Note to e-book Readers

Introduction by Laleh Bakhtiar

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Dedication

In memory of Muhammad Ayyub

of Mathurapur, Sylhet,

who introduced me to Islam

Special Note for the e-book reader:

This edition contains the complete text of the print edition with the following exceptions:

Transliterations of foreign words and phrases (chiefly Persian and Arabic) requiring special symbols have for technical reasons been
omitted or reduced to standard English fonts. The reader may refer to the printed edition available in some libraries if interested.

The Index has been discarded as the e-book technology renders it superfluous.

The footnotes have been converted into endnotes. Cross-references to notes not in this part refer to the footnote number in the two-volume print edition.

The Table of Contents has been modified to reflect these changes.

The Bibliography is that for the entire series. Not all of the books listed in it have been utilized in this part.

Introduction

“... And be not like those who forgot God and He caused them to forget themselves. ...” (Q. 59:19)

THERE IS nothing more timely today than a translation of the remarkable work on Islam of al-Ghazzali for two reasons. First of all, the results of recent studies of medicine-psychology and religious belief confirm that the religious model works in the healing process so traditional wisdom must be made available in English for all researchers as well as readers to be able to access it and draw upon it for areas of further research. Secondly, at a time when the world is confused by the varying beliefs of Muslims and are interested in studying what the majority of the world’s Muslims believe, the works of al-Ghazzali provide the perfect opportunity.

Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazzali was born in the city of Tous, northwestern Iran, in AD 1058. He studied in Tous until he was twenty-seven when he moved to Baghdad. He was appointed as a professor at the Nizamiyyah college there when he was thirty-three. After four years of a strenuous schedule, he underwent a spiritual experience which convinced him that all of the knowledge he had gained was useless in comparison to gnosis or experiential knowledge of the Divine Presence. He realized unless he left his position and was free to search for this knowledge deeper within himself without worldly distractions, he would never attain it. He therefore provided for his family and left for Damascus and other well known cities at that time.

When he was forty-eight he returned to his birthplace where he lived for the next five years until his early death at the age of fifty-three. He left behind over 400 works among them being his famous Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihya ulum al-din) which he wrote in Arabic. Over 2300 pages, it is a compendium of Islamic practices. A few years after he finished the Revival, he felt the need to write the same sort of compendium on being a Muslim in Persian. This is the entire work here translated into English for the first time which al-Ghazzali called the Alchemy of Happiness. It is a masterful textbook on traditional psychology.

While modern Western psychology focuses on describing emotions, behavior or cognition, that is, what we feel, do and think without recourse to the basic principles or causes, traditional psychology is based on the same three centers, but like all traditional sciences, includes much more. As a result of including metaphysics, theology, cosmology and the natural sciences as the basis or underlying principles for what we feel, do or think, it becomes a holistic psychology. The goal of traditional psychology is to assume the noble character traits, to overcome our ego which competes for our attention with our God-given instinct to attend to the One God. In this view, there cannot be two wills and therefore our free will has to be disciplined to submit to God’s will (islam).

The word psychology comes from the Greek words “psyche” or “soul” and “logos.” Psyche also means breath, spirit and refers to the animating principle of the universe. Logos means “word” and in the traditional view it refers to “the Word of God.” The science of psychology, then, when it is true to its name, is the study of the Word of God within the human soul or spirit.

Al-Ghazzali’s psychology is essentially that of monotheism and unity, the world view that “there is no god, but God” or “there is no deity, but God.” It is to see the universe and all that is in it as aspects of the One God. The world view of monotheism (tawhid) forms the underlying basis for traditional psychology.

By the word “tradition” we mean al-din which has been defined as: “truths or principles of a Divine Origin revealed or unveiled to mankind through a messenger along with the ramifications and application of these principles in different realms including law, social structure, art, symbols, the sciences and embracing Supreme Knowledge along with the means for its attainment.”

Tradition (al-din) is a point which is at one and the same time the Center and Origin of our being. Traditional psychology is oriented towards helping the individual as well as the human community find that Center as we prepare for the return to our Origin.

A monotheist (hanif) like al-Ghazzali regards the whole universe as a unity, as a single form, a single living and conscious thing, possessing will, intelligence, feeling, and purpose, revolving in a just and orderly system in which there is no discrimination no matter what one’s gender, color, race, class, or faith be. All comes from God and returns to God, while a multitheist (mushrik) views the universe as a discordant assemblage full of disunity, contradiction, and heterogeneity containing many independent and conflicting poles, unconnected desires, customs, purposes, wills, sexes, sects, colors, races, classes, and faiths.

The monotheistic world view sees the universal unity in existence, a unity of three separate relationships: (1) our relationship with others, nature and the universe; (2) our relationship with God; (3) our relationship with our “self.” These relationships are not alien to
Then know that there is a station in gnosis (marifat) where, when a person reaches it, he really sees that all that exists is interconnectedness, one with another, and all are like one animate being. The relationship of the parts of the world such as the heavens, the earth, the stars to each other is like the relationship of the parts of one animate being to each other. The relationship of all the world to its Director—from one aspect, not from all aspects—is like the relationship of the kingdom of the body of an animal to the spirit and intellect which are its Director. Until a person recognizes this, that Verily, God created Adam in His image, it cannot be comprehended by his understanding.”

