



NINETY-NINE NAMES OF GOD IN ISLAM

A translation of the major portion of
Al-Ghazālī's *Al-Maqṣad Al-Asnā*

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*Cover design shows the Islamic Confession of faith: *lā ilāha illā-lāh*, done in mosaic tiles inside the mosque at the University of Ibadan. It is shown in detail above.*

PREFACE

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Muhammad Ibn-Muhammad al-Ghazali

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Every Muslim, as well as every student of **Islām**, is aware of **the** fact that the **Qur'ān** bears constant witness to the absolute unity of God. This basic tenet finds its essential expression in Chapter (*sūra*) 112 where one reads, "Say: He, God, is one. God is He on whom all depend. He **begets** not, nor is begotten, and none is like Him." However, the fact remains that **the** basic essence and nature of this God is expressed in many different ways in the **Qur'ān**. It is to that variety of expression that this study is addressed.

The **Qur'ān** itself supplies the authority for this effort, since in four chapters it speaks of the "most beautiful names" of God. The verses in question are:

- 20,8/7 (A-2-8): "God — there is no God but He. His are the most beautiful names."
- 17,110 (A-3-4): "Say: Call on God or call on the Merciful. By whatever name you call on Him, He has the most beautiful names."
- 7,180/179 (A-3-19): "And God's are the most beautiful names, so call on Him thereby.. ."
- 59,24(B- 12): "He is God; the Creator, the **Maker**, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names."

In respect of the verse (*āya*) numbering used above, the first is the number found in the Cairo text and the second as found in the **Fluegel** (Western) text. This fact should be borne in mind by the reader as he endeavours to locate in his **Qur'ān** the various verses referred to in this study.

The letters and numbers to be found within the parentheses listed above refer to the time of **Muhammad's** life when the revelations were given: "A" refers to the Meccan period and "B" to the **Medinan** period. Since scholars have divided the Meccan period into three parts, the first number following "A" refers to the period involved

and the second to the chronological order of a given chapter within that period. Thus A-3-19 indicates the nineteenth chapter of the third period of the Meccan revelations. Since the **Medinan** period is considered as a unit, B-12 indicates the twelfth chapter of this period. This explanation should be helpful to the reader throughout this study, since every **Qur'ānic** citation is identified in this manner.

An additional reference to the footnotes is in place at this point. Undoubtedly many are already aware of the fact that a second source of truth in Islam is to be found in the *ḥadīth*, the traditions ascribed to the Prophet and gathered by his companions and followers during the years after his death. It is to be remembered that these sayings in Islam are second in importance only to the **Qur'ān** itself. From these two sources does the Muslim world identify and define eternal truth. Subsequently, it is only natural that Muslim writers quote from them on frequent occasion.

In the translation which occupies the major portion of this study, the reader will be referred to these traditions in the footnotes. **Two** examples are "Al-Bukhārī, *Maḥālim*, p.3" and "Muslim, *Kitāb al-Zakāt*, p. 111". In each instance the first word is the name of the traditionist, the second the title of his book and the third the page number of the book in which the citation contained in the text is found. The six most important traditionists are:

- a. al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) (died in 256 of the Muslim era/870 of the Christian era)
- b. Muslim b. al-Hajjāj (d. 261/874-5)
- c. Abū Dā'ūd (d. 275/887)
- d. Abū Ḥisā Muḥammad al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892)
- e. Abū Ḥabd Allāh Muḥammad b. Māja (d. 283/886)
- f. Abū Ḥabd ar-Raḥman al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915)

It is our hope that the material found within **this** book will be of service to many people in their understanding of the God of **Islām**.

INTRODUCTION

Among Muslims and students of **Islām** it is common knowledge that the beads of the Muslim rosary (*subḥa*) are ninety-nine in number and that the individual adherent of the Islamic faith regularly uses them in his worship life. As he fingers the individual bead, he quietly and reverently repeats the ninety-nine names of God that are particularly familiar to him. Perhaps it was in this manner that the non-Muslim world drew the conclusion that the names by which the God of Islam is known are only ninety-nine in number. Thus one commonly hears the expression, "The ninety-nine names of God." But this is not really the full truth of the matter.

In the **Qur'ānic** commentary entitled *Tafsir al-Jalālain (The Commentary of the Two (Writers Named) Jalāl)* the authors add to their mention of the expression "the most beautiful names" the remark, "which are ninety-nine in number." Thus one can conclude that this particular number is not a European invention.

However, further study proves quite conclusively that the number ninety-nine is not a rigid one. In *The Biographical Dictionary of Muhammad ibn al-Nawāwī*, an Arabic writer of Malay origin who lived in Mecca during the latter part of the eighteenth century, one finds the following statement, "Some of the Ṣūfī sects have asserted, 'Unto God — may He be glorified and magnified — (belong) a thousand names'." A line beyond this one reads, "But as for the names of God — may He be glorified and magnified — this number is insufficient in respect of them, that is to say, the names of God." In other words, the names by which God is known in **Islām** are, to say the least, numerous. This being the case, in one sense it is incorrect to speak of THE ninety-nine names of God. Perhaps it is more correct to refer to a particular list of ninety-nine names as used by a group of believers in a given place at a given time.

By the same token, however, ninety-nine is the number commonly used, since the Muslim rosary contains ninety-nine beads, divided into three sections of thirty-three each. The greater chaplet or

rosary of the Dervish Orders contains nine hundred and ninety-nine beads, and thus one can conclude that at least in some parts of the Muslim world the individual group can and does refer to God with one thousand names and more.

Of **additional** interest in this respect is the odd, rather than the even, number of names of God used by the Muslim world. **Al-Ghazālī**, to whose work the major portion of this study is devoted, gives us the explanation for this phenomenon when he quotes from **Abu-Hūraya**, a companion of the prophet and a most zealous propagator of his words and deeds: "The messenger of God — may the blessings of God and peace be upon him — said that God has ninety-nine names, one hundred minus one. He is the Odd and loves the odd number. The one who numerates them enters Paradise." Perhaps this stress upon the odd number is only another indication that the God of the **Qur'ān** is absolutely unique in respect of His essence, with no other being like Him.

The great majority of the names of God as **they** are listed on the following pages are taken either as they are found in the **Qur'ān** or as they are implied by a given verse or verses of the **Qur'ān**. Some of them are found with the definite article, some without; some are made definite by a definite complement and some remain indefinite; and some are **found** definite in one passage and indefinite in another. When a given name is made definite, the word assumes a special sense, attributing to God par *excellence* that quality of which it speaks.

In an article to be found in *The Journal* of the Royal Asiatic Society, vol. **XII**, London, 1880, the author, J. W **Redhouse**, lists 552 names of God as he found them in his research and then goes on to say, "Doubtless many another will be chanced upon, and there is every probability that a thousand can be collected and surpassed."

We now turn our attention to that Muslim theologian who, above all others, devoted time and effort to an understanding and application of the meanings of the names of God in Islam. He was **Abū-Hāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Aṭ-Ṭūsī Al-Ghazālī**, who

was born in 450 and died in 505 of the Muslim era (1058-1111 of the Christian era). Together with **Abii-l-Hasan Al-AshCari** (died **324/935**), he played a most formidable role within the House of Islam in defining the traditional position of **Muslim** theology. Born in **Ṭus** and a man of brilliant intellectual prowess, he was trained under **Al-Juwayni** (d. **478/1085**) who introduced him to the study of theology. By the age of twenty-seven **al-Ghazālī** had already attained the rank of professor at the **Nizamiyya** College in Baghdad, where he lectured to groups of three hundred and more.

A crisis period in his life led him to leave his campus, and during the following eleven years he spent his time in such leading centres of the Muslim world as Jerusalem, Medina and Mecca. It was during this time that he took part in the *hajj* of **489/1096**. Throughout this lengthy period he devoted himself solely to the search of truth, as he tells us in his *al-Munqidh min ad-Dalāl* (Deliverance from Error), an autobiographical work. It was also during this period that he produced his greatest work, *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm ad-Dīn* (The *Revival* of the Science of Religion). Throughout this time he lived as a poor **Ṣūfi**, devoting himself to meditation and other spiritual exercises. Thus it is not surprising to learn that, in reality, **Al-Ghazālī** was much more than an intellectual. At heart he was **also** a **Ṣūfi**. His years of searching for truth, self-examination and self-deprivation brought him to the point where he found God through experience, that experience which in one sense of the word must be realized in order to be understood. And to this extent he did know a proximity to God that can be understood only by one who has walked the same path (*ṭarīqa*). As **Duncan Black Macdonald** pointed out some years ago, two of his best contributions to the House of Islam were his influence in leading men of his day back from their scholastic labours upon theological dogmas to "a living contact with, study and exegesis of, the **Qur'ān** and the *ḥadīth*" and assuring that **Ṣūfism** would have a firm and honourable place among the Muslims the world over. That he has done so there can be no doubt.

As already indicated, Aal-Ghazālī was a voluminous writer. Prof. W. M. Watt, one of the leading contemporary scholars of al-Ghazālī, informs us that a total of forty works are generally attributed to him, though it is quite possible that thirteen of these are spurious. The three works that are of particular importance, and concerning them there can be no doubt whatsoever, are the *'Ihyā, al-Munqidh* and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa (The Incoherence of the Philosophers)*. For the benefit of those who do not read Arabic, the second and third of these can be found in English translation. (The *'Ihyā* is a very lengthy work, consisting of four volumes. As of this time only a few sections of it have been translated into English.)

Included in Al-Ghazālī's works is *Kitāb al-Maqṣad al-Asnā Sharḥi Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*. As is often true when trying to translate Arabic into English, one cannot be too rigid and insist upon a word-by-word translation of this title. Generally speaking, perhaps one does not go too far astray by translating, "Our exalted intent in respect of this book is to explain the beautiful names of God." It is to the greater portion of this text that we now address ourselves in the following pages. To our knowledge this is the first time this translation appears in English, though a few individuals have translated one or the other of the ninety-nine names. For those who wish to consult the Arabic, it will be helpful to know that the text upon which the following translation was based is to be found on pages 24-76 of *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*. The total text consists of 85 pages. In this connection we also wish to express our gratitude to Prof. W. M. Watt and Dr. P. Cachia of the Arabic Department of the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, for their invaluable counsel and advice.

The reader will notice that the definition of the individual name almost invariably is followed by an admonition addressed to the reader. By these admonitions Al-Ghazālī endeavoured to show how the individual Muslim can emulate the given name of God and thereby draw closer to Him and win His favour. This being the

case, both the definition and the admonition are of considerable importance. In many instances a difficult Arabic concept has been transliterated and placed within brackets following the English translation. This is done with the hope of assisting the reader who knows Arabic to better understand the translation. On each occasion where a name of God is presented, the Qur'ānic source is cited in a footnote, together with the period in which it was given to Muhammad.

Perhaps it is well to add that the author of this book is not a Muslim, though he has considerable respect for Islam. Every effort has been made to be as objective as possible and simply permit the Arabic text to speak for itself. To the extent that we have failed, we ask the reader's indulgence.

Concerning (Our) Intentions and Objectives

The first part (of this section) concerns itself with an explanation of the meanings of the ninety-nine names of God which are included in the report of **Abū-Hurayra** in which he states, "The messenger of God — may the blessings of God and peace be upon him — said that God has ninety-nine names, one hundred minus one. **He** is the Odd and loves the odd number. The one who enumerates them enters Paradise." He is Allah and there is none other than He (literally, the One other than whom there is no God), *ar-Raḥman, ar-Raḥīm, al-Malik, al-Quddus, as-Salām, al-Mu'min, al-Muḥaymin, al-ʿAzīz, al-Jabbār, al-Mutakabbir, al-Khāliq, al-Bārī, al-Muṣawwir, al-Ghaḥfār, al-Qaḥḥār, al-Waḥḥāb, ar-Razzaq, al-Fattāh, al-ʿAlīm, al-Qābid, al-Bāsīt, al-Khāfid, ar-Rāfiʿ, al-Muʿizz, al-Mudhill, as-Samīʿ, al-Basīr, al-Hakam, al-ʿAdl, al-Laṭīf, al-Khabīr, al-Ḥalīm, al-ʿAzīm, al-Ghaḥūr, ash-Shakūr, al-ʿAlī, al-Kabīr, al-Ḥafīz, al-Muqīt, al-Ḥasīb, al-Jalīl, al-Karīm, ar-Raqīb, al-Mujīb, al-Wāsiʿ, al-Hakīm, al-Wadūd, al-Majīd, al-Bācīth, ash-Shahīd, al-Ḥaqq, al-Wakīl, al-Qawī, al-Matīn, al-Walī, al-Ḥamīd, al-Muḥṣī, al-Mubdī, al-Muʿīd, al-Muḥyī, al-Mumīt, al-Ḥayy, al-Qayyum, al-Wājīd, al-Mājīd, al-Aḥad, as-Ṣamad, al-Qadīr, al-Muqtadīr, al-Muqaddīm, al-Mu'akh-khīr, al-Awwal, al-Ākhir, az-Zāhir, al-Bātin, al-Wālī, al-Mutacāl, al-Barr, at-Tawwāb, al-Muntaqīm, al-ʿAfū, ar-Ra'ūf, Mālik al-Mulk, Dhū-l-Jalāl wa-l-Ikram, al-Muqsīt, al-Jāmic, al-Ghani, al-Mughni, al-Māmic, aḍ-Ḍarr, an-Nāfiʿ, an-Nur, al-Hādī, al-Badīʿ, al-Bāqī, al-Wārith, ar-Rashīd* (and) *as-Sabur*.

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

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

An **important** detail: In respect of the meanings of the rest of the names, such as *ar-Raḥīm, al-ʿAlīm, al-Ḥalīm, aṣ-Ṣabūr, ash-Shakūr* and others, it is conceivable for man to be characterized (by these names) to the extent that they **may** be spoken of him, even though this is done in a fashion different from the application of (these) names to God. As for the meaning of this name (*Allāh*), it is so specific that it is inconceivable that there could be any sharing of it either metaphorically or literally. In view of this specificity, the

¹ S. 28, 88 (A-3-11).

rest of the names are described as being the names of God and are defined in relation to Him. (For this reason), one may say that *aş-Şabūr*, *ash-Shakūr*, *al-Jabbār* and *al-Malik* are among the names of God, (but) one cannot say that *Allāh* is one of the names of *aş-Şabūr* and *ash-Shakūr*. (This is true) in view of the fact that this name is **more** indicative of the true nature of the meaning of divinity and (subsequently) is more specific, (the name of God) that is best known and most prevalent. (As the result) one dispenses with trying to define it by **something** else, (whereas) the other (names) are defined in relationship to it.

An admonition: That portion of this name which man (may possess) is *ta'alluh*. By this I mean that his heart and concern should be so completely engrossed in God Most High that he does not see, pay attention to or hope for anyone except Him. How can he not be so when he understands from this **name** that God Most High is the Authentic Existent, the Real One, and that everything and everyone that is apart from Him is doomed to destruction and perdition and is worthless except through Him. Thus, first and foremost, he sees **himself** as the chief (of those who are) doomed to destruction **and** (utterly) worthless, even as the messenger of God — may the blessings of God and peace be upon him — saw him when he said, "The truest verse the Arabs spoke was the saying of Labid, 'Everything except God is worthless'."

AR-RAHMAN AR-RAHİM — The Merciful and Compassionate One ^{2,3}

These two names are derived from *rahma* (mercy). (The concept of) mercy necessitates one who is an object of mercy, for no one is an object of mercy unless he is in **need**. *Ar-Rahmān* is the one by means of whom the needs of the needy persons are satisfied in such a way that neither intent, volition nor solicitude are involved. The one in need is not called *rahim*. Furthermore, the one who intends the satisfaction of a need but does not in fact satisfy it, though he is able to do so, is not called compassionate. For if his intention had been perfect, he would have carried it out. On the other hand, the one who (for valid reasons) is unable (to carry his intention to fruition) may still be called a merciful one in view of the empathy that motivated him. In spite of this, however, he falls short (of his goal).

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

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

³ S. 7, 180/79 (A-3-91) speaks of "the fairest names" (Pickthall) of God. Redhouse notes that the Qur'anic commentary *Tafsir al-Jalalain* adds to its mention of "the most comely names" the remark, "which are 99 in number." Thus the number 99 is not a European invention. Most of the names were originally culled from the Qur'an and are found there either *in esse* or *in posse*, though some were introduced later. In view of the Qur'an and existing lists of names, it is erroneous to speak of *the 99* names of God. Each existing list of 99 is a selection based on the preference of some eminent man. Redhouse has listed 552 names and adds that "there is every probability that 1,000 can be collected and surpassed." Other collators of names were Meninski, Hottinger, E. T. Roggers, Herklot and M. Rabadan. In those instances in the following pages where an individual name cannot be traced to the Qur'an, the collator who has included it will be cited by his initial.

encompasses the essentials, needs and advantages which go beyond them. Thus He is in truth the Compassionate absolutely.

An Important Detail: Mercy implies a pain-inducing empathy which lays hold of the compassionate one. This moves a merciful person to satisfy the wants of the object of mercy. The Lord Most High is free of this. Perhaps you are of the opinion that this is an imperfection in respect of the meaning of mercy. On the contrary, however, this is a perfection and not an imperfection (in respect of the meaning of this concept). As for its not being an imperfection, this is because the perfection of mercy lies in the perfection of its fruit. Whenever the needs of the needy one are perfectly satisfied, the object of mercy has no share in the empathy of the one showing mercy and his feeling of distress. On the contrary, the feeling of distress on the part of the one showing mercy is caused by his own weakness and imperfection and does not (at all) increase his weakness in respect of the aim of the needy one after his needs have been perfectly satisfied.

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

A Useful Lesson: *Ar-Rahmān* is more specific than *ar-Rahīm* and therefore is applied only to God, whereas *ar-Rahīm* may be applied to one other than He. In this respect it approximates the name "God" which functions as a proper noun, even though (*ar-Rahmān*) is definitely derived from *rahma*. For this reason God combined the two when He said, "Say (unto mankind): Cry unto God, or cry unto the Beneficent (*ar-Rahmān*), unto whichever ye cry (it is the same). His are the most beautiful names."⁴

⁴ S. 17, 110 (A-3-4). Note that in this instance Pickthall translates *al-asmā al-husnā* "the most beautiful names" whereas in S. 7, 180/79 he translates "the fairest names".

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

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

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

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

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

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

is the well-being of the **body** as such, and certainly this is genuine good.

Moreover, when a sound body cannot exist except by **amputating** the hand, then the way to health is **the** amputation. The soundness of the body is desired for its own sake, in the first place, whereas the amputation is desired for **the** sake of **something** else, in the second place, not for its own sake. Therefore, both are comprised in the volition. But the one is willed for its own sake and the other for the sake of something else. Undoubtedly that which is willed for its own sake has precedence to that which is willed for something else. For this reason God Most High says, "My mercy precedes My anger." His anger is His will to do evil, and the evil comes into existence by means of His will. His **mercy** is His will to do good, and the good comes into existence by means of His will. However, He wills good for the good itself, whereas He wills evil **not** for itself **but rather** for the good that is within it. Good is determined essentially (bi I-Ilfit), but evil is required accidentally (bi **I-Caraq**). Both of them are predetermined, and there is nothing at all in that which is contrary to mercy.

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

The first is your view that this evil has no good within it. Surely this must be a part of that which the **mind** simply cannot understand. In this respect perhaps you are like the boy who considered cupping a pure evil, or the stupid man who considered killing **in** retaliation a pure evil. (The man) **primarily** considered **the** person killed, for whom, of course, the act was pure evil. However, he overlooked the general good accruing to the community as such resulting from the act. Such a person does not understand that the achievement of a general good by **means** of a specific evil is, in fact, a pure blessing. This (truth) the good (man) ought not disregard.

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

Consider this bit of poetry: "If the person you have been addressing were alive, you would have made him hear. But the one whom you have called is not alive." Certainly this is the condition of the majority of the people. But as for you, O brother, for whom this explanation is intended, I believe you are one of those trying to perceive and understand the secret action of God in respect of your destiny and therefore one who can dispense with these revolving thoughts and admonitions.

AL-MALIK — The King⁵

Al-Malik is the one whose essence and attributes are independent of all existing things, but everything in existence is dependent upon (in need of) Him. To be sure, nothing can exist without Him, whether it be in respect of its essence, its attributes, its existence or

its continued existence (*baqā'*). Each and every thing derives its existence from Him or from that which is derived from Him. Everything other than He Himself is subject to Him in respect of both its attributes and essence. But He has no need for anything. This, indeed, is the absolute *al-Malik*.

An Admonition: It is inconceivable that man could be an absolute king since he is not independent of everything. To the contrary, he is always a pauper before God Most High, and this would be the case even if he were independent of everyone except God. By the same token it is also unthinkable that everything in the universe should have need of him. Rather he should know that the majority of things in existence have no need of him. Man begins to understand the limited degree to which he can accept the title of king only when he knows that whereas he might be independent of some things, he shall always be totally dependent upon others. The true king among men is the one who realizes that in reality only God is the absolute king. For this reason he is always and ever totally dependent upon God (though he might be independent in certain human relationships).

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

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

⁵ S. 20, 114/3 (A-2-8); 23, 115/7 (A-2-17); inter alia.

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

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

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

AL-QUDDŪS — The Most Holy One

Al-Quddūs is the one who is above every description which human perception could apprehend, the imagination could grasp, the fancy could reach, the innermost consciousness could pervade and thereby have an understanding of Him, or the reflection could determine. I do not merely say that He is free of faults and deficiencies, for the mention of this would be akin to a breach of propriety. Certainly it is not a part of propriety for one to speak of the king of a country

and say, "He is not a weaver," or "He is not a cupper." For to deny the existence of an object in one sense of the word almost suggests that this object may exist and together with that suggestion there is a deficiency.

