

AL-GHAZĀLĪ

THE MYSTIC

A Study of the Life and Personality of
Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī, together
with an account of his Mystical Teaching and an
estimate of his place in the History of Islamic Mysticism

By

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PREFACE

THIS book owes its origin to the honour done me by the Committee of Manchester College, Oxford, in electing me to a Senior Research Studentship, which I held from 1936 to 1938. During this period I was able to investigate the material which was afterwards used for this book, the publication of which has been delayed by circumstances beyond my control. I owe a debt of deep gratitude to Manchester College for the opportunity thus given of undertaking this study, and also for the opportunity of working in Oxford, where I found much help for my work.

In times like these it is well to turn our thoughts from the things which are temporal to the things which are abiding and eternal. When we study the life and work of the mystics, we see that their inward vision did not make them less capable of serving other men, but rather of living a fuller life for others in the world, while at the same time they sought always to live a life of the closest fellowship with God.

MARGARET SMITH.

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PART I.
AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S LIFE AND PERSONALITY

CHAPTER I

*al-Ghazālī's birth at Ṭūs. His Early Years and
Education. His Travels and Professional Work. His
interest in Ṣūfism.*

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ṭā'ūs Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī al-Shāfi'ī, known as al-Nishāpūrī, the Proof of Islam, the Ornament of Religion, the Guide to the True Faith, was born in 450/1058 at Ṭūs, near the modern Meshhed, in Khurāsān. This district, in the North East of the old Persian Empire, had been chosen by the 'Abbāsids as the centre for the propaganda which preceded the establishment of their empire in the eight century A.D., and from that time onwards it was conspicuous for the number of religious teachers, writers, and especially poets, whom it produced.¹

Ṭūs itself, comprising the two townships of Ṭabarān and Nawqān, was a town of considerable size, well-built and thickly populated, famous for its waters and its trees and the mineral deposits in the neighbouring mountains, and still more famous as the birthplace of some of the most outstanding personalities in the history of Islam. Among these was Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan b. Ishāq, known as Nizām al-Mulk², who held this district as a fief, conferred on him by the Caliph Malik Shāh, and built there two cathedral mosques. The Nizām al-Mulk was destined to play a great part in the life of al-Ghazālī himself. Two famous poets were also natives of Ṭūs, Firdawsī (ob. 416/1025), author of the *Shāhnāma*, the greatest of Persian epic poems, and the celebrated 'Umar Khayyām,³ who was contemporary with al-Ghazālī.

¹ These included the two great mystics, Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī and Husayn b. Mansūr al-Hallāj (cf. pp. 125 ff 116 below) and the Ṣūfī poet Abū Sa'īd b. Abī'l-Khayr. (cf. R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 1-76).

² Ob. 485/1092. Cf. E. G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, II. pp. 175 ff.

³ Ob. c. 517/1125. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 252 ff.

al-Ghazālī's *nisba*, according to the most reliable authorities, was derived from the village of Ghazāla, near Tūs. He was, therefore, a Persian, though most of his books were written in Arabic. Some thirty years before al-Ghazālī's birth, the Seljūq Turks had begun to overrun the North and East of Persia; in 429 A.H. Tughril Bey had taken Nishāpūr and in 447 A.H. he had established himself in Baghdad. He was ruling as "King of the East and of the West" at the time of al-Ghazālī's birth, and five years later was succeeded by his nephew Alp Arslan.

al-Ghazālī was not the first scholar of distinction in his family: there had been another Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, his uncle, a teacher whose authority was recognised by jurisconsults and savants from far and wide, who was also a writer. He was buried at Tūs.¹ al-Ghazālī's father, however, like his grandfather, was a spinner and seller of wool, a poor man but devout. It is related that when his day's spinning was finished, he used to frequent the company of the divines, and spent what he could in their service. After listening to their sermons, he used to beseech God, with all humility, to grant him a son who should be a preacher and a divine. His prayer was answered, for he had two sons, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad, who became the greatest religious teacher of Islam, and Abū'l-Futūḥ Aḥmad, surnamed Majd al-Dīn (the Glory of Religion), who had such power in preaching that his congregations were said to tremble with fear at his words, and he also, like his brother, was a mystic.² Besides this one brother, al-Ghazālī had several sisters.

Their father died when his sons were still young and before his death he committed them to the care of a Ṣūfī friend, to whom he stated that he had greatly regretted his own lack of education, and he wished that his sons should have what he had lacked: therefore, such money as he was able to leave them was to be spent entirely on their education. al-Ghazālī's education at this stage would probably consist of what he describes later as the right school course for a boy, i.e., the study of the Qur'ān and Traditions, to which he adds what, in his own case, probably

came from his Ṣūfī guardian—stories of the saints and their spiritual states, "in order that the love of the godly may be implanted within him." He includes also the committal to memory of poems "which contain the mention of passionate love and lovers."³

This Ṣūfī friend undertook the education of the two boys until the small legacy was exhausted, and then, since he was himself a poor man, he advised them to betake themselves to a *madrassa* (college or academy), where, as students, they would have rations assigned to them, and this they did. al-Ghazālī afterwards said of this period in his life, "We sought learning for the sake of something other than God, but He would not allow it to be for anything but Himself."² It was perhaps with the thought of what he owed to this Ṣūfī friend in his mind that al-Ghazālī wrote later on: "Let the student be assured that more is due to the teacher than the father, for the teacher is the cause to him of eternal life and the father the cause only of his temporal life. It was for that reason that Alexander, when asked whether he honoured his teacher or his father the more, replied, 'My teacher, most certainly.'"³

al-Ghazālī writes also of the right conduct of the pupil towards the teacher, which may well have been impressed upon him at this age, that the pupil ought to listen attentively to the teacher and not speak except when asked questions, nor should he contradict his master, saying: "So and so said the opposite of what you say." Nor should the pupil give advice to his teacher, in opposition to his expressed opinion, in order to appear more learned than he is. It may well be that in his later years, al-Ghazālī's conscience reproached him in this respect, for he was undoubtedly an ambitious, and probably a conceited boy, at any rate fully aware of his own exceptional ability. He adds that the pupil should not discuss matters in class with his fellow-pupils, nor be restless, but should sit silent, with eyes cast down, as quiet and well-behaved as if he were at prayer. A scholar should not pester the teacher when he is tired, nor, when he leaves should the pupil follow him, asking questions along the road, which

¹ Cf. Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, p. 36.

² *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 102 ff Cf. also p. 54.

¹ M. Ridā, *Abū Ḥāmid*, p. 52.

² al-Subkī, *Ṭab*, IV, p. 102.

³ *Mizān al-Amāl*, p. 130.

suggests a personal recollection of his own eager desire for knowledge. Nor should the pupil criticise his teacher for outward conduct which he thinks unlawful, since the teacher is aware, as the boy is not, of the inner motives for it.¹

It is possible, too, that there is a reference to his own boyhood in his father's house and that of his guardian, in the recommendations which al-Ghazālī makes later on for the upbringing of boys. A boy, he considers, should be brought up austere and trained to be hardy, and the mother is responsible as much as the father for his training in good conduct. His bed should be hard, so that his limbs may be sturdy and he will not put on superfluous flesh. His food and clothing should be simple, and he should take plenty of active exercise, and not be allowed to grow lazy. He ought not to be boastful in regard to what his father may possess, but modest and courteous in his dealings with others, realising that dignity consists in giving, not in taking. Greed is to be regarded as contemptible, and the love of money as a vile and poisonous thing. A boy should not speak except when spoken to, and should listen to those older than himself and stand in their presence. If beaten by his teacher, he should not cry out or make a fuss, but behave courageously. After school-hours a boy should be allowed to play and enjoy himself, for all work and no play "will deaden a boy's heart and spoil his intelligence and make life grievous unto him."

An illustration which al-Ghazālī uses later suggests that one of the amusements which he enjoyed as a boy was a marionette show, for he says that the one who relates his actions to himself, because he supposes that what is seen in the visible world has no cause in the invisible world, is like the boy who is looking at the showman's play. From behind a curtain the showman produces puppets, which appear to dance and stand and sit: yet they do not move of themselves, but are moved by wires, invisible in the darkness, which are in the hands of the showman. He is hidden from the sight of the boys who watch, and they enjoy the performance and wonder at these bundles of rags which are dancing and playing and standing and sitting. Those who are wiser than the boys know that something causes the

¹ *Bidāyat al-Hidāya*, p. 40.

movement, the puppets do not move of themselves, but even they perhaps do not know how it is managed, nor understand the matter as the showman understands it. So it is, too, al-Ghazālī adds, with the people of this world, who fail to realise that all things and all events are the outcome of the Divine Will. The boy, he holds, must obey both his parents and his teacher and all who are set in authority over him. As soon as he reaches years of discretion, he must learn to fulfil his religious duties and to realise that this world is only a place of preparation for the next. al-Ghazālī concludes with the statement that if the boy's upbringing is sound, he will find this rule of life acceptable to him as an adult and it will be as deeply impressed on his heart as the inscription is engraved upon the stone.

He adds a story, which he may have heard from his Ṣūfī guardian, of the Ṣūfī Sahl b. 'Abd Allāh al-Tustarī (ob. 283/896), who, when he was but three years old, used to get up at night to watch his uncle M. b. Suwār at prayer. On one occasion his uncle asked the child if he would not also give praise to his Creator. The boy asked how he should praise Him, and his uncle replied: "When you put on your night-gown, say three times within your heart, without moving your tongue, "God is with me, God is watching me, God is looking upon me." The boy learnt to say it and then his uncle told him to say it seven times each night, and the child did so. Then his uncle said "Say it eleven times." The boy carried out his instructions and, speaking of it afterwards, said that the sweetness of the words sank into his heart. At the end of a year his uncle said, "Bear in mind what you have learnt and continue to do this for the rest of your life."¹

While still a boy al-Ghazālī began the study of jurisprudence in Ṭūs under Shaykh Aḥmad b. M. al-Rādhkānī al-Ṭūsī,² and then travelled to Jurjān, in Mazardarān, to study under the Imām Abū Naṣr al-Isma'īlī,³ of whose lectures he made notes. Returning to Ṭūs, he met with an adventure which is recorded by most of his biographers, on the word of al-Ghazālī himself.

¹ *Iḥyā*, III, pp. 63, 64. IV, p. 85.

² Subki, *Ṭab*, III, p. 36.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 37. The date here given for Abū Naṣr's death appears to be an error.

The party was attacked by highway robbers, who carried off all that the travellers had with them. al-Ghazālī went after them, though warned by the chief of the brigands that he imperilled his life by so doing. He persisted, however, and begged only for the return of his precious note-books, which could be of no value to them. "What are your note-books?" asked the robber-chief, and al-Ghazālī explained that they contained notes of the lectures he had recently heard and represented his knowledge of them. The robber laughed and said, "How can you lay claim to this knowledge when we have taken it from you? Being separated from your knowledge, you remain without it." Then he ordered one of his men to restore the note-books to their owner. al-Ghazālī felt that the words of the robber were to be taken as Divine guidance to him, and when he had reached Tūs, he betook himself to study for three years, during which time he committed to memory all the contents of his note-books, so that if he were robbed again, he could not be deprived of his learning.¹

It seems probable that it was during these three years that al-Ghazālī was studying Ṣūfism under the guidance of Yūsuf al-Nassāj. al-Ghazālī said later of himself: "At the beginning of my career, I knew nothing of the spiritual 'states' of the righteous and the 'stations' of the gnostics until I associated with my Shaykh Yūsuf al-Nassāj in Tūs, but he did not cease to 'polish' me by means of self-discipline until I was favoured with revelations and I heard the voice of God in a dream saying to me, 'Abū Ḥāmid.' My first thought was that perhaps Satan was addressing me, but He said: 'Not so, it is your Lord Who is everywhere present with you. O Abū Ḥāmid, abandon your formal rules, and seek the company of those whom I have appointed to be My friends in the earth, who have renounced both heaven and earth, for love of Me.' Then I said: 'By Thy Glory, hast Thou not made me to think rightly of Thee (i.e., as they do)?' He answered: 'I have done so, and that which separates you from them is your pre-occupation with the love of this world: therefore depart from it of your own choice, before you are cast out of it with ignominy. For I have

¹ Subkt, *Ṭab.*, IV, p. 103.

shed upon you the radiance of My glorious Presence, therefore, stretch forth your hand and obtain.' Then I woke up, happy and rejoicing, and came to my Shaykh Yūsuf al-Nassāj and told him of my dream. He smiled, saying: 'O Abū Ḥāmid, these are but the planks we use at the beginning, which now we have kicked away, but if you continue in my company, your inward vision shall be anointed with the antimony of the Divine assistance, until you behold the Throne of God and those who are round about it. When you have reached that stage, you will not be satisfied until you contemplate what the eye cannot see. So will you be purified from the defilement of your human nature and rise above the limitations of your intellect and you will hear the Voice of God Most High, saying unto you, as unto Moses, 'Verily I am God, the Lord of all created things.'"¹

In 470/1077-8, al-Ghazālī went to Nishāpūr, and there, with other students from Tūs,² joined the classes of Abū'l-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī, known as the Imām al-Ḥaramayn,³ under whom he studied theology, philosophy, logic, dialectic and natural science, and possibly also heard something more of Ṣūfism, for it is stated that the Imām had been a pupil of Abū Nu'aym al-Isfahānī⁴ and when he himself was dealing with the doctrines of the Ṣūfis and their mystic states (*aḥwāl*) he used to draw tears from all present.⁵

al-Ghazālī early gave proof of great ability and also of a tendency to scepticism. He engaged in debates with other students and seems to have been successful in refuting their arguments. The Imām al-Ḥaramayn allowed much freedom to his students, and this freedom acted as a stimulus to the genius of his brilliant pupil. Even at this early age al-Ghazālī was lecturing to his fellow-students and beginning to write, and at this time his health suffered from his over-application to work. Describing al-Ghazālī, with two other pupils of his, the Imām al-Ḥaramayn said:

¹ M. al-Murtadā, *Ithāf*, p. 9. M. Ridā, *Abū Ḥamid*, pp. 22, 23.

² Cf. Ibn 'Asākir, *Kitāb Tabyīn*, fol. 87.

³ "Imām of the Two Sanctuaries," so-called because he taught at both Mecca and Medina. Ob. 478/1085. For a full account of his career cf. Subkt *Ṭab.* III. pp. 249 ff.

⁴ Ob. 430/1038, the author of the great biography of the saints known as the *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*.

⁵ Ibn Khallikān, *Biog. Dict.*, I. p. 413.

"al-Ghazālī is a sea to drown in, al-Kiyā is a raging lion and al-Khawāfi is a burning fire." He is reported to have said also: "al-Khawāfi's strong point is verification, al-Ghazālī's is speculation, and al-Kiyā's is explanation."¹ While the Imām appeared to be proud of his distinguished pupil, it is said that he was really jealous of him, because al-Ghazālī excelled his master in the quickness of his explanations and in his natural capacity, and it was not acceptable to the older man that al-Ghazālī, still in his early twenties, should already have won a reputation for writings which showed that he had made himself the master of every subject to which he had applied himself. It is related that when al-Ghazālī had written his *Kitāb al-Mankhūl*, he showed it to the Imām al-Haramayn, who observed: "You have buried me while I am still alive. Why did you not have patience to wait until I was dead? For your book has thrust my writings out of sight."²

It was during this period that al-Ghazālī became impatient of dogmatic teaching and abandoned the policy of dependence upon authority (*taqlīd*): "he rose up to free his mind from that irksome captivity, in order to seek for that which aroused the attention of the rational soul of itself, and thereby to facilitate for the soul the attainment of its happiness and joy."³ From his boyhood, al-Ghazālī tells us, he had been possessed by the desire to comprehend the real meaning of things for himself and he had come to the conclusion that the greatest hindrance in the search for truth was the acceptance of beliefs on the authority of parents and teachers, and a rigid adherence to the heritage of the past. He remembered the traditional saying ascribed to the Prophet that "Every child is born with a naturally religious disposition (*'ala'l-fitra*), then his parents make him into a Jew or a Christian or a Magian," and he was anxious to know what was that innate disposition before it was affected by unreasoned convictions imposed by others. So he set out to secure a knowledge which left no room for doubt, and involved no possibility of error or conjecture, and, finding that none of the knowledge which he had acquired, except that which was based

¹ Subkī, *Ṭab.*, IV, pp. 103, 106. For an account of the subsequent careers of these two fellow-students cf. pp. 60 ff. below.

² Yāfi', *Mir'āt al-Janān*, fol. 257 b.

³ *Mi'yār al-'Ilm* (*Tarjamat al-Muṣannaf*), p. 2.

on first-hand experience, satisfied these conditions, from this time onwards he became a seeker after absolute truth and was content with no lower standard. He expressed this in a couplet which became famous:

"Take what you see and let hearsay alone,
When the sun has risen, what need have you of Saturn?"

He justified his scepticism by saying: "He who does not doubt, does not investigate, and he who does not investigate does not perceive, and he who does not perceive remains in blindness and error." All kinds of knowledge, he felt, should be investigated by the scholar, for all might be a help to him and the true scholar should be hostile to none, "For men are hostile to that of which they are ignorant." He says also that it is the business of the true investigator to embark "on the deep waters of what is obscure (*al-ishkāl*)," from which the common folk should be kept away, just as boys are kept away from the bank of the Tigris, lest they should be drowned. But those who are strong may embark upon such studies just as the skilled swimmer is free to dive into deep waters.¹

During this period al-Ghazālī was also studying under the Ṣūfī Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl b. M. b. 'Alī al-Fārmadhī al-Ṭūsī,² a pupil of al-Ghazālī's uncle and of al-Qushayrī,³ who had established a circle for instruction, held, we are told, in a garden full of flowers, at Nishāpūr, where he enjoyed the patronage of Nizām al-Mulk. His teaching attracted large numbers of Ṣūfis and strangers from other parts, since he was considered to be the greatest leader on the mystic Path. He died in Ṭūs in 477/1084. From al-Fārmadhī al-Ghazālī learnt more of the Ṣūfī "Way" and followed his directions in regard to observing the daily duties of good works and works of supererogation, while engaged in frequent devotions and earnestly striving the while to attain to salvation. Passing beyond this stage, he took to asceticism and self-mortification, but did not find that these brought him

¹ al-Munqidh pp. 3 ff. *Mizān al-'Amal*, pp. 164, 165. 14. *al-Risālat al-Wa'izyyat*, p. 150.

² Cf. Jāmi', *Nafahāt al-Uns*, pp. 422, 419.

³ Ob. 465/1074. His *Risāla* is one of the earliest and most valuable treatises on Ṣūfism, in Arabic, and was later one of al-Ghazālī's chief sources for the study of Ṣūfism.

to his goal.¹ It was probably to this period that al-Ghazālī was referring when he stated: "When I desired to set forth upon the Ṣūfī Path, and to drink of their wine, I considered my soul and saw that it was encompassed by many veils. So I retired into solitude and occupied myself with self-discipline and self-mortification for forty days, and I was given knowledge which I had not possessed before, purer and finer than I had yet known, and I considered it, and lo, it contained a legalistic element. Then I betook myself again to solitude and occupied myself with discipline and self-mortification for forty days, and then I was given other knowledge, still finer and purer than that I possessed at first, and I rejoiced in it: then I examined it and behold, it contained a speculative element. So I returned to solitude a third time, for forty days again, and I received other knowledge still finer and purer, but when I examined it, behold it contained an admixture of knowledge acquired by human means (*'ilm*) and so I had not yet overtaken those possessed of knowledge from on high (*al-'ulūm al-Laduniyya*).² So I realised that writing over what has been erased is not like writing on what was originally pure and clean, and I had not really separated myself from speculation except in a few matters."³ No doubt the increasing attraction of the Ṣūfī teaching, with its insistence upon a direct personal experience of God, added to Ghazālī's critical dissatisfaction with dogmatism.

The Imām al-Ḥaramayn died in 478/1085, after teaching in Nishāpūr for nearly thirty years, and his biographer records that at the moment of his death, his students, who numbered four hundred and one, broke their pens and ink-horns and allowed a full year to elapse before they resumed their studies.⁴ Alp Arslān had been succeeded by Malik Shāh in 467/1072, and al-Ghazālī now betook himself to the royal camp, where Malik Shāh's great Vizier Nizām al-Mulk had gathered around him a circle of the most distinguished scholars of the time, who frequented his levées and dedicated their books to him. The Vizier had a great regard for the Ṣūfis, and had received visits

¹ Subkt, *Tab.*, IV, p. 109.

² Cf. *al-Risālah al-Laduniyya*, pp. 22 ff.

³ Subkt, *Tab.*, IV, pp. 9, 10. *M. Ridā*, *op. cit.*, p. 23. *Murtadā*, *Ithāf*, p. 9.

⁴ Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, II, p. 122.

from both the Imām al-Ḥaramayn and al-Qushayrī, to whom he showed great honour. Of him, after his death, his son-in-law wrote:

"Nizām al-Mulk was a precious pearl, formed of pure nobility by God the All-Merciful,
So fine was it that the age did not realise its worth, and its Maker,
jealous for its honour, restored it to its shell."¹

Nizām al-Mulk not only encouraged the scholars of the age to come to his court, but he also founded a number of colleges, Ṣūfī monasteries, and mosques, in different provinces, building colleges in Baghdad, Balkh, Nishāpūr, Herāt, Isfahān, Basra, Merv, Āmul (in Ṭabaristān) and Mosul, so that it was said of him that there was a college founded by him in every city of 'Irāq and Khurasān.²

al-Ghazālī, whose fame as a scholar had preceded him, was received with much favour by the Vizier, who honoured him and made much of him. Nizām al-Mulk held frequent assemblies for debate and discussion and al-Ghazālī soon made his mark at these and was conspicuous for his skill in debate. He assumed the leadership among his fellow-scholars, as he had done in Khurasān, and his fame became widespread. Travellers came from afar to hear him and, as his biographer says, "he was one of those whom men pointed out."

al-Ghazālī's reputation as a scholar and especially his profound knowledge of Muslim theology and philosophy led Nizām al-Mulk to appoint him to the Chair of Theology at the Nizāmiyya College at Baghdad, in 484/1091, when al-Ghazālī was only thirty-four. These Colleges or Academies had taken the place of the mosques, as centres of instruction, because of the increasing numbers of students devoted to learning, who needed some means of maintaining themselves. A *madrassa* had been founded in Baghdad as early as 383/993 and before long most of the larger cities possessed such schools of learning. To found such a centre of knowledge was reckoned a pious deed and the endowments were made sufficient to cover the general costs of maintenance, the stipends of professors and lecturers,

¹ Cf. Ibn Khallikān, I, p. 413. Similar verses were also inscribed over the tomb of Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl (ob. 587/1191).

² *M. Ridā*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

and to provide scholarships for students. The buildings were made of stone and over the door was carved a dedicatory inscription, while the interior included an open courtyard, containing a large tank, and behind was the oratory. Round this courtyard were arcades and small rooms opening into the court, together with lecture-rooms and libraries. The upper storey of the building consisted of an open hall, furnished with circular, arched windows, with a pillar in the centre. Every encouragement was given to scholarship and learning by the authorities, and the poor scholar, travelling in pursuit of learning, could find free board and lodging at these colleges. There were libraries, both public and private, available for the use of students, the first to be established in Baghdad being Ma'mūn's "House of Wisdom" (*Bayt al-Hikma*), founded in 215/830. In the thirteenth century Baghdad possessed no fewer than thirty-six libraries.

At Baghdad, not only theology, but medicine and philosophy were taught, and the School of Baghdad was characterised from the first by its scientific spirit, accepting as valid only what was confirmed by experiment. There was complete freedom to teach for any teacher who was competent and knew his subject, and the lectures at Baghdad were attended by Muslim scholars from all parts of the Empire. While there were fixed days and hours for individual lecturers, there was no time-limit to lectures, nor any limit to the number of lectures that might be delivered on a given subject. The lecture usually took the form of a prepared treatise and was taken down verbatim by the class. The lecturer could not use the work of other scholars except by written permission, nor could members of the class make use of the substance of the lecture without the lecturer's leave.¹

The Nizāmiyya College, to which al-Ghazālī was appointed, had been built by Nizām al-Mulk in 457/1065, the first Director being Abū Ishāq al-Shirāzī, who died in 476/1083.² His biographer states that when al-Ghazālī arrived to take up his

¹ Cf. Kh. Bukhsh, *Islamic Civilisation*, II, pp. 51 ff. J. Hell, *The Arab Civilisation*, pp. 79, 80. F. Wüstenfeld, *Die Akademien der Araber & ihre Lehrer*, pp. 8 ff.

² Cf. Subki, *Ṭab.*, III, pp. 88 ff. for a detailed account of Abū Ishāq's career.

appointment at the Nizāmiyya, the jurists came to him and said: "We have been told that it has been the custom for everyone who teaches in this building to invite the jurists to be present and listen, and we wish you to invite us to your lectures on theology (*'ilm*)."¹ al-Ghazālī replied: "Most willingly, but on one of two conditions, either you shall provide refreshments for the day, and I shall fix the date, or the other way round." They said: "No, you shall provide refreshments, and we wish to be invited for to-day." He rejoined: "Then the food provided must be what I can manage, and it will be bread and vinegar and herbs." Then they exclaimed: "No, by God, but you shall fix the day, and we will supply provisions: we intend to have a supply of chicken and of sweetmeats." Then al-Ghazālī said, "Very well, then, the day shall be two years hence." So they admitted that they were baffled and left it all to him.¹

But, none the less, al-Ghazālī received a warm welcome in Baghdad. We are told that he astonished the Baghdadis by the excellence of his lectures, his fluent delivery, the extent of his learning, the subtlety of his allusions, and the lucidity of his explanations, and they conceived a great regard for him and treated him "as the apple of their eye." His lectures attracted large classes, which included the chief savants of the time. His wealth and position became such that his household and the number of his followers were said to exceed those of the great nobles and Amīrs and even the court of the Caliph himself. He became the Imām of 'Irāq, as he had been Imām of Khurāsān.² In addition to lecturing, al-Ghazālī was called upon to give legal decisions, based on the Canon Law (*fatāwa*), e.g., Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn, chief of the Almoravides, who had conquered Spain in A.D. 1088, formed an unfavourable opinion of the independent Muslim chiefs who exercised authority there, and referred the matter to al-Ghazālī, among others, for his opinion and al-Ghazālī, in consultation with Abū Bakr Turtūshī, a well-known authority on law and tradition (ob. 520/1126), addressed letters of advice to Yūsuf, urging him to govern with justice, and at the same time sent decisions with regard to these Muslim

¹ Subki, *Ṭab.*, IV, p. 113.

² Subki, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 107. Jāmi, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, p. 322. Ibn 'Asākir, *op. cit.*, fol. 88a.

chieftains, authorising him to execute upon them the Divine sentence, and this Yūsuf did, depriving them of their dignities and replacing them by his own relatives.¹ al-Ghazālī was also engaged in writing throughout this period, to which his earlier works belong.

But in spite of the exacting nature of his work "the fire of his burning intellect was not quenched," says one of his biographers, "nor his eagerness to unveil the truth in its entirety." He began to doubt even the evidence of his senses and for two months was a complete sceptic, but gradually, by the help of God, as he believed, his mind recovered its equilibrium and his power of reasoning returned, and he then applied himself resolutely to the search for truth, by an exhaustive study of the writings of the scholastic theologians, the philosophers, and finally, of the Šūfis, believing that the truth must have been attained by one of these groups of thinkers. His investigations led him to reject the first two, though he did not fail to make use of their methods and, to some extent, of their conclusions, in his later writings,² but he was led to concentrate his attention on Šūfism, being convinced that the mystics, and they alone, among the seekers for truth, had really attained their purpose.³

Meanwhile his classes continued to attract increasing numbers, and at this time included three hundred of the most distinguished students of the time, and one hundred of the sons of the princely families. At the height of his reputation, with a brilliant future before him, and all that the world could offer at his feet, the young professor suffered a complete physical breakdown, and for a time was incapable of lecturing. When he recovered, he announced that he was going on pilgrimage to Mecca, appointed his brother Aḥmad to take his place in the Nizāmiyya College, gave away all his wealth, except the small amount necessary to maintain his family, and in 488/1096 he left Baghdad, with the intention never to return thither.

¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berberes*, pp. 79, 82.

² It was as a result of his pre-occupation with philosophy at this time that he wrote his *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa* (The Aims of the Philosophers) setting forth their position, without criticising it, and this was followed by his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* (The Destruction of the Philosophers), a refutation of their teaching.

³ *al-Munqidh*, pp. 4 ff.

CHAPTER II

*The new Ghazālī. His conversion and period of retirement.
His return to active life. His later years and his death.*

The reasons for the abandonment of his career and for the rejection of all that the world had to offer him—a decision which astonished and perplexed all who heard of it—al-Ghazālī sets forth in his *apologia pro vita sua*.¹ In this he states that through his study of Šūfism, he had come to realise that knowledge of the way to God was not the same as experience of that way; that to know the meaning of the renunciation of worldliness was not the same thing as actually to renounce this world and all its gifts. From his study of the writings of the Šūfis and their lives, he saw that Šūfism consisted not in words but in actual experience. The attainment of the world to come, for which he sought, depended upon his detachment from this present world and the directing of his whole concern towards God. This could only be accomplished by abandoning reputation and wealth and fleeing from worldly pre-occupations and ties. As he reflected upon his position in Baghdad, it seemed to al-Ghazālī that he was fettered on every hand: his best work consisted of his studies and his teaching and he felt that he was giving his time to what was of no real importance or help in his purpose of drawing near to God, for the real motive of his work was the desire for fame and self-glorification. It must have been of this time that he was thinking, when he wrote later on: "The strongest ties which fetter the soul are those of the creatures and the love of position, for the joy of exercising authority and control and of being superior to others and of being their leader is the joy which in this world most prevails over the souls of the intelligent. And how should it not be so, since its object is one of the attributes of God Himself, namely, Lordship (*rubūbiyya*)? For domination is naturally loved and desired by the heart, because it is related to what is

¹ *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (The Deliverer from Error).

Divine—the search for power on the part of men is not blameworthy, but power is of two kinds, the power which is alloyed with all kinds of cares and quickly vanishes, for it is transitory and belongs to this life, and the power which is eternal and belongs to the next life. Man has been created subject to death (*'ajūl*), desirous of what is transient, and so he is tempted by what is only temporal.”¹

al-Ghazālī felt at this time as if he were standing on the edge of a precipice whence he would be hurled to destruction, unless he drew back in time. He reflected for some time on his position, unable to make up his mind; one day he resolved to leave Baghdad and to cut loose from all these hindrances to spiritual progress, and the next day the resolve weakened. “I put one foot forward,” he writes, “and withdrew the other.”² In the morning he felt a sincere desire to seek the things pertaining to eternal life, in the evening worldly and sensual desires got the better of him. The love of this world urged him to remain where he was, while at the same time the voice of conscience was calling insistently to him: “Set out, set out, for but little of life remains and the journey before you is long. All your actions and all your knowledge are nothing but hypocrisy and pretension. If you do not prepare now for the life to come, when will you prepare? If you do not detach yourself now, when will you do it?” So al-Ghazālī wrestled with the temptations of the world, the flesh and Satan for nearly six months, and it was to this inward struggle that his breakdown was due. He was probably thinking of this illness when he wrote: “We have sometimes seen a learned man fall sick with some infirmity which affects the head and the breast, so that his soul shuns all knowledge, and he forgets what he has learnt and it becomes confused to him, and all that he has acquired in the past remains hidden within his memory and his recollections.”³ The Caliph, hearing of the Professor's illness, sent his own physician, among others, to treat him. When the doctors had done their best for him and

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 67, 68.

² Cf. St. Paul's description of a similar state of spiritual conflict *Romans* VII. 15-24. and St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Bk. VIII. Chap. ii. Cf. H. Frick. *Ghazālī's Selbstbiographie: ein Vergleich mit Augustins Konfessionen*.

³ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 48.

were baffled, admitting that the cause was spiritual, not physical, al-Ghazālī tells us that he surrendered himself to the mercy of God, and in Him found the salvation which he had sought so long for himself.

He had asked a Šūfī friend whether he should not devote himself to studying the Word of God (the Qur'ān), but the Šūfī did not advise that, saying: “The Way (to God) consists in perseverance in cutting off all hindrances and healing the soul of the evil that afflicts it, and in concerning yourself with that until it becomes habitual to you. The most effective means of ensuring that is to leave your native land and your own country, to depart from 'Irāq, and betake yourself to a life of seclusion and avoidance of sin. Then when that state is established in your heart, you should give yourself continually to solitude, for the purpose of reflection and meditation upon the kingdom of heaven and earth, until your attributes are made perfect, and you are adorned with the virtues after being thus set free from the vices. When that has come to pass, you will be fit to become an Imām and make it your sole concern to call men unto God.”¹

In this way, al-Ghazālī says, God made it easy for him to abandon position and wealth and family ties and friends. Fearing lest the Caliph and his personal friends should prevent him from carrying out his real purpose of going to Syria in order to follow the Šūfī Path and live a life of devotion, he stated that he was going on pilgrimage and so departed.²

It was not the case that al-Ghazālī now discovered that mysticism, that is, Šūfism, was the way of spiritual progress, he had been realising that fact over a period of years, by his theoretical study of it, but now he consecrated himself to it, to make it part of his own personal experience. So he left Baghdad and went to Syria, and remained there for nearly two years, occupying himself, as he tells us, “simply in retreat and solitude, self-discipline and self-mortification, being pre-occupied with the cleansing of the soul, the amendment of character, and the purification of the heart for the recollection of God Most High,” in accordance with what he had learnt

¹ *Mi'yār al-'Ilm (Tarjama)*, pp. 10, 11.

² *al-Munqidh*, pp. 20 ff.

from his study of Ṣūfism.¹ It was no doubt in reference to this period that he wrote afterwards in his *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn* (The Garden of the Seekers): "True happiness and everything else that is worth while, which remains with you when your ship is wrecked, consists in two things, one of which is peace of mind, with the heart's freedom from all save God, and the other is the filling of the heart thus freed, with the knowledge of God Most Glorious, for it was to this end that all things were created. The result of combining these two things is a fine personality."²

al-Ghazālī went to Damascus, where he arrived in 489/1096. It is related that he entered the city in the garb of a poor man and sat at the door of the Khānqāh al-Samīṣātiyya,³ until an unknown *faqīr* gave him leave to enter and he then busied himself in sweeping the court for ablutions attached to the monastery, and in doing the work of a servant there. Then, one day, when he was sitting in the court of the 'Umayyad mosque, where a number of muftis were sitting talking together, a villager came to them, seeking a legal decision (*fatwa*), but they gave him no reply. al-Ghazālī, engaged in meditation, saw that no one gave the man any answer and that he was troubled thereby, so he called the rustic to him and gave him a reply. The villager, however, scoffed at him, saying: "The muftis gave me no decision and how can this ignorant *faqīr* tell me what I want to know." The muftis, meanwhile, were observing them and when al-Ghazālī had finished speaking, they called the villager and asked him what that common fellow had said to him. When the peasant explained the matter, they came to al-Ghazālī and, recognising him, surrounded him, requesting him to establish a discussion circle for them. He held out the hope of meeting them the next day, but instead he left the city that night.⁴ Some of his biographers says that after his stay there, he visited Jerusalem and then returned to Damascus, though al-Ghazālī himself does not mention such a visit to Jerusalem, but only the fact that he settled down to a life of seclusion in Damascus, in the mosque of the 'Umayyads, where he spent much time in prayer and

¹ *al-Munqidh*, p. 22.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 234.

³ The monastery belonging to the people of Samīṣāt, on the Euphrates.

⁴ Subki, *Ṭab.*, IV, p. 104.

meditation in the minaret of the mosque, which is now called the Minaret of al-Ghazālī.¹ There he shut himself in, so that he might be free from interruption. This place of retreat is said to have been the cell of Shaykh Naṣr al-Maqdisī, and it is related that al-Ghazālī originally set out, with the idea of joining Shaykh Naṣr, and reached Damascus on the day of the Shaykh's death. It happened that he went into the mosque, wearing the garb of a *faqīr*, and came upon Shaykh Naṣr's seat in this place of retreat (*zāwiya*). While he was there, a group of students arrived and entered into conversation with him, after they had considered him and looked at him for a long time, and as they talked with him, "they found him an ocean, inexhaustible." Then he asked them what Shaykh Naṣr was doing, and they replied: "He is dead and we have just returned from his funeral. When his end was approaching, we asked him who would be his successor and teach his followers, and he said: 'When my funeral is over, return to my cell and you will find someone there, a stranger,' and he described you to us. He told us to give that stranger his greetings, for he would be his successor." al-Subki, who relates this story, is doubtful whether it can be accepted as true. He points out that Shaykh Naṣr died in 490/1097 and that if this did occur, it could not have been when al-Ghazālī first arrived in Damascus, but after his return from Jerusalem. He thinks, however, that al-Ghazālī may have joined Shaykh Naṣr when he first reached Damascus in 489/1096, and it would have been natural enough for him to return to his former place of retreat.²

¹ Ibn Jubayr (ob. 1217 A.D.), a traveller and writer belonging to Granada, who has left an account of his travels between 1183 and 1185, says: "The mosque has three monastic cells, one at the Western side, which is like a high tower, comprising spacious dwellings and roomy cells, all of them locked off and inhabited by pious Maghribins, and the highest of the chambers was the retreat of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, may God have mercy on him, and to-day it is inhabited by the jurist al-Zāhid Abū 'Abdallāh b. Sa'īd." p. 266. Yāqūt also states: "Under the Dome of Naṣr are two black and white columns, which are said to have come from the throne of Balqis (the Queen of Sheba), but God knows best. The Western minaret of the mosque is that in which al-Ghazālī used to worship, and Ibn Tūmart (cf. pp. 63 ff. below). It is said that it used to be a fire-temple and that a flame of fire rose from it, which the people of Ḥarrān used to worship." *Geog. Wörterbuch*, II, p. 596.

² Subki, *Ṭab.*, IV, p. 104. al-Dhahabī stated that al-Ghazālī joined Naṣr, but that Naṣr appointed one of his own pupils, Naṣr Allāh al-Maṣṣīṣī, to succeed him. *Ibid.*

al-Ghazālī now lived the life of an ascetic, wearing coarse clothing and practising the greatest abstinence in the matter of food and drink, and giving most of his time to devotion. He found leisure for writing, too, and while here he wrote the greatest of all his works, the *Ihyā' Ulūm al-Dīn* (The Revivification of Religion). His biographers relate that one day al-Ghazālī happened to enter one of the Damascus colleges¹ and found a lecturer there who was quoting his teaching, and using the words: "al-Ghazālī said . . ." and, fearing lest he should be overtaken by pride, he left Damascus and began to wander about the country. He himself states that he went to Jerusalem, where he gave himself up to the contemplative life, spending much of his time in prayer in the great Mosque of 'Umar, where, as in Damascus, he secluded himself, locking the door of his retreat behind him. As time went on, he seems to have gathered round him a circle of disciples. Abu'l-Futūḥ al-Marāghī stated at a conference in Āmul, in Ṭabaristān, that he had been present at a gathering in Jerusalem, at the "Cradle of Jesus,"² which included al-Ghazālī, Isma'īl al-Ḥākimī, Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Ibrāhīm al-Shabbāk al-Jurjānī³ and a large number of pious strangers, and these verses were improvised, one account says, by al-Ghazālī himself:

"May I be your ransom, if it were not for love you would have ransomed me,
But by the magic of two eye-pupils, you have made me captive.
I came to you when my breast was straitened by desire.
Had you known how great was my longing, you would have come to me."

Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was filled with ecstasy and his emotion so affected those present that one of the company died on the spot.⁴

From Jerusalem, al-Ghazālī went to Hebron and the Ḥijāz and thence to Egypt, visiting Cairo and Alexandria, where he stayed for a time, and there he seems to have resumed his

¹ It is said to have been the Amīniyya Madrassa, but this was not founded until A.H. 514, after al-Ghazālī's death. Cf. Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

² Cf. Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, p. 166.

³ Cf. p. 63 below.

⁴ Subkī, *Ṭab. IV*, p. 205.

scholarly activities, and taken up teaching again.¹ After this he appears to have taken once more to a wandering life, visiting various sanctuaries and shrines, living all the time the life of an ascetic, eating dry bread, wearing rags, carrying a bag for his scanty provisions and a staff in his hand, seeking to purify his soul by self-discipline and good works until, as his biographer says, he became the "Pivot of Existence" (*Qutb al-Wujūd*), a general blessing to all creatures and a guide to the attainment of the satisfaction of the All-Merciful.² It seems most probable that it was during this period that someone followed him, as he was wandering in the open country, wearing a patched garment and carrying a water-jar and staff. Now that person had previously seen him in his lecture-room, lecturing to an audience of three hundred students and a hundred of the notables of Baghdad, and he said: "O Imām, is not the work of teaching better than this?" al-Ghazālī looked at him with indifference and replied: "When the full moon of happiness has arisen in the firmament of desire, then the sun of reason approaches the setting-place of attainment," and he recited these verses:

"I abandoned the love of Layla and my happiness was afar off,
And I returned to the companionship of my first halting-place.
And my desires called out to me, "Gently, for these
Are the stations of one whom you love, go slowly, alight."
I had spun a fine thread for them and I did not find
A wearer for my thread, so I broke my spindle."³

It was probably during this period of wandering that he paid a visit to Hamadān, and we are told that he had as his companion while wandering, Abū Ṭāhir al-Shabbāk (called also al-Shaybānī), a fellow-pupil of the Imām al-Ḥaramayn.

al-Ghazālī now returned to his own country and for a time was teaching in Baghdad and lecturing on the *Ihyā'*, though evidently still living a life of semi-retirement. He established himself also as a preacher and "spoke with the tongue of those who have attained to the Truth." He no longer based his teaching on the authority of others, nor did he rely for his instruction on the Traditions. He was now engaged in calling men to repentance,

¹ Cf. H. Götsche, p. 248. Subkī, *Ṭab. IV*, p. 105.

² *Ibid.*

³ Munāwī, *al-Kawākib*, fols. 194b, 195a. *Mi'yār al-'Ilm* (Tarjama), p. 11.

urging them to turn their backs on this world, and to prepare for the journey to the world to come, seeking guidance for themselves from those who were possessed of gnosis and the Divine enlightenment.¹ It is said that one day his brother Aḥmad came to him and recited these verses:

"You have sought to guide others and have not guidance yourself,
Men listen to your preaching but you do not listen to theirs,
O whetstone, how long will you sharpen iron,
And yet not receive a cutting edge yourself?"²

It was perhaps on account of this fraternal rebuke, added to his own sense of unworthiness, that al-Ghazālī became dissatisfied with himself as a preacher. Ibn Sam'ānī quotes a letter of his to Abū Ḥāmid A. b. Salāmat in which he writes: "I do not think myself worthy to preach, for preaching is like a tax and the property on which it is levied is the acceptance of the moral for oneself. How, then, can anyone who has no property pay a tax? How shall one who has no garment himself clothe another? When is the shadow straight, if the wood is crooked?"³

Abū Sa'īd al-Nawqānī⁴ related that while attending al-Ghazālī's lectures on the *Iḥyā* he heard him recite these verses:

"He has made their native lands dear unto men,
Places wherein their hearts long to be
When men remember their homes, they are mindful
Of childish days there and they yearn for return."

And then al-Ghazālī wept and his hearers wept with him.⁵

Once again he gave up his work at Baghdad and retired to Tūs, living a life of seclusion, occupying himself with reflection and his spiritual state, aiming at guidance and spiritual help for each one who sought him out and visited him. Then, after a time he began to write again and produced a number of books.

¹ Subkī, *Tab.* IV, p. 105.

² Murtaḍā, *Iḥyā*, p. 8 Ibn Khallikān attributes similar verses to Ibn Tūmart.

³ When these people were afar off, you lent them your assistance,
When they bade thee farewell, they left thee with indifference.
How often did you forbid them (to sin) and were not obeyed.
How often did you admonish, yet you were not heeded.
Whetstone (of others' wit), how long will you sharpen steel and never receive a cutting edge yourself? *Biog. Diet.*, III, p. 214.

⁴ Subkī, *Tab.* IV, p. 112.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

At this time his manner of life met with general approval and his authority was unquestioned.

This state of things continued until Fakhr al-Mulk Jamāl al-Shuhadā became Vizier and established his court and retinue in Khurāsān; he heard where al-Ghazālī was living and was informed of his high reputation and his great learning and the spiritual state to which he attained, in the purity of his faith, and his manner of life. So Fakhr al-Mulk sought for a blessing from him and visited him and listened to his teaching, and then besought him not to let his rare qualities and gifts remain fruitless, without profit to others, giving no light from their radiance. The Vizier used every importunity and pressed al-Ghazālī until at last he agreed to go, and was carried off to Nīshāpūr, where he was appointed as lecturer in the Maymūna Nizāmiyya College, being unable to escape from the pressure put upon him by the Government. This was in 499/1106-7. al-Ghazālī himself considered that this was the will of God, Who had aroused the desire of Fakhr al-Mulk, in order that al-Ghazālī should combat the decay of faith among Muslims. He felt also that the desire for peace and protection from worldly persecution were not sufficient motives to justify him in persisting in a life of solitude. Furthermore, he had consulted a number of spiritually-minded men, possessed of vision, and they were unanimous in advising him to quit his life of seclusion and go forth from his retreat. In addition to this, a number of these pious men had dreams which confirmed their decision, and indicated that God had predetermined this event for the beginning of the century (A.H. 500). "For God Most High," writes al-Ghazālī, "had promised a revival of religion at the beginning of every century." So he hoped that this was his God-given task and he went to Nīshāpūr with this purpose in view. "The impulse was not from myself, but from God and it was not I who acted, but He Who made me act. I asked Him, therefore, first to make me regenerate and then to give regeneration to others through me: to guide me unto the Truth and then to enable me to guide others thereto."¹

His intention, then, was to give all the guidance he could to

¹ *al-Munqidh*, p. 30.

others, by making known the results of his long meditation, and to benefit those who sought him out, but without any return to what he had abandoned, or allowing himself to be fettered by the desire for reputation or controversy and disputation with his opponents. Now, he was often attacked and opposed and suffered calumny and slander and disparagement, but he remained unmoved by it and was not concerned to reply to those who cast aspersions upon him. Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, who had known al-Ghazālī before his conversion and his long absence from the world, found a great change in him now. He saw nothing of his former corruption and his contemptuous attitude towards other men, whom he despised in his pride and arrogance, being deluded by what he had been given of eloquence and intellectual power and the opportunity for good works, added to his desire for reputation and a high position. He had now completely changed and was free from these defects. 'Abd al-Ghāfir supposed at first that he was simply restraining himself, but he was convinced, after investigating the matter, that it was not so, but that the man had recovered his sanity after being possessed by an evil spirit.

al-Ghazālī used to talk to his disciples at night, of what had happened to him, from the time when the nature of the journey along the road to God was first revealed to him, and how he attained to the mystic experience, after he had for so long been absorbed in his studies, and had realised his superiority to others, in his teaching, and the ability by which God had distinguished him in regard to all types of learning, and his capacity for research and criticism, until at last he had freed himself from pre-occupation with theory, apart from practice and concern with the life to come, and what might help him thereto. So he had betaken himself to the study of Ṣūfism under al-Fārmadhī.¹ They asked him then how he came to be willing to leave his life of retirement in his own home and to return to Nishāpūr when summoned thither, and he justified his action by saying that his religion did not allow him to reject the call and to deprive students of the benefit they might gain through his teaching.

¹ Subkī, *Tab.* IV, pp. 108, 109. Cf. also IV, p. 9 and p. 17 above. Yāfi'i, *op. cit.*, fol. 258a.

He felt it was incumbent on him to communicate the truth and to give utterance to it. 'Abd al-Ghāfir felt that he was sincere in his explanation. A statement made by al-Ghazālī in one of his books has a bearing on this decision. He says there that the work of the teacher is to perfect the human heart, to adorn and purify it and to urge it to draw near to God. Teaching, therefore, is a form of service to God Most High, a kind of vicegerency of God, and the most glorious of vicegerencies, for God has given to the learned man that knowledge which is the most distinctive of human attributes: he is, as it were, the treasurer of His most precious treasure, who is given leave to expend it upon everyone who has need of it, and what rank is more glorious, asks al-Ghazālī, than that of the servant who is a mediator between God Himself and His creatures, in bringing them near to Him, and showing them the way to salvation?¹ al-Ghazālī added that he gave up his teaching work, before it gave him up.² As noted above, he had to suffer much opposition and calumny, and Fakhr al-Mulk, who might have protected him against such attacks, was assassinated in A.H. 500/1106-7. It was possibly at this time, not earlier, as his biographers assume, that al-Ghazālī thought of taking refuge in the West, with Yūsuf b. Tāshfin, the Sultan of Morocco, of whose just administration he had heard (cf. p. 21 above), but hearing of Yūsuf's death, which occurred in this year, he abandoned the project.³

He retired once more to his home in Tūs and established a college for students of theology, close by, and also a convent for Ṣūfis. It must have been during this period that once again he was summoned by the Grand Vizier al-Sa'id to take up teaching again in the Nizāmiyya College in Baghdad, but al-Ghazālī wrote him a decisive letter of refusal, reminding him that he had given up that same work, in order to betake himself to a life of devotion, for the sake of God and in accordance with His purpose. He writes: "Know that men are divided into three groups, in turning towards what is their *Qibla* (the direction towards which all Muslims turn in prayer).

¹ *Fatḥat al-'Ulūm*, p. 7.

² Yāfi'i, *op. cit.* ff. 258a, 258b. Subkī, *Tab.* IV, 109.

³ Subkī, *Tab.* IV, p. 104. Yāfi'i, *op. cit.*, fol. 256b.

(a) The people at large, who limit their consideration to this transient world, and of these the Prophet expressed his disapproval when he said: "No wolves attacking the sheepfold are more destructive to the faith of the Muslim than the love of wealth and honour."

(b) The second are the elect, who give their chief attention to the next world, knowing that it is more excellent and more enduring than this, and they do good works for its sake, but the Prophet showed how they are in error, when he said: "This world is forbidden to those who belong to the next, and the next is forbidden to those who belong to this, and both are forbidden to those who belong to God Most High."

(c) The third are the elect of the elect, and they are those who know that beyond everything is something else which belongs to those that set,¹ and the wise man does not love that which sets (i.e., is but transient). These are convinced that this world and the world to come are but the creation of God and the most important things in them are eating and pro-creation, which are shared with the brutes and the reptiles and neither of the two represents a high rank. Therefore they have turned away from both and turned towards their Creator, Who is the Author of their being and their King. To them has been revealed the meaning of "God is more exalted and abides,"² and they are convinced of the truth of: "There is no god but God," and none who turns aside to what is other than Him is free from secret polytheism. For them all existent things are divided into two, God and what is other than God. They have considered this under the similitude of the two scales of a balance, and their heart is the tongue of that balance. Whenever they see their hearts inclining towards what is noble and honourable, they judge that the scale is weighted down by good works, and when they see their hearts inclining towards what is base, they judge that the scale is weighted down by evil deeds.

As the first class are common in comparison with the second, so also the second class are common in comparison with the third, and the three classes can be reduced to two. Therefore I say that

¹ Sūra VI, 6.

² Sūra XX, 75.

the Chief Vizier has summoned me to descend from the higher rank to that which is lower and I, for my part, summon him to ascend from the lower to the higher, which is the highest of the high. The road which leads to God Most High, from Baghdad and from Tūs and from every other place, is one, no one of them is nearer than any other. Therefore I ask God to arouse him from the sleep of heedlessness, so that he may consider the morrow while it is still to-day, before the matter is taken out of his hands. So farewell."¹

During this time in Tūs, al-Ghazālī was dividing up his time in the way best fitted to serve the needs of those around him. He devoted himself to reading the Qur'ān, to studying the Traditions afresh, to associating with the godly, to teaching work, and to prayer, so that he should not waste a single moment of his own time or of the time of those with him, content now "to wait with Love for Death's unhasting feet." "The mystic," he wrote, "is always mindful of death, because he has been promised union with his Beloved and the lover never forgets such a promise. So he desires the coming of death, in order that he may be delivered from this sinful world and be transported into the Presence of Him Who made the worlds. The highest stage is not to choose for oneself, either life or death, but to desire most that which is most desired by his Lord," and he quotes the words of the Ṣūfī Shiblī, as he lay dying, "The house in which Thou dwellest has no need of a lamp."² As the shadows lengthen, to look upon His Face is enough for His lover, who knows that he is passing out of darkness into eternal light. So al-Ghazālī passed his last days in tranquillity, waiting, "until Time itself overtook him and the days withdrew the gift that had been bestowed upon his generation and God Most High called him to the glory of His own Presence."³

He died on Monday the 14th of Jumādā II, A.H. 505 (Dec. 18th, A.D. 1111), at the age of fifty-three. His brother Aḥmad relates that at dawn on the day of his death al-Ghazālī performed his ablutions and prayed and then said: "Bring me my shroud,"

¹ *Mi'yār al-'Ilm (Tarjama)*, pp. 11, 12. Khwānsārī, *Rawḍat al-Jannāt*, p. 184.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 430.

³ Subkī, *Ṭab*, IV, p. 109. Yāfi'ī, *op. cit.* fol. 258b.

and taking it, he kissed it and laid it over his eyes and said: "Most gladly do I enter into the Presence of the King," and he stretched out his feet and went forth to meet Him, and so passed into the Paradise of God, "worthy of all honour, of loftier station than the stars, giving more guidance to men than the full moon when darkness has fallen."¹ He was buried outside Ṭabarān, in a grave near that of the poet Firdawsī, and Ibn al-Sam'ānī records that he visited his grave there.

There is a story to the effect that when al-Ghazālī fell ill and felt that his death was approaching, he sent away those who were with him and no one entered his presence until the next morning, when they went in as he had bidden them and they found him facing the Qibla, clad in his shroud, dead, and at his head they found a sheet of paper bearing these verses:

"Say to my friends, when they look upon me, dead,
Weeping for me and mourning me in sorrow
Do not believe that this corpse you see is myself.
In the name of God, I tell you, it is not I,
I am a spirit, and this is naught but flesh
It was my abode and my garment for a time.
I am a treasure, by a talisman kept hid,
Fashioned of dust, which served me as a shrine,
I am a pearl, which has left its shell deserted,
It was my prison, where I spent my time in grief.
I am a bird, and this body was my cage
Whence I have now flown forth and it is left as a token,
Praise be to God, Who hath now set me free,
And prepared for me my place in the highest of the heavens.
Until to-day I was dead, though alive in your midst.
Now I live in truth, with the grave-clothes discarded.
To-day I hold converse with the saints above,
Now, with no veil between, I see God face to face.
I look upon the Tablet² and therein I read,
Whatever was and is and all that is to be.
Let my house fall in ruins, lay my cage in the ground,
Cast away the talisman, 'tis a token, no more.
Lay aside my cloak, it was but my outer garment.
Place them all in the grave, let them be forgotten.
I have passed on my way and you are left behind.
Your place of abode was no dwelling-place for me.

