

PLACE OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMANDMENTS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ

It is well known that the homage accorded to Ghazālī by almost all sections of Islam was due largely to his success in showing the compatibility of mysticism with punctilious observance of the ritual laws. Not only was his own personality, with its rare combination of a dry legal scholar and a profoundly emotional mystic, a living demonstration of this truth, but he also devoted a considerable part of his writings, especially in his great work *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, to providing it with ample proof.

Therefore it would be a mistake to suppose that Ghazālī relegated the religious commandments of Islam to a position of minor significance in his philosophy. On the contrary, these commandments occupy the centre of his whole system of thought, so much so that he repeatedly returns to them in discussing the most various topics, and again and again, in all sorts of ways, emphasizes their importance and influence. Nor is this at all surprising. For just as Ghazālī aspired to give a deeper content to the religious life of those circles which, while keeping the commandments of Islam, did so mechanically and without any inner devotion, so he also wished to revive a punctilious and rigorous observance of those commandments in those of his contemporaries amongst whom there was widespread disregard of religious law and of the daily practices ordained by it (*ibāhiyya*). He was particularly concerned, like al-Qushairi before him, to extirpate this attitude of indifference from amongst the Sufis, where it had taken a strong hold, and therefore he repeatedly stresses that it is wrong to seek "the way of the world to come" in the Sufi spirit, without sincere and heartfelt observance of the religious commandments.

In Ghazālī's opinion, the uniqueness of man and the divine element in him consist in his ability to know and understand the truth about objects, the world and God. Now, every creature has been created for the sake of its own particular unique attribute in the full development of which it finds its mission and perfection. Hence, man's perfection and everlasting joy in the presence of his God lies in his attainment of true, eternal knowledge. If man does not seek after the knowledge for which he was created, he degrades himself to the level of the beasts. But if he pursues it with all his might, he can exalt himself to the ranks of the angels.¹ This "knowledge" brings man to the true love of God, which is the source of the love of one's fellow-men and of all the other

¹ *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Cairo edition, A. H. 1356/7, III, 1, p. 1360. (Referred to below simply as *Iḥyāʾ*. The Roman numeral denotes the relevant section of the work and the Arabic numeral the particular book in that section).

human virtues, and thereby gives him a slight foretaste in this world of the joy everlasting in store for him in the next.²

However, man usually goes astray in his search for his perfection. For most human beings, the element of the divine which is implanted in them constitutes just as great a danger as do their bestial, licentious and diabolical impulses.³ Thus, instead of seeking their perfection in true "knowledge," men try to find it in worldly power, wealth, scholarship and all the other primrose paths to the soul's destruction.⁴ Ghazālī therefore sets for himself the difficult task of guiding man back on to the right way to true knowledge.

In this guidance, the proper understanding of the religious commandments and their function has an important part to play. This understanding is part of the "knowledge of action" (*'ilm al-mu'āmalā*) which, together with the "knowledge of revelation" (*'ilm al-Mukāshafa*) constitutes the "knowledge of the world to come" (*'ilm al-ākhirā*). The "knowledge of revelation" is concerned with the true knowledge of God, His attributes and works, and seeks to comprehend the structure of the universe, prophetic revelation, the nature of the angels and of the devil, and the true content of such religious conceptions as Paradise, Hell and the like. The object of the "knowledge of action," on the other hand, is the understanding of the "states of the heart" (*Aḥwāl al-Qalb*), both those which are laudable, such as long-suffering, gratitude, fear, hope and so on, and those which are to be condemned, such as malevolence, enmity, arrogance, anger and the rest. Proceeding by therapeutic methods, this science aims at eradicating from the heart all that is sinful and strengthening all that is virtuous, by teaching man to recognize the symptoms, causes and consequences of the attributes of the heart, good and bad alike. Such a study is a necessary first stage, undertaken by an act of will, in man's preparation for the "knowledge of revelation" which is subsequently granted by God's grace to all who are worthy of it.⁵ Man can attain to the "knowledge of the world to come" both by revelation and by reasoning; nor is there essentially any great difference between these two methods of enlightenment. (The process whereby the heart perceives the true nature of objects as they are in the world of absolute reality is often compared to the way in which a mirror reflects the objects around it. There are many things that can obstruct themselves between

² *Iḥyā'*, IV, 6, p. 2654. *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*, Egyptian edition, A. H. 1328, pp. 95-96. Cf., also F. Jabre: *La Notion de la Ma'rifa chez Ghazālī*, 1958. (In order not to deviate from the subject of this article I shall not try to discuss these ideas).