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

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

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

An Admonition: Man is holy to the extent that he sublimates his will and knowledge. As far as his knowledge is concerned, he should sublimate it from all objects-of-imagination, from things

perceived through the senses as well as those merely fancied, and **from** all those perceptions in which the animal kingdom shares. Rather the activities of his reflection and his knowledge should be concerned with those things which are above being (either) near and apprehensible by sense, or distant and inaccessible to sense. In fact, he must rid his inner being of all objects-of-sense perception and imagination and must acquire such forms of knowledge that, even were he deprived of the instruments of his sense perception and his imagination, it would continue to be noble, universal, divine knowledge related to the eternal and everlasting objects-of-knowledge, not personal (knowledge) subject to change and alteration.

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

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

mere sensory perceptions and imaginations and dedicates his will to that which is above the demands of appetite, certainly he has entered the fullness of the realm of holiness.

AS-SALAM — The Sound One⁷

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

An Admonition: The one who comes to God with a pure heart is the one whose heart is free of fraud, hatred, envy and the desire for evil, whose limbs are free of sin and forbidden things and whose attributes could not possibly be inverted or reversed. Among **men** he is the sound one, the description of whom brings him near to the absolute and true soundness which simply cannot be approached or matched by any other. When I refer you to an inversion of his attributes, I speak of the possibility of his intellect becoming a prisoner of his passion and anger, **whereas** the truth is the very opposite of this, namely, **that** greed and anger ought to be and are subject to **his** intellect and obey it. **If** this **truth** is reversed, certainly a relapse will result. There is no soundness at all when the ruler becomes the one who is ruled, and the king **becomes** the servant. No one is described by **the terms** soundness and **Islām** except the one from whose tongue and hand the **Muslims** are safe. How can the one who is not safe from **himself** be characterized by soundness and **Islām**?

⁷ S. 5, 16/8 (B-24); 59, 23 (B-12).

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

It is a well-known fact that the blind person is afraid of suffering destruction in as much as he cannot see; but his seeing eye (*baṣīra*) gives him a degree of security from it. In a similar way the one-armed man fears the evil which only the hand can ward off, for the sound hand is security against it. This also is the case with all the senses and limbs. The Author of safety and security created, formed, supports and strengthens them.

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

By nature man is physically weak and subject to sickness, hunger and thirst from within and the evils of burning, drowning, physical

injury and killing from without. The only one who protects him from these dangers is the one who prepares remedies which repel his sickness, food which frees him from hunger, drink which slakes his thirst, limbs which protect his body and the five senses which serve as spies, warning him of impending dangers.

Furthermore, his greatest fear is eternal destruction in that life which is to come. There is nothing that protects him from this except the confession of the unity. God Most High is the One who guides him to this and causes him to desire it when He said, "There is no god except God, that is, My Fortress. And the one who enters My Fortress is safe from my **punishment**."⁹ There is no safety in the world except that which is acquired by causes which God **alone** has created, and He alone guides to the use of them. "Our **Lord** is He who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it **aright**."¹⁰ Indeed, He alone is the absolute *Mu'min*.

An Admonition: Man's portion of this characterization lies in the fact that all mankind is safe at the side of **him** (the Muslim). Even more, every timid soul should hope for and anticipate help from him in staving off destruction from himself in respect of both religious and secular affairs, just as the messenger of God said — may the blessings of God and peace be upon him — "If one believes in God and the last day, his neighbor is safe from his **evils**."¹¹ The one among **men** who is the most worthy of the name *al-Mu'min* is the one who protects man from the punishment of God by guiding him to the way of God and leading him to the path of escape. This is the vocation of the prophets and the theologians. Therefore the prophet said — may the blessings of God and peace be upon him — "Verily, you rush towards the fire like **moths**, but I am **the one** who holds you **back**."¹²

A *Premonition* and an *Admonition*: Perhaps you are saying, "In reality fear is from God. In fact, there is no one **who causes**

⁹ *Hadīth qudsī*.

¹⁰ S. 20, 50/52 (A-2-8).

¹¹ Muslim, *Imān*, p. 83.

¹² Al-Bukhārī, *Riqāq*, p. 26.

⁸ S. 59, 23 (B-12).

fear except God Himself. He is the One who causes His servants to fear, and He is the One Who created the causes of fear. How, then, can safety be ascribed to Him?" Your answer is that both fear and safety originate with Him. He creates the causes of fear and safety at one and the same time. His being the cause of fear does not prevent His being the cause of safety, just as His being the One Who humbles does not prevent His being the One Who exalts. Rather is He both the One Who exalts and the One Who humbles. In a similar manner He is both the Author of safety and the One Who causes fear. But *al-Mu'min* in particular is included in the enumeration of the names whereas *al-Mukhawwif* (the One Who causes fear) is excluded.

AL-MUHAYMIN — The Protector and Guardian¹³

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

An Admonition: That man is a *muhaymin* in respect of his heart who observes it carefully in order to apprehend its depths and secrets, who controls its various conditions and characteristics, and in addition to that continuously concerns himself with its preservation in accordance with its creation. If his supervision and control are

in respect of the possibility of existence, since it is possible that there exists one similar to it in terms of perfection and preciousness. The urgency of the need for it lies in the fact that everything and everyone requires it for everything, certainly for his existence, continuity and attributes. This (absolute need) does not exist completely except for God Most High. For we have explained that no one really knows God Most High except God Himself.' He is the truly absolute Incomparable and Unparalleled One, and there is no one comparable to Him in respect of this name.

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

AL-JABBĀR —

The One Who Compels His Creatures to Do as He Wills¹⁵

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

¹³ S. 59, 23 (B-12).

¹⁵ S. 59, 23 (O-12).

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

AL-MUTAKABBIR — The One Supreme in Pride and Greatness¹⁶

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

However, if that self-glory and self-magnification are false and his conclusion in respect of his uniqueness in magnificence is not as he believes it to be, then pride is false and reprehensible. The one who considers magnificence and glory to be his own particular properties, to the **exclusion** of others, must know that his evaluation of it is

¹⁶ S. 59, 23 (8-12).

false and his opinion useless. The truth of the matter is that these two characteristics are the property of none but God Most High.

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

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

AL-KHĀLIQ — The Creator ¹⁷

AL-BĀRI' — The Maker

AL-MUṢAWWIR — The Fashioner

One may think that these names are synonymous and that each one is derived from (the act) of creating and bringing into being. But this is not necessarily true. (The fact of the matter is that) everything which emerges from non-existence into existence requires a planning stage, first of all; the actual bringing into existence in accordance with the plan, secondly; and the fashioning of the

¹⁷ S. 59, 24 (B-12).

created matter, thirdly. God Most High is the Creator in as much as He is the **One** who plans and determines; He is the Maker to the extent that He is the **One** who invents and brings into being; and He is the Fashioner in view of the fact that He arranges the forms of His inventions in the best possible manner.

In one sense of the word this sequence of action reminds one of a building which requires a planner to estimate accurately what is needed in terms of timber, bricks and land area, not to mention the number of buildings, plus their length and width.

This work is the responsibility of the architect who sketches and fashions it. Following this a builder is required who will assume responsibility for the work by which the buildings actually come into existence. The next step requires a decorator to paint the outside of the buildings and thereby **improve** their appearance. The responsibility for this is **assumed** by someone other than the builder. This is the customary procedure in respect of the planning, erection and decoration of a building. However, this is not the case with God Most High. In every instance He Himself is the Planner, Builder and Decorator. For this **reason** He is the Creator, the Maker and the Fashioner.

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

At this point cooking heat must be added so that the mixture of water and earth might solidify and not break apart. This is necessary since man is not moulded from pure clay but rather from that which has been baked, as is the case with pottery. Pottery consists of clay that has been **made** into paste by the addition of water and subsequently was subjected to the action of fire in order that its union might become solid.

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

In respect of the planning of these things and the creation carried out in accordance with the planning, He is *al-Khāliq*. In respect of the actual creation, that transfer from nonexistence to existence, He is *al-Bāri'*. The mere act of bringing something into existence is one thing, but the act of bringing something into existence on the basis of a pre-arranged plan is quite another subject. The understanding of this difference is quite necessary for the one who finds it difficult to attribute the act of creation primarily to the planning stage, although apparently there is the possibility of philological support for this since the Arabs do call a skilled and experienced person a creator (*khāliq*) for his planning of some work on the basis of another. Therefore the poet said, "You certainly have cut that which you measured (*khalaqtu*), but some people measure and then will not cut."

The name *al-Muṣawwir* is God's in view of the fact that He arranges the shapes of things in the best possible order and gives them the best possible form. This name is one of the characteristics

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

Perhaps one can find a parallel to this in the person of the builder who lays the stones under the wall and the wood above it, a procedure he follows in something more than an accidental fashion. To the contrary, this is his common practice, and his only aim is the soundness of the wall. If **one** were to reverse this process and place the stones above the wall and the wood below it, certainly the structure would be demolished, and its form would not be permanent in any wise or manner.

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

This arrangement and fashioning exists in **conjunction** with every single part of the world, **even** if it is the size of an ant or an atom. **In** fact, it is even applicable to **the individual** member of the ant's constitution. Many words would be required to give an explanation of the eye which is the smallest **organ** of living creatures. If one does

not know the layers of the eye, **the number of its forms and** shapes, its measures, its colours and the kind of wisdom inherent within it, then one does not really know its form and therefore knows its *muṣawwir* only in a very general way. The same thing can also be said of every form of the animal and plant kingdom; in fact, of every part of every animal and plant.

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

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

This, then, is man's portion of this name; namely, the acquisition of that cognitive form which corresponds to that existential form.

Knowledge is a form in the mind corresponding to the form of the thing known. God's knowledge of the forms is the cause of the existence of the forms in individual (things). Furthermore, the forms, existing in the individual things, are the cause by which occur the cognitive forms in the mind of man. In this very manner does he acquire the knowledge of the significance of the name *al-Muṣawwir*, which is one of the names of God. By the acquisition of these forms in himself he also becomes one similar to a *muṣawwir*, even if only metaphorically. For that form comes into being within him, strictly speaking, only by the creation of God and His origination, and is not the result of man's efforts. But man will endeavour to expose himself to the flood-waters of God's mercy, as it were. For surely God Most High "changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts."¹⁸ Likewise (the prophet) said — may peace be upon him — "Certainly your Lord has gifts of mercy for you in the days of your life. By all means expose yourself to them."

Concerning *al-Khāliq* and *al-Bāri*, man cannot hope to penetrate these two names (either) without using some kind of remote figurative expression. The reason for this is that creation and origination go back to the use of power which is based upon knowledge. God Most High created knowledge and power for man. Man (now) has a means for attaining this power to a degree commensurate with his planning and knowledge. All existing things are divided into those whose occurrence is not at all dependent upon the capacity of man, such as the heavens, the stars, the earth, the animal and vegetable kingdoms and others; and into those things whose occurrence is dependent upon the capacity of man. These are the works that have come into being through the deeds of men, such as the things he has manufactured, various forms of administrations, acts of worship and various efforts of one kind and another. If man is (really) able to attain a degree of success by doing battle with himself in terms of constant practice and self-control, and

¹⁸ IS S. 13, 11/2 (A-3-22).

at the same time is able to direct both himself and others, he attains a position in which he is unique among men by discovering things not discovered before; and if at the same time he is able to do certain things and cause others to desire them, then he is like the person who creates something that did not exist before.

One says of the person who invented chess that he is the one who invented and devised the game when he invented something that did not exist before that time, even though the invention of something which has no real value is not a laudable attribution. This also applies in respect of religious exercises, struggles of one kind and another, administrations and the various crafts which are the source of many blessings, the forms and orders of which some people learn from others. Inevitably these are traceable to the original developer and inventor, and that inventor may be said to be the one who devised those forms. *Al-Khāliq* is the one who planned them so that it is possible to apply this name to him metaphorically. Among the names of God there are some that can be transferred to man metaphorically — actually this applies to the majority of them; and there are some which truly belong to man and are used in respect of God only metaphorically, as is the case with *aṣ-Ṣabūr* and *ash-Shakūr*. It is not right that we should recognize the sharing that exists in respect of some of the names and neglect those differences that we have just mentioned.

AL-GHAFFĀR — The Very Forgiving One¹⁹

Al-Ghaffār is the One who makes manifest what is noble and veils what is disgraceful. The sins (of man) are among the disgraceful things which He veils by placing a veil upon them in this world and disregarding their punishment in the hereafter. *Al-Ghafr* means

¹⁹ S. 38, 66 (A-2-12); S. 39, 5/7 (A-3-12). Redhouse notes in respect of this name that whereas *cafu* simply refers to remitting the responsibility of an offence, the second form of *ghafara* also implies the further consequence of admitting the forgiven one to bliss and glory.

veiling. The first of God's veils for man is to be found in the fact that the opening in his body that has been created for that which his eyes consider ugly has been hidden within him and is concealed within the beauty of his exterior. How great is the difference between the interior of man and his exterior in terms of cleanliness and dirtiness, and ugliness and beauty! Just look at that part of him which God exposes and that part which He covers!

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

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

An Admonition: Man's portion of this name lies in his veiling for the next man that part of him which needs to be veiled. (Muhammad) said — may the peace of God be upon him — "The one who veils the imperfections of a believer, his imperfections will God cover on the day of the resurrection".²⁰ The slanderer, the spy, the avenger and the one who requites evil with evil are far removed from this characterization. However, the one who is characterized by it is the one who does not divulge anything about God's creation except those things which are best in them. There is no creature totally free from perfection and imperfection, from ugliness and beauty. The one who disregards the repulsive qualities and remembers the good ones is the person who possesses a share of this name, even as it is related of Jesus — may peace be upon

²⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Mazālim*, p. 3.

him — that he and his disciples passed by a dead dog, and the stench of it was over-powering. His disciples exclaimed, "How this corpse smells!" But Jesus — may peace be upon him — replied, "How lovely is the white of his teeth!" In this way he pointed out that they ought to mention only that which is good.

AL-QAHHĀR — The Dominating One²¹

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

An Admonition: The dominating one among men is the one who dominates his enemies. Man's greatest enemy is man himself, that is to say, his own inner being. In fact, he is even a greater enemy than Satan who deceived him. When man has dominated his own carnal appetites he has actually dominated Satan. For Satan would like nothing better than to hand man over to destruction through the means of his carnal appetites, and one of his snares is women. It is impossible to imagine that one who has no desire for women could be caught in this snare. This also applies to the one who has gained dominion over this desire by the authority of religion and the counsel of reason. To the extent that one dominates his carnal desires he has dominated all of mankind, and then surely no one dominates him. The aim of his enemies is their effort to destroy his body. (But the purpose of dominating one's carnal desires is nothing less than) the revival of his spirit. The one who puts to death his desire during his life will live after his death. "Think not of those who are slain in the way of God as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision."²²

²¹ S. 12, 39 (A-3-9); 13, 16/7 (A-3-22), *inter alia*.

²² S. 3, 169/3 (B-7).

AL-WAHHĀB — The One Who **Gives** Freely, without
Thoughts of Compensation²³

A gift is a present that is free from thoughts of compensation and other selfish interests. The one who gives many gifts of this nature is known as a generous giver. Generosity, gifts and presents (of this kind) are truly inconceivable except from God Most High, for He is the One who gives every needy person that which he needs, and He does this not with thoughts of compensation or other selfish interests either now or later. The one whose giving is motivated by selfish interests, believing that sooner or later his gift will earn for him commendation, praise, friendship or the avoidance of censure or that by it he will acquire honour and a good reputation, (in reality) such a person is a trader. (Real) giving and generosity are non-existent (as far as he is concerned). His total purpose is not always a (special) object which he hopes to attain. Rather is it anything not yet acquired which the giver intends to acquire by his giving. Therefore it is a **compensation**. The one who gives and is generous so that he might be honoured or praised or not be criticized for his failure to give, is a trader. (On the other hand), however, the **truly** generous person is the one from whom blessings pour forth upon the one who derives benefit from them, and certainly his intention is not that they be returned to him. Indeed, the person who does something in order to escape **the blame** for not doing it, is one who frees himself **from** possible censure, and that (also) is an aim and a compensation.

An Admonition: (In the pure sense of the word) generosity and gifts cannot **exist** in man, for if the performance of a (given) deed **were** not more important (to him) than its non-performance, he would not take initiative in the matter. Therefore his performance of it is for his own purposes. But the person who freely spends everything he possesses, including his very life, for the sake of God

Most High, though not for the purpose of achieving the blessings of Paradise or protection from the punishment of hell or for anything considered desirable now or later of the human portions, (certainly) such a one is (considered) worthy of being called a giver and a generous person.

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

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

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

²³ S. 3, 8/6 (B-7); 38, 9/8 and 35/4 (A-2-12).

servant **but** for the sake of the service **that** he might receive from him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

AR-RAZZĀQ — The One Who Provides All Sustenance²⁴

He is the One who created the means of sustenance and those who need them. The purpose of the former is to satisfy the latter. (*Ar-Razzāq*) also created for them the causes of enjoying this sustenance. (Actually) there are two kinds of sustenance. One is manifest sustenance, and it consists of nourishment and food.'

These exist for that which is manifest, namely, the physical bodies. The other is hidden (sustenance) consisting of various types of **knowledge** and disclosures. These exist for (human) hearts and inner beings. The latter is the more noble of the two kinds of **sustenance**, for the fruit of it is eternal life. The fruit of the manifest sustenance is strength for the human body for a limited period of **time**. God (Himself) is the One who has assumed the responsibility for the creation of both types of sustenance, and He graciously makes them available to both categories, (that is to say, human **bodies** and hearts). But He grants it (amply) to whom He will and **He** measures (it to another).

²⁴*An Admonition:* The utmost that man can hope to achieve of this characterization are (the following) two (possibilities). The first is that he recognizes the real nature of **this** characterization, and that no one (really) deserves it except God Most High; and does not expect the sustenance except from **Him** and relies only upon Him in respect of it, even as it has been **reported** from **Hātim al-Aṣamm**. A man asked him, "From what source do you eat?" He replied, "From God's treasury." The man (went on to) ask, "Does God throw bread down to you **from heaven**?" **Hātim** answered, "If the earth did not belong to God, **then** certainly God would throw it down from heaven." The man continued, "But you people play with words." (To this) **Hātim** answered, "Nothing has ever come down **from heaven** except the word." The man said, "I am not strong enough to argue with you." **Hātim** replied, "That is because falsehood does not exist with truth."

24 S. 51, 58 (A-2-1).

The second (possibility that man can hope to achieve in respect of this characterization) is that God might give him a knowledge to guide (others), a tongue that is able to direct and teach, and a hand capable of giving alms. Such a person becomes a channel in bringing noble sustenance to (men's) hearts by his words and actions. When God Most High loves a man, He makes many people dependent upon him. Whenever a man is an intermediary between God and man in respect of supplying their sustenance, he achieves a portion of this attribute. The prophet said — may peace be upon him — "Certainly the faithful treasurer who carries out — one may possibly say 'who gives' — that which he is ordered to do, gives all that is expected of him, does this plentifully and in good spirits, and who gives it to the man to whom he is ordered to give it, (he also) is one of those who give **alms**."²⁵

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

AL-FATTĀH — He Who Opens All Things²⁶

He is the One by Whose concern everything that is closed is opened, and (the One) by Whose guidance everything that is obscure is made manifest. At times He causes kingdoms to be opened (i.e., conquered) for His prophets, and He takes them out of the hands of His enemies and says, "**Lo!** We have given thee, (O Muhammad), a signal victory (literally, opening), that God may forgive **thee**."²⁷ At times He lifts the screen from the hearts of

²⁵ Muslim, *Kitāb al-Zakāt*, p. 111. It is to be noted that the text used as the basis of this translation presents only a partial and unintelligible portion of the complete *hadith* listed above.

²⁶ S. 34, 26/5 (A-3-17).

²⁷ S. 48, 1.2 (B-18).

His friends, and He opens to them the gates to the kingdom of His heaven and the beauty of His grandeur. He says, "That which God openeth unto mankind of mercy none can withhold it."²⁸ The one in whose hand are the keys to the invisible world, as well as the keys to the means of sustenance, he is the one who is truly worthy of being an opener.

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

AL-CALĪM — The Omniscient One²⁹

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

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

The second (property) concerns his spiritual vision (*kashf*). Even if it is clear, it still does not reach the ultimate point beyond which there is nothing more possible. Rather does he see things as one would see them from behind a thin veil. Do not deny the difference between the (various) levels of spiritual vision, for the power of internal perception is like (the power of) the external vision. (You must) distinguish between that which is disclosed at the time of day-break and that disclosed at high-noon.

The third property consists of the fact that the knowledge of God Most High is not derived from (the observation of) things. Rather are the things derived from Him. The knowledge of man (comes into existence) by means of things, is dependent upon them and results from them. If the understanding of this difference is difficult for you to comprehend, then compare the knowledge of the men learned in chess with the knowledge of the inventor of chess. (Certainly) you must know that the inventor is the cause of the existence of chess, and the existence of chess is the cause of the knowledge of the man learned (in chess). The knowledge of the inventor preceded chess, and the knowledge of the man learned (in chess) both preceded and followed (his learning the game). In a similar fashion God's knowledge of things both preceded them and caused them. But our knowledge is not like this. The eminence of man is due to his knowledge and results from the fact that it is one of the attributes of God Most High. But the most illustrious knowledge is that subject whose object-of-knowledge is most illustrious, and the most illustrious one of all (those objects-of-knowledge) is God Most High. For this reason the knowledge (*maʿrifah*) of God Most High is the most excellent of all knowledge. Moreover, the knowledge of other things also implies a knowledge of the deeds of God Most High or the knowledge of the way by which man approaches God or the authority which facilitates the attainment of the knowledge of God and proximity to Him. All (other) knowledge outside of that is of no great honour.

²⁸ S. 35, 2 (A-3-18).

²⁹ S. 2, 32/0; 127/1; 137/1 (B-1), *inter alia*.

