having an external existence, as is the case with the person who hears in his sleep. That (speech) is ascribed to God Most High in the sense that it does not occur in him as the result of human action and voices.

As for al-payā, in their opinion it is an expression for His knowledge of

His essence, because anything that has consciousness of itself is said to be living and that which has no consciousness of itself is not said to be living.

The remaining (two attributes) are al-^cirāda and al-qudra. What they mean by His will is that He knows what good is and how it is organized, so that it comes into being as He knows it (to be). Therefore His knowledge of the thing is a cause of the existence of that thing. When He knows the manner of the good in respect of a (given) thing and (when the thing) comes about and there is no displeasure attached to it, He is content; and the one who is content (with something) may be said to be willing (it). Thus will may be reduced to knowledge together with the non-existence of displeasure.

As for al-qudra, the meaning is that He acts when He wishes to do so, and He does not act when He so wishes. His action is known, and His wish (mashī'a) is based upon His knowledge of what is good. This means that He causes to exist that from which He knows good will result, and He does not cause to exist that from which He knows no good will result. The existence of the ordering of the good does not require anything except His knowledge of it, and that which does not exist does not require anything in respect of the fact that it does not exist except the non-existence of the knowledge that there is a good in it. Therefore the order apprehended by reason is the cause of the existing order, and the existing order follows the order apprehended by reason.

They maintain that our (human) knowledge requires power for this realization of what is known (only) because our action takes place by means of the members of the body. Therefore it is necessary that the members be unimpaired and characterized by strength. However, He does not act through a member. His knowledge, therefore, is sufficient for the existence of that which is known, and thus power also is reduced to (His) knowledge.

Moreover, they maintain that knowledge also is reducible to His essence, because He knows His essence by means of His essence. Therefore the knowledge, the one who knows and that which is known are one. (Even) His knowledge of one other than Himself is derived from His essence, because He knows Himself as the beginning of every existent. Thus He knows the remainder of the things that exist from His essence by way of dependence, and this necessitates no multiplicity in respect of His essence.

They (also) assert that knowledge of the one, which is His essence, stands in the same relationship to the multiplicity of the things that are known as does the knowledge of the mathematician, for example, when one says to him, "What is the double of two, and the double of the double, and the double of the double of the double?" until one has done this, for example, ten times. Certainly before he can work out these (various) doublings in himself, the mathematician (already) has the certainty that he knows (the answer to this question), and that certainty is the basis of (his) detailed presentation of

(this matter) when he is engaged in the presentation. (Furthermore), that certainty is an individual matter related to the doublings of two, indeed to an infinity of doublings, without itself being presented (in this way). And even as the doubling of two gradually continues until it reaches a great number, so (also) in their opinion existing things have an order, but in respect of the original one of this group, there is no multiplicity but rather a gradual breaking down into multiplicity. The explanation and refutation of that would be too lengthy to expound (here). (But) one may find some assistance in respect of that (subject) in what we have mentioned in our Kitāb at-Tahfūt, for this would seem to be beyond the aim of this book.

The Third Section, Consisting of Three Parts

Implications and Supplements

The first part (of this section) explains how the many names of God Most High are not limited in number. In respect of authorization (the names of God) are not limited to ninety-nine, but authorization occurs for other names besides these. For (example), in another report from Abū-Hurayra there are alternatives for some of these names, of which some are approximately the same and others are not. As for those which are similar, al-Aḥad is the alternate of al-Wāḥid, al-Qāḥir is the alternate of al-Qaḥḥār and ash-Shākir is the alternate of al-Shakūr. Those that are dissimilar are such as al-Hādī, al-Kāfī, ad-Dā'im, al-Baṣīr, al-Munawwir, al-Mubīn, al-Jamīl, as-Ṣādiq, al-Muḥīṭ, al-Qarīb, al-Qadīm, al-Watr, al-Fāṭir, al-^cAllām, al-Malīk, al-Akram, al-Mudabbir, ar-Raḥīm, dhū-ṭ-Ṭūl, dhū-l-Ma^cartij, dhū-l-Faḍl and al-Khallāq. Other names are also mentioned in the Qur'ān on which the two reports do not entirely agree, such as al-Mawlā, an-Naṣīr, al-Ghālīb, al-Qarīb, ar-Rabb and an-Nāṣir.