³ On the various elements in man (after the manner of the Platonic or Aristotelian philosophies) see, e.g., *al-Arbaʿīn*, pp. 218 ff.; *Iḥyā'* III, 8; *Bayān* 5, p. 1845.

⁴ *Iḥyā'* III, 6, p. 1845.

⁵ *Iḥyā'* I, 1, p. 34-37.

the "mirror" and its surroundings, or between the heart and the truth). The heart that obtains the "knowledge of the world to come" by revelation obtains it from the world of absolute reality but the heart that obtains it by reasoning obtains it only indirectly, through the somewhat distorting medium of the senses and organs that belong to the world of appearances.⁶ Thus scholars, for example, who strive to attain this knowledge by their senses and minds, receive it through the entrance to their hearts which is open to the phenomenal world; whereas ascetics seek the divine truth by constantly rubbing and polishing the mirror of their heart (*taṣqīl al-mir'āt*), hoping to be granted an inner illumination through the opening leading to the ideal world. The difference between these two methods is like that described in the well-known story about the competition between the Byzantine and the Chinese painters (a story which later became particularly famous in the version of al-Nizāmi, who made the competition take place before Alexander the Great). While the Byzantine painter busied himself with his designs and colours, his Chinese rival merely polished his surface. But when the painting finally appeared on the prepared surface of the Byzantine, it was reflected with far greater brilliance on that of the Chinese.⁷

Moreover, divinely vouchsafed revelation is not the prerogative of prophets alone. It was also granted to the *awliyā'*, the saints, God's chosen confidants, in their waking moments or in sleep, while they were still in this world. Hence, it may be granted to every man who struggles to master his impulses and schools his soul, cutting himself off from all that binds him to this world and preparing his heart for the grace which is ready for him by self-purification, by the strengthening of his desire for this grace and by sincere and persistent yearning and proper way of gaining true "knowledge".⁸

⁶ See *Iḥyā'*, III, 1; *Bayān* 7, 8, 9.

⁷ *Iḥyā'* III, 1, p. 1377, p. 1382.

⁸ In the literature of medieval Christian mysticism we also find ideas closely akin to Ghazālī's. Thus, St. Bonaventura, like Ghazālī and like his famous predecessors amongst the Fathers of the Church, believes that the revelation of divine truth (*Beschauung*) is an experience that may be granted to any man who has disciplined his soul to it by asceticism and self-purification and who desires it with all his heart. According to Bonaventura, the most propitious time for this experience is during prayer, as is emphasized after him also by St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Theresa. In the same way, Ghazālī regards the moment of liturgical obeisance or the days towards the end of the month of fasting, as the most likely time for the true worshipper to be granted a glimpse of the world of divine reality.

⁹ See, e.g., *Iḥyā'* III, 1, p. 1389, 1.10 (and the whole page). Here Ghazālī's approach appears to differ from that expressed by him in *al-Munqidh*. There, in the chapter entitled "The Truth of Prophecy and Every Human Being's Need of It" (Damascus, 1956, pp. 105 ff.), he describes prophetic revelation as the highest stage in human development, and one that not everyone reaches. Nor does he mention that every man has it in his power to attain to this stage by moral and religious effort. W. M. Watt stressed the difference between the *Iḥyā'* and the *Munqidh* on this point in a different way and made it one of the

In this struggle to overcome his baser impulses and in his efforts to purify his heart to do God's will, man finds help, guidance and support in the commandments of the faith. The main function of these commandments is to help him master his passions, "for God, in His supreme wisdom, has made the salvation of mortals dependent on their deeds as opposed to their natural impulses and has entrusted their control to religious law."¹⁰ Hence submission to God's will takes the form of repressing the instincts, and sin simply means yielding to the wilful desires of the heart.¹¹ Every action that in any way contributes to the conquest of man's passions, and still more so of his mind, brings him closer to his true goal, the "cleansing of the soul" (*tashkiyat al-nafs*), without which a man can never draw near to his God and thus get to know Him and love Him. "Cleansing means purification. The Messenger of God, (may God's praise and blessing be with him), said: "Purity is half of faith." This teaches us that perfect faith is the cleansing of the heart of all that Almighty and Adored God does not desire, and adorning it with what God desires".¹² Accordingly, the function of the commandments is two-fold: to extirpate evil from the heart and to implant good in it. "Know that the purpose of the (ritual) commandments is to strengthen the feeling of joy in the recollection of Almighty and Adored God, that man may return to the world of eternity and that the heart (of man) may be indifferent to the world of temptation; but only he will have bliss in the next world who comes to his God (at his death) through love, and only he can love God who knows Him and frequently mentions His name, since knowledge and love can only be attained by constant meditation and recollection. Nor can the recollection of God be kept lastingly in the heart except by (deeds) that recall Him, and these are the commandments."¹³