AL-QĀBIḌ AL-BĀSIṬ — The One Who Withholds and Provides the Means of Subsistence as He Wills³⁰

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

An Admonition: *Al-Qābiḍ al-Bāsiṭ* among men is the one who is inspired with wonders of wisdom and has been given the ability to put words together (in such a way as to convey real meaning). Sometimes he makes the hearts of men happy by that which he causes them to remember of the blessings of God and His favour, and sometimes he makes them sad by warning them of God's splendour and grandeur and His various kinds of punishments, afflictions and vengeance upon His enemies, even as did the messenger of God — may peace be upon him — when he caused the hearts of his companions to be sad in respect of his scrupulous observance of the details of worship at the time when he reminded them that God Most High will say to Adam on the day of the resurrection, "Send (to me) the delegation who are destined to be in Hell." Adam will say, "How many?" God will reply, "Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every one thousand people".³¹ In this way the hearts of the people were broken to the point that they became

³⁰ The name *al-Qābiḍ* does not appear in the Qur'ān but was included in the list of names in reference to S. 2, 245/6 (B-1). The meaning of *al-Bāsiṭ* is expressed in verbal form in S. 13, 14/5 (A-3-22).

³¹ Al-Bukhārī, *Anbiyā'*, p. 7.

indifferent to worship. When Muḥammad came the next day and saw how sad and listless they were, he refreshed their hearts and made them happy by reminding them that in comparison with all the people who had gone before them, they were like a black birthmark on a white bull.

AL-KHĀFIḌ AR-RĀFIḌ — The One Who Abases the Unbeliever and Exalts the Believer³²

He is the One who abases the unbelievers by means of misfortune and the One who exalts the believers by means of good fortune. He exalts His elect by drawing them near to Him, and He abases His enemies by isolating them from Himself. The one who raises his vision above the things that are perceptible and within the potential of human imagination and who guides his will away from the reprehensible objects of human appetites is the one whom God lifts up to the vision of the angels who are near to Him. The one who limits his vision to sensory things and limits his concerns to the appetites which the animal kingdom shares with him is the one whom God reduces to the lowest possible status. Only God Most High does that, for He is *al-Khāfiḍ al-Rāfiḍ*.

An Admonition: Man's portion of this name lies in his exalting the truth and abasing falsehood. That happens when he champions the one in the right and restrains the one in the wrong. He becomes an enemy of the enemies of God so that he might abase them. He allies himself to the chosen ones of God so that he might exalt them. Therefore God said to one of His friends, "As for your renunciation of the world, you have earned your ease by it. As for your remembrance of Me, you have been honoured by Me. Have you allied yourself to anyone for My sake? Have you made an enemy for My sake?"³³

³² Though both concepts are used in S. 56, 3 (A-1-23) in respect of the last day, only *ar-Rāfiḍ* is used in respect of God. This occurs in S. 55/48 (B-7). But Redhouse has found *al-Khāfiḍ* in the lists of the collators referred to earlier in this study.

³³ *Hadith qudsī*.

AL-MUʿIZZ AL-MUDHILL —
The One Who Raises to Honour and Abases³⁴

He is the One who gives **dominion** to whom He wishes and the One who takes it from **whom** He wishes. **True** dominion is (to be found) in the liberation from the **humiliation** of (physical) needs, the subjugation of **appetite(s)** and the fault of the disgrace of ignorance. Therefore (**in** the case of) the one from whose heart the veil is lifted so that he can know **the** beauty of God's presence, and the one who is granted the ability to **be** abstemious so that as the result of it he has no need for (the things of) God's creation, and is provided strength and support so that by means of them he controls his own attributes (*ṣifāt*), God has raised this man to a position of honour and gives **him dominion** in **this** world. God will (also) raise **him** to honour in the hereafter in **terms** of this person's gaining access to Him, **and** God will call for **him**, saying, "Ah, thou soul at peace! Return unto thy **Lord!**"³⁵ The one whom God causes to look to human beings in such a way that he is dependent upon them and is so much under **the** dominion of greediness that he is not content even when he has sufficient to satisfy his needs, and the one who advances gradually by his cunning until he is deceived about himself and (thus) remains in the darkness of ignorance, God abases such **a one** and dispossesses him. That is the workmanship of God Most High, as and when He desires (it). For He, *al-Muʿizz al-Mudhill*, (is the One of **Whom** it is said) "Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt and Thou Abasest whom Thou wilt."³⁶ And this lowly one is the **one** to **whom** God speaks **and** says, "But ye tempted one another, and **hesitated**, and doubted, and vain desires beguiled you till the ordinance of God came to pass; and the deceiver deceived you concerning God; so this day

³⁴ Though these two names ss such do not appear in the Qurʾān, their verbs are to be found in S. 3, 26/5 (B-7).

³⁵ S. 89, 27.28 (A-1-43).

³⁶ S. 3, 26/5 (B-7).

no ransom can be taken from you".³⁷ This is the utmost limit of abasement. Each person who acts by means of his hand and his tongue so as to make the causes of honour easy possesses a portion of this characterization.

AS-SAMĪʿ — The All-Hearing One³⁸

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

An Admonition: Man in respect of (his) sense has a portion of hearing, but his portion is limited in view of the fact that he does not apprehend all of the things that are heard but only those sounds that are nearby. Moreover, his perception is dependent upon an instrument (the ear-drum) which is susceptible to damage. (Once **more**), if the sound is hidden, **he** will not perceive it, and if it is far away, it will not be heard. Even if the sound is great, the hearing maybe impaired and it will fade away.

³⁷ S. 57, 14/3 (b) and 15/4 (a) (B-9).

³⁸ S. 3, 35/1 (B-7); 5, 76/80 (B-24) *inter alia*.

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

AL-BASĪR — The All-Seeing One⁹

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

An Admonition: In respect of sensory perception man's portion of the characterization of sight is self-evident. But it is weak and inadequate. For man's sight does not extend to (those objects) which are distant, and it does not penetrate the hidden object which is near-by. Rather does it only reach the things that are obvious, and it falls short of those things that are hidden, including (man's) secret thoughts. However, man's portion of seeing spiritual matters

⁹ 39 S. 17, 1 (A-2-4); 42, 11/9 (A-3-15) *inter alia*.

consists of two things. One of them is that he knows that God created vision for him so that he might behold the signs and wonders of the kingdom and the heavens. And his vision is a warning. A (certain) man said to Jesus — may peace be upon him — "Is there any creature who is similar to you?" He answered, "The one whose vision amounts to a warning and his silence indicates that he is thinking and whose speech consists of remembering (God), he is similar to me."

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

ALHAKAM — The Arbitrator⁴⁰

He is the One who passes judgment, the Arbitrator, the Judge whose judgment is accepted, the **One** whose judgment is not rejected and whose decree is not revised. One of His judgments in respect of man is that "man hath only that for which he maketh effort and that his effort will be **seen**,"⁴¹ and that "the righteous verily will be in delight. And lo, the wicked verily will be in **hell**."⁴² The meaning of the righteous and the wicked in terms of happiness and distress is that (God) **makes** good or evil to be a cause which leads on the one who practices them to happiness or distress, even as

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

⁴¹ S. 53, 39.40/40.41 (A-1-30)

⁴² S. 82, 13.14 (A-1-15),

God makes medications and poisons the causes which lead those who take them to recovery and destruction. If the meaning of wisdom is the ordering and directing of the causes to the effects, then He is an absolute arbiter because He is the one who causes all causes in general and in particular,

The divine decree and predestination branch out from this judgment. His planning the origin of the setting of the causes in such a way that they are directed to the effects is His judgment. His setting up the universal, original, established and fixed causes which neither disappear nor change, such as the earth, the seven heavens, the stars, the celestial bodies and their harmonious and eternal movements which do not change and do not cease to exist "until (the term) prescribed is run",⁴³ is His decree, even as He says, "Then He ordained them seven heavens in two days and inspired in each heaven its mandate."⁴⁴

The directing by these causes, (that is to say),⁴⁵ of their harmonious, circumscribed, foreordained and calculated movements towards the effects resulting from them minute after minute is God's predestination. For judgment is the first and universal planning and the first command which is "a twinkling of the eye".⁴⁶ The decree is the universal setting of the universal and eternal causes. Predestination is the direction of the universal causes with their foreordained and calculated actions to the effects which are circumscribed and limited to a determined quantity which neither increases nor decreases. For this reason nothing escapes from His decree and His predestination.

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

also be another hollow mechanism which is placed within the cylinder (but) above the water, and a string which has one of its ends tied to this hollow mechanism. The other end is tied to the lower part of a small container which is placed above the hollow cylinder. In (this container) there is a ball. Under the ball there is another bowl (placed) in such a manner that if the ball drops it will fall into the bowl, and its jingle will be heard. Then the bottom of the cylindrical mechanism must be pierced to a determined extent so that the water can escape through it little by little.

When the water-(level) subsides, the hollow mechanism placed on the surface of the water also subsides. Then the string becomes taut as the result of that action. This will cause the container⁴⁷ which has the ball in it to begin to tip and then to completely tip over. (When that happens) the ball will roll out of it and fall into the bowl and jingle. At the end of each hour one ball falls (in this manner). But the interval between the two falls can be calculated by determining the (amount of) water that escapes and the lowering (of the surface of the water). And that is determined by the size of the puncture through which the water escapes, and this is known by calculation. The reason for the escape of the water in a determined amount can be determined by the width of the puncture (also) to a determined extent, and the water subsides to the extent of the width of the puncture. By means of the subsiding of the water, the extent to which the hollow mechanism subsides is (also) determined, as well as the extent to which the string is made taut and the extent to which the end moves which has the ball attached.

All of this can be determined by a determination of the extent of cause which neither increases nor decreases. It is possible to make the falling of the ball into the bowl a cause of another action and this other action a cause of a third action, and to continue this process indefinitely so that from it are generated remarkable and predetermined movements (actions) of circumscribed extent. The first cause was the falling of the water in a determined quantity.

⁴³ Literally, "until the book reaches it" — S.2, 235/6 (B-1).

⁴⁴ S. 41, 12/1 (A-3-2).

⁴⁵ Adding *ay* at this point.

⁴⁶ S. 16, 77/9 (A-3-5).

⁴⁷ Reading *zarf*.

If you can picture **this** image (in your mind's eye), **then** you must know that **the** one who created this plan is in need of **three** things.

The first (requirement) is the planning, **namely**, the judgment about what it is that must exist of **the** mechanisms, causes and movements in order to bring about the goals that are intended. That is the judgment (*al-hukm*).

The second (requirement) is the gathering of the mechanisms **which** are required to **achieve** (the objective). They are the mechanism made in the form of a cylinder so that it might hold water, the mechanism that is hollow so that it might be placed under the water, the string that is attached to the **container**⁴⁸ which has the ball, and the bowl into which the ball falls. That is the decree.

Thirdly, the establishing of its cause, which is the puncture of the lower part of the mechanism to a determined extent, necessitates predetermined, calculated and **circumscribed** movement so that by the foreordained escape of the water from it there occurs a movement in the water which leads to a movement on the surface of the water, and then to the movement of the hollow mechanism which had been placed on the surface of the water; then to the movement of the string; then to **the** movement of the container which has the ball in it; then to the movement of **the** ball; then to its impact in the bowl, for the ball fell in it; then to the jingle resulting from its fall; then to the rousing of those who were present and making it audible to them; and then to **their** activity in being busy with (their) prayers **and** their work in view of their knowledge **that the hour** (of prayer) had concluded.

All of that happens in a determined quantity and to a determined extent **which** causes the determination of all of it by (adding **bi at** this point) the determination of the first **movement** which is the **movement** of the water. When you understand that these mechanisms are **the principles from which** movements must result, and that the **movement** must be determined if the **result** is to be regulated, then certainly that which has been determined must proceed from **them**.

⁴⁸ Reading *zarf*.

Similarly, you must understand the occurrence of the determined events, not one of **which** is advanced or retarded "when its term **comes**",⁴⁹ that is to say, when its cause is present. All of that took place by a known measure. "Lo! God bringeth His **command** to pass." For "God hath set a measure for **everything**."⁵⁰ The heavens, **the** celestial bodies, the stars, the earth, the sea and the air and these great bodies in the world are like those mechanisms (described above). The cause moving the celestial bodies, the stars, the sun and the moon to a known extent is like that puncture which was the reason for the escape of the water in a known amount. The movement of **the** sun, the moon and the stars leads to the occurrence of certain events on the earth just as the movement of the water led to the occurrence of those movements causing the fall of the ball which is known to have marked the end of the hour.

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

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

⁴⁹ S. 63, 11 (B-14).

⁵⁰ S. 65, 3 (B-11).

that is to say, their movements (are dependent upon) a known reckoning. This is the determination (*taqdir*), and the laying down of the universal causes is the decree. The first planning which is similar to a glance of the eye is the judgment. God Most High is a just judge in these matters. Even as the movement of the mechanism, the string and the ball are not external to the will of the inventor of the mechanism — on the contrary, that is what He willed when He invented the mechanism — so also all the events which occur in the world, both the evil and the good and the beneficial and harmful, are not external to the will of God Most High. Rather (all of) that is the intention of God Most High for the sake of which He has planned its causes. This is what is meant by His saying, "and for that did He create them."⁵¹ The explanation of divine matters by means of conventional examples is difficult. But that which is intended from the examples is comparison. Therefore set aside the example and take notice of the aim! Beware of (both) exemplification and comparison (*tashbih*).

An Admonition: You have understood from the example already mentioned what share man has of wisdom, planning, decreeing and determining. That is a (comparatively) simple matter. However, the important things pertaining to him are those dealing with the planning of religious and spiritual exercises and the determining of policies which will produce benefits both religious and secular. In this way God appoints His servants as agents on the earth and settles them in (this capacity) so that He might observe how they act. As for his religious portion dealing with this characterization of God Most High, it consists in your knowing that the matter is concluded. It is not (a matter) for new initiative. The pen (that is to say, God's pen) is dry from writing what is to be; (knowing) that the causes have been directed towards their effects and (that) the movement (of the causes) towards (the effects) in respect of the beginning and end of their lives is absolutely necessary.

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

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

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

As far as (the second point about) activity is concerned, the answer is (to be found in) his (Muhammad's) words — may blessings and peace be upon him — "Work! Everyone is helped to that for which he was created." The meaning of this is that when happiness has been decreed for a man, it has been decreed by means of a cause, and the causes of (happiness) are made easy for him, namely, obedience. When distress has been decreed for a man, it has been decreed by means of a cause, namely, his idleness in not engaging

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

in the causes of (happiness). The cause of his idleness may well be found in his thinking that "if I am (to be) happy, there is no need for activity; and if I am (to be) wretched, activity will be of no advantage to me." But this is ignorance, for he is not aware of the **fact** that if he is (to be) happy, he will be happy only because the **knowledge** and activity which cause happiness were given to him. If they are not made easy for him and are not given to him, it is a sign of his distress.

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

Similarly it is necessary to understand that a man does not attain happiness unless he comes to God with a sound heart. Soundness of the heart is an attribute that is acquired by effort, even as is the understanding of oneself and the understanding (of law required for) the **imamate**; there is no distinction (between **them**). Certainly there are various grades of men in respect of seeing the judgment (of God). There is the one who looks to the ultimate result, judging the judgment according to that which ultimately results to him, and the one who looks to the beginning, judging it by that judgment

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

AL-CADL — The Just One⁵²

The meaning of this name is the just one. He is the one **from** whom the work of justice emanates which is the opposite of injustice and inequity. The one **who** does not know his justice cannot know **the** just one, and the one who does not know his work cannot know his justice. In order to understand this characterization, one must have a comprehensive knowledge of the works of God Most High (ranging) from **the** highest **kingdom** of the heavens to the farthest reaches of the earth. (This knowledge results) "when one does not see a **fault** in the Beneficent Ones' creation; and then looks again (at it). He sees no flaw. Then he looks yet again, and his sight **returns unto** him weakened and made dim,"⁵³ having been dazzled by the Holy Lordship and bewildered by its symmetry and systematic order. In **this** condition he loves (God) since he **knows** something of the "meanings" of God's justice. This is because God created the parts of **everything** in existence, both the corporeal **and** the spiritual as well as the perfect and **imperfect** in their number, and **gave** to each one its own character. In doing this He showed His **generosity**. (He also) placed each one in the **rank** suitable to it, **and** in doing this He was just. Some of the important bodies in

⁵² This name is not found in the Qur'ān. Ht. 29; Rs. 63.

⁵³ Al-Ghazālī here draws heavily upon S. 67, 3.4 (A-2-16) **but** has adapted the **basic** thought of **these** verses to conform with his presentation.

the world are the earth, water, the atmosphere, **the** heavens and the stars. He created **them** and placed them in their (proper) rank. He placed the earth in the lowest position, and He put the water above it, **the** atmosphere above the water and **the** heavens above the atmosphere. If this order were reversed, certainly the system would be ineffective.

Perhaps the explanation of the way in which this order is validated in respect of (both) justice and the system (itself) would be too difficult for most intellects to understand. Let us, therefore, condescend to the grade of the common people. We suggest that man would do well to direct his attention to his own body. It is composed of different members even as the body of the world is composed of different bodies. Its first difference is that God made it of bone, flesh and skin. He put the bones (in the body) as an inner support, the flesh as a case to surround it and the skin as a case for the flesh. If this order were reversed and that which is hidden were made visible, certainly the system would become ineffective. Should (this fact) be concealed from you, then (it would be well to remember) that man is created of different members; for **example**, the hand, the foot, the eye, the **nose** and the ear. By His creation of these members *al-cAdl* is generous, and by placing them in their specific positions he acts justly. Thus He placed the eye in that position of the body which was most suitable for it. If He had created it on the **nape** of the neck, or on **the** foot, the hand or the crown of the head, its failure to serve its intended purpose, as well as its vulnerability, would be (quite) evident. Similarly He suspended the arms from the shoulders. If they were **suspended** from the head or from the groin or knees, the defectiveness resulting from this would (again) be (quite) evident. **Similarly** He placed all the senses in **the** head, for they are spies, in order that they might control the entire body. If He had placed **them** on the foot, certainly the (entire) system would be defective.

An explanation of **this** nature in respect of all the members (of the body) would be too long. In general, it is necessary for you to

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

You must (also) know that **the** sun, too, was not created in **the** fourth heaven, which is the middle one of the seven heavens, as the **result** of a whim. Rather did God create it only in accordance with that which was fitting for it, and **He** placed it only in that position in which it could achieve that for which He intended it. Nevertheless, perhaps you are unable to comprehend the wisdom in respect of it **because** you (have given) little reflection to the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and their wonders. If you would consider them, certainly you would see that the wonders of your body are paltry in comparison with theirs. And how could it be otherwise since the creation of the heavens and the earth is so much greater than the creation of **people**?

If only your knowledge of the wonders concerning yourself were complete, and if only you would free yourself for pondering over them and the (other) bodies surrounding them, then you would be one of those of whom God Most High said, "We will show them Our portents on the horizons and within **themselves**."⁵⁴ How can you be one of those of whom He said, "Thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that **he** might be of those possessing **certainty**,"⁵⁵ and how can "the gates of heaven be opened"⁵⁶ to the one who is **completely** absorbed in the **anxiety** of this world, the one who is enslaved by greed and passion?

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

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

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

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

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

In respect of all the members of his body, his justice requires that he use them in the way in which the divine law permits. If he happens to be numbered among the **men** of authority, His justice in respect of his people, his children and, **beyond** these, his subjects is well known. Sometimes it is thought that inequity is harm, and justice is that which conveys benefit to the people. (But) it is not so. Indeed, if the king opens his treasury which contains arms, books and various types of possessions but distributes the possessions among the rich **and** the arms are given among the **people** of learning

and the fortresses are (also) turned over to them, **and the books are given to the** soldiers and fighters to whom the mosques and **schools** are also turned over; (to be sure), he has conferred benefits, **but (in reality) he has** been unjust and has turned away from justice, **for he has placed** things in positions not appropriate to them. **On** the other hand, if he causes hurt to the sick by giving them medicines to drink and by forcing cupping and blood-letting upon them; and if he causes hurt to the criminals by means of the death-penalty, amputation and beating, then he is just, for in each case he has administered the appropriate action.

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

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

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

A detailed exposition of His comprehension of the fine points and the secrets is (quite) impossible. **Suffice** it to say that the hidden (object) is as open to His knowledge as is the exposed one. There is (absolutely) no distinction (between them). His gentleness and subtlety in His deeds are also boundless. The only one who knows the subtlety in respect of His work is the one who knows the details of His deeds and the fine points of His gentleness in respect of them. One's knowledge of the meaning of **the name** *al-Latīf* is commensurate with one's knowledge of these things.

The explanation of (all) **this** is necessarily **lengthy**. Moreover, it is (quite) inconceivable that (even) **many** volumes could do justice to one-tenth of one-tenth of it. However, it is possible to draw attention to some generalities (concerning this subject). **A** part of His kindness is His creation of the foetus in the womb of the mother in a three-fold darkness, His preservation of it and His feeding it through the umbilical cord until the time that it is separated and becomes independent by taking food through the mouth. At that time God prompts the child to take the mother's breast into its mouth and suck it, and to do this even during the darkness of night and in spite of the fact that the child has not been taught to do so nor has seen it done.

Moreover, God causes the egg **containing** a bird to break, and He immediately prompts it to pick up seeds. Again, God does not give

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

The production of pure milk from the nursing mother's stomach and blood, the production of precious gems from hard stones, and the production of honey from the bee, silk from the worm and a pearl from the sea-shell are (also) the result of His subtlety. (But)

⁵⁷ S. 6, 103 (A-3-21); 67, 14 (A-2-16).

the most wonderful subject of all is God's creation of man from the impure semen and His making **him** the repository of His knowledge, the bearer of His trust and the witness of the kingdoms of His heavens. This, too, is gentleness that **simply** defies definition.

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

AL-KHABĪR — The All-Cognizant One⁵⁸

He is the one from whose mind no hidden information escapes. Nothing occurs in either (His) physical or spiritual domain, not an atom is set into motion or becomes still, not a breath is disturbed nor quieted without His knowledge of it. This term is equivalent to *al-cAlim*. (But) when knowledge is related to hidden secrets, it is called cognizance, and the one possessing it is called a cognizant one.

An *Admonition*: Man's portion of that (**name**) lies in his being cognizant of those things which take place in his world, and his world is his heart and his body. The secrets by which his heart is characterized — deception, treachery, worldliness, the concealment of evil, a public display of that which is good and fine behaviour which endeavors to present a facade of faithfulness whereas (in reality) one, is (completely) bankrupt of it — **are** known only to the one who has tested his soul and applied himself to the study of

⁵⁸ S. 6, 18 (A-3-21); 34, 1 (A-3-17); *inter alia*.

it, one who has come to know its cunning, deceit and deception and who therefore girds himself to combat it and takes precaution against it. (**Only**) such a person is worthy of being called a **cognizant one**.