There are also construct phrases, such as His saying shadīd al-^ciqāb,⁽¹⁶³⁾ qābil at-tawḥ,⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ ghāfir adh-Dhanb,⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ mūlij al-layl fī-n-nahār,⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ mūlij an-nahār fī-l-layl,⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ and mukhrīj al-ḥayy min al-mayyit wa mukhrīj

(163) S. 2, 196/2 (B-1) inter alii

(164) S. 40, 3/2 (A-3-10)

(165) Ibid.

(166) S. 3, 27/6 (B-7)

(167) Ibid.

al-mayyit min al-hayy. (168)

The name as-Sayyid also occurs in the Traditions, for a man (once) said to the messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him, "O, Sayyid!" and he replied, "The sayyid is (only) God Most High." It would seem that (in this instance) his intention was to prevent praise from being addressed to him directly, for (in another context) he said - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - "I am the sayyid of the sons of Adam and that is nothing of which to boast." (The name) ad-Dayyān also occurs, as is also the case with al-Hannān, al-Mannān and others which will certainly be found if you pursue them in the Traditions. (Furthermore), if the derivation of nouns from verbs were permissible, (certainly such names would be numerous) since the verbs applied to God Most High in the Qur'ān are many, such as His saying that God Most High "removeth the evil", (169) "hurleth the truth," (170) "will decide between them," (171) and "we decreed for the children of Israel." (172) From these (actions) may be derived al-Kāshif, al-Qādhif bi-l-Haqq, al-Faṣil and al-Qāḍī. All these (possibilities) are innumerable, and attention will be paid to them below.

Our intention has been to explain that the names (of God Most High) are

(168) S. 6, 95 (A-3-21). In this and the previous quotation al-Ghazālī uses participles rather than the Qur'ān's imperfect tense; e.g., mūlij rather than tūlij.

(169) S. 27, 63/2 (A-2-9)

(170) S. 34, 48/7 (A-3-17)

(171) S. 22, 16/7 (A-3-5)

(172) S. 17, 4 (A-3-4)

not (to be limited to only the particular) ninety-nine which we have listed and explained. But we have proceeded as is generally done (to give you) an explanation of those names, since they are (from) the best known tradition.

However, this listing and these details related from Abū-Hurayra are not to be found in the two Sahih's.⁽¹⁷³⁾ All that is included in sound (traditions) are his words - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - "God has ninety-nine names and the one who enumerates them will enter Paradise." As for an elucidation and exposition of these words, they do not exist (in the traditions). Among the names upon which the jurists and the theologians agree are such as al-Murīd, al-Mutakallim, al-Mawjūd, ash-Shay', adh-Dhāt, al-Azālī and al-Abadī. Certainly these are among those names that could be applied to God Most High.

It is related in the Tradition(s), "Do not say Ramaḍān has come for Ramaḍān is one of the names of God Most High. Rather say, the month of Ramaḍān has come." Likewise it is related from the messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - that he said, "One who is afflicted be it only by some sorrow need only say, 'O God, I am your servant and the son of your servant and the son of your bondmaid, my forelock is in your hand, your judgment is applicable to me, your decree concerning me is just; I bring my requests to you by means of every name by which you have called yourself or which you have sent down in your book or which you have taught one of your

(173) Of al-Bukhari (d. 256/869) and Muslim (d. 261/874)

creatures or of which you have taken exclusive possession in the hidden knowledge that is yours. Make the Qur'ān the spring of my heart and the light of my breast; (make it) that which drives away my sorrow and removes my anxiety, ' and God - to Him be might and majesty - will remove his anxiety and sorrow and will give him joy in exchange." His saying (i.e., the saying of Muḥammad), "Take exclusive possession of it in the hidden knowledge that is yours," indicates that the names are not restricted to those which are related in the well-known accounts. In view of this it may sometimes occur to you to ask what benefit there is in restricting the names to ninety-nine. This is something that must be explained.