¹ Munāwī, *op. cit.*, fol. 195 a. *Mi'yār al-'Ilm* (Tarjama), p. 13. Subkī, *Tab. IV*, p. 106.

² *al-Lawḥ al-mahfūz*.

Think not that death is death, nay, it is life,
A life that surpasses all we could dream of here,
While in this world. Here we are granted sleep,
Death is but sleep, sleep that shall be prolonged.
Be not affrighted when death draweth nigh,
It is but the departure for this blessed home.
Think of the mercy and love of your Lord,
Give thanks for His grace and come without fear.
What I am now, even so shall you be,
For I know that you are even as I am.
The souls of all men came forth from God,
The bodies of all are compounded alike
Good and evil, alike it was ours.
I give you now a message of good cheer
May God's peace and joy for evermore be yours."¹

There were many elegies composed in honour of al-Ghazālī after his death, the most famous being that of the poet Abu'l-Muẓaffer al-Abiwardī (Ob. 507/1113).² The Imām Isma'īl al-Ḥākimī³ also expressed his grief in lines taken from one of the most celebrated *qaṣīdas* of Abū Tammām⁴:

"I wondered how to endure it, when deprived of him by death,
I, who shed tears of blood, when he was away from me,
But these are times when so much seems strange,
That we have ceased to wonder thereat."⁵

One of al-Ghazālī's pupils, the well-known Ṣūfī Abu'l-'Abbās al-Alishī composed verses in praise of both his teacher and his teacher's masterpiece, the *Ihyā*.⁶

It is related that just after al-Ghazālī's death, Abu'l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Abī'l-Khayr al-Yamanī, known as al-Ṣayyād, had a vision. He was sitting at the open gates of Heaven and lo, a band of angels were descending to the earth, bearing robes of

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. 76561. Murtaḍa, *op. cit.*, p. 43. These verses have been attributed to Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, but certain of them are found in Abū Ḥamid's *Taḥṣīn al-Zunūn*. It is related that Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl (ob. 587/1191) recited some of these lines shortly before his death. Cf. von. Kremer. *Gesch. der Herrs. Ideen des Islams*, pp. 132, 133.

² Yāqūt, *Geogr. Wörterbuch* (*Mu'jam al-Buldān*) III. p. 561: Qazwīnī, *Athār al-Bilād*, II, p. 278. Subkī, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 115.

³ Cf. p. 63 below.

⁴ Abū Tammām Ḥabīb b. Aws, a distinguished poet who died c. A.D. 850, the author of the *Hamāsa*.

⁵ M. Ridā, *op. cit.*, p. 26. Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, II, p. 623.

⁶ Yāfī, *op. cit.*, fol. 257a. *Mi'yār al-'Ilm* (Tarjama), p. 13. Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, p. 184.

honour, green in colour, and with them a noble steed. They alighted at the head of a certain tomb and brought one forth from his grave, and having invested him with the robes, set him on that steed, and ascended with him to the heavens, continuing to ascend with him from one heaven to another until he had passed through all the Seven Heavens¹ and, ascending beyond them, he traversed the Seventy Veils.² "I was filled with wonder at that," said Abu'l-'Abbās, "and I desired to know who that rider was, and I was told: 'It is al-Ghazālī,' and I did not know then, that he had attained to martyrdom."³ It is said that al-Ghazālī occupied the position of *Quṭb*, the supreme head of the Sūfī hierarchy, for a period of three days.⁴

It is also related that someone saw al-Ghazālī, after his death, in a dream and asked about his state and he replied: "If it were not for this 'strange' knowledge, all would be well with us." His biographer is anxious that no one should imagine that "this strange knowledge" should be interpreted to mean the mystical knowledge of al-Ghazālī. This, he holds, would be a Satanic device to prevent others from following in al-Ghazālī's steps and would mean that they were veiled from God and hindered from attaining to the highest degree of saint-hood. He interprets the words to mean that, since it was a celestial vision, of one now in the Presence of God, no longer concerned with the things of sense, the "strange knowledge" was that which was concerned only with this world, with human affairs and relationships, which could have no bearing whatever on life in the world to come, for death means separation from them. So perhaps al-Ghazālī regretted having concerned himself with the worldly knowledge which was strange to the heavenly places. But his biographer points out that the knowledge of the mysteries of devotion and what belongs to the world to come could not be "strange" to one who had attained to that world, therefore he urges his readers not to misinterpret these words, lest they be

¹ Cf. pp. 120 ff below.

² Cf. pp. 147 ff. below.

³ Subkī, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 141.

⁴ "The station of the *Qutb* is the station of Perfect Manhood—his due title is Director of Souls and he is a blessing to those who invoke his aid, because he comprehends the innate capacities of all mankind and, like a camel-driver, speeds everyone to his home." R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, p. 165.

hindered from seeking spiritual knowledge, but to acquire of worldly knowledge only as much as was really necessary.¹

A number of other visions of al-Ghazālī after his death are mentioned by his biographers.² Miraculous gifts (*karāmāt*) were also ascribed to him as to all the great saints of Islam.

¹ Munāwī, *op. cit.*, fol. 198b.

² Cf. Qazwīnī, *op. cit.*, pp. 277, 278. Yāh'ī, *Mir'āt al-Janān*, fols. 259a, b. Jāmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 423, 424. Subkī, *Tab.* pp. 116, 131, 132. Munāwī, fol. 95a.

CHAPTER III

*al-Ghazālī's Character and Personality. His sociability.
His love of travel. His fondness for and knowledge of
animals and plants.*

There is much that may be learned of al-Ghazālī's character and personality from what we know of his life, and still more from his own writings. His eager curiosity and desire to investigate all branches of knowledge, his intellectual pride and self-confidence, were qualities natural to one possessed of such outstanding gifts, and natural to his youth, but there were other more essential and more lasting traits which are revealed as being more truly characteristic of him. He seems to have been sociable and fond of company and given to hospitality. It is good to eat in company, he observes, for it will mean friendly and profitable conversation during meals. He was probably a chess-player, for he remarks that when a man is an expert at chess, he rejoices in the game and if he is kept from it for a time, he will not give it up and cannot endure to be deprived of it. He observes also that one who is expert at the game is prepared to sacrifice his castle and his knight, without hesitation, in order to win the game, while the uninstructed spectator laughs at him and is surprised at his action. Elsewhere he notes that the expert at chess, for all its baseness (i.e., it is only a game) cannot refrain from instructing others in it and speaking about his own moves, because of the pleasure he takes in his knowledge and skill in the game.¹

Sociability he considers to be one of the marks of an attractive character and the unsociable man will be found to have an unpleasant personality. An attractive personality naturally secures affection and friendship and good relations with others, while an evil character produces dislike and jealousy and quarrels. "The believer both gives and receives friendship and there is no good in anyone who does neither." al-Ghazālī quotes the

Prophet's saying that when God wishes well to anyone He gives that one a good friend who, if he is neglectful, remembers him, and if he is mindful, helps him. The Prophet said that two friends meeting together were like two hands, one of which washes the other, and he also said: "To certain people it will be granted to sit around the Throne of God on the Day of resurrection and their faces will shine like the moon, on the night when it is full. Others will flee in terror, but they will remain, and other will fear, but they will be unafraid. These are the friends of God "upon whom there shall be no fear, neither shall they grieve,"¹ who are clothed in light and the prophets and martyrs desire to be of their number. The radiance of their beauty is manifest to the Blessed in Paradise, even as the light of the sun, and it is written upon their foreheads that they are "Those who love one another in God."²

There were five qualities which al-Ghazālī thought to be desirable in a friend who was to be a real companion in intellectual interests, in religion and in worldly affairs, and all five of these qualities were conspicuous in al-Ghazālī himself. The first quality was that of intelligence, he considered that there was no good to be derived from the companionship of the foolish, which would end only in alienation and separation. An intelligent enemy, he thinks, is better than a foolish friend. The second quality is an attractive disposition, and by an unpleasant character al-Ghazālī means that of a man who is lacking in self-control, who gives way to anger and to lust. The third is a high moral standard, no friendship is to be sought with an evil-doer, who persists in deadly sin. The fourth is freedom from greed, for the company of one who desires this world's goods is deadly poison, and the fifth is sincerity, for the man who cannot be trusted is "like a mirage which makes what is distant seem near to you, and what is near to seem far away." Friends are of three types, he observes, the one with whom you have fellowship in religion, the one whose company you seek in worldly affairs, and the one whose company you avoid as evil and a temptation. The first is like food, which is indispensable to life, the second is

¹ *Kṭmiyā al-Sa'āda*, p. 18. *Iḥyā*, IV, pp. 321, 264.

¹ *Sūra* II, 36.

² *Iḥyā*, II, pp. 6, 138 ff.

like medicine, necessary at one time, but not at another, and the third like disease, for which there is no need at all.¹

People on the whole, al-Ghazālī adds, are like trees and plants, some of which give shade but bear no fruit, for example, the friend who is a help to you for this life, but not for the next: what is of benefit in this life is like the shade which quickly passes away. Some trees bear fruit, but give no shade, like a friend who gives you help in regard to the world to come, but not in the affairs of this world, and there are some plants which give neither fruit nor shade, such as the mimosa (Egyptian thorn), "Which tears the clothes and produces neither food nor drink."²

al-Ghazālī had a high ideal of the duties involved in friendship, which in his view included silence and speech, each in its due time. Friendship, he held, must be based on fidelity and single-minded sincerity, and fidelity meant not only continual regard for a friend until his death, but also, after his death, for his children and his friends. He quotes his master al-Shāfi'ī who wrote of his friendship with M. b. 'Abd al-Hākim:

"My friend fell sick and I visited him,
Then I fell sick from my anxiety for him.
And my friend then came to visit me
And I was cured by looking upon him."³

While commending the custom of visiting the shrines of the saints, to seek a blessing, he expresses the view that, in general, visiting the living is more meritorious than visiting the dead.

From contact with others is learnt courtesy and understanding and the meaning of the good life in relation to God and one's fellows, an experience which cannot be realised in solitude. Unsociability may be a form of pride: al-Ghazālī tells the story of an Israelite who wrote three hundred and sixty books on different types of knowledge (*hikma*) and supposed that he had won the Divine approval for his work, but he received a prophetic message, saying: "Thou hast filled the earth with hypocrisy, I will have none of it." So the Israelite retired into an underground cave and thought that by so doing he had secured what he sought, but there came another message to say that he could

¹ *Bidāyat al-Hidāya*, pp. 41, 42. *Iḥyā*, II, pp. 150, 151.

² *Iḥyā*, II, p. 152.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

not expect the Divine approval unless he mixed with men and endured tribulation from them. So he went forth into the markets and mixed with men and sat with them and fed them and ate with them and walked with them, and then at last came the message: "Now hast thou attained to My good pleasure."¹

We should judge that al-Ghazālī was generous and hospitable, from the accounts given of his large household, and from his own expression of deep admiration for these qualities. He quotes the words of the Prophet: "Generosity brings us near to God and to man and to Paradise," and again: "Generosity is one of the trees of Paradise, the branches of which hang down to the earth and he who takes hold of one of its branches can climb thereby up to Paradise." He quotes also the saying of Ibn Sammāk:² "I marvel at one who buys slaves (i.e., for the purpose of manumission), with his wealth, and does not buy free men with his kindness." He also quotes the lines:

"You belong to wealth if you retain it,
But when you spend it, wealth belongs to you."

He tells with approval a story, comparable to that of the Widow's Mite, related by Abu'l-Ḥasan, of how al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, the Prophet's grandsons, and 'Abdallāh b. Ja'far³ went on pilgrimage, and, having lost their baggage, suffered from hunger and thirst. They came upon an old woman, in a tent of camel's hair, and asked her for something to drink. She had one ewe lying under the lower flaps of the tent and she bade them milk it and mix water with the milk. They asked them if she had anything to eat. She replied: "Nothing except this ewe. Let one of you slaughter her and I will prepare you something to eat." Then one of them killed the ewe and skinned it and the old woman prepared food for them and they ate and rose up to depart. When they set off, they told her that they were people of the Quraysh and if they returned in safety, she should come to them and they would deal kindly with her.

They went their way, and when her husband returned and she told him what had happened, he was angry and exclaimed:

¹ *Iḥyā*, II, p. 213.

² Ob. 183/799-80. Cf. Ibn Khallikān, III, pp. 18 ff.

³ Ob. 80/699-700. Cf. Ibn Khallikān, III, p. 627.

"Woe be unto you, you have killed my ewe for strangers whom you assert to belong to the Quraysh." Shortly afterwards destitution forced them to go into the city, where the man was reduced to collecting dung and selling it, so that they might live on the proceeds.¹ One day, as the old woman was passing through one of the streets of the city, Ḥasan, sitting at the door of his house, recognised her, though she did not know him, and he sent his servant to bring her to him, when he said: "I was your guest on such and such a day." Then she rejoined: "You are my father and my mother." He then gave orders that one thousand ewes should be brought for her from the sheep of the tithe,² and that she should also be given one thousand dinars, and he sent her with her servant to Ḥusayn. The latter asked her what his brother had given her and when she told him, Ḥusayn commanded that she should be given a similar amount from himself and then sent her with his servant to 'Abdallāh b. Ja'far, who asked her how much Ḥasan and Ḥusayn had given her. She said: "Two thousand ewes and two thousand dinars," and 'Abdallāh gave orders that she should be given another two thousand ewes and two thousand dinars, and observed to her: "If you had begun with me, I would have wearied them both (i.e., in equalling my gift)." So the old woman returned to her husband with four thousand ewes and four thousand dinars.³

Having travelled widely himself, al-Ghazālī has much to say of the advantages of travel, especially on the human side. Perhaps there is a personal reminiscence of early fears, in his statement that "a certain one" who was conscious of cowardice and faintheartedness within himself, and desired to make himself courageous, used to sail on "the sea" (possibly the Tigris, since most great rivers in the East are called "the sea" by those who live near them, up to the present day), in winter, when the waves were disturbed.⁴ Travel may be of great advantage, he thinks, to those who are mature enough to reap the benefit, but not for the young, as it is likely to make them idle and

¹ The *Zakāt* or alms-tithe levied in kind on the Muslim's possessions, including animals, and devoted to charitable gifts.

² *Ihyā*, III, p. 216.

³ *Ihyā*, III, p. 54.

disinclined to settle down to work. For those who are fitted for it, travel means an increase in knowledge. "Flowing water is good, but stagnant water loses its goodness." The traveller who visits other places, sees their scenery, mountains and deserts and oceans, and all kinds of animals and plants, and these remind him that their Maker is One. He also meets with other men, the learned and the saints, and this is profitable and may induce the traveller to imitate them. Travel, too, serves as a convenient means, as it had done for al-Ghazālī himself, of escaping from disturbances to religion, e.g., position and authority and other hindrances: it enables the heart to be at leisure from itself. But al-Ghazālī's fondness for company is suggested by his recommendation not to travel alone, but to choose a good companion, "First the companion, then the road."¹

al-Ghazālī advocated tolerance and charity towards others and we have the evidence of his friends that he practised these virtues in his mature years. He expressed his disapproval of slander not only because it might cause pain if overheard, but because it was finding fault with God's handiwork, for God created mankind and their qualities and their actions and their characters and these therefore ought not to be blamed.² al-Ghazālī also commends the advice to speak no harsh word to others without a kind word to follow it. The only way to get rid of envy is to look upon all men, whether in a good or an evil state, as being the same fellow human beings, and this state of mind will not come about so long as any attention is paid to this world's goods. A man must needs "become absorbed" in the love of God Most High, like one intoxicated and beside himself, so that his heart at last pays no attention to the different states of men, but he regards all with one eye and that is the eye of compassion, whereby he sees all to be the servants of God and their actions to be the actions of God and all under His control, but this state occurs but briefly, it does not last."³

To show the lengths to which he felt that charity and kindness

¹ *Ihyā*, II, pp. 218 ff. Cf. the saying of Rābi'a al-'Adawīyya of Basra, quoted by al-Ghazālī himself, "First the neighbour, then the house." *Ihyā*, IV, p. 269.

² Cf. *Acts*, X, 15. "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common."

³ *Ihyā*, III, p. 173.

to others should be carried, he tells a Franciscan story of how 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar¹ did not hesitate to eat with those suffering from elephantiasis, and how he gathered the lepers and the afflicted and made them sit at his table.²

al-Ghazālī carried his spirit of tolerance to notable lengths when asked whether it was not legal to curse the Caliph Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya, who was generally regarded as responsible for the death of the Prophet's grandson Ḥusayn at the battle of Karbalā (61/680),³ and his name held in execration by most Muslims. But al-Ghazālī replied that it was absolutely forbidden to curse a Muslim and he who did so was himself accursed. "How should be allowable to curse a Muslim," he asks, "when it is not permitted to curse the beasts of the field, and we have been prohibited from doing so? . . . Now, it is certain that Yazīd was a Muslim, but it is not certain that he slew Ḥusayn or that he ordered or consented to, his death, and as long as these circumstances remain uncertain, it is not allowable to believe that he acted so. Besides, it is forbidden to think ill of a Muslim, since God has said: "Be not ready to entertain suspicions of another, for it may be that these suspicions are a sin."⁴ The Prophet has declared that the blood, the wealth and the reputation of the Muslim are sacred and of him no ill should be thought. Moreover, if any person assert that Yazīd ordered Ḥusayn's death or consented to it, he gives thereby a proof of his extreme folly, for were he to endeavour to discover the true circumstances of the death of such great men, viziers and sultans, as perished in his time he would not succeed not even if the murder were perpetrated in his neighbourhood and his presence. And how can he know the truth (of Yazīd's conduct), now that four hundred years have elapsed, and that crime was committed in a place far remote? . . . the true circumstances of it cannot therefore be known and such being the case, it is incumbent on us to think well of every Muslim who can possibly deserve it. . . . Suppose that there be positive proof of one Muslim having

¹ Ob. 73/692-3, one of the most eminent of the Companions, who devoted himself to the religious life.

² *Ihyā*, III, p. 306.

³ Cf. R. A. Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs*, pp. 196 ff. Yazīd himself was not present at the battle.

⁴ Sūra, XLIX, 1

murdered another, the judgment of those whose authority is to be accepted is that the murderer may not be cursed, because the act itself is not an act of infidelity, but of disobedience to God. It may also happen that the murderer repents before he dies. If an infidel be converted from his infidelity, it is not allowable to curse him: how much the less, then, is it allowable to curse him who repents of having committed murder? Besides, how can it be known that the murderer of Ḥusayn died unrepentant? "And he accepteth the repentance of his servants."¹ Wherefore, inasmuch as it is not lawful to curse a Muslim after his death, he who curses him is a reprobate and disobedient to God. . . . 'Accursed are those who are alienated from God Almighty,' but who those may be is a mystery, except in the case of such persons as die infidels. . . . As for the invocation of the Divine mercy on Yazīd, it is allowable, nay, acceptable . . . in fact, it is included in those words which we utter in every prayer, 'O God, pardon the men and women who believe,' for Yazīd was a believer. God knows if my opinion be right."²

It was at least the opinion of one who would be neither unjust nor intolerant in his judgment of others, who had the moral courage to express a conviction which was likely to incur the criticism and hostility of others.³ al-Ghazālī was tolerant even of the religious views of those who were not of his faith and urged that a Christian's teaching should be tolerated except where it conflicted directly with the tenets of Islam.⁴

With this charity towards other men was associated a sense of humility and of his own unworthiness which, in his more mature years, replaced the intolerant pride of his youth. al-Ghazālī held that for any man to regard another as worse than himself was really pride and he tells a story of the humility of the Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz,⁵ to whom a visitor came one night when he was writing and the lamp had almost gone out. So the guest asked if he might replenish it. The Caliph replied "It is no honour to a man to let his guest do a servant's work."

¹ Sūra IX, 105.

² Ibn Khallikān, *Biog. Dict.*, II, pp. 230 ff.

³ Cf. Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, p. 182.

⁴ *al-Munqidh*, p. 13.

⁵ Reigned A.D. 717-720, a just ruler who was both philosopher and saint.

The guest asked then if he should rouse the servant-boy, who was sleeping, but the Caliph would not allow it, saying that the boy was enjoying his first sleep. Then he himself rose and fetched the leather bottle and filled the lamp with oil. His visitor said: "Was it for you to rise and do it for yourself, O Commander of the Faithful?" The Caliph replied: "I was 'Umar when I went and 'Umar when I returned. I have lost nothing. The best of men is he who humbles himself in the sight of God."¹

al-Ghazālī relates another story in praise of modesty, a quality conspicuous in himself in his later years, of how the preacher Ibn al-Sammāk entered the presence of Hārūn al-Rashīd² and said to him: "O Commander of the Faithful, your humility in regard to your high rank is more honourable to you than your rank." Hārūn replied: "That is well said." The preacher continued: "O Commander of the Faithful, if God creates a man with good looks, and of high lineage and wealthy and that man is modest in regard to his appearance and munificent with his wealth and humble in regard to his lineage, then he is written down in the Divine record among the purest of God's saints." Then Hārūn called for ink-horn and paper and wrote it down with his own hand.³

al-Ghazālī was not only a lover of his fellow-men but of the humbler creation. He had obviously a great fondness for animals, taking a great interest in them and their habits, and plainly very observant of them. He does not seem to have shared the usual Muslim prejudice against dogs. He commends the fidelity of the watch-dog, which is ready to sacrifice itself and its sleep, for the sake of its master, and he points out the value of the dog, both for protection and for hunting.⁴ He has several stories to tell of dogs, among these, of how someone found Mālik b. Dīnār⁵ sitting by himself, with a dog which had put its muzzle on his knee. This officious person wished to drive the dog away, but Mālik would not allow it, saying: "Let it alone, it does no harm and it is better than an evil companion."⁶ He tells also

¹ *Ihyā*, III, pp. 207-208.

² Abbāsīd Caliph, reigned A.D. 786, 809.

³ *Ihyā*, II, p. 295.

⁴ *al-Hikmat fī Maḥlūqāt Allāh*, p. 43.

⁵ Ob. 127/744, a famous ascetic of Basra.

⁶ *Ihyā*, II, p. 208.

a story of 'Abdallāh b. Ja'far, who went out one day to one of his estates and alighted at a certain palm-grove, where a black slave was working. His food was brought to him and shortly afterwards a dog entered the garden, whereupon the slave threw it a loaf of bread, then a second and then a third. 'Abdallāh looked at him and said: "O slave, how much food have you each day?" The slave answered: "What you have seen." 'Abdallāh asked why he had preferred the dog to himself, and he said: "He had come a long journey and was hungry and I was unwilling to satisfy my appetite, while he went hungry." "But what will you do to-day?" asked 'Abdallāh, and the slave replied: "I shall go hungry to-day." So that the slave-boy should not outdo him in generosity, 'Abdallāh b. Ja'far bought the garden and the slave-boy, and the tools in it, and set the boy free and presented him with the garden.¹

al-Ghazālī was evidently fond of cats, too, and perhaps had a favourite of his own, for he speaks of one who has an eye for beauty being able to find it in his own domestic cat, and he was thinking, no doubt, of the grace of its form and movements.² He also tells a story of how the Ṣūfī al-Shiblī found Abū'l-Ḥusayn Nūrī³ at prayer, absolutely still and concentrated, without any bodily movement at all, and al-Shiblī asked him afterwards how he had attained to this degree of meditation and stillness, and Nūrī replied: "I learnt it from a cat we had: when she was seeking her prey, she used to establish herself above the mouse-hole and never stirred a hair."⁴ al-Ghazālī was indignant over cruel treatment of animals, especially of those who did service to men, and in this connection he quotes the saying of Abū Darda.⁵: "Fear God and beware of men, for they never ride on a camel's back without galling it, nor on the back of a swift horse without laming it."⁶ He gives advice to the traveller which, we may be sure, he had observed himself

¹ *Ihyā*, III, p. 220.

² *Ihyā*, III, p. 41. While the cat, in the East, is often a neglected household drudge, expected to secure its own food, in other cases it is cherished as a pet, e.g., the traditionist Abū Hurayra received his nickname (Father of a Kitten), because of his habit of carrying a favourite kitten about with him.

³ Cf. my *Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 31 ff.

⁴ *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 340, 341.

⁵ One of the Companions of the Prophet, a noted ascetic.

⁶ *Ihyā*, II, p. 209.

on his own travels, urging him to be merciful to his beast and not overload it or beat it in the face, which is forbidden, nor should he sleep upon it, for "he becomes heavy in sleep" and the beast will be injured by his weight. Godfearing folk, al-Ghazālī observes, do not sleep upon their beasts, except for a short nap. The Prophet himself said: "Do not regard the backs of your animals as seats." It is desirable to dismount at least in the morning and evening and give the animal a rest thereby. It is laid down in the Canon Law that if any man injures a beast by beating or overloading it, that will be required at his hand on the Day of Judgment. It is related that Abū Darda said to a camel of his when it was dying, "O camel, do not accuse me to thy Lord, for I have not overloaded thee." To dismount for an hour serves a double purpose, for it is a benefit to the beast and also to its rider, enabling him to stretch his limbs.¹

al-Ghazālī was equally interested in birds and their ways, and he frequently refers to them in his writings. He may himself have kept pigeons, as it was a common custom to keep doves of many colours about the palaces of the great, and he must surely have been speaking from personal experience when he refers to the pigeon-fancier, who will stand on his feet all day in the burning sun, and does not feel the heat to be trying, because of his delight in the birds and their movements in flight, as he watches them soaring and wheeling about in the vault of the heavens.²

He quotes as fitting and beautiful the lines:

"The dove coos in the watches of the night,
Perched on a branch, while I lie here asleep.
I have lied, I swear it, when I said I was a lover,
For the doves surpass me in their lamentation,
While I assert that I am beside myself with love
To my Lord, but I weep not, while even the doves lament."

He commends the cock, too, for its praiseworthy energy, in repeating the Prophet's words: "There are three sounds dear to God Most High, the voice of the cock (when it crows at dawn), and the voice of him who recites the Qur'ān, and the voice of those who ask for forgiveness at the break of day." He also quotes

¹ *Iḥyā*, II, p. 226.

² *Iḥyā*, III, p. 51.

the saying of the wise man Luqmān, to his son, "O my son, let not the cock outdo you in greeting the dawn, while you are still asleep."¹ He was perhaps interested in falconry also, for he advises men to treat the lower self as the falcon is treated when it is to be trained and its hostility to man and its wild nature subdued to obedience and discipline. It must be confined at first in a dark building, with its eyes covered, in order that it may be weaned from its habits of flying in the heavens, until it has forgotten the natural freedom to which it was accustomed. It must be treated kindly and fed with meat, so that it becomes familiar with its owner and grows accustomed to his presence, so that when he calls it, it comes to him and when it hears his voice, it returns to him.²

There is a story related of al-Ghazālī by Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (cf. pp. 209 ff. below) which shows again his interest in birds. Once, when he was in Jerusalem, he saw a crow and a pigeon associating with each other and he said when he saw it: "Their association with each other must be due to some bond of kinship," and he pointed to them. They moved away and behold, both of them were lame.³

al-Ghazālī refused to condemn the practice adopted by some of the Ṣūfis of spending the night with wild beasts in the wilderness, in order to show their trust in God and His care for them, a custom which his critics thought was to be regarded as tempting Providence. It may be that al-Ghazālī himself had personal experience of the practice: at any rate he appears to have held the view that the saints had the power so to subdue and tame wild beasts that they could ride upon them, and rub their ears, and the creatures would obey them.⁴ He writes that it is the mark of the saint that he has the power to tame wild creatures and beasts of prey, and the lions and other wild beasts love him, and the lions "wag their tails for him." He tells a story of Ibrāhīm al-Raqqī,⁵ who visited Abu'l-Khayr al-Tinātī⁶ and found him reading the *Fātiḥa*, and as he went out for his

¹ *Khulāṣat al-Taṣānif fī'l-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 11, 12.

² *Iḥyā*, III, p. 51.

³ al-Munāwī, *op. cit.*, fol. 195 a. Cf. also *Iḥyā*, II, p. 143.

⁴ Murtaḍa, *Ithāf*, p. 35. *Minhāj al-'Ābidīn*, p. 90.

⁵ Ob. 342/953.

⁶ Cf. Sarraj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, pp. 236, 317.

ablutions before prayer, he met a lion and turned back in fear, and told his host what had befallen him. Thereupon Abu'l-Khayr went out and called to the lion: "Did I not tell you not to attack my guests?" and the lion turned away. al-Raqqī then performed his ablutions and returned, and Abu'l-Khayr observed to him: "You were engaged in adjusting outward things and we were occupied in adjusting inward things, and so we were able to make the lion afraid."¹ It is related also of the woman Šūfi Rābi'a of Basra that the wild creatures—deer, gazelle, mountain goats, and wild asses, used to gather round her, unafraid and doing her no harm.²

al-Ghazālī had also an interest in, and affection for, plants and flowers and trees, which suggests that he was a garden-lover, and like most dwellers in the East, he must have spent much time in his garden, and this, like other Eastern gardens, would include fruit-trees, grown as much for their blossom as their fruit, and water in the form of streams or fountains. He evidently gave close attention to the habits of plants. This is clear from the observations he makes in his writings. He speaks of rejoicing in the sight of different kinds of fruit with their varied forms and colours, and the beauty of the flowers and blossom and the ruddy apple, and the joy of looking upon green things and running water. On the other hand, he knows something of the difficulties of a gardener in a land where rain falls infrequently and irrigation is necessary. He speaks of the water hidden beneath the dust and the dry clay and how it can be discovered and utilised by the digging of conduits, which is easier than the transport of water from a distance. The joy of the gardener in the advent of rain long-desired is shown in his quotation of the words of Luqmān: "O my son, associate with the learned and approach them with great humility, for hearts are given life by wisdom, as the dead earth is given life by heavy showers of rain."³ He mentions the tree which grows of itself and receives no care, which very soon withers away, or if it does survive for a time, bears leaves but no fruit. Again he writes of the plant which has no depth

¹ *Ihyā*, III, p. 22.

² Cf. my *Rābi'a the Mystic and her Fellow-saints in Islam*, p. 34 and similar stories of the Christian saints, e.g., St. Anthony.

³ *Ihyā*, II, p. 237. IV, p. 67. II, p. 152.

of soil and so dies, while that which is deeply rooted survives.¹ He compares the imparting of knowledge to the casting of seed into the ground, which will assuredly grow and thrust its roots downwards and extend its branches upwards.² He knows something of the nuisance of weeds in the rainy season, and observes that to pull them up does not ensure that they will not recur as long as the ground is exposed to rain.³ He compares the self-deluded to a man who wishes to clear a field of weeds, who goes over it carefully, searching for the weeds and uprooting each one he sees, but not searching for what has not yet raised its head above the earth, because he supposes that everything has appeared and shown itself. But from the roots fine shoots may have grown and extended under the soil (perhaps he knew something of bindweed), which he has overlooked and neglected, and behold, they grow and become strong and injure the roots of his crop, he knows not how. So also is he who thinks that the outward expression of religion is sufficient and neglects the inward corruption.⁴ al-Ghazālī had also watched the leaves falling in winter, as they dried up, leaving the tree in its essence, bare, but with a new beauty and delicacy and grace in its bareness, and notes that so, too, sin can fall away from the soul, when it has no longer any encouragement or support.⁵

But al-Ghazālī thinks of plants and flowers not only as things of beauty and a source of keen delight to every lover of Nature, but also as displaying the wisdom and loving-kindness of God, Who has given the fruit its rind so that it may be protected against the birds, Who has ordained that the roots of the mighty tree shall be buried deep in the ground, in order to drink water therefrom, so that the earth becomes like a nursing-mother to it. The veins of the leaves, he notes, are like those of human beings, and serve the same purpose. It is by the wisdom of God that the leaves appear before the fruit, to protect it while it is still immature and liable to injury from the heat of the sun, or from unduly cold winds. Of His kindness to man, the

¹ Munāwī, *op. cit.*, fol. 196b. *Ihyā*, IV, p. 69, the latter reference perhaps a reminiscence of the Parable of the Sower.

² *Ihyā*, II, p. 216.

³ Subkī, *Tab.*, p. 139.

⁴ *Ihyā*, III, p. 337.

⁵ *Ihyā*, II, p. 141.

Creator has fashioned the trees and the fruits and the flowers, of different colours and shapes and flavours and scents, small and great, splendid and humble, of all colours and all shades in those colours: the very sight of them, says al-Ghazālī, purifies the heart of unclean thoughts, and refreshes the mind as it contemplates them, and the soul rejoices in their radiant beauty. He notes that the branch is made strong enough to support the pomegranate, so that it will not fall until it is ripe, and how the melon and the gourd rest on the ground, because their stems cannot support so heavy a weight, and how all these ripen just at the season when man most needs them. He refers to the wonderful means by which the date-palm is fertilised and notes how God has created aromatic roots with medicinal properties, able to relieve and cure the diseases of men. He points out that, by the Divine power, all these, the tree and the blade of grass and the fragrant herb and the flowers, with their varied hues and shapes, all alike have developed from one substance, from which they have derived their nourishment, and that is water, one cause, yet such infinite variety in results.¹

Such a man, then, was al-Ghazālī in his maturity, with his intellectual powers unabated, a keen observer, possessed of the eager curiosity which was inspired by his passion for truth, a man wise, tolerant and charitable, a lover of his fellow-men and of the humbler creation, both animate and inanimate.

¹ *al-Hikmat fī Makhlūqāt Allāh*, pp. 57 ff.

CHAPTER IV

al-Ghazālī's family relationships. His brother Aḥmad. His sisters and mother. His home-life. His friends and disciples.

We have very little information about any member of al-Ghazālī's family, except his brother Aḥmad, who was well-known both as preacher and mystic. Aḥmad seems to have been possessed of great gifts, but at an early age he was attracted to the religious life and as a youth he was content to act as a servant to the Ṣūfis, while learning from their shaykhs. In solitude and seclusion he came to a knowledge of the mystic Path, and then went to 'Irāq and gave himself to the task of preaching in Baghdad, where great crowds were attracted to hear his sermons. He used also to go into the villages and hamlets and preach to the Bedouin, in order to recall them to God. As we have seen,¹ he exercised the privilege of relationship in criticising his more famous brother and he is said to have recited these lines in reference to him:

"When you keep company with kings, then clothe yourself
With the fear of God, the most valuable of garments,
And when you enter, enter with closed eyes,
And depart, when the time comes, with closed lips."

Aḥmad, as already related, was present at his brother's deathbed, and was responsible for an abridgment of his *Iḥyā* (*Lubāb al-Iḥyā*). He survived Abū Ḥāmid by fifteen years, and died at Qazwīn in 520/1120.²

al-Ghazālī had also several sisters and his mother was still alive and in Baghdad when both her sons had become famous. He was married before the age of twenty, but none of his biographers give the name of his wife. There are indications, however, that his was a happy marriage, and though in his

¹ Cf. p. 30 above.

² Subki, *Tab.*, IV, pp. 54 ff. Cf. also Khwānsārī, *op. cit.*, p. 180 and Zwemer, *A Moslem Seeker after God*, p. 68.

dogmatic teaching, he follows the orthodox doctrine as to the subordinate place of women in society, elsewhere it is evident that he fully appreciated the importance and value of their influence in the home and also in a wider sphere. He considers that marriage is a great advantage to a man, not only for the sake of having children, but because of the satisfaction and benefit and refreshment to be obtained from the companionship of a wife, which is a consolation to the heart and strengthens it for the service of God. The soul, he says, sometimes grows weary in well-doing, and the refreshment and joy which it derives from the companionship of women dispels its heaviness and cheers the heart, and so a good wife is of the greatest value to a man's religious life. Moreover, it is the woman's character and religious faith which contribute most to a happy marriage. "He who marries a wife for the sake of her wealth and her beauty," he says, "makes her beauty and wealth unlawful to him, but upon him who marries a woman because of her faith, God will bestow both wealth and religion."¹

We have seen, too, that he considered that the mother's training of the child's character was as important as that of the father and he held that only a godly woman should be allowed to suckle and nurse a child.² He gives many stories in which women play the chief part and are held up as an example to the other sex. He advises those who plead that they are unable to follow in the steps of the illustrious leaders of the Faith, to consider the God-fearing women and the degree to which they attained in the spiritual life, and to admonish their own sluggish souls in saying, "O soul, be not content to be less than a woman for it is contemptible that a man should come short of a woman in respect of her religion or her attitude to this world. So," he says, "we will now mention somewhat of the spiritual states of those women who have striven to serve God," and he devotes the rest of the chapter to setting forth the outstanding example of the women saints of Islam.³

Among the stories he gives is that of a certain devotee who stopped before Ḥabān b. Hilāl, when he was sitting with his

¹ *Iḥyā*, I, p. 28.

² M. Ridā, *op. cit.* p. 50.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 353.

friends, and asked if she might put a question to one of them. They bade her ask any question she would of Ḥabān b. Hilāl. She then asked them what was their idea of generosity? They replied: "The giving of gifts, and munificence, and the preference of others to oneself." She said: "This is generosity in relation to this world, but what is generosity in respect of religion?" They replied: "That we should serve God Most Glorious, with willing hearts, ungrudgingly." She asked: "Do you seek a reward for that?" They admitted that they did and when she asked why, they answered: "Because God Most High has promised us, for each good deed, a ten-fold reward."¹ She said: "God be praised, if you give one and take ten, how can you be called generous?" Nonplussed, they asked her for her idea of true generosity and she said then: "In my view, generosity means to serve God, with joy and delight in His service, ungrudgingly, and without seeking any reward, so that your Lord may do with you what He wills. Are you not ashamed that God should look into your hearts and know that by one gift you are seeking another? This is considered a shameful thing in worldly affairs."

Another woman saint once asked: "Do you reckon that generosity is concerned only with dirhams and dinars?" She was asked: "With what then?" She replied. "To my mind, generosity means the gift of oneself, body, soul and spirit."²

al-Ghazālī was evidently a devoted father, much concerned with the happiness and well-being of his children. His *kunya* "Abū Ḥāmid" seems to indicate that he had at least one son, though no sons survived him and perhaps any son or sons died as children. He writes tenderly of the relation of the infant to its mother: "He knows only her and will take refuge only with her and trusts her alone, so that when he sees her, he clings to her skirts and will not leave her and if any trouble overtakes him when she is not there, the first word his tongue utters is a cry of "Mother," and the first thought which comes into his mind is of his mother, for she is his refuge. He depends upon her as his surety and sufficiency and as always full of pity for

¹ Cf. the story of Rābi'a in my *Rābi'a the Mystic*, pp. 32 ff.

² *Iḥyā*, III, p. 226.

him, and this reliance on her is based on a certain amount of comprehension, through what small power of discrimination he possesses." Again he writes: "The infant boy knows that if he does not cry for his mother, she will seek him out, and even if he does not cling to her skirts, she will carry him and even if he does not ask her for milk, she will give him to drink."¹

al-Ghazālī knows, too, the value of distracting a child's attention by a counter-attraction, for he notes that the child is weaned from the breast, by being induced to play with toy-birds and such-like, to distract him from his desire. He also notes how sweet music will hush the crying of the child in the cradle, and take his attention from the cause of his weeping.² It was, no doubt, from observation of his own children in their infancy that he points out that the incapacity of the suckling to appreciate the sweetness of honey and fatted birds and delicious sweetmeats does not indicate that these things are not enjoyable, nor does the infant's appreciation of milk indicate that it is the most desirable of foods.³ He speaks also of the small boy who, when he has become attached to some plaything, will not be parted from it and if it is taken from him, he weeps and protests until it is restored to him. When he goes to bed, he takes it with him and when he wakes up, he remembers it and takes hold of it. Whenever he loses it, he cries, and when he has found it again he laughs. If anyone disputes his possession of it, he is angry, but he loves that one who gives it back to him.⁴

al-Ghazālī had a deep sense of the obligation of a father to his children: the business of training a child he reckons to be one of the most important that can be undertaken. "The boy," he writes, "is a trust in the hands of his parents, and his heart, in its state of pristine purity, is a precious jewel, clear and free, as yet, from any imprint or image, but susceptible of every impression and inclination. If he grows up accustomed to what is good and with a knowledge of it, then he will be happy in this world and the next, and his reward will be shared by his teacher and his preceptor. But if he becomes accustomed to what is evil and is as neglectful (of what is due to God) as the

brutes, then he will be wretched and come to an evil end, and the responsibility for that sin will be upon the one who controls and rules him." As the father protects his little child from fire in this life, so also he must protect him from the fire of Hell, which is of much more consequence, and this protection is assured by a good upbringing, positive training in virtue, and protection from evil companionship.

The boy should not live too easy and comfortable a life, nor be allowed to grow fond of outward adornment, lest he should waste his life when he grows up, in seeking for material possessions, and so perish eternally. As soon as the child shows signs of discrimination, he must be watched more carefully, so that his choice shall be directed towards what is good and the evil shown to be such, and rejected, and so he will maintain purity of heart and attain to a sane and well-balanced judgment.

The boy should lead an active life and take plenty of exercise, lest he grow sluggish, and after he has finished his lessons he should be allowed to play games which he enjoys, but he should cease to play in the presence of his elders. His father must preserve the dignity of speech in talking to his son and should upbraid him but rarely and this only in private, not publicly. The mother should rebuke him for what is shameful and say that she will tell his father if he does not amend his ways.¹

If al-Ghazālī suffered the loss of children while still young, it must have been a consolation to him to remember the tradition, which he quotes, to the effect that on the Day of Resurrection, when all mankind are examined as to their deeds, those who have died as infants will gather round the Judgment Seat of God the All-Merciful and He, looking upon them, will say to His angels, "Take them hence to Paradise."² It was no doubt with his own children in mind that al-Ghazālī says that if a child is no longer with us and we wish to maintain our love for him, absent or present, living or dead, we speak at length of his courage and generosity and his learning and the rest of his lovable qualities, and so our love and our memories are kept alive.³

al-Ghazālī was survived by three daughters and, apparently,

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 225.

² *Iḥyā*, II, p. 243.

³ *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 91.

⁴ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 286.

¹ M. Ridā, *op. cit.*, pp. 50 ff. *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 69.

² *Iḥyā*, III, p. 227.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 257.

by his wife, since it is mentioned more than once that he died in poverty, having reserved of his former wealth only what was sufficient to maintain them. It was presumably the urgent requests of his little daughters to which he refers when he says that "the prayers of his infant children" induced him to give up a wandering life and to return to his native land.¹ It is much to be desired that we had the letters which passed between al-Ghazālī and his wife and children, when he was absent from them. The company of his daughters must have been a great satisfaction to so devoted a father and as we have seen, his frequent references to women and girls as exemplars in the religious life does not suggest that he would consider them as of less real consequence than his sons. He quotes with approval the story of a little slave-girl who used to take the Prophet by the hand, in Medina, and relates that he did not withdraw his hand from hers, but used to let the child accompany him wherever she wished.² One of his daughters, who was named Sitt al-Nisā, had a son called 'Ubayd Allāh, whose great-great-grandson, Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad was alive in Baghdad, in the year 710/1310,³ so that al-Ghazālī probably had grandchildren to delight his last years.

A man with al-Ghazālī's personality and capacity for friendship naturally gathered many friends and disciples around him and some of his associates were men of outstanding character and importance. Among his fellow-students in Nīshāpūr was Abu'l-Maẓaffar Aḥmad al-Khawāfī,⁴ who also studied under the Imām al-Ḥaramayn and was one of his most distinguished and most favoured pupils, who was permitted to discuss with him by day and by night and earned the highest commendation from the Imām. He was said to earn his living by his success in debate as al-Ghazālī was able to earn his by his success in writing. al-Khawāfī began to teach in the lifetime of the Imām and was appointed as Qādī of Ṭūs, but he gave up his appointment in order to devote himself to the life of a religious ascetic. al-Khawāfī died at Ṭūs in 500/1106.⁵

One of al-Ghazālī's earliest friends, whose life was exactly

¹ *Munqidh*, p. 22.

² *Iḥyā*, III, p. 306.

³ M. Riḍā, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴ Cf. p. 16 above.

⁵ Subki, *Ṭab.* IV, pp. 55, 308.

contemporary with his own, was Abū Ḥamid 'Alī al-Ṭabarī al-Harrāsī, 'Imād al-Dīn, known as al-Kiyā (= one of high rank or great influence), born the same year as al-Ghazālī, in 450/1058, in Ṭabaristān, and also a Shāfi'ite. He went to Nīshāpūr and studied under the Imām al-Ḥaramayn, who made him an assistant tutor. We are told that he was a good-looking man, with a clear voice, who expressed himself in a polished and agreeable style, and 'Abd al-Ghāfir, one of his contemporaries, declared him to be a second Abū Ḥamid (al-Ghazālī), "Nay, more profound in learning, more holy in life, more pleasing in voice and more agreeable in countenance,"¹ but he admits that al-Ghazālī had the keener intelligence of the two and was quicker in exposition and explanation. It was said that when al-Kiyā had memorised a piece of work, he used to repeat it at each step as he went up the stairs leading up to the Nizāmiyya College at Nīshāpūr and there were seventy steps. From Nīshāpūr he proceeded to Bayhaq, where he taught for a time and then went to 'Irāq, where he was appointed chief professor at the Nizāmiyya College, and held his chair for the rest of his life. He was there, we know, in 495, and was high in favour with the Seljuk sultan Majd al-Mulk Barkiyārūk, son of Malik Shāh, who appointed him chief Qādī. al-Kiyā was a traditionist, and in one of his sayings he declares: "When the horseman of the Traditions gallops about in the hippodrome of contestation, the heads of analogical deductions are struck off and given to the winds." He is also said to have been responsible for the following lines, while engaged in a discussion with Abu'l-Wafā' b. 'Uqayl al-Ḥanbalī:

"Have pity on thy servant, for he has the dryness
Of Media, while thou hast 'Irāq and its waters."

al-Kiyā died in 504/1110 and the poet Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Ghazzī composed this elegy upon him after his death: "Islam weeps the absence of its sun and sheds floods of tears, compared with which the rain would not be copious. Behold that learned divine, who used to receive us with an open and smiling countenance: with that look of pleasure which, to a visitor, was the best of welcomes. Death may tread him under foot, but his vast

¹ Cf. p. 16 above. Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, II, p. 229.

learning has spread abroad to distant climes. . . . Thine instructive lessons gave new life to Ibn Idrīs (al-Shāfi'ī)¹ and at their composition, intelligence and reflection stand amazed. He who was so fortunate as to note them down, possesses now a torch of unfading brightness. The obscurities of jurisprudence, elucidated by thy words, are like the foreheads of brown horses marked with a white star. Did I know thine equal, I should invoke him and exclaim: 'The age is impoverished and requires succour from thy riches.''' Among his works were the *Uṣūl al-Dīn* (Principles of Religion) and *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (The Ordinances of the Qur'ān).²

Another contemporary and intimate friend of al-Ghazālī, of the greatest importance, because he has left us so much information concerning al-Ghazālī, was Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Ghāfir b. Ismā'īl al-Fārisī, born at Nishāpūr in 451/1059. He was an infant prodigy, able to read the Qur'ān at the age of five, and to recite the articles of the faith in Persian. He was a grandson on his mother's side, of Abu'l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Qarīm al-Qushayrī, the author of one of the earliest treatises on Sūfism (*Risālat al-Qushayriyya*), with whom he studied the traditions, and he learnt also from his grandmother Fāṭima bint Abī 'Alī al-Daḥḥāq (al-Daqqāq). He studied for four years under the Imām al-Ḥaramayn, as a fellow-student of al-Ghazālī and al-Kiyā. On leaving Nishāpūr, he went to Khwārazm (the district along the banks of the Oxus, extending to the Caspian Sea), where he studied and lectured. Thence he travelled, by way of Afghanistan, to India. On his return from his travels, he was appointed as preacher in Nishāpūr and taught in the mosque of Akil. It was while he was here that al-Ghazālī returned to take up teaching work and 'Abd al-Ghāfir was once more in close association with his one-time fellow-student and was greatly astonished at the complete change in his character.³ He died in Nishāpūr in 529/1134. He was the author of a number of works, including *Kitāb al-Arba'in*, *Majma' al-Gharā'ib* and an outline history of Nishāpūr.⁴

¹ Ob. 204/820. Cf. Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 569.

² Subki, *Tab.* IV, pp. 281 ff. Ibn Khallikān, *Biog. Diet.*, II, p. 229. These two books are extant at Cairo.

³ Cf. p. 32 above.

⁴ Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, II, p. 170. Subki, *Tab.* IV, p. 255.

A faithful friend of al-Ghazālī, who had also been his fellow-student under the Imām al-Ḥaramayn and had gone with him to 'Irāq was Abū Tāhir Ibrāhīm al-Shaybānī (called also al-Shabbāk) al-Jurjānī. After al-Ghazālī had resigned his Chair and had become a wandering ascetic, al-Jurjānī accompanied him to the Ḥijāz and Syria. He then returned to his own country of Jurjān and took up the work of teaching and preaching, and his teaching proved so acceptable to his hearers that a College was built for him. He was killed in a raid, and so attained to martyrdom, in 513/1119.¹

Another faithful friend and fellow-student was Ismā'īl Abu'l-Qāsim al-Ḥakīmī al-Tūsī, who went with al-Ghazālī to 'Irāq. He was older than al-Ghazālī, who, we are told, treated him with great honour and gave him precedence. The two went together to the Ḥijāz and Syria. al-Ḥakīmī died in 529/1135 and was buried beside al-Ghazālī.²

al-Ghazālī numbered among his students some who later became famous in various spheres of life. Among the best-known of these was Abū 'Abdallāh M. Ibn Tūmart, known as al-Mahdī, born 485/1092 at Sūs in Morocco. While still very young, he became renowned for his piety, and as a youth, desiring to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, he travelled to Cordova and thence to the Ḥijāz. It was presumably at this time that he met al-Ghazālī in Damascus, while he was living there as an ascetic, in retirement, and shared his retreat in the mosque of the Umayyads.³ Visiting 'Irāq for the purpose of acquiring learning, he there met al-Ghazālī, al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī and al-Turtūshī, and in Baghdad attended the lectures of al-Ghazālī at the Niẓām-iyya, probably attracted to his teaching by his previous meeting with him.⁴ It was while Ibn Tūmart was in Baghdad that news reached al-Ghazālī that the Sultan 'Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn (ob. 537/1143), described as a mild, grave and virtuous prince, but a Mālikite, and very submissive to the theologians, had ordered his books to be destroyed, because he was told that they contained pure philosophy, which he abhorred as heretical.

¹ Subki, *Tab.*, IV, p. 200.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 204. ff. Cf. p. 37 above.

³ Cf. p. 26 above.

⁴ Cf. p. 29 above.

When al-Ghazālī heard this, he foretold that the Amīr's power would be taken from him and his son killed and his son's successor would be one who was even then present in his (al-Ghazālī's) audience. The young Ibn Tūmart, as he listened, prayed that this might come to pass by his means. He returned to Alexandria and thence to North Africa, having acquired on his travels a knowledge of the Ash'arite doctrine, mingled with something of the Mu'tazilite teaching and the Shi'ite theory of an infallible Imām descended from 'Alī. The disturbances caused by his heretical teaching caused him to be expelled from Tripoli, but he secured a large following among the Berbers and proclaimed himself Mahdī and overthrew 'Alī and the Almoravide dynasty, which was replaced by the Almohades (a name taken from the title of *al-Muwahhid*, which Ibn Tūmart claimed for himself). Ibn Tūmart himself was killed in 1130, but his teaching was disseminated in N. Africa and Spain by his successors. He wrote a number of works, including one on *Tawhīd* and the *Kanz al-'Ulūm* dealing with religious philosophy.¹

Another of al-Ghazālī's students, who later occupied a prominent position, was Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-'Arabī, born at Seville in 467/1076, who was travelling in the East with his father in 1092. He visited Damascus and Baghdad, where he may have met al-Ghazālī and must, in any case, have heard of his teaching, and proceeded to the Hijāz, but returned to Baghdad, in order to attend al-Ghazālī's lectures. Ibn al-'Arabī afterwards returned, by way of Cairo and Alexandria, to Seville, where he acted as Qāḍī for a time and later was teaching, until his death there, in 546/1151. To him we owe certain replies given to him by al-Ghazālī in response to his questions, which may have been sent in writing from Spain, or may have been given to him in person and set down by him in writing.²

One of the most famous of al-Ghazālī's students was Abū Sa'īd b. Yahyā al-Nishāpūrī, known as Muḥyī al-Dīn, born in 476/1083-4, who studied law under Abū Ḥāmid and his fellow-

¹ Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, III, p. 205. Subkī, *Tab.*, IV, pp. 71 ff. 'Abd al-Wāhid al-Marākushī, *History of the al-Mohades*, ed. R. Dozy, p.p. 128 ff. D. B. Macdonald notes that Ibn Tūmart laboured, though in a very different manner, to bring about in the West the same revival of faith and religious life to which al-Ghazālī gave himself in the East. *J.A.O.S.*, 1899, p. 113.