AL-ḤALĪM — The Non-Precipitate and Forbearing One⁵⁹

Al-Ḥalim is the One who witnesses the disobedience of **the** disobedient, the One who sees the violation of the command (*amr*). But anger does not rouse Him and rage does not seize Him. He is not one who is prompted by haste and recklessness to take swift vengeance, even though He has unlimited power to do so, even **as** God Most High said, "If God took mankind to task by that which they deserve, He would not leave a living creature on the surface of the **earth**."⁶⁰

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

AL-ʿAZĪM — The Great One⁶¹

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

Then (you must also) know that it is divided into (a) the "great"(ness) of which the eye receives an impression and (b) that whose extremities it is inconceivable that vision could grasp completely, such as the earth and the heavens. Thus one says that the elephant is "great" and the mountain is "great", and yet vision is

⁵⁹ S. 2, 225 (B-1); 3, 150/49 (B-7); *inter alia*.

⁶⁰ S. 35, 45/4 (A-3-18).

⁶¹ S. 2, 255/6 (B-1); 4, 13/7 (B-10); *inter alia*.

able to grasp their extremities completely. Either of these is "great" in comparison with that which is smaller than it. As far as the earth is concerned, it is inconceivable that vision should be able to grasp its extremities completely, and this is also true of the heavens. It is to these objects in the realm of those things subject to physical vision that the term "great" is applied in an absolute sense.

(You must) understand that there is also a difference in respect of those things that are apprehended by the powers of mental perception, Human reason grasps completely the core (*kunh*) of the real nature of some of them and falls short in the case of others. That portion of them which reason falls short of completely is divided into (a) that which some may⁶² conceivably grasp although the understanding of the majority falls short of it, and (b) into that concerning which reason cannot conceivably grasp the core of its real nature completely. This last one is the absolute "Great One" who exceeds all the limits of human understanding so that the comprehension of His essential being (*kunh*) is inconceivable. And that One is God Most High. The explanation to this effect is to be found in the first section.

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

⁶² Omitting *h* here.

ḠHAFŪR — The Most Forgiving One⁶³

it, one⁶³ has the same meaning as *al-Ghaffār*, but it (i.e., *Ḡhaffūr*) denotes an extensiveness of a different kind from that by *al-Ghaffūr*. Certainly *al-Ghaffūr* denotes an extreme of forgiveness in respect of forgiveness that is repeated time after time. (The difference lies in the fact that the paradigm) *al-facāl* denotes an abundance of the action (*al-fīl*) (expressed by the root), and *al-facūl* denotes the excellence, perfection and the inclusiveness of the action. Thus He is *al-Ghaffūr* in the sense that He forgives perfectly and completely and thereby reaches the ultimate degree of forgiveness. (But) we have spoken of this before.

ASH-SHAKŪR — The One Who Expresses Thankfulness by Rewarding Bounteously⁶⁴

Ash-Shakūr is the one who rewards trivial pious deeds with many grades, and the one who gives unlimited happiness in the life to come for activity during a limited period (in this life). The one who rewards the good deed with multiples of it is said to be thankful for that good deed, and the one who praises the performer of this good deed is also said to be thankful for it. If you consider multiple rewards (to be the criterion in this matter), then there can be no absolute *ash-Shakūr* except God Most High, because His increase of the reward is not restricted and limited since the blessings of Paradise are infinite. God Most High says, "Eat and drink at ease for that which ye sent on before you in past days."⁶⁵

(Furthermore), if you consider the concept of praise (to be the criterion), (you will discover that in the human realm) one's praises are directed to a second party, whereas when the Lord Most High praises the actions of His people, He is actually praising His own actions, since man's actions are a part of His creation. If one is

⁶³ S. 12, 98/9 (A-3-9); 15, 49 (A-2-10); *inter alia*.

⁶⁴ S. 35, 30/27 (A-3-18); 42, 23/2 (A-3-15); *inter alia*.

⁶⁵ S. 69, 24, (A-1-24).

given something and then praises (the giver), one may say that he is thankful. But the one who gives and then goes on to shower praises upon the recipient (certainly) is more worthy of being called a thankful person. The praise of God Most High upon His people is exemplified by His saying, "... Men who remember God much and women who remember, (God hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward)",⁶⁶ and by His saying, "How excellent a slave! Lo! he was ever turning in repentance (to his Lord)"⁶⁷ and by other verses of this nature.

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

⁶⁶ The text concludes with the words "women who remember", but the Qur'an continues with the second clause. S. 33, 35 (B-13).

⁶⁷ S. 38, 45/4 (A-2-12).

He is the One above whose rank there is no rank, and all the **other** ranks are inferior to Him. This is the case since *al-cAlī* is derived from *al-cUlūw*, and (this) highness refer to (the concept of) highness which is the (very) opposite of lowness, whether this occurs in the perceptible grades such as a flight of stairs and the staircase and all (other) bodies placed one above the other, or (whether it occurs) in grades apprehended by reason in relation to beings arranged in some sort of rational order. Everything that can be described as being "above" in respect of space possesses spatial highness, and everything that can be described as being "above" in terms of rank may be said to have a highness exceeding all others. The rational grades are understood just as the sensory grades. An example of the rational grades is the difference that exists between the cause and the effect, the ground (*cilla*)⁶⁹ and the thing grounded, the doer and that which is done, the one who receives and that which is received, and the perfect and the deficient. When you have determined a cause, it is a cause for a second thing and that second thing becomes a cause for a third and the third (becomes a cause) for a fourth until (one reaches) ten grades, for example. The tenth falls into the last rank and it is the lowest, the **most** inferior (cause). The **foremost** cause is to be **found** in the first grade of causality. It is the highest of all. The foremost (cause) is (said to be) above the second, but its being "above" is conceptual and not spatial. The highness is an expression for being "above".

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

⁶⁸ S. 2, 255/6 (R-1): 22, 62/1 (B-17).

⁶⁹ In this instance "ground" is used in the sense of founding or establishing a principle or reason.

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

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

In respect of **this** graduated division you know very well that the angel is above the man and the **man** above the animal and that God Most High is above all of **them**. He is the absolute *al-cAlī*. Certainly He is **the** living **One**, the One who gives **life**, **the** Knowing One in an absolute sense, the **One** who creates **the** knowledge of the scholars, and **the** One exalted **and** sanctified above all kinds of deficiencies. The dead have **fallen** into the lowest of the grades of perfection. At the **other** end of the scale is no **one** but God Most High. **It** is in this manner **that** you **must** understand His condition of being "above" and His **highness**.

These names were coined, **first of all**, in **relation** to the perception of (physical) vision, and (this is the manner in which they are understood in) **the** grade of the common people. When the elite **became aware** of the things that are perceived by the powers of

mental perception and found (certain) parallels between **them** and **physical** vision, they borrowed the absolute expressions from **them**. The elite understand them but the common people whose perceptions do not go beyond their senses, which is the class of the **animal** kingdom, deny **them**. They do not understand exaltedness **except** in terms of area, nor do they understand highness or the state of being "above" except in terms of space.

When you understand this you will understand what is meant by His being on the throne, because **the** throne is the most important of all bodies and is above all others. It is the transcendent existent, the (absolutely) holy one which is infinitely above delimitation and determination by means of **the** limitation of bodies and their capabilities. It is above all (other) bodies in respect of rank. But the throne is specified by saying (that "God established Himself upon the **throne**")⁷⁰ because it is above all bodies and that which is above it is above them all. This is similar to someone saying, "the caliph is above the sultan," and indicating that since he is above the sultan he is also above all the people who are under the sultan.

The amazing thing about the *Hashwiyya* who can understand the state of being "above" only in spatial terms is that when one (of them) is asked about two senior-ranked persons, "In what way do these two men sit in the place of honour at the **assembly**?" **he** replies, "This one sits above that one," even though he knows that one is sitting only at the side of the other. For one may be said to be sitting above another (in the literal sense of the word) only if lie is sitting on the **man's** head or on some type of physical structure erected over the man's head. If one says to him, "You are lying, for the man is sitting neither above nor beneath the other but (rather) at his side," this denial is repulsive to him and he replies, "I am referring to the state of being 'above' in respect of rank and of (the man's) proximity to the place of honour, for that place which is closest to the place of honour, the highest of all the places,

⁷⁰ S. 10, 4/3 (A-3-1h).

(must be **referred** to as being) above in relation to those which are **more** distant." In spite of this, this very person **cannot** understand that every order has two extremes, to one of which may be applied the connotation "above" and highness and to the other the exact opposite.

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

AL-KABĪR — The Grand One⁷¹

Al-Kabir is the one **who** possesses grandeur. Grandeur is an expression for the perfection of the essence, by which I mean the perfection of existence (*al-hāṭ*), and the perfection of existence is traceable to two things. One of **them** is its perpetuity, both past and future. Every existence is deficient **which** sooner or later is interrupted by a period of non-existence. For this reason one says of a man whose period of existence is lengthy that he is a *kabir*, that is to say, great of age, **one who** has lived long on this earth, and one does not say that he is *caẓim* of age. *Al-Kabir* is used in

⁷¹ S. 13, 9/10 (A-3-22); 22, 62/1 (B-17); *inter alia*.

ways in which *al-caẓim* cannot be used. If, then, the being whose **period** of existence is lengthy, even though its **actual** duration is **limited**, is (said to be) a *kabir* (i.e. aged), then the one who always **will** be and always has been eternal, the one in relation to whom **non-existence** is inconceivable, is **more** worthy of being called a *kabir*.

The second is that his existence is the existence from which the existence of all existing things emanates. If the one whose existence is complete in itself is perfect and grand, then the one from whom the existence of all existing things originated is more worthy of being called perfect and grand.

An *Admonition*: *Al-kabir* among men is the perfect one whose attributes of perfection are not restricted to himself. Rather do they extend to others besides himself. No one sits next to him without his pouring **out** upon the other (one) something of his own perfection. Man's perfection lies in his reason, piety and knowledge. *Al-kabir* is the god-fearing wise one who leads people, the one who is fit to be a pattern (for others), the one from whose lights and knowledge others draw (learn). For this reason Jesus said — **may** peace be upon him — "The one who knows and acts (accordingly) is called **mighty** (*caẓim*) in the kingdom of the heavens."

AL-ḤAFĪZ — The Preserver⁷²

Al-Ḥafiz is one who preserves very **many** things. That can be understood only by understanding the meaning of preservation, which **may** be taken in two ways. One of them is the permanence of the existence of all existing things, as well as their continuation, which is the opposite of (their) annihilation. God Most High is the preserver of the heavens, the earth, the angels and all things in existence, regardless of whether the period of their continuation be long or short, such as animals, vegetation and other similar things.

⁷² S. 11, 57/60 (A-3-7); 12, 55 (A-3-9); *inter alia*.

The second way (in which this term can be understood), and it is the better way, is (in terms of) keeping from each other (natural) enemies and those things that are inherently opposites. Here I am referring, (for example), to the mutual enmity that exists between water and fire which certainly are natural enemies. For either the water extinguishes the fire, or else the fire by prevailing causes the water to change (in such a way) that it becomes steam and then air.

The contrast and natural hostility are (also) obvious between heat and cold, for the one overcomes the other. An identical situation exists between dampness and dryness and the rest of the earthly bodies which are composed of hostile elements. Certainly the animal must have some inherent heat. If this heat ceases to exist, surely its life will also cease. Again, definitely the animal must have some moisture which (actually) is the nourishment for his body, such as the blood and that which is analogous to it. (Furthermore), surely there must also be some dryness by means of which the members of his body are held together, particularly those members, such as the bones, which are solid. There must also be some coldness to break the force of the heat and temper it so that its skin does not burn and its inner moisture does not quickly disintegrate. These contending components (within the animal) are in constant dispute with each other. God unites these contrasting and **contending** forces within the frame of man, the body of the animals, the plants and the rest of the composite bodies. Had He not preserved them they would have diverged and repelled one another, their blending would have been vitiated, their composition would have become weakened and the idea by means of which the composition and admixture (within the body of man) was acceptable would have been nullified. Sometimes God preserves them by adjusting their strengths and at other times by assisting that part among them which has been overcome.

As for the adjustment, it takes place when the extent of the strength of the fire becomes equal to the extent of the strength of

what is heated in such a way that when they come together one of them cannot overcome the other. Rather do they counter-balance each other, for neither one is more worthy of overcoming the other than it is of being overcome. Therefore they resist each other, and the proper condition of the vessel remains constant by means of their mutual resistance and balance. This is what is termed the balancing (or tempering) of the mixture.

Secondly, the assistance for those component parts which are overcome is supplied by that which restores their strength so that they may resist that which has overcome them. An example of this is the heat causing the moisture to be absorbed, and inevitably it does dry it up. If the heat overcomes, then the coldness and moisture are weakened and the heat and dryness overcome. The assistance for the weak (elements) would then be (given) by means of a cold and moist body which is water. The meaning of thirst is the need for (something) cold and moist. God Most High created the cold and moist with coldness and moisture as their means of assisting when they are overcome. He (also) created nourishment and medicines and the other contrasting substance so that when one thing overcomes, it is countered by one other than it (in such a way that the overcoming element) is neutralized. That is what is meant by compensation.^{72a}

However, that is achieved only by the creation of nourishment and medicines, corrective instruments and the knowledge that is necessary to use them. All of these things (God created) for the preservation of the bodies of the animals and of (anything) compounded out of conflicting (elements). These are the causes which preserve man from internal destruction. He is also exposed to destruction from external causes, such things as ferocious beasts and militant enemies. His preservation from them takes place by means of the spies that are created for him (which serve as) warning signals of the proximity of the enemy. Such things as the eye, ear and others are his scouts. Furthermore, God has also created for

72a Literally "supplying what is needed".

him the gallant hand and weapons which repel (the **enemy**), such as **armor** and the shield, as well as **those** (weapons) which cause death, such as the sword and the knife.

However, sometimes he is still unable to defend himself. (To cover that eventuality) God has provided him **with** the **instrument** of flight which is the leg for the earth-borne animal and the wing for the bird. Similarly His preservation includes every atom — His power is great! — **in** the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that (even) the core of **the** herbs which spring up from the earth is preserved by a hard hull, and its freshness is preserved by means of moisture; That which is not preserved by means of a hard hull is preserved by the thorns which grow from it so that some **animals** which would normally destroy (such growths) are repelled (by these thorns). The thorns are the weapons for the plants even as the horns, claws and fangs are the weapons for the animals.

Moreover, together with every drop of water there is that which preserves it from its counterpart, the air. For when water is placed into a container and left there for some time, it is converted into air. The air deprives it of its attribute of fluidity. If the finger is dipped into water and then raised and inverted, a drop remains suspended from the inverted finger and is not separated from it, even though it is part of its natural order to fall down. Yet if it were separated while it is a small (particle), the air would capture and transform it. Instead, it does not leave the finger but remains suspended until the remainder of the moisture joins it and increases the size of the drop. It is then emboldened to pass through the air, and the air is powerless to transform it. (Surely) that (condition) could not exist as a result of the drops preserving itself, (or as a result of) knowing its own weakness, the power of its opposite and its need to seek the help of the remaining moisture. However, that (condition) was preserved by an angel who is in charge of it through an abstract form (*maʿnā*) that is a part of its essence.

It is **related** in a story that a drop of rain does not fall unless it is accompanied by an angel who preserves it until it reaches its

resting place on the earth. That is a truth (established by) esoteric seeing (vouchsafed) to the possessors of the powers of mental vision. **They** were given indication and guidance to (this truth) and therefore believed the account (of the angel) not by a blind acceptance (of the idea) but by the power of mental perception. One could also speak at length about the explanation of God's preservation of the heavens and the earth and that which is between them, even as is **the** case with the rest of His deeds. The meaning of this name is known by this explanation and not by the knowledge of linguistic derivations or by struggling with the meaning of preservation in general.

An Admonition: The preserver among men is the one who preserves his limbs and his heart. He (also) preserves his religion from the assault of anger, the attraction of appetite, self-deception and the delusion of Satan. For (man) is on the edge of a crumbling bank, ever surrounded by these dangers (which) lead to ruin.

AL-MUQĪT — He Who is Cognizant and Capable of Providing His Creation With Everything It Needs⁷³

The meaning of *al-Muqīt* is that He is the creator of nourishment. (The nourishment) He conveys to the bodies is food, and (that which) He conveys to the hearts is knowledge. Thus it has the same meaning as *ar-Razzdq* except that *al-Muqīt* is more specific than *ar-Razzdq*. For sustenance includes nourishment and that which is not nourishment, nourishment being that which is sufficient for the support of the body. If, however, it is taken to mean one's taking possession of a thing, having power over it, with the appropriation being achieved by the power and knowledge — and the argument for this (interpretation) is in the words of God Most High, "God overseeth all **things**,"⁷⁴ that is to say, He is cognizant of and has

⁷³ Although Pickthall translates the final statement in S. 4; 85/7 (B-10) . "God overseeth all things," and Rodwell translates, "God keepeth watch over everything," Redhouse informs us that commentators Interpret *muqīt* as found in this verse as "God the feeder or preserver." Ht. 39 ; V. 134

⁷⁴ S. 4, 85/7 (B-10). *Muqīt* is an *hapax legomenon*.

power over everything—its meaning would then go back to (what is meant by) power and knowledge. As for (the topic-of) knowledge, it has already been discussed. As for (the topic of) power, it is to be discussed below. In terms of this meaning, His characterization as *al-Muqīt* is more complete than His characterization as *al-Qādir* alone and *al-ʿAlīm* alone because it indicates a composite of the (other) meanings. Therefore this name is not synonymous (with either of these two).

AL-ḤASĪB — He Who Satisfies The Needs of All Creation**

Al-Ḥasīb is the one who suffices. He is of such a nature that when one has his blessing one has everything. God Most High is the One who satisfies and suffices everyone. The real nature of this characteristic is inconceivable of anyone other than He. For the one who is sufficed requires this sufficiency for his existence, for the continuity of his existence and for the perfection of his existence. There is nothing in existence sufficient to another thing other than God Most High. For He alone is sufficient for everything, not only for some things. That is to say, He alone is sufficient, by means of Him the existence of things results, by means of Him their existence continues and by means of Him their existence is perfected.

Do not think that when you need food, drink, the earth, the sky; the sun, and the like that you are in need of one other than He. Do not think that He is not the One who satisfies you. He is the One who suffices you by creating food, drink, the earth and the heavens. He is the One who satisfies you. Do not think that the child who requires his mother to breast-feed him and take care of him is not satisfied and sufficed by God. To the contrary, God was sufficient for him since He created the child's mother, the milk in her breast, the guidance to breast-feeding and the pity and love in the heart of the mother by which she allowed him to feed at her breast and

75 S. 4, 6/7 (B-10); 4, 86/8; 33, 39 (B-13).

(even) urged and led him to it. The sufficiency (of the child) was brought about by these causes. But God alone is the One who single-handedly created them for the child's sake.

If one were to say to you that the mother alone is the sufficiency for the child and that she satisfies him, (perhaps) you would accept the statement. You would not say, "she is not his sufficiency because he is in need of her milk; where is the sufficiency of the mother when there is no milk?" Rather would you say, "Certainly the child needs the milk, and the milk also is from the mother and therefore he needs only his mother". (Carrying this line of thought even farther, you must) know that the milk is not from the mother. Rather both the milk and the mother are from God and are the results of His grace and bounty. He alone is the One who satisfies everyone. In all existence there is not one thing that satisfies anything by itself except God Most High. Rather are things dependent upon each other, and all of them are dependent upon God.

An Admonition: The only way in which one can share in this characterization is by using a far-fetched metaphor and (by using this term) "without reflection"⁷⁶ and (in accordance with) the premature thinking of the common people. As for the use of a metaphor, even if man is sufficient in terms of carrying out the support of his child or in terms of teaching his student in such a way that he does not require assistance from a second party, he still remains only an intermediary in respect of the sufficiency. He is not one who suffices (by his own power), because God Most High is the sufficer. Within his own potential there exists the possibility of neither subsistence nor sufficiency. How, then, can he be the sufficiency of a second party? As for the use of the term (in accordance with) premature thinking, which centres upon the conclusion that man is independent in terms of sufficiency and not merely a means to another's sufficiency, the fact (still) remains that he is not sufficient since (the very least) he requires is a place

76 S. 11, 27/29 (A-3-7).

receptive of his activity and sufficiency. This (place) is of the least importance in respect of the heart, which is the place of knowledge. (But) it is of primary importance if he is to be sufficient in respect of training (a child). (This is also true) in respect of the stomach, which is the resting-place of the food. It is necessary if he is to be sufficient in conveying the food to his body. This is necessary for him, as well as the many other things which he cannot number, none of which are a matter of his (own) choice.

Thus the lowest grade of action requires a doer and a receiver. By no means can the doer exist without the receiver. But this is (possible and) true in respect of God Most High, because He is the creator of the action and the place where it occurs, and He creates the conditions (necessary) to receive the action and all the accompanying circumstances. But sometimes "hasty opinion"⁷⁷ reaches a premature decision about the doer, takes cognizance of another condition and comes to the conclusion that the doer alone is sufficient to that condition. But it is not true. Indeed! The portion that falls to man (who believes) is that God alone is man's sufficiency with regard to his endeavour and **desire**. (This portion) consists of the fact that he has no desire except for God. He does not desire Paradise, and his heart is not preoccupied with hell (in the sense) that he must guard himself against it. Rather is his concern completely absorbed in God alone. If God is revealed to him in His majesty, he says, "That is my sufficiency. I do not desire one other than He. Nor do I care if one other than He escapes me or does not escape me."

AL-JALĪL — The Sublime One^{7*}

Al-Jalil is the one who is characterized by the qualities of sublimity. The qualities of sublimity include wealth, dominion, holiness, knowledge, power and other attributes that we have mentioned. **The** one who combines all of them (in his person) is the absolute

⁷⁷ S. 11, 27/9 (A-3-7), Rodwell's translation.