Other non-monotheistic religious world views see the Divinity—or even the plural of this—as existing in a special, metaphysical world of the gods, a higher world as contrasted with the lower world of nature and matter. They teach that God is separate from the world, created it and then left it alone. In the monotheistic world view, God has never left and is the destination of the Return. In this view, our “self” fears only one Power and is answerable to only one Judge; turns to one direction (qiblah), orienting all hopes and desires to only one Source. A belief in monotheism gives us a sense of independence and liberation from everything other than God and a connectedness to the universe and all that it contains. Submission to God's Will alone liberates us from worshipping anything other than God and rebelling against anything else that purports to be God.

Al-Ghazzali’s Three Fundamentals

Al-Ghazzali sees the basis for traditional psychology leading to self-development—which in essence is the greater struggle—as consisting of three fundamentals—the same three fundamentals confirmed by modern psychology and scientific studies—affect, behavior and cognition (the ABC of psychology). The first fundamental is knowledge (cognition, awareness or consciousness). The second he calls states (affect or emotion) that knowledge or awareness produces in us. The third he calls act or deed—the action that results from our emotion that came from our knowledge or awareness of something.

The First Fundamental: Knowledge

(Cognition)

According to al-Ghazzali, knowledge should be used to come to understand the articles of belief rather than accepting them on faith alone. The articles of belief include: the belief that God is One; the belief that God sent Prophets to guide mankind to Him and that Muhammad is the Messenger and last Prophet who will be sent (until the end of time when Jesus will return) and that the Quran is the last revelation; the belief in angels and the Scriptures; and the belief that after death we will be resurrected in the Hereafter and judged by God who will reward or punish us depending upon our intentions. Al-Ghazzali says: “It is the states of the heart, the place of our intentions, that holds us accountable.”

Beliefs

Our beliefs are the guiding principles that give meaning and direction to our life. They filter our perceptions of the world. When we freely choose to believe something is true, a command is delivered to our spiritual heart (mind) telling us how to represent what we have come to believe to be true. When the process has been accomplished with Divine Grace (defined by al-Ghazzali as: the harmony, agreement and concord of our will and action with God’s will), our beliefs can become our most effective force for creating the positive and good in our lives.

In explaining the importance of coming to the realization of the Oneness of God oneself and not accepting it because someone has told us, al-Ghazzali says:

Know that the first duty incumbent upon whoever becomes a Muslim is to know and believe the meaning of the utterance “there is no god but God, Muhammad is the Messenger of God,” which he pronounces with his tongue, understands in his heart, and believes so that he entertains no doubt about it. When he has believed and his heart is established firmly upon (that belief)—so that doubt cannot touch it—it is sufficient for the basis of being (one who submits to God’s Will (muslim)). Knowing it with evidence and proof is an
individual duty incumbent upon every (one who submits to God’s Will ( *muslim* )). The Prophet did not command the Arabs to seek proofs, to study theology, or to look for doubts and replies to those; rather, he was content with belief and faith.  

He then defines what belief in submission to God’s Will ( *islam* ) means:

Know that you have been created and that you have a Creator Who is the Creator of all the universe and all that it contains. He is One. He has no partner nor associate. He is Unique, for He has no peer. He always was; His existence has no beginning. He always shall be; there is no end to His existence. His existence in eternity and infinity is a necessary, for annihilation cannot touch Him. His existence is by His own essence. He needs nothing but nothing is unneedful of Him. Rather, He is established by His Own essence, and everything else is established through Him.  

Al-Ghazzali mentions five sources for our beliefs:

(1) Our environment: how we grow up; models of success or failure we learn from; what is right and what is wrong; what is possible and what is impossible.

(2) Our experiences and events as we grow up.
(3) Knowledge: what we know and do not know; that we continue to educate our “self” from “the cradle to the grave.”

(4) Results we have seen achieved in the past, learned from the stories of past people in the Quran.

(5) Setting new goals to achieve future results.

Future results depend upon how we incorporate our beliefs—how we view the world—into our own self image. According to al-Ghazzali, our firm and certain belief in the Oneness of God should lead us—as it did Prophet Muhammad—to the following beliefs:

(i) The belief that everything happens for a reason. We look for the good and positive in whatever happens.

(ii) The belief that there is no such thing as failure, only results or outcomes. If we are able to train a falcon to hunt for us, al-Ghazzali uses as an example, we can train and discipline our rational faculty to control our passions. Al-Ghazzali says that we should not expect immediate results. Change is gradual. We need to develop patience, a great virtue in his view.

(iii) The belief that we must take responsibility for whatever happens. No matter what happens, know and believe that we are in charge. The Prophet never blamed others for whatever happened. He never allowed himself to be a victim. As the Quran says: “Truly, God alters not a folk until they alter what is within themselves.” (Q. 13:11)

(iv) The belief that we need to learn from other people who are our greatest resource. Treat them with respect and dignity as the Prophet did.

(v) The belief that we need to challenge our profession or line of work and excel in it. Explore new ways of doing things. Increase our sense of curiosity and vitality.

(vi) The belief that there is no success without commitment. Know our outcome in the Hereafter as the Prophet knew. Develop our sensory responses so we know what we are getting and then continue to refine it until we get what we want. Study the key beliefs of the Prophet and then hold tight to them.