² Cf. MS. Paris, 5291.

student Abū'l-Nazāffar al-Khawāfī and became an eminent jurisconsult, being appointed as chief of the jurisconsults at Nishāpūr. So great was his reputation that persons came from all directions to study under him. He lectured at the Nizāmiyya College at Nishāpūr and later, at the Nizāmiyya College at Herāt. It is related that at one of his lectures someone was moved to recite these lines: "The mouldering remains of religion and of Islam receive new life from our master Muḥyī al-Dīn, son of Yahyā."¹ When he teaches, he seems to have received a revelation from God, the Lord of the Throne." al-Nishāpūrī said that his master al-Ghazālī and his knowledge could be known only by one who had himself reached or almost reached, intellectual perfection. al-Nishāpūrī wrote *al-Muḥīt* in explanation of al-Ghazālī's *Wāsiṭ*. He was killed in battle, when the Ghury attacked the Seljuks, in 548/1153.²

Another of al-Ghazālī's students, who became a distinguished and popular teacher, was Abū'l-Faṭḥ al-Uṣūlī, born in 466/1083-4, who was at first a Hanbalite, but later studied under al-Ghazālī and al-Kiyā. He lectured at the Nizāmiyya for a time and then in his own house and pupils thronged to him in such numbers that he was occupied all day long and continued teaching after nightfall. A group of students besought him to lecture to them on al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā*: he refused at first on the ground of lack of time, but he finally gave way and agreed to lecture on it at midnight. He died in 518/1124.³

Among al-Ghazālī's students were Ibn 'Uqayl and Abū'l-Khaṭṭāb, who attended his classes during the period when he first held his chair in Baghdad, and made notes of his lectures and quoted his sayings in their own works.⁴

Another faithful recorder of al-Ghazālī's words was the Shaykh Sa'd b. Fāris, known as al-Lubān, who was present at al-Ghazālī's sermons after his return to Baghdad (cf. p. 29 above), when the people thronged his assemblies to hear him preach. The Shaykh made a record of the sessions for exhortation and found that they amounted to one hundred and eighty three. The Shaykh read

¹ *Muḥyī al-Dīn* = the Reviver of Religion: *Yahyā* = he lives.

² Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, II, p. 628. Subkī, *Tab.*, IV, p. 197.

³ Subkī, *Tab.*, IV, pp. 42 ff.

⁴ M. Ridā, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

his notes of these addresses to al-Ghazālī, who, after he had corrected them, gave the Shaykh leave to make use of them, and the Shaykh copied them out into two stout volumes.¹

Other students and disciples of al-Ghazālī are mentioned by his biographers,² but little is known of the subsequent career of most of these.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16. Perhaps the *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz* or the *Naṣā'ih al-Ghazālī*, Cf. Brockelmann, I, p. 421 and *Suppl.*, p. 752.

² Cf. Murtaḍā, *Ithāf*, p. 44.

CHAPTER V

al-Ghazālī's Literary Style: His wide resources. His extensive use of Imagery.

al-Ghazālī's literary style is clear, attractive, readable and, in some ways, curiously modern. His knowledge of Persian is perhaps the reason why he uses Arabic with a freedom and lack of formality which is unusual among Arabic writers. Everywhere he shows himself to be a master of his subject and possessed of the power of penetrating men's minds and souls.¹ Much of his written work represents the substance of his lectures and bears the marks of a teacher's endeavour to impress his meaning upon his audience, but an audience which consisted chiefly of scholars and divines whose education had been much the same as his own and whose learning was not greatly inferior. But there are short works of his written in a style simple enough for the common folk and with the type of illustration which could be expected to appeal to them.

To his profound learning and his wide experience of men and life al-Ghazālī added a religious passion for truth which is revealed on every page of his greater works and gives them their claim to immortality. The intellectual curiosity which had combined with his search for truth to make him study philosophy and natural science, as well as theology, jurisprudence and the traditions, enabled him to draw upon a great and varied store of knowledge, for both his method of exposition and his illustrations. His arguments are closely reasoned, especially in the most comprehensive and characteristic of his writings, the *Ihyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn*,² which was the outcome of long reflection, culminating in the period of solitude and meditation which followed his conversion. In this great work we have his mystical teaching

¹ His style, in its ease and lucidity, has been compared with that of St. John Chrysostom (the Golden-tongued) Cf. Carra de Vaux, *Les penseurs de l'Islam*, IV, p. 160.

² In Islam, this work may be said to take the place of the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas in Christendom. Cf. A. Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination*, p. 326.

set forth in an ordered sequence of thought, original, profound and mature, which is based upon reasoning as sound as it is subtle. But his lesser works show the same literary characteristics and are equally lucid and well-reasoned, containing a wealth of imagery and appeals to analogy. Not only the fact that he had great resources of knowledge at his command, but the additional fact that he was a lover of both plants and animals and a close observer of Nature in all her manifestations, is revealed in al-Ghazālī's choice of images and illustrations. Every kind of creature seems to have attracted his attention, whether bird or beast, and anything which could fly or creep or swim. Earth and water, too, flowers and trees, the heavens and the winds, and, not least, men and women, all have come under his observant eye, and all that he observed, as well as his own personal experience, was drawn upon to make its contribution, directly, or by way of illustration, to his teaching.

He notes that the gnat, in spite of its minute size, acts with deliberation and intelligence: that, though so small, it has been created with a body as perfect as that of the elephant and is possessed of all the faculties and functions which other animals enjoy. He goes on to speak of how it is guided to man and the human pore, to seek its nourishment and how its eyes, though perfect, are too small to possess eyelashes, the purpose of which is to preserve the eyes from dust, and it is therefore provided with antennæ to serve the same end. Then he observes how, through the weakness of its sight, it falls into the lighted lamp, because it is seeking the daylight and supposes the lamp to be a window in a dark room, and if it flies beyond it, yet it returns again to it, until it is consumed. The gnat serves as an illustration of the wonders of God's handiwork, but also of man's blindness and ignorance, when he is attracted by the lights of desire and does not realise that they make for his destruction, not only here, but in the fire which is not quenched.¹

al-Ghazālī also bids his readers consider the bee and its capacity for building a house of wax, and its choice, from all forms, of that which is hexagonal, not round or square or pentagonal, the square being rejected because the space in the corners would

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 273.

be wasted, while the cells would not fit into the round shape: only the hexagonal is perfectly fitted to its needs. Then, too, from the flowers and fruit blossom the bees obtain nectar, from which they extract the wax for their houses and the honey for their nourishment, and from these men can secure light and medicine. al-Ghazālī goes on to note how the bees preserve the nectar from all defilement and will slay any intruder who might enter the hive and defile it, and how they obey their queen, who administers justice impartially towards them. He bids his readers draw the moral from this simple illustration, for as human architects fall short of the bee's unerring instinct for building, and of its perfect accomplishment of its purpose, so also man's knowledge falls short of the Divine knowledge, for what he knows is not worthy to be called knowledge in comparison with the Omniscience of God.¹

Of the limitations of science and the need for a knowledge which is beyond that attained by the senses, al-Ghazālī writes: "The mere physicist is like an ant which, as it crawls over a sheet of paper, observes black letters spreading over it, and refers the cause to the pen alone. The astronomer is like an ant of rather wider vision, which catches sight of the fingers moving the pen, that is, he knows that the elements are under the influence of the stars, but he is unaware that the stars are under the control of the angels. So also those whose eyes do not look beyond the phenomenal world are like those who mistake servants of the lowest rank for the king himself."²

Reason is compared by al-Ghazālī with a horseman going out to hunt, whose horse represents human lust and his dog passion. When the horseman is a skilled rider and his horse well broken in, and his dog thoroughly trained and obedient, he deserves to be successful: but if he lacks wisdom and his horse is restive and his dog savage, and his horse will not obey his urging, nor the dog his signals, he does not deserve to obtain what he seeks.³ al-Ghazālī gives another illustration taken from hunting, to show how desire and passion can be turned to good purposes and how those in whom they are strong, but well under control,

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 274.

² *The Alchemy of Happiness*, p. 35.

³ *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 47.

reach a higher degree than those in whom they are repressed altogether. Some people say that the hunter who hunts without either horse or dog is more of an expert, and to be esteemed more highly than the hunter using the dog and horse, because he is safe from the danger of his horse bolting with him, and he cannot be attacked and bitten by his dog, but this view al-Ghazālī considers mistaken, for he who hunts with horse and dog, if he is strong and has them well-trained and under control, is a hunter of a higher class than the other and will get more enjoyment out of his hunting.¹

al-Ghazālī compares this world to a snake, smooth to the touch and attractive in appearance, but possessed of deadly poison, and he advises men to beware of what they admire in it, because its allurements cloak the power to do men deadly harm.² Again he compares self-centred action and absorption in the desires of the self with the action of the silk-worm "which spins continually and comes to a grievous end in the midst of what it spins." So, also, man can destroy himself by a life centred in himself, and if he will take warning from the self-destruction of the silk-worm, he will utterly reject the life of self-indulgence, and save his soul alive.³

al-Ghazālī frequently uses images derived from his knowledge and love of plants and his experience of a garden and its needs. He compares the man who imagines that human knowledge will suffice him apart from Divine revelation, to one whose father built him a castle on a mountain-top and placed within it a certain growing herb, with aromatic properties, and impressed upon his son that the castle must never lack this herb for a single hour. The son planted all kinds of sweet herbs around the castle and sought far and wide for cuttings of aloes-wood and saffron and musk and many sweet-smelling trees, so that the scent of the original herb was quite overpowered and he said within himself: "Doubtless my father bade me preserve this herb simply for its fragrance and now with all these scents, we have no need of it and it serves no purpose now except to take up space," so he threw it away. When he had done so

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 37.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 208.

³ *Iḥyā*, III, p. 187.

from a certain hole there appeared a poisonous snake, which bit him and brought him to the point of death. Then he realised, when it was too late, that the herb had been expressly intended to keep away this deadly snake and that his father, in bidding him preserve the herb had two purposes in view, firstly, that his son should benefit by its fragrance, a purpose which the son had realised by means of his reason, and secondly, that the deadly snake should be kept away by its scent, and this purpose the son, by his unaided reason, had failed to realise, because he supposed there was nothing beyond what he knew. So al-Ghazālī draws the moral that human knowledge and reason are not enough for men, they need the guidance of the prophets, to whom is revealed the mystery of God.¹

He uses the nut to illustrate the different classes of believers. The first, he says, is like the outer husk of the nut, the second like the inner rind, the third like the kernel, and the fourth like the oil which is extracted from the kernel. Just as the outer shell of the nut is not fit to eat, but is bitter to the taste, and when used as fuel, extinguishes the fire and makes it smoke, and if left about in the house, clutters up the place, and it is therefore thrown away, so also the confession of faith with the tongue only, apart from the heart's conviction, is profitless, harmful, blameworthy, both outwardly and inwardly, though useful for a time, to preserve the inner rind until death comes. For the inner rind represents the heart and the body, and the confession of the faith, even by the hypocrite, preserves his body from hostile swords, for they are not bidden to pierce men's hearts, the sword reaches only the flesh, which is the outward husk, and when this is stripped from him in death, there remains no advantage afterwards in his confession of faith (which was only with the lips). The inner rind serves to preserve the kernel and to keep it from corruption, while it is stored, and when it has been removed, it may be used as fuel, but is of little value in comparison with the kernel, so also the heart's conviction, accepted on the authority of others, is of greater profit than mere confession by the lips, but is of much less value than the belief produced by personal experience of the grace of God. Though

¹ Subkī, *Ṭab.*, IV, p. 137.

the kernel is precious in itself, as compared with the inner rind, and as a whole is desirable, it is not free from a certain admixture of impurity, in comparison with the oil which is extracted from it, and so also the believer, who through his own experience sees God to be the Only Agent, has attained a high rank, yet he may not be free from some acceptance of "otherness" as compared with the mystic who does not regard God in relation to His works at all, but sees Him alone and nought else.¹

Of the stations attained by the traveller on the mystic Path, al-Ghazālī says that they consist of knowledge, feeling and action (in accordance with knowledge and feeling),² and the knowledge is like a tree, the feeling like the branches and action like the fruit, and this is universally true in regard to the stations of those who are seeking God.³ Referring to the capacity for attaining to perfection, which God has implanted in man, which may be brought from potentiality to actuality, if man chooses the conditions which make for its development, al-Ghazālī takes for illustration the date-stone which, he observes, is neither an apple-tree nor a date-palm, but has been created such that it may become a date-palm, if it is properly cultivated—but the never become an apple-tree, even with cultivation—but the date-stone is affected by the choice which gives it the conditions necessary for growth, or fails to do so. So, too, we can choose to develop our character and our religious life, by self-discipline and effort, which lead us to salvation and the life with God, Who gave us the capacity to ascend, if we but choose to do so.⁴

In stating his conviction that it is essential for the novice on the road to God to have a spiritual director as guide and tutor to help him and train him in getting rid of the vices which hinder his progress, and in acquiring those virtues, by the help of which he can go forward, al-Ghazālī compares such a director with the ploughman who harrows the soil, in order to remove the thorns and weeds from the crop, so that its growth may be stimulated and it shall thrive more perfectly.⁵

al-Ghazālī also compares the different capacities of men for the attainment of knowledge, with the different means of

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 212. Cf. p. 167 below.

² Cf. p. 163 below.

³ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 55.

⁴ *Ihyā*, III, p. 48.

⁵ *Ayyuha'l-walad*, p. 38.

obtaining a water-supply. If wells have to be dug there must be effort involved, but as there is water which flows without any work on the part of men, and some which is hidden beneath the earth, which requires perseverance in digging in order to discover it, and some which needs toil, but very little of it, so it is also with the attainment of knowledge within the human soul. Some comes forth from potentiality to actuality without human study, and this is the case with the prophets, for their knowledge is received from heavenly sources apart from human means, and for some, prolonged effort is needed, which is the case with most men, and for others, comparatively little.¹

Again al-Ghazālī compares the heart to a reservoir, into which flow waters which are offensive, turbid, impure, from the rivers of the senses, and the purpose of self-discipline is to free the reservoir from such waters and from the mud which defiles it, and also to prevent the water which is clean and pure from being affected by defilement. How, asks al-Ghazālī, can such water be drained away from the reservoir, while the rivers are free to flow into it, for at every moment the supply is renewed to a greater extent than it is removed? Therefore the senses must be controlled and limited to what serves a necessary purpose, as waters which flow into a reservoir must be controlled and purified, and self-control, he adds, is made perfect only in solitude and freedom from distraction, in which state the seeker hears the call of God and contemplates the glory of the Divine Majesty.²

al-Ghazālī illustrates the difference between spiritual and material values by a reference to the merchant in precious stones. To the ignorant it seems that to give one hundred *dinars* for a gem which weighs but a *mithqāl* (one and one-seventh of a dram), is to give ten times the like of it, since the money weighs ten times as much as the gem, but the jeweller knows better. The worth of a jewel is not perceived simply by looking at it, but by the knowledge of the expert. The boy and the villager and the Bedouin deny its value, saying: "This jewel is nothing but a stone, it weighs but a *mithqāl* and the

¹ *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 109. Cf. *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, pp. 46 ff.

² *Ihyā*, III, p. 66.

weight of a camel is a thousand thousand *mithqāls*." To them it seems that the camel must therefore exceed the jewel in value to that extent, but it is they who are wrong. So, too, spiritual values cannot be measured in terms of material equivalents.¹

Comparing the eternal happiness of the next life with the passing pleasures of this world, al-Ghazālī says: "Indeed, if we were given a world full of pearls, and every hundred years a bird were to snatch away a single one of them, in time the pearls would vanish, but no part of eternal happiness will ever diminish or pass away."² He observes elsewhere: "The shell in which the pearl is enclosed ought not to distract you from the pearl itself, nor the outward form of the spirit (i.e., the body which it inhabits) from the spirit, nor the outer husk which surrounds it, from the kernel, so that you are led away by the things which are seen and temporal from the things which are not seen and are eternal. You should therefore be concerned with one thing only, and busy your heart with God alone: the Adversary will then have no power against you and you will become one of God's chosen servants."³

al-Ghazālī often has recourse to the common things of life to provide him with illustrations. To make clear the difference between Self-subsistent Being and Not-Being (i.e., that which does not subsist of itself), he says that when the dust of the earth is raised up in the air by the wind and proudly twists about itself in the form of a minaret, anyone looking upon it would suppose that the dust itself is whirling and rising, but it is not so, it is the wind which is moving it, but while he cannot see the wind, he can see the dust. The dust is not a Being, shewing forth Not-Being, but the wind is. The dust in its movement is simply helpless, under the power of the wind, and all power rests with the wind, though that power is not evident. So likewise is the creature under the power of the Creator: it seems to act by its own volition, but in reality all is due to the Will of the Creator, though that Will is invisible.⁴ In warning his readers to beware of despising the little things which combine to make up both what is good and what is evil, al-Ghazālī urges them

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 25.

² *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 3.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 65.

⁴ *Jāmi*, *Nafahāt al-Uns*, p. 426.

not to be like the woman who was too lazy to spin and excused herself by saying that she could manage to spin but one thread in an hour and asked: "What good is attained by a single thread and what contribution will that make to a garment?" not realising that the clothes worn in this life combine thread with thread, as the material substances of the world combine particle with particle, and so make up the whole. So also the little deeds of goodness are by no means lost in the sight of God.¹

That it is impossible to serve God and Mammon al-Ghazālī seeks to prove by the example of the vessel, from which, as the water enters, the air passes out: it cannot contain them both. So too, the heart cannot contain both the love of this world and the love of God, and he who lives in fellowship with God is pre-occupied with Him and can be concerned with nothing else.² He uses much the same image to prove that, as Nature abhors a vacuum and you cannot therefore empty the vessel of air without replacing it with water or something else, otherwise it will be filled with air, as a matter of course, so too, the heart which is occupied in serious reflection on religion is free from the suggestions of Satan. On the other hand, to be heedless, even for an instant, of the claims of God Most High, means that in that very instant, Satan enters in.³ He also observes that nothing can leak from a vessel except what is in it, and so also the heart gives forth only of that which has taken possession of it, whether good or evil.⁴

al-Ghazālī notes that the darkness of sin cannot exist along with the light of good deeds, just as the darkness of the night cannot co-exist with the light of day, any more than the defilement caused by dirt can co-exist with the cleanliness produced by soap. "Just as the use of clothes for manual work soils them, and washing them in soap and hot water cleanses them, so also the concern of the heart with sensual lusts defiles it, and washing it with tears and burning it with contrition cleanses and purifies it. The heart which is thus purified is acceptable unto God and it is for you to cleanse and purify it."⁵ The heart of man

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 43.

² *Ibid.*, p. 209.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 65.

⁴ *Iḥyā*, II, p. 237.

⁵ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 11.

al-Ghazālī compares to a glass vessel, and evil qualities are like smoke and darkness: if these affect the heart, the way to happiness is darkened, but good qualities are like light and flame, and when these take possession of the heart, it is purified from the darkness of sin: the heart is either enlightened or darkened, and none can hope for salvation save him who approaches God with a pure heart.¹

In reference to the seeker who is sure of the way to God and follows it of his own accord, al-Ghazālī says that if God gives illumination on the way to such a seeker, he does not become more *certain* of it, but he sees it more clearly, just as one who sees a man at dawn, when the sun has risen, is not more certain that it is a man, but sees more clearly the details of his form.² The Reason he compares to a lamp and the Canon Law to the oil which supplies it: so long as there is no oil, the lamp is useless and if there is no lamp, the oil cannot serve its purpose. There is a reference to this in the verse: "God is the Light of the Heavens and the earth," for the Canon Law is Reason from without and the Reason is a Canon Law from within.³

al-Ghazālī draws a striking picture of the degree to which men vary in respect of gnosis and faith, upon which their eternal happiness depends, for only by means of the light of knowledge do men pass hereafter into the Presence of God, which is the true meaning of Paradise. Some give forth light like a mountain and some much less, and in the lowest rank is the man who has only light enough for the toe of his foot, a light which shines at one time so that he can go forward and at another is extinguished and he stands still. The passage of the faithful over *Ṣirāt*—the bridge, sharper than the edge of a sword and finer than a hair, which is suspended over the flames of Hell, over which they must pass to Paradise,—depends upon the light they possess. Some pass like the twinkling of an eye, some like a flash of lightning and others like quicksilver or a shooting star. Some pass like a race-horse at full speed, but he who has light enough only for his great-toe crawls along, face downwards, on his hands and feet, dragging one hand and

¹ *Kīmīyā al-Sa'āda*, p. 13.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 218.

³ *Ma'ārij al-Quds*, p. 60. Sūra XXIV, 35.

holding on by the other, with the flames touching his sides, and so makes his way until he is safely across. As the light of the sun, if measured against the light of all the candles in existence, would surpass them, so also the light of some men is like the sun's light, far surpassing the candle-light possessed by the common folk. The faith of the righteous is a light like that of the moon and the stars, but the faith of the Prophets is like the sunlight. Just as the surface of the world, from one horizon to the other, is revealed in the light of the sun, while the light of a candle reveals but a corner of the house, so also there is a distinction between the knowledge which expands the breast (of the ordinary believer) and the revelation of the full extent of the Kingdom to the heart of the gnostic. . . . On the Day of Resurrection those whose hearts contain the weight of a grain of faith, or half a grain, or a quarter or less, will be brought forth from the flames of Purgatory, but those whose faith exceeds the weight of a grain will not enter the flames at all.¹

✓ In reference to other worldliness, al-Ghazālī quotes the words of Yaḥyā b. Mu'adh² who said: "The ascetic for the sake of God, makes you sniff vinegar and mustard, but the gnostic makes you inhale musk and ambergris." The same mystic is quoted as saying: "This world is like a bride and the worldling who seeks her is her tire-woman—the ascetic blackens her face and pulls out her hair and tears her garments, but the gnostic is so pre-occupied with God that he does not even turn towards her."³

Another simile of which al-Ghazālī makes use in reference to this world is one derived from the Prophet, who said: "It is as if a rider, journeying on a hot day and seeing a tree, were to take an hour's rest beneath its shade: then he goes on his way, leaving it behind." He who regards the world in this light, says al-Ghazālī, does not rely upon it or mind whether his days therein are spent in distress and hardship or in ease and luxury. He does not build brick upon brick (i.e., he does not make a permanent abode for himself there). He repeats also a tradition that Jesus said: "This world is a bridge, pass over it, but do not make your abode there," and adds that

¹ *Iḥyā*, III, p. 19.

² Ob. 258/871, a mystic of Nishāpūr.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 28.

this is a clear simile, for the life of this world is a passage to the next and the cradle is the first milestone and the tomb the last, and between the two is a journey, the length of which is limited; men include those who have crossed half the bridge and some who have crossed a third and some two-thirds, and some for whom there remains but a step more. In any case, it must be crossed, and to build upon the bridge and adorn it, in the course of crossing it, is the height of folly. al-Ghazālī uses another simile taken from words ascribed to Jesus: "He who seeks this world is like one who drinks salt water, the more he drinks the more his thirst increases until it kills him." He gives another illustration of the worldling's folly, taken from the Prophet, who said: "The worldling is like one who walks on water, and how can anyone walk on water and his feet not give way?"¹

Again al-Ghazālī compares this world to a halting-stage or market-place through which pilgrims pass on their way to the next. While in this world, it is a man's business to secure provisions for the way, that is to say, by the use of his bodily faculties, to secure some knowledge of the works of God, and, through them, of God Himself, in the vision of Whom he will find his bliss in the world to come.²

Dealing with the "lust of the eyes" al-Ghazālī quotes from a saying of Fuḍayl³ that Satan says: "It is mine ancient bow and mine arrow which goes not astray." al-Ghazālī is reminded that the Prophet had also said: "The glance of the eye is one of Satan's poisoned arrows, which he shoots with unerring aim and no shield can ward it off save the shutting of the eyes and fleeing from the direction of its course, for this arrow is shot only from the bow of outward forms and if you turn aside from the (temptation) of those forms, Satan's arrow cannot reach you."⁴

Writing of the one who possesses knowledge and acts in accordance with his knowledge, al-Ghazālī says that he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven, and compares him

¹ *Ihyā*, III, pp. 187, 188.

² *Ihyā*, III, p. 182.

³ Ibn 'Iyād (ob. 187/602) one of the best-known of the early Sūfis.

⁴ *Ihyā*, III, p. 87, IV, p. 66.

with the sun which is both radiant in itself and gives of its radiance to others, and like the musk which is itself fragrant and diffuses its fragrance abroad. But he who knows and does not act accordingly is like the exercise-book which benefits others, while itself possessing no knowledge, and the whetstone which sharpens others and has no cutting-edge of its own,¹ and the needle which clothes others, but is itself naked, and the wick of the lamp which gives light but is itself burnt away, as someone said:

"It is only a wick which was lighted,
It gave light to men and was itself consumed."²

In this connection al-Ghazālī writes in one of his books: "Though you were to measure out a thousand *ratls* of wine, you would not become intoxicated, if you did not drink thereof. Therefore know that it does not profit you to acquire much knowledge and to accumulate many books so long as you do not act in accordance with what they teach."³

He compares the heart of man to a sheet of paper on which is imprinted all that he has heard and believed since his childhood. Some may have come to maturity without traditional beliefs and these are receptive of the truth because their hearts are not so deeply impressed that the impression cannot be obliterated, but in some the impression is so deep that they are like paper the imprint on which cannot be destroyed except by tearing up the paper and burning it.⁴ On the other hand, thinking of the heart's susceptibility to temptation and Satanic suggestions, he compares it to the bird which turns round on its nest every hour, to the pot when it is boiling hard and its surface continually disturbed and to a feather on waste land, when the wind blows it over and over.⁵

Some of his illustrations recall his travels and his experiences by land and by sea. For instance, of the disastrous effect of wrong-doing on the part of those in a prominent position he writes: "The sin of a learned man is like the wreck of a ship

¹ Cf. p. 30 below.

² *Ihyā*, I, p. 49. Cf. *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 129.

³ *Khulāsat al-taṣānif fī'l-Taṣawwuf*, p. 6.

⁴ *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 163.

⁵ *Ihyā*, III, p. 40.

which sinks together with those on board her."¹ Another simile derived from his experience as a traveller is used in reference to the virtue of patience, which, he considers, is to faith what the head is to the body: "There is no body without a head, nor does anyone possess faith without patience. The two half-loads (borne on each side of the camel) and the small package (which is placed on top) are bestowed upon the patient, the two side-loads being Prayer and Compassion, and the small package Guidance."²

In urging his readers to tolerance of those whose beliefs may differ from their own, and pointing out that truth is truth, irrespective of the person who holds it, and that even those who are in error as a whole may be in possession of some measure of truth which can be detached from their errors, he reminds them that gold is obtained from dirt, and that no harm comes to the assayer when he thrusts his hand without hesitation into the forger's bag and draws forth the genuine gold and silver from amongst what is debased and bad, trusting to his expert knowledge. It is only the ignorant peasant, he continues, not the expert assayer, who should be prevented from having any dealings with the coiner. So, too, it is the inexperienced swimmer who is kept back from the seashore, not the swimmer who has the skill to surmount the waves, just as a child is prevented from touching a snake, but not so the highly skilled charmer. So al-Ghazālī defends the seeker for truth, who is experienced in the search, for his study of what contains the false as well as the true.³

It was perhaps his experience of the illness which preceded his resignation which led al-Ghazālī so often to use illustrations drawn from the science of medicine. Pointing out that in the matter of knowledge generally, men accept the conclusions of experts, without insisting on testing the matter in question by first-hand experience, he says: "Suppose we imagine a man, mature and capable of reasoning, who has never before experienced illness, and then falls ill, whose father is a doctor, compassionate and skilled in medicine, whose medical skill has always

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 30.

² *Ihyā*, IV, p. 54.

³ *Munqidh*, p. 13.

been known to his son. If his father makes up a prescription and says to him: "This will help you in your sickness and will heal you of your affliction," what will his reason suggest to such a man? Even though the medicine is bitter and abominable in taste, will he accept it, or will he reject it, saying: "I understand that this medicine can ensure a cure, but I have not myself tested it by experience?" Would you not reckon him a fool if he did so? So also teaching which comes down on the authority of the Prophet and his successors is to be accepted even though its validity may not have been tested by the experience of those who receive it, and those who reject it for this reason are but fools who deprive themselves of guidance and help."¹

Again, in discussing the comparative values of different types of knowledge and the estimation in which they should be held, he points out that the results to be obtained from any branch of knowledge are the really important thing. Therefore a knowledge of religion is of infinitely greater value than a knowledge of medicine, for the fruit of the latter is temporal life and the fruit of the former is life everlasting.²

¹ *Munqidh*, p. 33.

² *Fātihāt al-'Ulūm*, p. 59.

CHAPTER VI

al-Ghazālī as Poet and Musician. His love of Beauty.

Although al-Ghazālī's fame as a writer and teacher rests on his prose works, yet he was also a poet, responsible for a volume of poems,¹ and there are verses of his to be found in his prose writings, and quoted by his biographers. Moreover, his writing everywhere, and his choice of words and images, is that of the poet, whose ears and eyes are open to the world of experience which lies behind the world of the senses, but is approached by means of them. "He who is without hearing and sight," he writes, "cannot enjoy sweet singing and beautiful forms and colours," and just as it is not given to all to have the sensitive eye and ear, so also many lack the inner power which would enable them to respond to the beauties of sight and sound, that feeling for beauty and that love for the beauty of the natural world, which is the "joy in widest commonalty spread."² To al-Ghazālī, all beauty, whether manifested to the eye or to the ear—for he was a great lover of music—made an irresistible appeal. He writes of the beauty of green things, of running water, of a fair face, and of beautiful colours and sounds, and perhaps there have been few of the mystics with whom it was not so: nearly all of the Ṣūfis were poets, and their mysticism expressed itself most often in poetry. There are Divine yearnings within the soul which can be expressed only by means of it and of music, but those who have no poetry within them, who are not responsive to the rhythm and music and imagery of poetry, cannot interpret its significance. "Consider," writes al-Ghazālī, "the poetic sense by which certain people are distinguished. It is a kind of apprehension, which is so lacking in others that they cannot discriminate between the scansion of a regular metre and that which is irregular. Consider how,

¹ *Mu'āmalat Asrār al-Dīn*. Cf. pp. 36 ff. above and the *Qaṣida* contained in MS. Paris 3198 fol. 87b.

² *Ihyā*, IV, p. 23.

in others, this capacity is so developed that thereby they produce music and melodies, able to provoke sorrow and joy, to produce slumber and weeping and madness, inciting to combat, or the cause of swooning. But these effects are produced strongly only in one who is himself possessed of this gift, while one who is devoid of it, though he also hears the sound, is very little affected by it, and he wonders at the one who is seized with ecstasy or swoons away. So that, if all those who are themselves poets or musicians were to try to make him understand what it means to possess this capacity, they could not do so."¹ al-Ghazālī, who possessed that faculty, writes elsewhere: "He who has a heart (i.e., is spiritually minded) and knows its true nature, knows that it is moved by poetry and music as it is not moved by other things. Therefore he seeks to move it in this way, either by his own voice or that of another." al-Ghazālī defines poetry as that which has measure and significance: in poetry, he says again, is wisdom to be found.²

One of his love-poems, which has been handed down and belongs perhaps to his early days, runs thus:

"The curls³ about her temples, to the moon of her cheeks, have fall'n,
In loveliness so radiant, that none with her can compare,
In the sign of the Scorpion, we have often seen the moon,
To see the Scorpion in the moon, that is a thing more rare."⁴

But these lines might well have a mystical significance, for the hyacinthine locks of the Beloved, in the poetry of the Ṣūfī, represented the One veiled by the Many, and her moon-like cheek the Divine Essence made manifest by its attributes.

Verses attributed to him by al-Jawharī expressed his opinion of the religious leaders of his day:

¹ *Ihyā*, II, p. 260. *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p. 133. Cf. the words of a modern mystic (George Russell), "The purified psyche is a focus or burning point through which that which is itself infinite or boundless manifests as pure light through a prism does, becoming sevenfold; and these intellectual fires are for ever playing upon us and we apprehend them as wisdom, thought, power, love, music or vision. By whatever way we ascend to that spirit it answers . . . poetry is one way in which it answers aspiration and we receive, interpret or misinterpret the oracle as our being here is pure or clouded." A.E., *Song and its Fountains*, pp. 23, 24.

² *Ihyā*, II, p. 265, pp. 240, 241.

³ *Aqārib*, which means both "scorpions" and "curls."

⁴ Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, II, p. 623. Cf. Subkī, *Tab.*, IV, p. 115.

" Like lamp-wicks are the men we know,
Whose light burns brightly, but below
Is something other than appears :
As brass another aspect wears,
Its worthless nature hid from sight,
When overlaid with silver bright."¹

There are verses attributed to him in the days when he was travelling and living a life of solitude, after his conversion, which are expressive of what his conversion had meant to him :

" Once I had been a slave : Lust was my master,
Lust then became my servant : I was free.
Leaving the haunts of men, I sought Thy Presence,
Lonely, I found in Thee my company.

Not in the market-place is found the treasure
Nor by the ignorant, who know not Thee,
Who taunt me, thinking that my search is folly,
But at the end, Thou wilt be found with me."²

Among his verses on love to God were the following lines :

" Though love afflict me, yet it is not grievous,
For death to self, means life in Thee my Lover,
To suffer thirst, if that shall be Thy pleasure,
To me, is sweeter far, than all refreshment.
Nothing can grieve me now, save what divides me
From Thee—but with Thee, nought has power to harm me."³

There are verses left to us which refer to al-Ghazālī's experience in teaching at Nishāpūr, when he had been persuaded to leave his life of retirement and had to face such calumny and hostility :

" What though the darkness of their enmity,
E'en like a threatening cloud, envelop me,
Doth not the pearl in darkness shew its light,
Against a sombre background shine more bright ?
Whether they praise my teaching, or they err,
Despising it as false : though they prefer
Dust to a gem—it matters not to me,
Pearls still are pearls, unvalued though they be."⁴

Of one whose life was devoted utterly to the service of God—

¹ Subki, *Tab.*, IV, p. 115.

² Murtaḍā, *Ithāf*, p. 24.

³ Subki, *Tab.*, IV, p. 115.

⁴ Subki, *Tab.*, IV, p. 105.

and perhaps he was thinking of his own flight from the world, he wrote :

" He cast away his books that he might travel without burden,
His provisions, yea, even his sandals, did he cast away."¹

al-Ghazālī also frequently quotes the verses of other poets, though almost invariably without any reference to their source.²

Closely linked with his poetic genius was al-Ghazālī's love for music, which was responsible for some of his most inspired writing. " The deaf man," he writes, " misses the joy of sweet sounds and musical notes : he is like one who is absent, though present, and dead, though he be alive."³ It was a much vexed question among the orthodox in Islam, as to whether listening to music and singing was permissible or unlawful.⁴ al-Ghazālī ranged himself with those who reckoned it to be lawful, for man, he points out, is not forbidden to delight in that which gives him pleasure, if it is not associated with anything which leads to sin. With his usual sanity and breadth of outlook, he states his view that it is not possible that listening to music should be unlawful simply because it is pleasant and measured, for no one regards the voice of the nightingale or of other birds as unlawful, and there is no difference between one throat and another, or between the inanimate and the animate. So we ought to draw an analogy from the voice of the nightingale to the sounds which proceed from other bodies, especially the sound which issues from the throat of man, or from musical instruments.

He quotes the tradition of David (obviously founded on the legend of Orpheus), that when he bemoaned himself, reciting the Psalms, so sweet was the sound that men, jinns, wild beasts and birds used to gather round to listen to his voice. He points out further that even the camel, though stupid by nature, is affected by the camel's song to such an extent that its heavy burdens seem light to it, and listening to music gives it an energy that makes long journeys seem short, and produces an

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

² For further examples of his own verses cf. *Mi'yār al-'Ilm*, p. 14. Subki, *Tab.*, IV, pp. 102 ff. Murtaḍā, *Ithāf*, I, pp. 24 ff. Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-Jannā*, p. 184. Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, II, p. 623.

³ *al-Hikmat fī Makhlūqāt Allāh*, p. 27.

⁴ Cf. Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, pp. 399, 413.

excitement which intoxicates it. So when the desert-roads seem long to them and they are overcome by the fatigue of travelling and the weariness of the heavy loads upon their pack-saddles, then the cameleer summons them with his song and they stretch out their necks, listening to the singer, with their ears pricked, and hasten their pace, until their loads and saddles are shaken upon them, and perhaps they may perish, because of the violence of their pace and the weight of their loads, of which they are unconscious, because of their excitement.

al-Ghazālī also tells a story of Abū Bakr. M. Da'ūd al-Dīnawarī, known as al-Raqqī,¹ who, when he was travelling in the desert, met with an Arab caravan and was given hospitality by one of the men, who brought him into his tent. There Abū Bakr saw a black slave in fetters and a number of dead camels in front of the tent, and one camel so weak and emaciated that it seemed about to die. The slave appealed to Abū Bakr, saying: "As a guest you have a right to ask favours, therefore intercede for me with my master, for he will be gracious to his guest and will not reject your intercession, and it may be that he will release me from these bonds." So when food was brought in, Abū Bakr refused to eat and said: "I will not eat until I have interceded for this slave," to which his host rejoined: "This slave has reduced me to poverty and destroyed my possessions," and when Abū Bakr inquired how this had come about, his host said: "He has a beautiful voice, and I made my living from hiring out these camels (lit. from their backs), and he loaded them with heavy loads and then sang to them so that they accomplished a three days' journey in a single night, because of the beauty of his song, and when they were unloaded, they all died except this one camel. But you are my guest and for your sake I give you what you ask." Then Abū Bakr wished to hear the slave's voice, and when morning came, he bade him sing to a camel which was drawing water from a well near by, and when the slave lifted up his voice, that camel was maddened and snapped its ropes, and Abū Bakr fell upon his face, and thought he had never heard such a wonderful voice.

If therefore, music has such an effect, even upon the brute

¹ Or al-Duqqī. Cf. Jāmī, *Nafuḥāt al-Uns*, No. 229.

creation, anyone who remains unmoved by it, must be regarded as being in some way deficient, lacking a sense of proportion, unspiritual, ruder and coarser in nature than the camels and the birds, indeed than all the beasts, for all of them are moved by measured melodies. Music and singing do not produce in the heart something which is not there, but they stir up what is already within it.

Music also refreshes the heart and serves to distract it from temptation and from anxiety, for when hearts are overdriven (and no doubt music had been a relief to al-Ghazālī himself at the time of his spiritual wrestling), some recreation helps to strengthen them and to fit them once more for concern with worldly affairs and for religious duties, such as prayer and reading the Qur'ān. A period of leisure and recreation may be regarded as the remedy for weariness and restlessness, both of mind and body, and therefore music is permissible and even desirable, for this purpose, but there ought not to be much recreation, as there ought not to be too much medicine, to cure bodily affliction. Moreover, listening to music, simply for the sake of enjoyment and relaxation, though permissible, is the lowest level of listening, shared by every kind of living being.¹

A degree above this is listening to music with understanding, but with application to some material thing. A third and higher stage of hearing includes the application of what is heard to the relation of the soul with God, and this kind of listening is that of the seekers (*murīdūn*), especially those who are novices, for they desire the direct knowledge of God Himself and the entrance into His Presence and the enjoyment of secret contemplation, and the removal of the veil between the soul and God. So when the *murīd* hears the singer singing of arrival or approach or ardent desire for one expected, or longing for one who is absent, or of loneliness or fellowship, or the mention of the sight of the beloved one, undoubtedly one or other of these will be in harmony with the spiritual state of the *murīd* in his search. The heart of man is like a flintstone and music evokes the fire hidden within it, so that its flames blaze up and its longing is strongly aroused and overpowers him who hears,

¹ *Iḥyā*, II, pp. 239, 243, pp. 250 ff. 257.

and spiritual experience of divers kinds is made possible for him thereby.

But the highest type of listening to music, in al-Ghazālī's view, is the listening of the soul for what God Himself may reveal to it through music.¹ "The purpose of music, considered in relation to God," he writes, "is to arouse longing for Him and passionate love towards Him and to produce states in which He reveals Himself and shews His favour, which are beyond description and are known only by experience, and by the Ṣūfis these states are called 'ecstasy.' The heart's attainment of these states through hearing music is due to the mystic relationship which God has ordained between the rhythm of music and the spirit of man, and the human spirit is so affected by that rhythm that music is the cause to it of longing and joy and sorrow and 'expansion' and 'contraction.'² But he who is dull of hearing and unresponsive and hard of heart is debarred from this joy, and such a one is astonished at the delight of the mystic and his ecstasy—for enjoyment is a kind of apprehension, and apprehension requires something to be apprehended and the capacity to apprehend, and he who lacks such a perfected capacity cannot imagine such enjoyment. How can anyone who lacks the sense of taste enjoy food, or he who has no ear, the pleasure of sweet sounds, or one who is out of his mind enjoy intelligible things? So also, after the sound has reached the ear, the true significance of music is apprehended by the inner sense within the heart, and he who lacks that sense, of necessity takes no pleasure in it."³

The fourth and highest degree of listening to music, therefore, is that of the gnostic who has passed beyond states and stages, who is conscious only of God and has become unconscious of self and his own actions and his relations with others. In that state of absorption, he plunges into the ocean of contemplation,

¹ Cf. a modern writer, R. Heber-Newton, who regards music as the living God within us, "if we obliterate or extinguish music, we extinguish the last light God has left burning within us, to point the way to find Him anew." *The Mysticism of Music*, p. 4.

² Cf. Sūra II, 246 and Hujwīrī, "Qabḍ denotes the contraction of the heart in the state of being veiled (*hijāb*) and baṣṭ denotes the expansion of the heart in the state of revelation (*kashf*)" *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 374.

³ *Ihyā*, II, pp. 246, 247.

and such a state as this the Ṣūfis describe as passing away from the self (*fanā*). Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī said of the ecstasy produced by music that it was a Divine messenger, urging the heart to seek God, and he who listens to it, seeking its spiritual meaning, will find God, and he who listens to it only with the outward ear, sinks into unbelief.¹

So, too, Abu'l-Husayn al-Darrāj² said: "Ecstasy (*wajḍ*) is an expression for what is experienced in listening to music, and music carries me away to the place where Beauty dwells and enables me to contemplate God (*wujūd Allāh*) within the veil, for He has poured out for me the cup of beatitude and I have attained thereby to the station of Satisfaction, and have entered the spacious gardens of eternal joy."³

Listening to music, al-Ghazālī says again, results in the purification of the heart, and purification is the cause of revelation, for by the power of music the heart is roused to activity and is strengthened for the contemplation of what was previously beyond its power, just as, by the cameleer's song, the camel is strengthened to bear a load which it could not endure before, for it is the heart's business to seek for revelation and the contemplation of the mysteries of the kingdom of God.⁴

In conclusion, al-Ghazālī states that anyone who listens to music should have regard for time and place and company, and should avoid any distraction and anything which would disturb the heart. The listener should give his attention to what he hears, being present in heart, absorbed in what he is doing, guarding his heart and meditating upon what God may reveal to him, of His mercy, within his inmost self. Listening to music, then, is altogether desirable for one who is dominated

¹ *Ihyā* II, p. 257. For a further study of gnosis and *fanā*, cf. Chapter XII below.

² Cf. Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-Uns*, No. 207.

³ *Ihyā*, II, p. 257. Cf. Hujwīrī, "Wajḍ is a mystery between the seeker and the Sought, which only a revelation can expound. Wujūd is a grace bestowed by the Beloved on the lover," and again, "wujūd is the thrill of emotion in the contemplation of God . . . some declare that wajḍ is the glowing passion of lovers, while wujūd is a gift bestowed on lovers." *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, pp. 413, 313.

⁴ *Ihyā*, II, p. 258. Cf. E. Underhill, "Of all the arts music alone shares with great mystical literature the power of waking in us a response to the life-movement of the universe, brings us—we know not how—news of its exultant passions and its incomparable peace." *Mysticism*, p. 76.

by the love of God, in whom music arouses only praiseworthy qualities, for on those who by nature are emotional, the effect of music is greater, fanning into flame the love which has already taken possession of the heart, whether that love be earthly and sensual, or Divine and spiritual.¹

But music, to al-Ghazālī, has also a cosmic significance: earthly music is but an echo of the heavenly music. In his *Qaṣīda al-Ta'iyya* al-Ghazālī explains that the soul responds to music here, in this life, because it is reminded of melodies heard long since, before it was invested with its body, when it listened to the sweet melody of the spheres. So, by some earthly melody, it is reminded of the time of its pre-existence, when it dwelt in the heavenly places, and it longs to be once again re-united with its Source. When the babe in the cradle is soothed by sweet singing and shows its delight, and lies at peace, it is remembering the celestial music which rejoiced it in the heavenly realms, when the spheres, revolving on their orbits, sang together and offered their praises to the All-High.² So, also, al-Ghazālī writes that the perfected gnostic, within his heart, hears the music of the spheres and has the joy of listening to the angelic choirs, and then he understands the meaning of the songs of the birds, for they, too, uplift their voices in praise of their Maker.³ In listening to music, therefore, the mystic is sharing in the supernal harmony, and the human spirit is entering into communion with the Infinite and Eternal Spirit. Music, for al-Ghazālī, was a door to Eternity.

¹ *Iḥyā*, II, pp. 265, 269. *The Alchemy of Happiness*, p. 64.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 228 ff. Cf. Shakespeare,

"There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the youngeye'd cherubins
Such harmony is in immortal souls."

The Merchant of Venice. Scene I, Act V.

³ *al-Ma'ārif al-'Aqliyya*, fol. 8b.

CHAPTER VII

al-Ghazālī as mystic. Asceticism and Solitude. The life of Prayer.

In his autobiography, al-Ghazālī states that when he had considered the Ṣūfī way of life, he realised that it could be followed only by means of "knowledge and action." Having acquired the theory by his study of the writings of the Ṣūfis, he knew that he must carry it into practice if he was to attain to their spiritual experience and, through mysticism, find his way to God. The first step on the way was the cleansing of the soul from the qualities which hindered its search for God, in order that it might be set free for His service. "The entrance to the Path," he says, "is the absolute purification of the heart from all save God, the beginning of which (just as the *Tahrīm*—the acknowledgment of God's Holiness—is the beginning of Prayer) is the complete absorption of the heart in the recollection of God, and the end of it is to pass away altogether into God, the end of the Path, that is, but the beginning of the Unitive Life, and all that precedes it is but the vestibule by which the mystic enters therein."¹

The purification of the Ṣūfī, he states elsewhere, means that "he offers the pleasures of the self as a ransom for the sake of his soul."² There was no difference, he held, between a man's worship of himself and his worship of an idol. Whenever man worships any other than God Himself, he is veiled thereby from God.³ al-Ghazālī therefore, applied himself to the asceticism which would purify his heart from vice, and enable it to acquire virtue as a fixed habit of life, against which no temptations could prevail, but he did not find it an easy thing, and he felt that it would have been harder still, had he not felt the call of

¹ *Munqidh*, pp. 22, 23.

² *Ayūth al-Walad*, p. 40.

³ *Iḥyā*, III, p. 53.

God while still in the prime of life. "What is acquired in youth," he says, "is like engraving on stone, but it is hard to teach old age."¹ Three things, he felt, were necessary for the healing of his soul, sick as it was with self-love and love of this world: firstly, flight from temptation, for so long as he remained on the scene of his worldly triumphs, desire would get the better of him, and God had made the world wide enough to offer a place of refuge from temptation, as He Himself said: "Is not God's earth broad enough for you to find refuge therein?"² Secondly, he must constrain himself to change his whole manner of life, and, for wealth and ease, he must substitute poverty and hardship, exchanging the garb of pomp for the vesture of humility, and, in fact, in every aspect of life, in his down-sitting and his uprising, he must do the exact opposite of what he did, while still in the world and of it. The remedy must be the antidote for the disease. But, thirdly, he must be mindful in doing this, to go gently and gradually and not rush from one extreme to the other, for human nature is perverse and its attributes cannot be changed in a moment, so renunciation should be first of one thing and then of another, until little by little his evil qualities would be eradicated and the service of God would not seem hateful to him.³ Asceticism, for al-Ghazālī, began with control of the natural appetites, for self-indulgence he regarded as one of the gates to Hell, and satiety as its foundation, while self-condemnation and contrition were a gate into Paradise, the foundation of which was fasting. The locking of a gate into Hell meant the opening of a gate into Paradise, to be near to one meant being far from the other. He held, too, that moderation in eating kept the body healthy and excess led to sickness, in addition to being a hindrance to devotion. Self-indulgence and the love of this world were the cause of man's destruction in the next and therefore he set himself against both and cut himself loose from worldly attachments, in order that he might be detached to God.⁴ Four things, he considered, would guard against "bandits" on the road to God, those temptations which might snatch the traveller back to the world he had abandoned, and

¹ *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 38.
² *Sūra*, IV, 99.

³ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 69.
⁴ *Munāwī*, *op. cit.*, fol. 197a.

these four were solitude and silence, fasting and vigils. Fasting made the heart pure and receptive of the Divine revelation, from which it is veiled while hardened by self-indulgence. Vigils have the same effect, and by such means the heart becomes like a bright and shining star, or a polished mirror, wherein is manifested the Divine Beauty, and so it may contemplate within itself the mysteries of the world to come.¹ Too much sleep al-Ghazālī considered to be destructive to the heart, the ascetic should indulge only in the strictly limited amount necessary for health, during which he might hope to have revealed to him the secrets of the Unseen.² Love of this world al-Ghazālī felt to be largely identical with love of money, for "dirhams and dinars" were the means by which all the goods of this world were obtained. Wealth he compared with a snake, producing both venom and the antidote for it, being calamitous in respect of its venom and profitable in regard to the remedy for it. Anyone who recognises both the danger and the advantages of wealth can guard against its perils and extract what is good from it. But renunciation of the world meant renunciation of wealth for all personal use, hence al-Ghazālī's abandonment of his own possessions, except what was needed for the support of his family, after his conversion.³

Asceticism, he felt, was of three degrees, the aim of the lowest degree being salvation from the fires of Hell and its sufferings, and of the second degree, the desire for the Divine reward and the favour of God and the fulfilment of His promises. But the highest degree is that in which the ascetic desires nothing but God and communion with Him, and his heart is not concerned with escape from the pains of Hell nor with attainment of the bliss of Paradise, but his concern is only with God Most High, and this is the asceticism of the lovers of God, the gnostics, for only that one who knows Him really loves Him. This highest degree of renunciation, to the ascetic, does not seem to be renunciation, for he does not feel that he has abandoned anything, since he knows that the world is of no account, he is like one who has cast away a potsherd and replaced it by a jewel and that

¹ *Ihyā*, III, p. 65.
² *Munāwī*, *op. cit.*, fol. 196b.
³ *Ihyā*, III, pp. 202, 204. Cf. p. 22 above.

seems to him no renunciation. So the ascetic does not rejoice in what he possesses nor grieve over what he lacks: praise and blame are alike to him, for his fellowship is with God Most High and what predominates in his heart is the joy of obedience.¹

To al-Ghazālī this world seemed to be only a place of sowing for the world to come and the harvest was the consummation for ever of that fellowship with God which has its beginning here on earth. Death to him, was not the end of existence, but merely the final separation from this world and a closer approach to God, the Beloved. While in this world he was hindered from continuous fellowship and continuous recollection of Him and the contemplation of His Beauty. The tomb, therefore, seemed to him but the entrance-gate into the gardens of Paradise, whereby he would be set free from the prison of the body and worldly fetters, and could at last be alone with his Beloved. Therefore, while still travelling on the way to that invisible world, he continued to observe a rule of life which would keep him apart from this world and would enable him to give his time to recollection and meditation upon the life to come.²

al-Ghazālī says that he had heard one of the Ṣūfī Shaykhs declare that the traveller to God looks upon the next world while he is still in this, and Paradise is really found within his own heart, when the self has been purified from its defilements and the concern is concentrated upon God. But recollection is possible only to the heart at leisure from itself and for this solitude is necessary.³ Only in solitude can the mystic hear the call of the Creative Truth and contemplate the Divine Glory. al-Ghazālī himself had sought that experience and he states that all solitaries know that this is true.⁴ He writes of his own experience, when he strove to overcome desire and sought seclusion and tried to give himself to meditation and recollection and found himself continually distracted by Satanic suggestions: "There is no remedy for this except by cutting off all ties, both outward and inward, by flight from wife and child and wealth

¹ M. Ridā, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

² *Ihyā*, III, p. 191.

³ Munāwī, *op. cit.*, fol. 197a. *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 16.

⁴ *Ḥurūqāt*, *Iḥyā*, I, p. 33.

and position and companions and friends. Then must come the withdrawal to a cell and a minimum of food, and contentment with that. But all this will not suffice unless the concerns of the heart become one concern, which is God Himself. Even when that prevails over the heart, it is not enough unless there is meditation by the inmost self upon the Kingdom of heaven and earth and the wonders which God has made and the rest of the gates which lead to a direct experience of God and then, and then only, will the solitary be free from Satanic temptations." Then every moment must be occupied with reading and recollection and prayer, with a heart at leisure and attention concentrated on the approach to God through recollection. This is but the beginning, says al-Ghazālī, when you utter the name of God with your tongue and your heart is present with Him. Then the tongue no longer moves, but the soul and heart persevere and the meaning of that word remains in the heart. So far the mystic has chosen to concentrate his thoughts, but after this the choice ceases and there remains only the expectation of what may be revealed by God. "This," says al-Ghazālī, who had trodden that way, "is the highroad of the Ṣūfis,"¹ and he notes in connection with Recollection that the Prophet had said that hearts get rusty as iron does and the means of polishing them is the recollection of God.²

al-Ghazālī relates that a certain monk was asked how he could endure his loneliness and the monk replied: "I am not alone, I have God as my Companion: when I wish Him to talk with me, I read His book, and when I wish to talk with Him, I pray."³ al-Ghazālī himself had the quality of mind which could endure and was content to be alone for the sake of gathering the fruits of seclusion. But the chief value which he found in solitude was the opportunity it offered for Prayer.⁴ Much of his time was given to the prayer-life: we know that he spent whole days and nights in devotion and he has left us many of his prayers, both of intercession and adoration and he has told us much of what

¹ *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 35.

² *Khulāṣat al-ṭaṣāwuf* fī'l-Ṭaṣawwuf, p. 31. Cf. Chapter XI below.

³ *Ihyā*, II, p. 202.

⁴ Cf. Ibn Jubayr who says that most of al-Ghazālī's prayers were answered, and adds: "We commend all sinners to his intercession, for God benefits us by the prayer of the pure-hearted among His saints." *Rihla*, p. 119.

Prayer meant to him and of what he felt as to its nature and purpose.