⁷⁸ Ht. 71; Rs. 50.

al-Jalil. If one is characterized by (only) some of them, his sublimity is commensurate with his attainment of these qualities. The absolute *al-Jalil* is God Most High alone. It may be said that *al-Kabir* is traceable to the perfection of the essence, *al-Jalil* to the perfection of the attributes and *al-ʿAzīm* to the perfection of the essence and the attributes, and all of this is in relation to that which is apprehended by mental perception. The one (described) in this manner engulfs mental perception and is not engulfed by it.

Furthermore, when the attributes of sublimity are related to the mental perception which apprehends it, it is called beauty, and the one who is characterized by it is termed beautiful. The name *al-Jamil* originally was coined for the visible (whatever it might be) that is discerned by the sight and is such as to harmonize and agree with sight. Then it was transferred to the inner form which is perceived by the powers of mental perception, and thus one speaks of conduct as being good and beautiful, and one says that one's character is beautiful. That (beauty) is perceived by the powers of mental perception and not by (physical) sight. (Indeed), inner forms, if they are perfect and proportionate, and combine all the perfections suitable to them as they ought to do and in such a manner as they should be (combined), are beautiful in relation to the inner powers of perception which comprehend them and are so suitable for them that when one gazes upon them the observer experiences greater joy, delight and emotion than are experienced by the one who through his external sight gazes upon beautiful forms. Therefore the absolutely and authentically beautiful one is God Most High alone, for all the beauty, perfection, splendour and loveliness in this world are from the lights of His essence and the traces of His attributes. Nothing in the whole of existence has absolute perfection, which in no sense is adulterated either actually or potentially, except God alone. For that reason the one who knows Him and gazes upon His beauty experiences such delight, happiness, joy and bliss that in comparison with them the blessings

of Paradise and the beauty of the visible form would be considered contemptible.

Moreover, there is no comparison between the beauty of the visible form and the beauty of the hidden ideas that are perceived by the powers of mental perception. This meaning we have revealed in the chapter in *Kitāb al-Maḥabba* from *Kitāb Iḥyā' ʿUlūm ad-Din*. If, then, it is established that He is sublime and beautiful, and since everything that is beautiful is both desired and loved by the one who perceives its beauty, therefore God Most High is the One who is desired but (only) by those who know, even as the beautiful and visible forms are desired by those who see but not by those who are blind.

An Admonition: The one among men who is termed *al-Jalīl al-Jamīl* is the one whose inner attributes are good, (those attributes) in which discerning hearts take pleasure. As for the beauty of the visible forms, (this is something which is) of little value.

AL-KARĪM — The Selflessly Generous One⁷⁹

Al-Karīm is the one who forgives when he has power (to exact retribution), the one who lives up to his promises when he promises and the one who exceeds the utmost one could desire when he gives. He is not concerned about the amount he gives and the one to whom he gives. If someone other than himself is in need, he is not pleased. When he is displeased (with a friend), he reproaches him but does not carry this to the limit. The one who seeks refuge and shelter with him is not lost and is spared the need of entreaties. The one who gathers to himself all of these descriptions and does this in a most natural way is the absolute *al-Karīm*, and that one is God Most High alone.

An Admonition: Man may adorn himself by acquiring these characteristics, but (he may do this only) in respect of some things

⁷⁹ S. 23, 115/7 (A-2-7); 82, 6 (A-1-15).

and (only) with a kind of affectation. For that reason he may be characterized by the term *al-Karīm*, but he (still) remains deficient in comparison with the absolute *al-Karīm*. And why should man not be called *al-Karīm* since the messenger of God said — may the blessings of God and peace be upon him — "It is not the grape-tree that should be called generous, for certainly the generous one is the Muslim."⁸⁰ And it has also been said, "The grape tree is characterized as being generous because, unlike the date palm, its fruit is delicious, picking it is simple, reaching it is easy and it is free of thorns and other sources of harm."

AR-RAQĪB — The One Who watches All⁸¹

Ar-Raqīb is the one who knows, the one who observes, the one who watches for a given object so that it is never ignored and who observes it so closely and constantly that if the one to whom it is forbidden knew of it, he would refrain from approaching it. Such a one is called a *raqīb*. (This word) may be said to be derived from **knowledge** and preservation, though (coupled) with the consideration that it is close and constant and that it is related to something that is forbidden, the approach to which is guarded.

An Admonition: The characteristic of watchfulness in man is praiseworthy only if his observation is directed to his Lord and his heart. That takes place when he knows that God is his watcher and observer in respect of everything, and if he recognizes the fact that he himself and Satan are his enemies and that these two enemies avail themselves of every opportunity to induce him to fall victim to negligence and disobedience, as the result of which he is on his guard against these things by observing their ambushes, deceit and their starting places in order that the outlets and avenues (available to them) might be blocked off. This is his observation.

⁸⁰ Muslim, *Alfāz*, 10.

⁸¹ S. 4, 1 (B-10); 5, 117 (B-24); 33,52 (B-13).

AL-MUJĪB — The One Who Responds to Every Need⁸²

Al-Mujib is **the one** who responds with help to the request of those who ask, **the one** who (responds to) the prayers of those who pray by giving answers, the one who (responds to) the necessity of those disturbed by reason of their insufficiency by giving sufficiency. In fact, He bestows (His gifts) even before the appeal, and he gives favours even before the prayer. There is no one like that except God Most High. Certainly He knows the needs of the needy before they ask. (In fact), He knew them already in eternity and therefore planned the causes necessary to satisfy existing **needs** by creating food and nourishment, and facilitating the causes and the instruments which made all of these requirements possible.

An Admonition: Man ought to be a *mujib*, first of all, to his Lord in respect of that which He has commanded and forbidden him to do and in respect of that which He has urged and appealed to him to do. Then man (should be a *mujib*) to his fellow-man in respect of that power over them that God has bestowed upon him, by making every petitioner happy by complying with his request if he has the ability to do so and in the graciousness of his reply if he cannot (actually comply with the request). God Most High said, "Therefore the beggar drive not away".⁸³ The messenger of God said — may blessings and peace be upon him' — "If I am invited to eat trotters, certainly I will answer favourably; if one presents to me the shank (of a beast), certainly I will accept it."⁸⁴ His attendance at (functions to which he received) invitations and his acceptance of gifts were (done with) the utmost of honour and positive responsiveness. How many a vile and proud person considers himself too great to receive every gift (that is offered) and will not condescend to accept every invitation! He would rather preserve his dignity and pride, and he does not take into considera-

⁸² S. 11, 61/4 (A-3-7).

⁸³ S. 93, 10 (A-1-4).

⁸⁴ Muslim, *Nikāh*, 104.

into the trouble taken by the one inviting him, even if he hurts (the feelings of) the person in this manner. Such a person has no portion (at all) in respect of the meaning of this name.

AL-WĀSĪC — The One Whose Capacity Is Limitless⁸⁵

Al-Wāsiḥ is derived from capacity. Sometimes capacity is related to knowledge, as it is extensive and **embraces** a great number of things that are known. At other times it is related to beneficence and the spreading of blessings. (But) no matter how it is understood and to what it is applied, the absolute *al-Wāsiḥ* is God Most High, because if one contemplates His knowledge one knows that there is no shore for the sea of His objects-of-knowledge. Rather would the seas be depleted if they were used as ink for His words. (Furthermore), if one were to contemplate His beneficence and blessings, (one would know that) there is no limit to His object-of-power. Every (other) capacity, even if it is great, ultimately reaches its limit, and that which does not reach such a limit is more deserving of the name capacity. God Most High is the absolute *al-Wāsiḥ* because every (other) extensive (subject) is restricted in **comparison** with that which is more extensive. (Furthermore), any capacity which ultimately reaches a limit (is of such a nature) that it is possible (for one) to conceive a further extension of it, whereas an extension is (absolutely) inconceivable (of that which is) infinite and limitless.

An Admonition: The capacity of man concerns the things that he knows, as well as his character. If his knowledge (*culūm*) is extensive, then he is a *wāsiḥ* in proportion to the capacity of his knowledge; and if his character has expanded to the point that the fear of poverty, the irritation of those about him who are envious, the victory of greed and other attributes of this nature do not harass him, then he is a *wāsiḥ* (in both knowledge and character), even though all of that has its limitation. However, the true *al-wāsiḥ* is God Most High.

⁸⁵ S. 2, 115/09; 247/8 (B-1); *inter alia*.

AL-HAKĪM — The Ultimately Wise One⁸⁶

Al-Ḥakīm is the one who possesses wisdom, and wisdom consists of the knowledge of the most excellent things gathered through the instrumentality of the most excellent branch of knowledge. The most sublime subject of all that is known is God Most High. It has been shown above that no one other than He knows the **essential** nature of His knowledge. He is the true *al-Ḥakīm* because He knows the most sublime things by means of the most sublime (type of) knowledge. The most sublime of (all) knowledge is the eternal and everlasting knowledge, the extinction of which is inconceivable, a knowledge that corresponds with all that is known in such a way that there can be no doubt or uncertainty. Only the knowledge of God Most High can be characterized in this manner. The name *ḥakīm* is (also) applied to the one who has mastery over and command of the finer points of the various crafts. The perfection of this, too, is possible only for God Most High. He (alone) is the true *al-Ḥakīm*.

An Admonition: The one who knows all things but does not know God Most High is not worthy of being called *ḥakīm*, for he does not know the most sublime and best of all things. Wisdom is the most sublime (kind) of knowledge. The sublimity of knowledge is commensurate with the sublimity of the thing known, and there is nothing more sublime than God. (Therefore), the one who knows God is wise even if he is weak in intelligence in respect of the remainder of the conventional sciences, tongue-tied and deficient in explaining these matters.

At the same time, man's wisdom as compared with the wisdom of God is in the same proportion as man's knowledge of (God) when compared to God's knowledge of Himself. What a difference there is between these various types of knowledge! And subsequently what a difference there is between these various kinds of wisdom! Yet as remote as (i.e., human knowledge) is from (God's), it **none-**

theless remains the **most** precious and most profitable (kind of) knowledge. The **one** who has been vouchsafed wisdom has been vouchsafed much good. To be sure, the one who knows God speaks differently from other men. He seldom concerns himself with particulars; rather is his discourse universal and all-inclusive. He does not concern himself with temporal advantages, but rather does he concern himself with that which will avail him in the hereafter.

Perhaps it is because this characteristic of the wise man (i.e., to concern himself with universal matters) is more obvious to (common) people than his knowledge of God that they **apply** the name "wisdom" to such general statements, and they describe the one who utters them as being wise. An example of that is the saying of the chief of the prophets — may the blessings of God be upon him — "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God". "The astute man is the one who brings himself to judgment and works for that which is after death." "The impotent one is the one who makes himself follow his own desires and keeps hoping that God 'will grant him his wishes.'" "That which is little but sufficient is better than that which is plentiful but distracts." "The one who awakes in the morning healthy in his body, secure in his household and has his daily bread, it is as if he has the whole world in his grasp." "Be pious, and you will be the most worshipful of the people; be abstemious, and you will be the most thankful of all people." "Calamity is dependent upon speech." "A part of the beauty of one's *Islām* is the avoidance of that which does not concern **him**." "The happy one is the one who is admonished by (the example of) a second party." "Silence is wisdom, but there are few who practise it." "Contentment with little is a wealth that is never consumed." "Endurance is one-half of faith, and certainty is the totality of faith." These and similar sayings are termed wisdom, and the one who (practises) them is termed wise.

⁸⁶ S. 2, 32/0; 129/3 (B-1); *inter alia*.

AL-WADŪD — The Objectively Loving One⁸⁷

Al-Wadūd is the one who desires good for all mankind; he does good for them, and he praises them. This name approximates the concept underlying *ar-Rahīm*. But compassion is related to the object of mercy, and the object of mercy is the needy one and the one under compulsion. The deeds of the compassionate one presuppose an object of mercy who is weak, whereas deeds of *al-Wadūd* do not require that. Indeed, acts of kindness from the outset belong to the products of love. Just as the meaning of the compassion of God Most High is His desiring good for the object of mercy and His being sufficient (to bring) it (about) while remaining above the empathy (usually associated with human) compassion, likewise His love is His desiring honour and favour (for man), and is His (actual) beneficence and His bounty, while He remains above the feeling of love. But love and mercy are desired in respect of their objects only for the sake of their fruit and benefit and not because of empathy or feeling. Thus the benefit is the quintessence of mercy and love and the spirit of these two. That is the conception (of these two characteristics) in respect of God Most High to the exclusion of that which (in human experience) accompanies them but is not a condition of producing the benefit.

An Admonition: *Al-Wadūd* among men is the one who desires for the creatures of God everything which he desires for himself. Even higher is the one who prefers the others to himself, even as one of them said, "I wish that I were a bridge over the fire upon which the people might pass over (safely) and not be harmed by it." The perfection of that (characteristic in man) is that one should not be restrained from affection and beneficence by anger, hatred or (resentment) of that harm done to one, even as the messenger of God said — may blessings and peace be upon him — when his teeth were broken and his face was bloodied (at the Battle of Uhud), "O, God, **guide** my people for they do not know." (Even) **their**

⁸⁷ S. 11, 90/2 (A-3-7); 85, 14 (A-1-44).

evil action did not prevent (the prophet) from desiring (only) good for them; or again as he — may the blessings of God be upon him and his family — commanded *ʿAlī* when he said, "If you desire to be before even the angels, remain friendly to the one who has denied you, give to the one who has deprived you and forgive the one who has dealt unjustly with you."⁸⁸

AL-MAJĪD — The Most Glorious One⁸⁹

Al-Majīd is the One noble in his essence, beautiful in his deeds and liberal in his gift and favour. Even as nobility of essence when joined to goodness in deeds is "glory" so that He is called *al-Mājid* as well as (*al-Majīd*), yet one of the two (i.e., the latter) is more indicative of magnification. *Al-Majīd* appears to combine the meaning of the names *al-Jalīl*, *al-Wahhāb* and *al-Karīm*, and we have spoken about them previously.

AL-BĀCĪTH — The Quickener⁹⁰

Al-Bācīth is the one who will bring people to life on the day of resurrection, the one who will resurrect those in the graves and will cull what is in the breast (i.e., man's secrets). Resurrection is the latter formation.⁹¹ The knowledge of this name is dependent upon the knowledge of the real nature of the resurrection, and that is one of the more obscure knowledges (known to man). The majority of people know about it only in terms of general supposi-

⁸⁸ *Aḥmad ibn-Ḥanbal*, 4.

⁸⁹ S. 11, 73/6 (A-3-7).

⁹⁰ The Qur'ān uses this concept only in verbal form; e.g. S. 22, 7 (B-17), *inter alia*.

⁹¹ The most obvious translation of *nash'a* in this context would seem to be "creation". However throughout the text "creation" has been used for *khalq* and at times for *ijād*. Subsequently "formation" is used here, though perhaps either "birth" or "constitution" would have been equally acceptable.

tions and obscure 'imagination. Their utmost capacity in this respect lies in their imagining that death is non-existence and that the resurrection is (actually another) bringing into existence initiated after the (period of) non-existence, as was the case with the first creation. But their notion that death is (equivalent) to non-existence is mistaken, and their thinking that the second (act of) bringing into existence will be like the first one is (also) mistaken.

As for their thinking that death is non-existence, this is invalid. Rather the grave is either one of the pits of the fires (of Hell), or one of the bowers of the gardens of Paradise. As for the dead, either they are **happy** and such are not dead — and "think not of those who are slain in the way of God as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision. Jubilant (are they) because of that which God hath bestowed upon them of His **bounty**"⁹² — or they are wretched, and these also are alive. For this reason the messenger of God — may the blessings of God and peace be upon him — called out to them in the battle of Badr and said, "Certainly I have found that which my Lord has promised me to be true. Have you also found that which your Lord has promised you to be true?" And when someone said to him, "But how do you call people who have died?" he answered, "You do not hear what I say any more clearly that they do, only they are. not able to answer."

Inner vision has shown the masters of insight that man was created for eternity and that non-existence has no access to him. True, freedom of action may at one time be cut off from the body, and then **one** says, "He has died"; at another time it may be returned to the body and then one says, "He lives and is resurrected," that is to say, his body has been brought back to **life**. (But) this book does not have the capacity for a true revelation of this (matter).

As for their thinking that the resurrection is a second creation which is just like the first creation, **this** is not correct. Rather is the resurrection another formation not related to **the** first formation

92 S. 3, 169.70/163.4 (B-7).

at all. For man there are numerous formations and not only two. Therefore God Most High said, "We are able to substitute others like unto you in your stead and to produce you again in the condition or form which ye knew not."⁹³ Likewise God Most High said, after the creation of the little lump (offlesh) and the clot (of blood), et cetera, "then we produced it (*ansha'nāhu*) as another **creation**."⁹⁴

Thus the drop (of seed) is a formation from the dust, and the little lump (of flesh) is a formation from the drop (of seed), and **the** clot of (blood) is a formation from the little lump (of flesh), and the spirit is a formation from the clot (of blood). Because of the magnitude and majesty of the formation of the spirit, and because it is something divine, God said— He who is mighty and great— "Then (we) produced it as another creation. So blessed be God, the Best of Creators!"⁹⁵ He also said, "They will ask thee concerning the Spirit, Say: The Spirit is by command of my Lord."⁹⁶ Then He created the sensory perceptions after He created the source of the spirit — another formation. Then He created discernment (*tamyiz*)⁹⁷ which became apparent after **the** age of seven years — another formation. Then He created the **mind** after the age of fifteen years or so — another formation. Every formation is a stage. "He created you by (divers) **stages**."⁹⁸ **Then** the appearance of the characteristics of saintliness in such as have this characteristic bestowed upon them — that is another formation. Then the appearance of the characteristic of prophethood after that — it is another formation and a type of resurrection. God Most High is the one who raises the messengers even as He is the one who raises **the** day of resurrection.

Even as it is difficult for an infant to understand the real nature of discernment before attaining discernment (so also) is it difficult

93 S. 56, 61 (A-1-23), Sale's translation.

94 From S. 23, 14 (A-2-17).

95 S. 23, 14 (A-2-17).

96 S. 17, 85/7 (A-3-4).

97 i.e., the *sensus communis*

98 S. 71, 14/3 (A-2-5).

for one possessing **discernment** to understand the real nature of reason and those **marvels** that are revealed in this state before **one** attains (the stage) of reason. Likewise it is difficult for one to understand the state of saintliness and **prophethood** while still in the stage of reason. For certainly saintliness is a state of perfection over and above the **formation** of (the slate of) reason just as (the state of) reason is a state of perfection over and above the formation of the (age of) discernment, and **the** (age of) discernment is a state of **perfection** over and above the formation of the senses.

Even as it is one of the peculiarities of people to deny that which they have not seen and that which **has** not happened to them so that (eventually) everyone denies that which he cannot see nor attain and disbelieves that which is hidden from his eyes, so also one of their peculiarities is to deny **saintliness** and its wonders, as well as **prophethood** and its marvels. Indeed, **among** their peculiarities is (also) the denial of the second formation and the life in the hereafter because they have not yet reached it. (This is **comparable** to the fact that) if the state of reason and its realm and the wonders that appear therein were expounded to the one who has reached (no more than) discernment, he would deny and reject it and declare its existence impossible. The one who believes in any of the things that he (himself) has not reached (certainly) believes in the unseen. That (i.e., belief in the unseen) is the key of all happiness.

Even as the state of reason and its perceptions and formation (can hardly be compared) with the perceptions that precede this state, so likewise is the second formation even farther removed (from the first). One must not (try to) understand the second formation by an analogy with the first. This formation consists of stages of the **one** essence and is the ladder by which one climbs up the steps of the grades of perfection until one approaches the presence which is the ultimate (height) of all perfection. **One** is then with God Most High, suspended between rejection and acceptance, separation and admission. If one is accepted, one ascends to the highest of the heights; and if one is rejected, one falls to the lowest of the depths.

By this we mean that the only comparison that exists between the two formations (i.e., creation and resurrection) lies in the name (formation) itself. He who does not know what formation and resurrection are does not know the meaning of **al-Bācith**. But the explanation of that would be (too) lengthy, and therefore we must pass it by.

An Admonition: The real nature of the resurrection goes back to the revival of the dead by forming them a second time. **Ignorance** is the greatest death, and knowledge is the most sublime life. God has mentioned knowledge and ignorance in the Book **and** called them (respectively), life and death. Now to raise someone from ignorance to knowledge is tantamount to forming him a second time and bringing him to a pleasant life. If man has a possibility of conferring knowledge upon people and calling them to God Most High, then that is a kind of revival. This (role) belongs to the rank of the prophets and the theologians, their heirs.

ASH-SHAHĪD —

The One Who Witnesses and Knows Everything Manifest⁹⁹

The meaning of ash-Shahid goes back to **al-cAlim** together with a particular application. God Most High is the **“Knower** of the invisible and the visible.”¹⁰⁰ The invisible consists of that which is hidden, and the visible consists of that which is manifest. He is the One who witnesses (all things). If one considers knowledge in an absolute sense, then He is **al-cAlim**. If one relates (knowledge) to the invisible and hidden things, then He is **al-Khabir**. If one relates (knowledge) to the things that are manifest, then He is **ash-Shahid**. Along with this, one must consider the fact that He will bear witness (**yashadu**) concerning mankind on the way of Resurrection on the

⁹⁹ S. 2, 282 (B-1); 3, 98/3 (B-7); *inter alia*.
¹⁰⁰ S. 6, 74 (A-3-21).

basis of that which He knows and has witnessed of them. The discussion of this name approximates (our) discussion of *al-cAlim* and *al-Khabir*, and (therefore) we will not repeat it (here).