We see, then, that even "adorning the heart with good," after "cleansing it of evil," is still not the final goal to be desired. Virtue and moral perfection are only the necessary conditions for that supreme degree of the knowledge and love of God in which lies man's true bliss. However, the function of the commandments is not merely one of moral preparation. They further bring man closer to this supreme knowledge by meditation and thought, which lead to knowledge and recognition of truth.¹⁴

criteria of the authenticity and chronology of Ghazali's works. See his article in *JRAS*, 1952, pp. 24-45, and especially pp. 26-28 (on the "dharuq" period). Cf., also A. J. Arberry: *Revelation and Reason in Islam* (London, 1957), pp. 61-64, 108-111; D. Z. Baneth, "Rabbi Jehuda Halevi and Alghazali," (Hebrew) in *Knesset*, VII, 1941/2, pp. 311-329. (This article appeared first for the general reader in German in *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins zur Gruendung u. Erhaltung einer Akademie fuer die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Berlin, 1923/4, pp. 27-45.

¹⁰ *Ihya'* I, 7, p. 485. See also I, 7, p. 484.

¹¹ *Al-Munqidh*, p. 110.

¹² *Al-Arba'in*, p. 112.

¹³ *Al-Arba'in*, p. 114.

¹⁴ *Ihya'* III, 3, p. 1499.

It is therefore impossible to overestimate the tremendous importance of the commandments, since, in the words of Judah Halevi, "man does not attain to *al-'Amr al-'Ilahi* except by divine command; that is, by deeds that God has commanded" (Cuzari i. 98; cf. ii. 46). The observance of the ritual commandments purifies man's polluted inner being ("man is verily a dung-heap" says Ghazali in one of his homilies!), cleans the mirror of his heart of the "blotches of greed and lust," and polishes it with divinely ordained good deeds.¹⁵ With the help of the commandments, man can attain to the "knowledge and love" in which lies his true happiness in this world and the next; and who would wish to make light of the "key to everlasting bliss"?

However, in Ghazali's opinion the matter is not so simple as the above words may seem to suggest. The commandments do not automatically bring man closer to his goal, as if by some magical process. It is true that they lead a man to "knowledge." But he must also "know" certain things himself, before he sets out along this road, if he is to make proper progress. Thus, a man must be well acquainted with the "states of his heart," its good and evil attributes and the influence of his actions upon them, before he can carry out the commandments in the right way to bring him nearer to his goal. For how can man fight against the evil within him, without being able to recognize it and its fruits, together with its corrective opposite? How can he become pure, without knowing what the pollution in his heart is? Every man is therefore enjoined to obtain this knowledge¹⁶ which comprises not only the "knowledge of action" mentioned above, but also the knowledge of the Qur'an and the Sunna, and a detailed familiarity with religious law and cognizance of all its subsidiary sciences, in so far as they are required by the individual for the proper observance of the commandments, (for example, an understanding of the direction of Mecca or of the course of the sun across the heavens, and so forth).¹⁷

But still more is required of man. He must also know *how* to perform the commandments properly, if they are to have the desired effect on his heart. Every commandment must be carried out with single-minded devotion, purity of thought and absolute sincerity. Ghazali discusses these conceptions at length in various parts of his writings, and even devotes to them the whole of the seventh book in the fourth section of the "*Ihya'*." Single-minded devotion is, as it were, the breath of life of the commandments, without which they become meaningless motions of the body instead of divinely ordained good deeds. Thus, for example, a man who absent-mindedly pats an orphan on the head,

¹⁵ *Al-Arba'in*, p. 122.

¹⁶ *Ihya'* I, 1, p. 27; III, 2, p. 1432; IV, 7, p. 2706.