He quotes a saying of Sufyān al-Thawrī that God has a wind which blows at daybreak and bears the praises and supplications of men to the King Supreme.¹ He forestalls the objection that there is no end to be reached by prayer if all is pre-determined by the Almighty Will of God, in saying that it is pre-determined that evil shall be averted by prayer and supplication for mercy. Just as the shield serves to turn aside the arrow and water causes the plants to spring out of the earth, and the shield contends with the arrow, so also Prayer and evil wrestle together, and belief in the pre-determining power of God does not debar anyone from using armour or from watering the earth, after sowing the seed.² God invites His worshippers to pray, in order that prayer may lead them to recollection and humility and self-surrender, which enlighten the heart and make it receptive of His revelation and mean a continuance of His loving-kindness. This does not mean dissatisfaction, on the part of those who pray, with God's Will for them, but just as lifting up the water-jar and drinking its contents does not mean dissatisfaction with the thirst which God has decreed, for He has also decreed that water shall quench thirst,—so also it is right to pray, for prayer is the means appointed by God for the satisfaction of men's spiritual needs.³

It is characteristic of al-Ghazālī to believe that even the humbler creation joins with men in offering prayer and praise to God and he observes that it is said that the birds and the insects meet one another on Friday⁴ and say: "Peace, peace, this is a sacred day."⁵ Of prayers for rain he states that when the streams cease to flow and the rains fail and the conduits are dried up, it is an act of merit for the Imām to bid the people first to fast for three days and to give alms according to their ability, and to refrain from doing injustice, and to repent of their sins. Then, on the fourth day, he should go forth with them, accompanied by old women and boys, all having purified themselves

¹ *Khulāṣat al-taṣāwuf fī'l-Taṣawwuf*, p. 10.

² *Iḥyā*, I, p. 298.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 303.

⁴ Friday is the day for public worship in Muslim countries.

⁵ *Iḥyā*, I, p. 160.

and being clad in coarse raiment, submissive, humble, in contrast to their mien on feast-days, and it is said to be a very fitting thing to take with them the cattle, because they also share in the need, and may fittingly share in their petitions.¹

al-Ghazālī held that a man should pray for his friends not only during their life-time but also after their death, and he gives a prayer to be said at the burial of the dead, commending the soul of the faithful departed unto its Lord: "O Lord, Thy creature has returned unto Thee, therefore have pity upon him and show mercy towards him. O Lord, we beseech Thee, open the gates of heaven unto his spirit and welcome him as he approaches Thee. O Lord, if he did good (while here upon earth), then multiply his good deeds and if he did evil, then close Thine eyes to his sins."² He also quotes the Prophet's words: "By the prayers of the living, the tombs of the dead are lighted up," and the words of one who said: "Prayer for the dead takes the place of guidance for the living and because of it, an angel enters into the presence of the dead bearing radiant lights and says: 'This is guidance for you from such a friend or relative,' and the dead rejoice in that as the living rejoice in guidance here."³

He felt that God Himself called His servants to Prayer and made them desire thus to enter into the closest relationship with Himself.⁴ "Praise be to God," he says in an outburst of thanksgiving, "Who overwhelms His servants with His gifts and fills their hearts with the radiance of faith and devotion. . . . He differs from earthly kings in that He inspires His servants to ask of Him and make their plea unto Him, for He says: 'Is there any who calls unto Me? I will answer him. Is there any who seeks for forgiveness? I will grant it unto him.' Unlike the rulers (of this world) He opens the door and lifts the veil and gives leave to His servants to enter into familiar intercourse with Him through Prayer. Nor does He limit Himself to giving

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

² *Ibid.*, p. 184.

³ *Iḥyā*, II, p. 164. Cf. the Christian prayer for the dead: "Let Light perpetual shine on them, may they rest in peace."

⁴ Cf. the anchoress Julian of Norwich: "I am the ground of thy beseeching: first it is My Will that thou have it: and after I make thee to will it: and after I make thee to beseech it and thou beseechest it."

Revelations of Divine Love, p. 84 (14th Revelation).

them leave but He shows His loving-kindness in inspiring them with the desire for this and calling them unto Him."¹

The first thought on awaking and the first word upon the tongue, for al-Ghazālī, was the remembrance of God and praise to Him and he gives a morning prayer which we may assume was his own greeting to his Lord on awaking: "Praise be to God, Who hath brought us back to life from death (i.e. from sleep). . . . O Lord, I ask Thee that Thou wilt lead me unto all good and that Thou wilt protect me from evil. . . . Through Thee, O Lord do we arise in the morning and through Thee do we come to eventide. Through Thee we live and through Thee we die and unto Thee do we return."²

The remembrance of God and the sense of His constant presence, he felt, should be with His servant at all times. "Know," he says, and he is undoubtedly relating his own experience, "that your Companion, Who never forsakes you, whether you are at home or abroad, asleep or awake, in life or in death, is your Lord and Master, your Protector and your Creator, and whenever you remember Him, He is there beside you. For God Most High hath said: 'I am the Companion of Him Who remembers Me. Whenever your heart is stricken with grief for your shortcomings in religion, He is there at hand, continually beside you. For He hath said: 'I am with those who are contrite in heart, for My sake.' If you but knew Him in truth, you would take Him as your Friend and forsake all others but Him. If you are not able to do that at all times, do not fail to set apart time both night and day, in which you may commune with your Lord and enjoy His presence in inward converse with Him and may know what it means to have continual fellowship with God."³

al-Ghazālī bids all who draw near to God to forget this world and its people and to approach Him as He will be approached on the day of resurrection, when the soul will stand in His Presence, with no mediator between. In Prayer he says, "God is face to face with you and you are in intimate conversation

with Him and you must know in Whose presence you are standing, for He is the King Supreme."¹

al-Ghazālī expresses his sense of the value of the ritual prayer in quoting the words of the Prophet, who said: "The five times of Prayer² are like a river of fresh water flowing beside the door of each one of you, into which he plunges five times each day, and what do you suppose that leaves of his defilement?"³

Prayer with the lips only was not real prayer, in al-Ghazālī's view, since he held that "confidential communion" with God could not exist along with any unmindfulness of His Presence. The essence of prayer, he held, was humility, intention, presence of the heart and single-minded devotion, and he always emphasized the need for the heart to be "present." If Prayer be an inner reality, he says, six things are needful, the presence of the heart, understanding, adoration, awe, hope and shame. By the "presence" of the heart al-Ghazālī meant that the heart should be concerned with nothing except that in which the worshipper is engaged and what is uttered with the lips. Whenever the thought is detached from everything else and the heart is mindful of that with which it is concerned, then there is presence of the heart. By "understanding" he meant something beyond this, the heart's comprehension of the spiritual meaning of what is uttered. Adoration goes beyond both of these and is something which cannot be given to man but only to God. "Awe" is an expression for the reverence which results from adoration and its source is the Divine Majesty.⁴ Hope is fitting on the part of the servant who believes in God's goodness towards him and he does rightly in hoping that his prayer will be effective. Shame, al-Ghazālī feels, must enter into prayer, for it is the creature's sense of his shortcomings and of sin in the presence of the Creator. The heart is "present" only in that about which it is concerned and when faith in the world to come is combined with a sense of the insignificance of this world and its affairs, then the heart is present in prayer. "Your heart is present,"

¹ *Rawḍat al-Tālibīn*, pp. 260, 261.

² At dawn, noon, midway between noon and sunset, sunset and nightfall.

³ *Ihyā*, I, p. 130.

⁴ Cf. R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 12 ff.

¹ *Ihyā*, I, pp. 129, 130.

² *Hidāyat al-Hidāyat*, p. 5.

³ *Hidāyat al-Hidāyat*, p. 39.

al-Ghazālī says, "when you enter the presence of one accounted great (in this world) who is, after all, a creature, with no real power to injure you or do you good; ought it not then to be present when you are in confidential communion with the King of kings, in Whose hand are both this world and the next, Who controls all that comes to you, of good or ill?"¹

These things, then, al-Ghazālī felt to be necessary if Prayer was to be an inward reality and he was doubtless speaking from his own experience. He felt, too, that the external ritual and formalities which accompany prayer must be realised to have a spiritual significance: they were but outward symbols of an inner reality. Of the ritual purification which preceded prayer al-Ghazālī writes: "When you purify the place in which you pray, which is your outermost container, and then your garments, which are your nearest covering and then your skin, which is your inner rind, do not forget your kernel, which is your real essence,² and that is your heart. So strive to cleanse it by repentance and contrition and therewith purify your inmost self, for He Whom you worship is looking thereon."³ This purification of the inmost self means that it is emptied and prepared for the Divine action, for the ultimate purpose of this purification is that the glory of God and His majesty should be manifested to the soul. "The knowledge of God," al-Ghazālī says, "will never enter and abide in the soul in very truth until all else but God has been removed from it."⁴

Then, too, just as in the ritual prayer, the outward face is turned towards the *qibla* (the direction of Mecca) and away from any other direction, so also during prayer the heart should be turned towards God and to nothing else. "Let the face of your heart," he writes, "be turned in the same direction as the

¹ *Ihyā*, I, p. 145. Cf. the Catholic mystic Angela of Foligno, "Prayer is nothing else save the manifestation of God and oneself and this manifestation is perfect and true humility. For humility consists in the soul beholding God and itself as it should."

² Cf. pp. 71, 72 above.

³ *Ihyā*, I, pp. 148.

⁴ *Ihyā*, III, p. 111. Cf. a modern writer: "The fundamental discipline and the fundamental duty in the face of the Eternal is prayer . . . it is more than an outpouring and far more than an entreating. It is a gripping of the self by an act of painful and arduous abstraction, from the concerns of time and space, for the purpose of facing eternity and speaking with the Eternal." E. Barker, *The Spectator*, November 25th, 1938.

face of your body and know that the heart does not turn towards God except when it is freed from the thought of all but Him."¹ He writes elsewhere on this subject, "When you turn your face towards the *qibla*, then turn your heart towards the Creative Truth and do not rejoice, for you have no reason for it, but remember how you must stand in His Presence on the Day of Judgment. Therefore stand on the feet of fear and hope, detaching your heart from regard for this world and for mankind and transfer your concern to Him, for He will not reject one who take refuge in Him, nor disappoint a suppliant."²

al-Ghazālī had much experience of the distraction of thought by which prayer is hindered, but he knew that only those whose prayer was directed solely towards God in humility and adoration could receive the Divine illumination and apprehend the mysteries revealed by God to His saints. In prayer alone were those mysteries revealed and the revelation came only to that one whose heart was set upon God alone. "When you can say, 'My living and my dying belong to God,' then," says al-Ghazālī, "you may know that this is the state of one who is lost to himself and found to his Lord." For when the creature, so lost to self, approaches God in prayer, He raises the veil between Himself and His servant and meets him face to face.³

His own prayers and thanksgivings show that al-Ghazālī had this experience of the inner reality of prayer. He quotes the words of the Prophet to the effect that he who gives praise to God in the midst of those who are heedless is like a green tree in the midst of plants that are withered, and like one who fights among those who flee. Again he declares that the dwellers in the celestial regions look down upon those earthly habitations whence prayers and praise rise up to God and see them as shining stars, and he adds his own petition, which he used to offer on entering the Divine sanctuary: "O Lord, give light unto my heart and my tongue and my hearing and my sight, and set light behind me and before me and above me, Lord, give me light."⁴ One of the briefest of his prayers is none the less significant because of its brevity: "Lord, make my secret thoughts

¹ *Ihyā*, I, p. 148.

² *Minhāj al-'Arifīn*, p. 110.

³ *Ihyā*, I, pp. 152, 149.

⁴ *Ihyā*, I, p. 292.

better than my outward acts and make my outward acts good."¹

We have al-Ghazālī's prayer when he bowed in worship before the Most High: "O Lord, Thee do I adore and in Thee do I put my trust and unto Thee do I commit myself. I bow my face in adoration to Him Who created and fashioned it, Who gave unto me hearing and vision. Blessed art Thou, Who hast created all things well: with heart and mind I worship Thee, my soul trusteth in Thee. I yield me to Thy grace, in acknowledging my transgression, and I seek Thy face therein, for Thou alone canst forgive sin." At the close of prayer he would say: "O Lord, Thou art peace, and from Thee cometh peace. Thou hast blessed me, O Lord Most Glorious, Who art worthy of all praise."²

Thanksgiving played a large part in al-Ghazālī's prayers and many of these *lauds* are very beautiful. For the double gift of purification and the means thereto he offers thanks, saying: "Praise be to God Who hath shown favour to His servants and hath called them to serve Him in purity and for the cleansing of their inward selves hath outpoured upon their hearts His radiance and His lovingkindness, and for their outward forms hath prepared the purification of pure and limpid water."³ al-Ghazālī offers thanks to the All-Glorious Who is also the All-Compassionate, when he says: "Praise be to God Whose glory passes the comprehension of the hearts and minds of His creatures, and they remain amazed thereat, by the radiance of Whose Light their vision is dazzled, Who looks upon the secrets of men's inmost selves, Who is aware of what is hidden within their consciences, Who orders all things by His sovereign will, and none is His counsellor or gives Him aid: Who turns men's hearts to repentance and forgives their transgressions: Who casts a veil over their sins and comforts them in their sorrows—to Him be praise."⁴

al-Ghazālī gives thanks also for the grace of God towards His saints in calling them into fellowship with Him through prayer, saying: "Praise be to God, Who hath magnified His grace towards the elect among His creatures and His chosen,

¹ Subkī, *Ṭab.*, IV, p. 178.

² *Ihyā*, I, pp. 292, 293.

³ *Ihyā*, I, p. 111.

⁴ *Ihyā*, III, p. 2.

in that He hath made them to be concerned only with His fellowship and hath bestowed upon them the joy of His grace and hath made their hearts to despise the goods of this world and its splendour, so that each one from whose mind the veils have been withdrawn is content to be alone with God and becomes accustomed to the contemplation of the Divine Majesty, in solitude, apart with Him, and is separated thereby from fellowship with mankind, even though it were his closest friend—to Him be praise."¹

We have, finally, al-Ghazālī's prayers that at the end of this mortal life he may pass into the presence of his Lord among the number of His saints, entering His presence as one who already knows and loves Him: "O Lord, let us not pass from this world except as gnostics, perfected in gnosis, submerged in the ocean of Thine Unicity, set free from the fetters of this world and its pomps and vanities, through Thy mercy, O Thou Most Merciful."² Akin to this is his prayer: "We ask God the All-Great to place us among His chosen and His elect, whom He has guided to the truth and directed along the path, whom He has inspired with the recollection of Himself, so that they are always mindful of Him: whom He has purified from the defilement of the self, so that they choose Him in preference to all other, whom He has appropriated unto Himself, so that they should adore none but Him."³

But al-Ghazālī was never unaware that the good life must mean not only fellowship with God, but also, and as a necessary consequence, fellowship with man and service to him. It was necessary for him to find time for solitude and quiet so that he might hear the Voice of God speaking to him, but the spiritual experience which he gained in these times of solitude must bear its fruit in the daily walk of life with other men: the mystic revelations which came to him from the opening of his heart and mind to the Divine indwelling, were given to inspire him to a higher service of humanity. Hence his return to teaching work at the end of his life and his association with his fellow

¹ *Ihyā*, II, p. 197.

² *Ma'ārij al-Quds*, p. 188.

³ *Munqidh*, p. 34.

Šūfis and with beginners on the mystic Way, in his latter days at Ṭus. "To be a Šūfi," he said, "means to abide continuously in God and to live at peace with men: whoever abides and deals rightly with men, treating them with unfailing kindness, is a Šūfi. The right attitude towards your fellow-men is that you should not lay burdens upon them according to your own desire, but rather burden yourself according to their desire. In your dealings with others, treat them as you would wish them to treat you, for the faith of God's servant is not made perfect unless he desires for others what he desires for himself."¹

So al-Ghazālī gave his last years on earth to the guidance of others on the road by which he had himself been led to a knowledge of—and fellowship with—God.

¹ *Ayyuha'l-Walad*, pp. 40, 46. *Khulāṣat al-taṣānif fi'l-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 21, 28.

PART II.

AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S MYSTICAL TEACHING

CHAPTER VIII

al-Ghazālī's Sources. Neo-Platonism and Arab Philosophy. Judaism and Christianity. Islamic and Šūfī Sources.

The wide scope of al-Ghazālī's studies, aided by his extensive travels, enabled him to draw upon many sources for the ideas which he develops, and the terminology which he uses, in setting forth his mystical teaching, though it is always to be borne in mind that its chief and most essential source was his own personal experience. He himself had experienced illumination and ecstasy, he had received revelations which it was not lawful to describe, he had entered into that direct knowledge of the Divine which was incommunicable, but it was this experience which enabled him to give his teaching with the assurance born of his personal conviction of the truth of what he taught.

His study of philosophy had led him to reject and refute many of its conclusions, but none the less, he was deeply influenced by Greek thought and especially by Neo-Platonism, and this influence is to be seen throughout his mystical writings. From Plotinus is derived the idea of God as the One Reality, the Source of all being, the All-Perfect, transcending all known attributes and existences. "He is the One, the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward, but He is neither body nor substance nor accident, nor like anything that exists. . . . He does not exist in anything nor does anything exist in Him, for He is too exalted to be contained in any place and too holy to be limited by time, for He was before time and place were created. He alone is self-existent in His essence." "Again al-Ghazālī writes: "He cannot be apprehended by the understanding, none can apprehend the One but the One."¹ So also Plotinus had written of the One, the First-Existent, Transcendent,

¹ *Ihyā*, I, p. 70. *Raḥmat al-Tālibin*, p. 153. Cf. *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, pp. 24, 26. Cf. also Chapter IX below.

Unconditioned, Unknowable: "The One, transcending intellect, transcends knowledge, thus the One is in truth beyond all statement, the All-transcending possesses, alone of all, true being, and is not a thing among things."¹

Of the Godhead al-Ghazālī declares that from eternity He alone existed, there was no other with Him, and again he says: "Know that all that is other than God veils you from Him . . . if it were not for your alienation, you would look upon Him face to face." "The freedom of the heart from all that is other than God," he writes elsewhere, "is needful if it is to be pre-occupied with the love of Him and the direct experience of Him." So, too, Plotinus writes of the Supreme as containing "no otherness," everpresent with us, and we with It, when we put "otherness" away.²

It is from Neo-Platonism also that al-Ghazālī derives his inclination towards the doctrine of emanation. He speaks of the Unitarian seeing things as a multiplicity, but he sees the Many as emanating from the One, the Supreme, and again he states that God is the First in relation to existent things, since all have emanated from Him in their order.³ In the Plotinian teaching the first emanation from the One was Universal Mind and al-Ghazālī also makes use of this term (*al-'aql al-awwal*), which he calls the Prior of all existences, that which is stronger, nobler, and nearer to the One, itself perfect because of its relationship to the One, and making perfect that which comes after it. When God wishes to bestow revelation on a creature, He makes use of the First Intelligence, "Universal Mind becomes the teacher and the sanctified soul the taught."⁴ Again al-Ghazālī states that the human intelligence is derived from Universal Intelligence as the light from the sun, for it is related to an individual, while the First Intelligence is absolute, without such relationship, and his commentator adds: "The First Intelligence is a pure

light outpoured upon all things, for it is the spirit of all and by the gnostics it has been called the Heart of the Universe."¹

From Universal Mind emanates Universal Soul, which in its turn gives rise to the phenomenal world and to individual human souls. The human soul, says Plotinus, "is a Divine thing, belonging to another order than that of sense." According to his teaching, the human soul resembles the Divine Nature in containing three principles, the Intellectual, which is the true self, the Reasoning Soul, which represents the normal, human life and the Animal Soul, which is the irrational nature.² So, too, al-Ghazālī refers to Universal Soul—related to Universal Mind as Eve to Adam, and next to it in honour and nobility and receptivity³—as the second emanation from the One, and that from which individual souls proceed.⁴ "Know," he says "that when Universal Soul takes possession of a body, its presence there is called a human soul."⁵ al-Ghazālī also refers to the human soul as a Divine thing, belonging, not to the sensual, but the spiritual world (cf. pp. 142 ff. below). That human soul, in al-Ghazālī's teaching, includes the highest self (*al-naḥs al-muṭma' inna*) which he also calls the "rational" soul (*al-naḥs al-nāfiqa*), to be identified with the heart and spirit of man, which is Divine in its origin.⁶ There is, secondly, the "reproachful" soul (*al-naḥs al-lawāma*) which predominates with the normal human being, in whom the voice of conscience is at work to correct the downward pull of the "flesh," and thirdly, there is the "headstrong" soul (*al-naḥs al-ammāra*), which is the irrational self, under the control of the animal nature.⁷ al-Ghazālī's cosmology, comprising the Divine World (*'ālam al-malakūt*), the Celestial World (*'ālam al-jabarūt*) and the material, phenomenal world (*'ālam al-mulk wa'l-shahāda*) is in accordance with

¹ *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 107.

² *Ennead*, III, 4. 3 ff. V, 1. 6, 10.

³ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 43. Cf. also *Mi'rāj al-Sālikin*, p. 23.

⁴ *Sirr al-'Alamayn*, p. 33. *Ma'ārij al-Quds*, pp. 134 ff.

⁵ *Ma'ārij al-'Aqliyya*, fol. 11b. Universal Soul is compared by al-Ghazālī with the Sun, which sheds its light upon all things exposed to it—it is called the Tenth Sphere and the Command (*'amr*) from the *Muta'* (=Universal Mind). Cf. my *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, J.R.A.S. April, 1938, p. 179, and the individual soul is said to come forth from it like the spark from the flint. Cf. *Min Ajwibat As'ilat Ibn al-'Arabi*. Paris 5291, fol. 138b.

⁶ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, pp. 27 ff. Cf. Chapter IX below, pp. ff.

⁷ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 31. Cf. *Sūras*, LXXV, 2: XII, 53.

¹ Plotinus, *Ennead* V, 3. 12, 13.

² *Ihyā*, I, p. 80. *Rawḍat al-Tālibin*, p. 128. *Kitāb al-Arba'in*, p. 143. *Ennead* VI, 9. 8.

³ *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 212, 217.

⁴ *Kitāb al-Ma'ārij al-'Aqliyya*, fols. 21b, 11b. *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, pp. 41, 43. *Ma'ārij al-Quds*, p. 15. *Sirr al-'Alamayn wa Kashf mā fi'l-Dārāyn* p. 33, a work attributed to al-Ghazālī, though probably edited by one of his disciples, perhaps from notes dictated by al-Ghazālī.

this three-fold principle,¹ and so also is his teaching on the three stages of the soul's ascent to God.²

al-Ghazālī's constant use of imagery derived from Light, though it is based to a limited extent upon the Qur'ān, is also Hellenic in origin, especially in his identification of knowledge with light (cf. p. 176 above). "Ignorance," he says, "is like a state of blindness and darkness, and knowledge is like vision and light."³ Especially is this true of the knowledge which comes from above, the Light of God, which, says al-Ghazālī, is "the radiance from the Lamp of the Invisible, shed upon a heart which is pure, at leisure, receptive."⁴ Plotinus had also called this knowledge the light within the soul which enlightened it, a light lit from above which gave the soul its brighter life.⁵ Again al-Ghazālī writes of earthly lights kindled by celestial lights and these in their turn by the Light Supernal (*al-Nūr al-aqṣā al-ālā*), above which there is no light and from which light is shed upon all other things.⁶ Elsewhere he says: "God is Manifest (*al-Zāhir*) and by Him all things are made manifest, for that which is manifest in itself, which makes all other things manifest, is Light, and whenever existence (*al-wujūd*) confronts non-existence, then undoubtedly existence is made manifest and there is no darkness darker than non-existence. Now that which is free from the darkness of non-existence, yea, even from the possibility of non-existence, Which brings all things out of non-existence into the manifestation of existence, is worthy to be called Light. Existence is light outpoured upon all things from the Light of His Essence, Who is the Light of the heavens and the earth."⁷ Plotinus, too, speaks of material forms, containing light, which need another light so that their own light may be manifested: in like manner celestial beings "all lightsome" need another and a greater Light, so that they may be visible to themselves and others.⁸ That Light, to al-Ghazālī, as to Plotinus, is the Ultimate Reality (*al-Mawjūd al-Haqq*).⁹

¹ Cf. *Ihyā*, IV, p. 216; and *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 23.

² Cf. Chapters X, XI, XII, below.

³ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43. Cf. also *Ihyā*, III, p. 16.

⁵ *Ennead* V, 3. 8.

⁶ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 110, 111.

⁷ *al-Maṣṣad al-Asnā*, p. 70.

⁸ *Ennead*, VI, 7. 21, 22.

⁹ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p. 113.

It is from Neo-Platonism also that al-Ghazālī derives his idea of God not only as Light, but as Supreme Beauty, and of love as the natural inclination of the soul towards beauty, whether terrestrial or Divine. Plotinus had taught that the original source of Love was to be found in the tendency of the soul towards pure beauty, and he observes that, while Beauty addresses itself chiefly to the sight, it has an attraction for the hearing, too, and minds that lift themselves above the realms of sense are aware of beauty in conduct and action, in character and in intellectual pursuits and they see the beauty of the virtues. The soul, too, is conscious of kinship with what it loves. Beauty is that which truly calls out Love and so it is that the soul, passing over all that is lovely here, and looking beyond it, loves the Supreme Good, the Divine Beauty, which is the ultimate Source of all beauty, and, loving God, seeks to be one with Him.¹ So also al-Ghazālī says of Beauty that the eye delights in looking upon what is beautiful, and the ear in listening to beautiful music, and adds that goodness and beauty exist in other than objects of sense, in character and knowledge and conduct and the virtues, and he writes in conclusion: "It cannot be denied that where Beauty exists, it is natural to love it. . . . The greater the beauty, the greater the love, and since complete and perfect Beauty is found only in God, He alone can be worthy of true love."²

al-Ghazālī, in his mystical writings, refers to the "intoxication" of love: was there ever lover who was not drunk with love? For His lovers, God pours out a draught from the cup of His love, and by that draught they are intoxicated, rapt away from themselves. So also Plotinus had taught that beyond knowledge is Love, which is "intoxication" and the highest joy, and "to be drunken is better than to be too staid for such revels."³

al-Ghazālī's doctrine of the music of the spheres and his belief that the harmony of earthly music reminded the soul of the celestial harmonies it had heard in the heavenly places

¹ *Ennead* I, 6. 1. III, 5. 1. V, 8. 7, 8. VI, 7. 22, 31; 9, 9.

² *Ihyā*, IV, p. 257, 256, 258. Cf. the famous passage in Plato's *Symposium* in which Diotima describes Divine Beauty as the supreme object of Love.

³ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 300. *Rawḍat al-Tālibin*, p. 131. Cf. also *Qaṣida al-Tā'iyya* p. 219. *Ennead*, VI, 7. 35.

before it descended into this world, and therefore stirred it up to joy and longing,¹ and his view of the value of music, both as a source of delight and as a means of bringing the seeker nearer to God, find their counterpart in Platonic teaching.²

al-Ghazālī also accepts the theory of the Seven Heavens, which played a part in Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought,³ and he recounts a tradition embodying this belief, which told how God created seven angels to guard the Seven Heavens, and how the guardian angels mount with the good deeds which a man has done, from morn till eve, work which shines like the sunlight, until they reach the First Heaven, and there the work is rejected by the Angel who guards the gate, because the servant was guilty of slander. Then the guardian angels come with more good works which they praise and magnify until they reach the Second Heaven, and there are stopped by the Angel guarding it, because in what he did the servant was seeking worldly ends and boasted of his works among men. The guardian angels then ascended with work adorned with the light of almsgiving and fasting and prayer, which excited the admiration of their fellow-angels, and they passed with it as far as the Third Heaven, but were brought to a halt by the Angel there, who rejected the work because the servant was arrogant towards his fellow-men. Once again they ascended with work shining like the stars, a radiance due to the man's praises and prayers and pilgrimages, until they reached the Fourth Heaven, where the work was rejected because of the servant's pride in it. Then they ascended as far as the Fifth Heaven, with work adorned like a bride coming unto her bridegroom, but the Angel who kept the gate refused to let it pass, because the doer was jealous of those whose works were like his own. Once more the angels ascended with the servant's good works of prayer and almsgiving and pilgrimages and fasting, and reached the Sixth Heaven, but the Angel forbade them to pass, because that servant had no pity on the afflicted, but rather rejoiced in their affliction. Again they ascended with the work of fasting and prayer and expenditure for others

¹ Cf. p. 90 above.

² Cf. *The Republic*, Bk. III. *Phaedo*, XXXVI, XLII. *Timaeus*, *passim*.

³ *The Republic*, Bk. X. Mentioned also briefly in the *Qur'ān*, Sūra LXVII, 3. LXXVIII, 12. The scheme is found also in the Talmud.

and alms and striving and piety, work resounding like thunder and shining like the sun, accompanied by three thousand angels, and they bore it up to the Seventh Heaven, but once more the Angel of the gate barred their advance, because the servant had not done his work for the sake of God alone, but had sought therein others beside God, seeking exaltation with the divines, and fame with the learned, and reputation among men.

Yet once more the angels ascended with good works as before and also a fair show of religion, and silence and the recollection of God, and the angels of heaven escorted that work until they had pierced all the veils and they brought it before God Most High. Then they stood in His Presence and bore witness to that good work done in sincerity, for His sake. Then God said unto them, "Ye are the guardians of My servant's work, but I am He Who looks upon his soul. He was not seeking Me, in what he did, he sought another than Myself." So the work was rejected and the Seven Heavens joined in execration of that faithless servant.¹

al-Ghazālī owes something to the Platonic theory of Ideas, of things in this world being only a type or symbol or imperfect copy of the archetype, the reality "laid up in the heavens." He likens them to the images which appear in sleep, compared with what is seen in waking hours. So, too, the capacity of the human mind in this life is like that of one who is asleep and what it perceives is but a type of the heavenly reality. But when men die, they awake from the dream of life and know things as they really are. Again he says that if there were no relationships between the visible world and the world invisible and no link between them, any ascent from one world to the other would be inconceivable. Therefore, by the Divine mercy, the visible world was made to correspond to the world invisible and there is nothing in this world but is a symbol of something in that other world.² "The *Ka'ba*," he says elsewhere, "is an outward symbol in this material world of that Presence, not seen by the eye, which indwells the Divine world, just as the body is an outward symbol in this visible, phenomenal world, of the heart,

¹ *Ihyā*, III, pp. 255, 256.

² *Ihyā*, IV, p. 21. *Mishkāt*, p. 124. Cf. Plato, *The Republic*, Bk. X. *Phaedo*, Chap. 49. Cf. also p. 155 below.

which cannot be seen by the eye, for it belongs to the world of the Unseen, and this material, visible world is a means of ascent to the invisible, spiritual world for him to whom God has opened the door."¹

These conceptions, and others in his writings which bear traces of a Neo-Platonic origin, al-Ghazālī may have derived from his own personal study of the Greek writers, in Arabic translations. He refers to Plato's theories,² and Arabic translations of the *Republic*, the *Timæus*, and the *Phædo*, for which Christian translators were mainly responsible, were available from the ninth century onwards.³ He had also direct access to the teaching of Plotinus, in the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, a translation into Arabic of Porphyry's commentary on the *Enneads*, IV, V, and VI, and from this undoubtedly he derived both ideas and terminology: sometimes whole phrases and paragraphs embodying the teaching of Plotinus are transferred to his own work and adapted to the purposes of his own mystical teaching.⁴

But al-Ghazālī probably owed some of his knowledge of Platonism and Neo-Platonism to the writings of the Arab philosophers, notably al-Kindī (ob. 260/873), considered to be the founder of Arab philosophy, but not an original thinker, rather one who founded his teaching on the Greek commentators of Alexandria. He was also interested in the effect of music, not only as a source of pleasure to the hearing, but as an influence on the spirit of man.⁵ al-Kindī was responsible for a number of translations from the Greek.⁶

The work of systematisation begun by al-Kindī was continued by al-Fārābī (ob. 339/950), who is mentioned by al-Ghazālī as a representative Islamic philosopher.⁷ al-Fārābī accepted

¹ *Ihyā*, I, p. 242.

² Cf. *Mi'rāj al-Sālikin*, p. 24. *Munqidh*, p. 9 and elsewhere.

³ Cf. my *Studies in Early Mysticism*, pp. 115 ff. and A. Guillaume, *The Legacy of Islam*, pp. 250 ff. Cf. also H. G. Farmer, *The Influence of Music from Arabic Sources*, pp. 6 ff.

⁴ For an account of the relation of Sūfism generally to Neo-Platonism cf. E. H. Whinfield, *Lauā'ih*, pp. VI ff. pp. 52 ff. and R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, pp. 12 ff. and *Diwān Shams-i-Tabriz*, pp. XXXII ff. Also J. Obermann, *Der Philosophische und Religiöse Subjectivismus Ghazālī*, pp. 63, 64. And A. J. Wensinck, *Book of the Dove*, pp. IXXX ff.

⁵ Cf. H. G. Farmer, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁶ Cf. L. Massignon, *Textes Inédits*, pp. 175 ff.

⁷ *Munqidh*, p. 11.

the Neo-Platonic system of emanation and emphasized the desire of the human being to enter into the closest union with Universal Mind and so with the One. He stressed the pre-existence of the soul in the ideal world, before its descent into the material world.

al-Ghazālī mentions also that he had studied the writings of the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*,¹ a group of philosophers which was formed in Basra in the tenth century, who taught the doctrine of emanation, and held that all good gifts were due to the outpouring of the Divine grace and the irradiation of the Divine light upon Universal Mind and thence upon individual, human souls.² They also taught the doctrine of the music of the spheres, of which souls in this temporal world are reminded by earthly melodies.³

Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna. ob. 428/1087), also mentioned by al-Ghazālī as one of his sources for the study of philosophy,⁴ gave a more complete expression to Arab philosophy. He held that the human soul was pre-existent, Divine in its origin, and therefore a prisoner in this world and always filled with the desire to return to its proper home.⁵ He taught the need of the rational soul for inner purification and moral perfection, in order that it might be fitted to receive the Divine illumination, and he, too, was interested in the influence of music upon the soul. His teaching on Prayer reaches a high level in his declaration that the inner significance of Prayer is the contemplation of God. He states that in Prayer the soul which is, as it were, disembodied, at leisure, free from the effects of time and space, contemplates God in intellectual contemplation and looks upon Him spiritually. In interior prayer the soul seeks from Absolute Being its own perfection, through its contemplation of Him, and its highest happiness through its direct knowledge of Him. Upon such a soul the Divine grace (*fayḍ*) descends as it prays.⁶

It was through his study of these Arab philosophers, who based their philosophy so largely upon Neo-Platonism, that al-Ghazālī

¹ *Munqidh*, p. 19.

² *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*, III, p. 275.

³ *Qaṣida on the Soul*, Ziya Bey, *Kharābat*, I, pp. 283, 284. Cf. *Fātiḥat al-'Ulūm*, p. 40, and *Qaṣida al-Tā'iyya*, pp. 122, 123, which seems to be based on Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣida*.

⁴ *Māhiyat al-Ṣalāt*, pp. 37, 39. Cf. pp. 99 ff. above.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 152, III, p. 104.

⁶ *Munqidh*, p. 11.

must have added greatly to the knowledge of Greek philosophy which he had secured from his own reading of the Greek writers.¹

al-Ghazālī's mysticism owes a certain amount to Judaistic sources: he makes use of some Jewish traditions and was probably acquainted with the Old Testament. The stress he lays on the Kingdom of Heaven (*Ālam al-Malakūt*, the Divine World), though the term *malakūt* itself is Aramaic, is due most probably to the use of the word in the Qu'rān² and to a significance derived from Neo-Platonic sources.³ He frequently quotes traditions concerning Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah, Job and other Old Testament figures, which must have come ultimately from Old Testament sources or Jewish traditions. He makes frequent reference to the Chronicles or Traditions of David (*Akhbār Da'ūd*), which appears to be a definite work to which he had access.⁴ He also refers to the *Tawrāt* and the Psalms and "the writings of Moses and Abraham," as being inspired in order to summon men to their spiritual heritage.⁵

al-Ghazālī also often draws upon Jewish sources to illustrate his teaching, and his religious tolerance, already mentioned, enables him to hold up devout Israelites as an example to the faithful of Islam, e.g., he relates how a certain Israelite worshipped God in sincerity for many years, and God Most High desired to manifest his sincerity to His angels. He therefore sent one of His angels to him with the message: "The Lord Most High asks of thee: 'How long wilt thou exert thyself and weary thyself in serving Me, since thou art destined for Hell?'" The angel delivered the message, to which the worshipper replied: "I am a servant and the servant's business is to serve: He is the Lord and what is the Lord's business none knows but He." The angel returned to his Lord and said: "My God, Thou dost know what is secret and hidden and Thou dost know what Thy servant said." Then God declared: "If this servant,

¹ For a more detailed account of al-Ghazālī's indebtedness to the Arab philosophers cf. my *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, J.R.A.S. April, 1938. pp. 183 ff.

² Sūras, VI, 75, VII, 84.

³ For a full discussion of al-Ghazālī's use of the term *Malakūt* cf. A. J. Wensinck, *The Relation between Ghazālī's Cosmology and his Mysticism*, pp. 2 ff.

⁴ *Ihyā*, III, pp. 47, 290, 322. IV. pp. 285, 291, 295, 499.

⁵ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 68.

in spite of his weakness, did not deny Us, how should We deny him Our grace? Bear witness, O My angels, that We have forgiven his sins," a story which may be based on that of Job, and al-Ghazālī adds the lines:

"For eyes to be wakeful, except for Thy sake, is vain,
That eyes should weep, save for loss of Thee, is folly,"

and the words of the Prophet: "However you may live, you will die: how great soever your love, you will be separated therefrom: whatever you do, you will be requited therefor."¹

al-Ghazālī undoubtedly owed much to Christian sources, and had made a careful study of the New Testament, using the Arabic texts accepted in his time. In one of his writings² he bases his arguments on the Fourth Gospel and quotes also from St. Mark. Here he is refuting the Christian doctrine, but as in the case of philosophy, he made a thorough study of the teaching which he wishes to refute and not unfrequently he makes use of New Testament texts, and traditions derived from them, to illustrate his mystical teaching. From St. John's Gospel he had derived the Christian doctrine that Christ was One with God,³ but this he regards as the error of one who looks in a mirror which reflects a coloured object, and supposes that reflection to be the form of the mirror, but such a one is mistaken, for the mirror in itself has no colour, its function is to reflect colours on its surface, but those who consider only what is apparent, think it is the colour of the mirror itself. So, too, one who does not know the nature of glass and wine, when he sees a glass containing wine does not perceive the distinction between them and sometimes he says: "There is no wine," and sometimes he says: "There is no glass." al-Ghazālī, in this connection quotes the lines of the poet:⁴

"Fine is the glass and the wine is fine:
They are commingled and seem to be one,
As if there were only wine and no glass,
Or as if there only glass and no wine."

¹ *Khulāṣat al-taṣāwuf fī'l-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 8, 9.

² *al-Radd al-Jamīl li Ilāhiyat 'Isā bi ṣarḥ al-Injīl*, Ayā Ṣufiyya 2246. Cf. also C. Padwick, *The Moslem World*, April, 1939.

³ St. John X, 30.

⁴ Ibn 'Abbād. Cf. Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, I, p. 215.

Such, he says, was the statement of that one¹ who said: "I am the Creative Truth," and the poet when he wrote:

"I am He Whom I love, and He Whom I love is I."²

It was in this way, al-Ghazālī considered, that the Christians regarded Christ, for they beheld the radiance of the Light of God shining within Him.³ But he held that they were deluded in supposing that the Divine nature could be made one with the human (*ittihād al-Lāhūt b'il-nāsūt*), like one who sees a star reflected in a mirror, or in a sheet of water, and stretches out his hand to take it, but he is deceived.⁴

But he constantly quotes the words of Christ. In reference to religious teachers who are lovers of this world and not spiritually-minded, al-Ghazālī gives the lines:

"The shepherd of the sheep protects them from the wolf,
But what if the shepherds include wolves among them?"⁵

and also the verses:

"O ye who are righteous, O salt of the earth,
If it loses its savour, what use is the salt?"⁶

Again al-Ghazālī observes that most men are unaware of their own faults; a man sees the mote in his brother's eye and fails to see the beam in his own.⁷ He gives also the story of the rich young man⁸ as an example of the snare of riches and worldliness to those who seek spiritual perfection. As an incentive to trust in God (*tawakkul*) he repeats the words of Jesus: "Consider the birds of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns and God feedeth them day by day."⁹

¹ Husayn b. Manṣūr al-Hallāj (ob. 309/932). Cf. L. Massignon, *La Passion d'al-Hallāj*.

² Hallāj, who completed the lines as follows:

"We are two spirits, indwelling one body,

When thou seest me, thou seest Him,

And when thou seest Him, thou dost see us both."

³ Cf. St. John, I, 14, "We beheld His glory, glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father" and VIII, 12. Also St. Paul, II. Cor. IV, 6. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

⁴ *al-Maṣṣad al-Asnā*, pp. 74, 75. *Ihyā*, II, p. 150.

⁵ *Ihyā*, I, p. 54, a re-echo of John X and Matt. VII, 15.

⁶ *Ihyā*, I, p. 54. Matt. V, 13.

⁷ *Ihyā*, III, p. 55. Cf. Matt. VII, 3.

⁸ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 208. Cf. Matt. XIX, 16, 23.

⁹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 230. Cf. Matt. VI, 26. XXIII,

al-Ghazālī refers to Christ's denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees in quoting as His words: "Evil teachers are like a rock which fell upon the mouth of the river, which neither drank of it nor let the water escape to water the crops in the fields. They are like tombs, which outwardly appear handsome and well-constructed, while inside they contain nothing but dead men's bones." He also gives the saying of Jesus: "O evil teachers, be not like the sieve which lets the good flour through while the chaff remains: so also ye bring forth wisdom from your mouths, while secret hatred remains in your hearts."¹ al-Ghazālī quotes also from Christ's parable of the Last Judgment, when he writes: "The doctor, physicist and astrologer are doubtless right each in his particular branch of knowledge, but they do not see that illness is, so to speak, a cord of love by which God draws to Himself the saints, concerning whom He has said: 'I was sick and ye visited Me not.'"²

He writes elsewhere: "I have seen it written in the Gospel: 'We have sung unto you and you did not rejoice: we have piped unto you and you did not dance,' that is, 'We have striven to arouse longing in you, by the praise of God, and you did not long for Him.'"³ Another Gospel quotation wrongly attributed to the Old Testament, is contained in the tradition that God said to Moses: "I was sick and thou didst not visit Me," and Moses asked: "O Lord, how came that about?" The Lord replied: "My servant so-and-so was sick and thou didst not visit him and if thou hadst done so, thou wouldst have found Me with him."⁴ al-Ghazālī quotes also Christ's words: "When you give alms, do it so that your left hand knoweth not what your right hand doeth, and He Who seeth in secret shall reward you openly. And when you fast, wash your face and anoint your head, lest any other than your Lord should know of it."⁵

As an incentive to otherworldliness, al-Ghazālī quotes a tradition that Jesus said: "The seasoning of My bread is hunger, My undergarment is godly fear and My over-robe is of wool

¹ *Fāṭihat al-'Ulūm*, pp. 8, 18. Cf. Matt., 13, 27.

² *The Alchemy of Happiness*, p. 37 (from the Hindustani).

³ *Ihyā*, II, p. 248. Cf. Matt. XI, 16.

⁴ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 203. Cf. Matt. XXV, 43, 45.

⁵ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 289. Cf. Matt. VI, 3, 4, 17, 18.

(i.e., the garb of the ascetic). My fire in winter is exposure to the sun and My lamp is the moon. My means of transport are My own feet, and My food and My dessert are what the earth brings forth. I go to sleep, possessing nothing, and I rise in the morning, possessing nothing, and there is none upon earth who is richer than I."¹ al-Ghazālī also gives a version of the Beatitudes which he may be quoting from memory: "Blessed are the meek upon earth, for they shall be exalted on the Day of Resurrection. Blessed are the peacemakers in this life, for they shall inherit Paradise in the life to come. Blessed are the pure in heart in this world, for at the Last Day they shall look upon God."² He gives also Christ's actual words on retaliation and the Christian way of treating one's enemies.³

There are lines in al-Ghazālī's *Qaṣīda al-Tā'iyya* which might well have been suggested by a study of St. Paul's spiritual struggles.

"I have become at enmity with my self (the 'flesh').
For it bids me to sin and I seek to restrain it.
We are two antagonists, warring one with the other,
Patiently I strive to overcome the flesh.
With the troops of lust, it takes the field against me.
What can patience do to withstand its onslaughts?
If I grow faint in the fight, the flesh waxes strong.
Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and forgive me.
For Thou didst create me and Thou art my Lord."⁴

From St. Paul, too, he may have taken the imagery he uses in saying that the one who, like the snake, sloughs off the skin of lust and natural desire and puts on the breast-plate of the Canon Law, will have the joy of receiving Divine enlightenment.⁵

There is a story told by al-Ghazālī, which also contains elements of Pauline teaching, of how the Ṣūfī Ibrāhīm b. Adham visited a Christian monk named Simā'ān. This monk had lived alone in his cell for seventy years, his food consisting of a portion of chickpeas each night. Asked how he could endure it, he said that on a certain day in the year the monks from the monastery

¹ *Ihyā*, III, p. 184. Cf. Matt. VIII, 20. VI, 25, 31 ff., X, 9.

² *Ihyā*, III, p. 294. Cf. Matt. V, 5, 9, 8.

³ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 62. Cf. Matt. V, 38.

⁴ *op. cit.*, p. 215. Cf. Romans VII, 14, 25.

⁵ *al-Ma'ārif al-'Aqliyya*, fol. 8b. Cf. Ephesians. IV, 22; VI, 13, 14.

opposite came to him and decorated his cell and walked in procession round it and did him honour and whenever his soul grew weary of devotion, he reminded it of the glory of that hour and so he was able to endure constant effort for the sake of one hour's glory. "Therefore, O Ḥanīf," he said to Ibrāhīm, "endure tribulation for a brief space, for the sake of eternal glory,"¹ and so gnosis was established in Ibrāhīm's heart. The monk asked him if he was satisfied or wished for more, and Ibrāhīm asked for still more. The monk told him to go out of the cell and, having let down to him a small bucket containing twenty chickpeas, bade him go into the monastery, for the monks had seen what had occurred. So Ibrāhīm entered the monastery, where the Christians gathered round him and said to him: "O Ḥanīf, what did the Shaykh let down to you?" and Ibrāhīm told them that it was some of his food. Then they declared that they were more worthy of it than he, and asked him to make a bargain with them: he offered the food to them for twenty dinars,² and they paid the price. Ibrāhīm returned to the monk, who asked for how much he had sold the food and Ibrāhīm replied: "For twenty dinars." Then the monk said: "You made a mistake; if you had bargained with them for twenty thousand dinars, they would have given you that sum. This is the glory of one whom you do not worship, and how great, then, must be the glory of Him Whom you do worship. O Ḥanīf, draw near unto your Lord Himself, and give up visiting His creatures."³

Writing of the Beatific Vision, al-Ghazālī again quotes St. Paul's words, saying that God has prepared for His faithful servants "what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and what has not entered into the heart of man."⁴

There are many other quotations taken directly from the New Testament, and traditions founded upon the New Testament teachings, to be found throughout al-Ghazālī's works and there

¹ Cf. *I Cor.* iv, 17, "Our light affliction which is for the moment worketh for us more and more an exceeding weight of glory," and *Romans*, VIII, 18, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward."

² A dinar is a gold coin.

³ *Ihyā*, III, p. 288. Cf. *Romans*, I, 23, 25.

⁴ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 267. Cf. *I Cor.* ii, 9.

is little doubt that he found it a source of inspiration to him in the development of his mystical doctrine.¹

During his travels in Syria and Egypt al-Ghazālī must have come into contact with the mystical teaching of Christians belonging to the Greek Church.² Especially in the teaching of John Cassian (ob. A.D. 432), who had lived at Bethlehem as a monk and then settled in Egypt, there is a remarkable resemblance to the doctrine developed later by al-Ghazālī, for example, in his division of spiritual knowledge into the active or practical (*πρακτική*) and the theoretical or contemplative (*θεωρητική*). One depends upon purification from sin and the acquirement of virtue, and the other on the contemplation of the Divine, the power of penetrating into the hidden significance of God's Word and seeing with the eye of the soul, a power which comes not through human learning, but by purity of heart and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But the contemplative wisdom, John teaches, can be revealed only by acquiring the practical, for the stains of sin must first be eradicated before the Vision of God can be attained. Only that one who understands his sins and has striven to get rid of them can hope to attain to the mysteries revealed in contemplation.³

So also al-Ghazālī declares that spiritual knowledge (*'ilm al-ākhirā*) is to be divided into the practical (*'ilm al-ma'āmala*), which has to do with action, and the contemplative (*'ilm al-mukāshafa*). The "practical" knowledge has for its purpose action in accordance with what is known, but the "contemplative" knowledge has for its purpose only revelation. The practical knowledge leads on to the contemplative, as the latter leads on to the direct, intuitive experience of God, which is the certainty which comes from the Divine Light "cast into" the heart of a servant who, by unremitting effort, has purified his soul from the stains of sin. This certainty is attained by an inward contemplation which is clearer and more glorious than

¹ Cf. M. Asin Palacios. *La Mystique d'al-Ghazālī*, pp. 81 ff. *Oriental Studies presented to E. G. Broune*, pp. 13 ff. *Logia et Agrapha*, Patrologia Orientalis XIII, XIX. Cf. also S. Zwemer, *Moslem World*, April, 1917. *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*, *passim*.

² Cf. my *Studies in Early Mysticism*, Chapters IV, V, VI for a detailed account of Christian Mysticism in the Near and Middle East and for the contacts between Christianity and Islam.

³ *Coll.* XIV, 1-3, 9.

the vision of the eyes. But the joy of the Vision lies beyond contemplative knowledge, as contemplative knowledge lies beyond "practical" knowledge, which means the following of the Path to God, by cutting off of all hindrances and getting rid of sin.¹ Again al-Ghazālī writes: "By contemplative knowledge we mean that the veil is raised and that the Divine Glory is revealed so clearly that it cannot be doubted, and this would be possible to man, if the mirror were not dimmed by rust and impurity due to the defilements of this world; and by the knowledge of the Way we mean knowledge of how to polish this mirror from the stains which are a veil between God Most Glorious and the understanding of His attributes and His acts, and this cleansing and purification is secured only by refraining from lust. In proportion as the heart is polished and is turned Godwards, is the Divine Reality manifested therein. There is no way to attain this except by self-discipline and knowledge and study."²

But so many of the elements in al-Ghazālī's mystical teaching are to be found in the writings of the Christian mystics of the Greek and even of the Roman Church that we can hardly doubt that he had found inspiration either in Arabic translations of their works or in personal contacts with Christian monks and others. The resemblance between al-Ghazālī's spiritual experience and that of St. Augustine has already been analysed,³ but there is a considerable and interesting resemblance also between their mystical teaching and their outlook on life, e.g., such a passage in al-Ghazālī as: "Beautiful forms are loved for their own sake; the very perception of Beauty is a cause of delight and it is undeniable that it is loved for its own sake. So also green things and running water are loved. It is natural to delight in the sight of the celestial lights and in the flowers and the birds, with their fair colours and varied forms and their perfectly proportioned shapes, and the griefs and anxieties of man are dispelled as he looks upon them,"⁴ shows the same appreciation of the good and the beautiful as St. Augustine's joy in

¹ *Ihyā*, I, pp. 4, 46, 48. *Fāṭihāt al-'Ulūm*, p. 41.

² *Ihyā*, I, pp. 18, 19. Cf. *Fāṭihāt al-'Ulūm*, p. 41.

³ H. Frick, *Ghazālī's Selbstbiographie: ein Vergleich mit Augustins Konfessionem*. ⁴ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 256.

the grace of the heavens, the earth and the sea, the brightness of light in the sun, moon and stars, the shade of the woods, the colours and fragrance of flowers, the kinds of birds and their varied hues and songs, the diverse forms of beasts and fishes, whereof the least are the rarest (for the fabric of the bee or pismire is more admirable than that of the whale). All these are "a shadowy foretaste of the glories to be revealed."¹ al-Ghazālī's interest in the bee and other small creatures, as being especially illustrative of the wonders of God's creation, has already been mentioned.²

There is little doubt that al-Ghazālī, being educated and studying where he did, must have been in touch also with the mysticism of the Syriac-speaking Christians of the Middle East. When he speaks of the heart as a Divine thing, irradiated by the Divine Light, he adds: "Then, when the beauty of the heart is unveiled, it may be that its owner turns towards the heart and sees of its transcendent beauty that which dazzles him."³ This passage bears a close resemblance to the words of Isaac of Nineveh, of the seventh century A.D.⁴ "Grace makes manifest all the glory, which God has hidden in the nature of the soul, showing the soul this glory and making it glad because of its own beauty . . . it does not remember the body which hid its own beauties from its sight. Then it sees heavenly beauties in itself, as the exact mirror which by its great purity shows the beauty of faces."⁵

al-Ghazālī's mystical teaching, therefore, certainly owes something to those of other faiths, both pagan and Christian, of the West as well as the East, but it is developed on lines distinctively Eastern and Islamic and there is no doubt that his chief sources are to be found in the writings of Muslim thinkers, and above all in those of the Ṣūfīs. Like other orthodox Ṣūfīs, he claimed the Qur'ān and the sayings of the Prophet and his

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, XXII, 24. Cf. also VII, 29, 30.

² Cf. pp. 68 ff above and also *Kitāb al-Hikma fī Mahklūqāt Allāh*, pp. 2, 63, 52, 59.

³ *Ihyā*, III, p. 450. al-Munāwī, *op. cit.*, fol. 198a. Cf. also *Mizān al-'Amal*, "We desire from knowledge the soul's attainment of its perfection so that it may ascend thereby, rejoicing in what it possesses of splendour and perfection for ever." p. 41.

⁴ Cf. my *Studies in Early Mysticism*, pp. 97 ff.