AL-HAQQ — The Real One¹⁰¹

Al-Haqq is the one who stands in contradistinction to the unreal. At times things may **become** evident by means of their opposites. Anything of which one may speak is either absolutely false or absolutely true, or it is true in one respect and false in another. That which is incapable of existing by its essence is absolutely unreal. That which is necessary by its essence is absolutely real. That which is possible by its essence (and) necessary by something else is real in one aspect and unreal in another. In respect of its essence it has no existence and therefore is unreal; in respect of the other it acquires existence. In respect of its relation to the giver of existence, it does exist, and in that respect is real, though in respect of itself it is unreal. For that reason everything is doomed to destruction except His countenance, and He is like that (i.e., as He is) eternally and forever. He is not in one state to the **exclusion** of another, because everything except He is eternally and forever unqualified for existence in terms of its essence, but by virtue of Him it is so qualified. **It** is unreal in **terms** of its essence and real by virtue of one other than it.

From this you know that the absolute *Haqq* is the One who really exists by virtue of His essence, that (essence) from which everything real derives its reality. It may also be said of the intelligible (concept), which existent reason has encountered in such a way that it (i.e., reason) corresponds with (the concept), that it is real. In respect of itself it (i.e., the intelligible) is called an existent, and in respect of its relationship with the reason which has apprehended it as it is, it is called "true". Therefore the existent who is most

deserving of being called *haqq* is God Most High, and the knowledge which is most deserving of being called *haqq* is the knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of God Most High; for it is true in itself, that is to say, it corresponds with the object known eternally and forever. Furthermore, it is derived through itself and not through an other, not like the knowledge of the existence of an other, for that (knowledge) exists only as long as that other exists, so that if that other ceases to exist, then belief in it becomes false. Again, that (kind of) belief **is** not true by virtue of the object-believed, since it exists not by virtue of itself but by virtue of an other.

The term (*haqq*) may also be applied to assertions (as such). (Thus) one may speak of "a true assertion" and "a false assertion". **On** this basis the assertion that is most true is the assertion that "there is no god save **God**",¹⁰² because it is forever and eternally true by virtue of its essence and not of an other.

Thus the term *al-haqq* is applied to existence in individual things; to existence in the intellect, that is, knowledge; and to existence on the tongue, that is, utterance. That one which is most worthy of being *haqq* is that (subject) whose existence is established eternally and forever by virtue of itself, the knowledge of which is true eternally and forever, and the witnessing to which is true eternally and forever. **All** of that belongs to the essence of the real Existence and not to any other.

An Admonition: Man's portion of this name consists of his seeing himself as something unreal and seeing God alone as real. If man is real, he is real not by virtue of himself but by virtue of God, for he exists by virtue of **Him** and not of himself. To be sure, were it not for his being brought into existence by the Real One, man in himself would be unreal. The one who said, "I am *al-Haqq*", (i.e., *al-Ḥallāj*) is mistaken unless (the statement is qualified) by one of the two following interpretations. The first of these is that he means that he exists by virtue of *al-Haqq*. However, this interpretation is far-fetched because the expression does not indicate it, and because

¹⁰¹ S. 2, 26/4; 91/85; 109/3 (B-1); *inter alia*.

¹⁰² S. 37, 35/4 (A-2-4) *inter alia*.

that (statement) is not peculiarly (applicable) to him; rather is it the case that everything other than *al-Ḥaqq* exists by virtue of *al-Ḥaqq*.

According to the second interpretation, (he is *al-Ḥaqq* in the sense that) he is so completely absorbed in *al-Ḥaqq* that there is no space in him for one other than He. One may say of that which acquires and absorbs the totality of a subject, "he is he", even as the poet says, "I am the one I love, and the one I love is I". By this (statement) the poet means the condition of being completely absorbed in (something).

The name of God Most High that is on the lips of the **Ṣūfis** in most states (*ahwāl*) is *al-Ḥaqq*, since that which is uppermost in their experience is their self-annihilation (*fanā'*) in terms of their essence; for they can glimpse the real essence to the exclusion of that which in itself is perishing. On the other hand, the name *al-Bārī'*, which has the same meaning as *al-Khāliq*, is most commonly on the lips of the theologians since they are far off in the "station" (*maqām*) of deducing (the nature of God) from (His) actions. The majority of mankind see everything except God. They seek evidence of Him in that which they see, and they are the ones who are addressed by God's words, "Have they not considered the dominion of the heavens and the earth and what things God hath **created**?"¹⁰³ The devout (on the other hand) do not see anything except Him, and thus it is in Him that they seek evidence of Him, and they are the ones addressed by God's words, "Doth not thy Lord suffice, since He is witness over all **things**?"¹⁰⁴

AL-WAKĪL — The Ultimate and Faithful **Trustee**¹⁰⁵

Al-Wakīl is the one to whom the matters have been entrusted. But one who has received such a trust may be either one to whom some matters have been entrusted — that one is deficient, or one to whom all matters have been entrusted — and that pertains only to God

¹⁰³ S. 7, 185/4 (A-3-19).

¹⁰⁴ S. 41, 54/3 (A-3-2).

¹⁰⁵ S. 3, 173/67 (B-7); 11, 12/5 (A-3-3); *inter alia*.

Most High. Again, **those** who are so entrusted are classified (first of all) as the one who is worthy not by **virtue** of himself but by virtue of his appointment as an agent and his delegation (to that post), and such a one is deficient in view of the fact that he needs **the** appointment and the delegation; and, (secondly), as the one who by virtue of his essence is worthy of having (all) matters entrusted to him and having (all) hearts place reliance upon him, not by virtue of an appointment and a delegation coming **from** one other **than** he. That one is the absolute *Wakīl*. *Al-Wakīl* may be either **the** one who carries out perfectly and without any shortcomings that which is entrusted to him or the one who does not carry out everything perfectly. The absolute *al-Wakīl* is the one to whom the matters are entrusted, the one who is conscientious in dealing with them and the one who is faithful in carrying them out. That one is God Most High alone. From this discussion you should now understand how it is possible for man to enter into the (abstract) quality (*maḥnā*) (inherent in) this name.

AL-QAWĪ AL-MATĪN — The Perfectly Strong and Firm One¹⁰⁶

Strength is indicative of perfect power, and firmness is indicative of the intensity of the strength. Inasmuch as God Most High has the utmost of power and is perfect therein, He is strong; and inasmuch as He has intense power, He is firm (to the ultimate degree). (But) that is derived from the concepts of strength, and that (subject) will come later.

AL-WALĪ — The Patron¹⁰⁷

Al-Walī is the friend and helper. The meaning of His love and His friendship have already been stated. The meaning of His help is obvious, for He subdues the enemies of the faith and He helps

¹⁰⁶ *Al-Qawī*: S. 11, 66/9 (A-3-7) and 42, 19/8 (A-3-5).

Al-Matīn: S. 51, 58 (A-2-1).

¹⁰⁷ S. 2, 107/1 (B-1); 42, 28/7 (A-3-5); *inter alia*.

His friends. God Most High said, "God is the patron of those who believe",¹⁰⁸ and He (also) said, "That is because God is patron of those who believe, and because the disbelievers have no patron";¹⁰⁹ that is to say, they have no helper. He, the Most High, went on to say, "God hath decreed: Lo! I verily shall conquer, I and My messengers."¹¹⁰

An Admonition: *Al-Wali* among men is the one who loves God and his friends, the one who helps God and his friends and the one who treats God's enemies as his enemies. Both self and Satan are among the enemies of God. The one who forsakes these two and (thereby) causes the affairs of God Most High to triumph, the one who is a friend of the friends of God and an enemy of God's enemies, he is the *al-Wali* among men.

AL-ḤAMĪD — The Ultimately Praiseworthy One¹¹¹

Al-Ḥamīd is the one who is praised and extolled. God Most High is *al-Ḥamīd* by virtue of His praising Himself from all eternity and by virtue of man's praising Him to all eternity. This (fact of His being praised) stems from (His) attributes of majesty, exaltedness and perfection in relation to (i.e., from the point of view of) those who make mention of Him. For (the essence of) praise is (to be found in) mentioning the qualities of perfection inasmuch as He is perfection.

An Admonition: *Al-Ḥamīd* among men is the one whose beliefs, character, activities and words are praised without reservation. That one is **Muḥammad** — may the blessings of God and peace be upon him — and those who approximate him among the prophets and also among the elect and the theologians. Everyone of them is

¹⁰⁸ S. 2, 257/8 (B-1).

¹⁰⁹ S. 47, 11/2 (B-6).

¹¹⁰ S. 58, 21 (B-16).

¹¹¹ S. 22, 64/3 (B-17); 31, 26/5 (A-3-14); *inter alia*.

praiseworthy to the extent that his beliefs, character, works and words are to be praised. And since no one is free of blame and deficiency, even though his praiseworthy actions are numerous, the (only) absolute *Ḥamīd* is God Most High.

AL-MUḤṢĪ — The Absolute Reckoner¹¹²

Al-Muḥṣī is the knowing one. But when knowledge is related to the objects-of-knowledge in respect of the fact that it reckons, counts and comprehends them, it is called a reckoning. The absolute *al-Muḥṣī* is the one to whose knowledge the definitive of everything known, as well as its quantity and extent, lie open. Though it is possible for man to reckon by virtue of his knowledge some of the objects-of-knowledge, yet he is incapable of reckoning the majority of them. (Therefore the possibility) of his acceding to this name is weak, as is the case with his participating in the basic attribute of knowledge.

AL-MUBDĪ' AL-MUḤĪD — The Originator and Restorer¹¹³

The meaning of *al-Mubdī' al-Muḥīd* is the one who brings (another) into being, but when this bringing into being has no precedent in terms of an act similar to it, it is called an origination. If there is a precedent in terms of an act similar to it, it is called a restoration. God Most High began the creation of people. Then **He**¹¹⁴ is (also) the one who restores them; that is to say, He resurrects them. All things first originated from Him and are restored to Him, and by Him all things are originated and by Him they are restored.

¹¹² This concept is used in respect of God only in verbal form. S. 58, 6/7 (B-16); 72, 28 (A-2-15); *inter alia*.

¹¹³ Both concepts are found in verbal form in respect of God in S. 85, 13 (A-1-44).

¹¹⁴ Reading *huwa*.

AL-MUḤYĪ AL-MUMĪT —

The One Responsible For Both Life and **Death**¹¹⁵

This name also is derived from (the original act of) bringing into being. But when the existent is life, bringing into being is called *ḥiāy'*, and when it is death, its bringing into being is called *imāta*. No one creates death and life except God Most High. There is no *muḥyi* or *mumit* except God Most High. An indication of the meaning of life was presented before in the name *al-Bācith*, and we do not return to it here.

AL-HAYY — The Absolutely Percipient**One**¹¹⁶

Al-Ḥayy is the one who acts and perceives so that that which is devoid of action and perception altogether is (said to be) dead. The lowest grade of perception exists when the perceptive being becomes cognizant of itself. That of which it is not cognizant of itself is the inanimate body and the dead. The perfect and absolute *Ḥayy* is the one under whose perception all objects-of-perception are marshalled, and all existing things are under His action so that no object-of-perception strays away from His knowledge and no deed (strays away from) His action. **All** of that is (descriptive of) God Most High. He is the absolute *al-Ḥayy*.

As for every living being except He, its life is commensurate with its perception and action, and all of that is restricted to narrow limits. Moreover, there are gradations of living beings. Their ranks are commensurate **with** their gradation (in perception and action), even as we have indicated before in respect of the ranks of the angels, man and the animals.

¹¹⁵ Both concepts occur in verbal form in S. 2, 28/6 (B-1). The former is also found, again in verbal form, in S. 30, 50/49 (A-3-6) and 39 (A-3-2).

¹¹⁶ S. 2, 255/6 (B-1); 3, 2/1 (B-7); 40, 65/7 (A-3-2); *inter alia*.

AL-QAYYŪM — The Self-Subsisting **One**¹¹⁷

You should know that things are divided into those **which** require a substrate (*maḥall*) such as accidents and qualities — one says of them that they are not self-subsistent, and into those **which** do not require a substrate — one says of them that they are self-subsistent, such as substances; yet **even** if the substance is self-subsistent and even if it is independent of a substrate on which to subsist, nevertheless it is not independent of certain matters that are necessary for its existence and are a precondition in respect of its existence. Therefore it is not (truly) self-subsistent because its **subsistence**¹¹⁸ requires the existence of one other than it, even if it does not require a substrate. If there is in existence an existent whose essence is self-sufficient, whose subsistence does not come from one other than it, and the perpetuity of whose existence is not conditioned by the existence of one other than it, (certainly) this existent is absolutely self-subsistent. Furthermore, if every other existent would subsist by means of it in such a way that the existence and the perpetuity of the existence of things are inconceivable except by it, then it is *al-qayyūm* because it subsists by its own essence, and the subsistence of everything is by means of it. That one is no other but God Most High. Man's access in respect of this characteristic is commensurate with his independence of (things) other than God Most High.

AL-WĀJID — He **Who** Has No **Needs**¹¹⁹

Al-Wājid is the one **who** does not need anything. The term is the (very) opposite of "the one in **want**". Perhaps (one may also say that) the one who is missed by the existence of that which he does not need would not be called one in want, and that the one who has within his reach that which is not relevant to his essence or the

¹¹⁷ S. 2, 255/6 (B-1); 3, 2/1 (B-7); 20, 111/0 (A-2-8).

¹¹⁸ Reading *qiyām*.

¹¹⁹ Ht. 64; R. 77.

perfection of it would not be called a *wājīd*. Rather *al-wājīd* is the one who does not lack any of the things that are necessary for **him**. Everything necessary for the attributes of divinity and their perfection is present in the existence of God Most High. From this standpoint, therefore, He is a *wājīd*; in fact, **He** is the absolute *al-Wājīd*. But any one other than He, even if he is a *wājīd* in the sense that he has some of the attributes of perfection and their causes, yet he (still) is in want and is not a *wājīd* **except** relatively.

AL-MĀJID — The Glorified **One**¹²⁰

Al-Mājid has the same meaning as *al-Majid*, even as *al-Ālim* has the same meaning as *al-Ālīm*. But (the paradigm) *al-Faḥīl* indicates an even greater extensiveness, and the meaning of that we have shown previously.

AL-AḤAD — He Who is Uniquely **One**¹²¹

Al-Aḥad is the one who can neither be separated into component parts nor reduplicated. An example of that which cannot be separated into component parts is the substance which is one (in number). One says of that which is indivisible that it is one in the sense that it has no component parts. Similarly a (geometric) point has no component parts. God Most High is one in the sense that it is impossible to conceive of division in respect of His essence. As for that which cannot be reduplicated, it is that which has no peer; such as the sun, for example. For even though it is capable of division in imagination and (though) in its essence it is made up of **component** parts since it is one of the species of (finite) bodies, nevertheless, in fact, it is without a peer, though it is indeed possible for it to have

¹²⁰ S. 11, 73/6 (A-3-7).

¹²¹ Though the **Qur'ān** very frequently bears witness to the unity of God, *aḥad* is used in respect of God only in S. 112, 1 (A-1-45),

a peer. If there is in existence an existent that is so unique in respect of its existence that it is entirely impossible to conceive of another sharing in its existence, then such (an existent) is the absolute *al-Wāḥid* eternally and forever. Man is a *wāḥid* only in the sense that he has no peers among his fellow-men in respect of some good quality. (Therefore he is) that (i.e., a *wāḥid*) only in relation to his fellow-men and in relation to a particular time, for it is possible that one like him might appear at another time; and in relation to some, but not all, qualities. (In other words), there is no absolute "one" except God Most High.

AṢ-ṢAMAD — He To Whom **One** Turns In Every Exigency¹²²

Aṣ-Ṣamad is the one to whom one turns in respect of (one's) needs and the one to whom one goes in respect of (one's) desires, since the ultimate degree of sovereignty is his. The one whom God has made the object of men's (quest) in respect of their requirements for both this life and the next, the one by whose tongue and hand God has ensured the needs of His people, he is the one upon whom God has bestowed a portion of the meaning of this characterization. But the absolute *aṣ-Ṣamad* is the One to whom one turns for every need, and this is (only) God Most High.

AL-QĀDIR AL-MUQTADIR — He Who Acts, Or Does Not Act, As He Pleases¹²³

The meaning of these two (names) is "the possessor of power" but *al-tuqtadir* does (this) to a greater extent (than *al-qādir*). Power is tantamount to the "abstract principle" (*maḥnā*) by means of which a thing comes into being according to the determination and in

¹²² S. 112, 2 (A-1-45):

¹²³ *Al-Qādir*: S. 6, 37 (A-3-21); 17, 99/101 (A-3-4); *inter alia*.
Al-Muqtadir: S. 18, 45/3 (A-2-21); 54, 42 (A-2-21); *inter alia*.

agreement with the will and knowledge. *Al-qādir* is the one who does what he wishes (to do); and if he so wishes, he does not do it. It is not a part of the condition that he should inevitably wish (to do something and therewith exercise his power). Thus God Most High is *qādir* of effecting the resurrection now, because He would effect it if He wished to do so. But if He does not effect it because He does not wish it, and He does not wish it because of His knowledge of the fixing of its appointed time and span, that does not detract from (His) power (to do so). The absolute *al-Qādir* is the One who created every existent by himself, independent of the assistance of another, and He is God Most High.

As far as man is concerned, (certainly) he does have power in a general sense, but it is deficient. For he is able to deal with only some of the things that are possible, and he is not capable of creation. Rather does God Most High create the objects of man's power by means of his (own) power whenever there are present all the causes of (man's) object-of-power. Beneath this there is an abyss which is impossible for a book of this nature to uncover.

AL-MUQADDIM AL-MUAKHKHIR — The One Who Causes Men To Be Both Near To And Distant From Him ¹²⁴

Al-Muqaddim al-Mu'akhhir is the one who causes (some) to be near (Him) and others to be distant from (Him). The one whom He has caused to be near, He has advanced him; and the one whom He has caused to be distant, He has removed him. He has advanced His prophets and His friends by drawing them near to Him and guiding them, and He has caused His enemies to be distant by separating them from Himself and by placing a veil between Himself and them. For example, when the king causes two persons

¹²⁴ *Al-Muqaddim*: The name as such is not used in the Qur'ān, but the verb is applied to God in S. 50, 28/7 (A-2-7).

Al-Mu'akhhir: This name is not found in the Qur'ān, but the verb is applied to God in eleven verses; e.g. S. 11, 8/11 (A-3-7).

to be near (to him) but at the same time effects a situation in which one of the two is nearer to him (than is the other), one says that the king has caused him to be set forward; that is to say, he has caused him to be put in front of the other one. Sometimes one speaks of being in front in respect of place and sometimes in respect of rank. Inevitably the term is used in relation to something else; further back. Necessarily involved (in this concept) is something sought, which is the goal, in relation to which the one set forward is (said to be) forward and the one set behind is (said to be) behind. This is the goal of God Most High. In respect of God the one who is set forward is the one who is brought near. Thus He has put forward the angels, then the prophets, then the friends of God and then the theologians. Anyone said to be behind is put in relation to that one who is before him, (though at the same time) he is forward in relation to the one who is behind him.

God Most High is *al-Muqaddim al-Mu'akhhir* for if you were to attribute their (i.e., mankind) being put forward and their being put behind to their accomplishments and shortcomings and the perfection and deficiency of their attributes, then (you would have to answer the objections): who is it who has led them to falling short (of these goals) by deflecting their motives to the (very) opposite of the straight path? All of that comes from God Most High, for He is *al-Muqaddim al-Mu'akhhir*. What is intended (by Him) is (both) advancement and retardation in respect of rank. There is in these (names) an indication that the one who takes a place of precedence does not do so by virtue of his knowledge and work; rather does he reach this position through God sending him forward. The same is true of the one who is put back. This is made clear by the saying of God Most High, "Lo, those unto whom kindness hath gone forth before from us, they will be far removed from thence";¹²⁵ and His saying, "And if We had so willed, We would

¹²⁵ S. 21, 101 (A-2-18).

have given every soul its guidance, but the word from Me concerning evil doers took effect: that I will fill hell.”¹²⁶

An Admonition: Man's portion of (these) active attributes is obvious. Therefore we will not busy ourselves by repeating it in respect of each **name** out of fear of falling into prolixity. After all, there is in what we have already mentioned an indication of the way in **which** the discourse (is to develop).

AL-AWWALAL-ĀKHİR — He Who Is Both First and Last¹²⁷

(You should) know that that which is first is first in relation to something and that which is last is last in relation to something. These two are opposites. It is inconceivable that one thing can be both first and last in the same respect and in relation to the same thing. Rather when you observe the order of existence (as such) and observe the **chain** of the ordered existents, (then you must know that) God Most **High** is first in relation to them since each and every existent acquires (its) existence from Him.

As for God Himself, He exists by **means** of His (own) essence and **has** not derived (His) existence from another. (At the same time), no **matter how** much you consider the order or progression **and observe** the gradations in standing of those who **are** moving towards Him, (you must conclude that) He is last. For He is the ultimate to which the grades of the knowing **ones**¹²⁸ **ascend**. Every knowledge that is attained before the knowledge of **Him** is a step towards the knowledge of **Him**, and the ultimate knowledge is the knowledge of God. He is last in relation to the progression (mentioned above) and first in relation to existence. **From** Him is the beginning, first of all, and to Him is the **return** and result, last of all.

¹²⁶ S. 32, 13 (A-3-1).

¹²⁷ S. 57, 3 (B-9).

¹²⁸ Or “the gnostics”

AZ-ZĀHIR AL-BĀṬIN — The Manifest and Hidden One¹²⁹

These two characterizations also are among those that are relative, for that which is manifest is (at one and the same time) manifest (in relation to) one thing and hidden (in relation to) another. (But) from the same point of view it cannot be both manifest and hidden. Rather it is **manifest** from one point of view and hidden from another, for it is only in relation to perceptions that things are manifest and hidden.

(Certainly it is **true** that) God Most High is hidden if He is sought through the perception of the (five) senses and the treasure house of the imagination, but He is manifest if sought through the treasure house of the **mind** and its reasoning faculties. You may (**object** to this and) say, “**As** for His being hidden in relation to the perception of the senses, that is (quite) obvious; but as for His being manifest in relation to (that which is perceived by) reason, that is abstruse. For (one terms) manifest that about which there is no dispute, that in the perception of which people do not differ. But this is a point on which men have had great doubt. How, then, is it possible for him to be a manifest one?”