The second part concerns itself with an explanation of the advantage of enumerating (the names) and restricting (them) to ninety-nine. In this part there is (also) an examination of (a number of other) matters. Let us present them in the form of questions.

Someone may query concerning the names of God Most High, "Do they exceed ninety-nine or not? If they are more numerous than that, what is the significance of this particularization? For example, if one has a thousand dirhams, it is not right for the one speaking of him to say that he has ninety-nine dirhams because even though the one thousand does include the ninety-nine, yet by mentioning a specific number one is inclined to repudiate those that are in excess of this number. (On the otherhand), if there are no names

over and above this number, what is the meaning of his words - may blessings and peace be upon him - 'I bring my requests to you by means of every name by which you have called yourself, have sent down in your book, have caused one of your creatures to know or of which you have taken exclusive possession in the hidden knowledge that is yours.' Surely this makes it explicit that He alone possesses some of the names. He speaks in a similar fashion in respect of Ramaḍān being one of the names of God Most High. Likewise the forefathers were accustomed to say that so-and-so was given (knowledge of) the greatest name, this (privilege) being ascribed to some of the prophets and saints. That would seem to indicate that (this particular name) is outside of the ninety-nine."

Our reply to (all of this) is, In view of these reports the most likely (conclusion) is that these names are more than ninety-nine (in number). As for the tradition which restricts (the names to ninety-nine), it deals with one particular proposition, not two. Analogous to this would be a king who has a thousand servants, for example. One may say that the king has ninety-nine servants with whose backing he could overwhelm his enemies. His specifying (the ninety-nine) concerns the backing (that is necessary to obtain), either because of their superior strength or because that number is sufficient in staying off the enemies and there is no need for more. It does not mean that only they exist (and are available).

(Another interpretation would be) that the names do not exceed this num-

ber. (According to this second interpretation) the wording of the tradition includes two propositions. One of them is that God has ninety-nine names (in all), and the second that the one who enumerates them enters Paradise. (In terms of this second interpretation), even if one limits (the meaning) to the first proposition, (his) argument is complete, whereas in terms of the first interpretation limiting oneself to the mention of the first proposition only would not be possible. This (second interpretation) is the one that more readily appeals to one's mind from the literal meaning of this enumeration. Yet it is less likely for two reasons. First of all, this makes it impossible that there are any names of which God has taken exclusive possession in the hidden knowledge that is His, although that is asserted in the Traditions. Secondly, this leads to a situation in which the (possibility of) enumeration is restricted to a prophet or a saint from among those who have received (knowledge of) the greatest name with which to complete the enumeration; for (in the case of other men) everything else listed would be less than the number (i.e., ninety-nine), the one (great) name being outside the number (enumerated). This would invalidate the restriction (of the names to ninety-nine). It is most likely that the messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - mentioned this when trying to awaken a desire within the many people for the enumeration although they do not know the (one) great name.

But now someone may say, "If it is more likely that there are more than

ninety-nine names, and if we assume, for example, that there are a thousand names and that Paradise can be claimed by enumerating ninety-nine of them, is it ninety-nine particular ones or is it any of the ninety-nine? (If the latter is the case), then the one who reaches that number in his enumeration is worthy of entering Paradise and the one who enumerates those which Abū-Hurayra once related enters Paradise and the one who enumerates those which the second report included will also enter Paradise, assuming that all the names in both reports are names of God Most High."

Our answer is that it is more likely that ninety-nine particular names are meant, for if it were not so there would be no point to the restriction and particularization (of the names) For to say, "the king has one hundred servants with whose help he would overwhelm his enemy" when the king (actually) has more would make sense only if the statement applied to one hundred among them who had superior power and might; whereas if that (objective) could be achieved by any (group of) one hundred servants out of the total number (available), then the statement would not be well cast.

But now someone may say, "Why is it that ninety-nine among (all) the names (of God) are singled out in this proposition in spite of the fact that all (of them) are names of God Most High?" We would reply, It is possible that the names differ in their (relative) merits because of the difference of their meanings in terms of sublimity and eminence. Out of the total number, ninety-nine bring together certain meanings indicative of sublimity which the others do

not combine. They are set apart by the additional eminence they possess.