¹⁷ See, e.g., *Ihya'* I, 4, pp. 348, 360; *ibid.* II, 7, pp. 1116, 1118-1119 et al. This is why al-Ghazali begins his book on the Commandments with detailed chapters on the ritual law.

or who does obeisance in prayer without any feeling of lowliness and spiritual humility, might just as well not have performed these acts at all; but when the same acts are performed with single-minded devotion and with full consciousness of what is being done, they greatly enhance the doer's feeling of compassion towards his fellow creatures and his self-abasement and spiritual humility before his God.¹⁸ Besides the lowliness of spirit and concentration of thought incumbent upon a man when carrying out one of the commandments, he must also, after its performance, have mingled feelings of fear and hope — fear that his deed may have been rejected by God, and hope that, by the grace of heaven, it may have been found acceptable to God.¹⁹ For man always requires divine grace for his deeds to be found acceptable, even if he has performed them with the utmost possible regard for the requirements of religious law. Man is like the farmer who prepares his soil and then sows it with seed. Essential as this preparatory work is for the success of the crop, only the rain can ensure a rich harvest, and the farmer can do nothing but hope and pray that God will send rain at the proper time. In the same way, the commandments prepare the soil of the heart for the seed of faith to grow therein, but only by God's abundant grace can the spiritual crop come to fruition.²⁰

The divine injunction to obtain these categories of knowledge takes precedence over all the other commandments and is "the supreme form of the worship of God." Only the combination of "knowledge and action" (*'ilm wa 'amal*) can ensure the proper performance of any deed in the "way of the world to come."²¹ By his well-known insistence on this combination Ghazālī, like other Muslim thinkers before and after him, rejects the assumption, which was popular particularly in philosophical circles, that intellectual cognition is in itself sufficient to ensure the perfection of the soul and its everlasting bliss.²² His opinion can be expressed by the old Hebrew saying: "whenever a man's wisdom outstrips his deeds, his wisdom comes to naught." Nor, conversely, are deeds alone the main thing or an end in themselves. They

¹⁸ *Iḥyā'* III, 2, pp. 1451-2. Note the emphasis on the supreme importance of habitual and constant repetition for the proper observance of all the Commandments.

¹⁹ *Iḥyā'* I, 7, p. 488.

²⁰ *Iḥyā'* IV, 3.

²¹ *Iḥyā'* I, 5, p. 398.

²² For remarks on this subject in Jewish and Muslim medieval literature and for the meaning of the term *'ilm*, see, e.g., I. Goldziher's introduction to *Kitāb Ma'ānī al-Nafs*, pp. 54-60. However, it is not only as a preparation for "knowledge" that action is important to Ghazālī. If my assumption about the "endless chain of reciprocal influence" (see below) in Ghazālī's philosophy is correct, it follows that action is for him not only a means to the desired end but also a part of that end, since "knowledge" improves and perfects action too. Though Ghazālī ultimately aspires to absolute spirituality, he knows that it is unattainable in this world, and therefore he holds that, throughout man's sojourn on earth, one of the purposes of his "knowledge" is to correct and improve his deeds.

are only indispensable means to the attainment of lasting knowledge, as has been described.

There is thus an endless chain of reciprocal influence here. Knowledge (*'ilm*) leads to right action, which in its turn brings man closer to "knowledge" (*ma'rifa*) and love of God, which again improve his deeds. In a similar way, fulfilment of the commandments and virtuous deeds lead to proper meditation and right thoughts, and meditation, in its turn, renews the "states of the heart" conducive to right action, while love facilitates the performance of such action.²³ Nor is right action confined to the proper observance of the written commandments; it also embraces every "good deed," a term which includes man's obligations to his fellow-men no less than his obligations to God. However, amongst these various reciprocally interacting factors there is no doubt that knowledge takes pride of place. "When a man knows (his heart) he knows himself, and when he knows himself he knows his God." "Knowledge is the beginning and the end. The beginning is only 'the knowledge of action' the end of which is action, while the purpose of action is to purify and cleanse the heart that the truth may be revealed in it and that it may be beautified by the true knowledge which is 'the knowledge of revelation.'"²⁴

This philosophy of Ghazālī incorporates ideas that were widely held in the intellectual circles of the Middle Ages. The conception of the knowledge of God as leading to the love of God was a commonplace of mystic doctrine and, to a lesser extent, also of other thinkers who inclined to neo-Platonism. Thus, for example, the "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā," by whom Ghazālī appears to have been greatly influenced, also extolled knowledge as bringing man nearer to the next world and regarded it as the purpose of man's life. Unlike Ghazālī, however, they sometimes looked upon the commandments as no more than an intermediate stage for those "who are not wise enough to understand" or who have not yet attained to true knowledge.²⁵