(At the same time), however, you must realize that He is hidden in spite of his manifestness, in view of the degree of his manifestness. (Or to state the matter in another way), his (very) manifestness is the cause of his **hiddenness** and his (very) light is the veil of his light, for everything which goes beyond its own limits must (eventually) turn to its opposite. Perhaps you are astonished by this teaching, consider it (quite) remote and will not understand it unless we cite an analogy.

Let me assure you that if you were to consider a single word written by a certain author, from it you would be able to infer that he is learned, capable, and able to hear and see, and you would also reach the position where you were very certain about the existence of these attributes. Indeed, if you saw a written word,

¹²⁹ S. 57, 3 (B-9).

(from it) you would attain unmistakable evidence of the existence of its writer who is learned, capable, able to hear and see and, (of course), is alive, and the only evidence (of his being such a person) would be the formation of the single word (in question). Even as this word is **unmistakable** evidence of **the** attributes of (its) author, so (also) there is not **an atom** in the heavens and the earth, not a celestial body, star, sun, moon, animal or vegetation, not a characteristic or anything that is characterized which does not bear witness of its own need for (the) manager who planned it, determined it and endowed it with its particular attributes. Moreover, man cannot contemplate any of his own external or internal members or parts, or any of his attributes or states which pertain to him by necessity and not by his own choice, without finding them to be outspoken witnesses for their Creator, Realizer and Planner.

This same truth applies in respect of everything which he perceives by means of all his senses, whether it be within or without his own person. If (some of) the things differed in respect of the witness (they brought), in that some of them bore witness and others did not, surely certainty would result in respect of all of them. But since the witnesses are so numerous that they have overlapped and (therewith) become indistinct, they have (in fact) **become** obscure due to (the) excessive clarity. An illustration of this is that the most manifest of (all) things are those which are perceived by the senses, and of these the most manifest things are those that are perceived by the senses of sight, and the most manifest of (all) things perceived by sight is the light of the sun which shines upon (worldly) bodies, that light by which everything becomes manifest. How could that by which everything is made manifest not (itself) be manifest?

This (is a question that) has confused many people and caused them to say, "As far as the coloured objects are concerned, only the colouring — (that is to say) black and red — exists in them. As for the possibility of there being together with the colour a radiance and a light associated with the colour, this is not true." These people become conscious of the existence of light in the coloured

things by the difference they perceive between **the** shade and **the** pace of the light and between nighttime and daytime. Since it is possible to conceive of the sun being concealed during the night, **and** its being veiled from sight by (various) dark bodies during the **day**, (you know that) its **effect** is distinguishable by **the** things that **are** coloured, and thereby the difference is perceived between that **which** is affected and illuminated by it and between the shaded' objects concealed from it.

Thus the existence of the light is (actually) known by the non-existence of the light. (The same result would also obtain) if existence were placed *via-a-vis* non-existence and the difference were perceived, with colours remaining constant in either case. If the light of the sun fell upon all the bodies that are manifest to a person and if the sun did not set and so enable him to notice the difference (made by its setting), surely it would be impossible for him to know that the light is something of consequence, existing and distinct from the colours; and this in spite of the fact that it is the most manifest of all things; indeed, it is that which makes all things manifest.

(Similarly), if the non-existence or absence of God Most High, the Holy One, **from** some things were conceivable, certainly the heavens and the earth and everything that would be cut off from His light would perish, and (then) surely the distinction between **the** two states (of existence and non-existence) would be comprehended. (In such an eventuality — **which**, of course, is impossible) His existence definitely would be known. But since all things are in agreement in respect of the witness (of Him) and all of the various states are uniformly constant, that is the cause of His being hidden. Praise, then, be to the One who is concealed from mankind by His light, the One who is hidden from them by the degree of His manifestness! He is *az-Zahir*, the One (in comparison with whom) there is no one more manifest; and He is *al-Bāṭin*, the One (in comparison with whom) there is no one more hidden.

An Admonition: Do not be surprised at this (admonition) in respect of the attributes of God Most High, for the sense in which

man is (said to be) man is both manifest and hidden. It is manifest in that one may infer it by looking at his orderly (and) wise deeds; (but) it is hidden if it is sought through sensory perception. For sensory (perception) is concerned only with his external form, but (the fact remains that) man is not man (simply) by virtue of his visible form. For if that form is changed -- indeed, if all his component parts are changed — he is still lie, (a man). And (it is an indisputable fact that) the (various) parts (of the body) do change. When he has grown old perhaps the parts of every man's body are no longer the same as they were when lie was a youth. They disintegrate with the passing of time and are exchanged for similar parts as a result of the nourishment (one receives). But man's nature has not changed. That (inner) nature is hidden from the senses, (but) it is manifest to reason by deduction from the evidence of its effects and deeds.

AL-BARR — The Dutiful One¹³⁰

Al-Burr is the beneficent one. The absolute *al-Barr* is the One from whom comes every good deed and every beneficence. Man, however, is a doer of good in the measure that he keeps himself busy doing things, especially towards his parents, teacher and elders. It is said that Moses — may peace be upon him — on the occasion of his Lord's speaking with him, saw a man standing by the leg of the throne, and he was amazed at the grandeur of his position. Thus he asked, "O Lord, by what means did this man attain this place?" The Lord replied, "Verily, he is one who did not begrudge any of My servants that which I bestowed upon him, and he was (ever) dutiful to his parents." This is the way in which man does good. As for a detailed exposition of the goodness and beneficence of God Most High over against His creation, the explanation of it would be too lengthy. (But) there is some indication of this subject in some of the things already mentioned.

¹³⁰ S. 52, 28 (A-1-22).

AT-TAWWĀB —

He Who Constantly Turns Man To Repentance¹³¹

At-Tawwāb is the One who keeps on facilitating the causes of repentance for His creatures time and time again by showing them some of His signs, by conveying to them some of His warnings and by revealing to them some of His deterrents and cautions with the intent that they, having been apprised of the dangers of their sins, might be filled with fear by His frightening them and subsequently turn to repentance. Through (His) accepting (the evidence of their penitence), the favour of God Most High (once again) reverts to them.

An Admonition: He who accepts over and over again the excuses of those who do wrong among his subjects, friends and acquaintances is characterized by this (type of) character and has received a share of it.

AL-MUNTAQIM — The Avenger¹³²

Al-Muntaqim is the One who breaks the back of the arrogant, the One who severely punishes the perpetrators and presses punishment upon the tyrants. He does that after excusing them (that is to say, after forgiving earlier sins), (after giving them many) warnings, making (repentance) possible and (granting them) time to reconsider and a brief respite. This is stronger vengeance than the quick infliction of a penalty, for if the penalty is hastened one does not sink deeper into disobedience and one does not incur extremely severe punishment.

An Admonition: Man's revenge is praiseworthy only when he takes revenge upon the enemies of God Most High, and the worst of

¹³¹ S. 2, 37/5; 54/1 (B-1); *inter alia*.

¹³² S. 32, 22 (A-3-1); 43, 41/0 (A-2-14); 44, 16/5 (A-2-6). In each instance this concept appears in plural form, though it is obvious that God is speaking only of Himself.

(God's) enemies is man himself. Man ought to take revenge upon himself whenever he **commits** an act of disobedience or falls short in an act of worship, **even** as it is related of *Abū-Yazīd*, who said, "One night I was (too) lazy to perform certain prayers. Therefore I punished myself by depriving myself of water for one year." It is in such a way that man **should** take revenge (upon himself).

AL-CAFŪ — The One Who Erases Sin¹³³

Al-cAfū is the One who erases sins and disregards acts of disobedience. This concept approximates the sense of *al-Ghafūr*, (the One who forgives much), though the former is **more** far-reaching than the latter. For *al-Ghufrān* indicates a veiling (of the sin) whereas *al-cAfū* indicates an erasing, and the erasing (of sin) is more far-reaching (than the simple veiling of it).

An Admonition: Man's portion of this is self-evident; it consists in his forgiving everyone who has done him wrong. Moreover, he (willingly) does good to such a person even as he sees that God Most High is the One who does good to the disobedient and the unbelievers in this life and is not one who quickly punishes them. On the contrary, sometimes He forgives them by turning them (from sin) to repentance. When He turns them (in this manner) He erases their sins, for when one turns from (his) offence, (he becomes) as one who has no offence. This is the ultimate (that is attainable) in erasing the crime.

AR-RA'ŪF — The Very Indulgent One¹³⁴

Ar-Ra'ūf is the One who has pity (on others), and pity is the intensification of mercy. Therefore it has the same meaning as *ar-Raḥīm*, though in an intensified form, and the discussion of *ar-Raḥīm* has already been presented.

¹³³ S. 22, 60/59 (B-17); 58, 2/3 (B-16); *inter alia*.
¹³⁴ S. 2, 207/3 (B-1); 3, 30/28 (B-7); *inter alia*.

MĀLIK AL-MULK —

The One Who Has Perfect Power Over His Kingdom¹³⁵

Mālik al-Mulk is the One who carries out His will in His kingdom in the manner and as He wishes (to do so), bringing into being, destroying, perpetuating and annihilating (as He pleases). (The word *al-Mulk* here has the meaning of 'kingdom', and (the word) *al-Mālik* has the meaning of 'the potent one, the one who possesses perfect power'. The totality of everything in existence **forms** a single kingdom, and He is the one who rules and has power over it. The totality of existing things are a single kingdom because they are dependent upon each other; for even if they are numerous in one respect, they still remain a **unit** in another. An example of this is the body of man. Certainly it is a kingdom for the real nature of man. It consists of different members, but they (all) give the appearance of cooperating in attaining the goal of a single manager, (and thus) the kingdom is one.

Similarly the entire world is like a single person, and the (constituent) parts are like the members of His (body). They all cooperate in attaining a single, goal **which** is the perfection of the greatest blessing that is possible in accordance with divine generosity. Because the systematic arrangement (of the universe) is based upon an harmonious order and because it is held together by one bond, it, therefore, forms a single kingdom, and God Most High alone rules over it.

The kingdom of every man is particularly his body. When his will is effective in respect of the attributes of his heart and limbs, he may be said to be a *mālik* of his own kingdom in a way commensurate with the power given to him.

¹³⁵ S. 3, 26/5 (B-7).

DHŪ-L-JALĀL WA-L-IKRĀM —
The One Possessed of Majesty and Honour¹³⁶

Dhū-l-Jalāl wa-l-Ikrām is such a One that there is no **majesty** and perfection which does not pertain to Him and no honour nor honourable quality (*makrama*) which does not emanate from Him. Majesty pertains to Him in respect of His essence, and **honour** overflows from Him upon His people. The variety of the ways in which He honours His people is almost unlimited and unending. The saying of God Most High is indicative of this, "Verily We have honoured the Children of Adam."¹³⁷

AL-WĀLĪ — He Who Has Charge Over All¹³⁸

Al-Wālī is the one who plans the affairs of mankind and has assumed control of them; that is to say, he is in charge of them, being capable, as he is, of discharging the trust. It would seem that *al-wilāya* suggests planning, power and activity. When all these are not included, one cannot be designated by the name *al-Wālī*, and there is no *wālī* of things except God Most High. First of all, He is without peer in His planning of things; secondly, He is the One responsible for and the One who carries out the planning by actually bringing into effect (everything that was planned); and, thirdly, He is the One who is in charge of them by perpetuating and continuing (all these things that were planned and effected).

¹³⁶ S. 55, 27.78 (A-1-28).

¹³⁷ S. 17, 70/2 (A-3-4).

¹³⁸ Ht. 76; Rs. 90. (Though *al-Wālī* does not appear in the Qur'an as a name of God, *wālī* appears eleven times as a divine title; e.g. S. 2, 107/1 (B-1); 42, 9/7 (A-3-15).

AL-MUTACĀLĪ — The Highly-Exalted One¹³⁹

Al-Mutaḥālī has the meaning of *al-cAlī* in an intensified form, and the meaning of *al-cAlī* has already been given.

AL-MUQSIT — The Ultimately Equitable One¹⁴⁰

Al-Muqsit is the one who demands justice for the one who has been wronged from the one who has done wrong. Its perfection lies in procuring not only the satisfaction of the one wronged but also the satisfaction of the **one** who did wrong. That is the ultimate of justice and equity, and it is not possible for anyone except God Most High. An example of this (is to be found) in that which is related of the prophet — may the blessing of God be upon him and his family and peace be upon all of them — "(One day) while sitting he laughed so much that his teeth showed. **cUmar** said, 'My father and my mother be your ransom, **O** messenger of God, what is it that makes you laugh? **Muḥammad** replied, 'Two men from my community fell to their knees before the Lord of power. One of the two said, '**O** Lord, get revenge for me for the wrong this one did to me.' God replied — to Him be might and majesty! — 'Make restitution to your brother for the wrong you did to him.' He said, '**O**, Lord, not a single one of my good deeds remains.' Then He — to Him be might and majesty — said to the supplicant, 'How will you deal with your brother when not a single one of his good deeds remains? He replied, '**O** Lord, let him bear for me some of my burden (of faults.)

¹³⁹ H. 57; Ht. 77; Rs. 97. The name as it appears in our text is not to be found in the Qur'an. But one does find *al-Mutaḥālī* in reference to **God** in S. 13, 9/10 (A-3-22). Concerning this **matter** **Redhouse** states, "The full grammatical form is *al-Mutaḥālī*. However, veneration for the smallest peculiarities of the original codex of the Qur'an has perpetuated the present form." If this deduction is correct, then **al-Ghazālī** in this instance deferred to correct grammatical usage.

¹⁴⁰ Ht. 85; V. 134; R. 40; Rs. 45. Though this **name** is not found in the Qur'an, **Redhouse** notes that the expression *qa'im bil-qist* (persistent in just distribution) is applied to **Ood** in S. 3, 18/6 (B-7).

Then the messenger of God — may the blessing of God and peace be upon him — began to weep and said, 'Surely that will be a great day when people will be in need of others to carry their faults for them.' **Muhammad** said, 'God — to Him be might and majesty — said to the one complaining of injustice, 'Lift your eyes and look to the gardens (i.e., Paradise).' He said, 'O Lord, I see cities of silver and palaces of gold, all adorned with pearls. For what believer or martyr is this? God — to Him be might and majesty — said, 'For the one who pays the price.' He asked again, 'O Lord, who has this in his power?' To this **came** the reply, 'You possess it.' He went on to query, 'In what way, O Lord? Forthwith came the reply, 'By your forgiving your brother.' The man went on, 'O Lord, I have forgiven him!' God — to Him be might and majesty — said, 'Take your brother by the hand and lead him into Paradise.' Then Muhammad — may the blessings of God and peace be upon him — said, 'Fear God and make peace among yourselves, for God Most High will make peace between the believers on the day of the Resurrection.'"

This is the way of claiming and affecting justice. (But) no one has the power of acting like this except the Lord of lords. He among men is most amply endowed with a portion of this name who first of all demands justice from himself (for another), who then seeks justice for another from a third party, but who does not demand justice for himself from another.

AL-JĀMIC — He Who Combines All Things in The Universe To Accomplish His Purposes¹⁴¹

Al-Jāmic is the one who joins things that are similar, things that are dissimilar and things that are opposed to each other. As for God Most High bringing together similar things, one finds an example of this in His bringing together **many** (creatures who are a part) of **the human race of this earth** and gathering them in the

realm of the resurrection. As for His bringing together dissimilar things, one finds an example of this in His bringing together the **heavens**, the stars, the air, the earth, the seas, the animals, the plants and the different minerals, all of which have different shapes, colours, tastes and characteristics. He has brought (the animals, plants and minerals) together on the earth, and He has brought everything together in the universe, (and this includes the earth, heavens and air). (Another) **example** of this is His bringing together the bone, nerve, vein, muscle, brain, skin, blood and the rest of the component parts (to be found) in the body of the animal.

As for His bringing together things opposed to each other, one finds an example of this in His bringing together **heat** and cold, moisture and dryness in the physical **constitution** of the animals, those things that are mutually repellent and hostile one to another. This (latter phenomenon) is the most comprehensive aspect of (His ability) to bring (things) together. (In reality) one does not know all the details of His (ability to) bring (things) together unless one knows every instance in which He has (ever) brought (things) together (both) in this life and in that which is to come, and the explanation of all that would be (far too) lengthy.

An Admonition: The **combiner** among men is the one who brings together the external propriety in respect of (man's) physical **members**, and the truths that are hidden in (men's) hearts. The one whose knowledge is perfect and whose behaviour is proper is (worthy of being called) *al-jāmic*. For that reason it has been said that the perfect **person** is such a one that the light of his knowledge does not extinguish the light of his piety. (Experience has taught us that) it is difficult for one to **combine** (in his person both) self-restraint and insight. For that **reason** we (usually) find either **men** who display self-restraint in asceticism and piety but have no insight, or **men** who have insight but no self-restraint. *Al-jāmic* is **the one who combines** (both) self-restraint and insight.

¹⁴¹ S. 3, 9/7 (U-7); 4, 140/39 (R-10).

AL-GHANĪ AL-MUGHNĪ — The Rich, The Enriching One¹⁴²

Al-Ghani al-Mughni is the one who is not dependent upon anyone else in respect of his essence or the attributes of his essence. Rather is he exalted above (any) connection with others. The one whose essence or the attributes of his essence are connected with something external to his essence in such a way that his existence or his perfection is dependent upon that other, is poor (that is to say, in the sense of being dependent) and needs to acquire something. That (complete independence) is inconceivable except for God Most High. God is also the One who satisfies (the needs of others).

But it is inconceivable that the one who is made free of want should become rich absolutely as a result of his being enriched, for at the very least he remains in need of the One who enriched him. (Therefore) he is not (truly) rich. Rather (it is true that) he can dispense with everyone but God in view of the fact that God supplies him with that which he needs, and not in view of the fact that his basic neediness has been removed.

The really rich (man) is the one who does not need anyone at all. The one who is in need and at the same time possesses that which he needs is called rich figuratively. This (possession of what one needs) is the utmost (form of riches) attainable by one other than God. As far as losing (this) need is concerned, this does not occur. But when one has no need for anything except God Most High, one is called rich. If it were not that the basic neediness remains, then the saying of God, "And God is the Rich, and ye are the poor",¹⁴³ would not be true. (On the other hand), if it were inconceivable that one could become independent of everything except God — to Him be might and majesty — then it would be incorrect to characterize God Most High as *al-Mughni*.

¹⁴² *Al-Ghani*: S. 10, 68/9 (A-3-16); 22, 64/3 (B-17); *inter alia*.

Al-Mughni: Ht. 88; R. 58; Rs. 67. Though this name as such is not to be found in the Qur'an, the concept expressed in it is used in respect of God in S. 9, 28 (B-23); 24, 32 (B-15); *inter alia*.

¹⁴³ S. 47, 40 (B-6).

AL-MĀNIC —

He Who Repels Those Things Detrimental To His Creation¹⁴⁴

Al-Mānic is the one who repels those things which cause destruction and deficiency in one's religious and physical life by creating (those) causes which are intended to preserve them, and the meaning of *al-Ḥafīz* was given before. All preservation necessarily implies a hindering and a repelling. The one who understands the meaning of *al-Ḥafīz* (therewith also) understands the meaning of *al-Mānic*. (The same process is spoken of as) *manʿ* in respect of the destructive cause and as *ḥifz* in respect of the one protected from destruction. The latter is the object and aim of the hindering. Since (all) hindering is intended for the sake of preservation whereas preservation is not sought for the sake of hindering, it follows that every preserver is one who resists and hinders, whereas everyone who hinders is not a preserver unless he is one who hinders in an absolute manner all the causes of destruction and deficiency in such a way that preservation follows of necessity.

AD-ḌĀRR AN-NĀFIC —

He Who Is Responsible For Both Good and Evil¹⁴⁵

Aḍ-Ḍārr An-Nāfic is the one from whom emanates the good and evil, that which is beneficial and harmful. All of that is attributed to God Most High either through the mediation of the angels, men or inanimate bodies, or without any mediation. Do not think that poison kills and harms by itself, or that food satisfies or is beneficial by itself, or that an angel, a man, a devil or any created thing, such as sky or star or something else, is itself capable of producing a good or an evil or something beneficial or harmful. Rather (is it true

¹⁴⁴ This name is not found in the Qur'an, and neither Redhouse nor Lane include it.

¹⁴⁵ These names are not in the Qur'an. Zwemer states that "they belong to God's attributes on the authority of the Prophet and are used especially in invocations and incantations".

that) each one of these is (only) a subservient cause from which nothing comes forth except that for which it has been made subservient. And all of that is related to the eternal power just as the pen is related to the writer in the belief of the ordinary man; and just as when the sultan records his signature authorizing either an honour or a punishment (for one), one does not ascribe the harm or benefit of that to the pen; rather (does one ascribe this) to those to whom the pen is subject. In a similar manner (the same principle applies for) the rest of the means and the causes.

We used the words "in the belief of the ordinary man" because the ignorant person is the one who considers the pen to be something that is subject to the writer, whereas the understanding person knows that even though it is in the hand (of the writer) it is (actually) subject to God Most High and that He is the one to whom the writer is subject. As a result of God's creating the writer and creating in him the ability (to write) and having brought to bear upon him those imperious and firm impulses (to write), the movement of the fingers and the pen inevitably results regardless of whether he wills or disdains it; to be sure, it is impossible for him not to will it. This being the case, the one who (actually) writes by means of the pen and the hand of man is God Most High. If you know this in respect of an animal endowed with the power of choice, (surely) it must be even more obvious in respect of inanimate beings.

AN-NŪR — The Light¹⁴⁶

An-Nūr is the visible One by means of whom all visibility exists. For that which itself is visible and makes others visible is called a light. When existence is contrasted with non-existence, (it becomes obvious that) visibility pertains to existence and that there is no darkness darker than non-existence. That which is free of the darkness of non-existence, rather from the possibility of non-

¹⁴⁶ S. 24, 35(B-15).

existence, and brings everything (else) from the darkness of non-existence to the visibility of existence is worthy of being called light. Existence is a light which flows freely upon all things from the light of His essence. Therefore He "is the light of the heavens and the earth".¹⁴⁷ Just as there is not a particle of the light of the sun which does not point to the existence of the illuminating sun, so also there is not a particle of all the things that exist in the heavens and the earth and that which is between them which does not by the (mere) possibility of its existence point to the necessary existence of its creator.