But then someone may say, "Is the great name of God included in these or not? If it is not, how is it possible that the one which is distinguished by the ultimate degree of eminence is excluded? (On the otherhand), if it is included (in this number), how can this be, since (the ninety-nine) are so well-known whereas the most exalted name is the appanage of a prophet or a saint? Indeed, it is said that Āṣaf-ibn-Barakhyā was able to bring the throne of Bilqīs (only) because he had been given the most exalted name and that it makes possible the working of great miracles for the one who knows it." (174)

Our answer is that it is possible for one to say that the most exalted name of God is outside of that number which Abū-Hurayra relates. The eminence of the enumerated names would then be on the same level as all the names that are well-known to the masses, (though) not on the same level with the names which the saints and prophets know. It is (also) possible that one may say that they include the most exalted name of God, but that its identity (amongst them) is obscure and no one but a saint knows which it is. For it is related in the Traditions of the prophet - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - that he said, "the most exalted name of God is in these two verses, 'Your God is One God; there is no God save Him, the Beneficent, the Merciful,' (175) and the opening of The Family of 'Imrān, 'Alif. Lām. Mīm.

(174) The Qur'ān refers to this incident in S. 27, 38-42 (A-2-20).

(175) S. 2, 163/58 (B-1)

Allah! There is no God save Him, the Alive, the Eternal." (176) It is related that the prophet - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - heard a man invoking (God) and saying, "O God, I beseech you in that I witness to the fact that you are God and there is no other God besides you, 'the One! the eternally Besought of all! He begetteth not nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him.'" (177) So he said, "I swear by Him in whose hand is my life, 'this man has invoked God by His most exalted name by which if He is asked He gives and if He is invoked He responds."

It may be asked, "What is the reason for specifying this particular number among all the numbers (that are available), and why is it not simply said to be one hundred when it is so near that number?" Our reply is that there are two possible answers. One of these is that this is said because the eminent meanings have reached this amount, not because the number (of the names) is limited (to ninety-nine). They reach this number in the same way as (the number of) attributes, in the opinion of the people of the Sunna, are held to be seven; namely, al-payā, al-^cilm, al-qudra, al-irāda, as-sam^c, al-baṣar and al-kalām, not because they are seven but because the lordship is not complete without them.

The second and more likely answer is that the reason for it lies in the explanation of what the messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace

(176) S. 3.1/1.2 (B-7)

(177) S. 112 (A-1-45)

be upon him - mentioned when he said, "One hundred minus one - God is the Odd and loves the odd number." However, this (tradition) indicates that these names are the designations that were deliberately chosen, not that the attributes of eminence are restricted to them, for such (eminence) can pertain only to His essence and is not a matter of will. One does not say that the attributes of God are seven in number because God is the Odd and loves the odd number. Rather is this the case because of His essence and His divinity; it is not the number therein that is limited. Indeed that (enumeration) is not a matter of intent or desire on the part of anyone as the result of which the odd number was aimed at to the exclusion of another. This almost confirms the possibility which we mentioned earlier; namely, that the names by which God Most High designated Himself are ninety-nine and no more and that He did not make them to be one hundred because He loves the odd number. We will now point out what (else) confirms this possibility.

It may be asked, "Did the messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - count and enumerate these ninety-nine names with the intent that they all be listed, or did he leave them to others to collect from the book (i.e., the Qur'ān), the Sunna and (other) reports that give some indication of them?" We would reply, The obvious answer which is also the more widely-accepted one, is that this is (part) of what the messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - enumerated and collected with the intent that they should be collected and taught, in accordance with the Tradition trans-

is this number, the tradition being that Muhammad said - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - that "God has ninety-nine names and the one who enumerates them will enter Paradise." As far as the names themselves are concerned, they are not cited in the sound Tradition. Rather do they occur in a rare account which has a weakness in the chain of authorities supporting it. This much is clear and indicative of the fact that the names do not add up to more than this number. What prompts us to turn away from the obvious (interpretation) is the fact that some of the names are not included in Abū-Hurayra's account.

