

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya

THE INVOCATION OF GOD

Al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib min al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib



من الكلم الطيب

Translated by

MICHAEL ABDURRAHMAN FITZGERALD
& MOULAY YOUSSEF SLITINE



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Abdurrahman Fitzgerald and Youssef Slitine
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INTRODUCTION

FOR MOST MUSLIMS who have heard of him, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's name is inseparable from that of his teacher, the 7th/13th century Hanbalite reformer, Ibn Taymiyya. It is true, in fact, that Ibn al-Qayyim was the principal compiler and editor of his teacher's writings, and had it not been for him, that voluminous body of work might never have survived. It is also true that Ibn Taymiyya's point of view had a profound effect on the young man who, at twenty-one years of age, became his student and companion. One of Ibn al-Qayyim's own students would later write, 'Above all, his love for Ibn Taymiyya was so great that he would never disagree with anything he said. Rather, he supported him in everything and was the one who edited his books and spread his teachings.'¹ In *fiqh*² and theology, both men wrote from a Hanbalite position, and Ibn Qayyim criticized the same things his *shaykh* had so adamantly opposed: innovation (*bid'ā*), Greek-influenced Muslim philosophy, Shī'ism, the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd*, or 'oneness of being' (attributed to Ibn 'Arabī) and, by extension, the extreme forms of Sufism that had gained currency particularly in the new seat of Muslim power, Mamluk Egypt and Syria.

However, two elements set Ibn al-Qayyim's writings apart from those of his *shaykh*. The first is his tone. Ibn Taymiyya wrote 'with the eye', as it were, and Ibn al-Qayyim added to that 'the heart'. As a contemporary editor of his works has written, 'Although he moved within the sphere of Ibn Taymiyya's influence, following him in most of his religious rulings, he was more ready than his teacher to be lenient and amiable to those

with whom he differed.³ A typical example of this may be found in his *magnum opus*, *Madārij al-sālikīn* ('The Travellers' Stages'), which is a long commentary on a treatise written by the 5th/11th century Hanbalite Sufi, 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī. Taking exception to something al-Anṣārī wrote, Ibn al-Qayyim prefaced his comments with, 'Certainly I love the *shaykh*, but I love the truth more!'⁴

The second is Ibn al-Qayyim's great interest in Sufism. Some of his major works, such as *Madārij*, *Ṭarīq al-hijratayn* ('Path of the Two Migrations') and *Miftāḥ dār al-sa'āda* ('Key to the Abode of Happiness'), are devoted almost entirely to Sufi themes, but his allusions to these themes are found in nearly all his writings, including the present one, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya on the Invocation of God (al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib)*. There is no doubt that Ibn al-Qayyim addressed those interested in Sufism in particular and *al-umūr al-qalbiyya*—'the matters of the heart'—in general. In fact, in the introduction to his short book *Patience and Gratitude*, he states, 'This is a book to benefit kings and princes, the wealthy and the indigent, Sufis and religious scholars; (a book) to inspire the sedentary to set out, accompany the wayfarer on the path (*al-sā'ir fi l-ṭarīq*) and inform the one journeying towards the Goal.'⁵

The subjects dealt with by Ibn al-Qayyim—the way to God, the maladies of the heart, and the virtues—are undoubtedly also those of *taṣawwuf*. Ibn al-Qayyim's role is, thus, somewhat similar to that of al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) two hundred years before him: to rediscover and restate the orthodox roots of Islam's interior dimension, with the added task of correcting what he saw as the new errors that had arisen due to the powerful influence of Ibn 'Arabī's works. In this sense, he might be described as a reviver of what he considered to be an authentic inclination of the heart towards God, and the path towards Him.

This is the formula which, in all likelihood, accounts for the on-going popularity of Ibn al-Qayyim's works throughout the Arabic-speaking world. His thirty or so extant books have been reprinted many times; the principal ones, including the titles

cited above, have all been reprinted in both inexpensive and scholarly editions since 1990.⁶ The reader who might be attracted to the inner dimension of Islam but not by much of what passes nowadays as Sufism, finds in Ibn al-Qayyim an exposition of the Way to God, free of 'mythology' or the exclusive terminology of Sufism, written for the generality of believers and with strict insistence upon the main sources of orthodoxy: the Qur'ān, the *Sunna*, and the practices of the first two generations of Muslims.

The Life of Ibn al-Qayyim

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya was born in 691 / 1292 in al-Zur'ī, a small farming village fifty-five miles from Damascus. Little is known of his childhood except that he received a comprehensive Islamic education thanks to the fact that his father was principal of the Madrasa al-Jawziyya, one of the few centres devoted to the study of Hanbalite *fiqh* in Damascus; hence, the name by which he came to be known: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya—'son of the principal of the Jawziyya school'—or simply, Ibn al-Qayyim.⁷

After completing his fundamental studies at the Jawziyya, Ibn al-Qayyim continued his learning in the circles of the *shaykhs* who filled the city's mosques. It appears that for some period of time, he came under the influence of Mu'tazilite teachings and probably of certain mystics. In the epic-length *Ode* he wrote in later years,⁸ he refers to this period as being one of confusion and misguidance: 'All these [ways] did I try, and I fell into a net, fluttering like a bird that knows not where to fly.'

This period came to an end in the year 712 / 1312, when at twenty-one years of age he met the man who would shape his life's orientation in Islam: Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymiyya.⁹ Ibn Taymiyya had just returned to Damascus from a seven-year stay in Egypt, the last year of which had been spent under house arrest. His reputation for being an uncompromising defender of the *Sunna* and of Hanbalite theology was well known to the people of Syria. Perhaps it was his certitude and strength that appealed to

the young Ibn al-Qayyim, who 'like a bird caught in a net did not know where to fly.' In any event, a bond formed between the two men which lasted for 16 years until Ibn Taymiyya's death.

Between 712/1312 and 726/1326, Ibn al-Qayyim married and had three sons—Ibrāhīm, 'Abd Allāh and Sharaf al-Dīn. He earned his living as teacher and *imām* at the Jawziyya school. His lessons on Hanbalite *fiqh* and his sermons probably showed the strong influence of his teacher for, in 726/1326, when the authorities of Damascus ordered the arrest of Ibn Taymiyya and his followers, Ibn al-Qayyim was among them.

This imprisonment came after Ibn Taymiyya had been summoned before a council of religious scholars ('*ulamā'*') for questioning on a point of *fiqh*: was it permissible for someone visiting the Prophet's mosque in Medina to shorten the prayers? Since the council knew in advance that Ibn Taymiyya strongly condemned the practice of visiting saints' tombs for the purpose of receiving blessing (*tabarruk*), they could easily portray his chary answer as proof that he himself propagated a dangerous innovation (*bid'a*) by discouraging Muslims from visiting the burial place of their beloved Prophet. This pretext was used to remove from the public eye a man whom they regarded as a source of unrest. The council ruled that Ibn Taymiyya and all those in Damascus who propagated his teachings—including Ibn al-Qayyim—should be rounded up and imprisoned in the citadel of the town. Although a few days later the authorities released Ibn Taymiyya's followers, Ibn al-Qayyim alone chose to stay at the side of his teacher in prison.

Unlike his house arrest in Egypt, during which he was permitted to write and to teach his followers, this time Ibn Taymiyya was not only locked up, but also denied both books and writing materials, a much harder condition for him to bear than prison itself. It has been recorded that during this final imprisonment he would find scraps of discarded paper and write with pieces of charcoal. In 728/1327, however, having been separated for two years from all those things he had lived for, he passed away.¹⁰

Then and only then did Ibn al-Qayyim come out of prison to join the multitudes who followed the body of Ibn Taymiyya to the burial.¹¹

It appears that only after his teacher's death did Ibn al-Qayyim begin his own prolific period as a writer.¹² This stage of his life was also marked by much travel, learning and teaching, as well as several pilgrimages to Mecca, where he even lived for some time.

Our picture of Ibn al-Qayyim in the last twenty-five or so years of his life is derived mainly from the recollections of his two most illustrious students, Ibn Rajab and Ibn Kathīr.¹³ The latter wrote, 'He recited [the Qur'ān] beautifully and was loved by a great many people. He neither envied nor harmed anyone, nor tried to find fault with them, nor harboured malice towards them. In short, there were few people like him ... He was dominated mostly by goodness and a virtuous nature.'¹⁴

Ibn Rajab writes, 'May God bless him, he was a person of worship and night prayers, someone who used to make the prayer last as long as possible; he was devoted to remembrance (*dhikr*), constant in his love of God, in turning back to God, in seeking forgiveness, in his dependence on God and in humility before Him. He reached a level of devotion which I have never witnessed in anyone else, nor have I seen anyone more vast in learning or more knowledgeable of the meanings of the Qur'ān, the *Sunna*, and the inner realities of faith. And while I know he was not infallible,¹⁵ yet I have never seen anyone who was closer to the meaning of this word.'¹⁶

In addition to these isolated glimpses of the man, there is evidence that he loved books so much that after his death his sons had to sell off much of his library, keeping only what they themselves could make use of.¹⁷

Ibn al-Qayyim died in 751/1350, when he was scarcely 60 years old. It is recorded that the funeral prayer, attended by many people, was offered at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. He was buried at the cemetery of Bāb al-Ṣaghīr, near the grave of his father—*rahīmahumā Allāh*.

His Writings

We have already made reference to Ibn al-Qayyim's interest in Sufism. Some of the more popular of his thirty or so printed works, mentioned below, give an idea of the subjects which most interested him:

–*Madārij al-sālikīn fī mā bayna 'iyyāka na'budu wa iyyāka nasta'in* ('The Travellers' Stages Between "Thee alone we worship and in Thee alone do we seek help"), a three-volume commentary on *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* ('The Journeymen's Abodes')—written in 475/1082–83 by the Hanbalite Sufi 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī. This latter work, among the first treatises describing 'the stations' of the inner journey to God, served as a primary reference for Ibn 'Arabī and others of his school. Ibn al-Qayyim seems to have undertaken his lengthy commentary in part to correct the errors in *Manāzil*, which he believed lent support—rightly or wrongly—to the doctrine of the 'Oneness of Being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).

–*Zād al-ma'ād fī hady khayr al-'ibād* ('Provision for the Appointed Day from the Teachings of the Best of God's Servants'), a five-volume work on the life of the Prophet, with an emphasis on how to imitate him inwardly and outwardly. This work includes the *al-Ṭibb al-nabawī* ('Book on Prophetic Medicine')—cures and remedies recommended by the Prophet, which has often been printed independently and is the only other work of Ibn al-Qayyim to have been translated into English.¹⁸

–*al-Wābil al-ṣayyib min al-kalim al-ṭayyib*, the present work as mentioned below.

–*Miftāḥ dār al-sa'āda* ('Key to the Abode of Happiness'), on the theme of Paradise and the role of knowledge in reaching it.

–*Ighāthat al-lahfān min maṣāyid al-shayṭān* ('Help to the Worried from Traps of Satan'), dealing with the errors by which people slip from the straight path.

–*Ṭarīq al-hijratayn wa bāb al-sa'ādatayn* ('Path of the Two Migrations and the Gate to the Two Happinesses'), dealing with the 'two migrations' (the migration to God and the migration to

His Prophet), which then leads to a commentary of Ibn al-ʿArīf's *Maḥāsin al-majālis* (a Sufi work similar to *Manāzil*).¹⁹

-*al-Rūḥ* ('The Soul'), dealing with questions of the soul.

-*Hādī al-arwāḥ ilā bilād al-afrāḥ* ('A Guide for Souls to the Land of Joy'), a description of heaven which provided the basis for Ibn Kathīr's small but well-known work *Ṣifat al-janna* ('A Description of Heaven').²⁰

-*ʿUddat al-ṣābirīn wa dakhīrat al-shākirīn* ('Implements for the Patient, Supplies for the Grateful'), dealing with the virtues of patience and gratitude.

-*al-Fawā'id* ('Benefits'), a short collection of insights and sermons on various subjects: Qur'ānic verses, *ḥadīth*, etc.

-*al-Dā'u wa l-dawā'* ('The Malady and the Remedy'), also called *al-Jawāb al-kāfi li-man sa'ala ʿan al-dawā' al-shāfi* ('A Comprehensive Answer to the One who Has Asked about the Healing Cure'), dealing with curing the illnesses of the soul.

-*al-Tibyān fī aqsām al-Qur'ān* ('Exposition: On Oaths in the Qur'ān'), a commentary on Qur'ānic verses which have the form of oaths such as '*By the sun and its radiance*'.

-*al-Ṣalāt wa ḥukm tārikihā* ('The Prayer and a Ruling Concerning the One who Abandons it'), a short work of Hanbalite *fiqh*.

Al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib

There are two references to this book elsewhere in Ibn al-Qayyim's other works. In *Madārij al-sālikīn*, Ibn Qayyim writes, 'And we have mentioned nearly one hundred benefits of remembrance in our book *al-Wābil al-ṣayyib wa rāfiʿ al-kalim al-ṭayyib*, and we have mentioned therein the secrets of remembrance, its great usefulness and the sweetness of its fruits.'²¹ In *Tarīq al-hijratayn*, he writes, 'And we have mentioned in our book *al-Kalim al-ṭayyib wa l-ʿamal al-ṣāliḥ* what the remembrance of God attracts to His servant, and we have mentioned nearly one hundred benefits attached to the remembrance, each one unequalled. This is a book of great usefulness.'²²

Besides summarising the subject of the present work, these quotations attest to one of its difficulties: disagreement about the work's true title. The most reliable manuscripts and all the printed editions, except one, have settled for a combination of the two titles mentioned: *al-Wābil al-ṣayyib min al-kalim al-ṭayyib*, rendered here as *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya on the Invocation of God*.

Whatever the exact title, the expression *al-kalim al-ṭayyib* refers both to the Qur'ānic verse, 'The goodly word ascends to Him, and the pious deed does He exalt',²³ as well as to a short work by Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Kalim al-ṭayyib*, which for all practical purposes is a collection of the Prophet's invocations and supplications—which Ibn al-Qayyim includes at the end of his book.

The printed versions of the Arabic text of *al-Wābil* run from 130 to 160 pages, and are generally divided into two main parts. The first part takes up two-thirds of the book, with a commentary on a long *ḥadīth* in which the believers are urged towards five things: divine oneness (*tawḥīd*), prayer, fasting, charity and finally remembrance (*dhikr*) of God in all its forms. The second part of the book, occupying the last one third of the entire work, is a re-edition of the collection by Ibn Taymiyya that we have mentioned above.

We have chosen to translate only part one of *al-Wābil*, for two reasons. First, the collection that Ibn al-Qayyim gives in Part Two is nearly identical to Ibn Taymiyya's work mentioned above. Secondly, we believe that Part One is actually an independent work, which Ibn al-Qayyim intended to attach to his edition of Ibn Taymiyya's work. We base this belief on the fact that nowhere in Part One does Ibn al-Qayyim make any reference to the *ḥadīths* that appear in Part Two. Nor does he in Part Two make any cross-references to *ḥadīths* or comments he has made in Part One, even when repeating a *ḥadīth* that had already been mentioned. The plausible explanation for this fact is that Part One was the original treatise to which Ibn al-Qayyim referred in *al-Madārij*: 'And we have mentioned nearly one hundred benefits of remembrance in our book *al-Wābil al-ṣayyib wa*

rāfi^c al-kalim al-ṭayyib, and we have mentioned therein the secrets of remembrance, its great usefulness and the sweetness of its fruits.’

The sections of *al-Wābil* we have translated contain a wealth of commentary on and insights into remembrance and other subjects. Its value is independent of the collection of *ḥadīths* comprising Part Two.

About this Translation

For our translation, we have relied on the edition of *al-Wābil* published in Riyāḍ (undated) by the government of Saudi Arabia and edited by Shaykh Ismā‘īl b. Muḥammad al-Anṣārī under the title *al-Wābil al-ṣayyib wa rāfi^c al-kalim al-ṭayyib*. We have also used two recent inexpensive editions containing certain *ḥadīth* references not found in the Riyāḍ edition. We have sought to produce a translation that is, not only accurate, but coherent, comprehensible and useful to the English reader. To this latter end, we have made the following changes to the format of the original work:

1. We have added section headings in order to facilitate finding certain subjects dealt with in the text.

2. We have annotated all Qur’ānic verses with the chapter (*sūra*) denoted by roman numerals. We have followed Pickthall’s translation with a few modifications for modernising its language. These references have also been summarised in an index at the end of this work.

3. Using the computer database published on CD-ROM by the Sakhr Company of Saudi Arabia, we have tried to trace as many of the *ḥadīths* as possible to nine collections—which are referred to as follows:

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī = Bukhārī

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim = Muslim

Sunan Tirmidhī = Tirmidhī

Sunan al-Nasā’ī = Nasā’ī

Sunan Abī Dāwūd = Abū Dāwūd

Al-Muwattaʿaʿ of Imām Mālik = Mālik

Sunan Ibn Māja = Ibn Māja

Musnad Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal = Ibn Ḥanbal

Sunan Dārimī = Dārimī.

The specific chapter and the *ḥadīth* numbering used in the Sakhr database (consecutive, rather than by chapter) are mentioned.

In addition to these nine sources, we have used Bayhaqī's *Shuʿab al-Imān*, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's *Nawādir al-uṣūl fī maʿrifat aḥādīth al-rasūl* (= *Nawādir*), Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī's *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ* (= *Ḥilya*), and al-Mundhirī's *al-Targhīb wa l-tarhīb* (= *al-Targhīb*).

4. We have included an appendix of invocations and supplications especially recommended in the text, in the original Arabic. These are marked with a superscript ^A.

5. We have included an appendix of biographical information on some of the persons mentioned in the text.

In the actual text, we have made no alterations, deletions or additions except for the following, all done for the sake of readability in English:

1. In a few places, we have removed Ibn al-Qayyim's grammatical or linguistic explanations from the main text and placed them in the footnotes.

2. In a few instances, we have placed long chains of *ḥadīth* transmitters in footnotes.

3. In one instance, we have placed the entire section, approximately three pages long, into a separate appendix. This is a highly technical exposition relating to fasting, one that was not directly related to the main subject of the text. It is nonetheless included for those interested in Ibn al-Qayyim's approach to *fiqh*, along with his interesting comments on *taʾwīl* ('interpretation').

4. Any other addition, Arabic transliterations or explanations of words have been placed in square brackets [].

5. The Islamic formula of respect following the mention of

the Prophet, 'may God bless him and grant him peace', has been largely omitted.

NOTES

¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar al-kāminah*, quoted in Bakr, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: ḥayātuhu wa āthāruhuh* (Riyāḍ, Maktabat al-Ma'ārif, 1405/1985), p. 86.

² *Fiqh* is the code of practical religious rules.

³ Shu'ayb Arnā'ūt, Introduction to *Zād al-Ma'ād fī hady khayr al-'ibād* (ed. Shu'ayb and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā'ūt, Kuwait, Maktabat al-Manār al-Islāmiyya, 1412/1992), p. 6.

⁴ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madārij al-sālikīn fī mā bayna 'iyyāka na'budu wa iyyāka nasta'in*, ed. Aḥmad Fakhrī al-Rifī and 'Aṣam Fāris al-Hurstānī, Beirut, Dār al-Jīl, 1412/1991, II. 41 and III. 431.

⁵ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Uddat al-ṣābirīn wa dhakhīrat al-shākirīn* ed. 'Iṣām al-Dīn al-Sabābtī, Cairo, Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1993, p. 12.

⁶ *Al-Wābil al-ṣayyib* has been printed in at least five editions in the last decade.

⁷ Al-Madrassa al-Jawziyya is named after Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Ubayd Allāh ibn al-Jawzī (d. 656/1258), who established it as an endowment. After reconstruction, the building stands today at the entrance of Sūq al-Buzūriyya, but has been converted into shops, with a small upstairs mosque.

It should also be noted that Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya is often confused with another Hanbalite scholar, Ibn al-Jawzī—the author of *Talbīs al-Iblīs* and other famous works. The latter died in 598/1201-2 and thus preceded Ibn al-Qayyim by more than a century.

⁸ This 6000-line poem is usually referred to simply as *al-Qaṣīda al-Nūniyya*.

⁹ In his *al-Qaṣīda al-Nūniyya*, he goes on to describe this meeting in near-mystical terms:

His hand took my hand and we journeyed without pause,
Till he showed me the place where the sun of faith rises
And I saw the banners of the city, and 'round about it
The descent of Guidance and the forces of the Qur'ān.
And I saw signs of wondrous import,
Yet veiled from a blind throng.
And I was given drink from a crystal glass,
Water that glistened like the jewels of a crown
And I saw cups as numerous as the stars
To quench the thirst of the thirsting.

And I saw 'round the pure spring of Kawthar,
Whose waters ever gush, two scales:
The scale of the *Sunna* and (the scale) of God's Word,
Which eternity will not rust nor tarnish.

¹⁰ He died at around 67 years of age.

¹¹ 'Those knowledgeable of records and history said, "A funeral of this magnitude was unheard of apart from that of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, may God be pleased with him.'" 'Umar al-Bazzār, *al-A'lām al-ʿalīya fī manāqib Ibn Taymiyya*, ed. Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh, Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1396 AH, p. 86.

¹² None of his books is dated, but most of his references to his Shaykh are followed by formulae of respect for the dead—*qaddas Allāhu rūḥahu* ('may God sanctify his soul') and *raḥimahu Allāhu* ('may God have mercy upon him').

¹³ Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1392) authored several works in *ḥadīth*, most famous of which is *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm wa l-ḥikam*, a widely studied commentary on the forty *ḥadīth* of al-Nawawī. Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) is the author of one of the most widely studied Qurʾānic commentaries.

¹⁴ From *al-Bidāya wa l-nihāya*, quoted in Bakr, *Ibn Qayyim*, p. 24.

¹⁵ The Arabic word *maʿṣūm* may also be rendered as 'sinless'.

¹⁶ From *Dhayl ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, quote in Bakr, *Ibn Qayyim*, p. 24.

¹⁷ Bakr, *Ibn Qayyim*, p. 38–9.

¹⁸ See Penelope Johnstone's translation as *Medicine of the Prophet*, Cambridge, The Islamic Texts Society, 1998.

¹⁹ Ibn al-ʿArīf, Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣanḥājī (d. 536/1141) was a prominent Andalusian Sufi and man of letters. See A. Faure's article in *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (2nd edition, ed. J.H. Kramers, H.A.R. et al., Leiden, 1954–) III. pp. 712–3.

²⁰ Cf. page 8 of the introduction by Ayman ibn ʿArīf al-Dimashqī to the recent re-edition of this work. Ibn Kathīr, *Ṣifat al-janna*, ed. Ayman ibn ʿArīf al-Dimashqī, Beirut, Muʾassasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfa, 1413/1993.

²¹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madārij al-sālikīn*, II: 485.

²² Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Ṭarīq al-hijratayn wa bāb al-saʿadatayn*, ed. ʿAmr b. Muḥammad, Saudi Arabia, Dār Ibn al-Qayyim, 1414/1994, p. 76.

²³ Qurʾān xxxv:10.

In the Name of God, Merciful and Compassionate

PART ONE

On the Paths to Happiness

*[This is a treatise written by our teacher, the learned Imām Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh, Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Ayyūb ibn Saʿīd, better known as Ibn al-Qayyim (may God sanctify his soul, illumine his grave and unite us in the Abode of God's Generosity). He said:]*¹

THERE IS NEITHER strength nor power save in God Almighty. It is God we implore—and whose answer we await—to watch over you in this world and the next, to shower you with His graces, outwardly and inwardly, and to make you among those who, when blessed, give thanks; when tried, persevere; and when sinful, seek forgiveness. For these three conditions are tokens of the servant's happiness [*saʿādat al-ʿabd*], and the signs of his² success in this world and the next. No servant is without them, but is always shifting from one to the other.

The first condition is the blessings which come to the servant from God (Most High), one after another. What secures them is gratitude [*shukr*], based on three supports: inward recognition of the blessing; outward mention and thanks for it; and its use in a way that pleases the One to whom it truly belongs and who truly bestows it. Acting thus, the servant shows his gratitude for the blessing—however brief.

The second is the trials from God (Most High) which test the servant, whose duty therein is patience [*ṣabr*] and forbearance: to restrain himself from anger with what is decreed; to restrain

his tongue from complaint; to restrain his limbs from offences, such as striking one's face in grief, rending one's clothes, tearing one's hair and like acts.³ Patience, then, rests on these three supports, and if the servant maintains them as he should, affliction will become benefaction, trial will change to bounty and what he disliked will become what he loves. For God (Exalted and Sublime) does not try the servant in order to destroy him. Rather, He tries him to put his patience and devotion [*al-^cubūdiyya*] to the test. For the servant owes devotion to God in affliction as in ease. He must have as much devotion in what he hates as in what he loves. And while most people offer devotion in what they love, it is important to do so in the things they hate. It is by this that servants' ranks are distinguished and their stations determined.

Ablution with cold water in searing heat is devotion. Sexual relations with one's beautiful and beloved spouse is devotion. Spending money for her, for one's children and for oneself is devotion. It is devotion no less than ablution with cold water in the bitter cold; giving up vice to which one's soul is driven without fear of people; and giving charity in hardship. But there is a great difference between the [two kinds] of devotion.

He who is God's servant in both states, maintaining his duty in both comfort and adversity, is the one to whom His words refer, *'Is not God sufficient for His servant?'*⁴ With complete devotion comes complete sufficiency, and with less comes what is less. Let him who discerns some good give praise to God, but let whoever finds something other than this blame no one but himself.

These are the servants over whom God's Foe has no control. God said [to the Devil], *'Lo! As for My servants, you have no power over them.'*⁵ And when His Foe Iblīs learned that He would not let His devoted servants yield to him or give him control over them, he proclaimed, *'Then by Your Might, I will surely beguile them all save for Your sincere servants among them.'*⁶ And God (Most High) said, *'And Iblīs found his calculation true, for they [all] followed him save a group of true believers. And he had no warrant whatsoever over [any of] them save that We might know the ones who believe in the hereafter from*

*those who doubt it.*⁷ God will not yield to His Foe control over His faithful servants. They are in His protection and His care. If the Devil robs any of them, as the thief robs the heedless man, this cannot be avoided, because by heedlessness, passion and anger is the servant tried. It is by these same three doors that the Devil comes to him. Try as he may to protect himself, the servant is bound to be heedless and given to passion and anger.

Adam, the father of all humanity, was the most discerning of creatures, their superior in wisdom, and the most steadfast. Yet the Foe kept after him until he made him fall into that which he fell. What then of someone with the reason of a moth, whose intelligence compared to that of his father [Adam] is like a spittle in the ocean? Still, the Foe of God obtains nothing from a faithful person except by robbing him in [a moment of] inattention and carelessness. And when he causes him to fall, the servant may think that he can never again face his Lord, that this fall has carried him away and destroyed him. Yet behind it all is God's grace, mercy, clemency and forgiveness.

For if God intends what is good for His servant, He will then open for him the doors of repentance [*al-tawba*] and remorse,⁸ abasement and humility, dependence and need; the doors of the request for God's help and protection; the doors of perpetual humility, supplication and the approach towards Him by means of whatever good works he can manage—so that his wrong may become a means to God's mercy. For the Foe says, 'Alas, I left him without causing him to fall!'

This is what one of the early believers [*salaf*] meant when he said, 'A person may commit a sin by which he goes to heaven and a good deed by which he goes to hell.' 'How?' someone asked. He replied, 'Having committed the sin, he is ever watchful in fear, regretful, timorous, lamenting, shamed before his Lord, his head in his hands and his heart rent. The sin that brings him all that we have mentioned, wherein lie his happiness and salvation, is more beneficial to him than numerous devotional acts.⁹ Indeed, it becomes the means by which he enters Heaven.

[On the other hand], he may perform a goodly deed and constantly laud it before his Lord, wax proud, boast, become vain and haughty with it, as he says, 'I did this, I did that.' His self-importance, pride and arrogance provide him only with the means to his own ruin. If God intends then what is good for this miserable person, He will try him through something that breaks [his pride], abases him and reduces his self-importance. But if He intends otherwise, He will leave him to his self-importance and pride, and this misfortune is what leads to his ruin.'

The Two Wings

The gnostics [*ʿārifīn*] all agree that Divine Accord [*taūfīq*] means that God does not abandon you to yourself, and that misfortune is when He does. So when God intends goodness for someone, He opens the door of humility, perpetual search for refuge and dependence upon Him. He opens the door where the self's faults, ignorance and enmity are sighted; where the blessings of its Lord, His excellence, mercy, and generosity are witnessed—the door of His goodness, wealth and praise.

The gnostic then journeys towards God on these two wings [*al-janāḥayn*]¹⁰—awareness of his own faults and recognition of his Lord's grace. He cannot journey without them, and if he denied one, he would be like a bird that had lost a wing.

The Shaykh of Islam¹⁰ said, 'The gnostic travels to God between the recognition of God's grace and the awareness of the flaws in his own soul and deed.' This, then, is the sense of the words of God's Messenger (may God bless him and grant him peace), recorded in the sound *ḥadīth* of Burayda [ibn Ḥusayb] (may God be pleased with him): 'The best way for the servant to ask God's forgiveness is to say, "O God, You are my Lord. There is no deity but You. You created me, and I am Your servant. I am keeping my pledge and promise to You as much as I am able. I seek refuge in You from what evil I have wrought. I acknowledge to You Your grace to me, and I acknowledge my sin, so forgive me. Truly, no one forgives sins but You."'¹¹

His words 'I acknowledge to You Your grace to me and I acknowledge my sin' combine the recognition of divine grace with the awareness of the defects of the soul and its deeds. The perception of God's grace engenders love, praise and gratitude for the One to whom belong this grace and generosity, and awareness of the soul's defects entails humility, need and repentance at every moment.

It also entails that the servant sees himself as impoverished. The closest door to God is impecuniousness, wherein the servant sees in himself no state, station or reason to which he could become attached, or any means with which he might be favoured. Rather, he comes to God (Most High) by the gate of indigence, adversity and pure poverty [*al-iftlās al-mahḍ*]. He enters as one whose heart has been broken by poverty and indigence, until neediness reaches his inner depths and he is shattered. Destitution envelops him from all sides and he feels his utter need for God, complete indigence and dependence upon Him. He feels that every whit of his inner and outer being is completely in need of and dependent on his Lord. He feels that if he is left to himself for even the blink of an eye, he will perish, lost beyond help—unless his Lord returns to him in His mercy to salvage him. There is no shorter way to God than that of servitude, and no thicker veil than pretension.

So servitude rests on two supports, which are its very principles: complete love and complete humility. These two principles arise from the two other sources we mentioned earlier—perception of [God's] blessings [which engenders love] and awareness of the defects of the soul and the acts [which engenders complete humility]. When a person bases his journey towards God on these two principles, his Foe will not overcome him, except in moments of absent-mindedness. But just as quickly, God shall come to him, rousing him and indemnifying him in His Mercy.

Love of God and Respect for His Commandments

All this will be put aright for the servant through the rectitude of his heart and limbs. The heart is rectified by two things. One of

them is that the love of God must take precedence over all other loves in his life, so that if this love and the love of something else presented themselves to him, the love of God would come first and his actions would follow this order.

How easy it is to speak about all this and yet how difficult to practise! It is by being tested that one is honoured or humbled. And how much more frequently will someone give precedence to what he himself loves and desires, or what some important person, ruler, *shaykh* or family member loves, above what is loved by God. For such a person, the love of God does not come before any other love; it is not the queen ruling over his heart.

For this person, it is God's way to turn the object of his love and everything that relates to it into a source of grief and sorrow, in return for having placed his own desires and the desires of those people who esteem or love him higher than his love of God. For God has decreed, as a part of destiny which cannot be turned back or repelled, that he who loves something other than God will surely be tormented by it; that one who fears someone other than God will come under his control; that one who involves himself with something to the exclusion of God will find it a source of grief; that one who prefers another to God will not be blessed therein; and that one who tries to please a fellow creature by anything displeasing to God will, without fail, bring God's anger upon himself.

The second way by which to put the heart aright is to venerate the Divine Laws [*ta'ẓīm al-amr wa l-nahī*] out of veneration for the One who sent them. To anyone who lacks this veneration, God asks, '*What ails you that you do not hope for God's protection?*'¹²—which is interpreted to mean, 'What is wrong with you that you do not fear God, Most High, in His Majesty?'

Signs of Veneration for God's Commandments

On veneration for God's Laws, nothing is more fitting than what the Shaykh of Islam¹³ had said: 'They should be taken neither with excessive license, nor with obsessive strictness, nor in any

way that undermines one's submission.'

The first step towards the veneration of God is veneration of His Laws. The believer knows his Lord by way of the message He has sent through His Messenger (may God bless him and grant him peace) to all people; and this message requires the believer to accept God's Laws completely, but he can only do so when he venerates them.

Veneration for God's Laws shows veneration for the One who sent them. It is to the depth of this veneration that faith, honesty and the absence of hypocrisy shall be witnessed. For, doubtless, a man may fulfil a commandment in the eyes of people—in order to gain some rank or standing with them—and he may avoid what is forbidden out of fear of falling in their esteem, or out of fear of punishments which the Lawgiver¹⁴ prescribed for the wrong-doers in this world. Such a man neither acts nor abstains because he venerates the Law and God.

The signs of veneration for what God has commanded are: to be scrupulous in keeping the nature and the limits of the command; to be attentive to those elements that are essential, necessary or recommended; to be vigilant in accomplishing them correctly and in their proper times; to hasten to them when they are due; and to be sad, disappointed and contrite to have missed any of their full benefits. This is true of someone who misses the prayer offered in congregation and is sad because, even while knowing that his solitary prayer was accepted, he had missed a twenty-seven-fold benefit.¹⁵ Surely, if a merchant missed a single deal where he could make twenty-seven dinars in his own land, without travel or toil, he would bite his hand in regret and remorse. What of prayer in congregation, where each increase in blessing is a thousand-fold and much more—whatever God wills? If the servant should miss this profit completely—and according to many scholars he has no prayer at all¹⁶—and yet his heart remains cold, devoid of any sense of loss and untroubled, it is because he lacks veneration for God in his heart.

Another example is someone who misses the first part of

prayer, God's pleasure [*riḍwān*],¹⁷ or fails to stand in the first row on the right side, upon which God and His angels shower their blessings. Were he to know how excellent it is, he would hold his place there against a whole throng of people.¹⁸ Another example is to miss a large congregation, which multiplies the merits of prayer in proportion to its size. For a congregation is loved by God when it grows larger; as when one walks a distance, the first step erases the sin and the other raises one in rank.

Yet another example is to lack the awe of reverence [*khushūʿ*] and presence of heart while standing [in prayer] before the Lord, for to lack these is to lack the very spirit and essence of prayer. A prayer with neither reverence nor presence is like a lifeless body without a soul. Should a person not be ashamed to offer a lifeless servant as a gift to one of his peers? Does he really think that such a gift would ever get to the one for whom it was intended, be he a king, a prince or someone else? A prayer devoid of reverence, presence or full aspiration for God is, like this dead servant, intended as a gift to the king. God will neither accept it nor reward him for it, even where the obligation [of the prayer] has been fulfilled according to earthly rules.

The servant has no prayer save that of which he is cognizant. And so it is stated in the *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and others that the Prophet said, 'A person may perform the prayer, and yet have recorded for him [by the angels] only half of it, a third, fourth, fifth and so on until [only] a tenth is reached.'¹⁹ One should know that this applies to all other practices, the most excellent of which are those done with the most faith, sincerity and love in the heart; and the degree to which they might amend sins depends on how complete or how deficient they are in this [inner reality].

How Good Deeds Amend Wrongs

These two principles, in fact, clear up some of the difficulties connected with the *ḥadīth* which states, 'Fasting on the day of ʿArafāt amends the sins of two years, and [fasting] on the day of

‘Āshūra amends [the sins of] one year.’²⁰ About this, some have asked, ‘If someone always fasted on the day of ‘Arafāt and the day of ‘Āshūra, then how could three years of sins be amended every year?’ To this others have responded, ‘Whatever is added beyond amending his sins, raises him in rank.’

Would that it were true! If only one could make amends like this for all of one’s wrongs, from first to last. But making amends is bound to certain conditions and depends on the removal of certain obstacles both within and without the action itself. If the servant could be certain that he had met every condition and eliminated every obstacle, then [certainly] such an act would atone for the sin.

But what about an action which is [itself] entirely or mostly enveloped in negligence, lacking in the sincerity which is its core and spirit, and performed without respect for its requirements or value? What can this action amend? [He could hope for atonement] if [in undertaking a devotional act] the servant were sure its outward and inward requirements had been fulfilled; that there were no obstacles to the act’s atoning quality; and that he [himself] did not annul it with feelings of self-importance, ostentation, or the expectation of something in return.

He would do so if he did not try to win people’s esteem, honouring those who recognised his rank but scorning those who did not, treating them as if they had personally offended him...²¹ [Otherwise], what could such a deed amend? In fact, there are countless things which invalidate or spoil devotional practice. It is not so much the action itself as the effort to keep it pure of the things that spoil and annul it.

Ostentation in Worship and in Other Good Deeds

Ostentation, however little, annuls good deeds and [enters by any one of] countless doors. An action incompatible with the observance of the Sunna²² is another thing that renders them vain. Boasting in one’s heart to God of some good act done, spoils it. Flaunting one’s charity, virtues, generosity, personal virtue or

liberality towards one's family, ruins these deeds, as God has said, '*O you who believe, do not render your almsgiving vain by reminders of your generosity or by injury.*'²³

Most people are indeed unaware of the wrongs that can annul good deeds. God says, '*O you who believe, do not lift your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor shout when speaking to him as you shout to one another, lest your works be rendered vain while you are unaware.*'²⁴ This is a warning to the believers that even speaking to the Prophet in the same loud voice they use among themselves can annul their deeds.

Now surely this is not apostasy, merely heedless disobedience—and yet it annuls good deeds. What then of the person who places less value on the directions and path of the Prophet than on the directions and path of someone else? Has he not also annulled his good deeds unawares? In the Prophet's words, 'Whoever leaves the *ʿasr* prayer has annulled his good deeds.'²⁵ Consider the words of *Ā'isha* (may God be pleased with her) about Zayd ibn Arqam: 'By selling *ʿīnah*, he annulled his combat at the Prophet's side, unless he repents.'²⁶ At worst, this kind of sale does not of itself count as apostasy but as sinful. In fact, the knowledge of what annuls good actions at the time they are performed, or what may annul them afterwards, is one of the most important things that a servant ought to attend to in order to keep his practices free of such things and to take precautions to avoid them.