In al-Ghazzali’s view, if we firmly believe we are among those “who submit to God’s Will” (muslim), then with our cognition, affect and behavior as understood from the monotheistic point of view as our foundation, we can submit in everything that we say or do. What we believe to be true becomes possible when we know what we want—to be one who submits to God’s will—and believe we can achieve it.

Strategies

Developing a strategy is to duplicate our belief system. When we organize the way we think, the way we feel and the way we behave according to our belief system, we have developed a strategy. The ingredients of our strategy are our human experiences. Our experiences are fed from our five outer senses: seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting and touching. Our five senses motivate us to action. When we are aware of what they perceive and keep their perceptions in line with our belief system, we have developed a successful strategy.

The amounts we use of the information provided by our senses is monitored by our spiritual heart (mind). Are the images small or large, bright or unclear, close up or far away? How we put these together, their order and sequence clarifies our strategy.

With our resource being our “self” consisting of body, spirit, soul and spiritual heart (it is our spiritual heart that centers us), we want to learn what we need to do to organize this resource. How can we have our goal and belief achieve the greatest potential? What is the most effective way to use the resource of our “self” and its subparts? The most effective strategy has always been modeling the behavior of others who have the same goal and the same belief. For the believer, this model is that of the Messenger Muhammad who was the perfect human being.

Strategies he used included performing the prescribed fast as well as formal prayer, supplication and continuous recitation of the revelation. For the believer, revelation brought both a Law and a Way. Both serve as strategies of how to approach life in the manner in which the model approached life, and knowing that our model did not always do things exactly the same way.

The strategy of Quranic recitation is yet another form of discipline. One of the verses of the Qur’an: “Remember Me and I will remember you.” (Q. 2:152) makes this form of supplication a very rich traditional strategy to attain spiritual energy.

The Second Fundamental: States

(Affect, Emotion)
Our belief establishes states (emotions, affect) which then result in our actions. In this relationship and all others, our state of mind is important because that determines our emotion and our emotion determines how many resources are available to us. Our emotions depend upon how we feel physically—our breathing, posture, etc.—and how we represent the world to ourselves internally. When we have cleared our spiritual heart of hypocrisy in our acts of worship, our actions are to worship God and we are at the beginning stages of the greater struggle according to al-Ghazzali.

States (affect, emotion) are held or transformed in terms of psychology through moral values that energize us. Our behavior is the result of the state we are in at the time. Our emotional state governs our behavior. Behavior is the result of how we represent the information from our senses internally as well as our muscular tension, posture, physiology.

We have the resources we need to succeed. We have to learn how to access them. We need to learn to take direct control. Once we learn to manage our states (emotions), according to al-Ghazzali, we can modify our behavior. There is a difference of how people react to the same state. The difference depends on their model.

One of the best methods which al-Ghazzali uses over and over again in the Alchemy is that of what is today called reframing: changing the way we evaluate what something means. If our culture teaches us that change is a failure of opportunity for learning, we need to become resourceful, to realize that nothing has power over us but the power we give it by our own conscious thoughts. The meaning of any experience depends on the frame we put around it. If we change the context or reference point, the process changes.

We can reframe by context reframing or content reframing. With context reframing, we take a bad experience and show it in another way. With content reframing, we drastically change how we see, hear, or represent a situation. We learn to change the way we represent a situation so we feel differently about it. Now we are at the level of choice instead of reaction. By learning to reframe, we change our emotions so that they empower us. We can either associate or disassociate. If we associate consciously, we learn to change the way we represent things, thereby changing our behavior. We have to aim for congruence between our spiritual heart (mind) and body.

Clarity of Moral Values

Clarity of values gives us a sense of who we are and why we do what we do. If we have an internal conflict between our values and our strategy, we will not succeed. Values determine what really matters in life. They provide us with a basis from which to make sound judgments about what makes life worth living.

Al-Ghazzali refers to verses 23:1-10 of the Quran as an example of believers who have succeeded by incorporating Quranic values:

Surely, the ones who believe prospered, those, they, who in their formal prayers are ones who are humble and they, those who from idle talk, are ones who turn aside and they, those who the purifying alms are ones who do give and they, those who of their private parts, are ones who guard, but from their spouses or from what their right hands possessed. Truly, they are ones who are irreproachable. Whoever was looking for something beyond that, then, those, they are the ones who turn away. And those, they who their trusts and their compacts are ones who shepherd and those, they who over their formal prayers are watchful, those, they are ones who will inherit. (Q. 23:1-10)

Al-Ghazzali then summarizes the verses to describe a person of good character.

A person of good character is he who is modest, says little, causes little trouble, speaks the truth, seeks the good, worships much, has few faults, meddles little, desires the good for all, and does good works for all. He is compassionate, dignified, measured, patient, content, grateful, sympathetic, friendly, abstinent, and not greedy. He does not use foul language, nor does he exhibit haste, nor does he harbor hatred in his heart. He is not envious. He is candid, well-spoken, and his friendship and enmity, his anger and his pleasure are for the sake of God Most High and nothing more.

In the Alchemy (as well as in the Revival), al-Ghazzali devotes the major part of the work to clarity of moral values by describing in great detail what he calls the Destroyers and the Deliverers. He not only describes them in each of those parts, but offers treatment as to how to get rid of them (the Destroyers) or how to incorporate them into our personality (the Deliverers). Doing this clarifies the moral values of the one who submits to God's Will.