If we consider weak the account which contains the enumeration of the names, then we rid ourselves of a number ⁽¹⁸¹⁾ of problems. (First of all), we (could) say that the names are ninety-nine (in number) and no more; (secondly), that God has called Himself by them and did not make them one hundred (in number) because He is the Odd and loves the odd number; and, (thirdly), included in their number are al-Hannān, al-Mannān and others and that knowledge of all of them is possible only by the study of the Book and the Sunna, for some of them are ascertainable from the book of God Most High and some of them in the Traditions. I do not know any of the religious leaders (ʿulamā) who has taken the trouble to do this and gather (all the names) except one man among the Traditionists of the Maghrib who is called ʿAlī ibn-Ḥazm. ⁽¹⁸²⁾ He said, "In my view (i. e., I am sure that) close to eighty names which are

(182) Reading jumla
(182) D. 456/1064

mitted by Abū-Hurayra. The obvious (purpose) of (his) saying was to create the desire for enumerating (the names), but that would be difficult for the masses if the messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - had not mentioned them in a list. This would seem to indicate that Abū-Hurayra's account is accurate. Indeed, the people have received the better-known of his versions, and it is in accordance with it that our exposition is set forth.

(On the otherhand, however), Aḥmad ⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ and al-Bayhaqī ⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ spoke about the version of Abū-Hurayra and said that it is the version of someone reckoned weak. Abū-ʿIsā at-Tirmidhī ⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ in his Musnad pointed out something which indicates a weakness in this version in addition to what the traditionists mention.

There are three points. One of them is the confusion of the account attributed to Abū-Hurayra, for (actually) two accounts are attributed to him and the difference between the two is apparent in respect of the substitution (of some names for others) and (in respect of) wording. The second (weakness) lies in the fact that his account does not include the mention of (the names) ḥannān, mannān, Ramaḍān and a group of other names which the Traditions mention. The third is (the fact that) what is recorded in the sound Tradition

(178) Aḥmad ibn-Hanbal (d. 241/855)

(179) He was a voluminous writer and traditionist whose works are said to have reached 1,000 fascicules (E.I.). He died in 458/1066.

(180) According to the E.I., his collection of traditions bears the title of Ṣaḥīḥ in the edition printed at Cairo; elsewhere it is called Djāmiʿ. He died in 279/892.

included in the Qur'ān and (collections of) the sound traditions are sound.

The remainder are to be sought in the Traditions by the exercise of independent judgment (ijtihād).” I presume that the Tradition which contains an enumeration of the names had not reached him; or, if it had reached him, it would seem that he considered its isnād (chain of authority) weak, or that he preferred to turn from it to the Traditions mentioned in the (collection of) sound Traditions and to select (the names) from them. On this (basis) the one who enumerates them, that is to say, gathers and memorizes them, has put himself to much trouble in the exercise of his independent judgment and therefore deserves to enter Paradise, whereas (simply) to enumerate once that which the account mentions is easy for the tongue. To be sure, there does occur in the wording of one (version) of the sound Traditions (the phrase) “the one who commits them to memory enters Paradise,” and (this) memorization (in comparison with mere enumeration) does require additional exertion.

These are the possibilities that occur to me in respect of this Tradition. Most of that is (material) which has not been discussed (by others), and it (consists of) matters of ijtihād to be known only by conjecture, since they are outside the province of reason. (With regard to all this) God knows best.

The third part (of this section) concerns itself with (the question) whether the attributes and names applied to God Most High are based on authorization (in the Qur'ān and Traditions) or may be (reached) by way of reason. (The view)

to which Qādī Abū-Bakr (183) is inclined is that this (exercise of reason) is possible except where revelation excludes (a name) or shows its meaning to be inapplicable to God Most High. Where there is nothing to exclude (a name), it is permissible. The view adopted by Shaykh Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī - may the mercy of God be upon him - is that this (matter of the names) is dependent upon authorization and that (therefore) it is not permissible to apply a name to God Most High, the meaning of which characterizes Him, unless He has allowed it.