According to a well-known saying, when a servant performs a good deed secretly, without anyone but God knowing of it, and then speaks about it [to people], his deed passes from the secret to the public domain—at which point it is reckoned as an act that has been performed in public. But if he speaks of it to [gain] rank and standing with anyone except God, it is annulled, just as if it had, from the outset, been carried out for that purpose.²⁷

It may be asked, 'And if he repents [of his ostentation], will the reward of the [original] act return to him?' Some respond that if he had done it for something other than God, this being

his real intention, then [the act] is not made good by repentance, which only serves to spare him from being punished for his ostentation. So [the act] is neither for nor against him. But if he had [originally] done it purely for God, then was tempted by self-esteem, pretension or boasting, and finally repented with feelings of remorse, the reward for his original deed would not be annulled and might well return to him. But others deny this, saying that, since it will never revert to him, he must repeat the act.

This question relates to a more general one that if someone abandons his Islam, does this annul all his previous good actions, or are these actions annulled only if he dies in that state? On this, scholars have two well-known positions based on two narratives by Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. We may say that apostasy in itself invalidates the good deeds, [so if a person were to return to Islam] he would start anew, for all the good he had done would be annulled. But if we say that his good deeds are not annulled unless he dies an apostate, the reward for what he had done would return to him on his return to Islam.

Similar to that, and predicated on the same priority, is this question: if a person performs some good act, then commits a sin which annuls it, then repents from that sin, does the reward for the first act revert to him?

This question has not left me. I am still searching for the right answer, and have yet to see anyone who is entirely satisfied with the matter. But what seems plain—and God (Most High) knows better, from Him comes all help and there is neither strength nor power save in Him—is that good and bad acts oppose each other and compete, and the [final] judgement will be based on which of them prevails and gains control over the other. Then that judgement will be so clearly in favour of the one that it will be as if the other had never existed. If a servant's good deeds prevail, they will repel from him many sins; and whenever he repents from a sin, his repentance gains him so much goodness that it may even exceed the good that the sin had annulled. And if he

resolves from the depths of his heart to repent, the good deed will burn up his misdeeds as if they had never existed—because ‘One who repents from sins is like one who has no sins.’²⁸

Therefore, when Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām asked the Prophet whether he would have any reward for having freed slaves, treated relatives well and observed virtue while still a polytheist, the Prophet replied, ‘You have entered Islam on the good you did in the past’²⁹—meaning that Islam had restored to him all the merit that polytheism [*shirk*] had annulled. In other words, when he repented from polytheism, all previous good reverted to him. When someone repents with a sincere, complete and honest repentance, the evil that existed before is burnt away and the reward for his good reverts to him.

What this shows is that wrongdoing and sin are really maladies of the heart, just as fever and pain are maladies of the body. When someone who has been ill recovers, he regains his [previous] strength and [sometimes] more—as if he had never been infirm at all.

The first state of health is like good acts. Illness is like sin, health and recovery like repentance. Some³⁰ sick people never regain their health because their condition is too weak. Others recover their previous health because they take the necessary remedy and precautions. Their bodies return to their original wholeness. [Still] others actually become healthier, stronger and more vigorous than before, for the remedy is [so] strong and overpowering, and it so completely overcomes the causes of the weakness and illness, that sickness becomes their way to health. Or as the poet said:

Perchance a reprimand from You is healing
And perchance a body is strengthened through illness.

After repenting, then, the servant is in one of these three situations. And God is the One who ‘grants accord’; there is no deity or lord beside Him.

Signs of Veneration for the One Who Prohibits

The signs of veneration for the Prohibitor [*al-Nāhī*] include taking care to avoid places and situations where prohibited things, their causes and whatever invites to them are found. It also entails avoiding all the means by which they are approached—fleeing from places which have forms that lead to temptation, out of fear of being tempted by them; discarding something harmless [in itself] as a precaution against something else which is harmful; avoiding things which are unnecessary but permitted, out of fear of engaging in things which are reprehensible [*makrūh*]. It includes avoiding people who talk about committing sin, extol it, invite to it, belittle it or pay no heed to it. For to mix with such people is to invite Divine anger, and no one would do so unless the veneration of God had left his heart.

Another sign of veneration for God is for the servant to feel anger when God's sanctity is debased; to experience sadness and lowness in his heart when God is disobeyed on His earth, and when His rules and commandments are not kept—although the servant himself can do nothing to change that.

A sign of veneration for the Divine Law is when a servant does not take license with certain permitted things so as to fall into excess, and no longer tread the middle road. For example, a *Sunna* has been recorded about delaying midday worship in extremely hot weather.³¹ Excessive license in this would be to delay it so long that its time would pass, or nearly so. For the purpose in allowing it to be delayed is that in extreme heat, instead of offering the prayer with humility and presence, the worshipper will do it with reluctance and annoyance. It was part of the wisdom of the Lawgiver (may God bless him and grant him peace) to order [Muslims] to delay [the prayer] until the heat broke, permitting them to pray with presence of heart and to achieve the aim of the prayer—namely, turning towards God in humility.

He also prohibited the servant from offering prayer when food is ready, or when the servant needs to urinate or to move his bowels, because concern for such things would distract him

from the aim of the prayer. Indeed, the rule is for a man to turn towards his labour and to accomplish it, then to empty his heart of it for the prayer, turn towards God and stand before Him with his whole being. Two *rak'āt* of prayer like this will atone for whatever sins he had committed. The idea here is not to seek excessive license.

Another example is shown by the Prophet, who permitted a traveller to combine two prayers when there was an excuse. [In other words], he eased the rule that every prayer must be offered in its proper time to allow him to complete his journey—since stopping might put someone in great difficulty.³² But if he stops in a place for two or three days, or [even] one day, then it is no longer necessary to combine two prayers; he can easily perform each one in its proper time. Combining two prayers is not an absolute *Sunna*, as so many travellers suppose, whether they have an excuse to do so or not. Rather, to combine two prayers is a conditional permission; to shorten the prayer is an imposed *Sunna*. To shorten prayers from four *rak'āt* to two is *Sunna* for the traveller—with or without excuse. To combine them is only in case of need. The former is one thing, the latter another.

Similarly, to satisfy one's appetite for food is permitted, not forbidden. Yet a person should not take excessive license with this and become so full that he needs to find something to aid his digestion, thereby making his stomach his main concern both before and after eating. The servant of God should feel hunger and satisfy his appetite, but he should turn down food when he simply craves it. The perfect balance is in the Prophet's words, 'One third for his food, one third for his drink, one third for his breath'³³—the three [parts] are not all for food.

[On the other hand], an example of opposition to the Divine Law through obsessive strictness is [the case of] someone who always hears whispering while performing the ablution, getting so concerned with doing it correctly that he misses the prayer time; or someone who repeats the first *takbīr* so many times that he misses the *imām*'s recitation of the Opening Chapter or near-

ly misses the [whole] *rak'at*; or someone who is so obsessed with scruples about lawful and unlawful [food] that he refuses to eat any food of the generality of Muslims out of fear that something doubtful may be in it.

Such obsessive scruples so overcame one ignorant ascetic that he refused to eat anything from the lands of Islam. He would sustain himself only by what came from Christian lands, even if he had to travel forth in search of it! So obsessed had he become that he regarded Muslims as bad and Christians as good! And we seek refuge in God from being abandoned!

Avoiding Extremes

The inner reality of veneration for the Divine Law is to follow it with neither excessive license nor obsessive strictness. The goal is the straight path that leads the one who travels it to God. But there is not one of God's commandments without two ways of approach to the Devil: one by deficiency, the other by excess. And it makes no difference which of the two errors overtakes the servant: they appear in his heart as equals. If he is already inclined towards ease and license, the Devil seizes him in this way. He slows him and sits him down, afflicts him with laziness, sloth and inactivity. Then he opens for him the door of interpretation,³⁴ [vain] hope and other [illusions], until perhaps he abandons entirely all the commandments.

If the Devil finds in him vigilance, activity and energy, he abandons his attempts to seize him from the one direction and instead spurs him on to ever greater efforts, whispering to him, 'This is not enough for you. Your aspiration is higher than this. You should accomplish more than others, and if they let up, you will not. If they break their fast, you will not. If they wear down, you will not. If one of them washes his hands three times, you will wash yours seven. If one of them makes ablution for prayer, you will take the complete bath'—and other such extremes. Therefore, the Devil urges this person to do so much that he passes up the straight path through excess; while he urges the first

person to do so little that he never reaches the straight path nor even approaches it. But his aim with both is [the same]: to keep them off the straight path, either by not drawing near to it or by passing it up. [Surely], many are so afflicted and there is no deliverance [for them] save through deeper knowledge, faith and the strength to resist them and to keep to the middle way. And God is the Helper.

The Ego [*Nafs*], the Physical Nature and the Members of the Body

[Also] among the signs of respect for [God's] Laws is when a servant avoids taking them in a way that undermines his submission. Rather, he submits to God's commandments and rules. He accomplishes what he is commanded whether their meaning is apparent to him or not. If their meaning is apparent to him, this [only] leads him to accept them and to submit to them all the more deeply, not to rid himself of them or to abandon them—as so many heretical *fuqarā'* and those associated with Sufism (*al-muntasibīn ila l-taṣawwuf*) have done.

Now, God ordained that five canonical prayers be maintained in His remembrance, involving the heart, limbs and tongue in devotion. Each is accorded its just measure of worship, the purpose of man's creation. In prayer, He placed the most perfect degree of servanthship [*al-ʿubūdiyya*].³⁵

And God created the human being, then distinguished him above all other creatures by making the human heart the abode of His treasures: faith, oneness, sincerity, love, propriety, reverence and self-examination. For those who draw near to Him He made a perfect and excellent reward: to gaze upon His Face, to win His perfect pleasure, to dwell near Him in His Heaven. With all this, the servant is nevertheless tried first through desires, anger and negligence. He is tried through his Foe Iblīs, who never lets him be, but comes to him through the doorways of his ego and his [physical] nature. The servant's ego inclines towards the Devil, because the Devil brings forth the things it wants. So [the Devil],

the ego and the desires—being the three controlling powers—join forces against the servant with the members of the body, which are only subjugated instruments. They carry out their ends and cannot do otherwise. Such are the three [controlling powers] and such are the members of the body, which continue to obey them, however they are commanded and wherever they are directed.

This is the servant's true state [on earth]. It requires the mercy of the Lord to come to the aid of the servant with some force, and to support him through any means that will stand against the forces that seek his ruin. And so God sends him His messengers and His Book, and then strengthens him with a noble angel poised against his Foe, the Devil. While the Devil sends his own command to the servant, the angel gives the servant the commandment of his Lord and makes it clear what ruin awaits him should he obey his Foe. Sometimes one wins out, sometimes the other. Victorious is he to whom God gives victory; protected is he to whom God grants protection.

Opposing the soul which commands [towards evil], God puts the soul at peace.³⁶ When the soul commands towards evil, God restrains the servant from it; when the former restrains the servant from some good, God commands him to it. There are times when the servant follows the one and times when he follows the other. Whichever of them wins, takes him. And it may happen that one of the two souls is so totally overcome that it never returns.

In opposition to the servant's passions and lower inclinations (which lead him to obey the Devil) and to his soul (which commands towards evil), God places light, intuition and reason—which dissuade him from following every whim. Each time he pursues a base desire, [God's] reason, intuition or light call out to him, 'Beware! Beware! Ruin and destruction are before you! If you travel behind that guide, you shall fall prey to criminals and highway robbers!' Sometimes he follows this advice, because its wisdom and good counsel are clear to him; sometimes he travels under the guidance of his passions. The highway robbers attack

him, rob him of his money, strip him of his clothes and ask him, 'Do you know whence we came?'

What is amazing is that he knows indeed whence they came. He had been well-acquainted with the road on which he was robbed, but takes it nonetheless and refuses to travel by any other, because its direction has so subjugated him, gained control of him, overpowered him. Yet he would never have been able to do so had he resisted and fought back. It is the servant who puts himself in his own control and gives himself his hand, like a man who gives his hand to an enemy who seizes him and leads him off to be tortured, as that man calls out for help. But no help arrives. Such is the servant who first offers himself as the captive of the Devil, his own passions and the commanding soul and then tries in vain to flee.

When the servant is tested by what he is tested, it is said to him, 'Do battle and strive against your Foe. Here are troops: take of them what you will. Here is armour: wear of it what you will. Here are fortresses: seek safety in any you wish. And hold your post to the death, because the outcome is near, the defence easy.'

It is as if you were with a great king who sends you messengers to lead you to his home, where you will find rest from the struggle. He separates you from your enemy and lets you roam through his noble abode wherever you wish. Then he imprisons your enemy in the most tightly sealed cell. And there you see him in the very prison he had hoped to place you, its doors locked—beyond rescue or relief.

You, however, find yourself in a place containing all that your soul had longed for and all that gives delight to your heart. Such is the recompense for your endurance and constancy during that brief period—no more than an hour had come and gone, and then it was as if adversity had never existed.

The Ephemerality of this World

If a soul be lax in recalling the brevity of worldly life and how soon it will be over, then let him reflect upon the words of God:

'And on the day they see that which they are promised, it will be as if they had tarried but an hour';³⁷ 'And on the day when they behold it, it will be as if they had but tarried an evening or a morning';³⁸ 'And they will be asked, "How many years have you tarried on earth?" They will say, "We tarried but a day or part of a day—ask those who keep count." And He will say to them, "You tarried but a little, if you but knew";³⁹ and finally, 'On the day when the trumpet is blown, and the wrongdoers are gathered together on that day, and it is announced to them that they tarried but ten days—We are best aware of what they utter, for those who have followed their path say "You have tarried but a day."'⁴⁰

One day, the Prophet was speaking to his companions when the sun, almost setting, touched the crests of the hills and he said, 'Relative to what has passed, there is as little time left in the world as there is in this day.'⁴¹ Let the person of intelligence seeking counsel for himself reflect upon this *ḥadīth*. Let him know what can befall him in the time that remains for the world. Let him know that he is living with illusions and '*confused dreams*',⁴² and that he may be selling everlasting happiness and everlasting grace for a paltry price. But if he seeks God and the abode of the next world, he will be given his full measure and much more. As the saying goes, 'Child of Adam, sell this world for the next and you will profit from them both. But do not sell the next world for this one, or you will lose them both.'

One of the early believers said, 'Child of Adam, you are in need of your worldly portion and your portion in the hereafter, but you are more in need of the hereafter. If you put your worldly portion first, you shall lose that of the hereafter and threaten your worldly one. But if you put the hereafter first, you will succeed in your worldly portion and put it in its rightful place.'⁴³

And 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-ʿAzīz used to say in his sermons, 'O ye people, you were not created in negligence, nor have you been left on your own. You have a destination where God, Most High, will judge among you and sort you out; ruined indeed and damned is the one whom God, Most High, puts outside His Mercy, '*which envelops all things*', and outside His Heaven, '*the*

*breadth of which is that of the heavens and the earth'*⁴⁴ But safety will be his morrow who fears and reveres God; who barter what is small for what is vast, what is ephemeral for what is eternal, what brings suffering for what brings joy. Do you not see that you are in the ranks of that which perishes and that you will be replaced hereafter by those who shall remain behind? Do you not see that each day you take to the grave a traveller journeying towards God, his term fulfilled, his future hopes cut short, you put him in a place burrowed in the earth, neither smooth nor cushioned—stripped of means, friends departed and a reckoning ahead?'⁴⁵

PART TWO

A Commentary on the *Ḥadīth* of al-Ḥārith al-Ash‘arī

Now, during this brief sojourn, God Almighty endows His servant with power, armour and helpers. He makes clear to him how he may protect himself from his Foe or free himself if taken captive. Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Tirmidhī have narrated a *ḥadīth* from al-Ḥārith al-Ash‘arī that the Prophet said:

‘Verily, God, Glorified and Exalted, commanded John [Yaḥyā] Son of Zakariyā with five words to act upon and to enjoin upon the Children of Israel; but he put it off. Then Jesus [‘Īsā], may God grant him peace, said to him, “God, Most High, has commanded you with five words to act upon and to enjoin upon the Children of Israel. Either you command them, or I shall.” To this John replied, “I fear that if you precede me, I shall be swallowed up by the earth and be punished.”’

He gathered the people together in Jerusalem and they filled the mosque. He sat at the top of a wall and said: “Verily, God, Blessed and Exalted, has commanded me with five words to act upon and to call on you to act upon it. The first of them is that you worship God and associate none with Him. For verily, the one who associates partners with God is like the man who buys a servant with his own wealth, be it gold or silver, and says to him, ‘This is my house and this is the work I have for you. So do it and render to me its fruits.’ But the servant does it and renders the fruits to another. Which of you would be pleased with such a servant?

[Second,] He enjoins prayer upon you. When you pray, do

not turn away, for God faces His servant when he is making the prayer as long as he does not turn away.⁴⁶

And [God] enjoins upon you the fast. Verily, the parable [*mithl*] of that is a man carrying a sack-full of musk in a crowd of people, all of them marvelling at its fragrance—for the breath of someone fasting is more fragrant to God, Most High, than the scent of musk.

And He enjoins upon you charity [*al-ṣadaqa*]. Verily, the parable of that is a man captured by his enemies who, having bound his hands to his neck, approach him in order to slay him; and he says, 'I ransom myself from you for any amount,' and he ransoms himself from them.

And He enjoins upon you the remembrance of God, Most High. Verily, the parable of that is a man who goes forth while his enemies are fast upon him, then comes to a safe fortress, where he delivers himself from them. In the same way, a servant shall not deliver himself from the Devil save by the remembrance of God, Most High.”

Our Prophet thus said, 'I, too, enjoin upon you five [words] which God has enjoined upon me: hearing, obedience, striving, migration and the community. Verily, if someone separates himself from the community by a mere handspan, he removes the bridle of Islam from his neck, unless he returns. And one who preaches with the call of [the age of] ignorance [*al-jāhiliyya*] will be among the denizens of hell.'

Then a man asked, 'O Messenger of God, even if he prays and fasts?' To which he replied, 'Even if he prays and fasts and claims to be Muslim. So call by the call of God, who named you Muslims, faithful devotees of God.'⁴⁷

Tirmidhī described this *ḥadīth* as good and authentic. In it, the Prophet mentions something that every Muslim ought to bear in mind and relate to his deeds: something that delivers him from the Devil and brings him success and salvation in this world and the next.

Tirmidhī mentions the parable of the monotheist [*muwahḥid*]

and the polytheist [*mushrik*], respectively. The first is like a servant who works for his master in his master's home and renders [the fruits of] the labour requested from him to the master. The second is like a servant working in the home of the master, who then labours and renders [the fruits of] his labour to someone else. Although he dwells in the House of God, the polytheist labours for someone else. He uses God's blessings upon him to approach God's Foe. If a human being had such a servant, he would be enraged with him and this would be the thing that made him most angry, the thing most likely to cause him to dismiss that servant and to send him far away.

If this is true of fellow creatures—even if both master and servant live by the blessings of another [namely, God]—what then of the Lord of the Worlds, the One who has no equal and besides whose graces a servant has no need of others? Besides God, the servant has no one to bring him what is good or to repel for him what is evil. God is solely responsible for creating him and giving him of His Mercy, directing him and providing for him, pardoning him and fulfilling his needs. How could someone make another God's equal in love, fear, hope, vows and dealings? How could he love someone else as he loves God, or perhaps even more? How could he fear someone else or hope for someone else's goodness as much as he fears God and hopes for Him?

[People's] states, their very words and deeds, bear witness to their love for God's rivals, both living and dead, above their love for God Himself. They fear His rivals and put more hopes in them than in God; they seek their pleasure and flee from their anger, more than they do God's.⁴⁸ This is the *shirk* that God does not forgive: '*Verily God does not forgive that partners be attributed to Him, but He forgives the sins of whomever else He wills.*'⁴⁹

The injustices [*al-mazālim*] before God Almighty on the Day of Judgement will be of three kinds. [First is] the kind which He will not forgive at all, namely, *shirk*—for '*Verily God does not forgive that partners be attributed to Him.*'⁵⁰ [Second is] the kind which He will not leave [standing] at all, namely, the injustice that

human beings have committed against one another, injustices He shall set aright.⁵¹ [Last is] the kind which He does not consider important at all—namely, the injustice that a human being has committed against his own soul in respect to what is between him and his Lord. This is the lightest of the three and the one most quickly effaced by repentance, seeking forgiveness, good deeds that erase the bad, afflictions that amend [faults] and other such things. The first kind of injustice, *shirk*, is different from this: it can only be removed by Divine Oneness [*tawhīd*].⁵² The second kind is not effaced unless reparation is made to those who have been wronged.

Divine Oneness (*Tawhīd*) the Key to Heaven

God has forbidden Heaven to those who commit *shirk*, it being the worst of the three kinds of injustice. None who associates partners with God will enter into Heaven. The people of *tawhīd* ['Divine Oneness'] will do so, because *tawhīd* is the key. The door shall not open for anyone without this key, or for anyone who comes with a key that lacks its teeth. The teeth of this key are prayer, fasting, alms, pilgrimage and sacred combat. They enjoin justice upon people and prohibit wrong; they speak truth and honour trusts; maintain family relations and treat parents well.⁵³

Anyone who acquires the right key in this life, the key of *tawhīd*, and then gives it teeth by [keeping God's] commandments, will come on the Day of Judgement to the door of Heaven with the only key that opens it. He will not be kept out unless sins, errors and burdens remain with him, the traces of which had not been removed through repentance and the search for forgiveness [while] in the world. These will bar him from Heaven until they have been cleansed away. If standing before God with all its terrors and distress will not accomplish this, hell cannot be avoided if the person is to be rid of what foulness remains in him, if his defilement is to be cleansed—until he is brought out and placed in Heaven. For Heaven is the abode of

the pure, and none shall enter it except they. God says, ‘*The pure ones whose souls the angels take, to them it will be said, “Peace be upon you. Enter Heaven”*’;⁵⁴ and, ‘*Those who revere their Lord are conducted to Heaven in ranks, until they come unto it and its doors are opened, and its guardians say to them, “Peace be upon you, you who are pure. So enter herein forever...”*’⁵⁵

Hell is the abode of [all] that is corrupt in word and deed, food and drink; it is the abode of the two impurities, ‘*That God may separate the corrupt from the pure. The corrupt He shall place one upon the other, heaping them all together and consigning them to hell. Such are the losers*’—in the words of God.⁵⁶ He will gather the corrupt and heap them high, as if to be carried away; He will place them in hell along with its denizens, and there will be nothing therein except what is corrupt.

Just as people will be of three levels—the pure [*al-ṭayyib*] with nothing corrupt in them, the corrupt [*al-khabīth*] with nothing pure and those in whom both are mixed—so, too, will their abodes be three. There will be the abode of the fully pure and the abode of the fully corrupt—both eternal. But there will be the abode of those in whom purity and corruption are mixed. That abode, which will not last for them, will be like a house of correction. But no one who believes in God’s oneness and has undergone punishment will remain in hell. Rather, after they have been punished to the measure earned, they will be taken out and placed in Heaven. And then naught will remain save the abodes of the fully pure and the fully corrupt.

Prayer

The words of the *ḥadīth* continue: ‘And God, Most High, enjoins prayer upon you. When you pray, do not turn away, for God faces His servant in prayer as long as he does not turn away.’⁵⁷

In prayer, one may turn away in two ways: with the heart and with the eyes—and both are proscribed. God remains before His servant in prayer as long as the servant stays in the direction of his prayer. But if the servant turns away with his heart or his eyes,

then God turns away. When the Prophet was asked about turning away in prayer, he replied, 'It is a robbery which the Devil perpetrates against a servant's prayer.'⁵⁸ And it is related that God says, '[Do you turn] towards [something] better than Me? [Do you turn] towards [something] better than Me?'

Someone who turns away in prayer, either with his eyes or his heart, is like a man whom the king summons and seats before him: just when the king starts to call out his name and addresses him, the man turns from him right and left, and his heart turns away. And since his heart is not present, he understands nothing of what the king says to him. What should this man expect from the king in return? At the very least, should he not expect to leave the palace—rejected, cast out and beneath consideration?

This worshipper is in no way equal to the one whose heart is present, turned in prayer towards Gods and so aware of the grandeur of the One before whom he stands that his heart is filled with awe, his head inclines and he would be ashamed before his Lord to face anyone else, or to turn away.

About these two prayers, as Ḥassān ibn 'Aṭīya said: 'Two men may offer prayer shoulder to shoulder, and yet between their two prayers lies a gulf as [vast] as that separating Heaven from earth. This is because one of them has his heart turned towards God, while the other is forgetful and heedless.'⁵⁹

Indeed, if the servant were to face a fellow man and between them lay a veil, surely there could be neither reciprocity nor intimacy. So what of his Creator? If the servant stands before God and there is a veil of passion and whispering between him and the Lord which absorbs and fascinates his soul, and he becomes so distracted by thoughts and whispers that he is completely absent, how can there be any receptivity?

When the servant stands in prayer, the Devil grows jealous, because [in prayer] the servant's station is supreme, nearest to God and most enraging to the Devil. And so the Devil will try every means to keep him from praying. He will keep coming at him with his forces—mounted and on foot—until he makes the

prayer appear insignificant to the servant, who will then treat it so and leave it.

But if the Devil fails in this, and the servant resists him and takes his place at that station, the Devil will then come before him with thoughts that rise up between the servant and the servant's own soul and heart. He will make him remember in prayer what he could not before. It may happen that while in prayer the devotee will recall something he needed but had given up hopes of ever [recalling]. This will absorb his heart and take him away from God entirely. He will stand in prayer without heart, and obtain nothing of the acceptance, generosity and proximity that come to one who turns completely toward God and make his heart present. Instead, he will walk away from the prayer just as he had come to it, still bearing his faults and sins, his burdens made no lighter.

Prayer will amend misdeeds, but only for he who gives it its due, offering it with complete humility and standing before God Most High with his heart fully turned in His direction. When such a person finishes praying, he finds a lightness in his soul, and feels that some weights have been lifted from him. He finds such vigour, rest and calm in the prayer that he wishes he had not had to end it. Prayer has become his source of gladness, his soul's delight, his heart's heaven and his place of rest from the world. Before beginning his prayer, he feels as if he were in a prison, a constricted place, and then finds rest—in his prayer, not *from* his prayer.

Thus, those who love God say, 'We pray and find rest in our prayer,' just as their *imām*, their exemplar, their Prophet had said, 'O Bilāl relieve us with the prayer',⁶⁰ but never 'relieve us *from* it'. He also said, 'My source of gladness has been put in the prayer.'⁶¹ How, then, can one who finds his gladness in prayer find it elsewhere? And how can he endure without it?

The prayer of someone who is present with his heart and finds his source of gladness therein ascends with its light and its proof, until by it the servant meets the Most Merciful, and the

prayer says, 'May God, Most High, watch over you just as you have watched over me!' But the prayer of the careless man who ignores its rules, limits and proper humility is folded up like a piece of cloth and thrown back in his face. His prayer says to him, 'May God cast you away just as you have cast me away!'

A *ḥadīth marfū*⁶² narrated by Bakr ibn Bishr, from Sa'īd ibn Sinān, from Abū l-Zāhiriya, from Ibn Shajara, from 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar states:

There is no believer who completes his ablution at its proper place, then stands for prayer at the proper time and offers it to God Almighty, omitting nothing from its time, bowings, prostrations or form, except that his prayer is taken from him up to God Almighty in a radiant white light which illuminates everything, from east to west, until it stops before God, the Most Merciful. But the prayer of the one who stands for it without having completed the ablution, who delays it beyond its time and robs it of its bowings, prostrations and form, is taken from him with darkness that does not rise above the hair on his head. And his prayer says, 'May God cast you away as you have cast me away. May He cast you away as you have cast me away.'⁶³

Prayer, or any other practice, is accepted [by God] when it is offered in a manner that befits Him. God's acceptance is of two kinds. The first is when a servant performs prayer or any other act of worship with his heart devoted to God, remembering Him with constancy. His deeds are then presented to Almighty God, and they stand before Him that He might behold them. And when He beholds them and sees that they had been done entirely for His sake and to please Him, and that they emanate from the pure and sincere heart of someone who loves Him and draws near to Him, He loves them [in turn], is pleased with them and accepts them.

The second kind is when a servant performs [something] absent-mindedly, out of habit. His intention—whether [for

prayer] or any other devotion—is still to obey God and to draw near to Him. His body is engaged in worship, but his heart is distracted. When such deeds are taken up to God Almighty, they do not stand before Him, nor does He look at them. Rather, they are placed wherever such deeds are recorded, to be shown to Him and sorted out on the Day of Judgement. Then will He reward the servant for whatever was done for His sake, and return to him whatever was not.

God's acceptance of this deed entails that the servant be recompensed with something God has created—the palaces, food and drink, and wide-eyed damsels [of Heaven]. His acceptance of the first kind entails His pleasure with the deed and its doer, drawing him nearer, and raising him in degree and station; for he is of those to whom God gives *without measure*.⁶⁴ The first are of one kind, the second of another.

Five Degrees of Prayer

With respect to prayer, there are five levels of people. [The lowest] is he '*who wrongs his own soul*';⁶⁵ who is remiss; who curtails his ablution and the times, limits and essential elements of prayer.

At the second level is he who keeps the times, rules and elements of prayer; who keeps its ablution but is taken away by distractions, which he lacks the inner strength to resist.

At the third level is he who keeps the limits and essential elements of the prayer, and struggles against distractions. This person is preoccupied with striving against his Foe, 'lest he rob him of his prayer'. In prayer, he is in sacred combat [*jihād*].

At the fourth level is he who, standing in prayer, completes its requirements, its essential elements and its limits. His heart is absorbed in safeguarding the rules and requirements of the prayer 'lest he miss any of them'. In fact, his entire concern becomes performing the prayer as it should be, completely and perfectly. In this way, his concern for the prayer and for worshipping his Lord absorbs his heart.

At the fifth level is he who, standing in prayer, performs it in

the manner of the fourth, but in addition places his heart before his Lord. With this he beholds God—ever vigilant before Him, filled with His love and glory—as if, seeing Him, he were physically present before Him. Therefore, the distractions vanish, as the veil between him and his Lord is lifted. The difference between this person in his prayer and everyone else is as vast as the distance between heaven and earth, for he is occupied [only] with his Lord Almighty in prayer, in which he finds his source of gladness.

[Of these five persons], the first will be punished, the second admonished, the third redeemed, the fourth rewarded and the fifth brought near to his Lord—for his source of gladness has been placed in prayer. And whoever is gladdened by the prayer in this world will be gladdened by nearness to his Lord in this world and the next. He who finds gladness in God, gladdens others [in turn]. But whoever does not, leaves this world a loser.

It has [also] been said that when the servant stands up to pray, God says, 'Remove the veil between Me and My servant.' But when the servant turns away—which is taken to mean from God to something else—He says, 'Replace the veil.' When he turns towards something else, the veil descends between him and God; and the Devil enters to show him all sorts of worldly things, appearing as if in a mirror. But when the servant turns his heart towards God, and does not turn away, the Devil cannot find a place between that heart and God. The Devil enters only when the veils are raised. So if the worshipper flees towards God, and makes his heart present, the Devil flees; if he turns away, he returns. Such is the lot of the worshipper and the lot of the Devil with respect to prayer.

Three Kinds of Hearts

As he overcomes his passions and impulses, the servant gains the strength to be present in prayer and occupied with his Lord. But as long as his heart is dominated by passions and captive to desires, and the Devil finds a home there, where he is in control, how can

the servant be free of distractions?

Hearts [in fact] are of three [types]. [The first] is the one devoid of faith and devoid of all good. With such a benighted heart, the Devil relaxes his whisperings, for he has already taken residence in this heart, a territory for him to rule as he pleases—in complete control.

The second type is the heart illuminated by faith. Lamps are lit therein, but the shadows of passions and impulses remain. In this heart, the Devil sometimes finds welcome, sometimes rejection; but it is a territory he yearns for. The war waxes and wanes. People of this kind vary greatly: among some the Devil usually wins; among others he is usually defeated; among others still he sometimes [wins] and sometimes [loses].

The third type is the heart brimming with faith, illumined by its light, the heart [of one] from whom the veils of passion have been lifted and shadows dispelled—so light shines forth in his breast. In that kindled glow, distractions are burnt up when they approach. This heart is like the firmament protected by stars: when a devil approaches, a meteor is cast down and he is burnt up. Surely no heaven is more sacrosanct than the believer. God protects him even more than He does the heavens. For while the heavens are the temple of angels, the repository of revelation, the place where the lights of obedience shine forth, the believer's heart is the repository of *tawhīd*, the love of God and gnosis. It is where the lights of faith shine on. It deserves to be guarded and protected from the plots of the Foe, who will obtain nothing of it save through deceit and in moments of negligence.

These three types have been likened to three chambers: the chamber of the king, which contains his treasures, supplies and jewels; the chamber of the servant, which contains his treasures and supplies, but none of the jewels or supplies of the king; and a chamber which is completely empty. [If] a thief came to rob any of these three chambers, which one would he choose? If you said the empty room, it would be absurd, for what is there to take? Ibn ʿAbbās was once told, 'The Jews claim nothing distracts their

prayer.' To this he answered, 'What does the Devil have to do with a heart in ruins?' But it would be equally absurd if you said that he will rob the chamber of the king, there being so many guards around it that a thief cannot even get near. How could he, when the king himself is guarding it? How could he approach it with all the guards and soldiers surrounding it? Therefore, nothing is left for the thief to rob except the other room, and that is the one he attacks.

Let the wise man ponder this analogy, and let it sink into his heart, for this is the way of the three hearts. The heart of the non-believer or the hypocrite, a heart devoid of all good, is the Devil's home. The Devil marks it for himself, claims it as his territory, takes residence and dwells in it. What is there for him to steal, when it already contains his stock and supplies, his doubts, deceits and whisperings?

And what devil [dare approach] a heart filled with the majesty of God Almighty, with reverence, love, vigilance and modesty? If he would steal something from it, what would it be? His only hope is to snatch something surreptitiously from the servant. And that time is inevitable—the servant is but a human being, subject to laws which govern men; he will brook neglect, forgetfulness, confusion and compulsion.

It is related that Wahb ibn Munabbih affirmed that in one of the sacred books [God says], 'I do not dwell in rooms which are not vast enough for Me, and what thing could be vast enough for Me, when my Footstool contains [all] the heavens? But I am in the heart of the one who has bid farewell to and left behind all else but Me.' This has the same meaning as the saying, 'My heavens and My earth do not contain Me, but the heart of My believing servant contains Me.'⁶⁶

In every heart there are oneness [*tawhīd*], gnosis, faith and affirmation of God's promise and warning. There are also the desires of the ego, its traits and the attraction of [base] desires and nature. So the heart lies between two calls. Sometimes it inclines towards the call of faith, gnosis, the love of God, and the desire for Him

alone; sometimes it inclines towards the call of the Devil, base desires and animal nature. This is the heart which gives hope to the Devil, where he pitches his camp and resides. And God gives victory to whomsoever He will, '*And there is no victory except from God, the Mighty and Wise.*'⁶⁷

The Devil has no control over this heart except through the weapons [he finds] there: passions, doubtful practices, delusions and false hopes. So he enters, finds his weapons, takes them and uses them for battle. If the servant has his forces of faith at the ready, they will rise to his defence, multiply and defeat the devils. If not, the territory goes to the enemy, '*and there is neither strength nor power save in God.*' When the servant allows his Foe to enter and opens the door, lets him in and arms him with the very weapons with which he will fight him, then he has none to blame but himself.

Blame yourself alone, not your mount.
And die in vain, for you have no excuse.

Fasting

Let us return to the commentary on the *ḥadīth* of Ḥārith, where the Prophet speaks of what will rescue a servant from the Foe: 'And [God] enjoins upon you the fast. Verily, the similitude of that is a man carrying a sack-full of musk in a crowd of people, all of them marvelling at its fragrance—for the breath of someone fasting is more fragrant to God, Most High, than the scent of musk.'⁶⁸

The Prophet uses the image of someone carrying a sack-full of musk concealed from view, hidden under his garments, after the habit of those who carry musk. Fasting is, likewise, hidden from the eyes of men and unperceived by their senses.

The fasting person's limbs fast from sins; his tongue fasts from lies, base language and false witness; his stomach fasts from food and drink; and his pudenda fast from union. If he speaks, he says nothing to violate his fast; and if he acts, he does nothing to spoil his fast. All his speech is salutary and wholesome, as are

his deeds—like the fragrance one smells while sitting next to the bearer of musk. Anyone who sits with a fasting person benefits from his presence and is safe from false witness, lies, base language and wrongdoing. This is the fast prescribed by the Sacred Law, not simply abstinence from eating and drinking.

Hence, a sound *ḥadīth* states: ‘When someone does not refrain from speaking falsely and the action that springs from it and from ignorance, God does not need him to refrain from food and drink.’⁶⁹ And in [another] *ḥadīth*: ‘Some who fast obtain nothing from it but hunger and thirst.’⁷⁰

True fasting is when the limbs fast from sin and the stomach fasts from food and drink. As food and drink can break the fast or spoil it, so sins can cut off its reward and spoil its fruits, as if one had not fasted at all.

Two diverging opinions have emerged as to whether the fragrance of the fasting person’s breath occurs in this world or the next, giving rise to the controversy between two honoured scholars, Abū Muḥammad ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Salām and Abū ‘Amr ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, each authoring a treatise on the subject. Some held that [the fragrance] occurs only in the next world. Abū ‘Amr held that it occurs in both this world and the next. His treatise on the same subject refuted Abū Muḥammad, citing the evidence of Abū Ḥātim ibn Ḥibbān, who devoted some chapters of his collection to this subject ...⁷¹

Section: The solution to this problem is this. The Prophet says that this fragrance will occur on the Day of Judgement, because that is the time when deeds will be recompensed, and when it will be clear which of them are good and which evil. Likewise, it will be clear to people that the breaths [of those who fasted] are more fragrant than musk—although the blood of those wounded for God’s sake will also have the scent of musk. Secrets will be made plain and appear on people’s faces,⁷² having become public. From the non-believers a foul odour will rise, and there will be darkness upon their faces.

But the Prophet says that this fragrance occurs 'when they turn away from food' and 'when they reach the evening', because that is the time when the effects of worship appear. Their breaths then are more fragrant than musk to God and His angels, though they be unpleasant to people. They are often disliked by people because they offend their natures. But they are beloved to God because they agree with His commandment, His contentment and His love. Thus they are more fragrant to Him than musk is for us.