As a result of the performance of the acts of worship, if accompanied by Divine Grace, the one who submits to the Will of God will be receptive to the adoption of positive dispositions (the Deliverers) like temperance, courage, wisdom, and justice and be able to
avoid negative dispositions (the Destroyers) like anger, fear of other than God, cowardice, lust, envy, apathy, preconsciousness (knowing that you do not know), unconsciousness (not knowing that you do not know) and overconsciousness (knowing but deceiving the self about it), but only on the condition that others benefit from the positive dispositions one has attained. This, then, makes it obligatory on the one who has submitted to the Will of God to come to know and act upon the commands that underlie the relationship of self to others.

**Energy**

The entire human organism is a complete system that makes use of energy transformed from food and air to satisfy its various natural dispositions. Perception (external and internal senses) and motivation develop, according to traditional psychology, from the animal soul. Motivation is the seat of impulses towards inclinations which are imprinted on the external or internal senses and then, through filtering into what is called the practical intellect (the mind), a response is given. Three energy sources are active in this perspective: natural (venial, tabiyya), vital (arterial, nafsaniyah), and nervous (hawañiyah). These transformed energies are distributed throughout the body. The heart is considered to be the point of contact between the energy of the body and that of the self.

Without the necessary energy, which according to al-Ghazzali comes from spiritual practices, we reach a state of hopelessness and despair. For instance, if someone asked: “If one has been condemned to hardship, what is the benefit of the greater struggle?” Al-Ghazzali explains this attitude:

> Your question is valid. These words are correct in that they are the cause of the illness of our heart. That is, when a sign of a concept that a person has been condemned to hardship falls upon his heart, they cause him to make no effort, neither sowing nor reaping. Such a sign would be when a person who has been condemned to death becomes hungry the thought occurs in his heart not to eat. He says: “What good is bread to me?” He does not extend his hand to eat and he does not eat until by necessity he dies. If he has been condemned to poverty, he says: “Of what use is sowing seed?” so he neither sows nor reaps. And he for whom happiness has been decreed, he has been made aware that wealth and life have been decreed for him. They have been decreed because he has cultivated, done business, and consumed. Therefore, this decree is not invalid; rather it has reasons. 11

**The Third Fundamental: Actions**

(Behavior)

Knowledge alone is not sufficient for we who accepted the trusteeship of nature and were endowed with the Divine Spirit which includes our abilities to choose, to discern, and to gain consciousness of our “self.” It is through actions based on knowledge that the centered self benefits another as proof of being centered. The major pillars include ritual purity (taharah) and ritual prayer (salah), ritual fast (saum), the paying of the alms tax (zakah), the pilgrimage (hajj), counseling to positive dispositions and preventing the development of negative ones (amr bil maruf wa nahy an al-munkar) and jihad or struggle in the Way of God, the greater struggle of which is the inward struggle of the self (jihad al-akbar). The last two are the major concern of traditional psychology.

**Bonding Power or Rapport**

Bonding and communicating are aspects of action—proof of the extent of transformation through attaining the goal that we had intended. The power to bond with others is another extraordinary human power. It comes in the true sense when bonding develops from the heart and not from either the intellect or the passions. It comes from a deep love for one’s fellow human being and arises when we try to meet the needs of others before our own needs, much like a mother with her new born child.

Al-Ghazzali quoting from the Quran, the Prophet and the Companions mentions how important it is to eat with other people and to perform the formal obligatory prayer with other people.

**Communicators**

Believers should conceivably be master communicators on all three levels—with self, with others and with the Source. How we
communicate determines the quality of our lives. Through spiritual disciplines like, for example, prescribed fasting, believers are given an opportunity, a challenge. If they are able to communicate that challenge to themselves successfully, they will find the ability to change. This is not to accept prescribed fasting as only a religious duty but rather as a divine challenge, as a chance for growth instead of an experience which limits self. In this way we will become master communicators because our very life will communicate our vision, goal and beliefs to others to help them change for the better, as well.

Relationship To Others

Al-Ghazzali discusses knowledge (cognition), states (affect) and action (behavior) in three relationships: our relationship with others; our relationship with our Creator-Guide; and our relationship with our “self.”

The model for this is the sunnah of Muhammad who said, “I was sent to complete the noble qualities of dispositions,” explaining that God loves the positive dispositions and not the negative ones. Al-Ghazzali also quotes another Tradition in this regard, “By Him in whose hand is my life, no one shall enter paradise except the one who has positive dispositions.” Al-Ghazzali says, “God taught [Muhammad] all the fine qualities of disposition, praiseworthy paths, reports about the first and last affairs, and matters through which one achieves salvation and reward in future life and happiness and reward in the world to come.”

Quoting the Traditions, al-Ghazzali shows the relationship established by the Prophet with others.

And the Messenger said: “There are not two persons who love each other for the sake of God that the one most beloved by God is the one loves the other the most.” And he said: “God Most High says: ‘My love is a right for those who visit one another for My sake, who love each other for My sake, who are generous to each other with their wealth for My sake, and who aid each other for My sake.’” And he said: “On the Day of Resurrection God Most High will say: ‘Where are those persons who loved each other for My sake so that I may keep them in My shadow on this day when there is no shade for the people in which to take refuge?’” And he said: “There are seven persons on the Day of Resurrection who, when there will be no shade for anyone, will be in the shadow of God Most High: the just leader (imam), the young person who began worshipping God Most High at the beginning of his youth, the man who leaves the mosque with his heart attached to the mosque until he returns to it again, two people who love each other for the sake of God Most High and who come together for that and separate for that, the person who remembers God Most High in private and whose eyes fill with tears, and the man who when called by a magnificent and beautiful woman says to her: ‘I fear God Most High,’ and the man who gives voluntary charity with his right hand so that the left hand has no knowledge of it.” And he said: “No one visits a brother for the sake of God Most High save that an angel cries out, saying: ‘Be happy and blessed! Thine is the heaven of God Most High!’”