In the Aristotelian philosophical circles of the Middle Ages, too, it was commonly held that the purpose of man's existence was his acquisition of knowledge, and that his perfection was to be found in the philosophical comprehension of the truth. To many Jewish, Christian and Muslim thinkers, moral perfection was merely a prerequisite and preparation for intellectual perfection, and the commandments a means to the attainment of this perfection in both character and mind. Maimonides, for example, regards knowledge as the end for which man was created and the commandments as the means of bringing him closer to it, by suppressing his bestial impulses and disciplining him in virtuous conduct, thereby implanting "the true knowledge" in his heart,

²³ *Iḥyā'* IV, i, p. 2808; IV, 6, p. 264.

²⁴ *Iḥyā'* III, i, p. 1348; IV, 6, p. 2618.

²⁵ Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, *Risāla*, 7 et al.

(see Guide to the Perplexed, Part I, 54; III, 27, 28, 33, 54, et al. It would be interesting to examine the many points that Ghazālī has in common with Maimonides, in spite of the great difference in their methods). At the same time, although he regards the final perfection as "pure knowledge in which there are no deeds or attributes." Maimonides, like Ghazālī, has no intention of belittling good deeds and the fulfilment of the commandments in any circumstances (*Guide to the Perplexed* III, 54; *Mishne Torah*, Sefer Hamada^c, Hilkhoh Teshuva 9, 1).

Thus we see that, in Ghazālī's view, the purpose for which the commandments were given is to enable man to master his baser impulses, to purge his heart of its vices and to fortify it with virtues, and to bring him near in thought to eternal "knowledge." It is true that Ghazālī occasionally gives other reasons for the commandments; but, on closer examination, it transpires that all these reasons are merely different aspects of this primary purpose. Sometimes this is self-evident, as when Ghazālī describes the commandments, in their repressive influence on the impulses, as medicines for the diseases of a man's heart, those diseases being all those qualities that lead to a man's damnation (*muhlikāt*).²⁶ But even when the connection is not so immediately obvious, as when the fulfilment of the commandments is represented as man's expression of gratitude for the delights of the body and the joys of personal property granted to him by God, or as a test of man's love for his God, even here, it seems, there is no more than an emphasis of one particular aspect of the central purpose. Gratitude, especially gratitude to the Almighty for His gracious mercies, and the determined rejection of the temptations of this world out of desire for the true joys of the next, are also virtues needed by man in his quest after truth. Similarly, whenever Ghazālī invests the commandments with a symbolical meaning, it is only for the purpose of strengthening their influence over man's soul.

It should not, therefore, occasion any surprise that there is a certain monotonous similarity about all the reasons given by Ghazālī for the

²⁶ Almsgiving, for example, is a corrective for the miserliness in every human heart. Hence a man should be grateful to the poor who come to beg alms from him. For the spendthrift, on the other hand, the commandment of charity is not so important. Moreover, with regard to all commandments man must beware of performing them ostentatiously to make an impression on others (*riyā^h*), and he must endeavour to carry them out in private, or even to refrain altogether from performing them at certain times. Otherwise they may infect his heart with the additional disease of ostentation instead of curing it of the defects from which it is already suffering. In expressing such views, Ghazālī is obviously taking a very different stand from the orthodox Muslim legalists, the *fuqahā^h*, whom he vehemently attacks, even while insisting, like them, on the punctilious observance of every jot and tittle of the ritual laws. The great difference between him and them is that he does not regard this observance as the be-all and end-all of a life lived in accordance with the religious commandments, or even as the most important factor in it.

commandments. In his section "*ibādāt*" of the "*Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*" he does not so much as mention any cosmic or astrological motivation for them; and he finds in them very little of social value, and still less historical or philosophical significance. Ghazālī's sole aim, the task for which he considers himself to have been chosen as "the reviver of religious knowledge," is to stress the importance of the commandments for the individual and the part played by them in helping him to master his passions, in schooling him to virtue, and in enriching his personal religious experience.

Ghazālī's conception of the commandments is one of the reasons, it seems to this writer, for his special attitude toward this world. He is far from preaching an extreme asceticism like that practised by many Sufis, since he regards such an attempt to escape from the world as no less of an enslavement to it than the eager pursuit of its vanities. For him, the world and its wealth are not in themselves the source of evil, nor is the body necessarily the accused flesh of Christian belief. It is man's attitude to all these that decides whether they are to be good or bad, and that makes them either a source of eternal bliss or a cause of everlasting ignominy.