⁵ *Mystical Treatises*, p. 349.

successors in the Caliphate as the original authority for much of his teaching, but a great part of his mystical doctrine is obviously based on the writings or reputed sayings of earlier Ṣūfīs, among them Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (ob. 110/728)¹, Sufyān al-Thawrī (ob. 161/777)² and Ibrāhīm b. Adham (ob. 160/177). Of the last al-Ghazālī relates that he was one who was filled with yearning love for his Lord and he told how one day he prayed: "O Lord, if Thou dost give to any of Thy lovers a means of rest for his heart before he meets with Thee, then grant it unto me, for disquietude lies heavy upon me." Then he dreamt that he stood in the Presence of God, Who said to him: "O Ibrāhīm, are you not ashamed to ask Me to give you rest for your heart before meeting with Me? Does anyone who loves with passionate longing find rest before meeting his beloved?" And Ibrāhīm replied: "O Lord, I was distracted by love to Thee and knew not what I said; therefore forgive me and teach me what to say." Then the Lord said to him: "Say: 'O my God, make me satisfied with Thy decree and give me patience under the trials Thou dost send, and grant unto me to give thanks for Thy grace, for this yearning love will find its satisfaction in the life to come.'"³ al-Ghazālī was well acquainted also with the sayings of the woman mystic, Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya of Bāṣra (ob. 185/801)⁴ and Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (ob. 215/850).⁵ al-Ghazālī himself, in his autobiography, mentions expressly that he had consulted the works of Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, Abū Ṭalīb al-Makkī, and the fragments handed down of the teaching of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, Junayd and Shibli.⁶

Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī (ob. 243/857) was one of the most important, and probably the earliest, of al-Ghazālī's written sources. Upon al-Muḥāsibī's *Ri'āya li Huqūq Allāh*,⁷ his

¹ Cf. my *Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 68, 69. *Ihyā*, I, p. 61, III, p. 186, III, pp. 183, 214, 320. IV, pp. 254, 293. *Mukāshafat al-Qulūb*, p. 137. *Munāwī, op. cit.*, fol. 196a.

² *Early Mystic*, p. 72. Cf. *Ihyā*, I, pp. 34, 61. IV, pp. 283, 285. *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 277, 287. Cf. also my *Early Mystic*, p. 73 and *Ihyā*, I, p. 61. III, p. 182. IV, p. 285. *Mukāshafat al-Qulūb*, p. 137.

³ Cf. my *Rābi'a the Mystic*, and *Ihyā* III, p. 89. IV, pp. 28, 42, 44, 269, 291, 344 (margin). *Minhāj al-'Abidin*, p. 80.

⁴ Cf. Sha'rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, I, p. 68. *Ihyā*, III, pp. 73, 182. IV, pp. 254, 299. *Mukāshafat al-Qulūb*, p. 138.

⁵ *al-Munqidh*, p. 20.

⁶ My edition of this has been recently published by the Gibb Trustees.

Waṣāyā (*Naṣā'ih*), the *Kitāb Iḥkām al-Tawba*, the *Muḥāsabat al-Nufūs*¹ and his *Faṣl fi'l-Maḥabba*,² al-Ghazālī draws very largely for both the main principles of his teaching and his illustrations. His psychology is derived, to a great extent, from al-Muḥāsibī, whose view of the Reason as an innate disposition he approves, while stating that it is a quality which distinguishes man from the brutes. "By the Reason, I mean the innate disposition," al-Ghazālī writes, repeating al-Muḥāsibī's words, "the original light by which man comprehends the real meaning of things . . . a clear intellect and penetrating understanding must be an original disposition, and if a man is not born with this, it cannot be acquired. But if the root of it is in you, it can be strengthened by close application to study." The human intelligence he compares to a mirror, which differs from other bodies in possessing the power to reproduce forms and colours, by means of the polish upon it, as the eye differs from, e.g., the forehead, in its capacity for vision, and the relation of this innate disposition to knowledge is like the relation of the eye to vision, and the relation of the Qur'ān and the *Shar'* to this natural capacity, in leading it to the revelation of knowledge, is like the relation of the sun to sight.³ al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge is also based on that of al-Muḥāsibī, and he makes the same distinction between the knowledge which can be acquired by study (*'ilm*) and the intuitive understanding (*ma'rifa*) which is given, not acquired, by means of which man can learn to know himself and his Lord and the true worth of this world in comparison with the world to come.⁴

al-Ghazālī's teaching on Prayer also owes much to the earlier writer,⁵ and the same is true of his teaching on Asceticism and the Purgative life, in which the soul is seeking purification from the grosser vices,⁶ and the acquirement of the virtues. In dealing with Generosity (cf. p. 57 above) he quotes a saying of

¹ These three works are still unpublished.

² Included in Abū Nu'aym's *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*.

³ *Iḥyā*, I, p. 75, III, p. 353. *Kitmiyā al-Sa'āda*, pp. 10 ff. Cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Mā'iyyat al-'Aql wa ma'nāhu*, fols. 104 b.

⁴ *Iḥyā*, III, p. 353. Cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, Chap. VIII. *Adāb al-Nufūs*, fols. 84 a ff.

⁵ Cf. *Iḥyā*, I, pp. 129 ff. and al-Muḥāsibī *Wasāyā* (*Naṣā'ih*), fols. 11b ff. 17b ff.

⁶ Cf. *Iḥyā*, III, passim. and al-Muḥāsibī, *Ri'āya*, passim.

al-Muḥāsibī to the effect that generosity in regard to religion (i.e., magnanimity) means that you should be prepared to pour out your very life-blood, spending yourself freely for the sake of God Most Glorious, and that you should be willing to make even the supreme sacrifice of life itself for His sake, willingly, not reluctantly, not seeking therewith any reward, either in this life or the life to come, and even though you are conscious of the reward, yet your predominating thought is of the beauty and perfection of the generosity which abandons the choice to God, so that it may be your Lord Who chooses for you what you are not able to choose for yourself.¹ al-Ghazālī also quotes al-Muḥāsibī's condemnation of wealth and his praise of godly poverty as the ideal for the traveller on the road to God.² He accepts al-Muḥāsibī's view of the right meaning of trust in God, which does not mean that a man is to refuse to possess anything, or to take means to earn a livelihood.³ al-Ghazālī, too, claims al-Muḥāsibī, for all his asceticism and rigid piety and his devotion to religion, as a supporter of his own view that listening to music and singing is permissible for the devout seeker after God.⁴ In his teaching on the Unitive life al-Ghazālī also depends to a certain extent upon his predecessor.⁵ al-Ghazālī's indebtedness to al-Muḥāsibī is, in fact, much greater than he himself acknowledges.⁶

al-Ghazālī has made use also of the sayings of the famous mystic Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (ob. 261/875),⁷ including his words: "The learned man is not he who studies from a book, for in that case, since the Prophet did not study, he would be ignorant—but he who takes his knowledge from his Lord, when He desires it, without study or instruction: this is the man learned in spiritual things."⁸ It is perhaps upon this that al-Ghazālī bases his own conclusions that the Ṣūfīs care chiefly for the knowledge bestowed on them by God (*al-'ulūm al-ilhāmīyya*),

¹ *Iḥyā*, III, p. 226.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

² *Iḥyā*, III, p. 229.

⁴ *Iḥyā*, II, p. 238.

⁵ Cf. *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 291 derived from al-Muḥāsibī's *Faṣl fi'l-Maḥabba* (*Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*), fols. 240 ff.

⁶ For a more detailed consideration of the subject cf. my article *The Fore-runner of al-Ghazālī*. J.R.A.S. January, 1936.

⁷ Cf. *Studies in Early Mysticism*, pp. 236 ff. L. Massignon, *Textes Intédits*, p. 27 ff.

⁸ al-Munāwī, *op. cit.*, fol. 196a.

not that acquired by study, and therefore they do not urge men to study human knowledge or to peruse what human writers have written, or to discuss statements and arguments, but instead they claim that the Way (which leads to God) is the choice of effort and the elimination of vices and the cutting off of all ties and the setting of the concern entirely upon God, and when that comes to pass, it is God Who takes possession of His servant's heart and is responsible for enlightening him with the light of knowledge from Himself.¹

On the same subject, al-Ghazālī quotes the words of Abū Yazīd to the theologians of his day: "You have taken your knowledge from these learned in outward ceremonial, a dead thing from the dead, but we have taken our knowledge from the Living One, Who does not die."² al-Ghazālī's admiration for al-Bisṭāmī and his disinterested service of his Lord is shown in his account of how Aḥmad b. Khadrawiya saw his Lord in a dream, and He said to him: "All men seek Paradise from Me except Abū Yazīd, who seeks Me for Myself." Then he tells how Abū Yazīd himself saw his Lord in a dream and said: "O Lord, what is the way to Thee?" and He answered: "Abandon thyself and come unto Me."³ al-Ghazālī also gives a striking saying of Abū Yazīd: "If it were granted unto you to talk with God face to face as Moses did, and to be filled with the Spirit, as Jesus was, and to enjoy the Divine friendship, like Abraham, yet should you seek what is beyond that, for there is infinitely more to be given by Him, and if you rest content with that, you are veiled thereby, and this is the test for such as these, and one who is like them, for they are in the highest rank."⁴

al-Ghazālī had also made a study of the fragments available of the teaching of Abū'l-Qāsim al-Junayd of Baghdad (ob. 298/854), who had studied under al-Muḥāsibī and become one of the most famous of Ṣūfī teachers, though he preferred to talk with a group of intimates, rather than to give formal instruction to a large number. al-Ghazālī states that he would not address more than ten present at once, and the members of his circle never reached as many as twenty.⁵ He also repeats Junayd's

¹ *Iḥyā*, II, p. 16.

² M. Ridā, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 321.

⁴ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 305.

⁵ *Iḥyā*, I, p. 32.

words to the effect that the best and most exalted of company is to sit with Reflection, in the sphere of the Unity, breathing the zephyr of Gnosis and drinking the cup of Love from the ocean of attachment (*wadād*) and having fair thoughts of God. Then he added: "O what company, none more glorious, and what wine, none more delicious: blessed is he who is sustained therewith!"¹ al-Ghazālī relates how Junayd said of his own experience of the Unitive Life: "I have been talking with God for thirty years and people suppose that I have been talking with them: this becomes easy only to one absorbed in the love of God, with an absorption which leaves no room for any other."² He quotes also words of Junayd which he may have felt were applicable to his own experience: "The journey from this world to the next (i.e., to give up worldly things for spiritual) is easy for the believer: the journey from the creatures (i.e., separation from them and from dependence on them) to the Creator is hard: the journey from the self to God is very hard, and to be able to abide in God is harder still," and al-Ghazālī adds that the greatest hindrances to the soul arise from mankind and the love of position and the enjoyment of authority.³ Among the sayings of Junayd on the love of God al-Ghazālī quotes his words: "The sign of love is constant activity and continual conflict with sensual desire: the body (of the lover) becomes weary, but not the heart."⁴

Another of al-Ghazālī's sources was Shibli (ob. 334/945),⁵ a disciple of Junayd and a well-known saint and Ṣūfī, who preached his doctrines at Baghdad. al-Ghazālī quotes a certain number of his sayings, among them his reply when he was asked to describe the gnostic and the lover and said: "The gnostic, if he speaks, is lost, and the lover, if he is silent, is lost."⁶ It is Shibli's lines also that al-Ghazālī quotes on Love:

"Verily love to the All-Merciful has intoxicated me:
Have you seen any lover who was not intoxicated?"⁷

¹ *Mukāshafat al-Qulūb*, p. 138.

² *Iḥyā*, II, p. 202.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 67.

⁴ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 286. Cf. also *Iḥyā*, III, pp. 57, 73, 182, 296. IV, pp. 48, 67, 292.

⁵ Cf. L. Massignon, *Textes Inédits*, pp. 77 ff.

⁶ *Mukāshafat al-Qulūb*, p. 221. *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 308.

⁷ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 300. cf. p. 109 above.

al-Ghazālī made considerable use of the *Qūt al-Qulūb* of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (ob. 386/996), who taught in Mecca, Basra and Baghdad, and especially of his teaching on knowledge, both 'ilm and ma'rifa, and the learned (al-'ulamā). The truly learned, says Abū Ṭālib, are those who prefer the next world to this, and God to themselves, and he adds the story of the Israelite given also by al-Ghazālī (cf. p. 142 above), whose ideal of the truly wise ('ulamā al-ākhirā) corresponds to that of Abū Ṭālib.¹ Again Abū Ṭālib writes of the man wise in spiritual things (al-'ālim al-rabbānī), that one who knows and acts in accordance with his knowledge, and teaches men what is good, as "he who is called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." al-Ghazālī repeats the statement, adding that such a one is like the sun, which is luminous in itself and gives light to others.²

Knowledge is compared, by both Abū Ṭālib and al-Ghazālī, with a light which God "casts" into the heart.³ Abū Ṭālib distinguishes between outward knowledge ('ilm al-zāhir) and inward knowledge ('ilm al-bā'in), the former concerned with this world (al-mulk) and the latter with the world to come (al-malakūt), and the inner knowledge, he holds, is as superior to the outward as the invisible world to the visible. al-Ghazālī makes the same distinction between the inward and the outward knowledge, the former being that of the heart, which is concerned with the spiritual world and the latter that which is concerned with the sensible world. By *mulk* he says he means the visible world perceived by the senses and by *malakūt* the invisible world which is perceived by the light of insight. The heart, the instrument of inner knowledge, belongs to the world of *malakūt*, and the members, the instruments of outward knowledge, and their actions, belong to the world of *mulk*.⁴ al-Ghazālī owes something also to Abū Ṭālib's teaching on Contemplation (*mushāhada*) and the state of certainty (*yaqīn*), which is really the Unitive life, and he follows Abū Ṭālib in accepting as the foundations of this state of assured faith, repentance, patience, gratitude,

¹ *Qūt al-Qulūb*, II, p. 11. Cf. *Ihyā*, II, p. 213, I, p. 11.
² *Qūt al-Qulūb*, II, p. 12. *Ihyā*, I, p. 49. Cf. Matt, V, 19.
³ *Qūt*, I, p. 197. *Munqidh*, p. 5.
⁴ *Qūt*, I, p. 200, II, p. 32, III, p. 106. *Ihyā*, I, p. 107. III, p. 311. IV, p. 216. *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 122 ff. *Fatāḥat al-'Ulūm*, p. 40. *Imlā'* pp. 216 ff.

hope, fear, asceticism (*zuhd*), trust, satisfaction and love, that is, love of the Divine Beloved.⁵

al-Ghazālī was also acquainted with the work of the historian of early Ṣūfism, Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī of Nishāpūr ob. 410/1021), whose *Tafsīr* (*Kitāb Haqā'iq al-Tafsīr*), he mentions⁶ and whose *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya* he may also have consulted, for the sayings of the Ṣūfis.

al-Ghazālī refers to the well-known writer on Ṣūfism, Abu'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (ob. 465/1074), a disciple of al-Sulamī, who taught at Baghdad and had been the teacher of one of al-Ghazālī's early instructors in Ṣūfism (cf. p. 17 above), so that al-Ghazālī would certainly have been brought into contact with Qushayrī's writings, and he does, in fact, make considerable use of *al-Risālat al-Qushayriyya*. This is notably the case in regard to his teaching on Music. al-Ghazālī's quotations from the older authorities, including al-Shāfi'ī, are found in Qushayrī's chapter on the subject,⁷ and also some of his examples of the power of music to affect even the animals, including the story of Raqqī and the black slave (cf. p. 86 above).⁸ Qushayrī had already made use of Junayd's remark that time, place and company should be taken into account in listening to music and had divided listeners into different classes, of whom the highest were the gnostics.⁹ Qushayrī, too, had quoted the saying of Abū Sulaymān that "A beautiful sound does not bring anything (fresh) into the heart, it only stirs up what is already in the heart." al-Ghazālī also states: "When the heart is moved (by music) what is manifested is only what it already contains as from a vessel there drips only what is in it."¹⁰ al-Ghazālī seems to be indebted, to some extent, to Qushayrī, for his teaching on ecstasy (*wajd*).¹¹

Qushayrī compares the Divine revelation which comes to those who are waiting in expectation for it, to flashes of light (*lawā'ih*), then rays of light (*tawālī'*), then the light shining in its full splendour (*lawāmi'*) and he quotes the lines:

⁵ *Qūt*, I, p. 200. III, p. 74. *Ihyā*, I, pp. 48, 64, 66, 107. IV, passim.
⁶ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 23.
⁷ *Risāla*, p. 152. Cf. *Ihyā*, II, p. 237.
⁸ *Risāla*, p. 153. *Ihyā*, II, p. 243.
⁹ *Risāla*, pp. 154 ff. *Ihyā*, II, pp. 265, 269.
¹⁰ *Risāla*, p. 157. *Ihyā*, II, p. 237, 246.
¹¹ *Risāla*, p. 34. *Ihyā*, II, pp. 246, 257.

"O lightning which flashes forth : from which horizon of the heavens dost thou shine ?
First come the flashes, then the rays, then the full splendour like a radiant light,
Manifest only to those who are veiled."

The rays of light, he says, are clearer than the flashes and do not disappear so speedily, and the light in its splendour remains longer still and is stronger and endures for a longer time. So also al-Ghazālī says that from behind the veil of the invisible world God causes knowledge to shine in men's hearts, sometimes like a dazzling flash of lightning, sometimes like a succession of lights, sometimes, but rarely, remaining.¹ Many other examples could be found showing the extent to which al-Ghazālī has availed himself of Qushayrī's work and borrowed his illustrations.

al-Ghazālī evidently made a close study of the Persian writer Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī, who was contemporary with Qushayrī, and died a year or two later, probably between 465/1074 and 469/1078. Hujwīrī travelled widely, visiting Damascus and Tūs in the course of his travels, and settled for a while in 'Irāq. He wrote a number of mystical works, including the *Kashf al-Mahjūb* (The Unveiling of the Veiled) and this is the book of which al-Ghazālī makes use. Hujwīrī divided the Way to God into three stages, and those who have reached these stages may be characterised by *waqt* (or *maqām*), *hāl*, and *tamkīn*. *Hāl*, he says, is that "which descends upon *waqt* and adorns it, as the spirit adorns the body." The one who is still in the stage of *waqt* has need to advance to the stage of *hāl*, for then he is no more subject to change and is made steadfast. "The possessor of *waqt* may become forgetful, but the possessor of *hāl* cannot possibly be so." He who has attained to *hāl* does not speak of his state, but his actions speak of its reality. The world is sometimes a place of tribulation to the owner of *waqt* because he is absent from his Beloved and distressed by his loss, but it makes no difference to the possessor of *hāl* whether he is subject to affliction or in a state of happiness, "for he is always in the place of actual vision." *Hāl* is an attribute of the object sought (*murād*), while *waqt* (or *maqām*) is the rank of the seeker (*murīd*).

¹ *Risāla*, p. 40. *Ihyā*, III, p. 16.

Tamkīn is the last of the stages, beyond which it is impossible to pass, because it is "repose within the shrine," and those who attain to *tamkīn* are of two classes, one which retains the attributes of the self, i.e., still has some individual personality, but the other has no personal attributes, for one of this class is completely absorbed in the contemplation of God (*shāhid al-Haqq*).¹

al-Ghazālī, in his *Rawḍat al-Tālibīn* (the Garden of the Seekers) and his *Mishkāṭ al-Anwār* (The Niche for Lights), makes use of these conceptions and the terms employed by Hujwīrī. He also divides those who follow the Ṣūfī Path into three classes, the seeker (*murīd*), who is the possessor of *waqt*, the traveller, who is the owner of *hāl*, and the one who has attained, who is possessed of *tamkīn*, for he has passed beyond the possibility of changes and stations and states.² Again, in his *Mishkāṭ al-Anwār*, al-Ghazālī divides those who attain into two classes, those with whom things seen are obliterated, but not the seeing soul, and those who are themselves obliterated and annihilated, for they have passed away from self.³

Hujwīrī writes of knowing God by means of His attributes of Beauty (*jamāl*) and Majesty (*jalāl*) and says that those who know Him through His beauty are always longing for vision, and longing is the result of love, while those who know Him through His Majesty are filled with awe. Again he writes: "When God manifests His glory to a man's heart, so that His Majesty prevails, he feels awe, but when God's Beauty predominates, he feels intimacy—"There is a difference," he adds, "between one who is burned by His Majesty in the fire of love and one who is illuminated by His Beauty in the light of contemplation."⁴ al-Ghazālī also notes that the realisation of the Majesty of God causes awe, while the contemplation of His Beauty produces love and longing, and he develops the theme in much the same way as his predecessor.⁵

Much, too, of al-Ghazālī's teaching on Audition and Music seems to be based on what Hujwīrī had already set forth.

¹ *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, pp. 369 ff.

² *Rawḍat al-Tālibīn*, p. 145. Cf. also Chapters X, XI, XII below.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 144.

⁴ *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, pp. 288, 376.

⁵ *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 287, 291. *Rawḍat al-Tālibīn*, p. 163. Cf. p. 138 below.

Hujwīrī also gives a story of Ibrāhīm Khawwās and a slave whose beautiful voice so affected the camels of which he had charge that they hastened their pace to the point of exhaustion and so died, a story identical in its details with that related by al-Ghazālī of Abū Bakr al-Dīnawārī.¹ al-Hujwīrī also gives the legend of David in much greater detail, stating that God made him His vicegerent and gave him a voice so melodious that the wild beasts and the birds came from mountain and plain to hear him, and the streams ceased to flow and the birds fell from the air to the ground. For the space of a month the people who had gathered round him in the desert ate no food, while the children neither wept nor asked for milk. Many died from the ecstasy which resulted from listening to his voice, the number of the dead at one time amounting to seven hundred maidens and twelve thousand old men. Then God, wishing to distinguish between those who merely listened to the voice and those who listened to the spiritual significance of what was sung, allowed Iblīs to do what he would. Iblīs constructed a mandoline and a flute and established himself opposite David, as he sang, and the audience were straight way divided into the blest and the damned: the latter listened to the music of Iblīs, but the former to the voice of David, being conscious of nothing else, for they saw God alone. al-Ghazālī gives this legend, but in a much attenuated form.²

Many Ṣūfī terms are used by al-Ghazālī in the same sense as Hujwīrī and often interpreted by him in a way which leaves no doubt that he owes the interpretation also to the earlier writer.

From all these varied sources, then, al-Ghazālī derived ideas and terminology and inspiration, threads which were woven into the texture of his own developed doctrine of mysticism, which, while based upon the foundations laid by the mystics of other times and spheres, yet owed much of its outward form to his own outstanding genius, and in its essence, owed still more to his own personal experience of treading the mystic Path which had led him to God.

¹ *Kashf*, p. 400. *Iḥyā*, II, p. 243. Cf. p. 85 above.
² *Kashf*, p. 402. *Iḥyā*, II, p. 239.

CHAPTER IX

*The Nature of the Godhead. The human soul and its origin.
 God and the soul of man.*

al-Ghazālī's mystical teaching, like that of other mystics, is based on his doctrine of the nature of the Godhead, his conception of the human soul, and his view of the relationship between God and the soul, and its implications.

In a passage in the *Iḥyā*, which is justly famed, he sets forth in full his doctrine of the Godhead: "Praise be to God, the Creator and restorer of all things, Who does what He wills, Lord of the Glorious Throne, the Almighty, Who guides His chosen servants into the right path and the straight road, Who blesses those who acknowledge His Unity, by preserving their faith from the darkness of doubt . . . to them hath He made known that in His Essence He is One, without partner. Unique, there is none like unto Him, Eternal, none resembling Him, set apart and having no equal. He is One, the Ancient of Days, without prior, Eternal, having no beginning, Everlasting, having no end, continuing for evermore. He abides, never ceasing to be: He remains and shall never be cut off; He has never ceased, nor shall cease, to be described by glorious attributes. He is the First and the Last, the Transcendent and Immanent, Whose wisdom extendeth over all.

He is neither body nor substance nor accident. He cannot be likened to anything that exists nor is anything like unto Him, nor is He contained by the earth or the heavens, for He is exalted far above the earth and the dust thereof. Yet is He near unto everything that exists, "nearer to His servant than the jugular vein."¹ He oversees all things: He is exalted beyond the limitations of space and time, for He was before time and space were created and He is, now, as He always was. The fact of His existence is apprehended by men's reason and He will be seen as He is by that gift of spiritual vision, which He will grant

¹ *Sūra*, L, 15.

unto the righteous, in the Abode of Eternity, when their beatitude shall be made perfect by the Vision of His Gracious Countenance. He is the Exalted, Almighty, Puissant, Supreme, Who slumbereth not nor sleepeth, neither mortality nor death have dominion over Him. His is the power and the kingdom and the glory and the majesty, and to Him belongs creation and the rule over what He has created: He alone is the Giver of Life.

He is Omniscient, for His Knowledge encompasseth all things, from the deepest depths of the earth to the highest heights of the heavens; not the smallest atom in the earth or the heavens but is known unto Him, yea, He is aware of how the ants creep upon the hard rock in the darkness of the night; He perceives the movement of the mote in the ether; He beholds the thoughts which pass through the minds of men, and the range of their fancies, and the secrets of their hearts, by His knowledge, which was from aforetime.

"All that is other than Him, men and genii, angels and Satan, the heavens and the earth, animals, plants, inorganic matter, substance and accident, what is intelligible and what is sensible, all were created by His power out of non-existence. He brought them into being, when as yet they had no being, for from eternity He alone existed and there was no other with Him.¹

"But then He chose to create all things that His power might be manifested forth for the establishment of what He had willed aforetime and the fulfilment of His eternal Word. It was not that He had need of them or that they fulfilled anything lacking (to Him), but for the showing-forth of His glory in the work of creation and of bringing into existence by the Word of His power, not on account of any obligation on His part . . . but out of His unfailing grace and living-kindness. But since service is due to Him from His creatures, for He has declared that to be necessary by the tongues of His prophets, He has not left it

¹ Cf. the Persian mystic Jāmi:

"In solitude, where Being signless dwelt,
And all the Universe still dormant lay,
Concealed in selflessness, One Being was
Exempt from "I," or "Thou"-ness and apart
From all duality: Beauty Supreme,
Unmanifest, except unto Itself."

Yūsuf u Zulaykha (tran. E. G. Browne.)

simply to their understanding, but has sent His messengers and has witnessed to their veracity by manifest miracles . . . and men ought to accept their word in what they relate."¹

Every creature, al-Ghazālī argues, has need of a Creator, to bring it into existence and to keep it alive and to maintain its endowments and to control its actions—by its very need of Him, the creature bears witness to its Creator.² This world bears witness to its Maker and His power, because there is evidence of judgment and organisation in its creation, for, says al-Ghazālī, anyone who sees a robe of brocade, beautifully woven and fashioned appropriately to the embroidery and the trimming, and then imagines that it is the work of something inanimate, without skill or capacity, must be devoid of reasoning power, and a fool.³

In passage after passage, al-Ghazālī insists on the unity of Being, that everything in existence apart from God is His handiwork, His creation, and as such manifests forth His wisdom and His might and His glory and His greatness. "There is no particle in the heavens or the earth," he declares, "which does not bear some kind of witness to the Unicity of God, which is their acknowledgment of the Unity. They witness, in their different spheres, to the holiness of their Maker, by their praise of Him, but men do not understand their praises, for they do not pass beyond the narrow limits of hearing with the outward ear to the wide scope of hearing with the inward ear, nor beyond the stuttering accents of the speaker's tongue to the eloquence of the tongue of the spiritual state. If every weakling (among human beings) were able to do this, Solomon would not be alone in his ability to understand the speech of the birds, nor Moses in being able to hear the very Voice of God."⁴

One of al-Ghazālī's books is expressly devoted to showing how the Eternal Wisdom has been manifested in the wonders of the Divine creation. "If you reflect upon this world," he says, "you will find it to be like a house, well-built, within which has been prepared all that is necessary: for roof, the heavens have been raised above it, and the earth has been spread out as

¹ *Ihyā*, I, pp. 79 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 371, II, p. 219.

a carpet for it. The stars are ranged in their order to serve it as lamps, and material things are laid up within it as provisions. All that is prepared, ready to serve its purpose, and man is like the owner of the house, to whom has been given all that is in it, prepared for his needs, sent for his benefit. The heavens have been created of the colour which is the most vivid suited for the eyes of men, and fitted to strengthen them: had the heavens consisted of sunbeams or pure light, men could not have borne to look upon them without suffering injury. Now kings paint pictures upon the ceilings of their dwellings and decorate them, in order that the sight of them may give pleasure and enjoyment, but those who look at them repeatedly grow weary of the sight and cease to enjoy them. Not so with the heavens and their adornment, for kings and lesser mortals, when vexed by annoyances, take refuge in enjoying the contemplation of the sky and its great expanse. Indeed, wise men say that you will be given peace and happiness in your home in proportion to what you have of heaven in it." al-Ghazālī quotes also the statement that looking upon the vault of heaven brings ten benefits, it dispels anxiety, it diminishes Satanic suggestions, removes imaginary fears, reminds us of God, increases the heart's reverence for Him, banishes evil thoughts, prevents melancholy, consoles the one who yearns for re-union with the absent, brings joy to lovers, and is the direction towards which look all who pray.¹

The sun, too, is a witness to the wisdom and lovingkindness of the Creator, for how could men enjoy life, asks al-Ghazālī, if they were to lose its light and the benefits it brings? But for the brilliant light which it gives, men's eyes would be of no service to them, for they could not distinguish between different colours. What wisdom, too, is shown forth in its setting as well as in its rising, since thereby men and beasts find rest and relief from continuous heat.²

¹ *al-Hikmat fī Makhlūqāt Allāh*, pp. 2, 3. Cf. Psalm XIX, 1, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork": and the words of a modern writer: "There are star-lit nights which . . . sober the mind with a sudden sense of the march of eternal truth," and he adds: "Perhaps it is one of our simple duties to walk abroad at night, when the world is hushed." Ernest Barker, *The Spectator*, November 25th, 1938.

² *al-Hikmat fī Makhlūqāt Allāh*, pp. 3, 4.

Again al-Ghazālī considers the benefit resulting from the succession of the four seasons. In the winter, he points out, the heat "returns" into the trees and plants and there produces in them the substance which will later develop into their fruits. The air in winter becomes laden with moisture and thence come clouds and the rain, which is good for the brute-creation and for all the works of Nature. In the Spring Nature awakes once more and, by God's grace, the plants reappear, and the trees break into blossom, while summer and autumn bring the ripening of the fruits of the earth.

Within the sea are to be found the likenesses of what is in the earth and for these, too, the Creator has made provision for all their needs. "Behold," says al-Ghazālī, "how God created the round pearl in its shell beneath the water and fixed the coral on the side of the rocks within the sea." Strange, indeed, that any can be heedless of the grace of God as shown forth in all this, whether considered as a whole or in detail.¹

al-Ghazālī points also to the wonders of God's creation as exemplified in the birds—with tail created to serve as a rudder to keep the bird on its course—in fish and reptile, who have little power to save themselves from danger, but are equipped with hard shells as a protection—in animals created with the instinct to sham death in order to avoid capture, or with the power to adapt their colour to their environment, like the chameleon—in insects endowed with the foresight to store their food like the ant, or, like the bee, to take nectar from the flowers and transform it into honey, as nourishment for themselves and a remedy for man, and the gnat, so minute, yet so perfectly fashioned that all the inhabitants of the universe, celestial and terrestrial, could not have conceived of it and cannot penetrate the mysteries of its being. All these show the wisdom of the Creator manifested in His handiwork and His care for the needs of His creatures.²

It is quite clear, therefore, to al-Ghazālī that man has only to look around him to realise that the existence and attributes of God are shown forth in His universe. "All that we behold and

¹ *al-Hikmat fī Makhlūqāt Allāh*, pp. 5, 12, 13.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 36 ff. *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 376 ff.

perceive by our senses, outward and inward," he writes, "bears irrefutable witness to the existence of God and His power and His knowledge and the rest of His attributes, the stone and the clod, plant and tree and living creatures, earth and star, land and sea, fire and air, substance and accident. Indeed, we ourselves are the chief witness to Him—but just as the bat sees only at night, when the light is veiled by the darkness and cannot therefore see in the daytime because of the weakness of its sight, which is dazzled by the full light of the sun, so also the human mind is too weak to behold the full glory of the Divine Majesty."¹

al-Ghazālī gives a mystical interpretation of certain of the Beautiful Names of God (the Divine Attributes) which might seem to be contradictory, since He is called the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden. He is the First, he says, in relation to existent things, since all have emanated from Him in their order, one after another, and He is the Last in relation to the course of those who are journeying towards Him, for they continue to advance from stage to stage until at last they reach their goal, that Presence, which is the end of the journey, so that He is the Last in respect of contemplation and the First in respect of existence. He is Hidden in relation to those who dwell in the phenomenal world, who seek to apprehend Him by means of the senses only, Manifest in relation to that one who seeks Him within a heart enlightened by that inner vision which penetrates the Invisible World.²

To al-Ghazālī, therefore, God is Transcendent and Immanent, the Creator and the Sole Cause of all existence, the Prime Mover of all things, and the Eternal Wisdom. He is also Supreme Beauty, for just as beauty in the works of men, the poet's verses, the painter's picture, the author's writings, the architect's buildings, indicate the inner beauty of their genius and conceptions—for only from beauty can beauty come forth—so also the beauty and perfection of the works of God show that He is Perfect Beauty, the most radiant and most glorious Existence that can be conceived, and indeed, possessed of a Beauty that is

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 275.

² *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 217, 218.

beyond man's conception.¹ al-Ghazālī writes of the love of the servant which is aroused by the Beauty and the Majesty of God: "The joy of contemplating the Divine Beauty," he says "is that to which the Apostle referred when he declared that God had said: 'I have prepared for My righteous servants what eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath entered into the heart of man'."² The realisation of the Divine Majesty brings awe to the servant's heart, but the contemplation of the Divine Beauty fills his heart with love and that servant is always seeking to penetrate the veil of the invisible and to look upon the All-Beautiful. The meaning of fellowship with God is the heart's joy and delight in the contemplation of His Beauty.³ It is the Eternal Beauty, of limitless perfection, seen only with the spiritual eye, more satisfying than all the beauties of this world, which are but a manifestation of that Absolute Beauty.⁴

al-Ghazālī also conceives of God as Light, which is the source, as it is the condition, of life and action, of beauty and joy, which he associated, as already noted, with wisdom and knowledge.⁵ Since, in the physical sphere, light is the embodiment of glory and splendour, and in the intellectual and ethical sphere, represents purity and holiness and truth, it is fitting, in his eyes, to think of God as Light. Moreover, Light, by its very nature, must manifest itself in enlightenment, and so it is, too, with the Divine Light. "All existent things in this world," al-Ghazālī declares, "result from the power of God and are enlightened by the Light of His Essence, for in truth there is no darkness more intense than non-existence and no light more evident than existence and all things are a ray of the Essential Light of God, the High, the Holy, since all things are maintained in existence by the Self-Subsistent, just as the light of material bodies is

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 259 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 267.

³ *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 287, 291.

⁴ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 300. *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p. 144. Cf. Jāmī,

"Each speck of matter did He constitute

A mirror, causing each one to reflect

The beauty of His visage . . .

His Beauty everywhere doth shew itself

And through the forms of earthly beauties shines

Obscured as through a veil."

Yūsuf u Zulaykha (tr. F. G. Browne)

⁵ Cf. p. 108 above.

maintained by the light of the sun, which is radiant in itself. Whenever part of the sun is eclipsed, it is customary to place a bowl of water in which the sun is reflected, so that it may be possible to look at it, the water being the means which enables the eyes to bear the sight of a small part of the sun's light. So also the works of God are a means by which we can contemplate the Attributes of Him Who made them, and we are not dazzled by that Essential Splendour, when we see it at a distance in His works.¹ The one Real Light (*al-Nūr al-Haqq*), therefore, is God Himself, for all other lights are but partial rays or reflections of His light, imperfect, transitory and incomplete, non-existent apart from Him. "The term 'light' applied to any but Him is merely metaphorical, without real meaning—God is the highest and ultimate Light. . . . He alone is the True, the Real Light and apart from Him there is no light at all."² The lesser lights, heavenly and earthly, which are derived from Him, are of different grades, for which an analogy can be found in the phenomenal world, by one who perceives the moonlight entering through the window of the house, and falling upon a mirror fixed upon a wall, from which the light is reflected upon the opposite wall and thence reflected upon the floor, so that the floor is illuminated by it. It is evident that the light upon the floor comes from that upon the wall, and the light upon the wall from that in the mirror and the light in the mirror from the moonlight and the light of the moon from the light of the sun, for it is the sun's light which shines upon the moon. So also the lights of the heavens and the earth rise in gradation, but not in an endless series, for they ascend to the First Source, Who is Light in, and through, Himself, for no light comes upon Him from anything else, and from Him all lights receive their light in their different grades. "The term 'light,' therefore," al-Ghazālī concludes: "can worthily be applied only to Ultimate Light, above Whom is no light and from Whom light descends upon all else."³

We have seen that al-Ghazālī compares non-existence with

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 370.

² *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 100 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 110 ff. Cf. p. 108 above.

darkness and existence with Light. Existence can be divided into that which is self-existent and that which derives its existence from another: this latter only borrows its existence, it cannot exist by itself, and this is not real existence at all. So, therefore, if the One Real Light is God, He, and He alone, is Real Being.¹ "The real meaning of Deity," al-Ghazālī writes, "is Unity in perfection and Unicity in existence in the way of absolute sovereignty, and He Who is Unique in existence is God, since there is none other co-existent with Him, apart from Him, for what is other than Him proceeds from His power, it has no subsistence in itself, but subsists through Him." Again he writes: "The world invisible includes mysteries hidden from the vision of the eyes, which are fitted only to perceive what is visible, and the sum total of the visible and invisible worlds considered as a whole is called the Divine Presence (*Ḥaḍrat al-Rubūbiyya*) which encompasses all existent things, since there is nothing existent save God and His works and His kingdom and His servants, who are His handiwork."²

God, to al-Ghazālī, then, is the First Cause, the Final Source, the Eternal Wisdom, Beauty Supreme, Unclouded Light, the One Ultimate Reality.³

In his teaching on the human soul and its relation to God, al-Ghazālī maintains, like other mystics, that it was pre-existent, before its attachment to a material body, that it has something of the Divine within it, and is immortal. He gives it different names—soul, spirit, heart—and points out that by the philosophers it was called "the rational soul" (*al-naḥs al-nāḥs*) in the Qur'ān it is called "the tranquillised soul" (*al-naḥs al-muṭma'inna*) and "the spirit which is of the *amr* of God" (*al-rūḥ min amr rabbī*),⁴ by the Sūfis the "spirit" and the

¹ *Mishkāt*, p. 113.

² *al-Munāwī*, *op. cit.*, fol. 107 b. *Ihyā*, III, p. 13.

³ Cf. a modern writer: "I mean the 'living God,' the might, the mind, the beauty, the will, the goodness in and through all things and all persons and at the heart of the world: I mean that which constitutes Unity: I mean that which comprehends into itself and is the Source of all precious values, being greater and not less for having attributes. . . . We do better to call this innermost Reality by lovely names, inasmuch as we surmise that all splendid thoughts come from its prompting. . . . We call it Life and Light and Love: we call it Eternal and the Father of our spirits." C. F. Dale, *The Hibbert Journal*, April, 1914.

⁴ *Sūras LXXXIX*, 27. XVII, 87.

"heart" but all mean the same things, which is the real essence of man (*haqīqat al-Ādamī*), that which differentiates him from the lower creation.¹ "The glory of man and his excellence, whereby he surpasses all other creatures in being receptive of the knowledge of God Most Glorious, which is this world is his adornment and his perfection and his excellence, and in the world to come is his equipment and his treasure, is his heart, for by it alone can he receive knowledge. For the heart is that which knows God, which approaches unto Him, which works for God and strives after Him, that to which revelation is made of the things of God."²

The human soul, al-Ghazālī teaches, is possessed of five faculties or "spirits" (*arwāh*): the Sensory faculty, which receives information conveyed by the senses: the Imagination, which records this information; the Intelligence (*al-rūh al-'aqlī*) which apprehends what is beyond the capacity of the senses and the imagination; the Reasoning power (*al-rūh al-fikrī*) which, from the data of pure reason, deduces fresh knowledge, and lastly the Divine prophetic spirit, which belongs to the prophets and the saints, by means of which the soul receives the revelation of the Invisible and attains to a knowledge of God Himself.³

The tradition states that "he who knows himself knows his Lord," and al-Ghazālī does not hesitate to draw the conclusion that the soul is itself Divine in its origin; it knows God, because it is godlike. The spirit of man is "of the *amr* of God" and *amr* has a deeper meaning than that of "command"; it is rather the Divine Spirit.⁴ There are two worlds, says al-Ghazālī, the world of creation (*khalq*) and the world of *amr* and both belong to God. All that is material belongs to the phenomenal world of created things and is subject to modality and dimension, and sensible things have no real existence, but all that is free from modality and dimension, all that has real existence, belongs to the spiritual world, the world of *amr* and this is the sphere of the human soul. It, like all else belonging to that world,

¹ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, pp. 26 ff. *Ma'ārij al-Quds*, p. 11.

² *Ihyā*, III, p. 2. *Kīmiyā al-Sa'āda*, p. 6.

³ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 131, 132.

⁴ Cf. p. 107 above.

is abiding, eternal, self-subsistent, incorruptible.¹ The secret self, man's inward part (*sirr al-qalb*) al-Ghazālī states elsewhere, is a Divine thing, a ray from the Light of God, a spark from the Eternal Flame, and within it, and to it, is revealed the Ultimate Reality, the image of the Whole, so that it, too, is filled with the Divine Light and manifests it forth.² Again he speaks of the human soul as Divine in origin (*min al-umūr al-Ālihiyya*), more glorious and exalted than vile bodies.³ The body is a type of the lower world and the spirit is a type of the higher world. The rational soul is like a governor who organises and controls and rules and issues commands and prohibitions and does what he wills in effacing and confirming: it is the vicegerent of God in the sphere of the body and the Word of God in relation to the gross outward form. It is the Divine bridge stretched between the brutes who are unmixed evil and the angels who are unmixed good. As it descended from the Heavens so it will re-ascend thither and at the last pass away into the Divine Majesty.⁴

The human soul is enabled to see and perceive Divine Reality by means of a spiritual sense called intuition, which goes beyond reason. Personality, al-Ghazālī holds, includes the outward form and the inward character or self since man is composed of a body which perceives by the vision of the eyes, and of spirit and soul which perceives by the insight: both have an appearance and a form, either foul or fair, and the soul which perceives by means of the insight is of greater value than the body which perceives by means of the eyes.⁵ "Certain of the Sūfis maintain," writes al-Ghazālī, "that the heart possesses an organ of sight like the body, and outward things are seen with the outward eye and inward realities with the eye of the mind. The Apostle said: 'Every servant has two eyes in his heart,' and they are eyes by which he perceives the Invisible, and when God wishes well to one of His servants He opens the eyes of his heart, so that he may see what is hidden from his outward

¹ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 29. *Ihyā*, II, p. 200. III, pp. 326 ff. *Kitāb al-Arba'in*, p. 53. Cf. *al-Maḍnūn al-Ṣaghīr*, pp. 4, 9.

² *al-Munāwī*, *op. cit.*, fol. 198a. *Ihyā*, III, p. 350.

³ *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 18.

⁴ *al-Mu'ārif al-'Aqliyya*, fol. 9b. *al-Maḍnūn al-Ṣaghīr*, p. 9.

⁵ *Ihyā*, III, p. 46.

sight." The spiritually-minded (*arbāb al-qulūb*) see with the inward eye more clearly than with the outward eyes, for the latter may be at fault, seeing what is far-off as near and the large as small, but the spiritual insight cannot be at fault. Each of these eyes, the outward and the inner has a sun and a light, whereby its vision is perfected, one of these lights is external, belonging to the material world, to wit, the sun, and the other internal, belonging to the spiritual world, and it is the Word of God.¹ The veil of man's lusts and his worldly pre-occupations prevent him from seeing anything of the unseen Divine world, so long as the veil is not withdrawn from the eye of his heart, but when it is withdrawn, as in the case of God's elect, then undoubtedly man can look upon that Divine world and contemplate its wonders.²

There is, too, an "inward hearing." What is heard with the "outward hearing" is only sound and man shares that faculty with the rest of the animals, but by the "inward hearing" (*al-samā' al-bāṭin*) he can hear and comprehend the spiritual meaning which lies beyond outward speech. To the man whose spiritual hearing is dulled, the song of the birds, the noise of the waves and the sighing of the wind, are mere sounds, but to that one whose spiritual hearing is alert, they are all bearing witness to the Unicity of God and praising Him with eloquent tongue.³ This inward perception, which is intuition (*al-baṣīrat al-bāṭina*) finds its satisfaction in what is invisible, inaudible, to the outward senses—in the things which are not temporal, but eternal.⁴ The heart, therefore, has two gates, one opening outwards, which is that of the senses, and one opening inwards, towards the Divine world, which is within the heart, and that is the gate whereby it receives inspiration and revelation.⁵

Like other mystics, both Christian and Ṣūfī, al-Ghazālī compares the human heart or soul, to a mirror. The human soul, he says,

¹ *al-Risālat al-Ladūniyya*, p. 30. *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 26. *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p. 108. Cf. a present-day writer on mysticism: "What we need to acquire is the seeing eye that sees through the visible and temporal, in clairvoyant fashion, and discovers the eternal and spiritual here and now revealed in the midst of time and things." R. Jones, *New Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 86.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 431.

³ *Iḥyā*, II, pp. 218, 219.

⁴ *Kitāb al-Arba'in*, p. 251.

⁵ *Iḥyā*, III, p. 22. *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 21.

is a mirror able to reflect the truth and its perfection, and that by which it is distinguished from all the lower animals, consists in this aptitude, but very often there is a veil over the mirror which hinders the reflection. Yet, as a veil may sometimes be removed by the hand and sometimes by the action of the wind moving it, so also the breezes of the Divine grace may blow, and raise the veil from men's hearts and reveal therein something of the Eternal Truth. That may happen in sleep and also in waking hours, when the veil is raised by God's favour, and there shines within the human heart something from behind the curtain of the Invisible. So to the inmost self Reality as a whole may be revealed so that the whole of existence is reflected in it and it comprehends the Universe.¹

The human soul, since it is Divine in its origin, the effect of the inbreathing of the Eternal Spirit, existed before the body to which it is temporarily attached while in this world, but with which it has no real affinity, the body being only its vehicle and instrument. The spirit itself is like a radiant sun and its light is dimmed only while it inhabits this temporal body, in which it is a stranger, but that sun will rise again when this body, which obscures its light, passes away.² In his *Qaṣīda al-Ta'iyya*, al-Ghazālī conceives of the soul as being one in essence with its Lord before it descended into this world for a period of affliction in the body. The death of the body means, for the soul, only a return to the state in which it was before it was abased.³ He quotes the words of the Prophet, to the effect that "Bodies are the cage of birds or the stable of beasts of burden," but the soul, when released from that cage, flies upwards to its own abode.⁴

This visible world is a road along which man journeys, but his native land and his permanent abode is the world invisible.

¹ *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 31. *Iḥyā*, III, pp. 16, 450. IV, p. 431. III, p. 450. This latter conception finds a curious parallel in the experience of the German mystic Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) who wrote: "I saw and knew the Being of all Beings, the Byss and the Abyss—the Descent and Origin of the World and—of all creatures through the Divine Wisdom. . . . In this Light my spirit suddenly saw through all and in and by all the creatures: it knew God Who He is and what His Will is." *The Aurora*, Chap. XIX.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 20. *al-Risālat al-Ladūniyya*, p. 30. *Ma'ārij al-Quds*, p. 130.

³ *Op. cit.*, I, 222, 233.

⁴ *al-Risālat al-Ladūniyya*, p. 10 and cf. p. 113 above.

This phenomenal world is like a sleep in relation to the Divine world! as the Prophet said: "Men are asleep and when they die, they awake." The realities of waking hours can be shown in sleep only by images and so what will come to pass in the awakening of the life to come is seen in the sleep of this world under an image, and things are seen only as types. When the soul returns to its Lord, it is awakened and knows the Reality of what was only typified before.¹

al-Ghazālī, therefore, believes in the immortality of the soul. "If the soul is not immortal then all of which we have been told and which we have experienced is vain."² He quotes the Qur'anic verse: "Say not of those who are slain for the sake of God that they are dead, nay, they are alive."³ The soul, being a simple essence, having real existence, a spiritual thing, Divine in nature, cannot be subject to corruption or mortality, and al-Ghazālī develops the argument with great subtlety, bringing it to a triumphant conclusion.⁴ Since the human soul is the sphere of faith and gnosis, death has no power over it. "The heart of the believer does not die and the knowledge he possesses at the time of his death is not obliterated and his state of purity is not defiled, and that is the meaning of the saying: 'The dust does not devour the abode of faith,' nay, rather death is a means of access and approach unto God."⁵ That sun, which was temporarily veiled by the body, must return to its Creator and Maker, either darkened and eclipsed, or shining and radiant, and the sun which shines with its pristine radiance will not be veiled from the Divine Presence.⁶ The soul which descended from its Divine Source to inhabit a body in this terrestrial world will ascend again to that higher world: "it will look towards its Source and unto Him it will return."⁷

¹ *Ihyā*, III, p. 9. IV, p. 21. Cf. St. Paul "Here we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." I Cor., xiii, 12.

² *Mī'rāj al-Sāliḥīn*, p. 23.

³ Sūra II, 149.

⁴ *Ma'ārij al-Quds*, pp. 126-134. Cf. *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 29.

⁵ *Ihyā*, III, p. 19.

⁶ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 26.

⁷ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 30. Cf. *Fāṭiḥat al-'Ulām*, p. 40.

CHAPTER X

The Beginning of the Ascent. The Creature and the Creator.

It is on this conception of the relation of the human soul to God that al-Ghazālī bases his teaching on the mystic Path, by which the soul ascends whence it came. He relates the saying of a certain gnostic who said that God has two secrets which He makes known to His servant. The first is revealed when he comes forth from his mother's womb and his Lord says unto him: "I have brought you forth into this world, pure and undefiled, and I have committed your life unto you and given it to you in trust, therefore look how you fulfil that trust and consider in what manner you will meet with Me hereafter." The second is revealed when the spirit returns to Him Who made it and He says: "My servant, what have you done with that which I committed unto you? Have you so preserved it that you can meet Me having fulfilled your trust, so that I can fulfil My promise unto you? Or have you so squandered it, that I must meet you with a claim against you for requital?"

The soul, then, belonging to the spiritual world, bearing the image of the Divine, a mirror able to reflect Reality, was pure (*salīm*) in its origin—"every child is born with an innate sense of religion," but through its association with a material body in this lower world, the soul has fallen from its high estate. The mirror has become tarnished and the pristine purity of the soul defiled: "that fair countenance has become disfigured by the dust and defilement of sin."¹

In considering the causes by which the human soul has become alienated from its Divine Source, al-Ghazālī has recourse to the tradition: "God hath Seventy Thousand Veils of Light and Darkness: were He to withdraw them, then would the glory of His Countenance consume every one who looked upon Him." al-Ghazālī considers that these veils vary according to the

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 11.

different natures of those veiled from the One Reality. The first class of these are veiled by Pure Darkness, the atheists who believe neither in God nor His Judgment, and these can be subdivided into those who regard Nature as the cause of this world, and those who are not concerned with causality, but with themselves. Their own selves and their dark lusts are the veil they establish between themselves and God. Of those who are veiled by self some make sensual pleasures their chief aim, others are ruled by the love of power, or riches, or personal renown. All of these are veiled from God by pure darkness, and they themselves are darkness.

The second class are those veiled by light mingled with darkness, and they are of three types. The first are those veiled by the darkness of the senses, all of whom have passed beyond mere absorption in themselves, for they look for a God and long for the knowledge of their Lord, the lowest rank of these being the idolaters and the highest the dualists. The idolaters make to themselves images of gold and silver and precious stones and regard these as gods, and they are veiled by the light of Glory and Beauty from the attributes of God and His Splendour, because they attached these attributes to material bodies, and the darkness of the senses has barred them from the Divine Light. Some tribes believe that their god must be something of great beauty, so if they see a beautiful human being, or tree or horse, they worship it as their god. They are veiled by the light of Beauty, mixed with the darkness of the senses. Others think that their god must be essential Light, but perceptible to the senses. They find that Fire answers to this description and they worship it as divine. These are veiled by the light of Might and Splendour, which really belong only to the Light of God. Others seek for what has absolute control and is exalted and sublime and so they put their faith in astrology and the influence of the stars. These are veiled by the light of Exaltation, of Radiance and Dominion, and these, too, come from the Divine Light alone. Another group hold that their deity must be the greatest of lights, so that they worship the sun, and these are veiled by the light of Grandeur. The last of

¹ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p. 139.

these maintain that their deity must have no partner in luminosity and so they worship Absolute Light, which includes all lights, and believe that Light strives with darkness, and these are the Dualists. There are also some in this second class who believe in the true God, but have false notions about Him, such as the anthropomorphists. All of these are veiled by light mingled with darkness.¹

The third class are veiled by pure light. They are free from anthropomorphism, for they know that the Divine attributes are beyond all human attributes, but yet they do not attain to the highest conception of the Divine Unity, which is that of the Unveiled, who attain to a Being Who transcends all that is comprehensible by sight or insight, for they find Him to be indescribable and inconceivable.²

It is to be noted that, while all the veils come between the soul and its vision of God, and all prevent it from recognising Him as He really is, the darkest of the veils are due to the self and its desires, so that the soul which is entirely self-centred and self indulgent, is farther away from God than the idolater or the Fire-worshipper or the Dualist, who at any rate recognise something higher and better than themselves and seek to worship it.

The purpose of the mystic, then, is to set the soul free from its fetters, to purify the heart, to polish the mirror, and so remove the veils between the soul and God, so that it may be able to return to its true home, to know God as He is and once more be united with its Source. This search of the soul for God is the greatest of all quests. "If he who seeks the King Supreme in the abode of Eternal Bliss possessed a thousand thousand souls and a thousand thousand lives, each like the life of this world and longer, and if he were to spend them all in this great quest, it would be little enough, and if he attained thereby to what he sought, he would have gained a Prize far beyond all he had given."³ Again al-Ghazālī prays for one of his disciples: "May God decree for you the search for the highest bliss; may He prepare you for the ascent to the highest height; may He

¹ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 140 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 144.