And he said: “A man was going to visit a friend. God Most High sent an angel in his path who asked: ‘Where are you going?’ He replied: ‘To visit such-and-such a brother.’ (The angel) asked: ‘Do you have some business with him?’ He said: ‘No.’ (The angel) asked: ‘Are you related to him in some way?’ He said: ‘No.’ (The angel) asked: ‘Has he done something good for you?’ He answered: ‘No.’ (The angel) said: ‘Then why are you going to him?’ He answered: ‘I love him for the sake of God.’ (The angel) said: “Then, God Most High has sent me to you to give you the good news that God Most High loves you because of your love for him, and has made heaven an obligation for both of you yourselves.” And the Messenger said: “The strongest resort of faith is love and enmity for the sake of God Most High.”

Al-Ghazzali describes relationships with others ranking them in degrees.

The first degree is that you love someone for some reason linked with him, but that motive is religious and for the sake of God Most High; as you like your teacher because he teaches you knowledge. That friendship is of a divine nature since your aim for (acquiring) this knowledge is the Hereafter, not rank or wealth. If the object be the world, that friendship is not of that kind. If you love your student so that he learn from you and may obtain the pleasure of God Most High through learning, (you) too obtain the spiritual reward of teaching. This is for the sake of God Most High. But if you love (him) for the sake of dignity and retinue, it will not be of that kind. If a person gives voluntary charity and likes a person on the condition that he deliver that to the poor; or he invites some friends for the sake of God Most High save that an angel cries out, saying: ‘Be happy and blessed! Thine is the heaven of God Most High,’ and has made heaven an obligation for both of you yourselves.” And the Messenger said: “The strongest resort of faith is love and enmity for the sake of God Most High.”

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The second degree is greater. It is that one love a person for the sake of God without having any expectations from him; instead, it is by reason of obedience to God and for the love of Him that he loves the other. Moreover, because he is a servant of God and created by Him—such friendship is divine. It is greater because this arises from the excess of one’s love of God Most High, so much so that it reaches the boundaries of passionate love. Whoever is in love with someone, loves (that person’s) district and neighborhood. He loves the walls of (that person’s) house; indeed, he loves the dog roaming the quarter’s streets, and he likes that dog more than other (dogs). He is compelled to love the friend of his beloved, and beloved of his beloved, the people who obey the commands of his beloved; (the beloved’s) servants, captives, or relatives; all of these he loves out of necessity, for his love spreads to whatever has a relation with his beloved. As his love increases so it does with the others who follow and are connected with the beloved. 13

Establishing the Relationship

Between the Self and Our Creator-Guide

This relationship is established, according to al-Ghazzali, through the commands of worship (ibadah), which are the most fundamental means of communication between our “self” and God. They embody the same three aspects: knowledge (cognition), states (affect, process) and action (behavior). One who submits to the Will of God seeks knowledge of particular guidance. This produces a “state” (emotion) in the self which then responds with an action as al-Ghazzali explains:

Know that object and kernel of all acts of worship are the remembrance of God Most High; that the buttress of Islam is obligatory formal prayer, the object of which is the remembrance of God Most High. As He said: Surely (formal) prayer prevents lewdness and evil, and indeed the remembrance of God is greater (than all else). (Q. 29:45)

Reading the Quran is the most meritorious of the acts of worship, for the reason that it is the word of God Most High: (reading or reciting it) is remembering Him. Everything that is in it all cause a renewal of the remembrance of God, may He be praised and exalted. The object of fasting is the reduction of the carnal appetite so that the heart, liberated from the annoyance of the carnal appetites, becomes purified and the abode of remembrance; for when the heart is filled with carnal appetite, it is not possible to remember (Him), nor does (the remembrance) affect one. The object of the greater pilgrimage, which is a visit to the House of God, is the remembrance of the Lord of that House and the incitement of longing for meeting Him.

Thus the inner mystery and the kernel of all of the acts of worship are remembrance. Indeed, the basis of Islam is the declaration: “there is no god but Go d”; this is the source of remembrance. All other acts of worship stress this remembrance. God’s remembrance of you is the fruit of your remembrance of Him, what fruit could be greater than this? For this He said: So remember Me, I shall remember you. (Q. 2:152)

This remembrance must be continuous. If it is not continuous, it should be most of the time; for salvation is tied to it. For this He said: And remember God much; perhaps you will be successful. (Q. 62:10) He says that if you have the hope of salvation, the key to that is much remembrance, not a little, and more frequently, not less.

And for this He said: Those who remember God standing, sitting, and lying down. (Q. 3:191) He praised these people because they do not neglect (remembrance) standing, sitting, lying down, or in any condition. And He said: Remember thy Lord, (O Muhammad), within thyself humbly and with awe, in a soft voice, in the morning and in the evening, and be not of the negligent. (Q. 7:205) He said: “Remember Him with weeping, fear, and in concealment, morning and evening, and do not neglect (this) at any time.”