Of course, this does not mean that, for Ghazālī, this world is any more than the antechamber to the great hall of the world to come; every true Muslim must believe in the Resurrection of the Dead and the Day of Judgment, when his deeds will be weighed in the scales of justice and he will be called to account for them. But the wise man will understand that the essential thing for him is not merely to be saved from hell and found worthy of entering Paradise, but to achieve the perfection of bliss which is the quintessence of all imaginable joys. Human beings are like the inhabitants of a town which has been captured by the Sultan. Some of them, though fortunate enough not to have been killed or even punished, are nevertheless banished from the city; others are permitted to remain living in the city with their kindred; but only he is truly happy who has not only escaped death and been allowed to remain in the city, but has also been specially favoured by the Sultan, presented with lavish gifts and given a share in his rule.²⁷ He who desires everlasting happiness, and is not so foolish as to sell an eternity of bliss for an ephemeral joy, will always be mindful that this world has no solid foundations, that everything here is transient, and that death puts an end to worldly pleasures. Hence only a thoughtless fool will devote the best of his powers to it and make himself the thrall of its vanities.²⁸

But, at the same time, it is only in this world that man can prepare himself for the world to come, as a guest grooms himself in the antechamber for his entry into the great hall. The more a man devotes

²⁷ *Al-Arba^hin*, p. 26.

²⁸ *Al-Munqidh*, p. 112; *Ihyā' III*, 2, p. 1477.

himself in this world to polishing the mirror of his heart, the greater will be his reward of "knowledge" and bliss in the next. The better he prepares himself here, the greater will be his joys there. "This world is the sown field (whose harvest) is the world to come,"²⁹ reiterates Ghazālī, with even greater emphasis than his predecessors, thereby allowing ample scope for human free-will side by side with the absolute determinism which he generally feels obliged to accept. It is by his actions in this world that man "gains" his reward in the world to come; he reaps there what he has sown here, and it depends very much on him whether the harvest brings him everlasting bliss or eternal damnation. At the same time, it is incumbent upon man to realize that God has dealt most graciously with him in letting him sojourn for a time in this world and in giving him his body and organs with which to prepare himself for the world to come. For, without this stopping-place on his journey at which he can fulfil the divine commandments and improve his heart by his physical deeds, he could never enter the next world. Without proper preparation here, he could have no hope of coming safely through his ordeal there.

Hence the apparent paradox that the man who wishes to prepare himself in the antechamber of this world for his meeting with his Maker in the world to come will, like the most worldly creature, also seek to postpone his death, the day when his harvest is "reaped." In his case, however, the reason is not any deluded and soul-sickly clinging to the vanities of this world, but a sincere desire to make the fullest possible use of the period of spiritual preparation graciously granted to him by God. Such a man knows that death will end the connection between his immortal soul and his mortal body and thereby deprive him of any further chance of improving his soul and polishing its mirror.³⁰ From this point of view, and from this alone, death is a tragedy for every true believer, even though it frees him from the fetters of the body which come between him and the true, eternally perfect "knowledge."

God has given man this world for the satisfaction of his religious needs, and He maintains it in being, so that man may make use of it for this purpose. And since this world cannot continue to exist when it is "entirely good," God has also given evil, indifference and sin a place in it. But His only purpose in so doing is to preserve the world for the sake of the good, that man may prepare himself to meet his Maker.³¹ However, Ghazālī goes still further than this. If man's purpose in this world is to prepare himself for his life in the world to come, by fulfilling the commandments and by other good deeds which bring him nearer to "true knowledge" and love and give him a slight

foretaste of them, then a far-reaching conclusion may be drawn: "Whoever does not know God in this world will not behold Him in the next, and whoever does not find delight in "true knowledge" in this world, will not enjoy the sight of God in the next; for in the next world man will not be granted any new thing that he has not already attained in this world, and he will reap only what he has sown; he shall rise (at the resurrection of the dead) exactly as he died, and he shall die exactly as he lived."³²