On the Day of Judgement, this fragrance will reach people and become public, as will the effects of all other deeds, be they good or evil. But, as both sight and spiritual vision will attest, some deeds are so powerful and abundant that their effects, whether good or evil, appear to people in this world. As Ibn 'Abbās said, 'Virtuous deeds bring illumination to the face and light to the heart, strength to the body, sufficiency in worldly provision and love to people's hearts. Evil deeds bring shadows to the face, darkness to the heart, weakness to the body, deficiency in provision and enmity to people's hearts.'⁷³

And 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān said, 'No man accomplishes an action but that God, Most High, clothes him with its mantle—if good, then with good and if evil, with evil.'

This is well known. It is known to mystics and others. In fact, from a man who is pure and good you may smell a fragrance, though he never touches perfume. For this is a fragrance which emanates from his soul and gains his body and clothes. For the corrupt person, the opposite is true. But someone with a cold and whose heart is ill can smell nothing. Rather, his cold will cause him even to deny that this can exist.

This is the extent of what we have to say on this matter, and God Exalted knows best what is right.

Charity

The Prophet said, 'And He enjoins upon you charity. Verily, the similitude of that is a man captured by his enemies who, having

bound his hands to his neck, approach him in order to slay him; and he says, "I ransom myself from you for any amount," and he ransoms himself from them.'

The proof of this saying is [simply] that it exists, and the evidence is that it is. Charity has the marvellous effect of warding off a variety of tribulations, even from the sinner and wrongdoer—in fact, even from the unbeliever. Through it, God repels many tribulations. This is well known to people, both the elect and the generality; people on earth all affirm this because they experience it.

Tirmidhī related on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik, that the Prophet said, 'Charity truly extinguishes the wrath of the Lord and wards off affliction.'⁷⁴ Charity extinguishes the Lord's wrath, and a servant's sins and iniquities as water extinguishes the fire. Tirmidhī relates that Mu'ādh ibn Jabal said, 'I was with the Prophet [may God bless him and grant him peace] on a journey, and one day I came close to him as we travelled ... and he said, "Shall I not direct you to the gates of goodness? Fasting is a shield. Charity extinguishes sins as water does fire. And the prayer of a man in the middle of the night is the sign of the truly pious [*ṣāliḥīn*]." Then he recited, "*Who forsake their beds to call upon their Lord in fear and hope, and spend of what We have bestowed on them.*"'⁷⁵

And a tradition [states]: 'Hasten to charity, for tribulations do not trespass charity.'⁷⁶

Thus the Prophet likens [the giver of charity] to a man about to be slain; he ransoms his life with enough of his wealth, for thus does charity ransom a servant from God's chastisement. As his sins and iniquities lead him to ruin, charity comes to his rescue.

In a sound *ḥadīth*, it is reported that the Prophet said to some women on a holy day of celebration, 'O women, give something in charity, if it be of your jewellery, for I have seen you numerous among the people in hell.'⁷⁷ He urged and implored them to do what would deliver their souls from it.

In another *ḥadīth*, from the two authoritative collections [*al-ṣaḥīḥayn*]⁷⁸ and narrated by 'Adī ibn Ḥātim, the Prophet said,

‘There is not one amongst you but that his Lord will speak to him [directly] through no intermediary. He will look to his right and see nothing except what he has sent forward. He will look to his left and see nothing except what he has sent forward. He will look before him and see nothing except hell reaching towards his face. So beware of that fire, if only with half a date [in charity].’⁷⁹

Another *ḥadīth*, from Abū Dhar, states: ‘I asked the Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] how the servant is delivered from the fire,’ and he answered, ‘By faith in God.’

‘O Messenger of God, is there no deed with faith?’

He answered, ‘That you give in charity what God has put in your possession’—or ‘That you give in charity what God has provided you with.’

‘O Messenger of God, what if a person is poor and finds nothing to give?’

He said, ‘Then let him enjoin justice and forbid wrongdoing [*ya’mar bi l-ma’rūf wa yanha’an al-munkar*].’

‘And what if he is unable to enjoin justice and forbid wrongdoing?’

‘Then let him assist some simple-minded person.’

‘O Messenger of God, what if whatever he did would not help?’

‘Then let him help someone who has been wronged.’

‘O Messenger of God, what if he were too weak and unable to help someone who has been wronged?’

‘Do you not wish to leave your friend any good? Then let him restrain himself from harming others.’

‘O Messenger of God, do you mean that someone will enter Heaven for doing thus?’

He replied, ‘Anyone who manages but one of the things I have described will be taken by the hand into Heaven.’ This *ḥadīth* was included by Bayhaqī in his book *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*.⁸⁰

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said, ‘[The Prophet] told me that deeds will vie with one another for merit, and charity will say, “I am better than any of you.”’⁸¹

The two authoritative collections contain the *ḥadīth* narrated by Abū Hurayra, who said, 'The Prophet [may God bless him and grant him peace] depicted the miserly and the charitable persons as two men in robes of iron which bind their hands to their chests and throats. Every time the charitable person gives something, the robe loosens until it hangs by his mere fingertips and erases his tracks. And every time the miserly person thinks of giving [but holds back], it tightens, every coil of the robe in its place.' At this point, Abū Hurayra said, 'And as he spoke, I saw the Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] put his fingers in his robe and make as if to loosen a garment that would not loosen.'⁸²

The miserly man is blocked from generosity and kept back from good deeds. And he receives the same in return. His breast is constricted, unable to expand. His stomach contracts. His soul is small, his happiness paltry. But his cares and woes are many. Rarely will he help the needy or the beggar. He is indeed like a man in a robe of iron, his hands so bound to his neck that he can neither move them nor free them. Whenever he tries, the coils spring back in place. For whenever such a man wishes to give, his miserliness holds him back and his heart remains imprisoned.

But each time a charitable person gives, he feels his heart expanding and his breast relieved, as if a robe of iron were loosening for him. Whenever he gives, it loosens, relaxes and expands; his happiness grows ever stronger and his joy increases.

Had there been no other benefit, this would have been reason enough to practise charity generously and fervently. And God has said, '*Those who are delivered from the greed of their own souls—they are the successful ones.*'⁸³

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf —or Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ—used to circumambulate the House,⁸⁴ with no other supplication than 'Lord, save me from my own greed! Lord, save me from my own greed!' And when he was asked, 'Do you not pray for anything else?' he answered, 'If I am delivered from my own greed, I will have succeeded.'

Greed [*al-shuḥḥ*] and miserliness [*al-bukhl*] differ in that the first means to be strongly attracted to some object, to pursue it relentlessly and to covet it in the soul. The second is to refuse to part with something after having acquired it, to love it and to be attached to it. Therefore, one is greedy before and miserly after he obtains something. Miserliness is the fruit of greed. Greed that is ingrained in the soul summons miserliness. One who is miserly obeys his greed, but one who resists it will deliver himself from its evil, to be counted with those referred to in the verse: *'Those who are delivered from the greed of their own souls—they are the successful ones.'*⁸⁵

The generous person is close to God, close to His creation and His people, close to Heaven and far from hell. The miser is far from God, far from His creation, far from Heaven and near to hell. In fact, generosity will endear a man even to his opponents, while miserliness will estrange him from his own children:

A man's miserliness shows people all his faults,
while his generosity conceals them.

So don the robe of generosity,
for I see that it covers every fault...⁸⁶

The highest form of generosity is to give freely what is needed, when it is needed, to the one who deserves it and to the extent of one's ability. It is not, as someone of little intelligence once said, 'to give away all there is.' For if such were the case, there would be no such words as 'excess' or 'spendthrift'—both of which are reproached in the Qur'ān and prohibited by the *Sunna*.

When generosity is of the praiseworthy type, the one who practices it to its highest degree is called 'nobly generous' [*karīm*] and merits praise; whereas the one who falls short in it is called 'miserly' and merits reproach.

According to an oral tradition [*athar*], 'God swears by His honour that the miserly man shall never be His neighbour.'

There are two kinds of generosity. The more honourable is that you be too generous [to expect] what someone else possess-

es; the [lesser] is that you be generous with what you possess. In fact, a man may be the most generous of people and never give them anything, for his generosity lies in not coveting what they have. This is what someone meant by the statement, 'Generosity is that you be liberal with what belongs to you and frugal with what belongs to others.'

I once heard the Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyya, say, 'God spoke through inspiration to Abraham, saying, "Do you know why I have taken you as My intimate friend [*khalīl*]?" "No," he answered. "Because I see that you love to give more than to take," said God.'⁸⁷

This is one of the attributes of the Lord Most High: He gives and does not take, He feeds and is not fed. He is the most charitable of those who show charity and the most generous of those who show generosity. And the creatures most beloved to Him are described by qualities derived from His attributes. He is generous and loves those who are generous; knowing and loves the learned; able and loves the courageous; beautiful and loves beauty.

Tirmidhī related in his collection that Ṣāliḥ ibn Abī Ḥassān⁸⁸ said he heard Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib say, 'Verily, God is pure and loves what is pure, He is clean and loves cleanliness; generous and loves generosity; charitable and loves charity. So cleanse yourselves from defilement and do not imitate the Jews.' Ibn Abī Ḥassān said that he mentioned this to the emigrant Ibn Masmār, saying, 'It was related to me by ʿĀmir ibn Saʿd, who heard it from his father, who heard it from the Prophet [may God bless him and grant him peace],' except that he said the words were 'So cleanse yourselves from waste'. This *ḥadīth* is unusual [*gharīb*],⁸⁹ and Khālid ibn Ilyās qualified its authenticity."⁹⁰

In the Chapter on Virtue, in Tirmidhī, there is also a *ḥadīth* on the authority of Abū Hurayra, where the Prophet says: 'The generous man is close to God, close to Heaven, close to the people and far from hell. And the miser is far from God, far from Heaven, far from the people and close to hell. And a generous

man who is uneducated is more beloved to God than a miserly scholar.⁹¹

God Acts towards His Servant as His Servant Acts towards Others

There is [the *hadith*]: ‘God is odd-numbered and loves the odd-numbered.’⁹² [Likewise,] He is compassionate and loves those who are compassionate; merciful to His compassionate servants. He also conceals [faults] and loves those who hide His servants’ faults. He is clement and loves those who pardon; forgiving and loves those who forgive. He is gentle and loves those who are gentle to others. But He is angered by those who are coarse, rough and pompously hard. He is companionable and loves brotherhood among men; forbearing and loves forbearance; good and loves virtuous deeds and those who perform them. He is just and loves justice. He accepts excuses and loves those who excuse His servants’ [errors]. And He recompenses His servant inasmuch as these attributes are present or absent [in his soul].

So He pardons whoever pardons, forgives whoever forgives, excuses whoever excuses, treats justly whoever treats justly. And God will befriend whoever befriends one of His servants. Whoever is merciful to creatures, to him is God merciful. Whoever does good for people, to him will God do good. Whoever is generous to them, to him will God be generous. Whoever benefits them, God will benefit him. Whoever conceals their faults, his faults God will conceal. And whoever excuses their errors, his errors God will excuse.

But someone who concerns himself with their vices, God will be concerned with his vice. Whoever shames them, God will shame him. Whoever bars them from the good, grieves them, plots against or betrays them, God will bar him from the good, grieve him, plot against him and betray him. In short, whoever deals with people according to a certain quality, God Most High will deal with him according to that [same] quality, both in this world and the next. For He acts with a servant as that servant acts

with his fellow men.

Another *ḥadīth* says, 'Anyone who conceals the vices of a Muslim, God will conceal his vices in this world and the next. Anyone who relieves a believer of some distress in this world, God will relieve him from distress on the Day of Judgement. And anyone who eases someone's hardships, God Most High will ease for him his reckoning.'⁹³

[And in a *ḥadīth*], 'He who releases a Muslim from a contract he regrets, God will release him from his errors.'⁹⁴ [In another *ḥadīth*], 'Whosoever grants more time to a debtor in hardship or relinquishes something of it, God will shelter him in the shade of His Throne.'⁹⁵ For as he had sheltered that debtor with his patience, delivering him from the heat of his claim upon him—a burden borne in hardship and weakness—so shall God deliver him from the burning sun of Judgement Day into the shade of the Throne.

Similar to this is the *ḥadīth* in Tirmidhī and elsewhere that one day, in a sermon, the Prophet had said, 'O assembly of those who believe with their tongues but in whose hearts faith has not entered! Do no harm to the Muslims and do not concern yourselves with their vices. For whoever concerns himself with his brother's vices, with his vices shall God be concerned. And anyone with whose vices God is concerned shall be disgraced in the safety of his own home.'⁹⁶

As you hold others in debt, so shall you be held in debt. So be as you wish, for God will treat you as you treat His servants.

[As for the hypocrites] who appear as Muslims but hide their non-belief, God will shine a light for them on the Bridge⁹⁷ to make it seem that they can get across. But He will hide from them how He will extinguish that light. What they were wont to do in the world, the same shall come between them and the Bridge. Likewise, to anyone who displays to people something different from what God knows of him, God will display the way to success and deliverance, but conceal from him its opposite. In a *ḥadīth*: 'Of the one who acts only to be seen, or boasts only to be

heard, God will cause [his true intentions] to be seen or heard.’⁹⁸

[The point here is that] God gives to the generous and charitable person what He does not give to the miserly, tight-fisted one. To recompense his deeds in kind, God broadens his essence, character, provision, soul and his means of livelihood.

Remembrance⁹⁹

In the words [of the Prophet]: ‘And He enjoins upon you the remembrance of God Most High. The parable of [remembrance] is that of a man who goes forth, his enemies fast upon him, then comes to a safe fortress where he delivers himself from them. By the same token, a servant delivers himself from the Devil only by the remembrance of God.’

If remembrance had this single benefit only, it would be reason enough for a person not to let his tongue flag without the mention of God and for him to be ever devoted to it. Only through remembrance can he keep himself safe from his Foe, who comes to him through the door of neglect and lies in ambush, [waiting for] him to grow negligent, then pounces and attacks. But if the servant remembers God, the Devil turns back in frustration, shrunken to the size of a tiny bird, or even a fly. And this is why he is called ‘*the whisperer who flees*’:¹⁰⁰ he whispers into hearts, but as soon as God is remembered, he flees. Controlled, he ceases.

Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘The Devil is perched upon the human heart. When a man forgets and grows heedless, the Devil begins to whisper, but when he remembers God Most High, the Devil flees.’¹⁰¹

In [the *Musnad* of] Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the Messenger of God, according to Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal, said, ‘A human being can do no more to deliver himself from God’s chastisement than to invoke Him.’¹⁰² Mu‘ādh [also] said, ‘The Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] said, “Should I tell you which of your deeds is best? Which purifies you most before your Sovereign? Which raises you higher in rank and is better for you than giving away gold and silver; better for

you than meeting your enemies that you might slay them or they might slay you?" And they answered, "By all means, O Messenger of God, tell us!" He said, "The remembrance of God Most High!"¹⁰³

In Muslim, as the Messenger of God was travelling on the road to Mecca, he passed a mountain called Jumdān and, according to Abū Hurayra, said [to his companions], 'Travel on! This is Jumdān. The *'dedicated ones'* arrive first.' And who are the *'dedicated ones'*, O Messenger of God?' it was asked. 'The men and women who amply remember God,' he answered.¹⁰⁴

In Abū Dāwūd, according to Abū Hurayra, the Messenger of God said, 'Those who rise from a gathering where God is not remembered, rise as from the corpse of a donkey and their gathering will be for them a source of regret'¹⁰⁵—and, in Tirmidhī's version, 'A gathering of people who sit together without remembering God or blessing their Prophet will be a source of regret. God will either punish them for it or forgive them, if He wills.'¹⁰⁶

In Muslim, al-Agharra Abū Muslim says, 'I bear witness that Abū Hurayra and Abū Sa'īd [al-Khudrī] told me that the Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] said, "No folk sit to remember God Most High but that angels surround them, Divine mercy envelopes them, tranquillity descends upon them and God mentions them to those who are near Him."¹⁰⁷

In Tirmidhī, a man once asked, according to 'Abd Allāh ibn Bishr, 'O Messenger of God, the doorways to goodness are many, but I cannot enter them all. So tell me something I can retain, but do not give me so much that I shall forget.' Or, in another version, 'The rules of Islam have become too many for me, and I have grown old. Tell me something I can retain.' He replied, 'Let your tongue be ever moist with the remembrance of God.'¹⁰⁸

Again in Tirmidhī, according to Abū Sa'īd, the Messenger of God was asked which of God's servants was best and highest before God on the Day of Judgement. He replied, 'All who remember God abundantly.' Then it was asked, 'O Messenger

of God, [better] even than the one who goes to battle for the sake of God?’ He answered, ‘Even if he should smite the non-believers and the polytheists until his sword breaks and blood flows, the one who remembers God Most High is of a more excellent rank.’¹⁰⁹

In Bukhārī, Abū Mūsā [al-Ash‘arī] relates that the Messenger of God said, ‘The one who remembers his Lord is to the one who does not as the living is to the dead.’¹¹⁰

And in both collections, it is related from Abū Hurayra that the Messenger of God said, ‘God Exalted says, “I am in accord with what My servant supposes about Me, and I am with him when he remembers Me. If he mentions Me within himself, I mention him within Myself, and if he mentions Me in a gathering, I mention him in a better gathering. If he approaches Me by a handspan, I approach him by an armspan. If he approaches Me by an armspan, I approach him by two armspans. And if he comes to Me walking, I hasten to him.”’¹¹¹

And in Tirmidhī, according to Anas [ibn Mālik], the Messenger of God said, ‘When you pass the meadows of Heaven, roam therein!’ And they asked, ‘O Messenger of God, what are the meadows of Heaven?’ He answered, ‘The circles of remembrance [*ḥalaq al-dhikr*].’¹¹²

Again in Tirmidhī, it is related that the Prophet said, ‘God [Mighty and Majestic] says, “My devotee is every one who remembers Me as he meets his opponent [in battle].”’¹¹³ This *ḥadīth* clarifies questions regarding the person who invokes [*dhākir*] in relation to the combatant [*mujaḥhid*]. Someone who invokes God and engages in combat for God is better than someone who only invokes, or only engages in combat. But someone who only invokes is better than someone who engages in combat but neglects [remembrance]. In short, the best of those who invoke God engage in combat for His sake, and the best of those who engage in combat invoke Him. So God Most High says, ‘O you who believe, when you meet a force, stand firm and remember God abundantly if you would succeed’,¹¹⁴ commanding them both to

invoke Him abundantly and to engage in combat for His sake if they wish for success.¹¹⁵

God has also said, '*O you who believe, remember God by frequent mention*'¹¹⁶ and '*Men who remember God abundantly and women who remember God abundantly*',¹¹⁷ and '*When you have completed the stations [of the Pilgrimage], mention God as you used to mention your forefathers, but more frequently.*'¹¹⁸ This is a commandment [not only] to mention God frequently, but to do so with the fervour of one who is in dire need of something and cannot do without it for even a blink of an eye. The moments that the servant passes without remembering God count against him, not for him; and his loss from them is greater than any gain he might make while heedless of God. Thus, a gnostic said, 'If someone offered such and such worship to God for a year, then turned away from Him for a moment, his loss [in that moment] would be greater than all he had gained.'¹¹⁹

Bayhaqī mentions that, according to 'Ā'isha, the Prophet said, 'An hour that passes during which a person fails to mention God, will be a source of regret for him on the Day of Judgement.'¹²⁰ He also mentions [a *ḥadīth*] according to Mu'ādh ibn Jabal: 'The people of Heaven have no regret except for the hour that passed them during which they did not remember God Most High.'¹²¹

The Prophet's wife, Umm Ḥabība said, 'The Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] declared, "All the servant's words are against him, not for him, except those enjoining fairness, forbidding evil or mentioning Almighty God."¹²²

Mu'ādh ibn Jabal said, 'I asked the Messenger of God, "Which act is most beloved to Almighty God?" He answered, "That upon death your tongue is moist with His remembrance."¹²³

Cleansing the Hearts of Tarnish

Abū l-Dardā' said, 'For all things, there is a polish, and for the hearts it is the remembrance of Almighty God.'¹²⁴ Bayhaqī cited a *ḥadīth* on the authority of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, quoted directly

from the Prophet [*marfū*], where he says, 'Everything has its polish, and the polish of hearts is the remembrance of Almighty God. And there is nothing that better delivers from God's punishment than His remembrance.' And when they asked, 'Not even combat [*jihād*] for His sake?' he answered, 'Not even if someone smites with his sword until it breaks in two.'¹²⁵

Doubtless, a heart grows tarnished like brass or silver, and its polish is by remembrance, which may make it shine like a crystal mirror. So when one neglects the remembrance it tarnishes, and when he returns it shines. Since the heart is tarnished by two things—heedlessness and sin—it is polished by two things: remembrance and asking forgiveness.

If heedlessness dominates most of someone's time, the tarnish on his heart grows in proportion. And if the heart is tarnished, it ceases to reflect things as they are. Therefore, it sees the false as true and the true as false. As the tarnish grows thicker, the heart grows dimmer, until it no longer reflects reality at all. And if this tarnish builds up, blackens and envelops the heart completely, the heart's reflective quality and perception will be totally lost, so that it will neither accept what is true nor reject what is false. Such a fate is the worst that can befall it.

The origin of all this is in heedlessness and the pursuit of one's passions, both of which dim the light of the heart and blind its vision. Thus, God (Most High) says, '*And follow not one whose heart We have made forgetful of Our mention, who pursues his passions, and whose situation has exceeded [all bounds]*.'¹²⁶ If the servant wishes to follow a man, let him look to see whether this man is of those who remember God or who are heedless; whether he is ruled by the passions or by revelation. If he is heedless and ruled by the passions, then '*his situation has exceeded [all bounds]*', and he should neither be trusted nor followed, for he will lead you to destruction.

The verse's reference to 'excess' is said to signify 'discarding'. That is, the order which should be followed and maintained—and in which lies a person's guidance and success—has been

discarded. It is also explained as being 'waste', 'destruction' or 'opposition to the truth', all of which have similar meanings. But the intention [of the verse] is that God prohibits us from following anyone who has these characteristics. So if a man has taken someone as a *shaykh*, model or a person to emulate, but finds him to be as [the verse] describes, then he should distance himself from him. But if he finds him to be someone in whom the mention of God and practice of the *Sunna* predominate, someone who does not trespass God's commandments but is resolute in keeping them, then he should adhere to him.

There is no difference between the living and the dead except remembrance, for 'the one who remembers his Lord is to the one who does not as the living is to the dead.' And in Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal there is a *ḥadīth* quoted directly from the Prophet: 'Be so abundant in the remembrance of God [Most High], that it be said [about you], "He is possessed!"'¹²⁷

PART THREE

The Many Benefits of Remembrance

There are more than a hundred benefits to remembrance.

1. Remembrance drives away, fetters and breaks the Devil.
2. It pleases the Most Merciful, God Almighty.
3. It removes the cares and worries of the heart.
4. It brings happiness, joy and relief [*al-farḥ wa l-surūr wa l-bast*] to the heart.
5. It strengthens both heart and body.
6. It illuminates the face and the heart.
7. It brings provision [*al-rizq*].
8. It adorns the one who practices it with dignity, sweetness and radiance.
9. It endows him with love [*al-maḥabba*] which is the very spirit of Islam, the pivotal point of religion and the axis of [eternal] happiness and deliverance. For God has opened a way of access to everything, and the way to love is constancy in remembrance. So let anyone who wishes to find the love of God Almighty be fervent in His remembrance. It is both a lesson and a reminder. It is equally the gateway to gnosis [*bāb al-ilm*] as the gateway to love, its widest route and straightest path.
10. It endows one with vigilance [*al-murāqaba*], which opens the door of self-reform. Entering [therein], the servant worships God as if he were seeing Him.¹²⁸ There is no way for the heedless man to reach the station of excellence [*iḥsān*],¹²⁹ any more than for a seated man to reach his home.
11. It predisposes [the servant] to turn back to God Almighty.

When someone turns to God frequently in remembrance, it pre-disposes his heart to turn back to Him in every state—so that in the face of trials and tribulations, God remains his sanctuary and his shelter, his protection and refuge, the *qibla* and prayer niche of his heart.

12. It endows him with proximity [*al-qurb*] to God. His proximity to God is in proportion to his remembrance; his distance in proportion to his heedlessness.

13. It opens for him the greatest door to gnosis [*abwāb al-maʿrifā*] and as his remembrance increases, so does this gnosis.

14. It endows him with a sense of reverence and awe [*al-hayba*] before the Lord, because of the high place that [remembrance] holds in his heart and the intensity of his presence with God Most High—unlike the heedless man, whose heart is veiled from the awe of God.

15. It endows him with God's own remembrance of him, even as God says, '*Remember Me, I shall remember you.*'¹³⁰ Indeed, remembrance would be merit and honour enough if there should be no more in it than that. The Prophet related these words from his Lord: 'Whoever mentions Me within himself, I shall mention him within Myself; whoever mentions Me in a gathering, I shall mention him in a better gathering.'¹³¹

16. It endows the heart with life. I heard the Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyya, say, 'Remembrance is to the heart what water is to the fish. And what is the state of a fish that leaves water?'

17. It is nourishment to the heart and soul. If the servant is deprived of it, it is as if his body were deprived of food. Once when I was with the Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyya, he performed the pre-dawn prayer and then sat down to remember God Most High until sunrise. Then he turned to me and said, 'This is my morning meal. If I do not take my morning meal, I lose my strength,'¹³² or words to that effect. Another time he said to me, 'I never forsake remembrance except with the intention of giving myself respite to be ready to resume another remembrance,' or words to that effect.

18. It polishes away the heart's tarnish. This has been mentioned in the previous *ḥadīth*, which states that everything can be polished. For the heart, the tarnish is heedlessness and passions, while its polish is the remembrance of God, repentance and the seeking of forgiveness. The meaning of this has already been discussed.

19. It erases sins and repels them, for it is a good deed that is of the greatest importance, and '*good deeds drive away wrongs*'.¹³³

20. It removes estrangement [*al-waḥisha*] between the servant and his Lord, for between a heedless man and God there is an estrangement which only remembrance can remove.

21. As the servant mentions his Lord by extolling His majesty, glorifying and praising Him, so shall the Lord remember him in his times of adversity. Imām Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal] related that the Prophet said, 'As you remember the majesty of your Lord, [saying] "There is no deity but God", "God is most great" and "Praise be to God", so shall the divine Throne be surrounded by a drone like that of bees, invoking the one who invokes God. And is there any one of you who would not want something by which he is mentioned [to his Lord]?' This is the *ḥadīth* or its meaning.¹³⁴

22. When the servant seeks to know his Lord through remembrance in times of ease, the Lord will know him in times of hardship.¹³⁵ A saying with this meaning states that when an obedient servant who [regularly] calls on his Lord is afflicted by some adversity, or asks something of God, the angels exclaim, 'O Lord, a familiar voice from a familiar servant!' But if it is a servant who neither heeds nor obeys his Lord, the angels say, 'An unknown voice from an unknown servant.'

23. Remembrance delivers one from God's chastisement. As Mu'ādh [ibn Jabal] is said to have uttered, 'The son of Adam can do nothing more effectively to deliver himself from God's chastisement than to invoke Him.'¹³⁶

24. It is a means by which tranquillity [*sakīna*] descends, Divine mercy encompasses and angels surround the one who remembers

in the manner described by the Prophet.¹³⁷

25. It is a way to keep the tongue from backbiting, slander, lies, lewdness and vain talk. For a servant must speak, and if upon speaking he fails to mention God and His commandments, then he falls into those forbidden things, or [at least] some of them. The only way to avoid the latter is to mention God. Both reflection and experience will bear this out: a person who accustoms his tongue to the mention of God, protects it from vain talk and chatter. But the tongue that is dry of God's mention grows moist with vanities, chatter and lewdness. There is neither strength nor power save in God.

26. The gatherings where God is mentioned are the gatherings of angels, whereas those full of chatter and heedlessness are the gatherings of devils. Let the servant decide which of these [two gatherings] is more pleasing and important to him, for he will belong to it in this world and the next.

27. An invoker is made joyful by his invocation and makes those around him joyful, for he is blessed wherever he may be. But someone who is heedless of God's mention, someone who just chatters, is made sorrowful by his heedlessness and empty talk, and makes those around him sorrowful as well.

28. Remembrance saves the servant from regret on the Day of Judgement. Every gathering in which the servant does not mention his Lord will be a source of regret for him on that Day.¹³⁸

29. The remembrance of God and the tears shed in private are the way to the shade that God will grant His servant on the Day of the Greatest Heat in the shelter of His Throne. As people stand in a melting sun, he who remembered [his Lord] will find shade beneath the Throne of the Most Merciful, the Almighty.¹³⁹

30. To be busy with remembrance is how God grants something better to the invoker than to those who supplicate Him. As the Messenger of God said, 'God says, "To one too occupied in My remembrance to supplicate Me I give what is better than what I give to those who ask.'¹⁴⁰

31. The easiest form of worship, remembrance is also the strong-

est and the best. Moving the tongue is easier than moving the limbs of the body and simpler. If someone could move his muscles day and night as much as his tongue, he would be completely exhausted—in fact, it is quite impossible.

32. Remembrance plants the trees of Heaven. In Tirmidhī, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd states that the Messenger of God said, ‘On the Night of the Ascension, I met Abraham, friend of God. He said to me: “O Muḥammad, recite to your people the greetings of peace and let them know that the soil of Heaven is fragrant, its waters sweet; that it is green with vegetation; that its trees are planted by [the remembrance]: Glory be to God, Praise be to God, there is no deity but God and God is most great!”’¹⁴¹ This *ḥadīth* is considered good but unusual [*ḥasan gharīb*].¹⁴¹

Also in Tirmidhī is the *ḥadīth* transmitted by Abū l-Zubayr from Jābir [ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī], that God’s Messenger said, ‘For whoever says “Glory and praise be to God”¹⁴² a date palm is planted in Heaven.’ Tirmidhī calls this *ḥadīth* good and sound.¹⁴²

33. The recompense and excellence [*al-‘aṭā’ wa l-faḍl*] that result from remembrance do not result from any other activity. In the two authoritative collections, Abū Hurayra related that God’s Messenger said, ‘For whoever says one hundred times in a single day “There is no deity but God, alone, without partner; to Him belongs the kingdom and to Him the praise; He has power over all things,”¹⁴³ it is like freeing ten slaves. One hundred good deeds are written for him and one hundred wrongs removed. It will be a shield from the Devil for that whole day until evening. No one will come with anything better, except someone who can do more. And whoever says one hundred times in one day “Glory be to God and Praise”¹⁴⁴ his greater sins will be removed, though they be like foam on the sea.’¹⁴³

And in Muslim it is related that God’s Messenger said, ‘To say “Glory be to God, Praise be to God, there is no deity but God, God is most great”¹⁴⁴ is more beloved to me than all upon which the sun sets.’¹⁴⁴

In Tirmidhī, Anas [ibn Mālīk] relates that the Prophet said,

‘Whoever says, in the morning or the evening, “O God, I have **risen** [this day] bearing witness to You, the bearers of Your **Throne**, Your Angels and the whole of Your creation: that You **are truly** God, that there is no deity but You and that Muḥammad **is Your** servant and Your messenger”^A—God shall free him by one fourth from hell. Whoever says it twice, God shall free him by one half. Whoever says it three times, God shall free him by three quarters. Whoever says it four times, God shall free him completely from hell.’¹⁴⁵

In Tirmidhī, Thawbān relates that the Prophet said, ‘Whoever says evening and morning, “I am content with God as my Lord, Islam as my religion and Muḥammad as the Messenger” will merit thereby God’s good pleasure.’^{A 146}

Again in Tirmidhī: ‘Whoever enters the marketplace and says “There is no deity but God, alone, without partner; to Him belongs the kingdom and to Him the praise; He gives life and brings death; He is the living who does not die; in His hand is goodness and He has power over all things”^A—for him God will record countless good deeds, erase countless ill deeds and raise him countless degrees.’¹⁴⁷

Safety from Forgetfulness of God

34. Constancy in remembrance of the Lord (Exalted) brings about security from forgetfulness of Him. This forgetfulness is the cause of the servant’s misery both in his worldly life and on the appointed Day. This is because forgetfulness of his Lord ... leads to forgetfulness of his own soul and its welfare. As God has said, ‘*And be not like those who forget God and whom He causes to forget their own souls: truly those are the corrupted.*’¹⁴⁸

If a servant forgets his own soul—turning away from it, disregarding what benefits it and becoming engrossed with other things—then its ruin and corruption are inevitable. It is the same as if he had a field of grain, an orchard or anything else that depended on his care, and he neglected it, forgot about it, busied himself with something else and disregarded what it needed. This

is where someone else could take his place.

But what about the misery, ruin and destruction of his own soul? If he ignores his soul, forgets it and gets distracted from its good; if he fails to care for it and gives up seeking what is beneficial to it, then what more can he expect than ruin, destruction and loss? This is [the state of] someone '*whose situation has exceeded all bounds*',¹⁴⁹ someone who throws away what is beneficial. He surrounds himself with the means of his own isolation, failure and destruction.

There is no way for a servant to protect himself against this state except by constant remembrance of God, by 'keeping the tongue ever moist with the mention of God' until it occupies a place as important to him as the very life on which he utterly depends—or as his food, lack of which would ruin his body; as water to someone dying of thirst; as clothes in the heat and the cold; as shelter in a hot blinding wind. Remembrance should indeed occupy a place like this, or a greater one [in his life], because what common measure is there between the ruin and destruction of the body, on the one hand, and the ruin and destruction of the heart and the soul, on the other? The body must perish, and yet a better state may just as surely follow its perishing. But if heart and soul should perish, what good can be hoped for? There is neither strength nor power save in God the Most High, the Almighty.

If there were no other benefit in remembrance and in maintaining it than this, it would suffice. For anyone who forgets God, and so forgets his own soul in this life, will be forgotten in the torment of the Day of Judgement. As the words of God proclaim: '*Whosoever turns away from My remembrance, for him life shall be narrow, and We will bring him forth on the Day of Judgement blind. He will say, "Lord, why did you bring me forth blind when I used to see?" And He will answer, "My verses came to you and you forgot them; and so on this Day you are forgotten."*'¹⁵⁰ That is, 'You are forgotten in the torment, just as you forgot My verses, neither reciting them nor acting upon them.'

‘Turning away’ from the remembrance of God implies turning away from His Book, the remembrance which God sent down. The notion thus implies turning away from the remembrance of the Lord through His Book, His names and attributes, His commandments, His gifts and His graces. All this flows from having turned away from His Book. For the word *dhikr* [‘remembrance’] in the verse is a noun which may be taken to refer either to what [God] possesses or solely to His names. [And so, the meaning of the verse is that] ‘he turned away from My Book and recited it not, nor reflected upon its meaning, nor acted upon it, nor understood it. His life and livelihood can only be narrow—plagued with adversities and torments.’

As for the word *ḍanak* [in the verse], it refers to narrowness, extreme difficulties and trials. To describe life with this word is hyperbole. The ‘narrow life’ referred to in the verse is [also] said to mean ‘punishment in the isthmus’ [*barzakh*],¹⁵¹ but the most correct reading includes life in both this world and the isthmus. Without a doubt, the servant will find himself in *ḍanak*—in toil, tribulation and narrowness—in both abodes, and be forgotten in the torment of the next world.

Opposite to this are the people of blessing and success, whose lives in this world are the most wholesome, and whose lives in the isthmus and the next world will offer the greatest recompense.

God has said, ‘*Whoever does good, whether male or female, and believes, to him shall We give a wholesome life*’—this, in the world. Then He says, ‘*And We shall reward them with a recompense for the best that they had done*’—this being in the isthmus and the next world.¹⁵²

He also said, ‘*Upon those who migrate for God after having been oppressed, We shall bestow good in this world, though the recompense of the next world is greater if they but knew.*’¹⁵³ And, ‘*If you seek forgiveness from your Lord then turn to Him in repentance. He will provide you with a goodly provision until an appointed time, and He will give favour to each one worthy of favour*’¹⁵⁴—which is of the next world. And,

*‘Say: O My believing servants, revere your Lord. To those who do good in this world there is good. God’s earth is vast. And those who are patient will be recompensed without measure.’*¹⁵⁵

In these four instances, God affirms that He will recompense the doer of good for his good with two rewards: a reward in this world and a reward in the next. So for the good deeds there must be recompense in the short term, and likewise for the wrongs. But [it would be enough for the doer of good] to have no other recompense than the expansiveness [he feels] in his breast, the joy in his heart, the pleasure he finds in dealing with his Lord, his obedience to and invocation of Him, and the delight of his soul [that comes] from the love of God and His remembrance.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, the happiness he has with his Lord is greater than the happiness of someone next to a king who rules with magnanimity.

[Conversely], the narrowness, hardness of heart, dispersion, darkness, rancour, cares, woes, sadness and fear which the ill-doer receives in return ...¹⁵⁷ are a requital that no one with the least sense or the least life can doubt. These ... are [truly] the punishments of this life, the worldly fire, the hell of this world; just as turning toward God, finding contentment in Him and from Him, filling one’s heart with His love, constant remembrance of Him, the joy and happiness that come from knowing Him—these are the rewards of this life, the Heaven [of this world] and the life which no life of a king can equal in the least.

The Heaven of this World

I heard the Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyya, say, ‘Truly, there is a Heaven in this world, [and] whoever does not enter it, will not enter the Heaven of the next world.’ And once he said to me, ‘What can my enemies do to me? I have in my breast both my Heaven and my garden. If I travel they are with me, and they never leave me. Imprisonment for me is a religious retreat [*khalwa*]. To be slain for me is martyrdom [*shahāda*] and to be exiled from my land is a spiritual journey [*siyāḥa*].’