The Messenger was asked: “What is the best of acts?” He answered: “That you die with your tongue moist with the remembrance of God Most High.” And he said: “Should I not inform you of the best of your actions—the most acceptable to the King, may He be exalted—and your highest degrees, that which is better than giving alms of silver and gold, and better than shedding your blood in battle against enemies in defense of the faith?” They asked: “What is that, O Messenger of God?” He said: “The remembrance of God.” The remembrance of God Most High! And he said: “Whoever remembering me engages in worshipful supplication of God, his gift is, in my opinion, greater and better than giving (charity) to beggars.” And he said: “The rememberer of God Most High among the heedless is like a living person amongst the dead, or like a green tree amongst dead vegetation, or like the warrior for the faith who stands fighting amongst those fleeing. . .” In summary, the strength of one’s love for God Most High is in accordance with the strength of one’s faith. The stronger one’s faith, the more overwhelming one’s love is. 15

Know Your “Self”
The most important relationship for the purposes of traditional psychology is that of our relationship to our “self.” Our “self” as we have seen, consists of body, spirit, soul and spiritual heart. We turn now to the Alchemy’s Prolegomena (added here by al-Ghazzali, it does not appear in the Revival) where al-Ghazzali explores how to come to know the “self” in great detail.

The traditional method of teaching a text is for the teacher to read it part by part with a class of students and then comment on what the text is saying. This is the method used next taking just the first subsection of Topic One of the Prolegomena, “Knowing Yourself” which appears in the following paragraphs in bold. The commentary and explanations that follow are enhanced with other sections of al-Ghazzali’s writings in the Alchemy which are inset for clarity. If we were sitting in al-Ghazzali’s classroom, this is the method he would be using.

Notes to the Introduction

1 See works like Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief by Herbert Benson; Why God Won’t Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief by Andrew Newberg, Eugene D’Aquili and Vince Rause; and Handbook of Religion and Health edited by Harold G. Koniz, Michael McCullough and David B. Larsed.

2 Other well known writers and poets born in Tous include Abu Yazid Bistami, Husayn bin Mansur Hallaj, Abu Said Abil-Khayr, Nizam al-Mulk, Ferdousi and Umar Khayyam.

3 See Bibliography to the Introduction for the numerous books that detail the life of al-Ghazzali. It is interesting to note that al-Ghazzali wrote the Alchemy of Happiness when the First Crusade ruled Jerusalem. Saladin arrived on the scene seventy-seven years after al-Ghazzali’s death.

4 See below for the definition of traditional psychology which historically was called the science of ethics or practical wisdom (hikmat al-amali).

5 Knowledge and the Sacred, p. 68.

6 Alchemy, p 841.

7 This is a clear distinction with modern secular psychology which is limited to only treating a human being part by part instead of holistically. See Alchemy p 817.

8 Alchemy, p 358.

9 Alchemy, p 116.

10 Alchemy, p 525.

11 Alchemy, p 780.

12 Alchemy, p 358.

13 Alchemy, p 360.

14 Alchemy, pp 221-222.

15 Ibid.

al-Ghazzali’s Foreword to The Alchemy of Happiness

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Thee do we ask for help

Abundant gratitude and thanks, in the number of the stars in the sky, the droplets of the rain, the leaves of the trees, the grains of sand in the desert, and the particles of the earth and the sky, to that God Whose attribute is Oneness, and Whose special nature is Majesty and Grandeur, Greatness and Superiority, and Glory and Goodness. No created being is cognizant of the perfection of His Majesty.
No one other than He may penetrate the true reality of His knowledge; indeed, the declaration of our inability to do so is the limit of the knowledge of the truly righteous. The confession of (their) shortcomings in praising and appreciating Him is the farthest limit of the angels’ and the prophets’ appreciation of Him.

The farthest limit (achieved by) human reason through the principles of the Illumination of His sublimity is bewilderment. The ultimate end of the journey of the wayfarers and disciples in their search for proximity to His awesome beauty is astonishment. Abandoning hope in the principle of (striving for) the knowledge of Him is the denial of His attributes while the claim to a perfect knowledge of Him is the imagining of a similitude and a likening. The portion for all the eyes that would gaze upon the beauty of His essence is bedazzlement, and the fruit of the contemplation of the wonders of His creation to all intellects is necessary knowledge.

Let no one reflect upon the Nature and the What of the vastness of His essence! Let no heart neglect for one moment the wonders of His creation and (question) the nature and origin of His existence, so that one necessarily recognizes that all are the signs of His power and the lights of His grandeur. All these are the inventions and marvels of His wisdom. All are the rays of the beauty of His presence. All are His; indeed, the existence of all things is (but) a ray of the light of His existence.

Praise be to Muhammad the Chosen One, upon whom be the peace and blessings of God, who is the lord of the prophets and the guide and the way for the believers. He is the trustee of the secrets of divinity, chosen and selected by the Divine Presence; and (praise be) to his helpers and the people of his house, each one of whom is a model for the nation and a discloser of the Way of the Religious Law.