What is true of the world is true also of man's body, and his wealth. Man needs his body and its organs to achieve the true purpose of his life. His organs are, as it were, the vehicle of his heart, his knowledge is the provision he carries with him on his journey to meet his God, while his good deeds are the channel by which he is enabled to "taste" and store up as much as he needs of this provision. Hence it is man's duty to take good care of his body, and to this end God has provided him with hosts of minions — the appetites, senses and organs — whose task it is to obey the instructions of his heart for the proper maintenance of his body and soul.³³ In the same way, even money, which supplies man's body — the "vehicle" that bears him into the next world — with food, clothing and the like, is not evil in itself. If a man takes only what he requires of it, it will make him blessed.³⁴ For with money he will be able to fulfil such commandments as giving charity, performing the pilgrimage to Mecca, and aiding in a Holy War; he will be able to build mosques, guard-posts, hospitals, bridges, etc. With money a man can support his family and pay for servants who will do his daily chores for him(!), thus releasing his heart from the vanities of this world and leaving it free to devote itself entirely to the affairs of the world to come.³⁵ In this way money, the source of all evil (especially according to Sufi doctrine), can actually be of benefit to man's religious practice and feeling, and thus become a further means of bringing him nearer to the next world.

But in all this there lurks a danger for man. The world, wealth and his body are like the deadly poison of a snake which may also be a healing antidote. A man must be abstemious in his enjoyment of these blessings and not rush headlong after his appetites, knowing the harm they can do him as well as the benefit they can bring him; he must choose only what will stand him in good stead on his way to the next world. Above all, he must beware of having his attention deflected from his main purpose by undue occupation with these accessories which, for all their subsidiary importance, are of no real value in themselves. If they succeed in diverting him from his real aim, they will become

²⁹ *Ihya'* III, 1, p. 1353; *al-Arba'in*, p. 40; *Streitschrift des Goadi gegen die Bāḥijja-Sekte* I. Goldziher, p. 79 (based on the Hadith).

³⁰ *Al-Arba'in*, pp. 104, 323. *Ihya'* IV, 7, p. 2615 et al.

³¹ *Ihya'* IV, 6, p. 2652.

³² *Ihya'* IV, 6, pp. 2613, 2612 (based on the Hadith).

³³ *Ihya'* III, 1, p. 1353 ff.

³⁴ *Al-Arba'in*, p. 147.

³⁵ *Ihya'* III, 7, p. 1768.

an obstacle and stumbling block on his path and, instead of bringing him nearer to his goal, will drive him far away from it to his perdition.³⁶

Here we meet that subjectivity and relativity on which J. Obermann³⁷ has remarked as the key-note of Ghazālī's philosophy and which appear also in Ghazālī's evaluation of every single commandment. The world, wealth, the human body are not good or bad in themselves, but become so according to the part played by them in a man's life. They should neither be eagerly sought after, nor deliberately eschewed. Moreover, a man may abandon himself to them by the very act of all the time running away from them; hence Ghazālī regards uncompromising self-subjection to the ideals of poverty, monasticism and the like as leading away from God. The extreme ascetic is little better than the hedonist. Therefore, the third and highest degree of self-denial is attained when "(a man's) soul neither inclines to this world nor withdraws from it in disgust, but regards its presence or absence with equanimity. To such a man money is like water, and the treasures of exalted God like a sea which his heart does not seek after nor yet does it flee from it. Such a one is the perfect man, for he who hates something is no less occupied with it than he who loves it." This is the "freedom from all the bonds of this world" in which lies man's true and everlasting perfection.³⁸

In the foregoing pages, I have tried to give a general survey of the place occupied by the religious commandments of Islam in Al-Ghazālī's philosophy, in so far as any single philosophy can be attributed to him. However, a fuller and more accurate picture of his views can be obtained only by a detailed examination of his statements on the nature of each individual commandment and the proper way of performing it. The rich pattern of symbolism and psychological explanation revealed by such an examination would be found to support a central doctrine of great interest concerning the influence of man's body on his soul. This doctrine, which underlies Ghazālī's whole philosophy, calls for a special study of its own.

Hebrew University
Jerusalem

HAVA LAZARUS-YAFEH

³⁶ *Iḥyāʾ* III, 7, p. 1768.

³⁷ See the excellent appraisal in J. Obermann: *Der philosophische und religiöse Subjektivismus Ghazālī's* (Braumüller, Wien 1921). See also A. J. Wensinck: *La Pensée de Ghazālī* (Paris 1940) especially p. 131 ff., who gives a somewhat different explanation of Ghazālī's attitude towards the world, wealth, etc.

³⁸ *Al-Arbaʿīn*, pp. 240, 160.