That which we have mentioned in respect of the meaning of *az-Zāhir* should help you to understand the meaning of *an-Nūr*, and it should spare you from the far-fetched things that have been mentioned in respect of its meaning.

AL-HĀDĪ — The Guide¹⁴⁸

Al-Hādī is the One, first of all, who guides His elect servants to the knowledge (*maʿrifā*) of His essence in order that they might use it as (their) witness of the knowledge of His essence; (secondly), He is the one who guides the common people among His servants to the things that He has created in order that they might be able to use them as (their) witness of His essence; and (finally) He is the one who guides every creature to that which is indispensable for the satisfaction of its needs. He guides the infant to nursing at (his mother's) breast from the time of his birth. He guides the young bird to pick up seeds from the time of its hatching, and He guides the bee to building its house in hexagonal form since this is the most appropriate form for the bee's body, (that form) which is the most cohesive and the least likely to be affected by¹⁴⁹ deep gashes. This subject, which is lengthy, is (best) defined in the

¹⁴⁷ As above.

¹⁴⁸ S. 22, 54/3 (B-17); 25, 31/3 (A-2-19).

¹⁴⁹ Reading *yatakhalluhā*.

saying of God **Most High**, "He (is the One) who gave unto everything its nature, then **guided it aright**,"¹⁵⁰ and in His words, "(He is the One) who measureth, **then guideth**."¹⁵¹

The guiding ones among men are the prophets and the theologians who direct men to happiness in the hereafter and guide them to the straight path of God. But (in reality) it is God who guides through the tongues (of these leaders), and they are (only) instruments subject to His power and planning.

AL-BADĪC — The Matchless, Unequalled **One**¹⁵²

Al-Badīc is the one (of whom it can be said that) there was never one like Him in all previous knowledge. The absolute *al-Badīc* is the one for whom previous knowledge has no parallel in respect of his essence, attributes, deeds or anything ascribed to him. If there is any such thing previously known, he is not absolutely matchless, unequalled. No one is worthy of this name in an absolute sense except God Most High. There was nothing before Him so that one like Him could not have been known before Him. Every existent (which has come into being) after Him results from His producing it and is in no way analogous to its producer. "Therefore, He is from eternity to eternity.

Every man who, in respect of prophethood, sovereignty or knowledge, is distinguished by a characteristic previously unknown either in all the ages that have gone by or in his own epoch, is matchless, unprecedented (only) in relation to that (gift) and that period of time which are peculiarly his.

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

151 S. 87, 3 (A-1-16).

152 S. 2, 117/1 (B-1); 6, 101 (A-3-21).

AL-BĀQĪ — The Everlasting **One**¹⁵³

Al-Bāqī is the existent whose existence is necessary by means of His essence. But when the human **mind** thinks of Him in terms of the future, He is called the everlasting One, and when it thinks of Him in terms of the past He is called the pre-eternal One. The absolute *al-Bāqī* is the One whose existence in the future cannot be conceived of as coming to an end, and this is expressed by the term *abadī*, and the absolutely pre-eternal One is the One whose existence in the past cannot be extended back to a beginning, and this is expressed by the term *azalī*. The phrase "necessarily existent by means of its essence" implies all of that. However, these names (i.e., *bāqī* and *qadīm*) are (applicable only) in the measure that the human mind relates this existence to the past or the future. But (in reality only) changeable things pertain to the past and the future, because these are two expressions of time and nothing pertains to time except change and movement, for movement in itself divides into past and future and the changeable comes within the scope of time by means of the change. Therefore, that which is above change and movement is not included in time and (subsequently) has no past and future, and there is no separation in respect of the apposition of past and future.

We have (a past and a future) only when certain events have occurred to us and in us and (other) events will be repeated. There must be (certain) events happening one after another in order that they might be divided into a past that has ceased to exist and is concluded, into the present time and into that of which the renewal is anticipated afterwards. When there is no renewal **and** no termination there can be no time. And why should it **not be** so since God Most High existed before time? Since He created time not a thing pertaining to His essence has **changed**; before He created

153 H. 80; Ht. 96; Rs. 72. Though the name as such is not found in the Qur'an, its basic meaning is implied in S. 28, 88 (A-3-11). Redhouse states that "the opening phrase of all Muslim inscriptions on tombstones is *huwa-l-Bāqī*."

time it could have no **relevance** for Him, and after **He** created time He **remained** as He existed before. The words of the **one** who said, "Duration is an attribute in addition to the essence of *al-Bāqī*", are quite wrong, and even more wrong are the words of the one who said, "Pre-existence is an attribute in addition to the essence of al-Qadim." Sufficient as proof of the incorrectness of these positions is the **confusion** that has resulted in respect of the everlastingness of the everlastingness and the everlastingness of the attributes, and the pre-existence of **the** pre-existence and the pre-existence of the attributes.

AL-WĀRITH — The Inheritor¹⁵⁴

Al-Wārith is the one to **whom** the possessions return after the passing away of the owner, and that one is God — praise the Lord! For He is the One who remains after His creatures pass away. Everything returns and reverts to Him. At that time He is the One who asks, "To whom do the possessions belong today?" And He is the One **who** answers, "To God, the One, the All-Powerful." This is in reference to the opinion of the majority of the people who consider that they themselves are owners. But on that day the real **nature** of the situation will be revealed to them. This call (i.e., "To whom do the possessions belong today?") expresses the real nature of that which will be revealed to them at that time.

As for those who are endowed with **the** powers of spiritual perception, they are constantly aware of the meaning of this call; they hear it without a (single) sound or letter being uttered. They are certain **that** every day, every hour and every moment (all) possessions belong to God, the One, the Powerful. For that **reason**¹⁵⁵ He is eternal and everlasting. (But) this is comprehended only by the

¹⁵⁴ S. 15, 23 (A-2-10); 21, 89 (A-2-18).
¹⁵⁵ Reading *kadhālika*.

one who comprehends the real nature of *at-tawḥīd* in respect of action and who knows that He who is alone in the action in respect of the possession and the sovereignty is one. But we have (already) indicated that in the beginning of *Kitāb at-Tawakkul* in *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm ad-Din*. Let it be sought there, for this book has no room for it.

AR-RASHĪD — The Absolutely Judicious Guide¹⁵⁶

Ar-Rashīd is the One whose dispositions lead on to their ultimate aims as a result of right ways-of-behaving without the advice of a counsellor, the directions of a director, or the guidance of a guider; and (this one) is God Most High. A man may be (said to be) a guider to the extent that he is guided in his dispositions to the attainment of right conduct in respect of his religious and secular ends.

AŞ-ŞABŪR — He Who Times All Things Perfectly¹⁵⁷

Aş-Şabūr is the One whom haste does not induce to rush into an action prematurely. Rather does He bring matters about in a determined measure, and makes them happen according to definite ways-of-acting. He does not delay them beyond their appointed time as a lazy one might do, and He does not hasten them ahead of their appointed time (that is to say, He does not act precipitately in this respect) as an impatient one might do. Rather does He bring about everything in its proper time, in the manner that is necessary that it be and just as it ought to be. He does all of that without permitting himself to be subjected to a motive force opposed to his will.

¹⁵⁶ S. 11, 87/9 (A-3-7).
¹⁵⁷ Ht. 99; Rs. 78.

As for the patience of man, it is not free of this disciplining because the **meaning** of his patience lies in the constancy of his intellectual or religious motivation vis-a-vis the motivation of greed and anger. If two opposite motives pull him in different directions and he **turns** from the one calling him to boldness and rashness and turns to the one that **causes** a delay, (then) he is called a patient man for he has caused the inclination to haste to be overcome.

In respect of God Most High the inclination to haste is non-existent. God is farther removed from haste than the mortal in whom the motive exists but is overcome. He is more worthy of this name, since one has dismissed from consideration any conflict of motivation and any overcoming of it by effort.

A Conclusion to This Part and an Apology

You should know that what has caused me to mention these **admonitions** is only the accordance of these names and attributes **with** the saying of the **messenger** of God — may the blessings of **God** and peace be upon him — "Be characterized by the characters of God Most High", and his saying — may the blessings of God and peace be upon him — "God Most High has such-and-such characters, and he who is characterized by one of them enters Paradise." The words commonly expressed by the **Şūfis** point to that which we have already mentioned but in such a manner that those who are unlearned assume from them something of the concepts of inherence (*hulūl*) and unification (*ittiḥād*).

But that is not the supposition of him who has attained the use of reason, to say nothing of those who discern the particular (features) of mystic vision. I have heard Shaykh **Abū-ʿAlī-l-Fārmadhī** relate from his Shaykh **Abū-l-Qāsim al-Karakānī** — may God make their spirits holy — that he said, "Certainly the ninety-nine names become a description of the man who follows the spiritual **path** of **Şūfism**, while he is still on his way and has not reached his destination." If by this saying is meant something compatible with what we have (already) asserted, then it is correct and nothing else need **be** surmised concerning it; and there will be in the expression some **kind** of latitude and metaphor, for the meanings of the names are **the** attributes of God and His attributes do not become the attributes of one other than He.

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

My argument, (therefore), is this: To say that the meanings of **the** names of God have become characteristics of a man can only

(be understood to) mean that (he is characterized by) attributes either other than these or **similar** to these. If he meant (attributes) similar to these, then he **must have meant** either a likeness that is absolute in every respect or a likeness in respect of **the** name and a sharing in the attributes in general but not in the peculiar properties of the "meanings".

Here, then, are two alternatives. If, (on the other hand), he meant by it the attributes themselves, then this can occur either by an (actual) transfer of the attributes from the Lord to **man** or in a way other than by such a transfer. If this does not happen by such a transfer, then it can only occur either by the uniting of the essence of man with the essence of the Lord in such a way that the one becomes the other and the attributes of the one become the attributes of the other, or else this takes place by the inherency (of God in man). These are the three alternatives; namely, a transfer of the attributes, the unification (of man and God) and the inherency (of beings).

(In all) there are five alternatives of which (only) one is correct, and it is that certain matters are established in man which broadly correspond to these attributes and share in the name. But they are not perfectly assimilated to **them** as we have pointed out in the (various) admonitions.

The second alternative, namely, that **(attributes) genuinely** similar (to God's) should be established for man is impossible, for amongst them (is the one indicating) that he should have a knowledge that comprehends all things that are known to such an extent that even the weight of an atom either in the earth or heavens does not escape him; another is that he should have a single power which comprehends all created beings in such a way that by means of it he is the creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. (But) how is this conceivable for one other than God Most High? How is it possible for man to be the creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them when he is one of those who is between them? How can he create himself? Furthermore, if these

attributes are established in two men, then each of them is the creator of the other and each of the two would be a creator of his (own) creator and all of these (propositions) are absurdities and impossibilities.

The third alternative, namely, the transfer of the attributes of Lordship themselves, is also inconceivable because it is impossible for the attributes to be separated from the things that are characterized (by them). This does not concern the pre-eternal essence (alone), for it is inconceivable that the knowledge of X itself can be transferred to Y. Indeed, the attributes have no subsistence except in relation to the things that are characterized, because a transfer (of anything) necessarily implies the diverting of that from which the transfer was **made**. (It would follow in the present argument) that the essence from which the attributes of Lordship are transferred would necessarily be divested of Lordship and its attributes, and that also obviously is impossible.

The fourth alternative (is the possibility) of the uniting (of man and God). This is even more obviously false, because to say that man has become the Lord is in itself contradictory. Rather is it necessary that the Lord — may He be praised — be far removed from the (mere thought) of the (human) tongue mentioning such impossibilities about Him or making (similar) unrestricted statements. To say that one thing can become another thing is absolutely impossible, because we say that if **one** conceives of X by himself and of Y by **himself**, then one **may** say that X has become Y or has become unified with him; and when this union has occurred, the situation can only be such that either both of them exist or both of them do not exist, or that X exists and Y does not exist or vice-versa. An alternative beyond these **four** is out of the question.

If both of them exist, one of the two cannot become the very self of the other. Rather does **each** one of the two himself exist. The utmost (that can happen) is that the locale of both of them becomes one, but this does not necessitate the union (of the essences). It is possible for knowledge, will and power to come together in one

essence in such a way that their locales cannot be distinguished, but still, power does not become knowledge or will and one is not united with the other. If the two are non-existent there is no union but rather a non-existence. Perhaps what does result is a third thing, (different from the other two). If one of the two is non-existent and the other existent, there would not be a union for an existent cannot be united with a non-existent. (In other words), unification between any two things is absolutely impossible. This applies to similar essences, to say nothing of different ones. It is impossible that this black colour should become that black colour, even as it is impossible that this black colour should become that white colour or that knowledge.

Now the difference between man and the Lord is greater than the difference between black and knowledge. Therefore the basis of union is (inherently) false. One's speaking of a union (between two objects) and saying, "the one is the other", is not possible except by expanding (the meaning of the words) and using them metaphorically which is in accordance with the practice of the **Şūfis** and poets. In order to embellish the effect that words have on one's understanding, they speak metaphorically as did the **poet**¹⁵⁸ when he said, "I am the one I love, and the one whom I love is I". That is (something to be) interpreted from the perspective of the poet (himself). He does not mean by these words that he is really the other, but rather that it is as if he were he, that he is as completely engrossed with him as the other is completely engrossed with himself. He expresses this condition loosely as "union". In the same way one must construe the words of **Abū-Yazid**¹⁵⁹ when he said, "I am (completely) stripped of my (former) self just as the snake is stripped of its skin. I looked and realized that I am He."

The meaning of this is that the one who strips himself of his appetites, passion and desire in such a way that he no longer has room (in his person) for anything except God and has no desire for

anyone except for God Most High, when (such a one reaches the **position** that) nothing occupies a place in (his) heart except the sublimity and beauty of God to such an extent that he is completely engrossed in Him, (then) he does become as if he were He but not in the sense that he is actually He. There is a difference between our saying that it is as if he were He and our saying that he is He. **But** we may say "he is He" to express "it is as if he were He", even as the poet at times says, "It is as if I were the One whom I love," and at other times he says, "I am the One whom I love."

But there is a pitfall here, for one who does not have a firm foothold in respect of things rational may not be able to distinguish the one from the other. Thus he may look upon his own perfection and being adorned with that portion of the appearance of **the Truth** that shines forth in him, he may (actually) suppose that he is He and therefore say, "I am the Truth." He makes the mistake of the Christians who, having seen that (i.e., a portion of the truth) in the essence of Jesus — may peace be upon him — therefore say that he is God. Indeed, he commits the same error as the one who looks into a mirror in which a coloured form appears and therefore thinks that that form is the form of the mirror and that that colour is the colour of the mirror. How preposterous is that! On the contrary, the mirror in itself does not have a colour; its only property is to receive the forms of the colours in such a way that it gives to those looking at these things the superficial impression that this is (actually) the form of the mirror. Thus it is that when a youth sees a man in the mirror he thinks that the man is (actually) in the mirror.

Similarly the heart in itself is free of forms and shapes. But its physiognomy is (such as) to be capable of receiving the ideas of shapes, forms and realities. That which dwells in it becomes as if it were identified with it, though it is not actually identified with it. Sometimes he says, "There is no wine", and other times, "There is no glass", just as this was expressed by the poet when he said, "The glass is thin and the wine is pure." Thus they resembled

158 Al-Hallāj, d. 309/1922.

159 Abu-Yazid al-Bistāmī, d. 261/875.

each **other**, and **matters became** confused. It is either as if there were wine and no glass, or glass and no wine.

Concerning the saying of the one who said, "I am the Real One", either its meaning is the meaning of the poet who said, "I am the one I love, and the one I love is I", or he was mistaken in this respect, even as **the** Christians were mistaken in their supposing the union of divinity and humanity. (**The** same is true) of the saying of **Abū-Yazīd**, if he actually said it, "Glory be to me, how important **am** I". Either he said this as a direct quotation from God Most High, just as if He had been heard saying, "There is no God save **Me**",¹⁶⁰ in which case he would certainly have been understood to be quoting, or, (on the other hand), he actually caught a **glimpse**¹⁶¹ of a perfection having the attribute of holiness, that (holiness) which we have (already) mentioned in respect of (the possibility of) rising by knowledge (**maʿrifā**) above the things that are imagined and sensed and (rising) by ambition above pleasure and greed. Therefore, he spoke of his own holiness when he said, "Glory be to **me**." He also saw **the** greatness of his own condition in **comparison** with the condition of the common people. Therefore he said, "How great is my condition!"

At **the** same **time**, (however), he knew that his holiness and the greatness of his condition existed only in relation to **human** beings and not **in** relation to the Lord Most High and the **greatness** of His condition. This **expression occurs** on his tongue in the **Ṣūfī** state of inebriation (**sukr**) and ecstasy. **Certainly** the recovery from this state of inebriation and the return to a normal condition necessitate that one guard **one's** tongue from suggestive statements, an impossibility **while** in a state of inebriation. To go beyond these two interpretations to (real) "union" is definitely impossible. You should not have such regard for men's rank that you (finally) believe the impossible. You must know men by the truth and not truth by the men.

¹⁶⁰ S. 20, 14 (A-2-8).

¹⁶¹ Reading *yakūn*.

The fifth alternative is the inherence (of beings) (*ḥulūl*). This (concept) is represented by one saying that the Lord inheres in man or **man** inheres in the Lord. May the Lord of the lords be exalted above the assertions of such false ones! If this were correct, it would not necessarily involve unification (of the two) or that **man** should be characterized by the attributes of the Lord, for **the** attributes of one who inheres (in another) do not become the attribute of the One in whom he inheres. Rather does the attribute of the one who inheres (in another) remain as it was.

Why inherence is impossible cannot be understood unless one understands the meaning of inherence; for unless one comprehends individual abstract forms conceptually, it is quite impossible for either their denial or affirmation to be known. If one does not know the meaning of inherence, how can one possibly know whether inherence actually exists or is impossible? For this reason we say that inherence must denote one of two things. One of them is the relationship that exists between **the** body and the place in which the body is. That (relationship) can only exist between two bodies, for such a relationship is inconceivable for that which is free of the abstract form of corporeality.

The second is the relationship that exists between the accident (*ʿaraḍ*) and the substance (*jawhar*). For the accident subsists by virtue of the substance. This may be expressed by saying that the accident inheres in the substance, but that is inconceivable of anything that is self-subsisting. One need not even mention the Lord Most High in this context! For anything that is self-subsisting can inhere in something else that is self-subsisting only in terms of the proximity that may exist between the (two) bodies. If inherence is inconceivable in respect of two men, then how is it conceivable between man and the Lord Most High?

If inherence, the transfer (of attributes), unification and being characterized by the likes of the attributes of God Most High are all invalid in the light of (absolute) truth, then no (sound) meaning **remains** to their view except that which we have indicated in our

admonitions. This (fact) prevents one from asserting in an unrestricted fashion **that** the meanings of the **names** of God (actually) become characteristics (of man) except in a very qualified way which excludes delusion; otherwise the **unrestricted** use of these terms is a delusion.

You may ask, "What is the meaning of his saying that man is still in *via* (*sālik*, i.e., a **Ṣūfi** 'traveller') and not one who has already attained, in spite of his being characterised by all of that? What is the meaning of 'travelling' (in this context)? What is the meaning of attaining?" I reply that 'travelling' is a refining of one's character, one's actions and the things one knows, and that means being busy with the cultivation of both one's outer and inner self. In doing this, **man** is occupied **with** himself and diverted from his Lord; yet he is occupied with the purification of his inner being in order that he might prepare himself for the "attaining".

"Attaining", (on the other hand), (is achieved when) the beauty of the truth is revealed to man in such a way that he becomes completely absorbed in it. **As** far as knowledge is concerned, he knows no one except God Most High. As far as desire is concerned, he has none except for **Him**. His whole being is occupied with the whole of Him, that is to say, beholding **and** desiring (Him). In so doing he pays no attention to himself, not (even) to the extent of enriching his outer being with worship and his inner being with **the** refinement of character. **All** of that is purity and it is only the beginning. The end is that he is stripped of self altogether and devotes himself exclusively to Him. In fact, he is as if he were He and that is the "attaining".

You **may** say, "The assertions of **the** **Ṣūfis** speak of visions that are unfolded to them when they are in a state of 'election' (*wilāya*) and reason is incapable of comprehending (this) 'election', whereas everything you have said consists of the exercise of the faculties of reason." (I reply) that nothing which reason has concluded to be impossible can become **evident** (when one is) in **the** state of "election". To be sure, something **may** become evident in the state of "election";

\of which reason falls short in the sense that it cannot be reached by reason alone. An example of this is that it is conceivable that a holy man might have revealed to him that so-and-so will die tomorrow even though this cannot be comprehended by the faculties of reason. On the contrary, reason is incapable of (such a phenomenon). But it is inconceivable that it should be revealed (to the elect) that tomorrow God will create a Being like Himself, for this is something that reason shows to be impossible (and) not something of which reason falls short.

More remote than that is one's saying, "God will make me to be like Himself", and even more remote is one's saying, "**God will** make me Himself", that is to say, "I will become He." For the meaning of this is that (though) I am originated, yet God is to make me pre-eternal; and (though) I am not the creator of the heavens and the earth, yet God is to make me the creator of the heavens and the earth. This is the meaning of his (i.e. **Abū-Yazid's**) words, "I looked and lo! I am He!" if the words are not interpreted but (simply) understood in their literal sense. The one who believes an absurdity of this nature (certainly) has been deprived of the natural faculty of reason, and as far as he is concerned that which may be known is no longer distinguishable from that which may not be known. He might as well believe that it is possible for a holy man to have revealed to him that the *Shari'ca* is false, or that even if it were true, God may change it and make it false; that He has made all the sayings of **the** prophets lies and that the one who says it is **impossible** that the **truth** should be changed into a lie is speaking on **the** strength of **the** faculties of reason. For the transformation of **the** truth into a lie is no more remote than the transformation of the originated being into an eternally pre-existent one, or man into a Lord. The one who does not differentiate between that which reason shows to be impossible and that which reason cannot attain is not worthy of being addressed. Let such a one be abandoned in his ignorance!