³ *Minhāj al-'Abidin*, p. 92.

anoint your inward vision with the light of Reality; may He empty your inmost self from all save His own Presence."¹

Since all the veils are due to a wrong conception of God, some setting up themselves and their lusts as gods, some worshipping His gifts instead of the Giver, others mistaking His true nature and attributes, the first step to be taken on the return to Him is for the soul to realise what is His real nature and what is its own relation to Him. It must acknowledge His transcendence as Creator and its own creatureliness and need. Those who neglect this task are no more intelligent than the ant which has made its home in a royal palace, the dwelling-place of fair maidens and noble youths, which is adorned with many rare and precious things. The ant, when it comes out of its hole, talks to its fellow-ants only of its home and its food and how to hoard it, but the beauties of the palace and the royal state are far beyond its consideration, it is concerned only with itself and its material needs. So, too, man, unmindful of his Creator and the heavens which are His dwelling-place, knows no more of them than the ant in the roof of his own house knows of him. But whereas the ant is incapable of understanding the palace and its rarities, man has the capacity to think upon the Divine world, and to recognise its wonders.²

Men are too apt, like the ant, to concern themselves with the means rather than the Final Cause. They think of the rain as being the means of the sprouting of the seed and its growth, and the clouds as being the cause of the rain, so, too, they think of the wind as causing the boat to sail on its course, but all of this is really polytheism and ignorance. The one who reflects on the real meaning of things realises that the wind must have some motive force behind it, and that has a further force behind it, which ultimately comes back to the First Movent, Who is not moved in Himself. If a man who has received a royal letter of pardon begins to think about the ink and the paper and the pen with which the pardon was written, and imagines that his deliverance is due to the pen, not to him who employs

¹ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p. 99.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 381.

it, he is guilty of the greatest folly. But he who realises that it is controlled by the king's hand, pays no attention to the pen, but gives thanks only to the writer. So, to the spiritually-minded man, every particle in the heavens and the earth has been made articulate by the Divine Power, so that these utter their praises to God Most High, while bearing witness to their own impotence. All things are holding secret and ceaseless converse with the Most High and to the spiritually-Minded they whisper the secrets of the King and His Kingdom, but only those who listen will hear.¹

"You ought to know yourself as you really are," al-Ghazālī writes, "so that you may understand of what nature you are and whence you have come to this world, and for what purpose you were created, and in what your happiness and your misery consist, for within you are combined the qualities of the animals and the wild beasts and the angels, but the spirit is your real essence and all beside it is, in fact, foreign to you. . . . So strive for the knowledge of your origin, so that you may know how to attain to the Divine Presence and the contemplation of the Divine Majesty and Beauty, and deliver yourself from the fetters of lust and passion . . . for God did not create you to be their captive, but that they should be your thralls, under your control, for the journey which is before you, to be your steed and your weapon, so that you may therewith pursue your happiness and then cast them under your feet."²

The true happiness of everything and its joy consists in its attainment of the perfection belonging to it. The perfection proper to man is his comprehension of the real meaning of things, and this goes beyond imagination or feeling, which the animals share with him. The soul within itself thirsts for this perfection and, through its innate religious feeling, is prepared for it, and is kept from it only by its pre-occupation with bodily desires, when these pre-dominate, but when a man gains control over them and the reason is freed from its servitude to the body, then he concerns himself with reflection upon the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, not more, upon himself and the

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, pp. 213, 214.

² *Kīmīyā al-Sa'āda*, pp. 4, 5.

wonders of his creation, and so attains to the perfection proper to him and to the joy of that attainment.¹

There are three stages on the Path which will lead the soul to re-union with its Source, the salvation which all desire—that of the novice or seeker (*al-murīd*) the creature conscious of its creatureliness and acknowledging the lordship of the Creator: that of the traveller, who is mid-way (*al-sā'ir*), the servant walking with his Lord: and that of the perfected gnostic, the one who has attained (*al-wāṣil*), the lover rejoicing in the Beloved.

The novice is concerned with the knowledge of himself and his Lord and its fruits, he is subject to *waqt*.² This stage means effort and toil, and the drinking of bitter draughts and the sacrifice of pleasure and the undertaking of what is a torment to the self.³ The novice can be greatly helped by a wise spiritual director, who is well acquainted with the defects of the self, and understands its secret sins, which he can make known to the novice, and he can help him to overcome them. "He who finds a Shaykh, a gnostic, wise, realising the faults of the self, compassionate, able to give counsel concerning the religious life, one who has accomplished the amendment of his own spiritual life, and is concerned with the amendment of God's servants—has found the physician for his ills. Let him cleave to that physician who will deliver him from the destruction with which he is threatened, for the heart is 'sick' if it cannot accomplish the work for which it was created, knowledge and wisdom and the love of God and His service and delight in the thought of Him, and the preference of that over every other object of desire."⁴

Repentance is the beginning of the Way and the "key of happiness" for the novice, for it means the return from alienation to proximity and it is based on faith, the conviction that there is no god but God. Faith appears as a spot of light in the heart and when it leads to doing that which is the will of God,

¹ *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 15.

² *Waqt* is defined by Tustarī as "search for knowledge of the state which exists between him and God in this world and hereafter." Cf. p. 131 above and Cf. Hujwīrī *Kashf*, p. 13(1).

³ *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, p. 145.

⁴ *Iḥyā*, III. pp. 55, 56, 54.

it grows and increases until the whole heart becomes bright. Then sin is seen to be poisonous and destructive, and godly fear and contrition give rise to the sincere desire for amendment of life, for the abandonment of sin in the present and the future, and for reparation for sins of the past. "Contrition," writes al-Ghazālī, "results from the realisation that sin intervenes between the sinner and the Beloved; it is the grief of the heart when it becomes aware of the absence of the Beloved."¹ So will repentance be made perfect, for the fire of contrition consumes the dross of sin and the light of good works obliterates the darkness of evil deeds.² The medicine of Repentance he describes as an electuary compounded of the sweetness of knowledge and the bitterness of patient endurance, just as oxymel combines the sweetness of sugar and the acidity of vinegar, each of which plays its part in the cure, when they are combined together.³

Repentance, he says elsewhere, consists of knowledge, feeling and action. The penitent has the knowledge that his heart has become veiled from its Beloved. He is like one upon whom the sun shines, after he has been in darkness, upon whom light is shed by the dispersal of the clouds, or the withdrawal of the veil, so that he is able to see his Beloved. He realises that he had been on the point of destruction, but the fires of love were kindled in his heart and stirred up his desire to arise and amend his life, to cast off "the garments of ill-faith" and to spread out the "carpet of good faith."⁴ The penitent can draw near unto God only by cutting off the heart's attachment to the vanities of this world and turning his face wholly towards God, seeking for fellowship with Him, and for love towards Him by the search for knowledge of His Majesty and His Beauty. Sin is the cause of alienation from God, but He is ever ready to accept the repentance of His creature. "When My servant calls unto Me, I answer him, and to him who seeks My forgiveness, I will not grudge it, for I am near at hand, ready to give ear unto his request." Al-Ghazālī, in this connection, quot

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 30.

² *Kitāb al-Arba'in*, p. 186. *Iḥyā*, I, p. 107. IV, p. 11.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 44.

⁴ i.e., in regard to his Lord. Cf. p. 147 above.

also the saying of Ibn Mas'ūd,¹ that Paradise has eight gates, all of which are sometimes open and sometimes shut, except the gate of Repentance, which has an angel in charge of it, and is never closed.²

Repentance is the realisation of the separation from God caused by sin, and it involves spiritual suffering greater than the physical suffering inflicted upon the body, by fire or sword, for while the destruction of the body means the separation of parts closely knit together, that which binds the soul to its Beloved is a still closer bond of union, and the pain of separation is the more intense. Those possessed of spiritual insight, whose eyes are open to their loss, feel this separation from God most keenly; others, less spiritually mature, feel it less, just as the boy, given the choice between the pain of being deprived of bat and ball, and deprivation of royal rank, does not feel the latter to be painful at all and says: "A spacious courtyard and the possession of bat and ball is dearer to me than a thousand thrones and the right to sit thereon."³

Now the penitent enters upon the contest between the impulse to what is spiritual and the impulse to what is sensual, and the battlefield is the human heart. He needs the patience which will enable him to stand fast by what is spiritual, in the face of what is sensual, and this is the first stage of patience, which means the abandonment of sensual desire.⁴ Sovereign power that is, the power to do what one wishes, is dear to all in this world and that is natural enough, al-Ghazālī feels, for lordship (*al-rubūbiyya*) is one of the attributes of God and is sought by the human heart because of its affinity with the Divine, but the Law and the Gospel and the Qur'ān and all inspired writings were sent simply to call mankind to a royal power, which is not earthly but eternal. Men are meant to be kings in this world and the next, but true royalty in this world means asceticism and the renunciation of it and contentment with but little therein, and royalty in the world to come is obtained through the approach unto God Most High, whereby man becomes immortal and

¹ One of the Companions of the Prophet, ob. 32/625, a great authority on the text of the Qur'ān.

² *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 3 ff. p. 13.

³ *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 22, 23.

⁴ *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 53, 58.

enters into a glory which does not pass away and joy unknown in this present life. Asceticism means that the seeker controls his passions and makes them subordinate to the spirit, through his faith, and this is sovereignty worthy of the name, since he who has it is set free from the bondage of the flesh, he is no longer a slave to lust. Those who strive to walk upon this road will be victorious both in this world and the next.¹

Asceticism, which al-Ghazālī considered to mean striving against the world, the flesh, and the devil,—like Repentance, includes knowledge, feeling and action. The ascetic, who renounces what is sensual and material, knows that what is abandoned is of small value in relation to what is gained, as the merchant knows that what he receives in exchange is better than what is sold, otherwise he would not sell. The ascetic knows that what is Divine is abiding and that the joy of the world to come is greater and more enduring than any pleasure in this world, just as, for example, precious stones are more valuable and more enduring than snow and it is no hardship for the owner of snow to sell it in exchange for precious stones and pearls. So it is with this world and the next, for this world is like snow placed in the sun, which continues to melt until it disappears altogether,² but the world to come is like a gem, which is imperishable, and he who is assured of that is prepared to sell all that he has for the sake of obtaining that treasure. Again al-Ghazālī compares the ascetic with one who is prevented from entering into the presence of the king, by a dog at the gate of the royal palace; to this dog he throws a morsel of bread and by thus distracting its attention, he is able to enter and approach the king, from whom he obtains all he desires. Will he consider that the morsel of bread thrown to the dog is to be compared in value with what he has obtained?

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 68.

² We are reminded of the lines of 'Umar Khayyām, a contemporary of al-Ghazālī, who met him at least once and was probably acquainted with his quatrains,

"The worldly hope men set their hearts upon,
Turns ashes—or it prospers and anon
Like snow upon the desert's dusty face
Lighting a little hour or two, is gone."

Cf. also the Parables of the Treasure hid in a field and the Pearl of Great Price. Matt. XIII, 44, 46.

Satan is like a dog at the door of the King of kings, hindering men from entering in—though the door is open and the curtain lifted—and this world is like that morsel of bread.¹

In this connection al-Ghazālī quotes the words of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who said of this world:

"It is as dreams when one sleepeth, or a fleeting shadow,
The wise are not deluded by such as these."

He tells also of an Arab who halted at an encampment, where food was set before him, and afterwards he went to sleep in the shade of one of the tents. They struck the tent, and the sun falling upon him roused him and he stood up and recited:

"Is not this world like the shadow of a mountain?
Assuredly one day your shade will vanish."²

So the seeker must be prepared for the sacrifice of everything which veils the heart from God, for the heart controls the outward conduct, and if it is corrupt, then his life and actions will be contrary to the will of God. When the walls of a house are illuminated by the fire-light, but the ceiling is dark and blackened with smoke, you know that the cause of the blackness differs from the cause of the light: so also, al-Ghazālī observes, what enlightens the heart is different from what darkens it: the former is celestial in origin and the latter a Satanic suggestion. It is by grace that the heart is enabled to receive what is good, and by the seductions of Iblīs that it welcomes what is evil. As Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī said: "A heart which is free from Satanic suggestions is like a house, by which thieves pass: if there is anything in it, they exercise their skill upon it, but if not, they go on their way and leave it alone. So also, if the heart is empty of lust, Satan does not enter it." The novice is like a traveller who finds himself, on a dark night, in the wilderness, where there are many obscure paths, and he cannot hope to find his way except by means of a discerning eye and the light of the sun, when it rises. What corresponds to the discerning eye is a heart cleansed by godly abstinence, and the rising sun is the knowledge which can be gained from the Word of God.³

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 381.

² *Iḥyā*, III, pp. 2, 23, 24, 27.

³ *Iḥyā*, III, p. 186.

Elsewhere al-Ghazālī compares the heart to a well which it is desired to purify from muddy water, so that the water which flows from it may be pure. Every heart which admits Satanic suggestions to poison the remembrance of God, has muddy water in it, which may be drained away at one side, but flows into it from the other, so that the owner's toil is fruitless. But the discerning man dams the course of the muddy water and allows only the clear water to rise in the well, that is, he gives his heart over to the remembrance of God alone.¹

The chief hindrances on this first stage of the Way are, therefore, the world, the flesh, i.e., the lower self, and Satan, and when the seeker, who seeks God alone, has accomplished the purification and amendment of the self and its qualities and has watched over his heart in order to purify it from all defilement, and is following the direct road, and the world is despised in his eyes and therefore he has renounced it; when he has detached his desire from the creatures and does not turn towards them—for his heart is concerned only with God Most High and joy in the remembrance of Him, and in prayer to Him, and the longing to meet with Him—then Satan cannot seduce him with worldly temptations or selfish desires for Satan no longer has any power over him.² Ṣūfism, said one of the Ṣūfis, is a matter of character, and beauty of character means that evil has been put away and good has taken its place.

The novice is now ready to pass on to the next stage, for the soul has been freed of its fetters, the veils of darkness have been rent, the mirror has been cleansed of its rust, brightened and polished. In reference to this first stage, which is the purgative life, and its fruits, al-Ghazālī relates a beautiful allegory, which tells how the Chinese and the Greeks came into the presence of a certain king and vied with one another in boasting of their great skill in drawing and painting. So the king decided to assign to them a corridor, one side of which should be adorned by the Chinese, and the other by the Greeks, and a curtain should be let down between them, so that neither group could see the work of the other. His commands were carried out,

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 273.

² *Iḥyā*, III, p. 354.

and the Greeks began by collecting a great quantity of rare colours. But the Chinese entered upon their task without any supply of colours at all, and proceeded to brighten their side and polish it. Then, when the Greeks had completed their work, the Chinese claimed that they also had finished, whereat the king marvelled, for how had they finished their painting, without the use of colours? They were asked: "How can you have completed it without materials and without even beginning the work of painting?" The Chinese replied: "That is not your concern. Raise the curtain." Then the curtain was drawn aside and behold, on their side, were reflected all the wondrous paintings and rare colours of the Greeks, shining with greater brilliancy and more clearly than on the other, for their side had become like a bright mirror through their patient efforts, and the beauty of their side was enhanced by much polishing. So also the seekers after God are solicitous in the purification of their hearts and the brightening and polishing of that which is meant to be the mirror of the Divine, to receive the reflection of the glory of God.¹

¹ *Ihyā*, III, p. 19. *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 37.

*The Mystic Path. The Servant and his Lord.
The Illuminative Life*

The traveller has now passed beyond the stage of the beginner or novice, concerned chiefly with purification, whose journey brought him only to the gateway of the King's abode, but now, al-Ghazālī says, it is for him to enter the wide spaces of the courtyard, and he quotes the words of a wise man who said: "The pious say: 'Open your eyes that you may see,' but I say: 'Close your eyes that you may see.'" The first saying is applicable to the seeker at the beginning of the Way, who is near to the Royal dwelling, but the second is more fitting for the traveller who has passed beyond the gateway and entered the precincts. Such a one jeopardises himself in search for the Object of his desire, and not all who start on the quest will face the dangers and the weariness involved in pursuing it to the end. In this stage the traveller passes from one state to another (*talwīn*), as he draws nearer to his goal.¹

This stage on the way corresponds to the world of Celestial Power (*jabarūt*) in al-Ghazālī's cosmological scheme.² This scheme includes three worlds through which the traveller must pass, the first being the material, visible world (*'ālam al-mulk wa'l-shahāda*), manifest to the senses, and the third the World Invisible (*'ālam al-malakūt*), which is manifest to the spirit. "There are two worlds," al-Ghazālī writes, "Spiritual and Material, or, if you prefer, Sensible and Intelligential, or again a Higher World and a Lower World, according to your point of view, regarding the worlds themselves, or in relation to the eye which sees them (outward in the one case, inward in the

¹ *Ihyā*, II, p. 219. Cf. also *Imlā'*, p. 50. *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, p. 141. Cf. Hujwiri, "The significance of *talwīn* is change and turning from one state to another," and he notes that this is the stage of those who have not attained *op. cit.*, p. 372.

² Cf. p. 107 above.

other) or in relation to one another."¹ So, too, al-Ghazālī points out, man consists of outward bodily parts and sensible qualities, and the inward, spiritual attributes and capacities. The material world has no real existence, but its relation to that other world is like the relation of the shadow to the body, and the real essence of man does not consist in his shadow. So also the corporeal form has no real existence, but is the shadow of the reality, which is the Divine world. Therefore nothing belonging to this world can claim the servant's allegiance, for the worship of shadows is abhorrent, true worship must be directed towards the One, Who is the Real.

The world of sense-perception corresponds to the stage of the novice, who is concerned with the temptations of the self and the senses, which come to him from the outward world, and with the effort to purify himself from the defilement which they cause. Between this base world and the Divine world lies the second world, that of *jabarūt*, which al-Ghazālī compares with a ship moving on the water, away from the land; it has not the constant motion of the water, nor has it the complete immobility of the land and its stability. He who walks on the land is like one passing through the world of *mulk* and *shahāda*, but when he is strong enough to sail on a ship he has passed into the world of *jabarūt*, and when he reaches the stage of being able to walk upon the water, needing no ship, then he walks in the world of *malakūt*, without sinking.² The world of *jabarūt* is therefore the stage of the traveller who is mid-way on his journey; he has left the land behind and is free from the fetters of a sensual, self-centred life, but he has not yet attained to a life altogether dominated by the spirit. His inner eye is open and he sees the goal clearly and hastens towards it, but is not yet there. Of this state al-Ghazālī writes that he who follows evil with good and wipes out the traces of it, has no darkness in his heart, but his light is still "somewhat dim," like a mirror that has been breathed upon.³

Yet the servant has much now to encourage him on his ascent, for he who has repented of sin, and accepted the obligation of

¹ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 122 ff.

² *Imlā'*, p. 221. *Kutāb al-Arba'īn*, p. 54. *Ihyā*, IV, p. 216.

³ *Ihyā*, III, p. 11.

obedience, has the joy of intimate converse with the Most High God and of rest in the knowledge of Him and obedience to His will and long periods of fellowship with Him, and if the servant were to obtain no further reward for his efforts than what he finds of the sweetness of obedience and the sense of fellowship in communion with his Lord, that would be enough.¹

The traveller is now walking in the light, which comes from the gift of the Divine grace. It is for the servant to seek help from his Lord, to strive to do His will, to discipline himself in accordance with that Will, but it is God Who gives him help on the way, Who crowns his efforts with success, Who grants grace to make his discipline effective, and Who draws near to the servant seeking to approach Him.² That does not depend on the servant's choice, but it is for him to choose to prepare himself for that Divine rapture (*al-jadhba*), by detaching his heart from all lower attractions, which would prevent him from being attracted by what is supernal. It is to be noted that for the Divine grace al-Ghazālī uses the term *jadhba* (lit. attractive force) for it is the Lord Who draws man unto Himself, He is the true Seeker and the quest is, in truth, evoked by the One Sought. al-Ghazālī quotes in this connection the words of the Prophet: "During your life here, your Lord has gifts to bestow upon you (*naḥāḥāt*, lit. fragrant breezes), therefore come within reach of them," for those gifts and raptures are of Divine origin. Again the Prophet declared that God descends every night to the firmament of this world, saying: 'Is there any who prays? I will answer his prayer' For the Lord hath said: 'The righteous have long yearned to meet with Me, but I have a still greater yearning to meet with them'.³

The Lord is ever ready to give; our business, says al-Ghazālī, is only to make the place empty and to await the descent of His mercy. We are like one who ploughs the ground and hoes it and sows the seed, but all that will not avail him without rain, and he does not know when God will cause the rain to fall, only he trusts in the grace of God and His mercy, in leaving no year without rain. So, too, there is seldom a year or a

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 52.

² *Ihyā*, III, p. 8.

³ *Rawḍat al-Tālibīn*, p. 134.

month or a day, without some rapture and some gift. The servant, therefore, must purify the heart from the weeds of sensual desire and sow within it the seed of goodwill and sincerity and expose it to the quarters whence blow the winds of mercy. Just as the expectation of rain is greatest in the season of Spring, and when clouds appear, so also the expectation of these Divine graces is greatest in holy seasons, when the concern is concentrated and the heart uplifted. When the whole concern is set upon God, then His grace is outpoured upon that one, and the Divine mysteries are revealed to him and the real meaning of things made plain. The servant has only to prepare himself through complete purification and to have his intention present, with a sincere will and ardent desire, watching with expectation for what God Most High will reveal to Him, of His mercy. For to the saints and prophets revelation was made, and their souls rejoiced in attaining to the perfection possible to them, not by means of study, but by asceticism in this world, and by shunning it, and cleansing themselves from its hindrances, and concentrating their whole concern upon God, and, "when anyone belongs to God, God belongs to him." In truth, al-Ghazālī adds, spiritual states and Divine revelations are actually present within your heart, but you are distracted from them by worldly ties and sensual desires, which veil you from them. But when that veil is raised, then the radiance of the knowledge of God is seen within yourself.¹

In such a heart, purified by godliness, the light of the lamp from the niche of Divinity² shines forth, so that there cannot be concealed within it that secret polytheism which is more secret "than the creeping of the black ant on a dark night," for nothing is hidden from this light. Such a heart, cleansed from all that is destructive, will soon be furnished with all that makes for salvation—gratitude, patience, fear and hope, trust and other virtues, and so become a heart acceptable unto God, the heart at rest in Him.³ "The rule of the Ṣūfī," al-Ghazālī says: "is that Poverty should be his adornment and Patience

¹ *Miẓān al-'Amal*, p. 34. *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 67.

² *Sūra XXIV*, 35. "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth: His Light is like a niche, wherein is a lamp."

³ *Iḥyā*, III, p. 40.

his ornament and Satisfaction his steed and Trust his dignity. God alone is sufficient for him; he employs his members in acts of devotion, and it may be that he has no desire at all for worldly things, or if he has, only for what suffices for his needs. His heart is pure from defilement and distraction through his love for his Lord and he looks towards Him in his inmost self, committing all things to Him, and having fellowship with Him. He does not rely upon anything, nor does he have fellowship with any, save Him Whom he worships, preferring God to all else."¹

The fruits of God's grace, then, are the virtues, His gift, whereby the traveller is helped to advance on the Path. The first of these to be considered by al-Ghazālī are Patience and Gratitude. "Praise be to God," he writes, "Who is most worthy of praise and thanksgiving, Unique in His mantle of greatness, Alone in His attributes of glory and exaltation, Who helps the elect among the saints, with the strength of Patience in prosperity and adversity, and Gratitude for afflictions and blessings alike." Faith itself, he says, consists of two halves, half patience and half gratitude. Both virtues are necessary for the traveller towards God, for he may expect that trials and sufferings will come upon him in greater measure than others so that, through the endurance of affliction, his faith may shine forth more brightly. One of the gnostics said that patience had three stages, the first the abandonment of desires, i.e., the patience to endure without what is desired, and this is the stage of the penitent; the second satisfaction with whatever is decreed by God and this is the patience of the traveller who is mid-way, and finally love for all that his Lord does, which is the rank of the spiritually perfect.²

Gratitude is the complement of Patience. "He who eats until he is satisfied and is thankful," says Al-Ghazālī, "is in the same station as he who fasts and is patient." Like other stations on the mystic way, al-Ghazālī considers it to include knowledge, feeling and action, for knowledge is the origin of it, which gives rise to feeling and the emotion produces action. The knowledge is the recognition of the gift bestowed by the

¹ *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, p. 143.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 53 ff. 60. Cf. Abū Ṭālib, *Qūt al-Qulūb*, I, p. 199.

Giver and the feeling is the joy of the one receiving His gifts, and the action is the observance of what the Giver desires, and what is acceptable to Him. The servant's knowledge is not completed until he knows that all gifts come from God and the means (by which these gifts are bestowed) are under His control. This knowledge lies behind the acknowledgment of the Unity and the Divine holiness, for these form part of it. When God is known as Essential Holiness, it is realised that One alone is Holy and One alone God. Then the servant realises that everything in the world has been brought into existence by the One and every good gift comes from Him. Nothing in the invocation of God is worth more than "Thanks be to Him" (*al-hamd lillāh*), but it not to be supposed that its value comes from the movement of the tongue in uttering these words apart from the realisation of their significance within the heart. "Glory be to God" (*subhān*) is the phrase which signifies admission of His Holiness, and "There is, no god but God" (*la allāh illa allāh*), indicates confession of His Unity. This knowledge that all gifts come from the One debars polytheism in action, i.e., the servant will not attribute any of them to the creatures, instead of the Creator, nor regard the creatures as responsible for what is profitable or injurious to him.

Perfect gratitude consists in the servant's joy in the gifts of God, because he is thereby enabled to draw near to Him and to dwell in His Presence and to contemplate His Face continually. This is the highest stage of gratitude and the sign of it is that the servant does not rejoice in this world except in so far as it is the place of sowing for the world to come and helps him thereto, and he is grieved by any gift which distracts him from the remembrance of God, for, as Shiblī said: "Gratitude is the vision of the Giver, not the gift."¹

Fear and Hope also mark stages in the progress of the traveller, and these two can likewise be analysed into the elements of knowledge, feeling and action, for they arise from knowledge and result in action, but the terms apply primarily to the feeling. If expectation, arising from knowledge of God's mercy towards the sinner and also His wrath upon sin, looks towards what is

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 70, 71, 72. Cf. Qushayrī, *Risāla*, p. 106.

abhorred, and produces suffering, it is called Fear, and if towards what is desired, producing joy, it is called Hope. Fear is the result of knowledge, the knowledge which was the mark of the penitent, Hope is the result of assured faith. The sign of Fear is flight, and the sign of Hope is search, and they are symbolised by the sanctuary, (*ḥaram*, the sacred precincts), and the mosque. He who enters the sanctuary of discipleship is safe from the creatures, and he who enters the mosque, keeps his members safe from sinning against God.¹ "Praise be to God," al-Ghazālī writes, "Who makes His loving kindness and His reward to be hoped for and His wrath and chastisement to be feared, Who keeps alive the hearts of His saints by the spirit of hope in Him, so that He may urge them on by His loving kindness until they arrive at absorption in Himself (*fanā'ihī*), and withdraw from this place of affliction, which is the abode of His enemies." The spiritually-minded know that this world is the sowing-ground for the world to come and the heart is like the soil and faith like the seed therein, and the life of devotion represents the ploughing of the soil and cleansing it and digging the runnels and turning the water into them. The heart which dotes on this world and is absorbed in it is like the earth which is saline: no crop will grow except from the seed of faith, and faith seldom flourishes in a heart filled with impurity and evil qualities, just as seed will not grow in earth which is saltish. The servant's hope of forgiveness should be like the hope of the sower, who seeks for good ground and sows therein good seed, neither mouldy nor brackish, and supplies it with what is needful, watering it from time to time, and hoeing the ground and keeping it clear of all that would check the growth of the seed or injure it, and then sits down, expecting that God, by His grace, will keep away thunderbolts and all sources of injury until the seed has grown and the crop is ripe. Such expectation is called Hope. Though God's mercy is due to His grace, not to human merit, yet the servant must at any rate strive to be worthy of it.

"You hope for salvation and do not follow the way thereto, But the ship will not move upon dry land."

¹ *Minhāj al-ʿArifīn*, p. 100.

Action in accordance with Hope, al-Ghazālī considers to be of a higher order than action as a result of Fear, because the servants nearest to God are those who love Him best, and love prevails through Hope.¹ Yet Fear has its place also, since it is based upon knowledge of what is to be dreaded, which is summed up in sin against God, which veils Him from His servant, and godly fear leads to action to avoid it. al-Ghazālī quotes a tradition which declares that God created Hell out of His great mercy, as a scourge wherewith to drive His creatures into Paradise. Yet the highest form of Fear is not the fear of chastisement, nor even of sin, but only the servant's fear lest he should be debarred for ever from the contemplation of the Eternal Beauty. But the servant, as he advances, will pass beyond both these stages to something higher than either, for both are really reins which hinder the soul from complete freedom, and when the soul is truly free, there will be no place for Fear or Hope.²

Among the highest of the stations of the travellers who are drawing near to God are those characterised by the virtues of Trust in God (*tawakkul*) and Unification (*tawhīd*), which, to the ordinary believer, meant the acknowledgment of the Divine Unity, but to the Ṣūfī meant the merging of the personal, individual will in the Eternal Will of God. In al-Ghazālī's view, these two stations are closely connected. "Praise be to God," he writes at the beginning of his teaching on this subject, "the Sovereign Ruler of this world and the world to come, Unique in glory and might, Who upholds the heavens by the word of His power alone (lit. upon nothing)³, Who provides all His creatures therein with their daily bread, Who turns the eyes of the righteous and the wise from the consideration of means and secondary causes to the Ultimate Cause, and prevents them from concerning themselves with what is other than Him, and from reliance upon any power save His. Therefore they worship none but Him, knowing that He is the One, the Unique, the Eternal God, and being convinced that all creatures are but servants like themselves. They need not to ask for their

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 123 ff.

² *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 130, 135.

³ Cf. Job XXVI, 7, "He stretcheth out the north upon empty space and hangeth the earth upon nothing."

daily bread, for not the smallest ant but has been created by God, and there is no creeping thing but He provides sustenance for it. So, being assured that He has taken upon Himself to provide for His servants and in Him they can put their trust, they depend upon Him and declare: "God is our Sufficiency and how excellent is He in Whom we trust."¹

Like the other virtues, Trust includes knowledge, feeling and action; the term itself is applied generally to the feeling, but that results from knowledge of the Divine Unity which is "a vast and shoreless sea." *Tawhīd* means the realisation that all things come from God and secondary causes and means are of no account. One of its effects is Trust, and another which al-Ghazālī notes is that the Unitarian ceases to complain against the creatures or to be angry with them and is satisfied with—and submissive to—the Will of God. *Tawhīd* he describes as a precious substance which has two outer coverings, one farther away from the kernel than the other, and people generally limit the name to the outer rind and the business of preserving it, and completely overlook and neglect the kernel. The first rind is represented by the declaration of the tongue: "There is no god but God" (which excludes, e.g., the doctrine of the Trinity accepted by Christians), but it may be made by the hypocrite, whose outward utterance differs from his inward belief. The second rind corresponds to the affirmation of one who is really convinced of the truth of what he affirms, and this is the *Tawhīd* of the common people and the theologians, who seek to preserve this rind from being corrupted by heresy. But the third type of *Tawhīd* is the kernel, when all things are seen to come from God Most High and the vision of Him obliterates all that comes between, and He alone is worshipped and none other. This kind of *Tawhīd* is the station of the truly sincere (*al-Sādiqūn*).² The real Unitarian is he who sees only the One and turns his face not to any earthly *Qibla* but towards Him alone.³

Such *Tawhīd* means that the servant can abandon himself

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 210.

² "*Sidq*" said Dhū'l-Nūn, "is the sword of God on the earth: it cuts every thing that it touches," and Hujwīrī adds: "*Sidq* regards the Cause and does not consist in affirmation of secondary causes." *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 101.

³ *Ihyā*, I, p. 30. Cf. also *Ihyā*, IV, p. 212 and p. 71 above.

to God in complete trust and merge his will in the Divine Will. The servant no longer finds his own powers and personality to be adequate, he has ceased to be self-sufficient and has allowed God to dominate his life. In all that he does or leaves undone he is in the hands of God like the corpse in the hands of the one who prepares it for burial: he considers himself as a dead body moved by the Divine decree and is content that the Divine strength should replace his own human weakness. This degree of Trust means the abandonment of intercession for personal needs, for the servant relies upon his Lord's grace and His care, believing that He will take the initiative in giving more than he asks, for how many a gift has been given by Him, before it was asked for and without being deserved. al-Ghazālī quotes the words of Dhu'l-Nūn¹ who said of Trust that it was "the casting of the soul into self-surrender (*al-'ubudiyya*) and the withdrawal of it from self-assertion (*al-rubūbiyya*)."² Again, al-Ghazālī gives the words of one who said: "All of God's creatures receive their provision from Him, but some eat with humility like the beggars, and some with constant labour, like the artisans, and some with glory, like the Ṣūfis, who contemplate the All-Glorious and take their daily bread from His hand and see nothing that comes between (no secondary cause)."³

These stations (*maqāmāt*) involve the active life of virtue; The middle of the Ṣūfī's journey, says al-Ghazālī, is action and the seeker's effort to move from station to station brings him nearer to the object of his search. But for such progress, which depends upon the Divine gift of "states," the mind and heart of the servant must be open to the influence of his Lord. The object of the self-surrender involved in *tawakkul* and *tawhīd* is that the soul of the seeker may be controlled and guided by the Divine light within him, and this means the presence of the heart in the practice of Meditation and Recollection, which lead to Contemplation.³ For these, solitude and withdrawal

¹ The great Egyptian Ṣūfī ob. 245/859. Cf. my *Studies in Early Mysticism* pp. 191 ff.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, pp. 225, 227, 230.

³ *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, p. 145. Cf. Hujwiri, "The term 'station' denotes the way of the seeker, and his progress in the field of exertion—whereas the man that has a 'state' is dead to 'self' and stands by a 'state' which God creates in him." *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

are needed if the mystic is to "see" and know God and to enter into communication with the Eternal. al-Ghazālī uses a homely metaphor to prove the need for detachment from worldly affairs and human companionship, in comparing the hearts of men to water-pots: so long as they are filled with water, the air does not enter them, and so the heart, pre-occupied with anything but God, has no room for the knowledge of His Majesty.¹ The self cannot become acquainted with its Lord nor become accustomed to the recollection of Him except when it is weaned from its natural habits, by solitude and seclusion, firstly in order that its hearing and its vision may be detached from what is familiar, and secondly that it may become accustomed to praise and recollection and prayer in solitude, until familiarity with the recollection of God prevails over it, in place of familiarity with the world.²

Solitude sets the heart free for adoration and reflection and communion through confidential intercourse with God. Only the heart at leisure from itself is prepared to receive the revelation of the Divine mysteries and such leisure cannot co-exist with social intercourse and the distraction of human companionship. Time must be made for silent communing with God, for detachment from immediate surroundings and the common round, in order to come into touch with the Ultimate Reality. Withdrawal into solitude is the means for securing such detachment. The solitaries are those who find rest from this world in the recollection of God and so continually do they give themselves to recollection that while they live, He is always in their thoughts, and when they die, it is with His Name on their lips that they pass into His Presence.³

Meditation and Recollection are the means by which solitude may be used to assist the soul in its ascent to God. The real meaning of Meditation (*murāqaba*), al-Ghazālī says, is the attentive apprehension (*mulāḥaza*) of the omnipresence of God (*al-Rāqib*), the direction of all concern towards Him, a state of introversion in which the heart is listening to His voice, pre-occupied with Him, all the thoughts directed towards Him, being continually

¹ *Munāwī*, *op. cit.*, fol. 195b. Cf. p. 75 above.

² *Iḥyā*, III, p. 59.

³ *Iḥyā*, II, p. 202.

conscious of His Presence. This state results from the realisation that He is aware of the very secrets of men's hearts, and to Him all things are unveiled, and it is the state of those who have drawn near to Him (*al-muqarrabūn*).

These can be divided into two classes: the first is that of the Godfearers, the "people of the right hand," who are always aware of God's regard upon their outward conduct and their inmost thoughts, who remain conscious of themselves and their actions and feel abashed before God. But the second class is that of the "just made perfect" who meditate upon the Divine Majesty and Glory, when the heart is so submerged in the apprehension of that Majesty and so overcome by awe that it cannot be turned aside to anything else. Such a one, absorbed in Him Whom he worships, gives no thought to himself or his actions, for his concern has become unified and God is sufficient for him. He is forgetful of created things and does not perceive who is present with him, though his eyes are open, and he does not hear what is said to him, though he is not deaf, for he who is absorbed in the consciousness of the Presence of God speaks only of Him and hears only in Him and has no need of words and actions save in relation to Him. "This is the degree of those whose hearts in meditation are overwhelmed by the Divine Majesty and Glory, so that there remains in them no place for anything else."¹

By Meditation the heart comes to know the joy of entering into the Presence of God and directing towards Him all its thoughts, interests and desires, and having known this joy, it seeks the practice of the Presence of God at all times, which is Recollection (*dhikr*)², and this, says al-Ghazālī, is the most excellent of occupations, for by it the heart is enlightened and enabled to contemplate the Vision of God. Godliness is the gate to Recollection and Recollection the gate to revelation and revelation the gate to the goal of desire (*al-fawz al-akbar*), which is the meeting with God Most High.³ Recollection is approached by three stages (*qushūr*) and the excellence of these

stages is in proportion to their power to help the soul to its purpose of attaining to that Presence in which it finds rest and peace. The first stage is Recollection with the tongue only, and the second is Recollection by the heart, which still finds it difficult to concentrate on worship and to keep free of distractions, and the third is Recollection which takes complete possession of the heart and so prevails over it that it can with difficulty be diverted from it to other matters. This leads to the highest degree of Recollection, when He Who is worshipped takes possession of the heart and Recollection itself is obliterated and disappears, and that is the end which is sought.¹

By Meditation and Recollection the soul is led on to Contemplation (*mushāhada*), when the veil is raised between the soul and God. The worshipper has entered into the sanctuary and there is no more need of prayer. "When God is present and manifested," said the Ṣūfī Dhu'l-Nūn, "there is no need to make intercession. If He were absent, then should intercession be made to Him."² Contemplation, says al-Ghazālī, is of three types, contemplation *bil-Ḥaqq*, which is the vision of things witnessing to the Unity, and contemplation *lil-Ḥaqq*, which is the vision of God in things, and finally the contemplation of God Himself, the vision of Reality, which is certain and without doubt.³ To such a contemplative the manifestation of the Eternal and Invisible God is made as clear as if seen with the eyes. The contemplative, when he reads the Word of God thinks not of himself or what he reads, for in the word he sees the Speaker and in the words His attributes. He is not concerned with himself or his reading or with the favours to be received from the Benefactor, but only with the Speaker, his thoughts are fixed on Him and he is absorbed in contemplation of Him, to the exclusion of all else. This is the rank of those who have drawn near to Him, for such a one no longer thinks of himself, but sees only the Most High and the mystery of the Unseen is revealed to him.³ This contemplation of the One Creative Truth is sometimes continuous and sometimes comes

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, pp. 340, 341. *Rawḍat al-Tālibīn*, pp. 187 ff.

² Cf. p. 95 above.

³ *Iḥyā*, III, p. 11.

¹ *Kitāb al-'Arba'in*, p. 52.

² al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, fols. 7b, 8a. So also Hujwiri says that Contemplation means to be absent from self and present with God., *op. cit.*, p. 155.

³ *Imlā*, p. 54. *Fatḥat al-'Ulūm*, p. 41. *Iḥyā*, I, p. 258.

unexpectedly like a flash of lightning, and this is what usually happens, continuous contemplation is rare and unusual.¹ But the contemplative who has attained to this highest degree of contemplation has come to the end of the journey and has entered upon the Unitive Life, which was his goal.

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 213.

CHAPTER XII

The end of the Path. The lover and the Beloved. The life of the Saints in God

The highest contemplation, said Hujwīrī, "is violence of love and absorption of human attributes in realising the vision of God, and their annihilation by the everlastingness of God."¹ Love is represented by al-Ghazālī as the final stage of the mystic Way,² and as its goal. The lover is the one who has attained (*al-wāṣil*): he is the gnostic (*al-ʿārif*), for "whoso knows his Lord loves Him," and to him who loves is revealed still greater knowledge of the Beloved, the knowledge which He Himself "casts into" the heart of His lover, by revelation and inspiration (*al-wahy* and *al-ilhām*), the knowledge from on high (*al-ilm al-ladunī*). To the lover is granted the Beatific Vision here and now, to the lover is given the consummation of his desire, in union with the Beloved.

In al-Ghazālī's teaching Love includes Longing (*shawq*), for the lover longs to be with his Beloved, Fellowship (*uns*), for he is in intimate communion with Him Whom he loves, and Satisfaction (*riḍā*). The lover has entered the ranks of the "just made perfect" (*al-sādiqūn*) and those whose single-mindedness (*ikhlās*) is without flaw, for his love has no taint of self-interest. This stage includes the perfection of all the stations and states which have preceded it, which the traveller has experienced on the way, but it transcends them all, for the mystic has no longer need of states and stations. He who has reached the end of the journey, al-Ghazālī states, has attained to "sobriety" (*sahū*)³ and permanence, and is listening at all times

¹ *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 165.

² For, as a modern writer observes: "Purgation leads to peace: illumination leads to truth: perfection leads to love." P. Elmer More, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 44.

³ "Sobriety," says Hujwīrī, "expresses the attainment of that which is desired." *op. cit.*, p. 185. Cf. Ibn al-Fāriḍ, "there is no 'where' after (vision of) Reality, since I have recovered from intoxication and the cloud that veiled the Essence has been cleared away by sobriety." R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, p. 243.

to the Divine Voice; he has passed beyond the stations and is in the realm of achievement (*tamkīn*, lit. fixity)¹ he is unmoved by fears, and "states" affect him no longer. It is all one to him whether he suffers hardship or is at ease, whether he has little or much, whether men do him wrong or keep faith with him, whether he eats or is hungry, whether he sleeps or wakes. The desires of the self (*al-ḥuḏūz*) have vanished, that which pertains to the spirit (*al-ḥuqūq*) remains.² His outward self is with the creatures, his inward self is with the Creative Truth.³

The place of attainment (*al-makān*) al-Ghazālī says elsewhere, belongs to those who have reached perfection and *tamkīn*, and have arrived at the goal. When the servant has perfectly realised what attainment means, then it is assured to him and he has passed beyond stations and states and becomes possessed of *makān*, as one wrote:

"Thy place (*makān*) within my heart is the whole of it,
And there is no room within it, save for Thee."⁴

The soul is now called the tranquillised soul (*al-naḥs al-mutma'inna*), the soul at rest, which returns to its Lord, satisfied and giving satisfaction to Him,⁵ and this stage corresponds to the *'ālam al-malakūt* called also *'ālam al-amr*, in al-Ghazālī's cosmological scheme (cf. pp. 159, 160 above). "In this world," he writes, "are wonders, in relation to which this visible world is seen to be of no account. He who does not ascend to that world . . . is but a brute beast, indeed he is more in error than any brute beast, since the brutes are not given the wings wherewith to take flight to that world. Know that the visible world is to the world Invisible as the husk to the kernel, as the form and body to the spirit, as darkness to light, and as the ignoble to the sublime. Therefore that Invisible World is called the World Supernal and the Spiritual World and the World of

¹ Cf. Hujwiri, "Tamkīn denotes the residence of spiritual adepts in the abode of perfection and in the highest grade—*tamkīn* is the resting-place of adepts—repose within the shrine." *op. cit.*, p. 371.

² Cf. the saying of al-Ṭayālīsī al-Rāzī, "When the spiritual (*al-ḥuqūq*) appears, the fleshly (*al-ḥuḏūz*) vanishes away." Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, p. 336.

³ *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, p. 145.

⁴ *Imlā*, p. 52. This passage is quoted verbatim from al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, p. 335.

⁵ *Sūra*, LXXXIX, 27, 28.

Light. . . . He who is in that world above is with God and has the keys of the Unseen."¹

This, then, is the stage of perfection, which is the stage of the lover, and al-Ghazālī has much to say of Love. Love, he says, is of different types and the first is self-love, which includes a man's desire for his own safety and preservation, love of wealth, because it is a means to self preservation, love of wife and child and kindred and friends. These things are loved not for themselves, but because they are bound up with the continuance of a man's own existence and its perfection.² The second type is love for the sake of the benefit received from the person or thing loved, and this, too, comes back to self-interest: the benefactor is not regarded as the desired perfection itself, but as a means to it. So the doctor is loved, not for his own sake, but because he is a means to health, and money because of what it will buy: but if the benefit ceased, the love for the benefactor would cease also. The third type is love of a thing for its own sake, not for the pleasure to be obtained from it apart from itself, and this is real love, which can be relied upon to endure, such as the love of Beauty and Goodness. All beauty is loved by the one who is able to perceive beauty, for the perception of beauty is a delight in itself, which is loved for its own sake, not for anything else. Beautiful forms may be loved for themselves, and not for any end to be obtained from them and that cannot be denied; for instance, green things and running water are loved for themselves, not for the sake of drinking the water or eating the green things. So, too, with the blossom and the flowers and the birds, with their fair colours and beautiful shapes and their perfectly symmetrical forms, the very sight of them is a joy in itself and all joy is loved. It cannot be denied that where Beauty is perceived, it is natural to love it and if it is certain that God is Beauty, He must be loved by that one to whom His Beauty and His Majesty are revealed.³ The fourth type of love is that inspired by Goodness and Beauty in the moral sense. al-Ghazālī concludes that the beauty and goodness of everything consists in the

¹ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 108, 109. Cf. *Sūra*, VI, 59.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 255.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 256.

presence of the perfection proper to it, e.g., the beautiful horse is one perfect in appearance and form and colour and pace, easy to wheel round in battle, while beautiful handwriting is that which combines due proportion and combination of the letters with the right slope and alignment. The same is true of the beauty which is perceived not by the senses, but by the insight: the moral goodness and beauty which are the perfection of character must be loved. The fifth type of love is that due to the secret affinity (*munāsaba*) existing between the lover and the beloved, for love between two persons may exist without any beauty or pleasure as the cause, but simply because their spirits are akin.

If all these causes of love were combined in one person and the attributes which are loved were to reach their highest perfection in that one, would not the result be the highest degree of love? In God and in Him alone are all these causes combined and all things lovable found in their highest perfection. For it is to Him that man owes his very existence and the qualities by which he may attain to his perfection. He is the only real Benefactor, and the Ultimate Cause of all benefits. If, where beauty is found, it is natural to love it, and if beauty consists in perfection, then it follows that the All-Beautiful, Who is Absolute Perfection, must be loved by those to whom His nature and Attributes are revealed.¹ For, as al-Ghazālī observes, if love is aroused by the beauty perceived by the physical eye, which is mistaken in much of what it sees, regarding as small what is large, and as large what is small and what is far off as near and what is ugly as beautiful, is it unreasonable that love should be aroused by the eternal and everlasting Beauty, limitless in its perfection, perceived by the eye of insight, which is not liable to error, nor subject to death, indeed, it survives death, alive with God and rejoicing in Him.² And finally, man loves God because of the affinity between the human soul and its Source, because it shares in the Divine Nature and Attributes, because through knowledge and love it can attain to eternal life and itself become Godlike.³

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, pp. 258-262.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 298.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 263.

Such love, when it has grown strong and overwhelming, is called Passion (*ishq*) which has no meaning but that of love firmly established and limitless. al-Ghazālī gives two examples of this passionate love directed towards a human being, that of Zulayka (Potiphar's wife) for Yūsuf (Joseph), which meant the loss of her wealth and her beauty, for though (after her husband's death, according to the Islamic legend) she possessed seventy camel-loads of jewels and necklaces, she spent them all in her love for Joseph. To everyone who said to her: "I saw Joseph to-day," she gave a necklace to enrich that one, until nothing remained to her. She remembered nothing except Joseph because of her passionate love, and when she raised her head to the heavens, she saw his name written upon the stars. But after her marriage to Joseph, a greater love took possession of her and she refused to live with him as his wife, saying: "I loved you only before I knew Him, but when I knew Him, love of Him left no room for the love of any other and I cannot give His place to another."

The other example is that of Majnūn, who went mad for love of Layla, and when asked his name would reply "Layla." When asked whether Layla was dead, he said: "Layla is within my heart, she is not dead. I am Layla." One day, when he was passing by her house, he looked up to the heavens and someone said to him: "O Majnūn, do not look up at the heavens, but look at the wall of Layla's house and perchance you will see her." But he said: "I am content with the star whose shadow falls upon Layla's house."

So, too, it was related of Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj, a passionate lover, who laid down his life for his love, that his friend Shibli visited him after he had been in prison for eighteen days and asked him: "O Maṣṣūr, what is love?" and al-Ḥallāj said: "Do not ask me to-day, but ask me to-morrow," and when the morrow came and he was brought forth from prison and the executioner spread out his carpet, to slay him, Shibli passed by and al-Ḥallāj called out: "O Shibli, the beginning of love is a consuming fire and the end thereof is death." al-Ḥallāj, also, when he came to know that everything save God was of no account and that God was the Sole Reality, forgot his own name and when asked:

"Who art thou?" replied, "I am the Creative Truth" (that is, I am one with Him Whom I love).¹

"It is reasonable," al-Ghazālī declares, "to give this passionate love to that One from Whom all good things are seen to come. In truth, there is nothing good or beautiful or beloved in this world, but comes from His loving kindness and is the gift of His grace, a draught from the sea of His bounty. For all that is good and fair and lovely in the world, perceived by the intellect and the sight and the hearing and the rest of the senses, from the creation of the world until it shall pass away, from the summit of the Pleiades to the ends of the earth, is but a particle from the treasures of His riches and a ray from the splendour of His Glory. Is it not reasonable to love Him Who is thus described and is it not comprehensible that those who have mystic knowledge of His attributes should love Him more and more until their love passes bounds? To use the term "passion" for it is wrong in regard to Him, for it fails to express the greatness of their love towards Him. Glory be to Him Who is concealed from sight by the brightness of His Light. If He had not veiled Himself with Seventy Veils of Light, the splendours of His Countenance would surely consume the eyes of those who contemplate the Beauty which is His."²

But the lover who claims to love the Most High must shew the signs of love, for Love, al-Ghazālī considers, is like a goodly tree, firmly rooted, the branches whereof reach up to the heavens, and its fruits are manifest in the heart and by the tongue and the other members, and these fruits are an indication of love, as smoke is an indication of fire. Among the signs of love to God is that the lover has no fear of death, for it means meeting with the Beloved face to face in the Abode of Peace. To the lover, there is no hardship in journeying from his own land to the home of the Beloved, in order to be blest by the vision of Him³; death opens the way to that meeting, it is the gate of entrance to the Vision. To lay down life itself for the sake of

¹ *Mukāshafat al-Qulūb*, pp. 23, 24.

² *Ihyā*, II, p. 247.

³ Cf. the lines of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī:

"Up, O ye lovers and away! 'Tis time to leave the world for aye, O heart, toward thy heart's love wend, and O friend, fly towards the Friend." R. A. Nicholson, *Eastern Poetry and Prose*, No. 136.

his Lord is the mark of sincerity in the lover.¹ Another sign of love is the sacrifice of the lover's will to that of the Beloved, and in this connection al-Ghazālī quotes verses which he attributes to Ibn al-Mubārak (ob. A.H. 180), which are attributed elsewhere to the woman mystic Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya of Basra:

"You disobey God, while you claim to love Him:
This, by my life, is a strange thing to do,
If your love were sincere, you would have obeyed Him,
For surely the lover obeys his Beloved."²

Another mark of the lover of God is that the remembrance of Him remains ever fresh in his heart, without effort on his part, for what a man loves he remembers unceasingly and if his love is perfect, he is never unmindful of it. al-Ghazālī gives a tradition which relates how God said to David: "He spoke falsely who claimed to love Me if, when night concealed him, he was unmindful of Me. Does not every lover desire to meet with his Beloved? And here am I present with him who seeks Me."³

Another sign that the love of God prevails in the heart of the lover is that he loves his fellow-men, for all are God's servants: indeed, his love will include the whole creation, for he who loves anyone, loves his work and his handwriting and his possessions.⁴ It is the mark of the lover, too, that he is eager to be alone, so that he may converse in secret with his Beloved, and he longs for the approach of night, so that in stillness and silence he may meet with Him Whom he loves.

Finally the sign of love is that the lover finds easy all that he does for his Beloved. The flesh may fail him and his body become weary in well-doing, but his spirit is tireless and rejoices in service. The Prophet once asked: "O Lord, who are Thy lovers?" and the answer came: "Those who cleave to Me as a child to its mother: those who take refuge in the remembrance of Me as a bird seeks the shelter of its nest: those who

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 282.

² *Ihyā*, IV, p. 284. Cf. Suhrawardī, *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*. *Ihyā*, IV, p. 344 (margin).

³ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 285. This recalls a lover of God, who was ever mindful of Him, Rābi'a of Basra, whose prayer al-Ghazālī records: "O my Lord, the stars are shining and the eyes of men are closed and kings have shut their doors and every lover is alone with his beloved and here am I, alone with Thee."

Ihyā, IV, p. 353.