During his imprisonment in the fortress, he would say, 'I could not be more grateful for this blessing were I to have this entire fortress in gold'; or, 'I could never repay them for the good that has come to me in [this prison].'¹⁵⁸ And in prostration he would say, 'O God, help me in my gratitude to You, remembrance of You and the most comely worship of You, God willing.'¹⁵⁹

Once he said to me, 'The real prisoner is someone whose heart is imprisoned from his Lord; the true captive is someone captured by his passions.' And when he entered the fortress and was inside its walls, he gazed upon them and then recited the verse, '*And a wall between them is struck which has a gate. On the inside there is mercy, on the outside punishment.*'¹⁶⁰

God knows, I have never seen anyone who had a better life than his. Despite the difficulties and all that expunges comfort and luxury, nay, things completely opposite to them; despite imprisonment, intimidation and oppression, Ibn Taymiyya had a purer life than anyone could. He was the most generous, the strongest of heart and the most joyful of soul, with '*the radiance of bliss*' in his face.¹⁶¹ When we were seized with fear and our thoughts [about God's decree] turned negative, and the earth grew narrow for us, we would go to him. No sooner did we look at him and hear his words than all these [feelings] would leave us, to be replaced by relief, strength, certainty and tranquillity. So glory be to the One who lets His servants witness His Heaven well before they meet Him, who opens its doors to them in this world of deeds and who gives them something of its refreshment, its breeze and its perfume—that they might seek it and hasten towards it with all their strength.

A gnostic once said, 'If kings and the sons of kings knew what we had, they would try to take it from us by the sword!' Another said: 'How pitiful, the worldly people! They leave this life without ever having tasted the sweetest thing in it.' When asked what that was, he replied, 'The love of God, the knowledge of God and the remembrance of God,' or words to that effect.¹⁶² Another said: 'There are times when the heart dances in joy.' And another

said, 'There are times when I say, If the people of Heaven have anything like this, how truly sweet their lives!'

To love God, to know Him intimately, to remember Him constantly, to find peace and rest in Him, to make Him alone the [ultimate] object of love, fear, hope and trust; to base one's act on His control of His servants' cares, aspirations and will—such is this world's Heaven, and such is a blessing with which no other blessing can compare. It is by this that the hearts of those who love God are gladdened and that the gnostics find life. As their hearts are gladdened by God, so others are gladdened by them. For whoever finds his source of gladness in God, gladdens all hearts; whoever does not, finds nothing in this world but restlessness.

Anyone with life in his heart will confirm this. But someone whose heart is dead will only estrange you from God; and so seek intimacy [with God] without him, when you can, for his mere presence will estrange you. If you are tested by him, show him only your outer aspect, but leave him behind in your heart. Depart from him with your soul and do not let him distract you from the One who is most important to you. Know that the greatest of all losses is the involvement with someone who weakens your relationship and standing with God, cutting you off from Him, wasting your time, dispersing your heart, weakening your resolve and dividing your aspirations. Therefore, if you are tested by this [kind of situation]—and it is inevitable that you will be—then bear up for the sake of God, and acknowledge Him as much as you are able.

Draw near to God by whatever of it pleases Him. Make your association [with worldly people] a profit, not a loss. Be like the man travelling along, whom another invites to stop: seek to take him along with you. When he comes along, lead him but be not led by him. And if he refuses, and you have no hope that he will journey, then [at least] do not let him detain you. Rather, hasten on, pay him no heed. Do not [even] turn in his direction, for he is a highway robber regardless.

Protect your heart and be careful of how you spend your day and your night. Let not the sun set on you before you reach camp, 'lest you be carried off'. Nor let the dawn find you abandoned in the camp after the caravan has moved on, and the time is nigh for you to reach them.¹⁶³

The Easiest Form of Worship

35. Remembrance is easy for the servant—whether he lies in bed or journeys, in health or in illness, in comfort and luxury, in his daily work, standing, sitting or lying down, on his way or at home. No [other] act can be performed so often and in so many situations. In fact, it is so easy that he could sleep in his bed and still be ahead of the one who stands [in worship] but is heedless. The sleeper rises having traversed a great distance, all the while stretched out on his bed; whereas the one standing heedlessly rises seated on his mount. *'And that is the grace of God which He gives to whomever He pleases.'*¹⁶⁴

It is recounted that there once was an ascetic [*rajul min al-^cibād*] who stayed the night with a man as a guest. The ascetic spent the entire night standing in prayer, while the host was stretched out in his bed. When he rose in the morning, the ascetic said to the host, 'The caravan has gone on before you,'¹⁶⁵ or words to that effect. To which the [host] replied, 'It is unimportant that one spend the night travelling and then wake up with the caravan. What is important is that one spend the night in bed but wake up having crossed a great distance.'

This and similar sayings have beneficial and detrimental aspects. If they lead someone to think that by lying in bed he can surpass a person who stands in prayer, then they are false. Rather, they refer to the one who lies in bed but his heart is attached to his Lord; the love of his heart cleaves to the Throne, and so he passes the night encircling the Throne with the angels. The man himself has passed away from the world and what it contains. The only thing that keeps him from standing in prayer is some hindrance, such as physical pain, cold or fear of being seen by

enemies pursuing him, or some other excuse. He lies in bed, but God knows best what is in his heart.

The other person, however, stands in prayer and recites. In his heart is the desire to be seen, to impress others, to have some rank or praise from them. Or else, his heart is one place and his body in another. And God knows best what is in his heart.

There is no doubt that the one in bed will rise having far surpassed the one who stands, because [the value of] an act rests in the heart, not the body: it depends on the dweller, not the dwelling. [The meaning of an] expression is in its first motion,¹⁶⁶ and it is remembrance which inspires the dweller's resolve, stimulates the love that is dormant [in his soul] and resurrects the quest that has died.

Remembrance as Light

36. For the invoker, remembrance is a light [*nūr*] in this world. It will be a light for him in his grave and at the appointed meeting [*ma'ādihi*] just ahead¹⁶⁷ on the Bridge. Neither hearts nor graves are illuminated by anything comparable to the remembrance of God, for He said, '*Or is one who was dead, and We gave him life and made for him a light by which he might walk among people, like the one who is in a darkness from which he cannot emerge?*'¹⁶⁸ The first is the believer illuminated by faith in God and His love, gnosis and remembrance. The second is heedless of God, having turned away from His remembrance and His love.

The concern of all concerns, the success of all successes is in [this] light. The misery of all miseries is to lose it. This is why the Prophet asked his Lord so fervently to put light in his flesh and bones, muscles, hair, and skin, his hearing and sight, above and beneath him, on his right and his left, behind him and before him—saying, 'and make of me light'.¹⁶⁹ In short, he would ask his Lord to make every particle of his inner and outer being into light: to encompass him with light from every side, and to make his essence and totality light.

The religion of God is light. His Book is light. His Messenger

is light. The abode which He has prepared for His intimate friends glows with light. God is the light of the heavens and the earth; one of His names is Light. And by the light of His face is darkness dispelled. As the Prophet said in his prayer on the day of Ṭā'if: 'I seek refuge in the light of Your face—which illumines the darkness and sets aright the things of this world and the next—from Your anger being loosed upon me, or Your wrath descending upon me. [My] humble devotion is to You, until You are pleased. There is neither strength nor power save in You.'¹⁷⁰

And as Ibn Mas'ūd said, 'With the Lord there is neither night nor day. The light of the heavens is from the light of His face.'¹⁷¹

God says, '*And the earth is illumined by the light of its Lord.*'¹⁷² When He comes on the Day of Resurrection to sort out His servants, and the earth is illumined by His Light, on that day there will be no light either from the sun or the moon; for the sun will be folded up and the moon eclipsed, and the lights of both will vanish.

[In fact] the veil of God is also light. Abū Mūsā [al-Ash'arī] said, 'The Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] bade us to keep ever in mind five utterances: "Verily, God does not sleep, nor should it be thought of Him that He sleeps; He lowers and raises the scales. The deeds of the night ascend to Him before the day, and the deeds of the day ascend to Him before the night. His veil is light. And if He were revealed unto you, the features of His face would burn the sight of any creature who gazed upon Him." And then he recited, "*That the one in the fire and those around it be blessed.*"'¹⁷³

This veil is illuminated by the light of His face. If it were not for that veil, the features of His face would burn up the vision of any who gaze upon Him—just as the mountain to which He unveiled the tiniest portion of His face was reduced to dust, never again to rise up before its Lord Exalted.¹⁷⁴

This is the same sense that Ibn 'Abbās intended by his comment on the verse '*Visions do not perceive Him*', 'This is God Most

High. When He unveils His light, naught can withstand it.’¹⁷⁵ And such was the quality of [Ibn ‘Abbās] understanding and wisdom. How could it be otherwise, when the Messenger of God prayed that God might teach him the interpretation [of the Qur’ān].

The Lord sees through His own vision, but it is impossible for human vision to perceive Him, even if one were to see Him; for perception is [something] higher than sight. It is like the sun—and to God belong the most sublime parables—we can see it, but we cannot perceive it as it truly is, nor get close to how it truly is. And so, when Ibn ‘Abbās was asked about seeing God and the verse *‘Visions do not perceive Him’*, he said, ‘Do you not see the sky?’

‘Of course,’ the man answered. And Ibn ‘Abbās asked him, ‘But do you perceive it?’ [The man] said, ‘No.’

‘Well, God Most High is much greater and more overwhelming,’ replied Ibn ‘Abbās.¹⁷⁶

Commentary on the Verse of Light

God strikes a parable about His light within the heart of His servant, which only the learned understand: *‘God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is a niche in which there is a lamp. The lamp is in a Glass, the Glass, like a glistening star, kindled from a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil well nigh glows though no fire has touched it: light upon light. God guides to His light whom He wills, and God strikes parables for human beings, and God knows all things.’*¹⁷⁷

Ubayy ibn Ka‘b said, *‘the similitude of His light [takes place in] the Muslim’s heart.’*¹⁷⁸ This light, which He has placed in the heart, comes from gnosis, love, faith and the remembrance of God. It is the light that He has sent down to His servants, by which He gives them life, and by which they walk among people. Its origin is in their hearts, but then He strengthens and increases it until it appears upon their faces, limbs, bodies, even their clothes and dwellings. People of this nature perceive it, while

others deny it. On the Day of Judgement, however, it will come forth by their faith, and hasten before them in the darkness of the Bridge, that they might cross it. They will proceed in proportion to either its strength or its weakness in their hearts during their life in the world.

For one person, it will be like the sun, for another like the moon, the stars or a lamp. For yet another, this light will be only at the tips of his toes; it will shine, then go out [then shine, then go out]. For just as his light had been in this world, so he shall be given when crossing the Bridge. In fact, it is the selfsame light that had appeared to him before. However, just as the hypocrite has no real light in this world, or has only an outward light but none within, so shall he be given [on that Day] an outward light which will vanish in the darkness and be lost.

It is about this light—its abode, its bearer and its fuel—that God has coined the parable of the niche, which is like the breast. In this niche lies a globe made of purest glass, like a *glistening planet* in whiteness and purity—a similitude for the heart, likened to glass inasmuch as it possesses the qualities of the believer's heart: clarity, fineness and firmness. By its clarity [the believer] sees truth and direction; by its fineness he acquires kindness and mercy; by its firmness he combats God's enemies, and stands firm in his resistance to them and upholds the truth.

None of these qualities negate another or oppose it. They strengthen and complement each other. '*[The faithful are] strict against the unbelievers, merciful to each other*';¹⁷⁹ '*By the mercy of God, you were gentle to them. For had you been harsh, or hard of heart, they would have fled from your presence*';¹⁸⁰ and '*O Prophet, strive against the non-believers and the hypocrites and be firm against them*.'¹⁸¹ According to a saying that has been passed down, 'Hearts are God's vessels on earth, and most beloved unto Him are the finest, firmest and clearest of them.'¹⁸²

In contrast to this heart, there are two other reprehensible types. One is the heart that is hard like stone, devoid of com-

passion, generosity or social good; devoid, too, of the clarity by which God may be seen—a heart dominated by ignorance, with neither knowledge of the truth, nor compassion for fellow creatures.

The other is the heart that is as weak as water. It is devoid of strength and firmness, accepts any idea, but lacks the strength to stand by what it accepts. It is devoid of the power to affect anyone, but is itself affected by everything it mingles with—be it strong or weak, wholesome or tainted.

In the glass *there is a lamp* which bears the light. The fuel for this light is oil pressed from an *olive tree*, [which grows] in a place so medial that the sun reaches it at both the beginning and the end of the day, making its oil the purest and least opaque—so clear it almost glows by itself, without fire.

Such is the fuel for this lamp's light, and such is the fuel of the lamp in the believer's heart which comes from the tree of revelation, the greatest in blessing and the farthest removed from extremes. Indeed, it is the most central of all things, the most balanced, the most excellent. It reaches neither the extreme of the Christians nor that of the Jews, but rather seeks a middle way in all things. Such is the fuel for the Lamp of Faith which burns in the believer's heart.

Because this oil is so limpid that it almost glows by itself, when it is mingled with fire its glow becomes even more intense, its substance is strengthened and there is '*light upon light*'. Similarly, the heart of the believer is so illumined that he could almost know God solely by way of his own God-given nature [*fitra*] and his own intelligence, though he had no fuel. Then the fuel of revelation reaches him, gives glad tidings to his heart and mixes with his own radiance. The light of revelation is added to the light of his own God-given nature, and the two combine to become '*light upon light*'.

He had almost been able to speak of God without ever hearing anything about Him. When he hears utterances which his own nature has already perceived, it becomes '*light upon light*'. Such is

the case of the believer who [first] experiences the truth in a general way through his God-given nature, and then hears the words brought by [the Prophet] which explain the details. His faith is thus founded on the testimony of revelation and the testimony of his God-given nature.

Let a person of insight reflect on this great verse and on how it can be applied according to this noble meaning. God mentions His light in the heavens and on earth, and His light in the hearts of His believing servants. There is intelligible light, perceived by insight, illuminating inner visions and hearts [*al-nūr al-ma'qūl al-mashhūd bi l-baṣā'ir wa l-qulūb*]. And there is the physical light [*al-nūr al-maḥsūs*], perceived by the faculty of sight, illuminating the upper and the lower regions of the world: two sublime lights, one more sublime than the other. When physical light is absent from some place, no human being or animal can live there. Animal life is engendered only where there is light. It cannot thrive in dark places where no light shines. And so, a people for whom the light of revelation and faith has gone out, and a heart in which this light has gone out, must be dead, no more alive than the most lifeless place on earth.

In His words, God connects life with light: *'Or is one who was dead, and whom We gave life and made for him a light by which to walk among people, like one who is in a darkness from which he cannot emerge?'*¹⁸³ Or His words, *'Thus have We inspired you with a spirit from Our command; you had known neither the Book nor faith, but We made it a light by which We guide those of Our servants whom We will.'*¹⁸⁴

About this second verse, it has been said that the pronoun 'it' refers to *command*, or to *faith*, but the correct reading is that it refers to *spirit*. Thus, 'We made that spirit with which We inspired you a light.' In other words, we say *spirit* when life is brought forth, and *light* when radiance and illumination are brought together. But the two are inseparable. If life exists through the Spirit, so does light; and where there is light, there

is also life. So the heart of one who does not accept this Spirit is dead and benighted, as dead as one whose soul has separated from his body.

The Images of Water and Fire in the Qur'ān

Related to this, God has struck two [other] parables—one of water and the other of fire. He shows how life comes by way of water and light. His words regarding [the first,] in the beginning of the Chapter of the Cow, are: *'Their parable is of one who kindles a fire, and then, when it has lit up all those around him, God takes away their light and leaves them in darkness, where they cannot see.'*¹⁸⁵

Here, it says, 'God takes away their light', but not 'their fire', since fire has both the property to burn and the property to give light. What He takes away is the latter, leaving only the property of burning and harm.

Such is the state of hypocrites. The light of their faith has been removed by hypocrisy, leaving to smoulder in their hearts the heat of disbelief, doubts and questionable practices. And as heat and flames singe their hearts in this world, so, too, on the Day of Judgement will God place them in *'a kindled fire that reaches up to the hearts'*.¹⁸⁶ Such is the similitude of one who no longer goes through this world by the light of faith, who abandons it and removes himself from it after it had lit his way. This is the condition of the hypocrite who knows, then denies, who reads, then disputes and remains in darkness, *'deaf, dumb and blind'*. As God has said in respect to his non-believing brethren, *'Those who deny Our signs are in darkness, deaf and dumb,'*¹⁸⁷ and *'The parable of those who reject faith is that of the one who shouts like a goat-herder, to things that hear nothing but calls and cries. Deaf, dumb and blind, they have no sense.'*¹⁸⁸

He likens the state of the hypocrite who departs from the light after it has shone upon him to someone who lights a fire. Once it lights up his surroundings, the fire is then taken away. The hypocrites mingle with the Muslims; they perform the prayer, fast

and hear the Qur'ān with them. They perceive the directions of Islam and its beacons, witness its illumination and see its light with their own eyes. And so God says in respect to them '*they do not return*'¹⁸⁹ to [Islam], because after having donned its robe and being given its light, they left it. Whereas with respect to the non-believers, He says '*they have no sense*',¹⁹⁰ since they have no sense of Islam; they have neither entered it nor been touched by its light, but remain in the darkness of rejection—'*deaf, dumb and blind*.'

So glory to the One who has made His word a cure for the ailments of the heart, a call to faith and its inner realities, an invitation to eternal life and enduring grace, a direction to the right path. The '*caller who calls to faith*'¹⁹¹ could be heard by any ear that hearkens, but Qur'ānic exhortations have no meaning for hearts which are empty because doubtful things and passions have overwhelmed them. [For these hearts], the lamps have gone out, and heedlessness and ignorance are in control. [For them], the doors to guidance are locked shut, and even the keys have been lost. The rust of '*what they have earned*',¹⁹² has encrusted them. Drunk with the passion for sin and delusion, they are impervious to blame. Despite admonishments sharper than spears and arrows, they perish in an ocean of ignorance, heedlessness, deeply ingrained passions and desires. And 'for the wounds of the dead, treatment is of no avail.'

The Similitude of the Rainstorm [ṣayyib]

The second parable is that of water and is found in God's words: '*Or like a rainstorm [ṣayyib] from the sky where there is darkness, thunder and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears by reason of the thunderclaps for fear of death. And God encompasses the non-believers.*'¹⁹³

[The word] ṣayyib signifies the 'driving rain' that falls from the sky, and is a similitude for the Qur'ān, by which springs the life of hearts, just as the life of the earth—its plants and animals—springs forth after a rain. When it reaches the believers, they know that

it gives life, and does not endanger it. They are not repelled by its thunder and lightning, or its warnings, [descriptions of] punishment and similitudes, by which God exhorts those who break His commandments and describes the place of those who reject His Prophet. Nor are they repelled by its rigorous commandments, such as combating enemies or patiently enduring. They are not repelled by those commandments which are hardest on the ego because they oppose its desires: '*darkness, thunder and lightning*'.¹⁹⁴ Anyone who knows about rainstorms and what life they bring, is not driven away by dark skies, thunder or lightning. In fact, he is drawn to them, and he rejoices in their promise of life and fertility.

On the other hand, the heart of the hypocrite is blind, and his vision cannot get beyond the zone of darkness. He sees only the lightning, '*which all but snatches away his sight*', and the mighty thunder and darkness, which repel and frighten him. He '*puts his fingers in his ears*' in order not to hear the thunderclap, and is so startled by the lightning flash, its intensity and magnitude, that he fears it will '*snatch away his vision*', too weak to bear it. In his darkness, he hears the thunderclap and sees the lightning flash. If '*it lights up what is before him, he walks*' in its light. But if it goes out, '*he stands*' confused, not knowing where to walk. In his ignorance, he does not know that these things are common to rainstorms, which support not only earthly and plant life, but his own life. All he knows is the thunder, lightning and darkness, with no notion of what is behind them. And so a feeling of estrangement clings to him, and terror and apprehension will not leave him.

Someone familiar with rainstorms, on the other hand, knows that there must be thunder, lightning and dark skies, and that rain-bearing clouds may come. He is drawn to them, not repelled, and the thunder and lightning will not prevent him from welcoming the rain.

This is the similitude of the penetrating rain which descended with [the angel] Gabriel from the Lord of the worlds into the

heart of the Prophet, rain that gives life both to hearts and to existence. And it is in accordance with His wisdom, a '*seasoned wisdom*'¹⁹⁵—a pattern of causality established by the Almighty, the Wise—that He connect it to rain-laden clouds, thunder and lightning, just as He connects rainstorms to water. Of that rain-storm, the hypocrite sees but dark clouds, thunder and lightning, with no idea of what lies behind them. What attracts the faithful estranges him. What gives serenity to the knowledgeable makes him apprehensive. What gives certitude to the gnostics and the people of intuition [*al-mubṣirūn al-ʿārifūn*] fills him with doubt. In the parable of the fire, his vision is like that of a bat at midday. In the parable of water, his hearing is like that of someone who falls lifeless at the sound of thunder, as certain animals are said to do.

When demonic error, perverse images and false suppositions meet with such minds, they completely overpower them. They engulf them in their sphere of influence, and through them multiply their empty talk. Ears are filled with their ranting and the land with their books.¹⁹⁶ And how many respond to them, accept them and take up their mission, defend their camp, fight beneath their banner and add to their ranks! Yet how paltry their place with God and His saints!

Because of the general tribulation they cause and the harm their words inflict upon hearts, God in His Book strips away their veils and fully discloses their secrets. He explains their traits, deeds and speech. And so again and again He says, '*And among them ... and among them ... and among them*'¹⁹⁷—that their situation may be uncovered, the truths about them cleared and their secrets made manifest.

Now, at the beginning of the Chapter of the Cow, God describes the believers, the hypocrites and the non-believers. He mentions the traits of the first in three verses, the last in two, but takes nearly ten verses to mention the traits of the hypocrites, due to the tribulations and afflictions that come from dealing with someone who appears outwardly to agree and to lend support, in contrast to the non-believer—who makes his enmity clear and

shows you his inner feelings, impelling you to leave him alone.

Related to these two parables are two more, mentioned in the Chapter of Thunder. In the words of God, '*And He sends water down from the sky, so that valleys flow according to their measure, and the flood bears [on its surface] a swelling foam.*'¹⁹⁸

In the parable of water, God likens the revelation He sends down to vivify hearts to the water He sends from the sky. And He likens these hearts to valleys which bear the flow. And just as a wide valley will bear a great amount of rain and a narrow valley only a little, so a great heart will bear abundant knowledge and a small one only a little—each according to its measure.

When valleys contain debris and begin to flood, they carry along that debris. A high foam forms on the surface, but beneath is the fertile, life-bearing water. The river will deposit that debris upon its banks until only the water beneath is left, by which God irrigates the earth and gives life to the land, its people, trees and animals. But the debris is left behind, cast upon the banks to dry up.

This is the knowledge and faith which God sends down from the heavens into hearts. Hearts bear them and are affected by them, depending on how much they mix with the debris of passions and the foam of doubtful things, and these will stay on the surface, while knowledge, faith and guidance will go down into the depths of the heart. As the Prophet said in a *ḥadīth* related by Ḥudhayfa [ibn al-Yamān] and quoted in Bukhārī: 'Faith descends to the roots of men's hearts.'¹⁹⁹ The debris and foam then continue to dry up, cast away by the flood little by little, until they vanish completely. Useful knowledge and sincere faith remain in the heart, in its depths, where people may seek it to drink, irrigate and plant.

Abū Mūsā [al-Ash'arī] transmitted a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet says, 'God has charged me to convey the similitude that guidance and knowledge are like the heavy rain that falls upon part of the earth. Some spots are fertile and accept the water, giving forth abundant pasturage and herbage. Others are dry and

hold water only for people to drink and to sow. Still others are gullies which neither hold water nor give pasturage. This similitude betokens the one who understands the religion of God, benefits from what God has sent me with, knows and teaches [it]; and the one who pays no heed, does not accept God's guidance with which I have been sent.'²⁰⁰

Levels of People with Respect to Knowledge and Guidance

Thus, in respect of knowledge and guidance, the Prophet placed people in three categories. First are the heirs of the messengers and the successors of the prophets [*warathat al-rusul wa khulafā' al-anbiyā'*], the ones who uphold religion by their knowledge and deeds and who summon to God Almighty and His Prophet. They are the true followers of the Prophet; they are like the rich, fertile ground that both absorbs the rain and gives forth abundant herbage and pasture, which thrive and give life to others. They combine their insight [*al-baṣīra*] in religion with the power to summon [others], and so they are the heirs of the Prophets about whom God says, '*And mention My servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, endowed with strength and vision*',²⁰¹ that is, with '*insight*' into the religion of God. For by insight is God perceived and known, and by strength can one deliver His message and summon others to it.

The people of this category have the power to learn texts by heart, to understand the religion and to gain the insight of interpretation; so that from the sacred texts rivers of knowledge flow, treasures are discovered and certain unique understandings nourished. When the commander of the faithful, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib was asked, 'Did the Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] single you out for something not given to other people?' He answered, 'By the One who splits the grain and draws forth the soul, no—save for the understanding of His Book which God gives to a servant.'²⁰²

Likened to the lush pasture and herbage that spring from the earth, such understanding distinguishes this level from the sec-

ond. For the second category belongs to those who learn texts by heart, their main concern being to preserve them, keeping them intact for [others] to draw water from and pass on. They make discoveries, extract their treasures, plant their seeds in fertile ground and bring forth their enigmas and secrets—each drinking according to his capacity, ‘*So that each tribe knew its drinking place.*’²⁰³ These are the ones about whom the Prophet said, ‘God has made radiant the one who hears my words, remembers them and then passes them on just as he heard them. It may be that the bearer of learning is not a learned man [*faqīh*]. Sometimes the bearer of learning brings it to someone more learned than himself.’²⁰⁴

‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, who was like this, was ‘the pen of the community’ and ‘interpreter of the Qur’ān.’²⁰⁵ The number [of *ḥadīth*] he heard [directly] from the Prophet, beginning with the words ‘I heard’ or ‘I saw’, did not exceed twenty. But he heard from many of the Companions, and was blessed in understanding, giving from it abundantly and filling the world with knowledge and religious learning. Abū Muḥammad ibn Ḥazm said, ‘I collected his rulings [*fatāwā*] into seven huge volumes. That is the extent of what was collected, for the knowledge of Ibn ‘Abbās is like an ocean. His learning, his deductions,²⁰⁶ and his understanding of the Qur’ān awakened people.’ He heard as they heard and memorised the Qur’ān as they did, but his soil was the finest and most receptive for planting. So texts were sown therein and they blossomed forth with ‘*every splendid pair*’²⁰⁷ ‘*That is the grace of God, He gives to whom He will and God possesses infinite grace.*’²⁰⁸

The [number of] religious rulings and [the amount of] commentary belonging to Ibn ‘Abbās far exceeded those of Abū Hurayra, although Abū Hurayra memorised more than he did. The latter was, without hesitation, ‘the memory of the community’. He conveyed *ḥadīths* as he heard them, teaching them by night. He aspired to memorise and to convey what he memorised as he heard it. Ibn ‘Abbās aspired, on the other hand, to

teach and to discover [meanings and applications], to expand on texts and to let rivers and treasures flow therefrom.

The people who came after them have been of these two types. There were those who memorised, who were concerned with accuracy, preservation and with transmission [of text] as they heard it, but not with discovering [its meanings] nor with showing its treasures. There were those who concerned themselves with discovering, extracting rules from texts and understanding them.

Examples of the first are [scholars] like Abū Zur^{ca}, Abū Ḥātim and Ibn Dāra; and before them Bindār Muḥammad ibn Bashshār, ^cAmr al-Nāqid and ^cAbd al-Razzāq; and before them Muḥammad ibn Ja^cfar Ghundar and Sa^cīd ibn Abī ^cArūba and others, all of whom memorised and kept what they heard exact and free of error, but did not seek to uncover its meanings, to alter it or to derive rules from it.

Examples of the second are [Mālik, al-Layth, Sufyān, Ibn al-Mubārak, al-Shāfi^cī, al-Awzā^cī, Ishāq, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, Muḥammad ibn Naṣr al-Marūzī,] and the like, who added understanding and jurisprudence [*fiqh*] to [straight] narration.

These first two levels are most blessed with what God sent His Messenger, for they accepted and heeded it.

The first group are the people of narration, observance and understanding [*riwāya wa dirāya*]. The second are people of narration and observance [*riwāya wa ri^cāya*], with a share of understanding but mostly narration. The third group are, however, the most unfortunate of people, since they neither accepted nor heeded God's guidance. They are not people of memorisation, comprehension, narration, understanding or observance. '*They are really like cattle but more astray from the path.*'²⁰⁹ These are the people who make understanding grow narrow and who fan the fires; they aspire to nothing beyond the stomach and the pudenda. Beyond that, they aspire to clothes and appearance; to worldly rank and to strengthen the dog-like personality; or,

beyond that still, to strengthen the lion-like personality. As for the angelic personality, why would it be given to one of them?

For there are three types of men: the dog-like, the lion-like and the angelic. The dog-like are satisfied with bones, table scraps, carrion and defilement. These do not satisfy the lion-like, who crave to control and to dominate people, either by truth or by lies. But the angelic are above this. They direct their wills towards the Sublime Companion. They aspire to knowledge, faith and love of God. They turn towards Him, find peace and tranquillity in Him, place His love and good pleasure above all else. They take whatever they get from the world as a means to help them arrive at its originator, the Lord and Protector, not to cut themselves off from Him.

God then gives a second parable, this time of fire [in the Chapter of Thunder]: *'And from what they smelt in the fire to make ornaments and tools rise a foam like unto it.'*²¹⁰ This refers to iron, copper, silver, gold and other [metals] which are put in a crucible to be purified of dross. When the dross is removed and cast away, the pure metal useful to people remains.

After giving these two parables, God then mentions both the case of those who answer His call and heed His direction, and the case of those who do not: *'To those who respond to their Lord are all the good things. But those who do not, even if they should have all that is in the heavens and on earth and much more, [in vain] shall they offer it for ransom. These have a woeful reckoning and their destination will be hell, a dire abode.'*²¹¹

Where there is light, God makes life and where there is darkness, death. So both spiritual life and physical life are by way of light. It is the very substance of life, just as it is the very substance of illumination, and neither can exist without it. Insofar as the heart lives through this light will there be an inward broadening and expansion. As the Prophet said, according to a *ḥadīth* collected by Tirmidhī, 'When light enters one's heart, there is an expansion and a broadening.' They asked, 'What are its signs?' He replied, 'A turning towards the eternal abode, a turning away

from the abode of delusions and a preparation for death before it arrives.²¹²

It is [in fact] the servant's light which his speech and actions cause to rise up to God. For no speech rises up to Him except that which is pure. And that [which is pure] is light, its source being light. And no actions ascend to Him except those which are pious.²¹³ No souls ascend except those which are pure. These are the souls of the faithful which have been illuminated by the light which He sent down to His Messenger and the angels, created from light. On the authority of 'Ā'isha is a *ḥadīth* in Muslim: 'The Prophet [may God bless him and grant him peace] said, "The angels were created from light, the devils from fire, and human beings from what has been described to you."' ²¹⁴

Since the substance of angels is light, they ascend to their Lord with the souls of believers which they have taken [at death]. Then, the door of the earth's Heaven is opened, then the door of the second [Heaven], the third, the fourth and so on, until they reach the seventh Heaven and come to a stop. There they stand before Almighty God, who orders that [the servant's] book be recorded among the *'illīyūn*.²¹⁵ Because this soul is pure, wholesome, made radiant with light, it ascends with the angels to God.

But for the soul enveloped in darkness, corrupted and obscure, the gates of Heaven do not open, nor does the soul ascend to God. Rather, it is sent back from the lowest Heaven down to its own world and its own element, for it was earthly and base; while the first was celestial and sublime. Each soul then returns to its most essential element, whatever predominates in it. This is clear from the long *ḥadīth* narrated by al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Abū 'Awwāna al-Isfārā'inī in his collection—by al-Ḥākim and others. This *ḥadīth* is considered sound.²¹⁶

Only that deed, speech or soul ascends to God Almighty which is light, and the creatures who are greatest in light are closest to God and most honored.

In a *ḥadīth* related by 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, the Prophet said,

‘God created His creation in darkness and then cast some of His light upon it. Those who were struck by that light were guided, those whom it missed went astray. And this is why I say, the pen is dry of the knowledge of God.’²¹⁷

This great *ḥadīth* is one of the foundations of faith and opens one of the greatest doors to the mystery of destiny and divine wisdom [*ḥikma*]. God is the One who grants accord.

This light which God cast upon them gave them both life and direction. Their pure God-given nature had its portion of this light, but by itself it was incomplete. So He completed it by way of the spirit, which He sent to the prophets, and the light which He revealed to them. This is how God-given nature rediscovers the pre-existent light that reached it on the day the light was cast. The light of revelation and prophecy joined with the light of God-given nature, [and there is] ‘light upon light’. Hearts glow, faces shine, souls are vivified, the body inclines to His worship willingly and hearts add life to their life.

The Attributes of God

Then this light directs them to another light, still greater and more brilliant—the light of God’s sublime attributes, besides which every other light is dim. Inner vision beholds it with a perception linked to the heart in the same way that the objects of physical sight are linked to the eye. It confers upon [those who possess it] certitude and reveals to them the inner realities of faith, until they clearly see, as it were, the very Throne of the Most Merciful and behold Him mounting it [*istiwā’ihi*]²¹⁸—just as He describes in His Book and as His Messenger stated. God ponders the destinies of kingdoms. He commands and forbids, creates and provides, brings death and gives life. He decrees and delivers, elevates and abases, changes night into day. He alternates the days of people and nations, replacing one with another.²¹⁹

The messengers who are angels either ascend towards Him or are sent down with the command. His commands and designs in temporal succession are realised according to His will. For what

God wills comes into being in the time and manner He wills it, with neither addition nor loss, neither sooner nor later. His order and His decree are fulfilled in the heavens, in the farthest reaches of the earth and beneath it; in the seas, the skies and every other part of the universe. And He reverses them or turns them back, originates what He wills, encompasses all things with His knowledge, keeps account of every single thing and envelops all things with His mercy and wisdom.

His hearing encompasses all voices, yet they do not blend into each other or resemble each other. Rather, He hears the clamour of all the various tongues, distinct in their countless supplications. One does not distract Him from another, nor does He confuse their innumerable pleas, nor does the tone of the supplicants' voices repulse Him.²²⁰

His sight envelops all visible things, so that He sees the smallest black ant upon a piece of coal in a moon-less night. The hidden for Him is visible and the secret public. He knows what is secret and what is more hidden than a secret; for what is secret is contained in a person's mind, conceived in his heart, but not uttered by his lips; while what is more concealed is what even his heart has not yet formulated. Yet, God knows that this person will formulate in his heart such and such a thing, at such and such a time.

To God belong the creation and the command, sovereignty and praise, this world and the next, blessing, grace and veneration ... In His hand is all good and to Him return all affairs. His power encompasses all things. His mercy encompasses all things. His grace extends to every living thing. Those in Heaven and earth ask Him, and every day He is involved [with a new creation].

He forgives sin, relieves cares, removes woes, makes the broken whole. He enriches the indigent, teaches the ignorant and guides the one who is astray. He directs the confused, aids the desperate and frees the captive. He feeds the hungry, clothes the naked and heals the sick. He pardons the one who has been tried, accepts repentance from the one who repents and rewards the one who does good. He helps the oppressed, humbles the haugh-

ty and steadies the one who has stumbled. He covers shame and gives safety from fear. He exalts some people and abases others. He does not sleep, nor is sleep conceivable of Him. He lowers and raises the scales. To Him do the deeds of the night ascend before those of the day, and the deeds of the day before those of the night.

His veil is light. Were He to lift it, the vision of His Face would consume all in creation that gaze. His right hand is full. All the days and nights of creation have not diminished it through giving—do you not see what He has given since He began creation? Giving does not diminish in the least what He possesses. The heart and forelocks of every creature are in His hand, and the resolution of all matters depends on His decree and His destiny. The whole earth will be in His grasp on the Day of Judgement, and all the heavens will be gathered in His right hand. He will hold all the heavens in His noble right hand and the earth in His other hand. Then He will shake them and say, ‘I am the Sovereign; I am the Sovereign. It is I who created the world out of nothingness, and I who will return it to what it was in the beginning.’

No sin is too great for Him to forgive, no need too great for Him to fill. And if all those in His heavens and on His earth, from the beginning to the end of creation, human beings and *jinn* had the heart of the most pious one among them, it would not add to His sovereignty in the least. And if all those in His heavens and on His earth, human beings and *jinn*, living and dead, moist and dry were assembled on a single vast plain and asked from Him, and He gave each one of them what was asked, it would not diminish by a particle what He possesses.

If all the trees on earth, from the beginning to the end of existence, were pens; if all the seas with seven other seas added to them were ink, and those pens were to write in that ink, both the pens and ink would run out—but the words of the Creator would not. And how could they, seeing how His words have neither beginning nor end, while all created things do, and so must pass away

and run out? And how can created things pass away except as created things?

He is the First before whom there is nothing; the Last after whom there is nothing; the Inward above whom there is nothing; the Outward beneath whom there is nothing—Glorified and Exalted is He, most worthy to be invoked, worshipped and praised. He is the first to be thanked; the one whose support is most desired; the most generous of those who possess; the most clement of those who have power; the noblest of those who have a purpose; the most just of those who show anger. With His knowledge comes His forbearance; with His might His forgiveness; with His withholding His wisdom; with His excellence and mercy His guardianship.

Servants have no real right upon Him,
Yet none of their strivings to reach Him are lost.

If they are chastised, that is His justice;
And if blessed by the generous Lord, that is His grace.

He is the Sovereign without a partner, the unique without equal, the independent without constraint, the eternally existent without son or mate; and He is the transcendent without comparison or kind.

Everything perishes except His face; every kingdom fades except His kingdom; every sheltering shade except His will be withdrawn; every grace except His has its limit. None obeys save by His permission and mercy; none sins except by His knowledge and judgement. When He is obeyed He is grateful, when disobeyed He overlooks and excuses. His anger is always just; His blessings are always by His grace. [He is] the closest witness and the nearest protecting friend. He moves within souls and grasps by the forelock. He records the traces and writes the pages. For Him all hearts and secrets are open. For Him the hidden is evident. And both His giving and His punishment are by word: *'His command when He intends a thing is only to say unto it, Be! And it is.'*²²¹

These are the qualities before which every [created] light fades. Beyond them the mind cannot conceive or express in words.

Remembrance then brings light to the heart, the face and the limbs. It is the servant's light in this world, in the Intermediary Realm²²² and on the Day of Judgement. In proportion to the light of faith in his heart, his deeds and words emerge, each with a light and a proof. So there are some faithful whose deeds, when they ascend to God, are like the light of the sun. Such will be the light of their spirits when presented to God, the light which goes forth before them on the Bridge, and [which shows upon] their faces at judgement. And God is the helper; upon Him we depend.