Now, know that mankind was not created frivolously or upon a whim; instead, his role is grand and his peril is great. Though man is not eternal and does not live forever, though his body is earth and clay, the truth of his soul is exalted and divine. His essence—though it is mixed and permeated in the beginning with bestial, wild, and devilish characteristics—is cleansed of these impurities and becomes fit for the Divine Presence when he strives to repent. From the lowest of the low to the highest of the high, all the dips and rises are (man’s) work. The lowest of the low is he who descends to the level of beasts, ferocious animals, and devils. He is the prisoner of his carnal appetite and anger. The highest of the high is he who attains the level of the angels and is liberated from his carnal appetite and anger. Both of them (appetite and anger) become his prisoners and he their ruler. When he attains such sovereignty, he becomes worthy of service to the Divine Presence, and such worthiness is the attribute of the angels and the perfection of the state of man. When he enjoys the pleasure of the beauty of the Divine Presence, he will not be able to withhold himself from its contemplation for one moment. Gazing upon that beauty becomes his heaven. That “heaven” which is the result of the appetite of the eyes, the genitals, and the stomach will be abridged for him. Since the essence of man is, at the outset of creation, deficient and base, it is not possible for him to attain the stage of perfection from this deficiency without strenuous effort and treatment.

al-Ghazzali’s Excursus

Just as that alchemy that transforms copper and bronze to the purity and beauty of pure gold is difficult and not known by everyone; so too the alchemy that will transform the essence of man from his baseness and bestiality to the purity and preciousness of the angelic state in order to achieve everlasting happiness is also difficult and not known by all. The purpose of this book is to describe the compounding of this alchemy which, in truth, is the alchemy of eternal (spiritual) happiness. With this in mind, I have named this book *The Alchemy of Happiness*.

The noun *Alchemy* is preferred because the difference between copper and gold lies not in yellowness and the reward of this alchemy is nothing more than (mere) wealth in this world. How long does this world itself last? How great is the difference between bestial and angelic attributes, from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high? But, the fruit of this *Alchemy of Happiness* is eternal; there is no limit to it! Its varieties of pleasure have no end, nor shall any annoyance tarnish its pleasure.

Know that the philosopher’s stone (of the alchemist) is not to be found in any old woman’s cupboard; rather it is found in the treasury of kings. So, too, the alchemy of happiness is not everywhere; it is in the Divine Treasury. And the Treasury of God is the essence of the angels in the heavens and the hearts of the prophets on earth. So, whoever, other than the noble prophets, seeks to achieve this alchemy is in error. In the season of the Resurrection, his insolvency will be disclosed and his false coinage made public. His imaginings will disgrace him, and it will be said to him: *Now We have removed from thee thy covering and piercing is thy sight this day.* (Q 50:22)

Of the greatest of the mercies of God Most High, one is that He sent 124,000 prophets to mankind for this purpose: to teach them the formula of this alchemy and to inform them how to place the soul ( *dil*) in the crucible of striving, and how to cleanse from it the
immoral characteristics from which come the wickedness and tarnishing of the soul, and how to draw the praiseworthy attributes to it. It was for this, as God Most High himself gloried in His Own sovereignty and purity, that He further glorified (Himself) by sending the prophets, may God bless them all. And He tasked them, saying:

All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth glorifieth God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the Mighty, the Wise. It is He Who hath sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own, to recite unto them His revelations and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and Wisdom, though before (this) they were indeed in manifest error. (Q. 62:1-2)

This purifying them is to cleanse them of the unbecoming traits that are the attributes of brutish beasts. Teaching them the Book and Wisdom is that mankind be clothed in the raiment of angelic attributes.

The object of this alchemy is to strip away all that should not be (the attributes of deficiency); and to adorn (a person) with what should be (the attributes of perfection). The secret of this alchemy is that one must turn away from this world and bring oneself to God Most High, as He first taught the Prophet (S), saying: Remember the name of thy Lord and devote thyself to Him, a great devotion. (Q. 73:8) The meaning of devotion is to cut oneself off from all else and give one’s self to Him in its entirety.

In short, this alchemy is that, but its explanation is lengthy.

On Patience and Gratitude

Know that repentance does not come without patience; indeed, no performance of any act of devotion, nor the abstention from any sin, comes without patience. It was for this that the Messenger (S) was asked: “What is faith?” He replied: “Patience.” 1 In another Tradition, he said: “Patience is one half of faith.” It is because of the importance of patience that God Most High has mentioned “patience” more than seventy times in the Quran. 2 Every degree which is superior (to a previous one) has been conferred with patience. Even leadership in the way of religion has been conferred with patience. And He said: And We made from amongst them leaders, guiding by Our command, and they endured patiently and they had firm faith in Our signs. (Q. 32:24) He delivered to them a limitless and uncountable reward with patience, and He said: surely, the patient will be paid their wages without reckoning. (Q. 39:10) He promised the patient that He is with them when He said: Surely God is with the patient. (Q. 2:153) Blessings, mercy, and guidance: these three have not come together except for the patient: He said: Upon them are blessings from their Lord, and mercy, and they are rightly guided. (Q. 2:157)

It is because of the importance of the virtue of patience that God Most High valued it and did not bestow it upon every person, except for a few of His Own friends, for the Messenger (S) said: “The least of that which has been brought to you is certainty and firm intention of patience.” He said: “The least of the things which have been given you are certainty and patience. And to whomever these two have been given say: Have no fear if one does not have much formal prayer and fasting. If ye be patient and do not alter that which ye hold today with the Companions, I prefer that to the performance by each one of you the acts of devotion of all of you (added) together. But I fear that the way of the world be spread open to you so that after me, ye will deny one another. The inhabitants of the heavens will deny you. Whoever is steadfast and keeps his eye on spiritual reward will obtain that spiritual reward completely. Be patient, for the world does not endure, but the spiritual reward of God Most High does: That which is with you comes to an end, but that which is with God endures; and surely We shall compensate those who were patient according to the best of what they did. (Q. 16:96)