⁴ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 285.

are as angry at the sight of sin, as an angry lion who fears nothing."¹

Love includes Longing (*shawq*), for every lover longs for the beloved when absent. Within his heart is the image of the beloved and he longs that the image should be perfected by vision. The lover of God knows that perfect revelation can be attained only in the life to come, when his contemplation will be uninterrupted and his joy increase evermore, and for that he longs, but he knows that much may be revealed here and now, and he longs to see more of the Beauty and the Glory of God and to attain to perfect union with the Beloved. al-Ghazālī relates a tradition of how the Lord said to David: "Tell My people that I am the Lover of him who loves Me and the Companion of him who desires My company and in fellowship with him who seeks My fellowship through Recollection, the Friend of him who is My friend: I choose him who has chosen Me. There is none who has loved Me with a perfect heart, but I have received him unto Myself and I have loved him with a love passing that of the creatures. He who sought Me in truth, found Me and he who sought any other, found Me not. Come, then, to partake of My grace and My fellowship and sit down with Me and enter into communion with Me and I will hasten to satisfy your love. For I have created the nature of My lovers after the nature of Abraham My friend and Moses My confidant and Muḥammad My chosen and I have created the hearts of those who long for Me, from My light, and I have glorified them with Mine own glory."²

Again al-Ghazālī says that God declared to one of "the just made perfect": "I have some among My servants who love Me and I love them, who long to meet Me as I long to meet them. They keep Me in remembrance and I remember them: they contemplate Me and I look continually upon them. If you have followed in their steps, I have loved you and if you have turned aside from following after them, I have turned aside from you." He said: "Lord, what is the sign of these?" He said: "They seek the shade by day as the compassionate

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 286.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 278.

shepherd seeks it for his flock and they yearn for the setting of the sun, as the bird yearns for its nest, and when night covers them and darkness falls and every lover is alone with his beloved, they bow down in adoration before Me. The first thing I give them is to cast My light into their hearts and they know of Me what I know of them. As for the second, were the heavens and the earth and all they contain apportioned to them, I should think it little for them. The third is that I shew them My Countenance and he to whom I shew My Face knows the utmost limit of that which is My secret."

al-Ghazālī relates also a tradition that David asked who were those who longed for their Lord and the Lord replied: "Those who long for Me are those whom I have cleansed from all defilement and have aroused to eagerness, and I have opened their hearts so that they may contemplate Me. Their hearts are in My hand and I take them forth and set them in My Presence in the heavenly places. Then I summon the noblest of My angels and they, when they have assembled, bow down in worship to Me, and I say: "In truth it was not to worship Me that I bade you come, but to shew you the hearts of those who long for Me, and to boast of them unto you, for their hearts give light to My angels in the heavens as the sun gives light to those who are in the earth."¹

Love results in Fellowship (*uns*). Fellowship, says al-Ghazālī, is one of the most glorious fruits of Love and its real meaning is the rejoicing of the heart and its delight in the revelation to it of the proximity of the Beloved and His Beauty and Perfection. Nearness to God means that when the heart has been purified from self-regard He is present with His lover (for between God and man there is only the veil of self). He who has drawn near to God knows that all things, from the foundation of the world, existed aforesaid in His knowledge and are a manifestation of Him, brought into existence by His Will and His power, which enabled them to exist and to subsist. The attributes cannot be separated from that one to whom they belong, indeed they subsist in that one, so that the lover who is in fellowship with God does not speak of himself or hear of

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 278.

himself, for it is the Divine attributes which are manifested in and through him.¹

Fellowship, al-Ghazālī considers, is to Longing what finding is to search, for when the lover is aware of imperfection and absence, his heart is disturbed and this disturbance is called "longing" for what is absent or invisible. But when joy prevails with him because he has approached the Object of his desire and has entered into the presence of his Beloved and is contemplating the Beauty which is revealed to him, that joy in the sense of intimacy is called Fellowship. To such a lover someone said: "You are one of those who long," and he replied: "No, longing is only for one who is absent and when He Who was absent is present, for whom should one long?" "These are the words," writes al-Ghazālī, "of one who is absorbed in the joy of what he has attained." The mark of Fellowship with God is the desire to be alone with Him, and a passionate absorption in the sweetness of Recollection.² "No one enters into fellowship with God but one who has given much time to the recollection of Him, for perfect fellowship means that the mind and the understanding have become absorbed in the joy of inward converse with their Lord, as one who talks with his beloved."³

Among the fruits of love is Satisfaction (*riḍā*),⁴ which includes the Satisfaction of God with man, and man's Satisfaction with God, i.e., his complete acquiescence in the Divine Will. Satisfaction may be due to the lover's absorption in the object of love, which prevents him from feeling any affliction which comes upon him. Thus, a passionate lover, wholly concerned with his love, pays no attention to what would otherwise hurt or grieve him, if it comes from some other than his beloved, still less if it is due to the beloved, and if this is conceivable in regard to slight affliction, because of earthly love, is it not conceivable in regard to a greater affliction, if the love is greater? If the love of beautiful forms perceptible by the outward vision

¹ *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, pp. 181, 182.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, pp. 291.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, pp. 314, 285. Cf. *Iḥyā*, II, p. 216.

⁴ "Satisfaction," said Hujwīrī, "is the result of love, inasmuch as the lover is satisfied with what is done by the Beloved." *op. cit.*, p. 180.

is strong, so also is the love of fair visions within, perceived by the light of insight, and the beauty of the Divine Glory and Majesty, with which no other beauty or glory is to be compared. That one to whom any part of it is revealed is overcome with amazement and is unconscious of what befalls him.

It was related that the wife of Faḥ al-Mawṣilī stumbled and was hurt, but laughed and when asked if she did not feel the pain, she said "The joy of His reward has taken from my heart the bitterness of His pain." Sahl al-Tustarī (ob. 283/896) suffered from an illness for which he used to treat others, but did not treat himself, and when asked why, he said: "O friend, the stroke of the Beloved does not wound."

But there is also the Satisfaction with pain that is felt and perceived, which is naturally disliked, yet may be desired, e.g., satisfaction with a surgical operation which causes pain, yet is desired, and satisfaction with travel which involves hardship, but also profit and pleasure. So, too, with the lover of God, the will of the Beloved and His good pleasure are what he seeks and if he suffers affliction thereby, yet he is satisfied.¹ One of these lovers said: "I have loved everything which He loved: even if He desired Hell-fire for me, I should desire to enter the fire." Bishr b. al-Ḥārith (ob. 227/841), a great ascetic and mystic, related that he saw a man who had been beaten with a thousand lashes in Baghdad and yet uttered no cry. When he had been taken back to prison, Bishr followed him and asked why he had been beaten. "Because I was a passionate lover," he answered, and when Bishr asked why he had kept silence under his sufferings, the man replied: "Because my beloved was opposite, regarding me." Then Bishr said: "If only you had set your regard upon the greatest Object of love," and the man gave a great cry and fell dead.²

al-Ghazālī relates a story from Masrūq, who told how a man lived in the desert and possessed a dog, an ass and a cock. The cock used to wake them for prayer at dawn,³ they employed the ass to convey water and to carry their tent, while the dog used to guard them. One day a fox came and carried off the

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, pp. 297.

² Cf. p. 50 above.

³ *I. a*, IV, p. 298.

cock, and they were grieved at the loss, but the man was pious and said: "It may be that it is for the best." Then came a wolf and attacked and killed the ass, and they grieved for him also, but again his master said: "Perhaps it is best." Later the dog was taken, and he said likewise. That same day they found that others had been raided and taken captive, while they were left in safety and the man said: "Those others were taken captive because the noise made by their dogs and asses and cocks betrayed their whereabouts." It had therefore been for their good that their animals were destroyed, in accordance with the Divine decree. So, concludes al-Ghazālī, he who knows the secret lovingkindness of the Lord is satisfied with what He does in all circumstances.¹

al-Ghazālī quotes as an example of Satisfaction the saying of Ibn Mas'ūd (ob. 32/652): "Poverty and wealth are two riding-beasts; I do not care which of them I ride, if poverty, I can exercise patience, and if wealth, generosity."² He quotes also the definition of Ibn 'Aṭā (ob. 310/922) who said: "Satisfaction is the heart's acquiescence in the eternal choice of God for His servant, assured that His choice for him is best, so he is satisfied therewith and abandons discontent." Abū Sa'īd was asked if it was allowable for a man to be both satisfied and dissatisfied, and he said: "Yes, it is allowable for him to be satisfied with his Lord and dissatisfied with himself and everything which comes between him and God." al-Ghazālī relates how someone quoted to Ḥasan b. 'Alī the words of the famous ascetic Abū Dharr: "Poverty is dearer to me than riches and sickness is dearer to me than health," and Ḥasan observed: "May God have mercy on Abū Dharr, but I say that he who trusts in the goodness of God's choice for him does not desire to be in any other state than that which God chooses for him." So the lover of God does not make intercession to Him, being satisfied that he needs nothing that is not already his.

Satisfaction results in heart's ease and in joy, for heart's ease comes from the light of Certainty and when that inner light burns steadily the heart rejoices and the inward eye is opened

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 298.

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 299.

and the excellence of God's ordering of things is made plain and dissatisfaction and disgust find no place. The heart is at rest when it is filled with the sweetness of love, for the true lover is satisfied with all that is done by the Beloved, and it seems to him to be his own desire.¹

Love of God is rooted in the knowledge and understanding of His nature and the lover is therefore the gnostic. "True gnosis," writes al-Ghazālī, "is to abandon this world and the next and to be set apart unto the Lord: it is to be intoxicated by the wine of Love and not to recover therefrom except in the Vision of the Beloved, for the gnostic dwells in the light of his Lord."² Gnosis (*ma'rifa*) is the gift of God, a light which He "casts" into the heart.³ "It is that," says al-Ghazālī, "which is attained without meditation between the soul and its Creator: it is indeed a ray from the Lamp of the Invisible, shed upon a heart which is pure, at leisure, spiritualised."⁴ Elsewhere he writes: "The sun which enlightens the heart of the gnostic is more radiant than our earthly sun, for that sun may be eclipsed and sets, but the sun of gnosis knows no eclipse nor setting." Deaf to the clamorous voices about them, blind to what goes on around them, uttering no word in answer to those who would summon them to human affairs, the gnostics see by that Divine radiance in the secret place within the veil, which is the Presence of God.⁵

The gnostics differ in the degree of gnosis to which they attain, for Gnosis is a "shoreless sea," the depths of which cannot be fathomed, since none can comprehend the greatness of the Divine Majesty, and those who plunge into this sea do so in accordance with their strength and the precedence which God granted unto them before time was.⁶ al-Ghazālī quotes the words of Junayd in regard to the gnostics: "Their spirits rejoice in communion with the Unseen, abiding in the presence

¹ *Rawḍat al-Tālibin*, pp. 250, 251.

² *Mukāshafat al-Qulūb*, p. 30.

³ "Gnosis," said Hujwiri, "is the life of the heart through God and the turning away of one's inmost thoughts from all that is not God. The worth of everyone is in proportion to gnosis, and he who is without gnosis is worth nothing." *op. cit.*, p. 267.

⁴ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 45.

⁵ *Rawḍat al-Tālibin*, p. 163.

⁶ *Iḥyā*, IV, pp. 241, 270.

of the All-Glorious, the Pre-eminent, in the cloud of Glory which envelopes Him, in the shadow of His Holiness. They have attained to a high station and they pass on thence to yet greater perfection, to an absolute glory which is immaterial, and they walk, clad in the mantle of Unification." But gnosis, Junayd adds, is a thing to be preserved inviolate, a pearl not to be cast before swine: to be given to those of God's servants, who are worthy to receive it, but to be withheld from the unworthy. It is the "mystery of God" and those who possess it must regard it as such.¹

This gnosis, which is granted only to those who have drawn near to God, means "a light which is manifested in the heart when it is purified from its blameworthy qualities by sincere self-mortification. In that light is revealed the true significance of things, the names of which were heard before and their meaning understood but vaguely. Now their meaning is understood and a real knowledge is attained of the Nature and Attributes of God, of His wondrous works in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and His wisdom in regard to this world and the world to come the gnostic knows the true nature of the human spirit and the relation to the world Invisible which results therefrom. That distinctive nature is manifest when the senses are stilled in sleep, and the spirit can contemplate the Unseen and perceive what lies in the future, being absent from this world. For the spirit is attached to this world only by means of the senses, and during sleep they are at rest."² But that "window" into the Unseen is not opened only in sleep and after the death of the body.³ It is opened in waking hours for the gnostic who has striven and is purified, being delivered from the power of sensual desire. Such a gnostic, sitting in solitude, who closes the channels of the senses and opens the eye and ear of the spirit and places his heart in relation with the Divine World, while he says continually: "God, God, God," within his heart, not with his tongue, ceases to be aware of himself and of this world and remains seeing only Him Who is Most Glorious and Exalted. Then that window is opened

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 288.

² *Fāṭihāt al-'Ulūm*, p. 40.

³ Cf. p. 145 above

and he sees in his waking moments that which he sees in dreams, and there appear unto him angelic spirits and the prophets and wondrous forms, fair and glorious to behold, and the kingdom of the heavens and the earth are laid open unto him, and he sees what it is not lawful to describe. This gnosis goes far beyond the knowledge of the learned, for it enters the hearts of the prophets and the saints direct from the Creative Truth Himself, nor can it be comprehended except by those who have experience of it.¹

al-Ghazālī relates the tradition that God said to David: "To know Me is to live in contemplation of Me," so that Gnosis is made perfect in the Vision of God and the contemplation of Him within the heart.² This is Contemplation in its perfection, for that measure of contemplation which was granted to the traveller who was mid-way, was but "permission" to enter upon the way which leads to Union, but this is "finding" (*wajd*) what was sought, it means entering in and the actual experience (*dhawq*) thereof. The gnostics in this world, says al-Ghazālī, see their Lord with the eye of assured faith and intuition (*baṣā'ir*), as in the world to come they see Him with their eyes and face to face, but He is close to them both here and there, and there is no difference between His nearness to them there and His nearness to them here, except that there it increases in subtlety and favour, but in both cases the distance between has been made to disappear.³ It is indeed the possession of gnosis in this life which will mean what is called "Paradise" in the life to come.

al-Ghazālī, on this subject, quotes the words of Rābi'a who, when asked what Paradise meant to her, replied: "First the Neighbour, then the house," and he continues: "No one who

¹ *Kīmīyā al-Sa'āda*, p. 16. *Iḥyā*, III, pp. 18, 19. Cf. St. Augustine, "If to anyone should grow hushed the tumult of the flesh, hushed the images of earth, and if the very soul should be hushed to itself and were by cessation of thought of self to pass beyond itself. If we should hear Him and in the flight of thought we touched upon the Eternal Wisdom, that which abideth over all things: if this were continued and other visions of a nature by far inferior were taken away and this one alone should ravish and absorb and enwrap the beholder of it amid inward joys so that life everlasting might be of such a kind, as 'was that moment of comprehension for which we sighed: were not this an 'enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?'" *Confessions*, IX, 10.

² *Rawḍāt al-Ṭālibīn*, p. 152.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

has not known God in this life can hope to see Him in the life to come, and only he who has found the joy of gnosis here will find the joy of contemplation there, since none can be in fellowship with Him in that world, who has not walked with Him in this. None may reap who has not sown, and a man is raised up only in the state in which he died, and he dies in the state in which he has lived, and he takes with him only that gnosis which was bestowed upon him, which will then be transformed into the Vision of God face to face, and his joy therein will be doubled, just as the joy of the lover is doubled when the image of the beloved is exchanged for the reality, for that is the consummation of his joy.

For the bliss of Paradise is to each one there only what he seeks, and he who seeks only the Presence of God finds no joy save in Him and finds all else irksome. Therefore, since the bliss of Paradise is in proportion to the love of God and the mystic's love of God is in proportion to his knowledge of Him, the source of that bliss is the gnosis revealed through faith." "If you say" al-Ghazālī goes on, "that the joy of the Vision, if it is in proportion to the joy of gnosis, is but little, even if doubled, for the joy of gnosis in this world is small, and even if it were great, it would not reach such a degree that all the other joys of Paradise would be despised in comparison with it, know that this contempt for the joy of gnosis arises from being deprived of it. How can he who is without gnosis comprehend its joy?"¹

But the joy of the Vision of God is given in this life to those whose hearts have been so purified that they can see God. The purpose of the gnostics is only to attain to this high knowledge and to possess in it a consolation revealing to them what to others remains unknown. When it is attained, all cares and sensual desires are obliterated and the heart is filled with its grace. Even if the gnostic were cast into Hell-fire, he would not feel it because of his absorption and if all the delights of Paradise were displayed to him, he would not turn towards them, because his joy has been made perfect and he has attained to what is above all else that can be attained. How can he

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 269.

who understands only the love of sensible things believe in the joy of looking upon the Face of God Most High, Who is without appearance or form? And what meaning for him has the promise of God to His worshippers and His declaration that it is the greatest of joys? But he who knows God knows that all joys are included in this joy.¹

Again al-Ghazālī writes that just as the physical eye rejoices in vision, so the gnostic in this world rejoices in the contemplation of the beauty of the Divine Presence, more than in all imaginable joys beside it, for joy is in proportion to affinity with what is desired. Now that with which the heart has most affinity is gnosis, for the heart is the Divine spirit which belongs not to brutes nor to brutish men, but to the prophets and the saints, and that which is itself Divine reaches out to the Divine.²

From Gnosis the mystic has passed to the Vision and in that Vision the mystic passes away from the self into the One and attains to the state of Union which is the end of the quest. Of those who see in existence but One al-Ghazālī says that this is the contemplation of the "just made perfect" and the Sūfis call it passing away into the Unity (*fanā' fi'l-tawḥīd*) because, since the gnostic sees only the One, he ceases to see himself and since he no longer sees himself because he is absorbed in the Unity, he has passed away from himself into the One.³ In passing away from the self, the mystic has also passed away from others: he seems to have passed away from all save the One contemplated and he has passed away also from the Vision, for if the heart turns to the Vision and to itself, because it is contemplating, then it becomes unmindful of the One contemplated.⁴ "In such a state of absorption," says al-Ghazālī, "the mystic is unmindful of himself, he does not feel what happens to his body, and this state is called *fanā'*. It means that he has become absorbed in Another and his concern has become one concern and that is his Beloved; there remains in him no room for any but the Beloved that he should turn towards him, whether that one be himself or another. This

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 287.

² *Kutāb al-Arba'in*, p. 259.

³ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 212.

⁴ *Iḥyā*, II, p. 256.

is the state which means attainment by the seeker, of the Sought."¹

For such a one the shadows of his own existence have been overcome by the victorious radiance of the light of his Unification, for the light of his *knowledge* of the Unity is extinguished in the light of his actual experience, as the light of the stars vanishes in the splendour of the light of day. In this stage the existence of the unitarian is submerged in the contemplation of the Beauty of the One, in the Whole itself, for he contemplates only the Essence of the One and His attributes, and the waves of the ocean of the Unity overwhelm him and he is surmerged in the One and All.²

Again, al-Ghazālī writes: "When the worshipper thinks no longer of his worship or himself, but is altogether absorbed in Him Whom he worships, that state, by the gnostics, is called *fanā'*, when a man has so passed away from himself that he feels nothing of his bodily members, nor of what is passing without, nor what passes within his own mind. He is absent from all that, and all that is absent from him: he is journeying first to his Lord, then (at the end) in his Lord. But if during that state the thought occurs to him that he has passed away completely from himself, that is a blemish and defilement. For perfect absorption means that he is unconscious not only of himself but of his absorption. For *fanā'* from *fanā'* is the goal of *fanā'*."

Orthodox theologians, al-Ghazālī continues, "may regard these words as meaningless nonsense, but that is not so, for this state of the mystics in relation to Him Whom they love is similar to your state in relation to what you love of position or wealth or a human love, when you may be overcome by anger in thinking of an enemy or so engrossed in your beloved that you perceive nothing else, and do not hear when someone speaks to you, nor see one who passes, though your eyes are open and you are not deaf, for this absorption makes you oblivious of all else and even of the absorption itself. For any attention to the absorption means being diverted from the cause thereof.

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 28.

² *Rawḍat al-Tālibīn*, p. 153.

So, having explained to you what is meant by *fanā'* you should cast aside doubt and cease to deny what you cannot comprehend. . . . This absorption at first will be like a flash of lightning, lasting but a short time, but then it becomes habitual, and a means of enabling the soul to ascend to the world above, where pure and essential Reality is manifested to it and it takes upon itself the impress of the Invisible World and the Divine Majesty is revealed to it . . . and at the last it looks upon God face to face. When such a mystic returns to this world of unreality and shadows, he regards mankind with pity, because they are deprived of the contemplation of the beauty of that celestial Abode and he marvels at their contentment with shadows and their allurements by this world of vain deceits. He is present with them in body . . . but absent in spirit: wondering at their presence, while they wonder at his absence."¹

These gnostics have ascended from the lowlands of unreality to the mountain heights of Reality and at the end of the ascent they have seen for themselves that there is none in existence save God Alone and that "all things perish save His Countenance,"² all things have been foredoomed to mortality save the One Himself. These gnostics when they return from their ascent to the World of Reality are agreed that they have seen nothing existent but the One, but some attained to this state through knowledge and some by direct experience and for these latter, plurality passed away entirely. They were submerged in the Absolute Unicity and their human reason disappeared into its abyss, and they remained stupefied therein. They could no longer recall any but God; forgetting themselves, God alone remained with them. It was in this state, al-Ghazālī declares, that one said: "I am the One Reality" and another: "Glory be to Me. How great is My majesty," and another: "Within this robe is nought but God." But the words uttered by passionate lovers in a state of ecstasy, al-Ghazālī feels, should be concealed, not spoken of. This state, in the language of metaphor, is called Identity (*ittiḥād*) and in the language of reality Unification (*tawḥīd*).³

¹ *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn* pp. 52, 53, 55.

² *Sūra LXXXVIII*, 28.

³ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 113-115.

It means that the mystic has arrived at the goal and passed into the unitive life with God. "He has entered into the pure and absolute Unicity of the One, and in the Kingdom of the One and Alone mortals reach the end of their ascent, for there is no ascent beyond it, since ascent involves multiplicity, implying an ascent *from* somewhere and an ascent *to* somewhere and when multiplicity has been eliminated, Unity is established and relationship ceases, signs are effaced, there remains neither height nor depth, nor one to descend or ascend. No higher ascent for the soul is possible, for there is no height beyond the highest and no multiplicity beside the Unity, and since multiplicity has been effaced, no further ascent."¹

The mystic who has reached the end of the Path and ascended to the highest height is the one who has attained what he sought and arrived at his journey's end: he is the *wāṣil*. Those who have passed into the unitive life, writes al-Ghazālī "have attained unto a Being transcending all that can be apprehended by sight or insight, for they find Him to transcend in His sanctity all that we have described heretofore. But these can be divided: for some of them, all that can be perceived is consumed away, blotted out, annihilated, but the soul remains contemplating that Supreme Beauty and Holiness and contemplating itself in the beauty which it has acquired by attaining to the Divine Presence, and for such a one, things seen are blotted out, but not the seeing soul. But some pass beyond this and they are the Elect of the Elect, who are consumed by the glory of His exalted Countenance and the greatness of the Divine Majesty overwhelms them and they are annihilated and they themselves are no more. They no longer contemplate themselves, having passed away from themselves and there remains only the One, the Real, and the meaning of His word "All things perish save His Countenance" is known by actual experience.

This is the final degree of those who attain, but some of them did not in their ascent follow the gradual progress we have described, nor was the ascent long for them. At the very beginning, outstripping their compeers, they attained to a knowledge of the All-Holy and the Divine transcendence.

¹ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p. 118.

They were overcome at the first by what overcame others at the last. The Divine Epiphany broke in upon them all at once, so that all things perceptible by the sight or by the insight were consumed by the Glory of His Countenance"; and al-Ghazālī adds: "Ask that I may be forgiven if my pen has gone astray or my foot has slipped, for to plunge into the abyss of the Divine mysteries is a perilous thing and no easy task is it to seek to discover the Unclouded Glory which lies behind the Veil."¹

But the mystic who has passed away from self is subsisting in God: *'fanā'* gives place, to *baqā'*, mortality to immortality. This is the life of the saints in God. al-Ghazālī quotes the words of Bundār² who said: "He who draws near to this world, will be consumed by its flames that is, by covetousness, until he is reduced to ashes; he who approaches the world to come will be purified by its fires and becomes a golden ingot which is profitable to others, but he who approaches God is consumed by the flaming splendour of the Unity and becomes an essence of infinite worth."³

"Praise be to God," writes al-Ghazālī elsewhere, in solemn thanksgiving for the lives of the saints, "Who hath freed the hearts of His saints from any inclination to the vanities of this world and its glamour and hath purified their inmost selves from the contemplation of aught but His Majesty. These are they whom He hath chosen for Himself that they might be devoted to the proclamation of His Glory, to whom He hath revealed His Names and His Attributes, until they were illumined by the radiance of their knowledge of Him. To them hath He unveiled the Splendour of His Countenance until they were consumed by the fire of His love."⁴

The saints are those whose hearts are occupied with recollection, whose tongues utter praise to God, whose members are occupied in His service. They find their happiness in fellowship with Him and are never separated from His love. He is always mindful of them as they are of Him, and He loves

¹ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 144, 145.

² Ibn al-Husayn, a pupil of Shiblī, who died at Arrajān, 353/964. Cf. Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, pp. 269, 273, 278.

³ *Ihyā*, III, p. 183.

⁴ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 252.

them as they love Him and is well-pleased with them, even as they are satisfied in Him. Their capital stock is poverty and their affairs are controlled by necessity. They have realised the bitterness of sin and have found the remedy which could heal them. They are as lanterns, whose light bears witness unto God, keys to the treasure-house of His wisdom. Their path is made clear before them by a light like that of the rising moon: they are the pure fruit of that blessed tree, the root of which is the Divine Unity and the branches thereof godliness.¹ For those whom He has chosen to be His saints God pours out a "draught from the cup of His love" and by drinking thereof, thirst is increased. The saint is as one rapt away, given over entirely to contemplation (*majdhūb*). His very self and his own attributes have disappeared and he has passed from mortality into the Divine immortality. He is clothed upon with a robe of honour, which is the Divine promise, "My saint hears by Me and sees by Me." God has taken him as His friend: when he speaks, it is only to speak of Him and when he sees, it is by His light, and when he moves, it is by His power, and if he is rapt away, it is by His decree, and therewith duality vanishes and is transformed into the One Reality. The saints, by the indwelling of the Divine Spirit, have become deified (*ruhāniyyūn*).²

al-Ghazālī relates a tradition telling how David asked the Lord to show him His saints, and he was bidden to go to the Lebanon mountains and there he would find fourteen souls, including the young and the mature and the old, and he was to give them greeting from their Lord and the message: "Will ye not ask for what ye need, for ye are My friends and Mine elect and My saints? I rejoice in your joy and I hasten to respond to your love. At all times I am regarding you with the regard of a pitiful, tender mother." So David went his way and gave them the message, which they received with eyes bent to the ground, and they listened with tears flowing down their cheeks. But they had nothing to ask save that they might draw still nearer to the Divine Light, and their only need was to look upon the Face of Him they loved. Then the Lord

¹ *Minhāj al-'Arifin*, p. 102.

² *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibin*, p. 131 *Kitāb al-Arba'in*, p. 265.

bade David say unto them: "I have heard your words and granted you your desire. I am raising the veil between Me and you, that ye may look upon My Light and My Glory." Then David asked by what means these saints had attained to such grace, and the Lord replied: "By right thinking and detachment from this world and its people and communion, in solitude, apart with Me; and this is a degree to which none attain except him who has ceased to be concerned with this world, whose heart is at leisure, who has preferred Me above all My creatures. Therefore I have inclined unto him and freed his soul, and I have raised the veil between us, so that he looks upon Me face to face and My grace is with him at all times and I shew him the Light of My Countenance. If he falls sick I tend him, even as a pitiful mother tends her child: if he thirsts, I give him to drink and make him to taste of the recollection of Myself, and so have I detached his soul from this world and its people and they have ceased to be dear unto him. He does not weary of devotion to Me, but hastens to draw near unto Me. . . . I am loath to decree his death, for in him I make Myself manifest among My creatures. He sees none but Me and I see none but him and I see that his soul is melted within him, and his body emaciated and his hands bruised and his heart broken. By My Glory and My Majesty, O David, I will make him to sit down in Paradise and I will satisfy his desire to look upon Me, until he is content and more than content."¹

But the life of the saint is not limited to the joy of fellowship with God; the light which he receives from the Divine radiance is a torch whereby he gives light to others. It is for the saint, al-Ghazālī points out, to descend from the mountain of transfiguration to the lower levels of this world, so that the weak may seek out his company and may kindle their lights at the radiance which the saint has brought from the heavenly places, as bats find their light in what remains of the sunlight, and are content with the light of the stars in the watches of the night, and thereby live a life suited to their bodily state, though not the life of those who come and go in the full light of the sun.

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 279.

The saint is one whose eyes are open, so that he sees clearly and needs none to lead him, but it is his business to lead the blind or those weak of sight, for his relation to the weaker brethren is that of one who walks on water to those who walk on land. Some may learn to swim, but to walk on the water is only given to those who have reached spiritual perfection.¹ al-Ghazālī says elsewhere that it is the glory of the saint to spend himself for those in need and to undertake the task of shepherding them into Paradise.² Again, it is the mark of saintship to shew compassion to all God's servants, to be pitiful towards them and to fight for them, and with them, against the forces of evil.³

al-Ghazālī gives a word of encouragement to one who cannot reckon himself to be among the saints of God, bidding him at any rate to be a lover of the saints, having faith in them and it may be that at the Resurrection he will find himself with those he loves. As a proof of this al-Ghazālī adds a tradition that Jesus asked the Jews: "Where does the seed grow?" and they replied: "In the earth." Then He said: "Verily I say unto you, Wisdom takes root only in a heart like the earth (i.e., which is soft and receptive of the truth)," and it may be, that those who seek to fulfil the conditions of saintship will attain to it, through self-abasement and humility.⁴

al-Ghazālī gives thanks for the life of the saints in God in the words: "Praise be unto God, Who hath consumed the hearts of His saints in the fire of His love and hath taken captive their desires (*himam*) and their spirits by the longing to meet with Him and to look upon Him and hath fixed their sight and their insight upon the vision of the Beauty of His Presence, until by the inbreathing of the spirit of Union, they have become rapt beyond themselves and their hearts have become distraught by the contemplation of the splendours of the Divine Glory, so that they see naught but Him in this world or the world to come, and they remember none in heaven or earth save Him alone. If any form presents itself to their outward gaze, their

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 84. Cf. p. 160 above.

² *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 107.

³ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 286.

⁴ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 306.

inward vision passes beyond it to Him Who formed it: if sweet music breaks in upon their hearing, their inmost thoughts pass from it to the Beloved. If any sound reaches them, which is disquieting or disturbing or affecting or giving rise to joy or sorrow or making for merriment or for longing or stirring up to excitement—they are disturbed only for His sake, their joy is in Him alone and they are disquieted only on His account. Their grief is only in Him and their longing is only for that which is to be found in His Presence, they are aroused only for Him, and their going to and fro is round about Him alone. For from Him is all that they hear and it is to Him that they give heed, since He hath closed their eyes to all but Himself and hath made them deaf to all words save His. These are they whom God hath called to be His saints, having claimed them for Himself from among His chosen and His elect."¹

¹ *Ihyā*, II, pp. 236, 237.

CHAPTER XIII

al-Ghazālī's Influence: upon Islam and Sūfism: upon Jewish Thought and upon Mediæval Christian Mysticism

al-Ghazālī's influence was great even during his life-time, and the widespread appreciation of both his lectures and his writings made his teaching famous, while he was still alive, among all Arabic-speaking Muslims, in the West as in the East. At the same time, his fearless devotion to truth and his consistent support of the Sūfī doctrine incurred much criticism and hostility on the part of the most orthodox theologians both before, and after, his death.

In Andalusia, the Qāḍī of Cordova, Abū 'Abdallāh M. b. Hamdīn, condemned al-Ghazālī's works, and the rest of the Spanish Qāḍīs accepted the condemnation, with the result that al-Ghazālī's books were burnt wherever found throughout Andalusia, and possession of them was forbidden on pain of scourging or death. These books included the *Ihyā*, but it is noted by one writer that when it was later brought back to Spain, its return was received with satisfaction and approbation, and he adds that one admirer even copied it out in letters of gold.¹ But the Qāḍī's *fatwa* bears witness to the circulation of al-Ghazālī's writings, even at this early period, throughout Spain, and no doubt this was largely due to the dissemination of his teaching by his students, such as Abū Bakr M. Ibn al-'Arabī, who returned to Spain and taught in Seville, after having studied under al-Ghazālī at Baghdad and elsewhere (cf. p. 64 above).

There is similar evidence that al-Ghazālī's books were in circulation in North Africa. The Sultan of Marakash, 'Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshfin (477/1084-537/1142), whose empire included not only North Africa, but the whole of Spain and the Balearic isles, was a bigoted fanatic in religious matters, accepting the authority of the orthodox religious leaders of his time. A devoted Mālikite, he regarded both philosophy and scholastic

¹ M. Riḍā, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

theology as destructive to the true faith and al-Ghazālī's books naturally came under his ban. Orders were issued that they were to be burnt and anyone found in possession of any part of them was threatened with confiscation of property and even with death. The biographer who records this observes that the Maghibī theologians were jealous of al-Ghazālī on account of his authoritative position and profound learning and widespread reputation, and so "they did what they did, but they did not attain their desire, for God enabled him to triumph over them and the people welcomed his books and estimated them at their true value."¹

Among al-Ghazālī's most bitter critics was Abu'l-Walīd M. Ibn Rushd (Averroes), the Spanish philosopher, born at Cordova in 520/1126. He was Qāḍī of Seville and for a time acted as Chief Qāḍī of the whole of Muslim Spain. He paid several visits to Morocco and died there in 595/1198. Ibn Rushd accused al-Ghazālī of inconsistency in advocating the doctrine of emanation in the *Mishkāt al-Anwār*—he might have found other examples elsewhere in al-Ghazālī's works; cf. pp. ff. 106 above—while he expressly denies it elsewhere. Ibn Rushd quotes al-Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid* and his *Tahāfut al-Falāsafa*, the *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, the *Munqidh min al-Dalāl* the *Kīmiyā al-Sa'ada*, and the *Tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa'l-Zandaqa*. al-Ghazālī's teaching, he considers, is sometimes detrimental to the Shar' and sometimes to philosophy and sometimes to both, but may equally be considered favourable to both.² Ibn Rushd perhaps failed to distinguish between al-Ghazālī the orthodox theologian and al-Ghazālī the mystic, and between his earlier opinions and those of his later years, and it is to the latter period that the *Mishkāt* belongs. al-Ghazālī's use of terms in the mystical sense was not necessarily identical with the use of these terms by the philosophers. Ibn Rushd had evidently made a close study of al-Ghazālī's works, even if it was only for the purpose of refuting them.

Another critic was Abu'l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī, surnamed Jamāl al-Dīn, of Baghdad (ob. 597/1200), an able traditionist

¹ M. Riḍā, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 31.

² *al-Kashf 'an manāḥij al-adilla*, pp. 57, 58.

and a celebrated preacher, and the most learned writer of his time, whose pen, very frequently, was dipped in gall. Lines which he composed and addressed to his fellow-citizens in Baghdad run thus: "There are people in 'Irāq for whom I feel no friendship, but my excuse is this: their hearts are formed of churlishness. They listen with admiration to the words of a stranger, but those of their own townsmen attract no attention. If a neighbour profited by the water which flowed from the roofs of their houses, they would turn the spout in another direction. And when reproached, their excuse is: That the voice of the songstress has no charms for the tribe to which she belongs."¹ He was a bigoted Ḥanbalite, who attacked al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, on whose teaching al-Ghazālī based much of his own (cf. pp. 123 ff. above), and attacked al-Ghazālī himself, for accepting al-Muḥāsibī's views, and also, for his adherence to Šūfism, to which Ibn al-Jawzī himself was bitterly opposed.²

It was for the Šūfis, writes Ibn al-Jawzī, that al-Ghazālī wrote the *Iḥyā* and filled it with false traditions, and was unaware of their falsity, and spoke of revelation and departed from the Canon Law, and his words, says Ibn al-Jawzī, are a kind of esoterism. He quotes also from his writings the statement that the Šūfis in their waking hours behold the angels and the spirits of the prophets and hear their voices and receive favours from them and then they ascend from contemplation of their forms to degrees which cannot be described.³ al-Jawzī collected what he considered to be the errors of the *Iḥyā* in a book which he called *I'lām al-Iḥyā b'Ighlāt al-Iḥyā* and also expressed his opinions of al-Ghazālī's teaching in his book—*Talbīs Iblīs*.⁴ He quotes al-Ghazālī's statement that the inclination of the Šūfis was towards knowledge which was revealed and not acquired by study, and therefore they did not concern themselves with study nor the works of human writers, but asserted that the Way gave precedence to self-discipline, in order to to get rid of evil qualities and to cut off all fetters. They taught the concentration of the concern upon God, through

¹ Ibn Khallikān, II, p. 91.
² Cf. *Talbīs Iblīs*, pp. 171 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 176. Cf. p. 186 above.
⁴ M. Riḍā, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

cessation of concern with family and wealth and knowledge, and betaking themselves to solitude for the recollection of God.¹ Ibn Jawzī stoutly defends the pursuit of learning (which al-Ghazālī never despised, though he reckoned it inferior to the God-given gnosis), and maintains that the soul, in solitude, is the more subject to Satanic suggestions and its own vain imaginations, and knowledge is necessary to ward these off. Fasting, vigils, and the waste of time involved in meditation, Ibn al-Jawzī considers to be contrary to the Canon Law.²

Again, Ibn al-Jawzī takes exception to al-Ghazālī's view that listening to music and singing was permissible, because if listening to a single melodious sound was lawful, so also must be listening to a combination of such sounds (cf. pp. 85 ff. above). Ibn al-Jawzī considers this is a fallacious argument, pointing out that the string by itself, or the lute without strings, if struck, is not unlawful, or does it produce music, but if the two are combined and struck in a particular fashion, that is forbidden.³

Ibn al-Jawzī expresses his astonishment that al-Ghazālī should relate so many stories of the otherworldliness of the Šūfis, their indifference to this world's goods, and the severity of their asceticism and self-discipline, and not only did he relate these things, but he approved of the Šūfis in such action. "How cheaply has al-Ghazālī traded theology for Šūfism!" he exclaims. Again he says: "Glory be to Him Who withdrew Abū Ḥāmid from the orbit of theology by his authorship of the *Iḥyā*! Would that he had not related therein such unlawful things. It is amazing that he should both relate them and express his approval of them and should call the Šūfis (lit. the owners of "states") his friends: and what state is more vile and more disastrous than that of one who opposes the Shar' and approves what is opposed to it?"⁴ In many other passages Ibn al-Jawzī attacks al-Ghazālī in a manner which proves his thorough study of al-Ghazālī's teaching and his indignation that a man of such gifts should have given his support to the Šūfis and their doctrines. He also rebukes

¹ *Iḥyā*, III, p. 16.

² *Talbīs Iblīs*, pp. 345, 346. Cf. also p. 347

³ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁴ *Talbīs Iblīs*, pp. 377 ff. 380.

al-Ghazālī for his tolerance towards Yazīd (cf. pp. 45 ff. above), in his *Book of the Refutation of the Bigot* which is directed against one who denies that Yazīd should be cursed.¹

But al-Ghazālī had a much greater influence on those who admired and accepted his teachings. It is stated that his *fatwas*, which, in their tolerance and wisdom, reflected his own religious beliefs, were written down by the Imām Abu'l-Faḍl al-Muẓaffar al-'Abdī al-Baḥarānī in the year 564/1170, and so were available for the guidance of those who came after him, who had similar questions to settle.² The large number of summaries of the *Ihyā* and commentaries upon it, beginning with his brother Aḥmad's *Lubāb al-Ihyā* which was followed by those of many traditionalists and theologians, shews the deep impression made by a book still widely read in all Islamic communities.³

A writer who made a careful study of al-Ghazālī's writings and did not hesitate to pass friendly criticism where necessary, while at the same time admiring his work and defending it against those who attacked it, was the celebrated Spanish philosopher and mystic Abū Bakr Ibn Ṭufayl (ob. 581/1185). He admits that al-Ghazālī, when addressing himself to the general public "bound in one place and loosed in another and denied certain things and then declared then to be true." There are many contradictions in his books, Ibn Ṭufayl points out, and he quotes al-Ghazālī's own justification for such inconsistency, given in the *Mizān al-'Amal*, where he says that opinions are of three kinds: (i) that which is shared with the vulgar and is in accordance with their view; (ii) the opinion given to anyone who comes asking for guidance; (iii) the opinion which a man keeps to himself, which is not disclosed except to one who himself holds it.⁴ Ibn Ṭufayl defends al-Ghazālī against the attacks of critics such as Ibn Rushd, saying: "Some later writers have read a grave significance into the words that occur at the end of the *Mishkāt*, to the effect that those

¹ Khwānsārī, *Rawḍat al-Jannāt*, p. 182.

² *Ithāf*, p. 18.

³ A list of such summaries is given by the Sayyid Murtaḍa in the *Ithāf*, p. 41. Cf. also Brocklemann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*, I, p. 42. *Supp.* I, p. 748.

⁴ *Hayy b. Yaqzān*, p. 4. *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 162.

who Attained-to-Union are convinced that the Existent One can be described by attributes inconsistent with pure Unity, inferring from this that al-Ghazālī asserted that the First Being, The Reality, Who Alone is worthy to be glorified, admitted of multiplicity in His Essence, which God forbid."¹

al-Ghazālī's teaching, in Ibn Ṭufayl's view, consisted chiefly of symbolic utterances and allusions, and none could profit thereby, except that one who, in the first place, examined them by his insight, and used his insight to interpret them, or one especially fitted to understand them, one possessed of transcendental wisdom, for whom a slight allusion was sufficient. Ibn Ṭufayl notes that al-Ghazālī himself stated that he composed books of esoteric doctrine and had set down therein the truth undefiled, but these books, Ibn Ṭufayl observes, had not reached Andalusia. Books reputed to contain such doctrine were the *Kitāb al-Ma'ārif al-'Aqliyya* and the *Kitāb al-Nafkh wa'l-Taswīya*,² but though these books contain symbolic expressions, Ibn Ṭufayl does not think there is much revealed in them beyond what is set forth in those of al-Ghazālī's books meant for the multitude (though Ibn Ṭufayl might have found indications of a belief in emanation, in the former book).³

It is evident that Ibn Ṭufayl had made the closest study of al-Ghazālī's writings, and the theme of his own famous romance *Hayy b. Yaqzān*, with its emphasis on the value of the life in solitude in communion with the Divine, which results in attainment to the Vision of God and the knowledge of all things, may well have been influenced by al-Ghazālī's teaching on the subject. Ibn Ṭufayl closes his book by stating that he has included in it "secret knowledge which can be received only by the gnostics in God, and ignored only by those who are heedless of Him—but the mysteries which we have confided to these pages, we have concealed with a light veil, easily withdrawn by those fitted to do so, but impenetrable by those who are unworthy of what lies beyond it," a method of teaching which by his own admission, is characteristically Ghazālīan.⁴

¹ *Hayy b. Yaqzān*, p. 14.

² Cf. Sūras, XV, 29. XXXII, 8. XXXVIII, 72.

³ *Hayy b. Yaqzān*, p. 14. Cf. p. 107 above.

⁴ *Hayy b. Yaqzān*, p. 118.

There is no doubt that al-Ghazālī's teaching on the mystic Path had a profound influence on the founders of the Ṣūfī religious orders which were being established in Islam, in considerable numbers, from the twelfth century onwards. Among the greatest of these orders was that of the Qādiriyya, named after 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (ob. 561/1166). As a youth of eighteen, he arrived at Baghdad in A.H. 488, just after al-Ghazālī's resignation, when everyone was asking why he had given up his post, and this event must have produced a deep effect on the young student. 'Abd al-Qādir studied Ṣūfism in Baghdad and then spent long years in asceticism and self-discipline until he attained to the mystical experience and the life of the saints. He then returned to Baghdad to accomplish the work to which he felt himself called and devoted his time to preaching, as al-Ghazālī had done before him. In A.H. 521 he was appointed Professor at the College of Abū Sa'd al-Mubārak and there his followers built a convent for his Ṣūfī novices. He was responsible for a large number of writings, in which he follows the teaching of al-Ghazālī. His teaching on the Vision, and the distinction between sight (the physical eye, *baṣr*) and insight (the eye of the spirit, *baṣīra*), on the visible and invisible worlds, on Love, which he calls "a kind of intoxication," Gnosis, which he regards as the knowledge of the hidden meaning of things, and ecstasy (*wajd*), when God pours out the cup of His love, for His saints, and so admits them to the Garden of Fellowship with Himself, all follows closely that of al-Ghazālī on the same subjects.¹

There is a passage in 'Abd al-Qādir's *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, in which he writes: "Die to the creatures, by God's leave, to your passions, by His command: to your will, by His act, and you will then be worthy to be the dwelling-place of the knowledge of God. The sign of your death to the creatures is that you detach yourself from them and do not look for anything from them. The sign that you have died to your passions is that you cease to seek benefit for yourself, or to ward off injury, and you are not concerned about yourself, for you have com-

¹ Cf. M. 'Alī Aīnī, *Abd al-Kādir Guilanī*, pp. 169 ff. and Chapters IX, XII above

mitted all things unto God. The sign that your will has been merged in the Divine Will is that you seek nothing of yourself or for yourself . . . God's will is working in you. Surrender yourself into the hands of God, like the ball of the polo-player, who sends it hither and thither with his mallet, or the corpse in the hands of him who washes it, . . . like the child in its mother's bosom."² He also writes of God's revelation of Himself in Majesty and Beauty and how those to whom He reveals Himself in His Majesty and Greatness are filled with fear and awe, while, those to whom His Beauty is revealed are filled with radiance and joy, and know themselves to be near unto Him.³ The whole of this work shews plainly that it has been based upon al-Ghazālī's writings.⁴

The Qādiriyya order was inspired by Jilānī's principles and based its rule of life upon his teaching. The order has three degrees of initiation that of *Islām*, for the believers who accept the "five pillars" of the Faith (the creed, prayer, almsgiving, fasting and the pilgrimage), that of *Imān*, for those whose faith includes belief in God, His angels, the prophets, the sacred books, the Resurrection and predetermination, and that of *Iḥsān*, for the elect, who pray to God "as if they saw Him with their eyes," or if they do not see Him, who know that He sees them. This bears a close resemblance to al-Ghazālī's three-fold division of the degrees of faith and the classes of believers.⁵ The Order bases its teaching also on the Tradition of the Seventy Thousand Veils, between God and the soul, with its implications of the need of purification, in order that these veils may be rent asunder.⁶

Another of the great orders obviously influenced by al-Ghazālī's teaching was that of the Rifā'iyya, whose founder, Aḥmad al-Rifā'i (ob. 570/1182) lived near Basra, a devout ascetic who, like al-Ghazālī, was a great lover of animal life. He has been called the St. Francis of the dervishes, and by his followers he was regarded as almost Divine. One of his titles at the

² M. al-Tādaff, *Qalā'id al-Jawāhir* (margin), pp. 12 ff. 121 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴ Cf. Chapters XI and XII above and p. 169 above.

⁵ Cf. M. 'Alī Aīnī, *op. cit.*, p. 196. and p. 167 above

⁶ Cf. p. 147 ff. above.

present day is Abu'l-'Awājiz (the Father of the Needy).¹ His doctrine of the Godhead is very like that of al-Ghazālī and is stated almost in his words "It is wonderful that, whilst I seek, Thou art with me: and how I see that Thou art at my side. Still more wonderful that I can know Thee. Infinite, nothing limits Thee: incapable of being represented, Thou hast no body: invisible, Thou hast no form—How know Thee? In what way to appreciate Thee? Thou art not present that I should lay hold upon Thee: Thou art not absent that I should seek Thee. Thou art not without, that we can attain unto Thee. Thou art not within, that one has the right to deny Thee . . . since all finite things subsist by Thee, they are of necessity near unto Thee: but finite beings have no relation to Thee in dignity, and they are therefore far from Thee."²

The Rifā'i Shaykh of the present day says to the novice who desires initiation into the Order: "You are the dead body and I am the washer of the dead. You are the garden, I the gardener," both similes borrowed from al-Ghazālī.³ The Rifā'is also teach the doctrine of the Seventy Thousand Veils and hold that there are four main stages in the task of rending the veils, the Law, the Way, Knowledge and Reality. The novice has to begin with Repentance and getting rid of the gross outward sins, the purgative life. He has then to purify the inner self from the vices and to replace evil by good. His spiritual director tells him that he must be cast into the flames of spiritual love (*'ishq*) so that he may emerge refined, and the fuel of that fire is the constant recollection of God. So the initiate attains to the death of self (*al-fanā' al-asghar*) and he begins to have the gifts of light and rapture (*jadhba*), the illuminative life. But he is still a traveller and has not yet reached the goal of seeing God in all things and all things in relation to himself when he knows himself to be the mirror of all things, and so lives the unitive life.⁴

¹ Cf. T. Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine*, pp. 274, 276.

² *al-Burhān al-mu'ayyad*, p. 124, quoted by Carra de Vaux, *al-Ghazālī*, p. 251. Cf. pp. 133, 98 ff. above.

³ Cf. 168, 72, 161 pp. above.

⁴ Cf. W. H. T. Gairdner *The Moslem World*, 1912. pp. 173 ff. 245 ff. Cf. chapters X, XI, XII above and pp. 144 ff. above.

A very important writer on Sūfism, also regarded as the founder of an order, whose writings, concerned largely with the organisation of the Sūfī orders, shew very plainly the influence of al-Ghazālī, was Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (ob. 632/1234). He had studied under 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, while the Persian mystic poet Sa'dī was his pupil. He became famed as a spiritual director and gathered many disciples around him. In his *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif* he gives a systematic account of the Sūfī way of life, much of which is derived from al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā* and his other works.

Of the Path he says that the beginning of Sūfism is knowledge and the middle of it is action and the end of it is a gift from God.¹ He teaches that the novice requires the guidance of a spiritual director, whose purpose is to help to purify his heart from vice and to cultivate the virtues, so that the heart may become as a polished mirror wherein is reflected the splendour of the Divine Glory, and the radiance of the Divine Beauty may be manifested therein. The perfect Shaykh is the true gnostic, the chosen saint, and his guidance of the novice is the medicine for the penitent's affliction, for his teaching brings healing to his soul.²

Suhrawardī's views on Music are evidently derived from those of al-Ghazālī. He points out that music arouses in the heart only what is already there. That one who is inwardly attached to what is other than God is stirred by music to sensual desire, but he who is inwardly attached to the love of God, is moved to do His will. He also observes that the spirit responds to the rhythm of music, because it has an affinity therewith. He divides those who listen to music into three classes, the common folk who hear with their outward ears only and whose emotions are stirred; those who are more advanced on the way, to whom it brings the vision of the grace of God, the gnostics to whom listening means contemplation; and finally, the spiritually perfect, to whom, through music, God reveals Himself unveiled.³

¹ *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, *Iḥyā*, II (margin), p. 288. Cf. pp. 152 ff above and *Rawḍat al-Tālibīn*, p. 145.

² *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, *Iḥyā*, II (margin), pp. 12, 28. Cf. pp. 153 ff above.

³ *Op. cit.* *Iḥyā*, II (margin), pp. 223 ff. Cf. pp. 87 ff. above.

Suhrawardī accepts al-Ghazālī's cosmological scheme and frequently refers to the different worlds of experience, the *'ālam al-mulk wa'l-khalq wa'l-shahāda*, which is that of created forms, and the *'ālam al-amr wa'l-malakūt*, the spiritual world, to which the heart of man belongs.¹ He writes also of the human heart facing two ways, towards the lower self and towards the spirit, and only the heart which is completely purified faces continually towards the spiritual. Like al-Ghazālī before him, Suhrawardī thinks of the hindrances, which prevent the soul from finding God, as veils, and only when these have been rent, can the soul become the mirror of the Divine Reality and the splendour of the Divine Glory be manifested therein.²

Suhrawardī also lays stress on the Divine approach to man, on the attractive force (*jādhīb*) of the Spirit of God, which draws the human spirit,—when it is perfectly tranquillised, and the mirror is so polished that it reflects the Divine radiance—to its true abiding-place, the Invisible World. This attraction of the human to the Divine, he says, is stronger than that of the iron to the magnet. Just as the magnet and the iron are mutually attracted because of their affinity in substance, so also there is affinity between the Divine and the human spirit which draws them together.³

Suhrawardī's teaching on Prayer owes a good deal to al-Ghazālī and he also quotes the words of Abū Sa'd al-Kharrāz that when entering upon Prayer a man should approach God as he will on the Day of Resurrection, when he will stand in His Presence, with no mediator between, for he who prays is face to face with Him to Whom he prays and in confidential talk with Him, and it should be remembered that He is the King of kings.⁴ When the pure in heart, says Suhrawardī, utter the *takbīr* (God is Most Great), they enter into the heavenly places and are preserved from Satanic suggestions. The hearts of those who seek to draw nigh unto God ascend through the heavenly spheres and with each sphere to which they ascend, they leave behind them something of the darkness of the self, until they pass

¹ *Op. cit.* *Iḥyā*, II (margin), pp. 17, 28, 338. IV, p. 217. Cf. pp. 160, 174 above.

² *Op. cit.* *Iḥyā*, II (margin), pp. 261, 334, 260. Cf. pp. 157 ff. above.

³ *Op. cit.* *Iḥyā*, II (margin), p. 305. Cf. p. 143 above.

⁴ *Op. cit.* *Iḥyā*, III (margin), pp. 169, 171. Cf. pp. 100, 101 above.

beyond the heavens and stand before the Throne of God, and then all thought of the self passes away in the radiant light of the Divine Majesty, and the darkness of the self is extinguished in that pure light, as the darkness of the night disappears in the light of day.¹

The final stage of the way, to Suhrawardī, as to al-Ghazālī, is that of *tamkīn*, and those who attain to it have left the "states" behind them and pierced the veils, and their spirits dwell in Essential Light: they are the lovers, enjoying that fellowship (*uns*) which Dhū 'l-Nūn defined as the lover's joy in the Beloved, which Suhrawardī describes as the rejoicing of the spirit in the perfection of the Divine Beauty. They have returned to their Source, they have found that which they sought (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), and, having passed away from self into God, have attained to the unitive life in Him (*ittiṣāl*).²

But the greatest among those who were influenced by al-Ghazālī was the Spanish mystic Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī, "al-Shaykh al-Akbar," who was born at Murcia, in Spain, in 560/1164. He lived for some thirty years at Seville, then a centre of Spanish Ṣūfism, and there he first studied its teaching. He then travelled eastwards, visiting Egypt, Syria, Baghdad, Aleppo, and Asia Minor. He settled finally in Damascus, where he died in 638/1240. His travels brought him into contact with the chief Ṣūfīs of his time and his study of al-Ghazālī's writings is proved by his expressed admiration for the earlier mystic, whom he calls one of the leaders of the Ṣūfī Way, possessing a knowledge belonging only to the elect among the Ṣūfīs, one able to explain both the name and the named, for whom God had drawn aside the veil, that he might look upon the World Invisible.³

In his *Kitāb al-Ajwiba* Ibn al-'Arabī gives his doctrine of the Godhead: "He is, and there is with Him no after nor before, nor above nor below, nor far nor near, nor union nor division, nor how nor where nor place. He is now as He was. He is the One without oneness and the Single without singleness. . . .

¹ *Op. cit.* *Iḥyā*, III (margin), p. 218. Cf. pp. 165, 190 above.

² *Op. cit.* *Iḥyā*, IV (margin), pp. 407, 307, 367, 369 ff. Cf. pp. 101, 190 above.

³ Cf. *Iḥyā*, p. 10. Munāwī, fol. 195a.