Invitation to Sanctity [*al-walāya*]

37. Remembrance is the foremost principle [of faith], the way of most of the faithful and an invitation to sanctity.²²³ The door unto God opens to the one for whom remembrance is opened. So let him purify himself and enter unto his Lord, and there he shall find all he wants. For if he finds his Lord, he finds everything; and if he loses his Lord, he loses everything.

38. In the heart, there is an emptiness and a need which nothing can satisfy except the remembrance of God. When remembrance becomes the watchword of the heart, then the servant continuously remembers God. Wherever he is, the tongue will follow. This is the remembrance which fills that emptiness and satisfies that need. He who practises it is rich without possessions, honoured without followers and revered without rank. One who neglects it is, by contrast, poor with all his wealth, abased with all his rank and power, worthless with all his followers.

39. Remembrance gathers what has become dispersed, disperses what has become gathered, makes near what has grown remote and removes what has grown near.

It gathers together what has become dispersed within the servant: his heart, will and intention. For these to be separated,

dispersed and dissipated is the worst of all torments, while in their union is happiness and life itself.

[Conversely], remembrance disperses that which has accumulated within the servant. Cares and woes, sadness and disappointment at not getting his share or at not getting what he seeks; greater and lesser sins and burdens all fall away, crumble and vanish. Remembrance also disperses the forces which the Devil has gathered against him. For Iblīs keeps sending wave after wave [upon him]. The more intensely the servant seeks God and clings to Him, and the more that goodness predominates in his substance, the more intense these waves become. And there is no way to disperse those forces gathered by the Devil except through remembrance.

Bringing nearer what is remote refers to the next world, which both the Devil and illusions render seemingly distant. For the servant who keeps to remembrance, it is as if he enters the next world and dwells there. This world withdraws from view and the next world comes to the forefront in his heart. It removes him from what is close: namely, this world, which [appears] nearer to him than the next world. When the next world is close to his heart, this one will grow distant; whenever that level is nearer to him, this one withdraws. And there is no way to this except through constancy in remembrance. And God is our helper.

40. Remembrance wakens the heart from its sleep and rouses it from its slumber. Profits and bargains alike are lost to the sleeping heart. But when the heart wakes and comes to know what it has lost while asleep, it can collect itself, revive what is left of its life and recover what it has missed. This wakefulness only comes about through remembrance, for heedlessness of God is a deep sleep.

41. Remembrance is a tree which bears the fruits of gnosis and the states for which wayfarers [*al-sālikūn*] strive. In fact, there is no way to harvest these fruits except from the tree of remembrance. The taller this tree grows, the deeper are its roots and the larger

its fruits. Remembrance bears the fruits of all the stations [of the Way], from awakening to oneness; for it underlies each of them and is the firm ground upon which they are built. Just as walls must be built on a foundation before a roof is raised upon them, so a servant who fails to wake cannot make the least progress in the stages of the journey. But he can wake only through remembrance. As we said, heedlessness of God is the heart's sleep, even its death.

God is with the One who Invokes Him

42. Remembrance is when the one who remembers [*dhākir*] is near to the One remembered [*madhkūr*], and the One remembered is with him. This 'withness' [*ma'iyya*] is not in the sense of being with the other through knowledge or encompassment. Rather, it is a special [relationship] of proximity, friendship, love, help and accord—as in the words of God (Most High), '*Verily, God is **with** the reverent*';²²⁴ '*And God is **with** those who are patient*';²²⁵ '*And God is verily **with** those who do good*';²²⁶ and '*Do not grieve: God is truly **with** us*'.²²⁷

The scope of the relationship that comes to those who remember God is expressed in the sacred utterance: 'I am with My servant when he remembers Me and when his lips move to mention Me.'²²⁸

According to another saying, 'Those who remember Me sit in My company. Those who are grateful to Me visit Me. Those who obey Me shall have My generosity. But even those who disobey Me, I do not leave bereft of My Mercy. If they repent, then I am their beloved friend, for I love those who repent and I love those who purify themselves.'²²⁹ If they do not repent, I am their physician [*ṭabībuhum*], and I will try them with afflictions to cleanse them of their faults.'²³⁰

In fact, nothing resembles God's relationship with someone who remembers Him. This relationship is even more particular than the one that occurs to the doers of good deeds or the reverent. Beyond expression or description, it is something known

through direct experience. It is also a stumbling block unless the servant can distinguish between the eternal and the temporal, the Lord and the servant, the Creator and the created. Otherwise, he will fall into incarnationism—by which the Christians were misled—or unionism—by which the proponents of the doctrine of ‘the oneness of being’ [*wahdat al-wujūd*] have been misled.²³¹ For these latter, the Being of the Lord is identical to the being of created things. In fact, for them there is no Lord and servant, creation and Truth. [They hold] that the Lord is the servant and the servant is the Lord, that the creature, who has a likeness, is the transcendent Truth. Far be it from God (Exalted), who is above what the wrongdoers and the deniers say!

In other words, when the power of remembrance takes hold of the servant, causing him to lose consciousness of himself and his invocation in the [consciousness of] the One he invokes, the servant is bound to drift through the doors of incarnationism and union, unless his theology is sound.

43. Remembrance is equivalent [in merit] to freeing slaves, spending wealth for the sake of God and meeting God’s enemies in armed battle.

As quoted earlier, ‘For whoever says one hundred times in a single day, “There is no deity but God, alone, with no partner; to Him belongs the kingdom and to Him belongs all praise; and He has power over all things”, it is like freeing ten slaves. One hundred good deeds are written for him and one hundred wrongs are removed from him, and it will act as a shield from the Devil for that whole day until the evening...’

And Ibn Abī l-Dunyā related from al-A‘mash, from Sālim ibn Abī l-Ja‘d, ‘When it was said to Abū l-Dardā’ that a man had freed a hundred people, he said, “Freeing a hundred people takes up much of a man’s wealth. Better than that—since the best kind of faith is what is done with regularity both day and night—is that your tongues be ever moist with the mention of Almighty God.”’

And [‘Abd Allāh] ibn Mas‘ūd said, ‘For me, to glorify God

Most High a certain number of times is more beloved than to spend the same number of dinars for [combat] in the way of God.'

‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar was sitting with ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd when the latter said to him, ‘For me, to set out on the road with the words “Glory be to God; praise be to God; there is no deity but God; God is most great” is more beloved than spending the same number of dinars [for combat] in the way of God.’ To this ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar said, ‘For me, to set out on the road uttering these words is more beloved than providing the same number of mounts [for combat] in the way of God.’

And the *ḥadīth* of Abū l-Dardā’ has already been quoted, in which he said that the Messenger of God stated, ‘Should I tell you which of your deeds is best? Which purifies you most before your Sovereign? Which raises you higher in rank and is better for you than giving away gold and silver, better for you than meeting your enemies that you might slay them or they slay you?’ They answered, ‘By all means, Messenger of God, tell us!’ He said, ‘The remembrance of God Most High.’²³² Ibn Māja and Tirmidhī narrated this *ḥadīth*, whose chain of transmission al-Ḥākim said is sound.

The Basis of Gratitude

44. Remembrance is the basis of gratitude. No one can be grateful to God without invoking Him. Bayhaqī mentions that according to Zayd ibn Aslam, Moses said, ‘O Lord, You have blessed me abundantly, so show me how I can thank you abundantly.’ And God said, ‘Remember Me abundantly. When you remember Me abundantly, you thank Me abundantly; and when you forget Me, you do not believe in Me.’

Al-Bayhaqī also mentions in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān* that according to ‘Abd Allāh ibn Salām, Moses said, ‘O Lord, what is the gratitude that befits You?’ And God said to him through inspiration, ‘That your tongue be ever moist with My remembrance.’

To this Moses answered, ‘But there are instances when I am

ashamed to mention You.'

And God asked, 'What are they?'

'When I am impure after the sexual act or from answering the call of nature,' replied Moses.

'And what of it?'

'O Lord, what do I say then?'

And God answered, 'Say: Glory be to You, remove from me what is injurious; glory and praise to You, protect me from harm.'²³³

Said 'Ā'isha, 'The Prophet [may God bless him and grant him peace] used to invoke God Most High in every state.'²³⁴ She did not single out one state over another, proving that he invoked his Lord in a state of ritual impurity as well as ritual purity.²³⁵ As for when he relieved himself, there was no one with him [to affirm or deny that he said anything], but he did prescribe for his people certain formulas to say just before and after, evidence of how much he valued remembrance.

Likewise, the Prophet prescribed for his people a prayer to say just before the sexual act, 'In the name of God, O God, protect us from the Devil, and protect from the Devil what you bestow upon us.'²³⁶ He did not disapprove of remembrance in the heart to seek God's aid while answering the call of nature, or during union with one's spouse, because his heart could not but remember. It would have been impossible for him to keep his heart from remembering the Most Beloved in his life. In fact, were the heart charged with forgetting God [at certain times], the burden would be impossible [to bear]. As the poet said,

It was demanded of the heart to forget You,
but its nature could not change.

Remembrance with the tongue in this situation, however, is not something prescribed for us. The Messenger of God never bade us to do it, nor was it conveyed from any of the [Messenger's] Companions. On the contrary, 'Abd Allāh ibn Abī l-Hudhayl said, 'God Most High loves to be remembered in the marketplace

and in every situation except when one relieves oneself.' Here, to keep in mind modesty and vigilance and to be cognisant of one's blessings serve for remembrance. For there is remembrance in every condition, according to what is proper. In this state, what is proper is to keep one's nakedness covered out of modesty before God, and to remember that by His blessing and favour a harmful enemy to the body, something that could kill us if it remained, is removed. Therefore, its passing easily [from our bodies] is as much a blessing as our nourishment.

Having relieved himself, 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib passed his hands over his stomach and said, 'How blessed is this one, if people knew its worth!'²³⁷ And one of the early believers used to say, 'Praise be to God who lets me taste His delicious things, leaves their benefits within me and removes their harm from me!' His remembrance of God at the time of sexual union was similarly a remembrance of the blessing bestowed—one of the greatest in this life—and when he remembered God for it, gratitude filled his heart. So the remembrance is the basis of gratitude.

The Prophet said to Mu'ādh [ibn Jabal], 'By God, Mu'ādh, I truly love you. So do not forget to say at the end of each prayer: "O God, help me in my gratitude to You, my remembrance of You and the most beautiful worship of You."²³⁸ Thus he connected remembrance and gratitude in the manner prescribed by God in the verse, '*Remember Me—I shall remember you. And be grateful unto Me, and do not disbelieve.*'²³⁹ Remembrance and gratitude bring together happiness and salvation.

The Stations of those who Labour for the Next World

45. The noblest of human beings who revere God is the man whose tongue is ever moist with His remembrance, who reveres Him through His laws and makes remembrance his watchword. For by his reverence will he achieve recompense and reward—to enter Heaven and be delivered from hell. By his remembrance will he achieve a spiritual station: nearness and intimacy with God.

Indeed, among those who labour for the next world, there are

two kinds of people: the one who works towards recompense and reward, and the one who works towards spiritual stations and degrees, who vies to stand before God and to be near Him.

God mentioned both types in the Chapter of Iron, '*Verily, men and women who are charitable and lend unto God a goodly loan, their loan shall be doubled for them and theirs will be a rich reward*'²⁴⁰—these are the people of recompense and reward. '*And those who believe in God and His messengers, they are the loyal*'²⁴¹—these are the people of stations and nearness. Then He says, '*And the martyrs are with their Lord; they have their reward and their light.*'²⁴² According to some, this refers to '*those who believe in God and His messengers*',²⁴³ and means that '*they are the loyal*' and '*the martyrs*' who bear witness over the peoples [of the earth]; and that it is '*they [who] have their reward and their light*'. [According to this reading] God is speaking of four things about them, and [to describe them as] '*the loyal*' and '*the martyrs*' is [to describe] their degree and standing.

It is also said, however, that the first phrase ends at '*the loyal*', and that He then goes on to mention the condition of '*the martyrs*', saying, '[they] *are with their Lord; they have their reward and their light*'.²⁴⁴ [According to this reading], He mentions [first] the people of charity, those of good works and excellence; then '*the loyal*' believers, the people of knowledge and deeds in whose hearts faith has taken root; then '*the martyrs*', who have spent freely of themselves for the sake of God, and are rewarded thus: to live in His presence with their sustenance and light flowing to them. And [all] these are among the blessed.

And lastly He mentions the damned: '*While those who disbelieve and deny Our Revelations, they belong in hell.*'²⁴⁵

Thus God refers to the people of recompense and to the people of degrees, these being [the two things] the Pharaoh promised his sorcerers if they defeated Moses when they asked, '*Will there truly be a reward for us if we are winners? He said, Aye, and you will then be of those brought near [to me].*'²⁴⁶ That is, 'I will give you both a reward and a place near to me.'

Therefore, the people of deeds, in whom physical actions pre-

dominate, work for recompense, while the gnostics, in whom inward practices predominate, work for rank, standing and proximity to God.

Bayhaqī mentions that according to Muḥammad ibn Kaʿb al-Qurẓī, Moses asked, ‘O Lord, which of Your creatures is most noble in Your eyes?’ And God answered, ‘The one whose tongue is ever moist with My mention.’

Then Moses asked, ‘And which of them is most knowledgeable?’

‘The one who esteems someone else’s knowledge above his own.’

‘And which of Your creatures is most just?’ asked Moses.

‘The one who judges himself as he judges others.’

‘And which of them is most sinful?’

‘The one who suspects Me of wrong,’ said God.

‘[Who] is it that could suspect You of wrong?’

‘The one who asks for My help in deciding a matter²⁴⁷ and is then dissatisfied with what I decree,’ said God.²⁴⁸

He also mentions [that] Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘When Moses [may God grant him peace] was on Mount Sinai, he said, “O Lord, which of Your servants is most beloved to You?” And God answered, “The one who remembers Me and does not forget Me.”’²⁴⁹

And Kaʿb related that Moses said, ‘O Lord, are You near, that I may speak with You intimately; or are You far, that I must call out to You?’ And God answered, ‘O Moses, I sit with the one who invokes Me.’

‘[But] I may be in a state too lowly for You,’ Moses replied.

‘What is that state, Moses?’

‘When I void myself or when I am ritually impure after the sexual act.’ And God said, ‘Remember Me in every state.’²⁵⁰

‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr said, ‘One rosary of praise to God [written] on a believer’s scroll is better for him than the mountains of the world running with gold.’²⁵¹

And Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] affirmed that on the Day of Judgement

a caller will cry out: 'Let the assembly know the most noble. Where are the ones "*[whose] sides forsake their beds as they call to their Lord in fear and hope, and spend out of the sustenance We have given them?*"'²⁵² And they will rise and be raised up upon the shoulders of the people. Then a caller will cry out, 'Let the assembly know the most noble. Where are the ones "*whom neither commerce nor merchandise divert from the remembrance of God?*"'²⁵³ And they will rise and be raised up upon the shoulders of the people. And then a caller will cry out, 'Let the assembly know the most noble. Where are those who would praise God in every state?' Said Ḥasan, 'And they will rise and their number will be great. And then will follow what follows, and the reckoning of those who are left.'²⁵⁴

A man came to Abū Muslim al-Khawḷānī and said, 'Counsel me, Abū Muslim,' to which the latter replied, 'Remember God Most High under every tree and hillside.'

'Give me more,' the man said.

'Remember God Most High until people reckon you among those obsessed with His remembrance.'

Abū Muslim used to engage in such abundant remembrance of God that a man once saw him and asked [another], 'Is your friend [here] mad?' Hearing this, Abū Muslim replied, 'This is not madness, my nephew. This is the cure for madness.'

46. In the heart there is a hardness that nothing but the remembrance of God will melt. So let the servant cure the hardness of his heart by the remembrance of God.

Ḥammād ibn Zayd heard from al-Muʿallā ibn Ziyād who mentioned that a man said to Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī], 'O Abū Saʿīd, I protest to you the hardness of my heart.' To this Ḥasan replied, 'Melt it with remembrance.'

This is because when heedlessness takes hold of the heart, so does hardness. But when God is remembered, that hardness melts like lead in fire. And nothing will melt it as well as remembrance.

47. Remembrance is a curative and a medicine for the heart

[*shifā' al-qalb wa dawā'u hu*], and heedlessness its illness. Therefore, hearts grow ill and their cure and medicine is in the remembrance of God.

Makhūl said, 'The mention of God is a cure; the mention of people is an illness.'²⁵⁵ Al-Bayhaqī mentions on the authority of Makhūl a *ḥadīth* [considered to be] reliably transmitted: '[Verily, hearts grow ill, and when] they remember God, He cures them and restores their well-being. But if they neglect remembrance, they relapse.'²⁵⁶ As [the poet says]:

When we are ill, we treat ourselves with Your remembrance
But sometimes we put off remembrance and relapse.

48. Remembrance is both the source and the basis of intimate friendship with God [*muwālāt Allāh*], while heedlessness is the source and the basis for His enmity. The servant may thus continue to invoke his Lord until He loves him, or to neglect Him until He is angered and becomes his foe. Al-Awzā'ī said, Ḥassān ibn 'Aṭīya said, 'The worst [kind of] enmity a servant can have from his Lord is to hate His remembrance or to hate someone who remembers Him.'²⁵⁷

[In other words], the [initial] cause of enmity is [the servant's] neglect [of God], and this can persist until he hates even the remembrance of God and hates the ones who remember God. At that point [God] takes him as an enemy, just as He takes the one who remembers Him as an intimate friend.

49. Nothing attracts God's blessings and repels His wrath as does His remembrance. Remembrance attracts grace and is a shield against anger. God says, '*Verily, God repels harm from those who believe*'—in another recitation, '*God defends those who believe*.'²⁵⁸ He repels harm from them and defends them in proportion to the strength and the completeness of their faith in Him. The very substance and power of this faith comes through [His] remembrance. The stronger one's faith and more abundant the remembrance, the greater God's defence of him. For one who falls short, it falls short. Remembrance by remembrance, forget-

ting by forgetting.

God has said, '*And behold, your Lord has declared: if you give thanks, I will increase your [blessings].*'²⁵⁹ As explained, remembrance is the source for this gratitude which attracts blessings.

As one of the early believers said: 'There is no neglect uglier than that of the person who neglects Your remembrance.'²⁶⁰

50. Remembrance brings the mercy of God and His angels to the one who practices it. Anyone blessed by God and His angels has achieved the success of all successes and the victory of all victories. God says, '*O you who believe, remember God by frequent mention and glorify Him early and late. He blesses you and His angels [bless you], that He might take you from darkness to light; and He is merciful to the believers.*'²⁶¹

This mercy from Him and His angels [upon those who invoke Him abundantly]²⁶² is indeed the means by which He brings them out of darkness into light. If this mercy has reached them, and they have emerged from the darkness into the light, then what goodness has not reached them through it, and what evil has not been repelled from them? And what a misfortune for those who are heedless of their Lord's remembrance to be denied [that portion of] His goodness and grace! And with God is the highest accord.

The Meadows of Heaven

51. Whoever wishes to dwell in the meadows of Heaven in this world should frequent the gatherings of remembrance, for these are the meadows of Heaven.

Ibn Abī l-Dunyā and others relate a *ḥadīth* transmitted by Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh: 'The Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] came out to us and said, "O people, roam the meadows of Heaven!" And we asked, "And what are the meadows of Heaven, Messenger of God?" He answered, "The gatherings of remembrance." Then he said, "So be nourished and take your rest and remember. Let anyone who wishes to know his place with God behold what place he has given God

[in his soul], for verily God will give to a servant the [same] place with Him that the servant has given to God within himself.”²⁶³

The Gatherings of Angels

52. The gatherings of remembrance are gatherings of angels, who assemble on earth only where God is remembered.

As stated in a *ḥadīth* from al-Aʿmash, transmitted by Abū Ṣāliḥ on the authority of Abū Hurayra, and recorded in the two authoritative collections, the Prophet said: ‘Verily, God has angels in addition to those recording people’s deeds, ranging the paths of the earth seeking out the people of remembrance. And when they find a folk remembering God Most High, they call to each other: “Make haste! Here is what you seek.” They envelop them with their wings and fill the sky.

Then their Lord Most High asks them—and He knows better than they do—“What are My servants saying?” They answer, “They are glorifying You, magnifying You and praising You.”

God then asks, “And have they seen Me?”

“No, by God, they have not,” they reply.

“And if they could see Me, how would they be?”

“If they could see You, they would worship You ever more fervently and praise You ever more fervently, and glorify You ever more abundantly.”

“And what do they ask of Me?”

The angels answer, “They ask of You Heaven.”

“And have they seen it?”

“No, by God, they have not.”

“And if they could see it, how would they be?”

“They would strive and long for it ever more fervently.”

“And from what do they ask My protection?”

“They ask Your protection from hell.”

“And have they seen it?”

“No, by God, they have not.”

“And how would they be if they could see it?”

“If they could see it, they would flee from it ever more fer-

vently and fear it ever more fervently.”

And God says, “I call you to witness that I have forgiven them.”

Then one of the angels says, “But among them is someone who is not really of them, being in need of something.”

“Whoever sits in the gatherings of these folk shall not be damned.”²⁶⁴

This is because of their benediction, which comes to anyone who sits with them. As Jesus said, ‘*And He made me blessed wherever I may be.*’²⁶⁵ Such is the believer, blessed wherever he may be; and such is the profligate, unfortunate wherever he may be. The gatherings of remembrance are gatherings of angels. The gatherings of the heedless are gatherings of devils. Each person will relate to what resembles him, each will journey towards what befits him.

53. God discloses those who remember Him to the angels. Muslim narrates on the authority of Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī that Mu‘āwiya came upon a circle of men seated in the mosque and said, ‘Why are you sitting together?’

They replied, ‘We are invoking God Most High.’

‘By God, You are sitting together for that only?’

‘By God!’

He said, ‘I did not ask you to swear to it because I doubted you. No one had a place like mine with the Prophet [may God bless him and grant him peace], and I will relate a *ḥadīth* I have from him. The Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] came upon a circle of his companions and asked, “Why are you sitting together?”

They said, “We are sitting together to invoke God Most High and praise Him for having guided and blessed us with Islam.”

He asked, “And, by God, You are sitting together for that only?”

“By God!” was their reply.

He said, “I did not ask you to swear to it because I doubted you, but rather because the Angel Gabriel came to me and told

me that God Exalted has disclosed you to the angels!”²⁶⁶

God’s disclosure shows the esteem which remembrance carries for Him, His love for it and its excellence above all other practices.

54. Someone constant in remembrance will enter Heaven laughing. Ibn Abī l-Dunyā relates ... that Abū l-Dardā’ said, ‘One of those whose tongues are ever moist with the mention of God will enter Heaven laughing.’²⁶⁷

The purpose of all religious practice

55. All [religious] practice prescribes the remembrance of God, and to achieve this remembrance is its goal.

God says, ‘*And establish regular prayer for My remembrance.*’²⁶⁸ ‘*My remembrance*’ is said to have an active sense: ‘In order that I [God] might remember you thereby.’ It is also said to refer to the One remembered: ‘That you might remember Me thereby,’ with the [letter] *lām*²⁶⁹ in both cases expressing purpose.

Others, however, argue that the *lām* carries a sense of time: ‘Establish the prayer *when* I am mentioned’, as in the verse, ‘*Establish the prayer at the sun’s setting*’,²⁷⁰ or the verse, ‘*And We shall set up the scales with justice on the Day of Judgement.*’²⁷¹ In these two verses, time is certainly meant, but [in the present case] this explanation is merely an opinion. The difference is that [in the latter two verses], the *lām* of time precedes the nouns of time [‘*the sun’s setting*’ and ‘*the Day of Judgement*’]; whereas [in the first verse], it precedes a noun [‘*My remembrance*’] derived from a verb, unless [we agree that] an expression of time is understood, so that the verse means ‘*at [the time of] My remembrance*’—which is possible.

However, *lām* most plainly expresses purpose. The verse means ‘Establish the prayer for the sake of My remembrance.’ This includes the fact that the prayer is offered at the time that God is remembered; and the fact that when the servant remembers his Lord, God’s remembrance of him has preceded his remembrance of God. For when God remembers His servant,

it inspires the servant to remember Him. Therefore, all three meanings are correct.

God has also said: '*Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish the prayer. Verily, the prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds. And God's remembrance is greater.*'²⁷² It has been said that this means, 'In prayer you remember God and He remembers you, and His remembrance of you is greater than your remembrance of Him.' According to Ibn 'Abbās, Salmān, Abū l-Dardā' and Ibn Mas'ūd, this is the meaning. And Ibn Abī l-Dunyā related from Fuḍayl ibn Marzūq that 'Atiyya said that "*And God's remembrance is greater*"²⁷³ is "*Remember Me, I shall remember you.*"²⁷⁴ His remembrance of you is greater than your remembrance of Him.'

Ibn Zayd and Qatāda, however, held that it meant the remembrance of God is greater than everything. And when Salmān was asked, 'Which is the best practice?' he answered, 'Do you not read the Qur'ān: "*And God's remembrance is greater*"?'²⁷⁵ This is supported by the *ḥadīth* from Abū l-Dardā' already quoted above: 'Should I tell you which of your deeds is best? Which purifies you most before your Sovereign ... and is better for you than giving away gold and silver?'

The Shaykh of Islam Abū l-'Abbās [ibn Taymiyya] said, 'The correct understanding of the verse is that the prayer has two major purposes, one greater than the other: prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds and contains the remembrance of God Most High; the remembrance of God contained in the prayer is [something] greater than the restraint from shameful deeds and injustice.'

Ibn Abī l-Dunyā said that when Ibn 'Abbās was asked which deed was most excellent, he answered, '*And God's remembrance is greater.*' In the *Sunan*, [there is a *ḥadīth*] from 'Ā'isha where the Prophet says, 'The circumambulation around the House, the course between Safā and Marwā and the casting of stones at the Pillars are [all] for maintaining the remembrance of God Most High.' This *ḥadīth* was narrated by Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī,

and is considered both good and sound.²⁷⁶

56. The most excellent of those who perform any practice are people who do it with the greatest remembrance of God. The most excellent of those who fast are people who remember God most in their fasting. The most excellent of those who give charity are people who remember God most [in their giving]. The most excellent of those who make the pilgrimage are people who remember God most [in their pilgrimage]. And the same holds true for all other practices.

Ibn Abī l-Dunyā mentioned a *ḥadīth* reliably transmitted from the first generation²⁷⁷ that when the Prophet was asked which of the people who frequented the mosque were best, he answered, 'Those who remember God most.' When asked which of the people who attended a funeral were best, he answered, 'Those who remember God most.' When asked which warriors were best, he answered, 'Those who remember God most.' When asked which pilgrims were best, he answered, 'Those who remember God most.' And when asked which of those who visited the sick²⁷⁸ were best, he said, 'Those who remember God most.' At which Abū Bakr said, 'Those who remember have taken all the good!'²⁷⁹

Said 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr, 'If you find this night too long for standing, and you find yourselves too worried about your money to give it away and too cowardly to fight your enemy, then invoke God Most High abundantly.'²⁸⁰

Remembrance May Replace Supererogatory Acts

57. Continuous remembrance can replace supererogatory deeds, whether they be physical, monetary or both—such as a supererogatory pilgrimage.

This is clear from a *ḥadīth* which Abū Hurayra transmitted. The poorest of the Emigrants [to Medina] came to the Messenger of God and said, 'O Messenger of God, the wealthy have taken the highest degrees and eternal happiness. They pray as we do and fast as we do, but they also have the advantage of wealth, which

they use to go on the greater and the lesser pilgrimages²⁸¹ and to combat.' The Messenger said, 'Shall I teach you something by which you can catch up with those who have surpassed you and surpass those who are behind you, something in which no one can better you, unless he does as you do?'

'By all means, Messenger!'

'You glorify, praise and magnify [God] after every prayer,'²⁸² he said. It is agreed that this *ḥadīth* is sound.²⁸³

For them he replaced with remembrance the *ḥajj*, *ʿumra* and combat that they were unable to do, and told them they could surpass all these through remembrance. The wealthy heard about it, and began the practice in their turn, adding it to the charity and devotional practices [they could perform] with their wealth, thereby achieving two sorts of excellence. The Emigrants who vied with them told the Messenger of God that they now shared this [practice] with them and so had [again] been set apart by something they, the poor, could not do.

'That is the grace of God,' the Prophet replied. 'He gives it to whomever He wills!'

In a *ḥadīth* from 'Abd Allāh ibn Bishr, a Bedouin came and said, 'O Messenger of God, the rules and laws of Islam have become too much for me. Tell me about something general that will be enough for me.'

The Messenger told him, 'Keep to the remembrance of God Most High.'

'And that will be enough for me, O Messenger of God?'

'Yes, and it will give you something more besides.'²⁸⁴

So the Counsellor²⁸⁵ directed him to something that would encourage him to keep the laws of Islam and to accomplish as many of them as he could, because if he took the remembrance of God as his watchword, it would make him beloved to God. It would make what is loved by God loved by him. For there is no way of approach that God loves more than the laws of Islam. The Messenger was directing [that Bedouin] to something that would enable him to follow those laws, something that would

make them easy for him, and that thing was the remembrance of God Most High.

This is explained below.

58. Remembrance is one of the greatest ramparts of obedience [*tā'atīhi*], making it lovable, easy and pleasant for the servant; the place where he finds rest, favour and joy, rather than the weight, toil and burden it is for the heedless man. Experience will bear this out, and it is further qualified by [what follows].

59. The mention of God Almighty smoothes what is rough, eases what is difficult and lightens what is heavy. As soon as God Almighty is mentioned, every rough [road] is smoothed, every difficulty eased, every burden lightened, every hardship removed, every woe lifted. The remembrance of God is the ease that follows difficulty,²⁸⁶ the relief that follows hardship, care and woe. And this is [further] explained by [what follows].

60. The remembrance of God Almighty alleviates fear from the heart, and has the wondrous effect of bringing about security. For someone who is frightened and seized by fear, there is nothing more beneficial than to mention God Almighty. And in proportion to his remembrance he will find security, even in the thing that had [previously] caused him fear. The heedless man may be completely safe yet afraid, and all the safety he has will only increase his fear.

Anyone with the least sense has experienced both this and that. God is the One from whom we seek aid.

Strength

61. Remembrance gives to the one who practices invocation such strength that he is able to do what he does not have the strength to do without it. I myself witnessed the wondrous strength of the Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyya, in his walk, his speech and his limbs. Indeed he used to write in one day what would take a scribe a week or more [to finish].²⁸⁷

Soldiers [too] have testified to the wondrous strength that remembrance can give them in combat. And when Fāṭima came

to ask the Prophet for a servant, and complained to him about the difficulty she suffered in grinding flour, running errands and doing other chores, he taught her and [his son-in-law] ‘Alī to recite the formula of glorification thirty-three times, that of praise thirty-three times and that of edification thirty-four times—every night upon going to bed.²⁸⁸ He said, ‘This will be better for you both than a servant.’²⁸⁹ It is said that anyone who is constant in this [practice] will find such strength in his body that he will have no need for a servant.

I [also] heard the Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyya, mention a saying: ‘When the angels were commanded to bear the Throne [of God], they said: “Our Lord, how can we bear Your Throne when upon it is Your greatness and might?” He said, “Say: There is neither power nor strength save in God.” Upon pronouncing this, they carried the Throne.’

I have seen that even Ibn Abī l-Dunyā himself mentioned this tradition, relating it from al-Layth ibn Sa‘d, from Mu‘āwiya ibn Ṣāliḥ, who said, ‘Our teachers told us that it had been related to them that the first thing that Almighty God had created, when His Throne was upon the waters, was the bearers of the Throne. They said, “Our Lord, wherefore have You created us?”

God answered, “To bear My Throne.”

“Our Lord, who is strong enough to bear Your Throne, when upon it lay Your greatness, might and honour?” He said, “For that have I created you.” And they repeated this several times, until He told them, “Say: There is neither strength nor power save in God.” And they bore the Throne.’

These words—‘There is neither strength nor power save in God’⁴—have the striking effect of helping one to accomplish difficult work, bear fatigue, visit kings and endure fear or dreadful experience. They also have the striking effect of warding off poverty. For according to a *ḥadīth* related by Ibn Abī l-Dunyā,²⁹⁰ the Messenger of God said, ‘For whoever says “There is neither strength nor power save in God” one hundred times, no day shall be afflicted by poverty.’²⁹¹

It was [also] the preferred practice of Ḥabīb ibn Musallama to say these words whenever he encountered an enemy force or stormed a stronghold. One day, he attacked a castle belonging to the Byzantines, which stood fast. Then the Muslims began to repeat these words and to magnify God, and the castle fell in ruins.

62. All those who labour for the next world are running upon a track, and those who remember God are in the forefront, but dust obscures their lead. When this dust settles and things are unveiled, people will see them bearing away the laurels of the race.

Al-Walīd ibn Muslim said, ‘Muḥammad ibn ‘Ijlān told us that he heard ‘Umar *mawlā* Ghafra say, “On the Day of Reckoning, when the veil is lifted [to disclose] the recompense of people’s deeds, none shall find a practice that has more merit than remembrance, and some will feel regret and say, Nothing was easier for us than remembrance!”’

Abū Hurayra said, ‘The Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] said, “Journey on. The solitary ones have gone ahead.” [People] asked, “Who are the solitary ones?” He said, “Remembrance will remove the burdens of those who are completely taken up [*ahtirū*] by the remembrance of God Most High.”’²⁹²

The verb *ahtiru* means to become so avid about something that one is always pursuing it. Another wording of the *ḥadīth* is ‘the ones overcome by the remembrance of God [Most High]’—meaning ‘those who are so in love with the remembrance that they become avid and excited by it’. It is said, ‘So and so is taken up or taken over by that’ [*istaharū bi dhālik*], when he or she has become completely engrossed in it.

Another explanation of *ahtiru* is ‘those who have grown old and seen people around them pass on, while they have persisted with the remembrance of God’. For it is said ‘the man is taken up’ when his voice begins to fail from age. The noun *hatir* signifies ‘drivel’. The words in the *ḥadīth* may be taken to mean someone

who persists in his remembrance of God until he is so old that his mind has grown feeble.

But the best meaning of the expression 'to be taken up' [*istihtār*] is an abundance of something and a fervor for it, whether true or false. Since people are known more to be taken up by vanities, saying that so and so is taken up [*mustahtir*] is now understood only in the sense of something false. When it is connected with something positive, it takes on this positive sense: 'He is taken up with the remembrance of God Most High' means 'He is enthusiastic for and excited by it'.

Still another meaning is to be passionate or obsessed *about* something, which calls to mind yet another saying: 'Mention God Most High often and people will say, "He is possessed!"'

Lastly, the one taken up [*hatir*]²⁹³ may also imply falsehood; a man is called *mustahtir* when he frequently utters falsehoods. Thus, from [ʿAbd Allāh] ibn ʿUmar we have the saying, 'I seek refuge in God from being one of the *mustahtirīn*.'

63. Remembrance is the means by which the Lord Almighty confirms His servant's truthfulness [*taṣḍīq*]. For [in remembrance], the servant articulates God's attributes of perfection and sublimity. Whenever he articulates them, his Lord affirms his truthfulness. Whoever is considered truthful by God will never be grouped with the liars and can hope to be included among the veracious.

Abū Ishāq related [a saying] on the authority of al-Agharra Abū Muslim, who was present with Abū Hurayra and Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī when the Messenger of God said, 'When the servant says, "There is no deity but God" and "God is greater", God Most High says, "My servant has spoken the truth, there is no deity but Me and I am greater."'

And when the servant says, "There is no deity but God, He alone", the Lord says, "My servant has spoken the truth. There is no deity but Me, Me alone."

And when the servant says, "There is no deity but God, He alone without partner", the Lord says, "My servant has spoken

the truth. There is no deity but Me, Me alone without partner.”

And when the servant says, “There is no deity but God, His is the kingdom and the praise”, the Lord says, “My servant has spoken the truth. There is no deity but Me, and Mine is the kingdom and the praise.”

And when the servant says, “There is neither strength nor power save in God”,⁴ the Lord says, “My servant has spoken the truth. There is neither strength nor power save in Me.”

Abū Ishāq said, ‘Then al-Agharra uttered something I did not understand, and I asked Abū Ja‘far about what he had said. He answered, “He said: The one who has these words with him at the time of death will not be touched by the fire.”’²⁹⁴

64. The dwellings in heaven are built by remembrance. When the invoker ceases his invocation, the angels cease their building; when he continues, they continue.

In his book, Ibn Abī l-Dunyā mentions that Ḥakīm ibn Muḥammad al-Akhansī said, ‘It has been related to me that the dwellings of heaven are built through remembrance⁴. When the remembrance ceases, the building ceases, and when [the angels are asked], they say, “Until our wages come!”’

He [also] mentions a *ḥadīth* on the authority of Abū Hurayra, that the Prophet said, ‘A tower is built in Heaven for whoever says “Glory to God and praise! Glory to God Almighty!”⁴ seven times.’²⁹⁵

And just as its dwellings are built by remembrance, so are its gardens planted by remembrance, as we have already mentioned in an earlier *ḥadīth*, where the Prophet related these words of Abraham, the friend of God: ‘[Tell your people] that the soil of Heaven is fragrant, that its water is sweet, that it is green with vegetation and that its trees are planted by [remembrance]: Glory to God and praise to God, there is no deity but God and God is most great.’^{4 296}

[Finally], Ibn Abī l-Dunyā mentions a *ḥadīth* from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar that the Messenger of God said, ‘Plant the trees of Heaven in abundance!’ People said, ‘Messenger of God, what

is planting trees in Heaven?' He said, '[The words] "Whatever God wills. There is no strength nor power save in God!"' ^{A297}

65. Remembrance is a barrier between the servant and hell. Certain acts are his route to hell, and remembrance will bar that route. If remembrance is continuous and complete, the barrier will be fortified and impenetrable; if not, it will be to measure.

‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Abī Ruwād said, ‘There was a man living in the wilderness who built himself a mosque. In the *qibla* of the mosque he placed seven stones. Whenever he finished his prayer, he would say, “O you stones, I call you to witness that there is no deity but God!” When the man later became ill, his soul was taken up high. He said, “I saw in my sleep that I had been ordered into the fire, and I saw one of those [seven] stones, which I realised had grown huge, barring me from one of the gates of hell. So I was ordered to go to another gate, and, behold, there was another of the stones, grown huge, barring me from that gate. And so on, such that each of the remaining stones barred me from the [remaining] gates.”’