The preferable position (in this matter) in our view is that we should make a distinction and say that everything which goes back to a name is dependent upon the permission (of God), whereas everything which goes back to a characterization is not dependent upon (His) permission; or rather that portion (of the latter category) which is truthful, not that which is false, is allowable. But one can understand this only after understanding the distinction between the name and the characterization. In our opinion the name is the expression coined to indicate the one who is named. For example, Zayd's name is Zayd. In respect of his person he is white and tall. If someone speaks to him and says, "O! tall and white one!" he has called him by (those qualities) by which he is characterized, and he spoke the truth in doing so. However, he has turned away from (the use of) his name, since his name is Zayd and not "tall" and "white". His being tall and white is no indication that his name is "the tall

(183) I.e., al-Bāqillānī (d.403/1013)

one". The fact that we name a child either Qāsim or Jāmi^c does not indicate that he is characterized by the meanings of these names. Even though they carry a signification in themselves, the fact still remains that they identify him in the same way as would happen were we to call him Zayd or ^cĪsā or by others that have no meaning in themselves.

Furthermore, when we name someone ^cAbd-al-Malik, we do not mean by the name that this person is (actually) the servant of the king. This is why we say that ^cAbd-al-Malik is a single name, just like ^cĪsā and Zayd, whereas when (the combination) is mentioned as a characterization, it is a compound (consisting of two nouns). The same is true of ^cAbd-Allāh (which is treated as a single noun, and subsequently) when it is to be used in the plural one says Abādila and not ^cIbād-Allāh, (which would mean "the servants of God".) When you understand the meaning of a name, then (you know that) the name of anyone is that by which a person calls himself, or the name by which a close associate, that is to say, his parents or master, calls him.

The act of naming, that is, selecting the name that will be given, is a disposition taken in behalf of the one to be named and implies guardianship. In man's situation guardianship is exercised over oneself, one's servant or one's child. Therefore the (actual) naming (is a rite) pertaining to those (guardians). For this reason if one other than those (guardians) selects a name (for one), the one named disowns it and is angry about it. (This being

the case), if we have no (authority) to name a human being, that is to say, we are not to select a name for him, then how could we (possibly) ever select a name for God?

In a similar way the names of the messenger of God - may the blessing of God and peace be upon him - are ~~enumerated~~ He has enumerated them himself when he said, "I have ⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ certain names, namely, Aḥmad, Muḥammad, al-Muqaffā, al-Māḥī, al-Āqīb, nabī-t-Tawba, nabī-r-Rahma and nabī-l-Malḥama. We have no right to add ⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ to these names, though we may (expand upon them) when giving information about his characterization. Thus it is permissible for us to say that he was knowing, one guiding aright, one rightly guided, a guide and the like, even as we may say of Zayd that he is white and tall, not in the sense that we are naming him but that we are giving information about his characteristics.

Generally speaking, this is a juridical matter since it examines the question of whether a certain term is lawful or unlawful. (In support of our opinion) we therefore say that the proof that the coining of a name for him is to be condemned is the condemnation of coining a name for the messenger of God - may the blessings of God and peace be upon him - other than those which he applied to himself or were applied to him by his Lord or his father. Now if this is condemned in respect of the messenger, or, indeed, in respect

(184) Reading inna lī

(185) Reading naḥīd

of any person, all the more is it to be condemned in respect of God. This is the type of juridical analogy on the like of which legal judgments are based.

But with regard to the permissibility of the characterization (ascribed to God), (the justification for) it lies in a report about a certain matter. A report is either true or false. Revelation has indicated that falsehood is basically sinful. (Therefore) falsehood is sinful unless (the judgment is reversed by) something accidental. (Revelation also) indicates the allowability of the truth, and therefore truth is permissible unless (the judgment is reversed) by something accidental. Even as it is permissible for us to say in respect of Zayd that he is an existent because he does in fact exist, so also (is it permissible for us to say this) with regard to God Most High, whether revelation asserts this (in so many words) or not. We say that He is eternally pre-existent even while taking into consideration the fact that revelation does not say this (in so many words).