He is the very existence of the First and the very existence of the Last and the very existence of the Outward and the very existence of the Inward. So that there is no first nor last nor outward nor inward except Him, without those becoming Him or His becoming them. . . . He is not in a thing, nor a thing in Him, whether entering in or proceeding forth. It is necessary that thou know Him, after this fashion, not by learning (*'ilm*) nor by intellect, nor by understanding, nor by imagination, nor by sense, nor by the outward eye, nor by the inward eye nor by perception. By Himself he sees Himself and by Himself He knows Himself. . . . His Veil (i.e., phenomenal existence) is (only) the concealment of His existence in His oneness, with out any quality. . . . There is no other and there is no existence to other, than He. . . . He whom thou thinkest to be other than God, he is not other than God, but thou dost not know Him and dost not understand that thou seest Him," Nature, he says, is nothing else than the "breath of God" indwelling forms higher and lower, which are manifest as phenomena. His relation to the world is that of the spirit to the body. But he adds, "He is still Ruler as well as ruled and is still Creator as well as created. He is now as He was as to His creative power and as to His sovereignty, not requiring a creature nor a subject. . . . When He called into being the things that are He was (already) endowed with all attributes, and He is now as He was then. In His oneness there is no difference between what is recent and what is original: the recent is the result of His manifesting Himself and the original is the result of His remaining within Himself."¹ There is a striking resemblance in this passage to al-Ghazālī's declaration of the Nature of the Godhead, in his emphasis on the Divine Self-Sufficiency, and his statement that He is as He always was and the creation was but the shewing forth of His glory, and in his interpretation of the terms First and Last as applied to the Godhead.²

Again Ibn al-'Arabī writes: "There is no existence save His existence. To this the Prophet pointed when he said: "Revile not the world, for God is the world," pointing to the fact that

¹ *Kitāb al-Ajwiba*, pp. 810, 813, 817. Cf. *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, pp. 271, 116.

² Cf. *Iḥyā*, I, pp. 79 ff. IV, pp. 217 ff. and pp. 133, 138 above.

the existence of the world is God's existence without partner or like or equal. It is related that the Prophet declared that God said to Moses: "O my servant, I was sick and thou didst not visit Me. I begged of thee and thou gavest not to Me," with other like expressions, pointing to the fact that the existence of the beggar is His existence and the existence of the sick is His existence. And when this is allowed it is allowed that this existence is His existence and that the existence of all created things, both accidents and substances, is His existence. And when the secret of an atom of the atoms is clear, the secret of all created things, both outward and inward is clear, and thou dost not see in this world or the next, aught beside God, but the existence of these two Abodes and their name and their named, all of them, are He without doubt and without wavering."¹ al-Ghazālī had already stated his view that the sum total of the visible and invisible worlds were to be regarded as the Divine Presence "which encompasses all existent things, since there is nothing existent, save God and His works and His servants, who are His handiwork," and again he had written that there was nothing co-existent with God, apart from Him, for everything subsists through Him.² The traditions attributed by Ibn al-'Arabī to Moses were also quoted by al-Ghazālī, who adds the words of the Lord: "If thou hadst visited My servant, thou wouldest have found Me with him,"³ and it would seem that Ibn al-'Arabī has taken this from al-Ghazālī. But in Ibn al-'Arabī's teaching al-Ghazālī's panentheism is developed into an unmistakable pantheistic monism.

In his teaching on the mystic's realisation of his oneness with the Divine, and the Ṣūfī "union," Ibn al-'Arabī writes: "When this secret is revealed to thee, thou understandest that thou art not what is other than God . . . and that thou hast continued and wilt continue without when and without times. . . . And thou seest all thine actions to be His actions and all thine attributes to be His attributes and thine essence to be His essence, without thy becoming Him or His becoming thee, either in the greatest or least degree. "Everything is perishing

¹ *Kitāb al-Ajwiba*, p. 815.

² Cf. pp. 191, 192 above.

³ Cf. p. 117 above.

except His Face,"¹ that is, there is nothing except His Face, then whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God."² Later in the same treatise he writes: "Just as he who dies the death of the body loses all his qualities, both praiseworthy and blameworthy, so in the spiritual death, all qualities both praiseworthy and blameworthy, are cut off and God comes into his place in all his states. Thus, instead of his own essence, comes the essence of God, and in place of his attributes, come the attributes of God. He who knows himself sees his whole existence to be His existence and does not see any change take place in his own essence or attributes. For when thou 'knowest thyself' thine egoism is taken away and thou knowest that thou art not other than God."³ This comes very near to al-Ghazālī's description of the re-union of those who attain (*al-wāsilūn*) with the One, given in the *Mishkāt*, which might well be the source of Ibn al-'Arabī's teaching in the passages quoted, in which even the wording follows al-Ghazālī.⁴

Ibn al-'Arabī's mystical psychology and his theory of knowledge, together with his views on the "inner eye" and on dreams, bear the closest resemblance to those of al-Ghazālī, so much so that it has been possible for more than one student of Ibn al-'Arabī to attribute to the later mystic what is actually the work of the earlier writer.⁵

In his teaching on Love and Beauty Ibn al-'Arabī also followed al-Ghazālī in holding that the object of natural love is self-satisfaction, which subordinates the object of love to itself, while in spiritual love the self and its desires are subordinated to the Beloved. He also holds that the cause of all love is Beauty and it is as Beauty that the gnostic knows Him and

¹ Sūra XXVIII, 88.

² Sūra, II, 109.

³ *Kitāb al-Ajwiba*, p. 816.

⁴ Cf. *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 113, 115, 118, 144, 145.

⁵ Cf. A. E. Affi, *The Mystical Philosophy of M. al-D. Ibn al-'Arabī*, pp. 93, 103, 106 ff., pp. 115 ff. and al-Ghazālī, *al-Risāla al-Laduniyya*, pp. 27, 39 ff. Baron Carra de Vaux, Professor Asin Palacios and Dr. Affi have all accepted as the work of Ibn al-'Arabī the *Risāla fi Ma'na al-naḥs wa'l-Rūḥ*, which consists of al-Ghazālī's *Risāla* with a few additions and some omissions: these scholars have found al-Ghazālī's teaching so similar to that of Ibn al-'Arabī that they have been able to accept it as that of the Spanish mystic. It is to be noted that the teaching of al-Ghazālī's *Risāla* is found in part also in the *Iḥyā* and other works and that the work is his seems beyond doubt. Cf. my translation, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, April, 1938, pp. 177 ff.

loves Him. On this subject Ibn al-'Arabī has obviously based his teaching on al-Ghazālī's *Book of Love*.¹

Ibn al-'Arabī is a trinitarian, in the Plotinian sense and expressly accepts the idea of triplicity (*tathlith*) as that upon which Reality is based. Like al-Ghazālī, he accepts the Plotinian conception of the Absolute One, Universal Mind and Universal Soul. al-Ghazālī's teaching that man is made in the image of God and as such can be invested with the Divine attributes² is developed by Ibn al-'Arabī into the doctrine of the Perfect Man³ who has fully realised his oneness with his Divine Source, and so Being, by him, is considered as having three degrees or phases, those of Pure Being, the Perfect Man (the expression of Universal Mind), and the Phenomenal World (the expression of Universal Soul), and these correspond to al-Ghazālī's classification of the three worlds, that of *Malakūt*, the spiritual, invisible world, that of *Jabarūt* partaking of both the eternal and the temporal, and that of *Mulk* and *Shahāda*, this material, phenomenal world.⁴

In his *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq* Ibn al-'Arabī describes the journey of the pilgrims through the dark night of bodily existence, the Purgative way, until they reach the region of the Heavenly Court (cf. p. 159 above) the Illuminative way. Gnosis of God is inspired only by Love and love means the annihilation of the lover and the lover's attributes: he becomes one in essence with the Beloved and vanishes in Him from himself, the Unitive life.⁵

While Ibn al-'Arabī is the most important of the mystics influenced by al-Ghazālī, there were others after him whose admiration of al-Ghazālī's work led them to base much of their teaching upon his. Among these was Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (ob. 656/1258), a native of Tunisia, who spent much of his life wandering from place to place, giving himself to meditation and contemplation. He based his teaching admittedly on the

¹ *Futūḥāt*, pp. 426, 431, 441. *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 154. Cf. pp. 175 ff. above.

² *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 293. Cf. pp. 142 ff. above.

³ For a full treatment of this doctrine cf. R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 77 ff.

⁴ Cf. pp. 159, 174 above.

⁵ *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq* XXIII, 1. XLVI, 1. XXVII, 1. Cf. also *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 186 and pp. 192 ff. above.

Ihyā, and taught his disciples to devote their lives entirely to the service of God and to seek *fanā* as the goal of their quest. His importance in extending the influence of al-Ghazālī is due to the fact that he founded the order of the Shādhiliyya, a Ṣūfī fraternity which is still very influential in North Africa, especially Morocco, Tunis and Egypt, and is represented also in Syria and the Hijaz.¹

Another writer who studied the work of al-Ghazālī and spread his fame abroad was 'Afīf al-Dīn Yāfī'ī (ob. 768/1367) a Shāfī'ite, deeply interested in Ṣūfism and the Ṣūfis. A native of Yemen, he travelled to Jerusalem, Damascus and Cairo, became a Ṣūfī and devoted most of his writings to mysticism. He regarded al-Ghazālī as one of the greatest of Imāms, to whom the giving of judicial decisions became easier than drinking water. The *Ihyā* Yāfī'ī considered to be the most precious of books and he commends its literary style. al-Ghazālī's memory, he held, was perpetuated by his writings and he notes that students and writers were agreed that no one after him had left anything to equal his work. Yāfī'ī wrote a Qaṣida in eulogy of al-Ghazālī and his work. "The *Ihyā* 'Ulūm al-Dīn, starlike," he writes, "has arisen from the depths of the knowledge of one who sought for light and found it. Abū Ḥamid was a spinner (*ghazzāl*) who spun a fine thread out of knowledge, not spun by a spindle. He was called *The Proof of Islam* and undoubtedly was worthy of the name, absolutely trustworthy (in respect of the Faith) How many an epitome (has he given) us setting forth the basic principles of religion: how much that was repetitive has he summarised, and epitomised what was lengthy. How many a simple explanation has he given us of what was hard to fathom, with brief elucidation and clear solution of knotty problems. He used moderation, being quiet but decisive in silencing an adversary, though his words were like a sharp sword-thrust in refuting a slanderer and protecting the high-road of guidance. In thrust and parry he was foremost, like a hero in battle, upheld by his virtue. The hum of his spinning-wheel reached to the heavens, so that Muḥammad looked with favour upon him and boasted of him to Jesus, as one illustrious in gifts,

¹ Cf. *Ithāf*, pp. 10, 27.

eloquent in speech, profound in learning." Yāfī'ī felt that no other writer was his equal for literary style and significance of content, nor was his equal likely to be found "as long as the earth and the heavens endure": furthermore, his sources were authoritative and reliable. Yāfī'ī adds that the later Ṣūfis depended upon al-Ghazālī and made him their authority.¹

A contemporary of Yāfī'ī, who also admired al-Ghazālī and did what he could to give others a knowledge of his teaching, was the lawyer Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (ob. 771/1370), who held positions as Professor, Mufti, and Qādī, in Damascus and Cairo, where he was *Khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque. As a Shāfī'ite he devotes much attention to this distinguished adherent of his own school of thought. Asked his opinion of al-Ghazālī, he replied: "What can a man say? for his achievements and his fame have covered the earth and he who really knows his teaching knows that it goes beyond his fame."² He describes al-Ghazālī as the "Highway of Religion, whereby men may be enabled to reach the Abode of Peace." He was a lion, except that in his presence the lion would cower and hide himself, a perfect full-moon, except that his guidance shone by day, and a preacher, able to edify. He taught at a time when people had more need of the truth, than darkness has of the light of the heavens and the barren land of the fruitful rain." He did not cease to defend the true faith," says al-Subkī, "with his persuasive words, and to protect the sanctuary of religion, and to dip the tip of his arrow in the blood of the arrogant, until he had established the Faith securely and shewn plainly what was contrary to it." For the benefit of his readers, al-Subkī gives a considerable number of the fatwas and sayings of al-Ghazālī, whom he regarded not only as one of the greatest of Imāms, but as a seer of whom he says: "if there had been a prophet after Muḥammad, it surely would have been al-Ghazālī." Of the *Ihyā* he says that it is one of the books which Muslims ought to study and to recommend to others, so that as many as possible may be enabled to follow its guidance and he adds that there are few who reflect upon it who do not find some word of counsel and help in it forthwith.³

¹ *Mir'at al-Janān*, fols. 257a, 258b.

² *Ithāf*, p. 10.

³ *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfī'iyya al-kubrā*, IV, pp. 101, 102. M. Riḍā, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

A traditionist who gave his time to the extension of al-Ghazālī's influence by making his work more widely known was Zayn al-Dīn b. al-Husayn al-'Irāqī (ob. 806/1404), who travelled in Egypt, Syria and the Hijāz and spent three years as Qāḍī in Medina. He taught for some time in Cairo. 'Irāqī regarded the *Ihyā* as one of the greatest books of Islam, in its analysis of what was lawful and unlawful for the true Muslim, and in its reconciliation of orthodox religion with the mystical doctrine of the Sūfis. al-Ghazālī, he says, does not limit himself to what arises out of religious belief (*al-furū'*)¹ and problems of conduct, but he does not "plunge into a fathomless sea" whence it would be impossible to return to the shore. He combines both exoteric and esoteric knowledge in his work, and gives due weight to the deepest significance of both. 'Irāqī considers al-Ghazālī's literary style to be most felicitous, but never extravagant. He follows the *Via media*, in accordance with 'Alī's saying: "The best of this community are those who follow the middle course (*al-namaṭ al-awsaṭ*)—the laggard overtakes them and the fanatic returns to them." 'Irāqī edited and made a collection of the traditions contained in the *Ihyā*, the rough draft of which he completed in A.H. 751 and the fair copy in A.H. 790. This *Takhrīj* is appended to the best-known modern text of the *Ihyā*.²

One of the last of the great Sūfī writers to be influenced by al-Ghazālī was the Egyptian 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shar'ānī (called also Sha'rāwī) al-Shāfi'ī al-Miṣrī (ob. 973/1585)³ a member of the Shādhiliyya order and therefore naturally attracted towards al-Ghazālī's teaching. He wrote a considerable number of books on mysticism and has something to say of al-Ghazālī,⁴ and it is evident that he followed in al-Ghazālī's steps in much of his teaching and conduct, e.g., in his consideration for animals,⁵ and his view that the good life was one of service to others,

¹ al-Sarrāj defines these as discipline, morals, spiritual stations and states and acts and deeds. *Kitāb al-Luma'*, p. 410.

² Cf. the Cairo edition A.H. 1272 (reprint 1340), I, p. 2. Cf. also M. Riḍā, p. 28.

³ Cf. my article *al-Shar'ānī the Mystic*. *The Moslem World*, July, 1939.

⁴ Cf. *Ithāf*, p. 9.

⁵ *Mizān al-Shar'ānī*, pp. XXIX, XXXVIII. *Laṭā'if al-Mīnan*, p. 21. Cf. pp. 49 ff. above.

a life productive of good for the Faith and for society. He, too, teaches that the saint is possessed of an inner eye and that when his spiritual understanding is enlightened, he comprehends all mysteries and by the light of gnosis can contemplate the Unseen.¹ Like al-Ghazālī, he holds that this "knowledge from on high" breaks in suddenly upon those to whom God gives it, who have surrendered themselves wholly unto Him, and such He chooses to be His saints, to be in constant communion with Himself.² These are they who, having ascended ever higher and higher, enter the unitive life, dead unto self, but alive in God and in constant contemplation of the glory which has been revealed unto them.³

al-Ghazālī's influence, therefore, made itself felt, throughout the length and breadth of Islam and affected orthodox and Sūfī writers alike, so that his books have been—and still are—read and studied from West Africa to Oceania.

But it was not only within Islam that his teaching was studied and accepted and made a rule of life to be followed. Those of other faiths, both in East and West, found much in his writings to be admired and much of his teaching on the mystic Way, which could be adopted by mystics who owed no allegiance to Islam.

Upon mediæval Jewish thought al-Ghazālī had a considerable influence, since his ethical teaching was of a standard and a type which closely resembled that of Judaism, and his works were carefully studied by Jewish scholars, not only those writings dealing with philosophy, which aroused wide-spread interest and discussion in Jewish circles, being studied by Maimonides among others, but his mystical works also, and within a century of his death, Hebrew and Latin translations of his works appeared, e.g., his philosophical works were translated into Latin by Avendeath (Ibn Da'ūd c. 1090 to c. 1165) of Toledo, a converted Jew working in conjunction with Dominic Gundisalvus, Archdeacon of Segovia, and his *Mizān al-'Amal* was translated in the thirteenth century by Abraham Ibn Ḥasdai of Barcelona, who did much work in translating from Arabic

¹ *Lawāqih al-Anwār*, pp. 67. Cf. pp. 143 ff. above.

² *Ibid.* p. 9. Cf. pp. 199 ff. above.

³ *Al-Anwār al-Qudsiyya* (margin), p. 22. Cf. pp. 206 ff. above.

to Hebrew. The *Mishkāt al-Anwār* also aroused great interest among Jewish thinkers. It was translated by Isaac Alfāsī,¹ and quoted by the sixteenth century writer Moses Ibn Ḥabīb, a native of Lisbon, who was himself a poet, translator, and philosopher.

Jewish writers, e.g., Johanan Alemanus also found a likeness between the order and gradation of the lights which are derived from the Light Supernal and the theory of lights found in the Qabbalah. In the *Zohar*, a Jewish mystical treatise, compiled from many sources, which appeared in Spain in the thirteenth century, A.D., it is stated that "all the heavenly lights are illumined from One and depend on One and all the lights there form only one Light and desire never to be separated, and he who does separate them in his mind is as though he separated himself from life eternal." The Qabbalic doctrine conceived of the ten Sefirōt or spiritual agencies as all manifesting the same Divine Light: the lowest triad corresponding to the Lights Terrestrial and the second triad to the Lights Celestial, while above all, is the Essential Light. The grouping of the Sefirōt, of which the three highest represent the intelligible world of creative ideas, the second the moral world of creative formation, and the third the material world of creative matter, correspond, in some measure, to al-Ghazālī's 'ālam al-Malakūt, the 'ālam al-Jabarūt, and the 'ālam al-Mulk wa'l-Shahāda.² In one of his works he writes definitely of ten emanations from the One, of which the tenth is man.³

The Zoharic theory of the soul also resembles closely that of al-Ghazālī. "When the Holy One created man, He made him on the supernal pattern and breathed into him a holy breath consisting of a triad whose several names are *nephesh* (*nafs*), *ruah* (*rūh*), and *neshamah* (*nasāma*), the last being the highest, for it is the superior energy by means of which man can apprehend and keep the commandments of the Holy One. For these three aspects of the soul are all one, being merged one in the other on the pattern of the supernal mystery."⁴ This

¹ Descendant of a Spanish family, who was living in Adrianople in the sixteenth century.

² Cf. *Zohar*, IV, p. 110 and *Mishkāt*, pp. 110, ff. and pp. 159 ff. above.

³ *al-Ma'qūf al-'Aqlīyya*, fol. 8a.

⁴ *Zohar*, IV, p. 116.

latter corresponds to al-Ghazālī's conception of the "rational soul" and the "soul at rest" and the "heart."¹

al-Ghazālī's teaching also had its influence upon Christian writers in the Middle Ages and one of the earliest of these to make a close study of his work and to make it the basis of his own mystical teaching was the Jacobite Christian Yuhannā Abu'l-Faraj Barhebraeus, known also as Gregorius, the son of a Jewish father. Born at Melatīa in Asia Minor in A.D. 1226 he became a monk and seems to have studied under Muslim teachers during a period of residence in Tripoli. He wrote Arabic as fluently as Syriac and had also some knowledge of Persian. He became successively Bishop of Guba, Lakaba and Aleppo and died in Persia in A.D. 1286. He spent some time in Baghdad, where, no doubt, he came into contact with al-Ghazālī's work, and he made it his business to render Muslim thought accessible to the Syrians. The extent of his dependence upon al-Ghazālī in two of his mystical works, *The Book of the Dove* and the *Ethikon* has already been fully analysed.² In his teaching on the inner life, on the progress of the seeker towards spiritual perfection, on gnosis and its relation to the love of God, as well as in his views on music and its spiritual value, Barhebraeus follows al-Ghazālī very closely and quotes frequently from the *Iḥyā*. It seems probable, too, that he was acquainted with the *Mīzān al-'Amal*, and this is likely enough, since it was well-known to Jewish circles,—and certain of his expressions suggest an acquaintance also with al-Ghazālī's *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*³ and the *Kīmīyā al-Sa'āda*.⁴

But it was not only in the East that al-Ghazālī's work bore fruit in the writings of Christian mystics: his influence made itself felt also in the West, where, in Italy and Spain, Christian and Muslim thought came into close contact. The Crusades had a considerable effect in spreading the knowledge of Islamic culture and literature and both Arab and Jewish ideas were gaining ground in the universities of the West, from the twelfth century onwards. In the thirteenth century Frederick II

¹ Cf. *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, pp. 26, 27, 31. Cf. pp. 141 ff. above.

² Cf. A. J. Wensinck, *Book of the Dove*, pp. CXI. ff.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 74 (Nos. 71, 72), *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 31.

⁴ Cf. *Book of the Dove*, Chap. IV, 11 and *Kīmīyā*, p. 16.

founded the University of Naples, and encouraged a spirit of free inquiry by welcoming both Arab and Jewish scholars to his court: and their intellectual influence made itself felt at Palermo and Salerno as well as Naples. Arabic, in addition to Latin and Greek, was recognised for legal purposes, and in the vernacular form was in constant use among the people in Sicily, which after a hundred and thirty years of Islam, had come under Christian rule by the Norman conquest, in 1091, and Christian scholars gave themselves to the study and translation of Arabic writings.

Toledo, coming under Christian rule once more, in 1085, yet continued to be a centre of Islamic learning, and the Archbishop Raymond (1130-1150) established a school for the translation of Arabic writings into Latin. It was at Toledo, also, that a School of Oriental Studies was started in 1250, and Arabic became a subject of study not only in Southern, but Northern Europe. There can be no doubt that al-Ghazālī's works would be among the first to attract the attention of these European scholars. It has now been fully realised that Christian scholasticism and mediæval Christian mysticism derived certain conceptions from Muslim writers, among whom al-Ghazālī was included.¹

The greatest of these Christian writers who was influenced by al-Ghazālī was St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who made a study of the Arabic writers and admitted his indebtedness to them.² He studied at the University of Naples, where the influence of Arabic literature and culture was predominant at the time.

In reference to the inability of the creature to realise the Majesty of the Creator, St. Thomas uses the very words of al-Ghazālī in saying that "the sun, though supremely visible, cannot be seen by the bat, because of its excess of light."³ Again, in dealing with the spiritual aspiration of the human soul, due to its affinity with the Divine, St. Thomas states that the ultimate perfection of the rational creature is to be found in that which is the principle of its being, since a thing

¹ Cf. the work of M. Asin Palacios, Bruno Nardi and Dr. A. Guillaume.

² *Summa Theol.* Suppl. Part III, Q. 92, A. 1.

³ *Summa Theol.* Part I. Q. XII. Art 1. Cf. p. 138 above.

is perfect in so far as it attains to that principle. God is the greatest of all goods and He alone is true perfection, and St. Thomas holds that He is the end towards which all things move, in order to achieve the perfection which can be given by Him alone, which is to become like Him. Man must find out wherein his own perfection consists and then seek to pursue it. He was not created simply for sensual satisfaction, for this is common to both man and the brutes, nor for the pursuit of material ends, for man shares the nature of the angels as well as the brutes. This argument is set forth by al-Ghazālī, in almost the same terms, in his *Kīmīyā al-Sa'āda* and elsewhere.¹

St. Thomas teaches that in this life God can be seen mirrored in His works, by consideration of which we can in the first place see something of the Divine wisdom. Then, in the second place, this consideration leads to a recognition of God's power and so the human heart is led to reverence before Him. Thirdly, it leads man to a love of God's goodness. His conclusion is that the goodness and perfection found in individual things is all united in the One Who is the Fountain of all goodness. If, therefore, man loves goodness, beauty and attraction in created things, then the very Fountain of goodness, their Creator, must influence men's minds and draw them to Himself.² This is the theme of al-Ghazālī's *Hikmat fī Makhlūqāt Allāh* and is emphasised again in the *Ihyā*, where he shews that all the causes of love are found in God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift.³

But it is in his teaching on the Beatific Vision and the gnosis which leads to it that St. Thomas seems to have derived most from the teaching of the Muslim mystics and especially al-Ghazālī. The goal which man seeks, St. Thomas states, is the contemplation of Truth, for this is appropriate to his nature and no other earthly creature shares it with him. There is no end beyond it, for such contemplation is an end in itself.⁴ "It is impossible for any created intellect to comprehend God," writes St. Thomas,

¹ *Summa Theol.* Part I. Q. XII. A. 1. Part II, Q. 1. A. 1. Q. II. A. 1. Q. II. A. 5, 6. *Contra Gen.* III, 2, 22, 24, 25, 27. Cf. pp. 150 ff. above and *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, and *Ihyā*, IV, p. 226.

² *Contra Gen.* II, 2.

³ Cf. pp. 142 ff, pp. 175 ff. above and *Ihyā*, IV, p. 385.

⁴ *Con. Gen.* III, 37.

and again: "We have a more perfect knowledge of God by grace than by natural reason."¹ This grace, by which man understands God, is the gnosis which al-Ghazālī calls "knowledge from on high" (*al-'ilm al-ladunī*). In order to see the Vision of God, St. Thomas holds that the created intellect needs to be raised "by some kind of outpouring of the Divine grace," the disposition by which the created intellect is raised to the Beatific Vision is rightly called the light of glory (*lumen gloriae*), and those who are raised to this rank know all things and the whole order of the universe, for this light is a likeness of the Divine intellect (cf. pp. 145 ff. above).² This is the *nūr Allāh*, which God "casts" into the heart, "that which is attained without mediation between the soul and its Creator," wrote al-Ghazālī, "the radiance from the Lamp of the Invisible shed upon the heart which is pure and at leisure."³

The contemplation of the Divine Vision, St. Thomas believes, will be perfected in the life to come, but even now, that contemplation gives us a foretaste of beatitude which begins here and will be continued in the life to come. The Vision is only for those who love and know God. "He who possesses more love will see God the more perfectly and will be the more beatified." So the bliss of Paradise will be in proportion to the intensity of the love for God, as this love will be in proportion to the knowledge of God gained by His saints on earth and called, by Revelation, faith. The joy of contemplation consists not only in the contemplation itself, but in the love of Him Who is contemplated. "In both respects," writes St. Thomas, "the delight thereof surpasses all human delight, both because spiritual delight is greater than sensual pleasure . . . and because the love of God surpasses all other love." It is the ultimate perfection of contemplation that the Truth be not only seen, but loved. It is by the Vision that man is made a partaker of Eternal life.⁴

This is the doctrine of al-Ghazālī concerning the Vision, and is given almost in his words, for he writes: "The joy of

¹ *Sum. Theol.* Part I. Q. XII. Arts. 7, 13.

² *Con. Gen.*, III, 53, 59.

³ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 43. Cf. p. 185 above.

⁴ *Sum. Theol.* Q. CLXXX. Arts. 4, 7. *Sum Gen.* III, 59.

Paradise is in proportion to the love of God and the love of God is proportionate to the knowledge of Him, and so the source of that joy is the gnosis revealed through Faith," and he, too states that the joy of the Vision surpasses all sensual joys.¹

Among Christian writers who made a special study of Islamic teaching and made use of it in their own writings was the Dominican Raymond Martin (or Marti), a Catalan, who lived for a considerable time in Barcelona and died some time after 1284. He was chosen out to study Oriental languages, for the purpose of missionary work among Muslims and Jews. In his *Explanatio Symboli* and his *Pugio Fidei* he quotes from al-Ghazālī's *Maqāsid al-Falāsifa*, his *Ihyā* and his *Mizān al-'Amal*, in each case to shew how al-Ghazālī affirms that the joy of knowing God and of contemplating Him face to face is the most glorious and excellent of all joys. In his description of the ultimate Beatitude, he refers to the chapter in the *Mizān*, where al-Ghazālī states that the true beatitude is the final state of the Blessed. Comparing it with other forms of happiness, al-Ghazālī points out that wealth in the form of dirhams and dinars, even though they may serve to satisfy all needs, are but as pebbles beside it. The good, he writes, can be divided into the beneficial, the beautiful and the enjoyable, but these qualities, when related to earthly goods, are transient and shared with the lower creation, but the Beatitude of God's elect is a spiritual thing, abiding, unchangeable, a joy for ever, for it consists in the Presence of the Eternal and the contemplation of His everlasting glory, Raymond Martin, therefore, takes al-Ghazālī, among other Muslim writers, as his authority for the view that the joy of the Hereafter is a purely spiritual joy, and as such, above all sensual joys.²

Another great Christian mediæval mystic whose writings shew evidence of al-Ghazālī's influence, was Dante Alighieri

¹ Cf. *Ihyā*, IV, pp. 267 ff. and also pp. 188 ff. above, and *The Legacy of Islam*, pp. 270 ff.

² *Explanatio Symboli* (Anuari del Institut d'estudis catalans. March, 1910), p. 54. He had also studied the *Munqidh* and other works. Cf. *Pugio Fidei*, Part I. Cap. I., par. iv, par. v, par. vii. Cap. II., par. x. Cap. V., par. I. Cap. XI, par. i. Cap. XII, par. xi, etc. Cf. *Ihyā*, IV, p. 265, and *Mizān al-'Amal*, pp. 90 ff., and pp. 88 ff. above.

(1265-1321), who admits his indebtedness to the Muslim thinkers and quotes al-Ghazālī as one of his sources.¹

The ascent through the Seven Heavens, where the Blessed dwell, in accordance with their spiritual merits, described in the *Paradiso*, has been recognised as derived from Muslim legends of the Prophet's Ascent to Heaven² and al-Ghazālī gives a version of it in which the guardian angels ascend through the Seven Heavens, bearing the good deeds of believers, none of which are acceptable to God, unless done for His sake alone.³ Dante, like al-Ghazālī before him, holds that goodness arouses love and the greater the goodness and perfection, the greater the love, therefore that "Essence which is such that all good found outside of it is only a light from its own ray, draws to itself more than any other the movement of the mind, in love, of that one who realises the truth of this."⁴

The conception of the Beatific Vision and the means whereby it may be attained in some measure even in this life, an attainment which will be perfected in the life to come, as we have seen above, was derived, at least in part, from Muslim conceptions, by St. Thomas Aquinas, and there is little doubt that his sources were also available to Dante. To the latter the Vision is Light, the Divine Essence is conceived of as a living Light, going forth in creation, kindling the lower lights from its own radiance, a Divine sun "which kindled all and each." Looking upon that Divine Light man enters therewith into the Divine life also. In that Light man becomes such that he cannot turn thence to any other sight. For the good which he seeks is therein wholly concentrated and therein is perfect all that outside is defective. That is the Light Eternal, in contemplating which the human soul enters into eternal life.⁵ It is al-Ghazālī's conception of God as the Light Supernal, from Whom Light is radiated to all other things, which kindles the Lights Celestial and the Lights Terrestrial, which are lit by that Light as the lamp is lit by fire, for He is Essential Light,

Elemental Fire. The Vision, for those who attain, is the contemplation of that Light and those who look upon it, pass away into it.¹

A much later writer in whom the influence of al-Ghazālī has been found was the French mystic Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) and his knowledge of the Muslim mystic's teaching no doubt came to him through his study of Raymond Martin's *Pugio Fidei* which came into his hands in a French edition, towards the end of his life, when he was writing his *Pensées*, and it is to be noted that Raymond Martin cites his Arabic authorities in Latin and gives the title of the books quoted.²

Pascal holds that there are three ways of believing; reason, custom and inspiration. Reason opens the mind to the truths of religion, and custom brings them home to men, but he holds that it is necessary, by humiliation, to invite inspiration, which alone can bring about a sure and lasting result. It is the heart which is conscious of God and can have a direct experience of Him, not the reason.³ His faith in intuition recalls al-Ghazālī's belief in the superiority of gnosis to reason. Reason, says Pascal, moves slowly and is for ever falling asleep or going astray, but intuition acts in a flash and is always ready to act. So men should put their trust in it, for it means assurance.⁴ This is the gnosis which comes, says al-Ghazālī, like a flash of lightning, but leads to certainty (*yaqīn*).⁵

Pascal's famous wager for and against belief in God⁶ contains teaching and arguments which are also to be found in al-Ghazālī. Pascal held that to wager for the existence of God resulted, if it were true, in infinite gain, and if untrue, in no loss. To wager against the existence of God, if He exists, means infinite loss, and if He does not exist, neither loss nor gain. Al-Ghazālī had propounded the same alternatives. He gives as an illustration that if a man is hungry, and food is at hand, which he is

¹ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 110, 111, 117, 144.

² Cf. St. Cyres, *Pascal*, p. 386.

³ *Pensées*, 245, 278. Cf. *Munqidh*, p. 23. *Ihyā*, IV, p. 212.

⁴ *Pens.* 252. Cf. also *Pens.* 282.

⁵ *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 42. Cf. pp. 171, 172 above and Chapter XII above.

⁶ *Pens.* 233. M. Asin Palacios has written a work entitled *Los precedentes musulmanes del "Pari" de Pascal*, Santander, 1920, to which I have not been able to refer.

¹ Cf. *Convito*, II, 14. IV, 21.

² Cf. M. Asin Palacios, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, pp. 3 ff.

³ Cf. *Ihyā*, III, pp. 255, 256, and pp. 110 ff. above.

⁴ *Paradiso*, Canto XXVI, 28, 36. Cf. pp. 178 ff. above.

⁵ *Paradiso*, XIII, 52 ff. XXIII, 28-30. XXXIII, 107-105.

anxious to eat, and a boy tells him that it is poisoned, and a snake has licked it, the man will endure hunger rather than run the risk of eating it. He says to himself that if the boy is lying, he has only missed the pleasure of the food, and if the boy is speaking the truth, he has been saved from destruction. al-Ghazālī argues, therefore, that it is worth while to live as if there were a God and a hereafter, for if death means annihilation, nothing is lost thereby, but if death means Paradise or Hell, then the belief means eternal salvation from the fires of Hell and he quotes the verses:

"The astrologer and the physician both declared:
 'The dead are not raised.' I said: 'Look to yourselves!
 If your statement is true, I shall have lost nothing.
 If what I say is true, you will lose everything!'"¹

Pascal notes that man's thirst for glory, which may be turned to evil uses, is also the chief mark of his excellence, and al-Ghazālī, too, speaks of sovereign power being dear to all in this world, but this is because lordship is a Divine attribute and a quality which can be used to enable the believer to gain the royalty of service to God in this world and the next.² Pascal, again, lays much stress on disinterested love and holds that the Truth can be reached only through love, as the saints knew well, and al-Ghazālī, more perhaps than any other Ṣūfī writer, lays stress on Love as the guide on the mystic way, that pure love which will ultimately lead the lover to the Creative Truth Himself.³

al-Ghazālī, therefore, himself indebted to Christianity and the West for not a little of his own inspiration, was able to repay the debt in kind and to give to the thinkers of the west as well as the East and to Christian mystics as well as those of own faith, much that was inspiring and helpful to them as they also sought to tread the path which he had trodden before them.

¹ *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*, p. 185. *Ihyā*, IV, p. 52.

² *Pens.* 404. Cf. pp. 23, 154 above.

³ *Treatise on the Passion of Love. Esprit Géométrique. Works.* III, p. 175.

CHAPTER XIV

Summary of al-Ghazālī's Mystical Teaching. His place in the history of Ṣūfism

al-Ghazālī, as we have seen was a man who travelled widely, who had been in contact with Hellenic thought as well as the culture of 'Irāq and Syria, who had made a thorough study of philosophy and theology, of Ṣūfī mysticism and of the mystical teaching of the Christian Church. His teaching, therefore, is that of a scholar, a philosopher and a theologian, and his is a reasoned, philosophic type of mysticism, able to appeal to the intellectual type among his readers, while its sincerity and the use which he makes of familiar illustrations made it equally comprehensible to the common folk.

It was his great aim to reconcile orthodox Islam with the mystical teaching which was wide-spread in his time, and to this he consecrated his life and his time, and he succeeded in giving Ṣūfism an assured place within orthodox Islam. Professedly based upon orthodox Islamic doctrine, his mysticism yet goes far beyond it and is permeated by another spirit than that of the Qur'ān and the Sunna. So, too, he has passed far beyond the ascetic quietism of the earlier Ṣūfis whose sayings he quotes, and his way of life is based upon a theosophic doctrine of mysticism according to which the soul, by the Divinity within it, is urged to make the upward ascent to the Godhead, to which it is akin. The mystical teaching found in his earlier works, such as the *Ihyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, meant for all to read, must be considered in conjunction with the teaching given in his later books or those dealing more specifically with Ṣūfī doctrine, such as *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, *al-Ma'ārif al-'Aqliyya*, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, *Mizān al-'Amal*, *Mukāshafat al-Qulūb*, and *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, in which a more developed and more theosophic type of mysticism is found, and this must be held to represent his final conclusions, based on his own personal experience and reflections. He himself refers to "esoteric"

writings, not intended for the general public, but only for those fitted to receive them¹ and no doubt it was to such teaching that he referred. He is concerned to shew that it is the mystical element in religion which is the most vital, that which makes the religious life a reality.

In his teaching on the Nature of God, he lays stress on the Divine Unity, God as the Sole-Existent and the Ultimate Cause of all being, Transcendent yet Immanent, the Eternal Will which is manifest in action throughout the universe. To al-Ghazālī, He is a Living, Personal God, but all His attributes are spiritual. He is the Creative Truth, He is the Light of lights, He is perfect Goodness and Perfect Beauty, the supreme Object of love, indeed, the Only Object of real love. Yet He desires intercourse with His creatures and makes it possible for them to enter into fellowship with Himself through prayer and contemplation and through the gift of gnosis, that mystic knowledge, which goes beyond the knowledge gained by means of the senses and beyond the knowledge deduced by the reason, and leads to "union." Those to whom He reveals Himself are His "friends," the saints to whom is given here and now the knowledge of the "mysteries of God."

The soul, al-Ghazālī teaches, belongs to the Divine world and is itself Divine in origin, made in the Divine image and partaking of the attributes of God. It is, therefore, capable of receiving a direct knowledge of God, and entering into a direct relation with Him. The mirror of the soul, though it may have become rusty and defiled by neglect and sin, if polished and freed from its blemishes, can reflect the realities of the spiritual world, and the soul can return to the state in which it was one with the Divine.

The purpose of the Ṣūfī Path is to enable the soul to free itself from the veils which hinder it from seeing God and having direct access to Him. It begins with Repentance and Conversion, which is a spiritual crisis, leading the creature to acknowledge its creatureliness before its Creator. It realises in all humility what it is, but it also has the vision before it of what

¹ Cf. *Kitāb al-Maʿnān bihi'ala ghayr ahlihi*, p. 2. Ibn Tufayl. *Ḥayy al-Yaʿqān*, pp. 13-15 and pp. 202 ff. above.

it may become, and so it turns towards God with a faith that is not a merely outward confession, but arises from an inner conviction, which desires the purification of the heart from all but God. This purification of the heart—the only means by which the mystic can approach unto God,—is accomplished by asceticism and renunciation, so that the heart shall be freed of the ties which attach it to this world and be at leisure to give itself to the consideration of spiritual things, emptied of self that it may become the dwelling-place of God. When this first stage, the stage of the novice, still hampered by the world of material values, still striving against the rebellious soul, has been passed, the novice becomes the traveller, who is half-way to the goal.

The different states and stages through which the mystic passed on the upward ascent, had been described by teachers before al-Ghazālī, notably by al-Muḥāsibī, Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī and Qushayrī, but al-Ghazālī considers these stages in much greater detail and his analysis, of each of them, into knowledge, feeling and action, appears to be the result of his own original thought. Knowledge of the need for them and in what they consist leads to emotion, which may be pleasant or painful, and this results in action in accordance with that feeling.¹

In the stage of the traveller, al-Ghazālī teaches that the evil is replaced by good, the virtues, so painfully acquired, become fixed habits, there are Divine gifts and graces to illuminate the path, and to assist the soul in its ascent. The traveller has passed into a world where God is known and His presence realised: his soul repels the attacks made by its Enemy and resists the downward urge of the self, for its gaze is directed upwards. The "window" towards the heavenly world has been opened, the soul is no longer blind and deaf to the Divine claims, but the spiritual eye is awake and the inward hearing alert, and the mystic is constantly aware of the Presence of God round and about him.

But knowledge of God, derived from intercourse with Him in prayer, means that He is loved—"who knows God, loves Him"—and the servant who has become the lover of his Lord,

¹ Cf. pp. 164 ff. above.

lives a life dominated by the spirit. There is no longer strife between the higher and the lower nature, the soul is tranquillised, it is at home in its native sphere, it has attained the summit of the ascent. The lover is the gnostic, who has found in his direct apprehension of God "an attainment above all else that can be attained." To the lover, enlightened by that gnosis, the Divine Beauty is revealed and the joy of that Vision is "what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, that which has not entered into the heart of man." The mystic has pierced beyond the veils and sees God as Essential Light, the One Reality, transcending all that can be seen by the sight or apprehended by the insight. In that vision of the Beloved, the soul of the mystic passes into union with Him, and henceforth he lives the life of the saint in God.

al-Ghazālī's place in the history of Sūfism is that of a great theologian and an original thinker who, as we have seen, desired to reconcile orthodox Islam with the mystical ideas of Sūfism, which were widely prevalent in his day. Islam, in his time, seemed in danger from without, for the Crusaders were girding on their swords to oust the Saracens from Syria, and in Spain the Moorish influence was declining. The Faith was in danger also from within from sectarian divisions and from heretical doctrines, and not least from the teaching of pagan philosophy. al-Ghazālī felt himself called to save the Faith from the slow destruction of inward decay by infusing it with the new spiritual life which alone could arrest the process. This desire arose out of the conviction, based on his personal religious experience, that religion was a moral thing and that moral perfection was to be attained only by following the example of the Sūfis, who were not dependent upon an authority derived from others, nor upon knowledge obtained by study, but had developed a practical way of life which, they claimed, was revealed to them by God Himself. al-Ghazālī's teaching on the first stage of the way, characterised by asceticism and purgation, shews affinity with that of the earlier Sūfī mystics, and especially al-Muḥāsibī, and he does not hesitate to illustrate his teaching, in all its phases, by quoting freely from the earlier mystics, Rābī'a al-'Adawīyya, Abū Yazīd Bisṭāmī and others, but he

has his own original contribution to make. He lays the greatest stress on religious experience and consequently on personality. Self-observation, self-knowledge and self-discipline, he holds, are of the first importance for the novice. His epistemology and mystical psychology owe something to al-Muḥāsibī and to philosophic theory, but he develops them on his own lines. He lays much more emphasis than his predecessors among the Sūfis,¹ on the Divine origin of the soul and its possession of Divine attributes, not the least of which is the possession of a will which controls action. Believing that the Universe is the manifestation of God, he regards man as a microcosm, who is equally the manifestation of God, on a smaller scale. This estimate of man as the image of the Divine means that al-Ghazālī takes a lofty view of man's spiritual possibilities; it means, too, that man, possessed of will, must himself take an active and strenuous part in seeking to realise his high possibilities. He is endowed with the reasoning faculty (*al-rūḥ al-'aqlī wa'l-rūḥ al-fikrī*), which enables him to understand intelligibles and make deductions therefrom, and both mind and will must be employed in attaining the purpose of bringing both into conformity with the Mind and Will of God.

But there is a plane beyond that of the Intelligence, and this is the sphere of the Divine spirit, the "inner light" which comes from the Light of lights, and al-Ghazālī has added much to this conception, found in a more elementary form in earlier writers. That light will burn steadily and clearly only in a heart pure and at leisure; it will be reflected in its full glory, only in the polished mirror, free from every blemish; and prayer, worship, meditation and recollection are the means of gaining that access to God, which means dwelling in the light. It is when man seeks to draw nigh unto God, that He hastens to draw nigh unto man.² al-Ghazālī has devoted a whole book to the theme of God as Light and the possession by the human

¹ Cf. his *al-Maḍnūn al-Saghr*, where he writes of the human spirit as the emanation (*ḥayḍ*) of God's Essence, pp. 3 ff. While insisting that the soul is "created" in the sense of coming into existence in time, he admits that it is "uncreated" in another sense, being self-subsistent and immortal. Elsewhere he writes of it as "abiding, eternal, incorruptible." *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 29.

² Cf. *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 132, 136.

soul of a measure of that light, which in the saints and prophets burns brightly and clearly. But the conception finds a place in nearly all his mystical writings.¹

All the Ṣūfī mystics had realised that Love was the guiding principle of the seeker after God; the self with its insistent claims, could only be overcome by a love greater than that of self-love and so, by all of them, God was conceived of, as the Beloved, and the Ṣūfī thought of himself as the lover, longing for the consummation of his love in union with the Beloved. Rābi'a al-'Adawīyya had taught that the seeker could only be purified by love and she was almost the first to teach the doctrine of Pure Love, love that gave itself with no desire for reward, seeking only the Beloved and His glory, and al-Ghazālī quotes many of her sayings on love. al-Muḥāsibī also, had written a book on Love and found that it included both longing for the Beloved and joy in the consciousness of His presence, and Satisfaction he regards as part of Love, for the lovers of God have passed beyond states and stations and have found their rest in Him. al-Ghazālī reproduces much of al-Muḥāsibī's teaching on this subject word for word. Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, again, had laid stress on the Pure Love of God, free from all defilement, on Fellowship as the joy of the lover in the Beloved, on the ecstasy produced by the "wine of Love." Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, another of al-Ghazālī's sources, had been a great lover, and to him love was an all-absorbing passion.

So al-Ghazālī had found such teaching on mystic love available to him, and he made full use of it in his great section on Love in the *Iḥyā*. It was, therefore, no new doctrine, but he develops it in a new and systematic fashion. He analyses the types of love and the causes of love. Love may be self-love, or it may be disinterested love, the love of a thing for its own sake, which alone is true love. He shews that the chief cause of love is Beauty, in whatever form it shews itself, sensual, intellectual or moral, but affinity is also the cause of love. He concludes that since all the causes of love are combined in God and in Him alone, He alone is worthy of true love, a pure and all-

¹ Cf. *Iḥyā*, III, p. 16. IV, pp. 67, 278, 370. *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, p. 163. *Mukāshafat al-Qulūb*, p. 30. *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 107. *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*, p. 70.

absorbing love, which leaves no room for the love of anything else.¹

The doctrine of the Beatific Vision was based not only upon the Qur'an² and such a tradition as "God hath Seventy Thousand Veils of Light and Darkness: if He were to withdraw them aside, then would the glory of His Countenance consume each one who looked upon Him," but upon legends of the Ascent of Muḥammad, an experience to which the *Mi'rāj* of the mystic Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī approximates very closely.³ Early mystics, including Rābi'a and Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī had realised that the Vision of God in His Beauty, the desire of the lover, might be vouchsafed to the gnostics in this life. But it was al-Ghazālī who first gave the doctrine a complete and developed form and he devotes a whole chapter of the *Iḥyā* to the subject, writing of the Vision as the result of gnosis, the enlightenment of the understanding by the light of God Himself, and drawing a parallel between the spiritual and the physical vision.⁴

The state of mystic ecstasy in which the mystic loses consciousness of self and remains conscious only of the Divine, when the worshipper is absorbed in Him. Whom he worships, which the Ṣūfīs called *fanā'* (passing away from the self) resulting in *baqā'* (subsistence in God)⁵ is a conception found among the early Ṣūfīs such as Abū Yazīd Bisṭāmī, Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz and Junayd. al-Ghazālī adds something to this conception in his teaching on the subject, and though he tries to guard himself against the admission that the creature can be actually identified with the Creator, that is in fact the conclusion which he reaches.⁶ *Fanā'* he holds, means that the mystic has become unconscious not only of his body, but of his very self. He has ceased to be self-conscious and has become God-conscious. It was in this state that Ḥallāj and Abū Yazīd felt themselves to be one with God, and so, to be deified, and it is to be noted that al-Ghazālī

¹ A recent book *al-Ghazālī's Book der Liebe*, by H. Dingemans (Leiden, 1938), includes a translation into Dutch of al-Ghazālī's Book on Love, together with an introduction on al-Ghazālī's teaching on the subject.

² Cf. Sūras LXXXV, 22. XCII, 20. XXIV, 35.

³ Cf. my *Studies in Early Mysticism*, pp. 240 ff.

⁴ Cf. *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, pp. 162, 182, and cf. pp. 188 ff. above.

⁵ Cf. R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, pp. 163 ff.

⁶ Cf. pp. 191 ff. above. Cf. *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 212.

has no word of condemnation for them. only adding that "the words of passionate lovers in the state of ecstasy should be concealed and not spoken of. " This, he says, is not real identity (*iltihād*), but what is meant by the verses of al-Ḥallāj :

"I am He Whom I love and He Whom I love is I,
We are two spirits indwelling one body."

It is as if a man should look into a mirror and suppose that the form he sees in the mirror is the form of the mirror, one with it, or as if, seeing the wine in the glass, he supposes it is the colour of the glass. When such a state prevails with the mystic, it is called *fanā'*, even *fanā' al-fanā'*, because he is unaware that he has passed away from himself. Behind this state, al-Ghazālī admits there are mysteries which it is not fitting to discuss.¹ But at the end of the same treatise he does go farther still, and asserts that at the end of the journey the mystic "is consumed" by the glory of the Divine Countenance and overwhelmed by the Divine Majesty and as a separate personality is absorbed into the One Reality. "All has perished save His Countenance."² Elsewhere he writes that the mystic is overwhelmed by the waves of the ocean of Unity and is submerged in the Whole.³ This is "union" in the deepest mystical sense of the term, though it is the re-union of the drop with the ocean whence it came forth, and the re-union of the spark with the flame, the part still subsistent in the whole.

It can hardly be said to differ essentially from the conception of mystical union maintained by the pantheist, but al-Ghazālī is usually careful, at any rate in those of his writings intended for the general public, not to make the transition from theosophy to pantheism: his belief, recognising the transcendence as well as the immanence of God, is rather panentheism, "not the doctrine that all is God, but the doctrine that all is in God, Who is also above all."⁴ None the less, when writing as a

¹ *Mishkāt*, pp. 114, 115.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 144, 145.

³ *Rawḍat al-Talibin*, p. 153. Cf. p. 192 above.

⁴ Cf. R. A. Nicholson, *The Idea of Personality in Sūfism*, p. 27, also M. Iqbal, "in him, like Borger and Solger in Germany, Sūfī pantheism and the Ash'arite dogma of personality appear to harmonise together, a reconciliation which makes it difficult to say whether he was a Pantheist or a Personal Pantheist of the type of Lotze." *The development of Metaphysics in Persia*, p. 75.

mystic, for the benefit of the initiated, he comes very close to pantheism in his inclination towards the doctrine of emanation,¹ which means that the Divine Essence is really the substance of all existent things, for they are one in *kind* with it, if differing in degree. But al-Ghazālī comes still nearer the position of the pantheistic monist when he declares, even in the *Ihyā'*, meant for the general reader, that the universe, including the visible and invisible worlds, considered as a whole, is the Divine Reality, which includes all existent things.² Again he writes of seeing all multiplicity as emanating from the One, and then, of ceasing to see multiplicity at all, but seeing all existence as One.³ He expresses this view even more clearly in the *Mishkāt*, where he states that there is no *ipse* but God (*lā huwa illa huwa*), for *huwa* is an expression for what can be indicated, and in whatever direction we turn, He alone is indicated (for all things point to Him). Indeed whenever you indicate anything the indication is really to Him, though it may not be realised. Again, he writes that God is "with" everything at all times, and by and through Him all things are manifested, and the Manifestor cannot be separated from what is manifested. So "nothing remaineth but the One Reality." God, the One in All and the All in All.⁴

Here, in al-Ghazālī's mystical teaching, is found the anticipation of the development of Sūfism into a definitely pantheistic system of philosophy, of which the greatest exponent was Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī, in the century following al-Ghazālī's death, and it is evident that the chief principles of his teaching are to be found in essence in al-Ghazālī's writings, though Ibn al-'Arabī goes far beyond al-Ghazālī in making a fundamentally pantheistic monism the basis of all his mystical teaching. To the same school of thought belonged the great Persian mystic poets Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, who died some thirty years after Ibn al-'Arabī and Jāmī, who lived some two centuries later, who wrote:

¹ Cf. *al-Ma'ārif al-'Aqliyya*, fol. 11b. *Mishkāt*, pp. 117, 144. *al-Risālat al-Laduniyya*, p. 43. *al-Maḍnūn al-Saghir*, p. 3. *Sirr al-'Alamayn*, p. 32.

² *Ihyā'*, III, p. 13. Cf. p. 141 above.

³ *Ihyā'*, IV, p. 212.

⁴ *Mishkāt*, pp. 117, 120, 121, 145.

"Where'er a veil thou seest,
Behind that veil He hides,"

and again :

"He is both Treasure and Casket : there is here no place for I and Thou, which are but phantasies."

Al-Ghazālī's place in the history of Ṣūfism, therefore, is that of the thinker who really systematised its doctrines and gave them clearness and precision, and by his great influence enabled Ṣūfism henceforward to be accepted as an integral—and the most vital—element in Islam. It was his aim to bring men to a knowledge of God through mysticism : he was convinced that true religion must always be a matter of personal experience, and it was because his teaching was so plainly the result of his own spiritual experience and a reflection of his own inner life, that his leadership was acknowledged and men counted him as one of the greatest of the Ṣūfis, one of the "friends" of God, a second Prophet, and his *Ihyā* as a second Qur'ān. His teaching includes all of value that the earlier Ṣūfis had to contribute, to which he adds his own great and original contribution, while the reasoned, philosophic form in which it is presented enabled others who came after him to build on the foundations which he had laid and to develop a mystical doctrine, which for him depended upon a deep religious and personal experience, into a definitely pantheistic system of philosophy.

It is a significant fact that at the present time al-Ghazālī's works are still read and studied (and their teaching accepted as authoritative), more widely than those of any other Muslim writer, throughout the length and breadth of the world of Islam.

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