66. The angels seek the same forgiveness for the invoker as they do for someone who repents from sin. Thus, Ḥusayn al-Mu‘allim related from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Burayda, on the authority of ‘Āmir al-Sha‘bī, that ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Ās said, ‘I discovered in the revealed Book of God that when the servant says, “Praise be to God”, the angels say, “Lord of the Worlds”. And when the servant says, “Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds”, the angels say, “O Lord, forgive Your servant”. And when the servant says, “Glory be to God”, the angels say, “And praise”. And when he says, “Glory to God and praise”, the angels, say “O Lord, forgive Your servant”. And when the servant says, “There is no deity but God”, the angels say, “And God is greater”. And when he says, “There is no deity but God, and God is greater”, the angels say, “O Lord, forgive Your servant”’.

The Mountains and Plains Boast to One Another

67. The mountains and plains boast to one another and are gladdened by the one who invokes God Almighty.

[‘Abd Allāh] ibn Mas‘ūd said, ‘One mountain calls another by its name and asks, “Did anyone pass by you today invoking Almighty God?” When the other answers in the affirmative, the first says, “Then be gladdened!”’

‘Awn ibn ‘Abd Allāh said, ‘The plains call out to one another, “O my two neighbours, did anyone pass by you today invoking God?” One may say yes, the other no.’

Al-A‘mash related from Mujāhid that a mountain calls to another by its name, ‘Did anyone pass by you this day invoking Almighty God?’ One may say yes, the other no.’

68. Abundance in the remembrance of God is safety from hypocrisy [*amān min al-nifāq*], for hypocrites are those who scarcely remember God. As God says concerning them, ‘*And they remember God but little.*’²⁹⁸

Ka‘b said, ‘Whoever abounds in the remembrance of God [Most High] is innocent of hypocrisy.’ And this is why—and God knows better—He ends the Chapter of the Hypocrites with the words, ‘*O you who believe, let not your wealth nor your children distract you from the remembrance of God. Those who do, these are the losers.*’²⁹⁹ This is caution against the temptations of those who neglected the remembrance of God and so fell into hypocrisy.

One of the Companions was asked whether the Kharijites³⁰⁰ were hypocrites, and he answered, ‘No. The hypocrites are those who remember God but little.’ To remember God little is a sign of hypocrisy, to remember Him much is a protection from it. [Indeed] God is too generous to afflict with hypocrisy a remembering heart. It is for hearts which are heedless.

69. Remembrance has a delight with which no other practice can compare, and if the servant obtains nothing else in return than this delight and the bliss which reaches the heart, it would be enough. The gatherings for remembrance have been called ‘the meadows of Heaven’.³⁰¹

Mālik ibn Dīnār said, 'No delight can compare with the remembrance of Almighty God: there is no practice which is lighter and yet brings the heart greater pleasure, or more happiness and joy.'

70. It adorns the face with radiance in this world, and a light in the next, so that the invokers have more radiant faces than anyone else in this world, and will have the most illuminated in the next.

In a *ḥadīth* traceable to the generation of the followers,³⁰² the Prophet said, 'Whoever says one hundred times every day "There is no deity but God alone, without partner; His is the kingdom and His the praise; He gives life and causes death; in His hand is goodness; He has power over all things"⁴ will come to God Most High on the Day of Judgement, his face brighter than the moon on the night it is full.'³⁰³

71. Continuous remembrance—on the road, at home or in any domain—increases the number of those who will bear witness to the servant on the Day of Judgement; for the land, the house, the mountains and the earth [itself] will be among them.

God says, '*When the earth is shaken with a jolt and it sends forth its burdens, and the man says, "What is the matter with it?"—on that day it will recount its stories, for thy Lord will have inspired it.*'³⁰⁴ And Tirmidhī narrated a *ḥadīth* on the authority of Sa'īd al-Muqbirī, that Abū Hurayra said, 'The Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] recited this verse, and then asked, "Do you know what *its stories* are?" The people said, "God and His Messenger know better." He said, "*Its stories* are that it will bear witness about what every servant—male or female—did while on its surface, saying, He did this on such and such a day, and this on such and such a day.'" Tirmidhī calls this *ḥadīth* both good and sound.³⁰⁵

The one who remembers has many witnesses before Almighty God in every part of the land. It may be that they will come forward for him on the Day of Judgement, the Day of witnessing; and the testimonies they give forth will bring him happiness and joy.

72. The person who is busy with remembrance is too busy for

vain talk, be it back-biting, slander, chatter, flattery or blame and the like. In fact, the tongue can never be entirely silent: it is either invoking or chattering. There is no avoiding one or the other. Such is the ego that if you do not occupy it with what is true, it will occupy you with what is false. And such is the heart that if the love of God does not reside in it, the love of creatures will, without fail. And such is the tongue that if you do not use it for remembrance, it will use you for chatter and oppose you, without fail. So choose for your soul one of the two paths, and situate it in one of these two abodes.

Returning to [the Discussion of] Protection from the Devil

73. Because what we first mentioned briefly is so important, and in view of the need—the sheer necessity—that each person has for it, we would like to return to it at length. The servant is surrounded by his enemies, the devils. Imagine a man whose enemies have ambushed him, raging at him and threatening him with evil and harm, and he has no way of escape except through the remembrance of Almighty God.

There is a *ḥadīth* of major importance which each Muslim should learn. We will quote it here in its entirety because of its general benefit and the need for it. This *ḥadīth* is from Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Samra ibn Jundub, who said that one day as they were seated on the steps in Medina, the Messenger of God came out, stood before them and said: ‘I saw something magnificent last night. I saw a man from my people as the angel of death came to take his soul. The goodness he had shown his parents came to him and turned back the angel of death.

I saw a man from my people as the punishment of the grave loomed before him. His ablution came to him and rescued him from it.

I saw a man from my people, as devils surrounded him. The remembrance of God Almighty came to him and drove them away.

I saw a man from my people as the angels of punishment surrounded him. His prayer came to him and saved him from their grips.

I saw a man from my people who was perishing from thirst. Every time he approached the pond,³⁰⁶ he was held back and driven away. His fasting during Ramaḍān came to him, gave him water and quenched his thirst.

I saw a man from my people, and I saw the prophets sitting in circles, one circle after another. Each time he approached one of the circles, he was driven away. His greater ablution came to him, took him by the hand and seated him at my side.

I saw a man from my people when there was darkness before him, behind him, on his right and on his left, above and beneath him. He moved aimlessly in its midst. And then his pilgrimages—the lesser and the greater—came to him, took him out of that darkness and brought him into the light.

I saw a man from my people protecting himself with his hand from the fumes of the fire and its harm. His charity came to him and shielded him from the fire, spreading out over his head.

I saw a man from my people who was speaking to the believers, but they were not speaking to him. Then the good relations he had kept with relatives came to him, and said, "O assembly of Muslims, this man kept his ties with relatives, so speak to him." And they spoke to him, shook his hand and he shook theirs.

I saw a man from my people surrounded by the demons of hell. His enjoining of fairness and forbiddance of evil came to him and rescued him from their grip; they brought him to God Most High.

I saw a man from my people whose right hand had lost the scroll.³⁰⁷ There came to him his fear of God Almighty; it took the scroll and placed in his right hand.

I saw a man from my people whose scale was light [in good deeds], and there came to him those members of his family he had lost, and this weighed down the scale.

I saw a man from my people standing on the brink of hell, and

there came to him his hope in God Almighty. It rescued him from hell and he passed on.

I saw a man from my people who had been put in the fire, and there came to him the tears he had shed in reverent fear of God Almighty. They rescued him from the fire.

I saw a man from my people standing on the bridge, tossing about like a palm tree in a storm. His hope in God came to him. It steadied him and he walked [across].

I saw a man from my people advancing over the bridge, sometimes crawling, sometimes clinging to it. The blessings he had invoked upon me came to him. It set him on his two feet and saved him.

I saw a man from my people who had come to the gates of heaven and found all of them locked. His testimony—"There is no deity but God"—came to him, opened the gates for him and led him into heaven.³⁰⁸

This was narrated by al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Mūsā al-Madaynī in *al-Targhīb fī l-khiṣāl al-munjiyya, wa l-tarhīb min al-khilāl al-mardiyya*, which he based on this *ḥadīth*, making this book a commentary on it. He said, 'This is a good *ḥadīth*, transmitted by Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib from ʿAmr ibn Āzar, ʿAlī ibn Zayd ibn Judʿān, and Hilāl Abū Jibla.'

The Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyya, used to stress the importance of this *ḥadīth*, and I have been told that he used to say, 'It bears the evidence of being sound.'

The words of the Prophet—'And I saw a man from my people as devils surrounded him. The remembrance of God Almighty came to him and drove them away'—conform to what is stated in the *ḥadīth* of al-Ḥārith al-Ashʿarī, which we have already explained in this treatise. In it, al-Ashʿarī says, 'And He enjoins upon you the remembrance of God Most High. And the similitude of this is the man who goes forth with his enemies fast upon him, then comes to a safe fortress and delivers himself from them.'

Such is the Devil that servants will protect themselves from him only by the remembrance of God Almighty.

In Tirmidhī is the *ḥadīth* of Anas ibn Mālīk, who said that the Messenger of God declared, 'Whoever says [upon leaving his house] "in the name of God, on God do I depend, there is neither strength nor power save in God",⁴ to him it is said: You have found contentment, you have been guided, you have been protected. And the devil moves out of his path, saying to another devil, "How can you have any chance with a man who is content, guided and protected?"' Abū Dāwūd, Nasā'ī and Tirmidhī have all recounted it and classified it as good.³⁰⁹

And the words of [the Prophet] have already been quoted: 'Whosoever says "There is no deity but God, alone, without partner; His is the kingdom and His the praise; He has power over all things"⁴ one hundred times in a single day, this will be his shield from the Devil for that whole day and night.'³¹⁰

Sufyān transmitted from Abū l-Zubayr, on the authority of 'Abd Allāh ibn Ḍamra, from Ka'b, who said, 'When [upon leaving his house] a man says, "In the name of God", the angel [next to him] says, "You are guided". When he says, "I depend on God", the angel says, "You found contentment". And when he says, "There is neither strength nor power save in God", the angel says, "You have been protected". The devils then say to one another, "Go back. There is no way for you to [seize] this one. What can you do to someone who is content, guided and protected?"'

Abū Khulād al-Miṣrī said, 'Whoever enters Islam has entered a safe fortress; whoever enters a mosque has entered two fortresses; whoever then sits down in a circle to remember Almighty God has entered three.'

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Mūsā narrates in his book a *ḥadīth* from Abū 'Imrān al-Jūnī, from Anas [ibn Mālīk] that the Prophet said: 'When the servant lies down on his side in bed and says, "In the name of God", then recites the opening chapter of the Qur'ān, he is safe from the evil of *jinn* and men, safe from the evil of everything.'³¹¹

And in al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn relates that Abū Hurayra said, 'The Prophet [may God bless him and grant

him peace] put me in charge of watching over the donations of food collected at the end of Ramaḍān. Then someone came and snatched some food, and I grabbed him. He said, "Let me go. I shall do it no more ..." And he [went on to] recount the *ḥadīth*,³¹² saying, "The third time he said to me: I shall teach you some words by which God will benefit you—when you lie down in your bed, recite the Verse of the Throne³¹³ from beginning to end; a protecting angel will stay by you and no devil will approach you, until you wake in the morning." I tried his method, and when I awoke in the morning, I told the Prophet what he had said, and he said [to me], 'He told you the truth, but he is a liar.'³¹⁴

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Mūsā related a *ḥadīth* from Abū l-Zubayr on the authority of Jābir [ibn 'Abd Allāh], where the Messenger of God says, 'When a person retires to his bed, both an angel and a devil come to him. The angel says, "End with goodness." And the devil says, "End with evil." If he remembers God until sleep overcomes him, the angel drives the devil away and protects him through the night.

When he wakes, the angel and devil reappear. The former says, "Begin with goodness", the other says, "Begin with evil". If the person says, "Praise be to God who revived my soul after its death and did not cause it to die in its sleep; praise be to God who holds back the death decreed for my soul and postpones the next life until an appointed time; praise be to God who holds back the heavens and earth lest they fall, for if they fell, none could hold them back save He; praise be to God who holds up the sky lest it fall upon the earth by nothing more than His permission"^A—if a person says all this, the angel drives away the devil and continues to protect him.'³¹⁵

The two authoritative collections contain the *ḥadīth* transmitted on the authority of Sālim ibn Abī l-Ja'd, from Kurayb, from Ibn 'Abbās: 'The Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] said, "When any of you goes unto his wife, let him say "In the name of God", "O God, protect us from the

Devil, and protect from the Devil what You bestow upon us", and if you then have a child, the Devil will never harm it.³¹⁶

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Mūsā also makes mention of [a saying] from al-Ḥasan, son of 'Alī: 'I promise to anyone who recites these twenty verses that God will protect him from any oppressive ruler, any obstinate devil, any dangerous animal and any thief: the Verse of the Throne; three verses from 'The Heights', starting from "*Verily, your Lord is God who has created the heavens and the earth*"³¹⁷; the first ten verses from 'The Ranks'³¹⁸; three from 'The Merciful', starting with "*O you assembly of jinn and men*"³¹⁹; and the end of the Chapter of Exile, starting from "*If We sent this Qur'ān down upon a mountain.*"³²⁰

Said Muḥammad ibn Abān: 'Once, as one man was praying in the mosque, he sensed something at his side and moved away from it in extreme fear. [A voice] said, "I mean you no harm. I have come to you in God Most High. Go to 'Urwa and ask him what words he says when he seeks refuge from the Devil of devils." He said, "Say: I believe in God Almighty alone; I reject *sorcery and idolatry*;³²¹ I hold fast to *the trustworthy hold of the hand that never breaks*;³²² God is sufficient for me; He hears the one who calls; no boundaries can be imposed upon God."

Bishr ibn Maṣṣūr said that according to Wahīb ibn al-Ward, a man went into the courtyard late one night and claimed to hear a strong whisper or voices. A bed was brought over and placed there. A figure sat upon it, his troops were gathered around and he shouted, 'Who can bring me 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr?' No one answered. Then someone said, 'I can.' I watched as he went to Medina, returned and said, 'There is no way to 'Urwa. I found that he said certain words upon waking and upon sleeping, and we could not get to him.'

The man continued, 'When I awoke in the morning, I asked my family to prepare my things for travel. I went to Medina, and asked around for [a man named 'Urwa]. I was taken to him and found him to be an old *shaykh*. I asked him, "Is there something you say upon waking in the morning and upon sleeping at

night?" At first, he refused to tell me. But then I related to him what I had seen and heard, and he said, "I know only that when I wake in the morning, or sleep at night, I say three times: I believe in God Almighty, I reject *sorcery and idolatry*, I hold fast to the *trust-worthy hold of the hand* and *God is all-hearing and all-knowing*."

Abū Mūsā [al-Mundhirī] also recounts that Muslim al-Baṭīn said that the Angel Gabriel told the Prophet, 'There is a demon among the *jinn* who conspires against you. So, whenever you repair to your bed, say: "I seek refuge in the perfect words of God which cannot be trespassed by any person—whether good or bad—from the evil which descends from the sky and ascends back to it; from the evil which dwells in the earth and comes out of it; from the evil of the temptations of night and day; from the evil of the paths of night and day; but not from the path of goodness, O Merciful God [Yā Raḥmān].'"^{A 323}

It is also told in [Muslim] that the Devil flees at the sound of the call to prayer. Sahl ibn Abī Ṣāliḥ said, 'My father had sent me to the Bani Ḥāritha, and with me there was a servant boy—or some other companion. [On the way] someone from an orchard called out the boy's name. The boy climbed up the wall but saw nothing. I mentioned this [incident] to my father. He said, "If I had realised you were to encounter that, I would not have sent you. But if you hear a voice, make the call to prayer, for I heard Abū Hurayra relate that the Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] said that when the prayer is called, the Devil turns back [so fast] that he breaks wind"³²⁴—and in another version of this *ḥadīth*, '...when [the Devil] hears the call to prayer, he turns back [so fast] that he breaks wind trying not to hear it.'³²⁵

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Mūsā [al-Mundhirī] also relates the *ḥadīth* of Abū Rajā', from Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, who recounted that the Messenger of God said, 'Say "There is no deity but God" and ask for forgiveness frequently, for the Devil says: "I destroyed them with sins and they destroyed me by saying there is no deity but God and by asking for God's forgiveness. When I saw that [saying coming] from them, I could destroy them by [their own] whims,

because they thought they were guided and stopped asking forgiveness.”³²⁶

Abū Mūsā [al-Mundhirī] also related from Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥakam, on the authority of his father, that ‘Ikrima said, ‘Once, a man on a journey passed a sleeping man around whom he saw devils. The traveller heard one devil say to its companion, “Go to that sleeper and corrupt his heart.” But after approaching him, the latter returned and said, “He has gone to sleep [reciting] a verse [of the Qur’ān]. We have no way to get to him!” Then the other went, approached the sleeper and returned: “You are right.” And they left. When the sleeper woke, the man told him about the devils he had seen and asked him, “Tell me what verse you said before sleeping.” He answered, “This one: *Verily, your Lord is God Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then settled upon the Throne. He covers the night with the day, which follows fast upon it. And the sun, the moon and the stars are under His control. Is not the creation and the command His? Blessed be God, Lord of the Worlds.*”³²⁷

Abū l-Naḍr Hāshim ibn l-Qāsim said: ‘I was in my house and [a voice] said to me, “O Abu l-Naḍr, leave our territory.” I was so seized with fear by this that I wrote to Ibn Idrīs, al-Muḥārībī and Abū Usāma in Kūfā. Al-Muḥārībī wrote back: “There was a well in the city and its ropes kept breaking. [Finally] a rider came to the people and complained about it. So they took a pitcher of its water, uttered a few words, poured it back into the well and fire began rising up from the well. Then they uttered a few more words, and the fire went out as it reached the brim.”’

Abū l-Naḍr said, ‘So I took a pitcher of water and uttered these words into it, and went around to all the corners of the house and sprinkled them with the water. Then the voice called out again, “O Abū l-Naḍr, you have burnt us! We are letting you be!” And the words were these:

We reach the evening in the name of God, whom nothing can hold back; by God’s might, which is never defeated or overcome; in God’s shielding and shelter-

Part Three

ing authority; with all of God's beautiful and protective names, sheltering us from the evil of devils and *jinn*—from all who speak openly or in secret; from the evil of all that comes out in the night and is hidden in the day, or is hidden by night and comes out in the day; from the evil of what God created and originated; from the evil of Iblīs and his armies; the evil of every beast whose forelock You hold in Your grip. *'Verily my Lord is upon a straight path.'*³²⁸ I take refuge in God from that in which Moses, Jesus and Abraham, who fulfilled his trust, had taken refuge; the evil of what God created and originated; the evil of Iblīs and his armies and of what he desires. I seek refuge in God—the Hearing, the Knowing—from Satan the accursed. In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate. *'By those who stood themselves in ranks, and so are strong in repelling [evil], and those who recite the remembrance, "Verily your God is one, Lord of the heavens and the earth, and all that lies between them. He is Lord of every point of the rising of the sun. We have indeed adorned the lower heaven with the beauty of the planets and for protection against all obstinate devils, who do not listen to the exalted assembly, but are cast away from all sides, repulsed, in perpetual torment, except the one snatching something away and who is then pursued by a piercing flame."*³²⁹

All this relates to the Prophet's words, 'In this way, a servant delivers himself from the Devil only by the remembrance of God.'

Let us [now] consider [other] useful topics connected to remembrance, which complete its benefits.

PART FOUR

Two Kinds of Remembrance

First Section: There are two general kinds of remembrance. One of them is to mention the names of the Lord and His attributes, praising Him by them, exalting Him and sanctifying Him above all that is not meet with Him.

This type is of two kinds. One sort is for the invoker to sing the praises of God by His names and attributes, as mentioned in the *ḥadīth*, [with phrases] like ‘Glory to God’, ‘Praise to God’, ‘There is no deity but God’, ‘God is greater’, ‘Glory to God and praise’ and ‘There is no deity but God, One, without partner; His is the kingdom and His the praise; He has power over all things’—and like phrases.

The most meritorious of this kind [of remembrance] is that which is most encompassing and inclusive in praise. For example, saying, ‘Glory to God in ways as numerous as His creatures’, is better than saying only, ‘Glory to God’. And saying, ‘Praise to God as abundantly as all He has created in the heavens and on earth, all He has created between them and inasmuch as He is Creator’, is better than saying only, ‘Praise be to God’.

This is from the *ḥadīth* concerning Juwayriyya (may God be pleased with her) to whom the Prophet said, ‘After seeing you, I said four phrases three times, and if all that you have said this whole day were put in the scales, [these four] would outweigh it: “Glory to God [in ways] as numerous as all He has created”; “Glory to God [as vast] as His contentment”; “Glory to God [as endless] as the beauty of His Throne”; “Glory to God [as limit-

less] as the ink in His words”’.⁴ This is found in Muslim.³³⁰

Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd related the *ḥadīth* of Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, who [recounted] how he and the Messenger of God entered a room where they found a woman with date pits or pebbles in her hands, which she was using to [count] praises to God. The Messenger told the woman, ‘Shall I tell you what is easier and better for you than that? [Say], “Glory to God [in ways] as numerous as all He has created in the heavens”, “Glory to God [in ways] as numerous as all He has created on earth”, “Glory to God [in ways] as numerous as what lies between them”, “Glory to God inasmuch as He is Creator”. Then, in the same way, [say], “God is greater”, “Praise be to God”, “There is no deity but God” and “There is neither strength nor power save in God”, all in the same way.’^{4 331}

The second kind of [remembrance for praise] is to speak about the Lord by uttering what His names and attributes designate. An example of this would be to say: ‘God Almighty hears His servants’ voices, sees their movements and not the slightest of their actions is hidden from Him’; ‘He is more compassionate and merciful towards them than their own fathers and mothers’; ‘He has power over all things, and when His servant repents, He is more pleased with that repentance than a man who has lost his mount in the desert and then finds it.’

The best of this kind of praise is the way God has praised Himself and the way the Messenger praised Him, without deviating—neither denying His attributes [*ta‘tīl*], nor equating them with human qualities [*tashbīh* and *tamthīl*]. This can take one of three forms: praise, adulation and glorification. To praise God is to mention Him in a way that refers to His attributes of perfection and [to express your] love and contentment, doing so for Him and in Him. A lover is silent until he gives voice to both his adulation and his love. Then, if his praise continues and one [perfection] after another is repeated, it becomes adulation. And if this refers to God’s attributes of magnificence, greatness, infinitude and sovereignty, it is [called] glorification.

God has gathered for His servant these three forms at the beginning of the Opening Chapter [*Fātiḥa*] of the Qur'ān. When the servant says, '*Praise be to God Lord of the worlds*', God says, 'My servant has praised Me'. When the servant says, '*The Merciful, the Compassionate*', God says, 'My servant has extolled Me'. When he says, '*Sovereign of the Day of Judgement*', God says, 'My servant has glorified Me'.³³²

The second general type of remembrance is the remembrance of God's commandments, prohibitions and laws. And this, too, is of two kinds. One kind consists in mentioning the fact that God has commanded this or prohibited that, loves this or is angered by that and is content with this or that. The other kind is to remember that something is commanded and then to hasten to it; or to remember that something is prohibited and to abstain from it. Therefore, to remember His commandments and prohibitions is one thing, to remember to follow them is another.

When these kinds of remembrance combine, the invoker's remembrance is most meritorious and offers the highest and greatest benefit. Such remembrance [arises] from 'the greater code',³³³ while what is below it has the most merit when it is sound.

[Still] another [form of] remembering God is to mention His gifts and blessings, His generosity and support—the ways in which His munificence has reached His servant. This, too, is one of the highest forms of remembrance.

These are the five types of remembrance. Sometimes they are performed with the heart and the tongue, which ranks first; sometimes with only the heart, which ranks second; sometimes with only the tongue, which ranks third. The remembrance that offers the greatest merit involves both the heart and the tongue. But the remembrance that involves only the heart has greater merit than that which involves only the tongue. For it is remembrance with the heart that yields the fruit of gnosis, inspires love, encourages modesty and leads to [reverent] fear and self-examination. It keeps one from falling short in obedience to God, and

from the abasement of greater and lesser sins. Remembrance with the tongue alone results in none of this. Whatever it yields is fragile at best.

Remembrance and Supplication

Second Section: Remembrance has greater merit than supplication. This is because remembrance is adulation of God Almighty by the beauty of His attributes, His gifts and His names; while supplication consists in the servant asking God for something he needs. And what is this compared to that? Thus, it is stated in a *ḥadīth*: ‘To someone too busy with My remembrance to supplicate Me, I give what is more excellent than what I give to those who ask.’³³⁴

This is also why the preferred form of supplication begins with praise and adulation for God, then gives blessings upon His Prophet and, finally, asks for what one needs. This follows a *ḥadīth* from Fuḍāla ibn ‘Ubayd. When the Messenger of God heard a man in worship supplicating God without praising Him and without invoking blessings upon His Prophet, he remarked, ‘This one has rushed things.’ Then he called the man over and said to him or to someone else [who was with them], ‘When one of you offers the prayer, let him begin with adulation for his Lord Almighty, then let him ask for blessings upon the Prophet. After that, let him ask for what he wants.’ This was related by Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and by Tirmidhī, both of whom considered it good and authentic, and by al-Ḥākim.³³⁵

This was how Dhu’l-Nūn made his supplication.³³⁶ About him the Prophet said, ‘In the supplication of my brother Dhu’l-Nūn, no one in distress calls upon God by these words but that He will relieve him from his distress: “*There is no deity but You, Glory to You, I have truly been among the wrongdoers*”’.^{A 337} And in Tirmidhī: ‘The supplication of my brother Dhu’l-Nūn, by which he called out to God from inside the belly of the whale was, ‘*There is no deity but You, Glory to You, I have truly been among the wrongdoers*’. No Muslim calls upon God [by these words], wherever he may

be, but that God will answer him.^{'338}

This, then, is how the Prophet always supplicated. One of his supplications requested relief from distress: 'There is no deity but God—the Almighty, the Gentle. There is no deity but God, Lord of the mighty Throne. There is no deity but God—Lord of the heavens, Lord of the earth and Lord of the noble Throne.'^{A 339}

And among them is the *ḥadīth* from Burayda al-Aslamī, related by Tirmidhī in the *Sunan* and by [Abū Ḥātim] ibn Ḥibbān in his collection. The Messenger of God heard a man supplicating, 'O God, I supplicate You bearing witness that You are indeed God, that there is no deity but You, the One, the Self-sustaining; who does not beget nor was begotten; who has no equal.' Upon which, the Prophet said, 'By the One in whose hand is my soul, he has supplicated God by His supreme name. When God is called upon by it, He answers; when asked for something through it, He gives.'³⁴⁰

Abū Dāwūd and Nasā'ī both related from Anas [ibn Mālik] that he was sitting with the Prophet when a man, after offering his prayers, said in supplication: 'O God, verily, I ask You because Yours is all praise. There is no deity but You, the One who sends blessings, the Originator of the heavens and the earth. O You who are endowed with might and generosity. You who are the Living, the Vigilant.' The Prophet remarked, '[This man] has supplicated God through His supreme name: when God is called upon by it, He answers; when asked for something through it, He gives [what is asked]'.³⁴¹

In this way, the Prophet is telling [us] that a supplication is answered when it is preceded by praise and remembrance, that this [praise and remembrance] are the Supreme name of God and that this is the most effective way for the servant to ask for his needs.

This is yet another benefit of remembrance: it allows a supplication to be answered, for a supplication preceded by remembrance and praise is greater in merit and more likely to be answered than a supplication by itself. When the servant

relates his need to his condition—his lowliness, dependence [upon God] and acknowledgement [of that dependence]—it is better and more persuasive. He appeals to the One who is called upon by His attributes of perfection, generosity and grace; and shows (or rather, makes clear) the urgency of his need, his utter necessity, his poverty and his lowliness. This [state] is essential to him, just as the attributes of the One Supplicated are essential to God, and a personal prayer where what is essential in the supplicant meets what is essential in the One Supplicated is more persuasive. It has more subtle effects and is more perfect in gnosis and servanthship.

You can see from experience—though to God alone belong the highest similitudes—that in appealing to the generosity, munificence and goodness of a fellow man, whenever the petitioner mentions his need, his indigence and his lowliness, the impression on the heart of the one being petitioned is deeper and the request more likely to be fulfilled. Saying to him, ‘By your generosity the caravans journey’ and ‘Your excellence can no more be denied than the sun’ and the like; or ‘I am so overwhelmed by necessity that I have no way to bear it’ and the like, are much more persuasive than simply saying ‘Give me this or that’.

Consider, then, the words of Moses, ‘*My Lord, I am truly dependent on the goodness You have sent down to me*’;³⁴² and the words of Dhu’l-Nūn, ‘*There is no deity but You; Glory to You; I have truly been among the wrongdoers*’;³⁴³ and the words of our father Adam, ‘*Our Lord, we have truly wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will find ruin*!’³⁴⁴

[According to the two collections], Abū Bakr, said, ‘O Messenger of God, teach me a supplication to say in my prayer.’ The Prophet told him to say, ‘O God, I have greatly wronged my soul, and no one forgives sins like You, so grant me Your own forgiveness, and have mercy on me. You are truly the Forgiving and Most Merciful!’³⁴⁵ In this great and dignified supplication, the Prophet combined recognition of his state and the appeal to the excellence and generosity of his Almighty Lord with the fact

that it is God Alone who forgives sins. After these two appeals, he asks regarding his need. This is the proper manner [*adab*] of supplication and these are the proper manners of servanthship.

Remembrance, Recitation and Supplication

Third Section: The recitation of the Qur'ān has more merit than remembrance, and remembrance has more merit than supplication—each considered in its own right. Yet some situations may give what has less merit priority over what has more. In fact, they may require the former and forbid its omission in favour of the other.

An example of this is the [recommended] formula of glorification, uttered while bowing and prostrating during the prayer. This formula is preferable to the recitation of the Qur'ān when bowing and prostrating. In fact, the recitation of the Qur'ān then has been prohibited, being either forbidden or strongly disapproved. The same holds true for those moments in prayer when one says, 'God hears those who praise Him' [*tasmi'*] and 'Our Lord, to You is all the praise' [*tahmīd*]; when one utters the formula of witnessing [*tashahhud*]; or where one may say, 'Lord, forgive me, have mercy on me, guide me, pardon me, and provide for me' between the two prostrations. The same is true of the remembrance following the closing salutation of the prayer with the formula, 'There is no deity but God'; and with the glorification, praise and magnification: all are preferred to recitation. It is valid for responding to the muezzin when he makes the call to prayer and for repeating what he says.

So, while the superiority of the Qur'ān to all other speech is as great as the superiority of God to His creation, for every station there is an utterance. When that utterance is missed or replaced by something else, the wisdom [of that station] and the desired benefits are lost.

Likewise, the formulae of remembrance recommended for certain situations are preferable to free recitation, and free recitation is preferable to free remembrance, unless something befalls

the servant that makes remembrance or supplication more useful to him than recitation—for example, when the servant ponders his sins and this impels him towards repentance by [a formula for] asking forgiveness; or if a situation makes him fear the diabolical harm of human beings or *jinn* and impels him towards the invocations and supplications of protection and refuge. Similarly, the servant may be confronted by a pressing need, but instead of praying to God about it, he occupies himself with recitation or invocation, and thus his heart is not present. But if he turns to God in supplication and appeal, his entire heart will be concentrated on God, and he will address His Lord, pleading, out of sheer need and humility. In this [situation], to be occupied with personal prayer is more beneficial, although both recitation and remembrance [in themselves] are more meritorious and greater in reward.

This very practical subject requires an understanding of the soul, and the discernment between a thing's inherent virtues and its virtues in relation to something else, giving each its rightful importance.³⁴⁶ For the eye has a place and so does the foot; water has a place and so does flesh. The order [of things] is by way of the perfect wisdom that constitutes the system of [God's] commandments and prohibitions. And He is the One who grants accord.

Sometimes the most beneficial thing to use on clothes is soap, sometimes incense and rose water. One day I told the Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyya, that a scholar asked, 'Which is more useful to the servant: formulae of glorification or asking forgiveness?' [Ibn Taymiyya] answered me, 'When the cloth is clean, then incense and rose water is the best thing you can put on it; but if it is stained, use soap and hot water!' Then he said to me, 'But what do you do if the cloth remains stained?'

With respect to this subject, the Chapter [of Sincerity] in the Qur'ān [which begins], 'Say, He is God—the One, the Only' is equal to one third of the Qur'ān.³⁴⁷ Nonetheless, it cannot replace the verses on inheritance, divorce, the waiting period [before remarriage] and the like. Wherever and whenever they

are needed, these verses are much more useful than reciting the Chapter of Sincerity.

[Finally], inasmuch as prayer contains recitation, remembrance and supplication, and joins these elements of devotion in their most perfect form to worship through all the limbs of the body, it is of greater merit than [any one of these practices] in themselves.

This is an extremely useful principle, which opens for the servant the door to understanding how to give every act its rightful importance and place. In this manner, he will not busy himself with a lesser deed to the detriment of a greater one, thereby profiting the Devil by the difference. Nor will he behold a greater deed and busy himself with it because he imagines that it brings more reward, when it is actually the moment of a lesser one, the benefit of which he loses entirely.

All this requires a comprehensive knowledge of the order of practices, [the time of] their omission and what their purposes are. [It requires one] to understand how to give each practice its proper due, how to situate it in its rightful place and when to forego it in favour of something more important, with greater priority or more merit. For it may be possible to make up or to repeat [a greater deed], but not a lesser one. Therefore, for completion, the lesser deed comes first. An example of this would be someone who cuts short his recitation of the Qur'ān in order to return someone's greeting or to bless someone who had sneezed. Although the Qur'ān has greater merit, he may accomplish those lesser deeds and still return to it. If he is too busy reciting to return a greeting or to bless someone who had sneezed, he would miss the benefit [these lesser acts contain]. And this holds true for all other practices when they coincide in time. And God Most High is the One who grants accord ...

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, the goodly and blessed praise which our Lord loves, which pleases Him and is fitting to the nobility of His Face and Majesty;

Praise which fills the heavens, fills the earth, fills what is between them and fills whatever else He should will thereafter, in ceaseless and eternal praise;

Praise as numerous as the praises of all those who praise Him and as numerous as the times when the heedless neglect His remembrance;

And blessings be upon our master and protector, Muḥammad, the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers, the best of creation, most dependable in conveying the revelation, the Emissary of God to His servants;

Who, by the leave of his Lord, opens the doors of guidance and leads people out of darkness into light, along the path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy, the One who brought him forth to call to faith, guide to the straight path and beckon to the gardens of bliss; to command all that is fair, to restrain all that is immoral, so that by him, hearts are given life after their death, and light after being in darkness; so that they are gathered after being dispersed.

He called to Almighty God with an inner vision from his Lord, with wisdom and beautiful exhortations. He strove justly for God Most High, that God alone without partner be worshipped. His call extended to every corner [of the earth] touched by the sun, and the religion that pleases God reached as far as night and day.

He made God [rightly] known and called unto Him. May Almighty God and His angels and all His creation bless him and greet him with the salutations of peace!³⁴⁸



NOTES

¹ The passage in parentheses appears only in the Riyāḍ printing. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Al-Wābil al-ṣayyib wa rāfiʿ al-kalim al-ṭayyib*, ed. Shaykh Ismāʿīl Muḥammad al-Anṣārī, n.d.

² The masculine pronoun is used only by convention. 'The servant' ('*abd*') to whom Ibn al-Qayyim refers throughout this treatise may also be translated as 'human being', male or female.

³ *Ḥadīth*: 'He is not one of us who slaps his cheeks, rends his clothes, and calls with a call from the days of ignorance.' Bukhārī, Janā'iz, 1212.

⁴ Qur'ān xxxix:36. The text goes on to say, 'or in another recitation, "*His servants*"', the two being the same, because the singular is what is possessed [in the possessive construct], and thus has the generality of the plural.'

⁵ Qur'ān xv:42.

⁶ Qur'ān xxxviii:82-83.

⁷ Qur'ān xxxiv:20-21.

⁸ This is the third of the three situations—sin and forgiveness being the other two—with which Ibn al-Qayyim began the section.

⁹ About this, there are numerous sayings of the early believers. One example, attributed to Abū Hāzim, states, 'A man may commit a sin which does him more good than a pious deed, and may perform a pious deed which does him more harm than a sin.' Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā'*, 10 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1986, III. 242.

¹⁰ Contrary to most opinions expressed by the various editors of *al-Wābil*, Ibn al-Qayyim is not referring to Ibn Taymiyya here, but rather to 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī in his *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*.

¹¹ Bukhārī, Da'wāt, 5831, and Ibn Māja, Taṭbīq, 1116, ending with the words, 'Whoever says this with complete conviction in the morning and dies that day, shall enter heaven. And whoever says this with complete conviction in the evening, then dies that night, shall enter heaven.' For a slightly different ending, see Abū Dāwūd, Ādāb, 4408 and others.

¹² Qur'ān LXXI:13.

¹³ This is the second place where Ibn al-Qayyim uses 'Shaykh of Islam' to refer not to Ibn Taymiyya, but rather to al-Harawī.

¹⁴ The Lawgiver for the Muslims is the Prophet Muḥammad.

¹⁵ 'The prayer offered in congregation has twenty-seven times more merit than the one offered alone.' Bukhārī, Ādhān, 609.

¹⁶ Ibn al-Qayyim deals with this question at length in his small book *al-Ṣalāt wa ḥukm tārikihā* (ed. Bassām 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Jābī, Beirut, Al-Jaffān and al-Jābī, 1996), where he mentions, among those sharing this viewpoint, 'Aṭā ibn Abī Rabāḥ, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Abū 'Umar al-Awzā'i, Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and Imām al-Shāfi'i.

¹⁷ 'The first part of the prayer time is God's pleasure; the last part is His pardon.' Tirmidhī, Ṣalāt, 157. *Ḥadīth gharīb* (cf. note 89 below).

¹⁸ *Ḥadīth*: 'If people knew the reward for announcing the call to prayer and for standing in the first row, and found no other way to obtain it except by drawing lots, they would draw lots. If they knew the reward for the noon prayer, they would race towards it; if they knew the rewards of the night and the morning prayers in congregation, they would come crawling to offer them.' Bukhārī, Ādhān, 580. Another *ḥadīth* in Abū Dāwūd, Ṣalāt, 457, mentions the angels blessing those in the first row.