Even as we do not say of Zayd that he is tall and white because there might be a time when Zayd will hear of it and hate it since such a description implies a deficiency (in his person), so also we never say anything in respect of God Most High that one could interpret as being a deficiency. However, that which implies no deficiency or indicates (His) praise is unrestricted and permissible by the same token as that which makes (the disclosure of) truth permissible in the absence of contingencies that would forbid it. For this reason one may be

prevented from applying (to Him) a certain term in an unrestricted fashion, and yet (the same term may) be permitted in a particular context. Thus one may not call to God Most High and say, "O! Sower!" or "O! Plowman!" but it is permissible to say, "When someone copulates and deposits the semen, he is not the plowman, but God is the Plowman," and "When someone sows the seed, he is not the sower, but God is the Sower," and "When someone shoots (arrows), he is not the one who shoots, but God is the One who shoots," even as God Most High said, "... And thou (Muhammad) threwest not when thou didst throw, but God threw." (186) (Once more), we do not speak to God Most High and say, "O! Thou Humbler!" but we do say, "O! Thou Exalter and Humbler!" for when these two (terms) are combined they become a characterization of praise since (the phrase) indicates that the extremities of all matters are in His control.

The same is true of the invocations we address to God Most High. We call upon Him by His beautiful names as He has commanded us to do. When we go beyond the names, we call upon Him by means of the attributes of praise and sublimity. We do not say (to Him), "O! Existent One! O! Mover! O! Quieter!" Rather do we say, "O! Thou Who dost forgive (man's) offenses! O! Thou who dost send down blessings! O! Thou who dost make every difficulty easy!" and others of this nature. Similarly when we call to someone, we call him either by his name or one of his praise-worthy attributes. For

example, we say, "O! Noble One!" (or) "O! Legist!" We do not say, "O! Tall One!" (or) "O! White One!" unless we intend to speak contemptuously of Him.

However, when one asks us about the person's attributes, we tell him that he is white of colour (and) black of hair, and we do not mention those things that would displease him were they to reach him, even if they are true, in consideration of the fact that he would detest (such a report), and that which he detests (is the very thing) one considers to be a deficiency.

Similarly when one asks us about the one who sets things in motion, who causes them to stand still, who makes them black and white we say it is God Most High (who is responsible). In respect of attributing deeds and qualities to Him, we do not wait for specific permission. For permission has been given in revelation to tell the truth, except that which is excluded by a contingent objection. God Most High is al-Mawjūd (the Existent), al-Mūjid (the Originator), al-Mughir (the Revealer), al-Mukhfi (the Veiler), al-Mus'id (the One who makes others happy), al-Mushqī (the One who makes others wretched), al-Mubqī (the One who perpetuates) and al-Mughnī (the One who enriches). It is permissible to apply all these (names) to Him even though there is no authorization for them.

It may be asked, "Why, then, is it not permissible for one to call Him al-ʿArif (the Knowing One), al-ʿAqil (the Understanding One), al-Faṭin (the

Discerning One), adh-Dhaki (the Sagacious One) and others of this nature?" Our answer is that the objection to giving Him these (names) and similar ones lies in the implication inherent in them of something unallowable unless (specifically) permitted. (We now think of such names as) as-Ṣabūr, ar-Rahīm and al-Halīm. Certainly they can imply (imperfection) in respect of God, but permission (to use them) has been forthcoming, whereas there is no such permission for those other terms. What is misleading about them is that al-^cĀqil means the one who has knowledge which restrains him, that is, it impedes him. In fact, one uses the expression, "His reasonableness hobbles him." Discernment and sagacity suggest quick perception of something that (previously) escaped the perceiver. As far as knowledge is concerned, it may suggest previous ignorance. Nothing stands in the way of the unrestricted application of any of these (names) except one of the things that we have mentioned. If an expression is ascertained which in no way misleads those who are discussing (these matters) and if no revelation is forthcoming to prevent this, then it definitely is permissible for us to apply it. God knows best what is correct and to Him do (all things) come back and return. Amen.

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