¹⁹ In Abū Dāwūd, Ṣalāt, 675 and, with slightly different wording, Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 17846.

²⁰ Muslim, Siyām, 1977 with the wording, '[Fasting on the Day of 'Arafāt] amends the sins of the year, what is past and what remains, and fasting on the Day of 'Āshūra amends the sins of the year past.' The Day of 'Arafāt is the tenth day of the month of pilgrimage; 'Āshūra is the tenth day of the first month of the Muslim year.

²¹ The words in parentheses are implicit. The conditional sentence is left incomplete in Arabic.

²² A precedent in word or deed set by the Prophet Muḥammad.

²³ Qur'ān II:264.

²⁴ Qur'ān XLIX:2.

²⁵ Beginning with the words, 'Pray the 'aṣr early...'. Bukhārī, Muwāqīt al-Ṣalāt, 520; Nasā'i, Ṣalāt, 470. The 'aṣr prayer is the worship offered in the late afternoon.

²⁶ *Īnah*: selling something that is not yet owned. The person receives money for something he does not yet own. Then he takes the money and buys the item for a lower price and delivers it to the original buyer. In Ibn

al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Zād al-Ma'ād fī ḥady khayr al-ʿibād* (ed. Shuʿayb and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Arnāʾūt, 5 vols, Kuwait, Maktabat al-Manār al-Islāmiyya, 1412/1992), III, 424. This saying may be traced to Dāraqutnī, 2: 311.

²⁷ *Ḥadīth*: 'A man accomplishes a deed and it is written in his favour as a pious act done in secret; his reward multiplies seventy times. Then when the Devil pursues him until he mentions it to people, making it public, it is written as a deed done in public and its multiple reward is totally erased. The Devil pursues him further until he mentions it to people a second time and likes it to be mentioned, and likes being praised for it, until it goes from being a deed done in public to ostentation ...' Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab al-ʾImān*, 6813.

²⁸ Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, II, 90.

²⁹ Muslim, *Imān*, 172 with the wording '*aslamta ʿalā mā aslafta min khayr*'; and Bukhārī, *Zakāt*, 1346 with the wording '*mā salafa*'.

³⁰ There is a repetition here in all the printed editions used.

³¹ Cf. Bukhārī, *Muwāqīt al-Ṣalāt*, 503.

³² On delaying the noon prayer, see Bukhārī, *Jamaʿāt*, 1044. On delaying the *maghrib* (sunset prayer), see Bukhārī, *Ḥajj*, 1678.

³³ Tirmidhī, *Zuhd*, 2302. This *ḥadīth* is classified as good and sound.

³⁴ *Taʾwīl*. In this case, Ibn Qayyim is probably referring to the Muʿtazilites and others who, he believed, abused the Qurʾān through excessive interpretation.

³⁵ 'The closest a servant can be to His Lord is in prostration, so give supplications in abundance therein.' Muslim, *Ṣalāt*, 744; Nasāʾī, *Taṭbīq*, 1125.

³⁶ Here Ibn Qayyim refers to the Qurʾānic expressions '*al-naḥs al-ammāratun bi l-sū*' (Qurʾān XII:53) and '*al-naḥs al-muṭmaʾinna*' (Qurʾān LXXXIX:27).

³⁷ Qurʾān XLVI:35.

³⁸ Qurʾān LXXIX:46.

³⁹ Qurʾān XXIII:112-114.

⁴⁰ Qurʾān XX:102-104.

⁴¹ Part of a longer *ḥadīth* in Tirmidhī, *Fitan*, 2117.

⁴² Qurʾān XII:44.

⁴³ Paraphrasing a saying attributed to Muʿādh ibn Jabal, quoted in Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilya* I, 234.

⁴⁴ The words in italics are Qurʾānic expressions.

⁴⁵ This sermon was quoted by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, in his commentary on the Qurʾānic verse XXIII:112 (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, Mecca and Riyāḍ: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1997, VIII, 2513) and was also included in Ibn Kathīr's commentary on the same verses (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*

al-Qur'ān, ed. Ḥusayn b. Ibrāhīm Zahāran, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1408/1988, III. 315).

⁴⁶ The point is not to be distracted in prayer but to remain attentive.

⁴⁷ Tirmidhī, *Amthāl*, 2790; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 16542.

⁴⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim is referring here to practices connected with visiting saints' tombs, or venerating *shaykhs*.

⁴⁹ Qur'ān IV:48 and I I6.

⁵⁰ Qur'ān IV:48 and I I6.

⁵¹ *Ḥadīth*: 'The penniless man from among my people is the one who shall come to the Day of Judgement with his prayer, his fasting and his alms, but there will be someone whom he had insulted, another he had abused, one whose wealth he had consumed, another whose blood he had shed, yet another whom he had struck, and all shall be given of his good deeds. And if these run out, then some of their sins shall be assigned to him and he shall be cast into hell.' In Muslim, *Birr*, 4678; Tirmidhī, *Ṣifāt al-Qiyāma*, 2342.

⁵² *Tawḥīd* ('oneness') is signified by the *shahāda*: 'There is no deity but God' (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*). It may also be translated as 'monotheism' (the belief that God is one, not multiple), or as the realisation that God alone can bring us either benefit or harm, provide for us, and that we must ultimately love and fear Him alone.

⁵³ Ibn al-Qayyim is referring to a saying attributed to Wahb ibn al-Munabbih, quoted in the first chapter of the Book on Funerals (*al-Janā'iz*), in Bukhārī: 'And when it was said to Wahb ibn al-Munabbih, "Is not the key to Heaven *lā ilāha illā Allāh*?" He replied, "By all means. But there is no key without teeth. If the key you come with has teeth, the door shall be opened; if not, then not."'

⁵⁴ Qur'ān XVI:32.

⁵⁵ Qur'ān XXXIX:73. The text goes on to say: '[In this latter verse], the relationship of purity to entering heaven is expressed by the particle *fa* ['therefore']. This means that purity is the condition of entering heaven, as if to say, "By reason of your purity, it is said to you enter therein."'

⁵⁶ Qur'ān VIII:37.

⁵⁷ This is a continuation of the *ḥadīth* found in Tirmidhī, *Amthāl*, 2790; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 16542.

⁵⁸ Bukhārī, *Adhān*, 709; and, with slightly different wording, in Tirmidhī, *Jum'ā*, 538, and *Nasā'ī*, *Sahw*, I I83.

⁵⁹ A similar saying appears in *Iṣfāhānī*, *Hilya*, v. 167, attributed to Shafī ibn Māṭī' al-Aṣbaḥī: 'Two men may be standing shoulder to shoulder in prayer,

and yet between them lie the distance between heaven and earth. They may be fasting in the same room, yet the difference between their fasts is that of heaven and earth.'

⁶⁰ The full wording is: 'Rise, O Bilāl, and give us rest with the prayer'. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 22009; in Abū Dāwūd, *Ādāb*, 4333, with slightly different wording.

⁶¹ The full wording is: 'Made beloved to me in your world are women and perfume, and my source of gladness has been placed in prayer.' (Nasā'ī, 'Ashra al-Nisā', 3879). The frequent addition 'three things' is not found in the main collections of *ḥadīth*.

⁶² A *ḥadīth* whose chain of narration to the Prophet is broken.

⁶³ A *ḥadīth* similar to this, narrated by al-Aḥwaṣ ibn Ḥakīm, is found in 'Uqaylī, *Kitāb al-ḍu'afā' al-kabīr* (ed. A. Qal'ajī, Beirut, 1404/1984, I. 121), beginning with the words, 'When the servant performs the ablution, and does it well, then stands in prayer ...' 'Uqaylī considered al-Aḥwaṣ an unreliable narrator.

⁶⁴ 'And God provides for whom He will without reckoning' (*bi-ghayri ḥisāb*)—in such abundance that it is beyond reckoning. Qur'ān 11:212.

⁶⁵ This is an expression which Ibn al-Qayyim frequently uses to refer to the states of the human heart. It is derived from Qur'ān xxxv:32, 'And then We gave the Book as an inheritance to those of Our servants whom We elected. But of them is he who wrongs his own soul; and of them is he who holds back; and of them is he who races towards the good by God's permission, and that is the great favour.'

⁶⁶ Both these sayings are sometimes quoted as *ḥadīth qudsī*, but neither Ibn al-Qayyim nor his teacher accepted them as such.

⁶⁷ Qur'ān 111:126.

⁶⁸ This is a continuation of the *ḥadīth* found in Tirmidhī, *Amthāl*, 2790; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 16542.

⁶⁹ Bukhārī, *Ādāb*, 5597; Ibn Māja, *Ṣiḡām*, 1679; also in Bukhārī, *Ṣawm*, 1770, without the word 'ignorance'.

⁷⁰ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 8501, with the ending 'And some may stand for prayer at night and receive nothing from it but sleeplessness.' Also in Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 3642, with 'standing at night' mentioned first.

⁷¹ The text of this argument, which is both technical and lengthy, has been placed in Appendix C.

⁷² 'On the Day when secrets come out.' Qur'ān lxxxvi:9.

⁷³ A similar saying is quoted in Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, v. 7220, attributed to Ibrāhīm ibn Adham: 'Sins weaken the body's strength and harden the heart,

while virtuous deeds give strength to the body and light to the heart.'

⁷⁴ Tirmidhī, *Zakāt*, 600. He describes the *ḥadīth* as *ḥasan gharīb* (cf. note 89).

⁷⁵ Qur'ān xxxii:16. This is part of a long *ḥadīth* in Tirmidhī, *Jum'a*, 558; Ibn Māja, *Fitan*, 3963.

⁷⁶ Narrated as a *ḥadīth* in Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, iii. 3353. It is generally agreed to be weak.

⁷⁷ Bukhārī, *Zakāt*, 1369; Muslim, *Zakāt*, 1667, with slightly different wording.

⁷⁸ That is, Bukhārī and Muslim.

⁷⁹ Bukhārī, *Riqāq*, 6058; Muslim, *Zakāt*, 1688, with slightly different wording.

⁸⁰ Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, iii. 3328.

⁸¹ Zakī al-Dīn Mundhirī, *al-Targhib wa l-tarhīb*, 2 vols, Beirut, 1992, i. 418.

⁸² Bukhārī, *Libās*, 5351; Muslim, *Zakāt*, 1696. There is an omission here, in several of the printed editions of *al-Wābil*, of a *ḥadīth* narrated by Abū Hurayra and found in Muslim, *Zakāt*, 1676 and Nasā'ī, *Zakāt*, 2491: 'Upon every Muslim is a form of charity.' They said, 'What if he finds nothing to give?' He said, 'Then let him labour with his hands, benefit himself and give in charity.' They asked, 'Do you see that he may be unable?' He replied, 'Then let him help someone in dire need.' They said, 'Do you see that he may be unable?' He replied, 'Then let him enjoin fairness or goodness.' They said, 'And if he will not?' He said, 'Then let him restrain himself from evil, for verily that [too] is charity.'

⁸³ Qur'ān LIX:9.

⁸⁴ The *Ka'ba*.

⁸⁵ Qur'ān LIX:9.

⁸⁶ Some printed editions of *al-Wābil* include other couplets from the same poem, but the lines quoted above are the most pertinent to the topic.

⁸⁷ This saying appears in Iṣfahānī, *Hilya*, viii. 242, with the ending, 'Because you give to people and take naught from anyone.'

⁸⁸ The full *isnād* given in the text is 'Muḥammad ibn Bishār related to us that Abū 'Āmir said "Khālīd ibn Ilyās recounted to us, from Ṣāliḥ ibn Abī Ḥassān ...'"

⁸⁹ *Gharīb* ('strange' or 'unusual'): a *ḥadīth* narrated by only one person at each stage of its chain of transmission.

⁹⁰ Tirmidhī, *Ādāb*, 2723.

⁹¹ Tirmidhī, *Birr*, 1884 and classified as *gharīb* (cf. note 89 above). The

full *isnād* given in the text is 'Al-Ḥasan ibn 'Urfā related from Sa'īd ibn Muḥammad al-Warrāq, on the authority of Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd, on the authority of al-A'raj, on the authority of Abū Hurayra ...' The word 'ālim ('scholar') was wrongly copied in several editions as 'ābid ('servant').

⁹² Muslim, Dhikr, 4835, beginning with the words: 'God has ninety-nine names. Whoever memorises them [in another version, 'enumerates them'] enters heaven...' The expression also appears in a *ḥadīth* found in Tirmidhī, Ṣalāt, 415; Abū Dāwūd, Ṣalāt, 1207 and Ibn Māja, Iqāmat al-Ṣalāt, 1159.

⁹³ Muslim, Dhikr, 4867, with slightly different wording.

⁹⁴ Mundhirī, *al-Tarḡīb*, II. 362. In Abū Dāwūd, Buyū', 3001 with the wording: 'One who releases a Muslim from a contract God will release from his errors.'

⁹⁵ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 8354, ending with the words 'on the Day of Judgement'. Similar versions of this *ḥadīth* exist in Muslim, Zuhd, 5328 and Tirmidhī, Buyū', 1227.

⁹⁶ Abū Dāwūd, Ādāb, 4236. And in Tirmidhī, Buyū', 1227: 'O Assembly of Muslims with thy tongues...'

⁹⁷ The *ṣirāt* is 'a bridge suspended over the gulf of hell, sharper than a sword and thinner than a hair. Whoever has in the world kept upright upon the Straight Path [*al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*] shall bear lightly upon [it].' Al-Ghazālī, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*, trans. T.J. Winter, Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1989, p. 206.

⁹⁸ Bukhārī, Riqāq, 6018; Muslim, Zuhd, 5301. Both place 'to be heard' before 'to be seen'.

⁹⁹ For the rest of the treatise, the words '*dhikr*', 'mention', 'invoke' and 'remember' will be used almost interchangeably (cf. Introduction p. xvi).

¹⁰⁰ Qur'ān CXIV:4.

¹⁰¹ Ibn Kathīr cites this and other similar sayings in his commentary on the last chapter of the Qur'ān (*Tafsīr*, 920-21). Also, in Bayhaqī (*Shu'ab al-Imān*, 676) there is a saying attributed to Ibn 'Abbās which begins, 'None is born without the whisperer upon his heart. When he remembers God, the whisperer withdraws; when he forgets, then begins the whispering.'

¹⁰² Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 21064. The chain of transmitters continues: 'according to 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Abī Salma al-Mājīshūn, according to Ziyād ibn Abī Ziyād *mawla* 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās ibn Abī Rabi'a...'

¹⁰³ Tirmidhī, Da'wāt, 3299.

¹⁰⁴ Muslim, Dhikr, 4834. The Prophet coined the term *mufarridūn*, which was presumably unfamiliar to those around him. It is derived from the verb

ifrad (*bi*), 'to single out someone or something for something'. In this case, the idea is that they are the ones who single out God for mention. It also appears that the Prophet was speaking with a double meaning: 'We who are dedicated to the remembrance of God are first to arrive at our destinations, in this world and the spiritual realm.'

¹⁰⁵ Abū Dāwūd, *Ādāb*, 4214.

¹⁰⁶ Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3302. He describes this *hadīth* as good and sound.

¹⁰⁷ Muslim, *Dhikr*, 4868.

¹⁰⁸ The second version with 'the rules' appears in Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3297 and Ibn Māja, *Ādāb*, 3783.

¹⁰⁹ Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3298.

¹¹⁰ Bukhārī, *Da'wāt*, 5928.

¹¹¹ Bukhārī, *Tawhīd*, 6856; Muslim, *Dhikr*, 4832.

¹¹² Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3432.

¹¹³ Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3504.

¹¹⁴ Qur'ān VIII:45.

¹¹⁵ Since the words *mujāhid* and *jihād* are, in many people's minds, so closely connected with political terrorism, it should be remembered that in the days of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim they were above all associated with the defence of Muslim lands against the Mongols, who had decimated Baghdad just forty years before Ibn al-Qayyim was born, slaughtering men, women and children indiscriminately, and who were still considered a threat. In addition, as Ibn al-Qayyim states elsewhere, the term *jihād*, which literally means 'striving', also implies personal struggle against one's own vices.

¹¹⁶ Qur'ān XXXIII:41.

¹¹⁷ Qur'ān XXXIII:35.

¹¹⁸ Qur'ān II:200.

¹¹⁹ This paraphrases a saying attributed to Junayd: 'If someone from the saintly were to offer worship to God for a million years and then turn away from Him for a mere second, his loss that moment would be greater than all he had gained.' Iṣfahānī, *Hilya*, x. 328.

¹²⁰ Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Imān*, 511.

¹²¹ Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Imān*, 512; also in Mundhirī, *al-Targhib*, II. 248

¹²² Tirmidhī, *Zuhd*, 2336.

¹²³ Mundhirī, *al-Targhib*, II. 244.

¹²⁴ Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Imān*, 523.

¹²⁵ Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Imān*, 522.

¹²⁶ Qur'ān XVIII:28.

¹²⁷ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 27310.

¹²⁸ Referring to the famous *ḥadīth Jibrīl*, in Bukhārī, *Imān*, 48; Muslim, *Imān*, 9.

¹²⁹ When asked, in the above mentioned *ḥadīth*, to define *iḥsān*, the Prophet answered, 'It is that you worship God as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, He nonetheless sees you.'

¹³⁰ Qur'ān II:152.

¹³¹ Bukhārī, *Tawḥīd*, 6856; Muslim, *Dhikr*, 4832, with the wording, 'If he mentions Me...'

¹³² Nearly the same vignette is conveyed about Ibn Qayyim by Ibn Ḥajar, and quoted in most introductions to editions of his works. It is likely that he adopted this practice from his teacher.

¹³³ Qur'ān XI:114.

¹³⁴ Ibn Māja, *Ādāb*, 3799 and Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 17639, both with slightly different wording.

¹³⁵ Referring to the well-known *ḥadīth* in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, 2666, which begins, 'O lad, shall I not teach you that which will cause God to benefit you? Protect (*iḥfaz*) God, He will protect you. Protect God and you will find Him before you. Seek to know Him in times of ease and He will know you in times of hardship...'

¹³⁶ Cf. note 102.

¹³⁷ Cf. note 107.

¹³⁸ Cf. note 120.

¹³⁹ Referring to the *ḥadīth*, 'Seven [persons] will God shade by His Throne on the Day when there is no shade but His ...' The seventh mentioned is 'a man who remembers God in solitude and whose eyes overflow with tears.' In Bukhārī, *Hudūd*, 6308; Muslim, *Zakāt*, 1712.

¹⁴⁰ With the wording, 'To the one engrossed in [reciting] the Qur'ān and with My remembrance ...' in Tirmidhī, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, 2850.

¹⁴¹ Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3384.

¹⁴² Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3386.

¹⁴³ Muslim, *Dhikr*, 4857. The last part appears only in Bukhārī, *Da'wāt*, 5926.

¹⁴⁴ Muslim, *Dhikr*, 4861; Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 4521.

¹⁴⁵ In Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3423, but with the ending 'except that God will forgive him for whatever befalls him that day. And if he says this in the evening, God will forgive him for whatever befalls him that night.'

¹⁴⁶ Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3389; Nasā'ī, *Adhān*, 679; Abū Dāwūd, *Da'wāt*,

6403.

¹⁴⁷ Tirmidhī, Da^ʿwāt, 3350.

¹⁴⁸ Qur'ān LIX: 19.

¹⁴⁹ Qur'ān XVIII: 28.

¹⁵⁰ Qur'ān XX: 124-126.

¹⁵¹ Presumably the grave, which is the isthmus between this world and the next.

¹⁵² Qur'ān XVI: 97.

¹⁵³ Qur'ān XVI: 41.

¹⁵⁴ Qur'ān XI: 3.

¹⁵⁵ Qur'ān XXXIX: 10.

¹⁵⁶ There is an omission here in all printed editions. The words 'it would be enough' are logical and suggested by the editors.

¹⁵⁷ There is another omission in the original, but the sentence that follows, logically completes the idea.

¹⁵⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim accompanied Ibn Taymiyya to prison (cf. Introduction).

¹⁵⁹ A prayer recommended by the Prophet to Mu^ʿadh. Nasā'i, Sahw, 1286; Abū Dāwūd, Ṣalāt, 1301.

¹⁶⁰ Qur'ān LVII: 13.

¹⁶¹ 'Naḍratan al-na^ʿīm'. Qur'ān LXXXIII: 24.

¹⁶² Possibly referring to the saying by 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak: 'Worldly people leave the world before having feasted on the sweetest thing in it.' They asked him what that was and he answered, 'The knowledge of Almighty God.' Iṣfahānī, *Hilya*, VIII: 167.

¹⁶³ There are some omissions in the Arabic editions here. The sense of the last sentence is not altogether clear.

¹⁶⁴ Qur'ān LVII: 21.

¹⁶⁵ 'Sabaqak al-rakb', by which he meant, 'I have surpassed you in the journey to God'.

¹⁶⁶ That is, whatever intention motivates someone to a word or deed, determines the meaning of that word or deed.

¹⁶⁷ He is paraphrasing the Qur'ān LVII: 12: 'The day you shall see the believers, men and women, their light shining forth before them.'

¹⁶⁸ Qur'ān VI: 122.

¹⁶⁹ This refers to the well-known prayer which begins, 'O God, put light in my heart...' ('Allāhumma ja^ʿal fī qalbī nūran...'). Bukhārī, Da^ʿwāt, 5841; Muslim, Ṣalāt al-Musāfirīn, 1274.

¹⁷⁰ Part of what has come to be known as Du^ʿā' al-Ṭā'if, which begins: 'O

God, I complain to You of my weakness...’ In *Zād al-Ma‘ād*, the editor attributes it to the Collection (*Musnad*) of Ṭabarānī, (ed. ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Salāfi, Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1989, VI.: 35), noting that Ibn Ishāq is a weak link in the chain of narrators.

¹⁷¹ Quoted by Ibn Kathīr in his commentary (*Tafsīr*, III: 464) with the words, ‘The light of the Throne is from the light of His Face.’

¹⁷² Qur’ān XXXIX: 69.

¹⁷³ Muslim, *Imān*, 263; Ibn Māja, *Muqaddima*, 191. This is also quoted by Ibn Kathīr in his commentary on Qur’ān VII:143 (*Tafsīr*, II. 259). None of these versions includes verse XXVII: 8 of the Qur’ān at the end, God’s words to Moses at the Burning Bush.

¹⁷⁴ Referring to Qur’ān VII: 143, where Moses asks the Lord to reveal Himself, and God tells him to look upon the mountain instead: ‘*And when the Lord revealed His glory to the mountain, He sent it crashing down.*’

¹⁷⁵ ‘*Lā tudrikuhu l-abṣār*’ (Qur’ān VI: 103). The verb carries the meaning ‘to perceive, grasp or comprehend’ and ‘to reach or overtake’. Ibn ‘Abbās is saying that it is one thing to see something, another to ‘take it all in.’ Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes this saying in his *Tafsīr*, (IV. 1363): ‘Ikrima said, “I heard Ibn ‘Abbās say, ‘Muḥammad saw his Lord, be He blessed and Exalted.”’ I said, “But has not God said, ‘*Visions do not perceive Him*’? [Ibn ‘Abbās] said to me, “Have you no mother? That is His Light. When He unveils His Light, none can perceive it”, or in another version “none can withstand it.”’ Ibn Kathīr also quotes this saying in his *Tafsīr*, II.: 259.

¹⁷⁶ Tirmidhī, *Tafsīr*, 3201, with slightly different wording.

¹⁷⁷ Qur’ān XXIV: 35.

¹⁷⁸ In the Qur’ānic commentary of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, the quotation from [‘Ubayy] ibn Ka‘b is, ‘*The similitude of His light is the believer in whose heart God has placed faith and the Qur’ān.*’ See Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr*, IV. 1363). Ibn Kathīr (*Tafsīr*, III. 464) quotes [‘Ubayy] Ibn Ka‘b in the same words. See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, III: 464.

¹⁷⁹ Qur’ān XLVIII: 29

¹⁸⁰ Qur’ān III: 159. The expression translated as ‘hard of heart’ (*ghalīẓ al-qalb*) literally means ‘thick-hearted’.

¹⁸¹ Qur’ān IX: 73.

¹⁸² Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir al-uṣūl fī ma‘rifat aḥādīth al-rasūl*, (ed. Dr. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Umayr, Beirut, Dār al-Jīl, 1412/1992), IV. 34. It also appears in Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1414/1993, *ḥadīth* 829, 237), and Iṣfahānī (*Ḥilya*, VI:97), with the wording,

'God, blessed be He, has vessels on earth ...'

¹⁸³ Qur'ān VI: 122.

¹⁸⁴ Qur'ān XLII: 52.

¹⁸⁵ Qur'ān II: 17.

¹⁸⁶ Qur'ān CIV: 6-7.

¹⁸⁷ Qur'ān VI: 39.

¹⁸⁸ Qur'ān II: 171.

¹⁸⁹ Qur'ān II: 178.

¹⁹⁰ Qur'ān II: 171.

¹⁹¹ 'They say, O Lord, we heard a caller calling to faith, "Believe in your Lord," so we believed. Our Lord, forgive us our sins, remove from us our wrongs and take our souls into the company of the righteous.' Qur'ān III: 193.

¹⁹² 'Nay, but upon their hearts is the rust of what they have earned.' Qur'ān LXXXIII: 14.

¹⁹³ Qur'ān II: 19.

¹⁹⁴ The words in italics in this paragraph paraphrase Qur'ān II: 19 and 20.

¹⁹⁵ Qur'ān LIV: 5.

¹⁹⁶ *Dawāwīn* is the plural of *dīwān*, often used to refer to a book of poetry.

¹⁹⁷ Here he is probably referring to Qur'ān IX, where verses 49, 58, 61, 75 all begin with '*And among them*', in reference to the hypocrites.

¹⁹⁸ Qur'ān XIII: 17.

¹⁹⁹ The *ḥadīth* referred to actually reads, 'The Trust [*al-amāna*] descended to the roots of men's hearts, then they knew by the Qur'ān, and then they knew by the *Sunna*.'

²⁰⁰ Muslim, Faḍā'il, 4232. A slightly different version exists in Bukhārī, 'Ilm, 77.

²⁰¹ Qur'ān XXXVIII: 45.

²⁰² Bukhārī, Jihād, 2820, beginning, 'Do you have anything revealed which is not in the Qur'ān?'

²⁰³ Qur'ān II: 60.

²⁰⁴ Tirmidhī, 'Ilm, 2582.

²⁰⁵ In the sense of 'commentator'.

²⁰⁶ *Istinbāṭihi*. The word is used in the sense of deducing in the *ḥadīth* or the Qur'ān applications to given circumstances.

²⁰⁷ 'And the earth We spread out and cast thereupon headlands, and caused therefrom to spring every splendid pair.' Qur'ān L: 7.

²⁰⁸ Qur'ān LVII: 21 and elsewhere.

²⁰⁹ Qur'ān XXV: 44.

²¹⁰ Qur'ān XIII: 17.

²¹¹ Qur'ān XIII: 18.

²¹² This *ḥadīth* is not in Tirmidhī, compiler of the *Sunan*. It is, however, mentioned by Ibn Abī Ḥātim and quoted in the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr (II. 280) on Qur'ān VI: 125: 'Whoever God wishes to guide, He opens his breast to Islam.'

²¹³ This refers to Qur'ān XXXV: 10, 'To Him the goodly word ascends and He exalts the pious deed.'

²¹⁴ Muslim, Zuhd, 5314, with the words 'and the *jinn* from fire...'

²¹⁵ Mentioned in Qur'ān LXXXIII: 18. The word is derived from 'alā, and refers to a high place.

²¹⁶ Abū Dāwūd, Sunna, 4127. This *ḥadīth* begins, 'We went out with the Prophet [may God bless him and grant him peace] for the burial of a man from among the Anṣār and stopped by the grave. When the body was buried, the Messenger of God [may God bless him and grant him peace] sat down, and we sat down quietly around him. In his hand was a stick, with which he scratched the earth. Then he raised his head and said, "Seek refuge in God from the punishment of the grave," repeating this two or three times. Then he said, "When the moment comes for the believing servant to leave this world and proceed to the next, angels are sent down to him from the sky, their faces so white they are [like] the sun ..."'

²¹⁷ Tirmidhī, Imān, 2566; Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 6356; al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, IV. 199.

²¹⁸ There are seven verses in the Qur'ān which say that God 'took a seat upon' or 'mounted upon' the Throne. Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim and the Ḥanbalites in general rejected all attempts to interpret these verses. Their view was reflected in the saying of Imām Mālik, 'The mounting is understood, but the how is unknown.'

²¹⁹ The following section almost totally paraphrases Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīth*. Though it is first and foremost glorification of God, it is undoubtedly phrased as a response to the philosophic notions of Ibn Sīna, Ibn Rushd and others, still in circulation, which held that God knows His creation through universals, not particulars. In fact, this is precisely the point upon which al-Ghazālī found the philosophers guilty of disbelief [*kufṛ*].

²²⁰ Or possibly, 'the voice of those in need who ask in a sing-song voice'. The meaning is that this kind of voice, often used by beggars, may repulse people but it does not repulse God.

²²¹ Qur'ān XXXVI: 82.

²²² The *barzakh*, or 'isthmus', referred to is mentioned in Qur'ān XXIII:

99-100: 'Until, when death comes to one of them, he says, My Lord! Send me back, that I may do right in that which I have left behind! But nay, it is but a word that he speaks; and behind them is a barrier [barzakh] until the day when they are raised.' In the commentary of Ibn Kathīr, Mujāhid is quoted as saying, 'It is a barrier between this world and the next.' Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, III. 409-410.

²²³ In his *Risāla*, Qushayrī attributes this expression, 'remembrance is an invitation to sanctity', to his master, Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq. See Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, (ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, 2nd edn., Beirut, n.d.), p. 221.

²²⁴ Qur'ān XVI: 128.

²²⁵ Qur'ān II: 249.

²²⁶ Qur'ān XXIX: 69.

²²⁷ Qur'ān IX: 40.

²²⁸ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 10553.

²²⁹ Paraphrasing Qur'ān II: 222, 'Verily, God loves those who repent and loves those who purify themselves.'

²³⁰ Ibn al-Qayyim also quotes this *ḥadīth* in *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, in the last section dealing with *Mashāhid al-Khalq*, where he also mistakenly attributes it to the *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madārij al-sālikīn fī mā bayna 'Iyyāka na'budu wa iyyāka nasta'in*, (ed. Aḥmad Fakhri al-Rifī and 'Aṣam Fāris al-Hurstānī, Beirut, Dār al-Jīl, 1412/1991), I. 475.

²³¹ That is, the school of Ibn 'Arabī.

²³² Cf. note 103.

²³³ Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 679.

²³⁴ Bukhārī, Ḥayḍ, chapter heading; Muslim, Ḥayḍ, 557.

²³⁵ The question relates to ritual impurity following sexual relations, when a woman is menstruating, or following childbirth.

²³⁶ Bukhārī, Wuḍū', 138; Muslim, Nikāḥ, 2591.

²³⁷ Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 4468.

²³⁸ Cf. note. 159.

²³⁹ Qur'ān II: 152.

²⁴⁰ Qur'ān LVII: 18.

²⁴¹ Qur'ān LVII: 19.

²⁴² Qur'ān LVII: 19.

²⁴³ Qur'ān LVII: 19.

²⁴⁴ Qur'ān LVII: 19.

²⁴⁵ Qur'ān LVII: 19.

²⁴⁶ Qur'ān XXVI: 41-2.

²⁴⁷ *Yastakhimī*, literally, ‘who seeks My choice’. *Ṣalāt al-istikhāra*, the ‘prayer to seek (God’s) choice’, consists of two *raka’āt* followed by a prescribed supplication. It is *sunna* for one who is unsure about an important decision he is about to make. In the supplication, the Prophet would ask God to ease the way if it was good for his religion and worldly life, but to make the way difficult if not.

²⁴⁸ Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 682; Iṣfahānī, *Hilya*, iv. 45.

²⁴⁹ Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 10348.

²⁵⁰ Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 680; Iṣfahānī, *Hilya*, vi. 42, ending with the words ‘in any state’.

²⁵¹ Iṣfahānī, *Hilya*, III.: 272.

²⁵² Qur’ān xxxii: 16.

²⁵³ Qur’ān xxiv: 37.

²⁵⁴ Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 693.

²⁵⁵ This is quoted as a *ḥadīth* in Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 717, with the words, ‘Verily, the mention of God is a cure and verily, the mention of people is an illness.’

²⁵⁶ There is an omission in the Arabic original.

²⁵⁷ Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 727.

²⁵⁸ Qur’ān xxii: 38.

²⁵⁹ Qur’ān xiv: 7.

²⁶⁰ Attributed to Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Balkhī in Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 713.

²⁶¹ Qur’ān xxxiii: 41-43. The word translated here as ‘mercy’, *ṣalāt*, is the same word used for the Muslim prayer. Most commentaries explain that *ṣalāt* for human beings signifies worship, but for God and His Angels, it is mercy and compassion (*rahma*). This has to do with the linguistic origin of the word, which is said to refer to two muscles at the base of the back which bend when one inclines. Thus, the word *ṣalāt* combines bodily worship, inclination and mercy and, like the verb *ḥanā*, has a relationship to the movement of the mother when she bends down to pick up her baby.

²⁶² The words in parentheses do not appear in most of the printed editions.

²⁶³ Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 528, with the wording: ‘Verily, God [Exalted] has roving angels that stop and descend upon the gatherings of remembrance. So roam the meadows of Heaven.’ We asked, “What are the meadows of Heaven, O Messenger of God?” He said, “The gatherings of remembrance. So be nourished and take your rest in the remembrance of God, and remember Him in your souls. Whoever wishes to know his place with God should

look to see what place he has given God [in his soul], for verily, God will give to a servant the [same] place with Him that the servant has given to God within himself.”

²⁶⁴ Bukhārī, Da‘wāt, 5929. Muslim, Dhikr, 4854.

²⁶⁵ Qur’ān XIX: 31.

²⁶⁶ Muslim, Dhikr, 4869.

²⁶⁷ Iṣfahānī, *Hilya*, v. 133. The *isnād* continues with, ‘from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī, on the authority of Mu‘āwiya ibn Ṣāliḥ, on the authority of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Jubayr ibn Nafīr al-Ḥaḍramī, on the authority of his father ...’

²⁶⁸ Qur’ān XX: 14.

²⁶⁹ In ‘*li-dhikrī*’, ‘for My remembrance’.

²⁷⁰ Qur’ān XVII: 78.

²⁷¹ Qur’ān XXI: 47.

²⁷² Qur’ān XXIX: 45.

²⁷³ Qur’ān, XXIX: 45

²⁷⁴ Qur’ān, II: 152.

²⁷⁵ Qur’ān, XXIX: 45.

²⁷⁶ Tirmidhī, Ḥajj, 826; Abū Dāwūd, Manāsik, 1612.

²⁷⁷ *Mursal*, literally, ‘hurried’: a *ḥadīth* with a chain of transmission which is reliable but which only goes back to the ‘generation of followers’ (*al-tābi‘ūn*).

²⁷⁸ Read as ‘*ayyād*’, ‘those who visit’. In some versions, this is read as ‘*ibād*’, or ‘the worshippers’.

²⁷⁹ Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Imān*, 558, but with slightly different wording.

²⁸⁰ Iṣfahānī, *Hilya*, III. 267.

²⁸¹ *Hajj* and ‘*umra*’, respectively.

²⁸² This refers to the formula *subḥān Allāh* repeated thirty-three times, followed by *al-ḥamdu li Llāh* thirty-three times, followed by *Allāhu akbar* thirty-three times.

²⁸³ Bukhārī, Da‘wāt, 5854; Muslim, Masājīd, 936.

²⁸⁴ We were unable to find a source for this particular wording, but similar versions exist in Tirmidhī, Da‘wāt, 3297; Ibn Māja, *Ādāb*, 3783; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 17020.

²⁸⁵ A name of the Prophet (*al-nāsiḥ*)

²⁸⁶ Referring to Qur’ān XCIV:5-6.

²⁸⁷ Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-‘Ajūz, editor of the Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya printing of this work, adds this interesting footnote: ‘I have seen [Ibn Taymiyya’s] handwriting in works still in the Zāhiriyya library in Damascus. Due to the

speed with which he wrote, all the words from the beginning to the end of the line are connected. This means he did not lift his reed pen except at the end of a line, when the ink went dry.'

²⁸⁸ That is, the expressions *subḥān Allāh*, *al-ḥamdu li-Llāh* and *Allāhu akbar*.

²⁸⁹ Bukhārī, *Da'wāt*, 5843; Muslim, *Dhikr*, 4907.

²⁹⁰ The chain of transmitters continues, 'On the authority of al-Layth ibn Sa'd, on the authority of Mu'āwiya ibn Ṣālih, on the authority of Asad ibn Waḍā'a [upon whom be God's mercy] ...'

²⁹¹ We were unable to find the source of this *ḥadīth*. However, in Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3525 there is the following version: 'From Makhūl, on the authority of Abū Hurayra, the Messenger of God [upon whom be peace and God's blessings] said to me, "Be abundant in the saying, '*There is neither strength nor power save in God*', for verily, it is one of the treasures of heaven." And Makhūl said, "From whoever says, '*There is neither strength nor power save in God and no refuge from Him except in Him*' will be removed seventy kinds of harm, the least of which is poverty." Abū 'Isā [Tirmidhī] says, 'This [*ḥadīth*] does not have an unbroken line of transmission. Makhūl never heard directly from Abū Hurayra.'

²⁹² Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3520, with the variant *al-mustahtarūn*; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Imān*, 505, with the variant *yuhhtarūna*.

²⁹³ That is, the noun.

²⁹⁴ Ibn Māja, *Ādāb*, 3784.

²⁹⁵ We were unable to find a source for this *ḥadīth*.

²⁹⁶ Cf. the thirty-second 'Benefit', where the *ḥadīth* is attributed to Tirmidhī.

²⁹⁷ Mundhirī, *al-Targhib*, II. 286

²⁹⁸ Qur'ān IV:142.

²⁹⁹ Qur'ān LXIII:9.

³⁰⁰ The Khārijites broke ranks with the majority of Muslims in the year 37/658 over the question of succession, following the death of the caliph 'Uthmān in 35/656, and considered all those who supported 'Alī as infidels. They became notorious for their absolutism and violent resistance. The saying quoted above has been attributed, in fact, to 'Alī.

³⁰¹ As in the *ḥadīth* quoted above in the fiftieth 'Benefit'.

³⁰² The *ḥadīth* is classified as *mursal*.

³⁰³ We were unable to find the source of this *ḥadīth*.

³⁰⁴ Qur'ān XCIX:1-5.

³⁰⁵ Tirmidhī, *Ṣifāt al-Qiyāma*, 2353.

³⁰⁶ *Hawḍ*: the Celestial Pool of infinite breadth, where the believers will be reunited with their Prophet in the course of Judgement Day. 'Be patient until you meet me at the *Hawḍ*' (Bukhārī, *Jazīyya*, 2928); 'He who drinks therefrom shall never thirst' (Bukhārī, *Riqāq*, 6097). It is fed by the river of Heaven called al-Kawthar (Muslim, *Ṣalāt*, 607).

³⁰⁷ Upon which are inscribed his good deeds.

³⁰⁸ Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, III, p. 231 ff.

³⁰⁹ Abū Dāwūd, *Ādāb*, 4431. The version in Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3348 has a slightly different ending.

³¹⁰ The most common version of this *ḥadīth* includes the words, '[It] will be the equivalent for him of freeing ten slaves, and one hundred virtuous deeds shall be written for him, and one hundred wrongs removed from him...' Bukhārī, *Da'wāt*, 6403; Muslim, *Dhikr*, 2691.

³¹¹ Mundhirī, *al-Targhib*, I, 282, with the wording, 'When you lie down on your side in your bed, and recite the *Fātiḥa*, then 'Say: He, God, is One', you have protected yourself from everything except death.'

³¹² In the full version of the *ḥadīth* this happens two more times.

³¹³ Qur'ān II:255.

³¹⁴ Bukhārī, *Wakāla*, 3033. He meant that Abū Hurayra had met a devil.

³¹⁵ Iṣfahānī, *Hilya*, VI, 261, with slightly different wording.

³¹⁶ Cf. note 234.

³¹⁷ Qur'ān VII:54.

³¹⁸ Qur'ān XXXVII.

³¹⁹ Qur'ān LV:33.

³²⁰ Qur'ān LIX:21.

³²¹ 'Do you not see those who have been given a portion of the Book and believe in sorcery and idolatry?' Qur'ān IV:51.

³²² 'Urwa chose a verse that contains his name: 'the trustworthy hold of hand' [*al-ʿurwati l-wuthqā*]. Qur'ān II:256.

³²³ Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab al-Īmān*, 4710.

³²⁴ Muslim, *Ṣalāt*, 584.

³²⁵ Muslim, *Ṣalāt*, 581.

³²⁶ We were unable to find the source of this *ḥadīth*.

³²⁷ Qur'ān VII:54.

³²⁸ Qur'ān XI:56.

³²⁹ Qur'ān XXXVII:1-10.

³³⁰ Muslim, *Dhikr*, 4905; similar version in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 2218.

³³¹ Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3491; Abū Dāwūd, *Ṣalāt*, 1282.

³³² This is a reference to the *ḥadīth qudsī* that begins, 'I have divided the prayer between Me and My servant.' Muslim, *Ṣalāt*, 598; Tirmidhī, *Tafsīr*, 2877; Nasā'ī, *Ifitāḥ*, 900; Ibn Māja, *Ādāb*, 3774.

³³³ *Al-fiqh al-akbar*: the deepest understanding of Islam's form and content.

³³⁴ Cf. note 137.

³³⁵ Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3399; Abū Dāwūd, *Ṣalāt*, 1266; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 32811.

³³⁶ Another name for the Prophet Yūnus (Jonah).

³³⁷ Qur'ān XXI:87.

³³⁸ Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3427; Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, II. 24.

³³⁹ Bukhārī, *Da'wāt*, 5879; Muslim, *Dhikr*, 4909.

³⁴⁰ Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3397.

³⁴¹ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 13081; also Ibn Māja, *Da'wāt*, 3848, without the ending, 'O You who are the Living, the Vigilant.'

³⁴² Qur'ān XXVIII:24.

³⁴³ Qur'ān XXI:87.

³⁴⁴ Qur'ān VII:23.

³⁴⁵ Bukhārī, *Ādhān*, 790; Muslim, *Dhikr*, 4876; Tirmidhī, *Da'wāt*, 3454.

³⁴⁶ This expression *ya'fī kulla dhī ḥaqqi, ḥaqqahu*—which means, literally, 'he gives everything which has a right, its right' appears in several *ḥadīth* and is often found in texts which treat of the relationship between the form and substance.

³⁴⁷ Qur'ān CXII. Bukhārī, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, 4627; Muslim, *Ṣalāt al-Musāfirīn*, 1344.

³⁴⁸ This is the supplication which ends *al-Wābil al-ṣayyib*.

APPENDIX I

THE ARABIC TEXT OF RECOMMENDED INVOCATIONS AND SUPPLICATIONS

* اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ ، خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ ، وَأَنَا عَلَى عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ مَا
اسْتَطَعْتُ ، أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا صَنَعْتُ ، أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ وَأَبُوءُ بِذَنْبِي ،
فَاغْفِرْ لِي ، إِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ .

* سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ .

* سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ .

* لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ .

* سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ .

* سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ .

* اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَصْبَحْتُ أَشْهَدُكَ وَأُشْهَدُ حَمَلَةَ عَرْشِكَ وَمَلَائِكَتَكَ وَجَمِيعَ خَلْقِكَ ، إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ وَأَنْ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُكَ وَرَسُولُكَ .

* رَضِيتُ بِاللَّهِ رَبًّا ، وَبِالْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا ، وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ رَسُولًا .

* لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ، وَهُوَ حَيٌّ لَا يَمُوتُ ، بِيَدِهِ الْخَيْرُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ .

* أَعُوذُ بِنُورِ وَجْهِكَ الَّذِي أَشْرَقَتْ لَهُ الظُّلُمَاتِ وَصَلَحَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ أَنْ يَحِلَّ عَلَيَّ غَضَبُكَ ، أَوْ يَنْزِلَ بِي سَخَطُكَ ، لَكَ الْعُتْبَى حَتَّى تَرْضَى ، وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِكَ .

* بِسْمِ اللَّهِ ، اللَّهُمَّ جَنِّبْنَا الشَّيْطَانَ وَجَنِّبِ الشَّيْطَانَ مَا رَزَقْتَنَا .

* اللَّهُمَّ أَعِنِّي عَلَى ذِكْرِكَ وَشُكْرِكَ وَحُسْنِ عِبَادَتِكَ .

* لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ .

* لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ .

* سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ .

* سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ .

* مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ، لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ .

* لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ بِيَدِهِ الْخَيْرُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ .

* بِسْمِ اللَّهِ ، تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ ، لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ .

* الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَحْيَا نَفْسِي بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَلَمْ يَمِتْهَا فِي مَنَامِهَا ، الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُمَسِّكُ الَّتِي قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ، الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُمَسِّكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا وَلَئِنْ زَالَتَا إِنْ أَمْسِكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ، الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُمَسِّكُ السَّمَاءَ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ .

* أَعُوذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ التَّامَّاتِ الَّتِي لَا يَجَاوِزُهُنَّ بَرٌّ وَلَا فَاجِرٌ ، مِنْ شَرِّ مَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ، وَمِنْ شَرِّ مَا ذَرَأَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يُخْرِجُ مِنْهَا ، وَمِنْ شَرِّ فِتَنِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ، وَمِنْ شَرِّ طَوَارِقِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ إِلَّا طَارِقًا يَطْرُقُ بِخَيْرٍ يَا رَحْمَنُ .

* سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَدَدَ خَلْقِهِ ، سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رِضَاءَ نَفْسِهِ ، سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ زِينَةَ عَرْشِهِ ، سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ مِدَادَ كَلِمَاتِهِ .

* سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَدَدَ مَا خَلَقَ فِي السَّمَاءِ ، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَدَدَ مَا خَلَقَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ،

وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَدَدَ مَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ ، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَدَدَ مَا هُوَ خَالِقٌ ، وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ
(مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ) ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ (مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ) ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ) ، وَلَا
حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ (مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ) .

* لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ ، سُبْحَانَكَ ، إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ .

* لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ الْحَلِيمُ ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ رَبُّ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَرَبُّ الْأَرْضِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ .

APPENDIX II

SELECTED BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Sources: (W) = Winter, (Z) = Ziriklī, (M) = *Mawsūʿā* (see bibliography for detailed references).

‘**Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ** (d. c 65/684-5)—104. A Companion known for his asceticism, he was also a noted authority on *ḥadīth*. (Z)

‘**Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Abī Ruwād Maymūn** (d. 159/776)—104. Born in Mecca. Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal narrated thirteen *ḥadīth* from him, and Abū Dāwūd, seven. (Z)

‘**Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf** al-Qurashī (d. 31/652)—38. One of the first to respond to the Prophet’s call in Mecca, he took part in the migration to Abyssinia. A wealthy merchant, he donated huge sums in charity, and was one of the council of six nominated by ‘Umar to choose his successor, as well as being one of the ten men assured of Heaven by the Prophet while they still lived. (W)

‘**Abd al-Razzāq**, ibn Hammām ibn Nāfi‘ al-Ḥimyarī Mawlāhum, Abū Bakr al-San‘ānī (d. 211/827)—74. Originally from San‘ā’ (Yemen), he reputedly memorized 17,000 *ḥadīth*. There is a collection attributed to him, *al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*. (Z)

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ibn Abī Quḥāfa al-Taymī (d. 13/634)—97, 113, 122. A businessman of Mecca who personally accompanied the Prophet on his Emigration to Medina, Abū Bakr became the Prophet’s closest advisor, and after his death became the first caliph. (W)

Abū l-Dardā', 'Uwaymir al-Khazrajī (d. 32/652)—46, 84, 85, 95, 96. A celebrated companion of the Prophet who joined Islam some time after the battle of Badr, whereupon he is said to have given up commerce in order to occupy himself with worship with the *ahl al-Ṣuffa*. He died in Damascus, where he was buried, and is venerated in particular by the Sufis. (W)

Abū Dharr, Jundub ibn Junāda al-Ghifārī (d. c 32/652-3)—37. One of the earliest and best-known of the Companions. It is said that he was the fifth to enter Islam, and the first to greet the Prophet with *al-salāmu 'alaykum*, the greeting of Islam. He emigrated after the death of the Prophet to Syria, and lived a pious life serving the poor. He accumulated no wealth of his own. When he died there was nothing in his house with which to cover his body. Two hundred and eighty-one *ḥadīth* in Bukhārī and Muslim are narrated in his name. (Z)

Abū Hurayra al-Dawsī al-Yamānī (d. c 58/677)—38, 40, 44, 45, 53, 73, 93, 97, 101, 102, 103, 106, 110, 113. One of the most copious narrators of Tradition, and also a model of poverty and the fear of God's chastisement. He is said to have joined Islam during the Khaybar expedition (7/629), after which he became one of the *ahl al-Ṣuffa*. After the Prophet's death he was appointed governor of Bahrayn by 'Umar. (W)

Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī, 'Abd Allāh ibn Thuwab (d. 62/682)—90. One of the First Generation after the Companions. Originally from Yemen, he embraced Islam before the death of the Prophet, but did not meet him. He became known for his piety and asceticism. (Z)

Abū l-Naḍr, Hāshim ibn al-Qāsim (d. 207/823)—114. Originally from Khurāsān, he memorised *ḥadīth* and was venerated by the people of Baghdad. (Z)

Abū Zur'a, 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Karīm bin Yazīd al-Rāzī (d. 264/878)—74. He is said to have memorised 100,000 *ḥadīth*, was a student of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and author of a *musnad* collection. (Z)

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855)—8, 11, 21, 43, 48, 51, 76, 120, 128. The great *ḥadīth* scholar after whom the Ḥanbalī school of law is named. He travelled extensively in search of Traditions, of which he is said to have committed over three hundred thousand to memory. A companion of Bishr al-Ḥāfi and Maʿrūf al-Karkhī, he was held in high regard by the Sufis, who attribute a number of miracles to him. His tomb became one of the most frequented centres of pilgrimage in Baghdad. (W)

ʿĀʾisha bint Abī Bakr (d. 58/678)—10, 46, 76, 86, 96. The third and most beloved wife of the Prophet. During his final illness he asked his other wives for leave to stay in her house, where he died. After his death she was involved in the revolt of Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr against the caliph ʿAlī, after which she lived quietly at Medina until she died. She was well-versed in Arab history and in poetry, and some of her verses have been preserved. (W)

ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661)—72, 87. The cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, having married his daughter Fāṭima. He was usually the Prophet's standard-bearer on expeditions, and became the model of the Muslim knight for later generations. He lived a life of austerity and piety. Upon the death of ʿUthmān (35/656) he accepted, with reluctance, the office of Caliph, which he held for five years disturbed by several rebellions, including that of Muʿāwiya, the governor of Syria. He was assassinated at Kūfa by a member of the extreme Kharijite sect, which repudiated him for having agreed to negotiate with Muʿāwiya. (W)

Al-Aʿmash, Sulaymān ibn Mihrān al-Asadī (d. 147/764-5)—84, 93, 105. A Qurʾān specialist of Persian origin who studied under Mujāhid at Kūfa. One of the fourteen canonical readings of the Qurʾān bears his name. In addition, Sufyān al-Thawrī and Ibn ʿUyayna both studied *ḥadīth* under him. (W)

Anas ibn Mālīk ibn al-Naḍr (d. 91-3 [709-10/711-2])—36, 45, 53, 110, 121. A celebrated Companion of the Prophet, he had been presented to the Prophet by his mother at an early age in

fulfilment of a vow. After the Prophet's death he participated in the wars of conquest. One hundred and twenty-eight Traditions on his authority are to be found in the collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. (W)

Al-Awzā'ī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Amr, Abū 'Amr (d. 157/774)—74, 91, 128. The principal Syrian authority on the *Sharī'ah* of his generation, he put special emphasis on the 'living tradition' of the Muslim community as an authoritative source of law. His *madhhab* also spread in North Africa and Spain, where it was then replaced by that of Mālik. His tomb near Beirut is still visited. (W)

Al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib al-Awsī (d. 81/690)—76. He converted to Islam as a child and took part with the Prophet in fifteen battles. He was later made ruler of Rayy in Persia by 'Uthmān. Three hundred and five of his *ḥadīth* have been collected. (Z)

Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ (d. 17-21 [638/9-642/3])—27, 131. Usually held to have been the second adult to convert to Islam, Bilāl was born in Mecca into slavery, and was tortured by his master Umayya ibn Khalaf when he refused to renounce his new faith. He was purchased by Abū Bakr, who set him free. He became the Prophet's muezzin at Medina, and later moved to Syria, where he died. (W)

Burayda ibn al-Ḥuṣayb ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥārith al-Aslamī (d. 63/683)—4, 121. One of the earliest converts to Islam, Burayda was present both at Khaybar and the conquest of Mecca. He lived for a time in Medina, then traveled to Baṣra, and finally to Merv, where he died. Burayda was the narrator of 167 *ḥadīth*. (Z)

Fāṭima (d. 11/632)—99. The youngest and best-loved of the daughters of the Prophet. He once told her that "God is angry when you are angry, and glad when you are glad." In the year 2, she married 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Their union produced al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. Her piety made her a figure greatly revered by later generations. (W)

Ḥabīb ibn Musallama ibn Mālik al-Fihri (d. 42/662)—101. One of the greatest military figures in early Islam, called 'Ḥabīb al-Rūm' for his many battles against the Byzantines (=Rūm). (Z)

Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām, ibn Khuwaylid ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzā Abū Khālīd (d. 54/674)—12. He was Khadīja's nephew. Born in Mecca in the Ka'ba, and a friend of the Prophet before and after his mission began. Forty *ḥadīth* are ascribed to him in the books. (Z)

Al-Harawī, 'Abd Allāh ibn Muhammad ibn 'Alī al-Ansārī Abū Ismā'īl (d. 481/1089)—x, xiv, 127, 128. A great Hanbalite Ṣūfī *shaykh* born in Herat, in what is now Afghanistan. He was a descendent of the Companion Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, and author of the famous treatise *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*. Because of his staunch defence of the Hanbalite doctrine and his ceaseless attacks on the Ash'arites, he suffered harsh treatment. (Z)

Al-Ḥārith al-Ash'arī, ibn al-Ḥārith Abū Muḥammad (d. ?)—21, 33, 109. One of the Companions noted for reliability in narration. He lived in Syria. (M)

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728-9)—89, 90, 128. Perhaps the best-known personality among the second generation of Muslims, he was born in Medina and took part in the conquest of eastern Iran. He then moved to Baṣra, where his sanctity and great eloquence attracted great numbers to his circle. He was also a judge and an authority on *ḥadīth*. His tomb at Baṣra remains an important centre for devout visits. (W)

Al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī (d. c 50/670-1)—112. Grandson of the Prophet, and second Imām of the Shī'a. Until the reign of 'Alī he lived a secluded life at Medina, which was interrupted by a short period in which he claimed the Caliphate. (W)

Ḥassān ibn 'Aṭiyya (d. ?)—91. Originally from Baṣra, he was among the first generation after the Companions. Many of al-Awzā'ī's *ḥadīth* include him in their transmission chains. (M)

Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān al-'Abasī (d. 36/656-7)—71. One of the earliest converts to Islam, he became governor of Ctesiphon

under ‘Umar. He is particularly revered by the Sufis. He related a considerable number of *ḥadīth*, particularly those relating to eschatology: according to the sources he said that “the Prophet told him all that would occur from the present until the Day of Judgement.” (W)

Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Abd Allāh: (d. 68/687-8)—31, 35, 43, 62, 63, 73, 89, 96, 111, 133. A cousin and close Companion of the Prophet respected for his piety, and commonly acknowledged as the greatest scholar of the first generation of Muslims, a narrator of *ḥadīth* and the founder of the science of Qur’ānic exegesis. He fought alongside ‘Alī at Ṣiffīn and died at al-Ṭā’if, where the site of his grave is still visited. (W)

Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Ubayd ibn Sufyān (d. 281/894)—84, 92, 95, 96, 97, 100, 103. He memorised *ḥadīth* and authored 164 books, mainly on the subjects of virtue and abstinence from worldly matters. In his youth, he taught Abbasid Caliph al-Mu‘taḍid and his son. He was a skilled orator on religious matters who, it is said, could make his listeners either laugh or weep. (Z)

Ibn Mas‘ūd, ‘Abd Allāh al-Hudhalī (d. 32-3 [652-3/653-4])—53, 62, 84, 85, 96, 105. Of Bedouin origin, Ibn Mas‘ūd is said to have been either the third or the sixth convert to Islam; he became one of the most erudite Companions. He was particularly well versed in the recitation and interpretation of the Qur’ān, and was an expert in matters of law. (W)

Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797-8)—74, 136. An influential scholar of the Law. Originally of Merv in central Asia, he travelled to study with Mālik ibn Anas in Medina and al-Awzā‘ī in Syria before he died in combat against the Byzantines. His works on renunciation and the *jihād* have been published and are still popular. (W)

Ibn ‘Umar, ‘Abd Allāh (d. 73 [693/4])—28, 46, 76, 85, 102, 103. A Companion of the Prophet who, at the age of fourteen, asked to be permitted to fight at Uhūd, which permission was denied.

Possessed of high moral qualities, he commanded universal deference and respect. Although it is said that he was offered the caliphate on three separate occasions, he kept himself aloof from politics and occupied himself instead with study and instruction. (W)

ʿIkrima, *mawlā* Ibn ʿAbbās (d. c 105/723-4)—114. Said to have been of Berber origin, he was a manumitted slave of Ibn ʿAbbās, whose exegesis of the Qurʾān he passed on to Mujāhid. Although accused of Khārijite sympathies, he is regarded as a reliable authority on *ḥadīth*. (W)

Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī (d. 68-78/[687/8-697/8])—53, 92, 111, 163, 165. A Companion of the Prophet whose father died at the battle of Uḥud. He participated in nineteen of the expeditions of the Prophet, and related a sizeable number of Traditions. (W)

Juwayriyya bint al-Ḥārith (d. 57/676)—117. One of the Prophet's wives, previously widowed. Bukhārī, Muslim and others narrated seven *ḥadīth* on her authority. She was 65 years old when she died in Medina. (Z)

Al-Layth ibn Saʿd ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Fahmī (d. 185/791)—74, 100. *Imām* of the people of Egypt in *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*. *Imām* al-Shāfiʿī said, 'Al-Layth is more knowledgeable than Mālik, except that his companions do not abide by what he says.' He authored several books. (Z)

Makḥūl, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Dimashqī (d. 112/730)—91. A prisoner of war taken at Kabul and given to an Egyptian woman, who set him free. He later became one of the prominent jurists of Damascus, where he influenced al-Awzāʿī. (W)

Mālik ibn Anas al-Aṣbaḥī (d. 179/795)—74, 139. The founder of one of the four main schools of Islamic law. Born into a family of *ḥadīth* scholars, he studied the recitation of the Qurʾān with Nāfiʿ and heard *ḥadīth* from al-Zuhri and Ibn al-Munkadir. He taught al-Shāfiʿī, al-Thawri and Ibn al-Mubarak. His book, the *Muwattaʿa*, is the earliest surviving work of Muslim law, and

places great emphasis on the actual practice of Islam in Medina in Mālik's time. (W)

Mālik ibn Dīnār al-Nājī (d. 131/748-9)—106. An ascetic of Baṣra who made a living copying the Qur'ān. A companion of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, he was credited with a number of miracles, including the ability to walk on water. (W)

Mu'ādh ibn Jabal al-Khazrajī (d. c 18/639-40)—36, 43, 46, 51, 87, 129. An early convert to Islam, he became well-versed in *fiqh* in a short space of time. He was the Prophet's governor of the Yemen and died in Syria. (W)

Muḥammad ibn Ja'far Ghundar (d. 193/809)—74. He was from Baṣra and known as the most impeccable of the transcribers of *ḥadīth*. (Z)

Muḥammad ibn Naṣr al-Marūzī (d. ?)—74. Known for life-long travels, he was an expert in the points upon which the Companions differed. He died in Samarkand and authored numerous works. (Z)

Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ al-Murrī (d. 50/670-1 or 55/674-5)—38, 118. One of the ten Companions assured of Heaven by the Prophet, he distinguished himself particularly as a brilliant politician and soldier. To him goes the credit for the defeat of the Persians at al-Qādisiyya (16/637), one of history's most decisive battles, and the subsequent founding of Kūfā as a military base. He remained governor of that city until the year 20 (640/1), when he was recalled to Medina following allegations, not credited by the Caliph, of misrule. 'Umar later made him one of the six men who were to choose the new caliph. (W)

Sa'īd ibn Abī 'Arūba (al-Baṣrī) (d. 157/883)—74. Memorised *ḥadīth*, unequalled in his time. (Z)

Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib al-Makhzūmī (d. 93-4 [291/1-292/3])—40, 107, 109. A major genealogist and legal expert of Medina, held by some to have been the most erudite of the second Muslim generation. He refused to marry his devout and learned daughter to Caliph al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Mālik, for which

he was flogged. (W)

Al-Shāfiʿī, Muhammad ibn Idrīs al-Qurashī (d. 204/820)—74, 128. The founder of the Shāfiʿite school of Islamic law. Although born in Gaza he was brought up with a Bedouin tribe, which gave him a good grounding in poetry and the Arabic language. He later studied *fiqh* with Sufyān ibn ʿUyayna and Mālik ibn Anas, developing a legal theory that stood halfway between literalism and personal opinion. He travelled extensively in Iraq and Egypt, where he died; his tomb is today one of the centres of Cairene religious life. (W)

Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn Saʿīd (d. 161/777-8)—74, 110. A scholar and well-known saint of Kūfa, of whom a great number of anecdotes are recorded. It is said that he was offered high office under the Umayyads but consistently refused. (W)

Thawbān ibn Yuḥḍad (d. 54/673-4)—54. A slave purchased and freed by the Prophet, whom he served until the latter's death. He later removed to Ḥimṣ, where he died. The *ḥadīth* collection of Muslim contains material given on his authority. (W)

ʿUbayd ibn ʿUmayr al-Laythī (d. 74/693-4)—89, 97. A respected traditionist of Mecca who taught the exegesis of the Qurʾān to Mujāhid. He is said to have been unusually thin as a consequence of much fasting and self-denial. (W)

ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Marwān (regn. 99-101/717-720)—19. Sometimes called 'the fifth rightly-guided Caliph' for his piety, he was concerned to implement the *Sharīʿah* in a number of neglected areas, such as the equal treatment of converts; he also ended the public cursing of ʿAlī from the pulpits. A large body of sermons and anecdotes connected with him soon found its way into religious literature. (W)

ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13-23/634-44)—37. At first an enemy of the Prophet's mission, he became one of its staunchest defenders. His daughter Ḥafṣa married the Prophet after the Emigration. When he succeeded Abū Bakr as caliph, he showed considerable brilliance in the face of the new circumstances aris-

ing as a result of the conquests, regulating the status of minorities, arranging a military pensions system and founding a number of garrison towns [*amṣār*]. He was universally respected for his integrity and uncompromising devotion to the faith. (W)

Umm Ḥabība, Ramla bint Abī Sufyān (d. 44/664)—46. One of the wives of the Prophet and the sister of Mu‘āwiya. She was first married to ‘Ubayd Allāh Jahsh, with whom she emigrated to Abyssinia. When he later abandoned Islam, she opposed him until his death. In the year 5 H, when she was about thirty years old, the Prophet sent her a proposal while she was still in Abyssinia, and the marriage was officiated by the Najāshī, King of Abyssinia, who gave her a marriage endowment of 400 *dinārs* from his own wealth. The books of *ḥadīth* ascribe sixty-five narrations to her. (Z)

‘Urwa ibn al-Zubayr (ibn al-‘Awwām al-Asadī al-Qurashī Abū ‘Abd Allāh) (d. 93/712)—112. Brother of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr. He was one of the seven *fuqahā’* (jurists) of Medina. He later moved to Baṣra, then to Egypt, where he married and settled for seven years, finally returning to Medina where he died. The well of ‘Urwa in Medina is named after him. (Z)

‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān ibn Abī l-‘Ās ibn Umayya (r. 23-35/644-56)—35. A wealthy merchant who became a Muslim before the Emigration. He became known as “Dhū l-Nūrayn”—“the man of the two lights” because he married two of the Prophet’s daughters: first Ruqayya, and then, after her death, Umm Kulthūm. During the later years of his caliphate he was accused of nepotism, a charge which brought about his murder by a group of dissidents from Egypt, who besieged his house, it is said, for forty-nine days, then stormed it and stabbed him to death while he was reading the Qur’ān. (W)

Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 110/728-9)—32. A Yemeni sage, possibly of Persian origin, who is said to have prayed all night for forty consecutive years. A number of sermons are ascribed to him which make considerable use of Jewish lore. He was made a

judge during the reign of ʿUmar II. (W)

Zayd ibn Arqam al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī (d. c 68/687) — 10. Companion who fought in seventeen battles alongside the Prophet and fought in the Battle of Ṣiffīn with ʿAlī. The books of *ḥadīth* include seventy of his narrations. (Z)

APPENDIX III

Excerpt from *al-Wābil al-ṣayyib min al-kalim ṭayyib*

(PART ONE)¹

Discussion on the *ḥadīth*, ‘*The foul breath of the fasting person is more fragrant to God Most High than the scent of musk.*’ [Abū ‘Amr held that this *ḥadīth* refers to both this world and the next; he authored a treatise of several chapters on this subject.]

[In the first chapter of his treatise, called] ‘Exposition that “the breath of the fasting person ...”’, Abū ‘Amr cites the *ḥadīth* of al-A‘mash, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, on the authority of Abū Hurayra: ‘God Almighty says, “*Every act of the child of Adam belongs to him, except fasting: it belongs to Me and I reward it.*”’²

Then, in the ‘Exposition that “the breath ... on the Day of Judgement”’, he cites a *ḥadīth* from Ibn Jurayj, transmitted by ‘Atā’, on the authority of Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Zayyāt, who heard Abū Hurayra say, ‘The Messenger of God [may God bless him] said that God [Blessed and Exalted] says, “*Every act of the child of Adam belongs to him, except for fasting: it belongs to Me and I reward it.*” And by the One who holds in His hand the soul of Muḥammad, the breath of the fasting person is more fragrant to God *on the Day of Judgement* than the scent of musk. And for the fasting person are two joys: when he breaks his fast, he will be happy with his break-

fast; when he meets his Lord, he will be happy with his fasting.’³

[Abū ‘Amr continues:] Abū Ḥātim says [in his book], ‘The believers will be distinguished from all other peoples on the Day of Judgement because the parts washed by ablution will be radiant; their breaths, from fasting, will be more fragrant than the scent of musk so that they might be known by that practice in the midst of the assembly. And may God make us one of them.’

Then, [in a chapter] called ‘Exposition that “the breath of the fasting person is also more fragrant than musk in this world”’, he cites a *ḥadīth* of Shu‘aba, from Sulaymān, transmitted by Dhikwān, on the authority of Abū Hurayra, that the Prophet said, ‘Every good deed of the child of Adam is rewarded ten to seven hundred-fold. And God says, “*Except for fasting: it belongs to Me and I reward it. He puts aside his food and drink for My sake, and I reward it.*” And for the fasting person there are two joys: the joy at the time when the fast is broken and the joy when he meets his Lord. The breath of the fasting person when it grows foul is more fragrant to God than the scent of musk.’⁴

As for Abū Muḥammad [‘Izz al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Salām], he cites as evidence only the *ḥadīth* linking the fragrance to the Day of Judgement. But in support of his view there is the accepted *ḥadīth*: ‘By the One in whose hand is my soul, no one is wounded for the sake of God—and God knows best who is wounded for His sake—but that he will arrive at the Day of Judgement, his wound bleeding, its colour the colour of blood, but its scent the scent of musk.’⁵ Here the Prophet describes the scent of wounds suffered for the sake of God as being like the fragrance of musk on the Day of Judgement. And this is close to his description of the breath of one who fasts. The sense is that, in the physical world, one is blood and the other an odour, but on the Day of Judgement God will endow both with the fragrance of musk.

[Returning to] Abū ‘Amr, he cites the words of Abū Ḥātim’s *ḥadīth* as proof that [the scent is in this world], because when the subject [of the sentence], ‘the breath of the fasting person’, is qualified by the condition, ‘when his breath gets foul’, the predi-

cate [adjective] of the sentence, 'more fragrant to God', must be qualified by the same condition. This is based on the grammatical rule [which states] that when the subject in a linking sentence is qualified by an adjective, adverb of time or of condition, then the predicate is qualified in the same way. And this shows that the subject's fragrance with God (Most High) is just when the breath becomes foul.

He [also] says that Ḥasan ibn Sufyān relates in his collection from Jābir [ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī] that the Messenger of God said, 'My community has been given five [special blessings] in Ramaḍān ... Second is that the odour from their breaths, when they reach the evening, is more fragrant to God than the scent of musk.'⁶

And [Abū 'Amr] mentions that the commentator interprets the gerund 'finding [something] fragrant' to mean '[God's] praise for [the fasting person] and satisfaction with his deed'.

It is customary for many to interpret what needs no interpretation, as if the [commentator] were blessed by it and so completely inseparable from it.⁷ What need is there for the interpretation that if something 'is more fragrant to God than musk', it means 'His praise and contentment for the one who accomplishes the fast', thereby changing the phrase's literal meaning? Many of [these commentators] concoct another meaning for a phrase, claiming it as the intended meaning, without considering its use in the primary sense, or whether the language supports [such an interpretation]. It is known that this even includes bearing witness before God and His Messenger, to prove that the intention behind a certain phrase is such and such. But if [the meaning of an expression] is not known from specific usage, or from the Lawgiver having made it known and habitually used it [in a given sense], or having explained it in that sense, then such evidence is invalid, and the least that can be said of it is that it is devoid of knowledge.

What is obvious is that there is no scent more fragrant to people than the scent of musk. And so, the Prophet compared the

breath [of the person fasting] for God and the fragrance of musk, or something even greater for us. But 'finding something fragrant' is related to God as the rest of His attributes and actions are related to Him: [how] something is fragrant for Him does not resemble how it is for people; just as His pleasure and anger, His happiness and disapproval, His love and wrath do not resemble those of created beings; and as His essence does not resemble that of created beings, then neither do His attributes or actions. Indeed, He [alone] is the One who finds 'the Fragrant Word' to be fragrant, [so that] 'it ascends up' to Him, and the pious deed He exalts.⁸

How God finds something fragrant is not how we do, but to construe it as '[His] contentment' does not remove the problem. The same difficulties which attend how He finds something fragrant equally pertain to how He is content [with something]: if you admit that His way of being content is not that of created beings, then you can [just as well] say that the way He finds something fragrant is not the way created beings do. This, in fact, applies to everything related to this question.

Therefore, [Abū 'Amr] says, 'And he mentions the Day of Judgement in the *ḥadīth* because it is the day of recompense, on which the breath of the one who fasted will appear heavier in the scales than the musk used by people to repel unpleasant odours and to seek God's contentment [Most High]. God commands that unpleasant odours be shunned and that we make use of scents, in mosques, during prayers and other forms of worship. And so he mentions specifically the Day of Judgement in some versions—as in God's words, "*On that Day will their Lord be perfectly informed concerning them*"⁹—but omits mentioning it in other versions to emphasize its excellence in both this life and the next.'

What is curious is that he reposes Abū Muḥammad [ʿIzz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām] for something that neither Abū Muḥammad nor others dispute: that 'to find something fragrant' implies God's praise for those who fast, and His contentment with their practice in this world is a matter that no Muslim would deny. For God

praises them and expresses His pleasure with them [both] in His Book and in what His Messenger has conveyed. Therefore, if this is [connected to His] finding something fragrant, then the view of Abū Muḥammad does not conflict with it.

What Abū Muḥammad [‘Izz al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Salām] does say is that the [breath of the fasting person] will appear more fragrant than musk on the day that the blood of a martyr will be made into perfume as fragrant as musk. And, without a doubt, that is the Day of Judgement. On that day, the one who fasted will come with breath more fragrant than musk, just as the martyr will come with wounds suffered for the sake of God, and the scent of his blood shall be the same. Sacred combat being more excellent than fasting, if this perfume will appear [for the martyr] on the Day of Judgement, then the same must take place for the person who has fasted.

The *ḥadīth* from Jābir [ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī]—‘And verily, they reach the evenings and the odour of their breaths [is] more fragrant than musk’—is an adverbial rather than a declarative sentence and [the grammar of the sentence] does not allow for the meaning ‘their breaths on the Day of Judgement will be more fragrant than musk’. If the sentence had explicitly referred to the Day of Judgement by the wording, ‘They reach the evening, and their breaths are more fragrant than musk on the Day of Judgement’, then the construction would not be faulty, for it would mean, ‘They reach the evening and *this is their [reward]* on the Day of Judgement’.

And in respect to the phrase ‘And the foul breath of the fasting person when his breath gets foul’, the word ‘when’ here is an adverb of time used to emphasise the meaning of the subject and to clarify the real signification to be construed from it. It has neither an implied nor a metaphorical meaning, and is no different than your saying, ‘For the sacred combat of the believer when he combats and for his prayer when he prays, God will reward and raise him up in degree on the Day of Judgement.’

It is similar to the saying of the Prophet, ‘The adulterer does

not commit adultery, *when he commits it*, as a believer' or 'The [drinker] does not drink wine, *when he drinks it*, as a believer.'¹⁰ The intention is not to say that his faith is negated only while he is occupied in these actions, and then returns as soon as he has completed these actions! Rather, [it means that] this negation continues until the moment of repentance. Otherwise, he continues to be a sinner, even though he is not in the act [of sinning]. The negation of faith stigmatises him, and the reprobation and the rules [of Law] relating to the action itself are not removed from him except by sincere repentance. And God [Most High] knows best.

NOTES

¹ See p.34 of the main text.

² Bukhārī, *Ṣiyām*, 2187.

³ Muslim, *Ṣiyām*, 1944; Nasā'ī, *Ṣiyām*, 2186.

⁴ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 0827.

⁵ Bukhārī, *Dhabā'ih*, 5107.

⁶ Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Imān*, 3602. The complete wording is 'My community has been given five [special blessings] in Ramaḍān, which no other prophet before me has been given. One is that on the first night of the month of Ramaḍān God gazes upon them, and no one upon whom God gazes shall ever be punished. Second, the odour from their breaths, when they reach the evening is more fragrant to God than the scent of musk. Third, the angels ask forgiveness for them day and night. Fourth, God Most High commands His heaven, saying to it, "*Make ready and beautify yourself for My servants. They are about to find rest in My abode and generosity from the toil of the world.*" And fifth, on the last night, God forgives them all.' And a man asked, 'Is that the Night of Destiny?' The Prophet answered, 'No, but do you not see that when the worker labours and completes his work, his recompense is due?'

⁷ The portion between brackets is ambiguous in the text and may be the fragment of a longer sentence.

⁸ He is referring to Qur'ān xxxv:10, '*The goodly word [al-kalim al-tayyib—literally, 'the fragrant word'] ascends to Him and the pious deed does He exalt.*'

⁹ Qur'ān c:11.

¹⁰ In Muslim and Bukhārī.

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IN DESCRIBING *al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib*, here translated into English for the first time as *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya on the Invocation of God*, the author says, 'We have mentioned [in it] nearly one hundred benefits of remembrance of God [*dhikr*], and the secrets of remembrance ... This is a book of great usefulness.'

Written in the fourteenth century by the renowned theologian Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, this treatise movingly details the many blessings of the remembrance of God. Through discussions of the ego, the nature of the body, the ephemerality of the world, the degrees of prayer, fasting, charity, and the purification of the heart, this beautifully written work is a genuine contribution to Muslim spirituality. What makes *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya on the Invocation of God* of great interest is that it illustrates the devotional and spiritual life of Ibn al-Qayyim and the great interest he had in Sufism. *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya on the Invocation of God* is a significant addition to the knowledge of this important thinker; it sheds light on an aspect of his personality that is not often recognised and helps to balance and do justice to his writings and his thought.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya was born in 1292 near Damascus where he obtained a classical Islamic education and specialised in jurisprudence. In 1312, he met the Hanbalite reformer Ibn Taymiyya and remained his disciple until the latter's death in 1327. Ibn al-Qayyim went on to become a renowned jurist and to write numerous books many of which remain popular to this day; he died in 1350 in Damascus. The only other work by Ibn al-Qayyim to appear in English is *Medicine of the Prophet*, translated by Penelope Johnstone, and published by The Islamic Texts Society.



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