And the Messenger (S) said: “Patience is a treasure of the treasures of Paradise.” And he said: “If patience were a man, he would be a generous man and God Most High loves the patient.” Revelation came to David (A): “Follow my example in character, and one of the qualities of my character is that I am very patient.” Jesus (A) said: “Ye shall not obtain that which ye desire so long as ye are not patient with that which ye do not desire.” The Messenger (S) saw a group of the Helpers. He asked: “Are ye believers?” They replied: “Yes.” He asked: “What is the sign of your faith?” They said: “We give thanks in ease and are patient in adversity and we are pleased with the decree of God.” He said: “By the Lord of the Ka’bah, ye are believers!” ‘Ali (R) said: “Patience is to faith as the head is to the body. Whoever does not have a head, does not have a body; whoever does not have patience, does not have faith.”

The True Nature of Patience

Know that patience is a human trait; brutish beasts do not have patience and are very deficient. Angels have no need of patience, for they are the extremity of perfection and free from appetite. Thus, beasts are subjugated by appetite alone. They have no importuner other than appetite, while the angels are immersed in the love of the Divine Presence. There is no obstacle for them to be patient in the overcoming of it.

Moreover, at first, a human being is created in the character of the beasts, and the craving for food, clothing, decoration, amusement, and play have been made dominant over him. Then, at the time of puberty, a light from the angelic lights appears in him and he sees the results of affairs in that light. Indeed, two angels have been appointed over him, of which the beasts are deprived. One angel guides him and shows him the way by means of a light which spreads to him from the lights of the angel so that he recognizes the end of affairs and sees the prudence of affairs, until he comes to know himself and God Most High by that light. He understands that the end result of the appetites is total destruction, even if there be delight for the moment. He understands that his pleasure and ease are
quickly transitory, while his sorrow will be long lasting. This guidance is not for the beasts.

However, this guidance is not sufficient, for if one learns that (something) causes loss and that one does not possess the power to ward it off, what is the benefit? A sick person knows that the disease is harmful to him, but he is unable to repulse it. Therefore, God, may He be praised, has appointed the other angel over him to give him strength and power and to support and direct him so that he will refrain from that which he has learned is harmful to him. As it is his need that he control his lusts, something else must appear in him to oppose that in order to escape harm in the future. This compulsion for opposition is that of the angelic hosts, while the compulsion to give rein to the appetites is that of the demonic hosts. This compulsion to oppose the carnal appetite is what we call the "religious impulse," and the compulsion to give rein to the carnal appetites we call the "carnal impulse."

As a result, there is continuous warfare and opposition between these two armies. One says: "Do it!" while the other says: "Do it not!" One remains continually between these two importuning (forces). If the religious impulse is dug in firmly in the battle with the carnal impulse and is steadfast, its steadfastness) is called "patience." Therefore, that is the meaning of patience. If it overcomes the carnal impulse and repulses it, its triumph is called "victory." While the battle continues in him, this is called "the earnest striving against the self." So, the meaning of patience is the remaining firm of the religious impulse in opposition against the carnal impulse. Wherever these two opposing armies are not present, there is no patience. This is because there is no need of patience for the angels, while beasts and children do not themselves have the power of patience.

Know that these two angels whom we have mentioned are their Recording Angels. To whomever the way of opinion and ratiocination has been opened, he knows that for every occurrence there is a cause. When two things are in opposition, two opposing causes are need. He sees that for a beast or a child there is at first no guidance and no insight to understand the consequences of acts. (A child) does not have the motivation or the strength to be patient, but when approaching puberty, both appear (in him). He knows that two causes are needed for this and those two angels are the expressions of those two causes. He also knows that guidance is the source and its precursor. Then power and will work with it.

Consequently, that angel whose brief is guidance is nobler and superior, so that the right-hand side of the breast is certain for him. Thou art the breast; they are thy guardians. Therefore, he is the angel of the right hand. Since he is charged with thee, when thou listen to him in order to obtain guidance and spiritual insight, thy hearkening is (counted as) a good deed that thou hast performed. It is recorded as one of thy good deeds because thou hast not left (the angel of the right hand) neglected. And if thou turnest away and neglect him so that thou remain like children and beasts, deprived of the guidance as to consequences, this is an evil deed which thou will have committed with respect to (that angel) and to thyself, and it will be recorded against thy. In the same way, if thou utilizest that strength which thou hast obtained from the other for opposing the carnal appetites and strive earnestly, that is a good deed. If thou doth not, it is a bad deed. Both inscribe these states in thy ledgers. Though they are inside thy soul, they are hidden from thy soul.

These two angels and their ledgers are not of this visible world, nor can they be seen with the eye (of this world). When death comes and the eyes of this visible (world) are closed, another eye by which one can see the angelic world opens and one sees these ledgers at hand and thou mayest see them. At the Lesser Resurrection, thou wilt be informed about that. As for its exposition, thou wilt see that in the Greater Resurrection. The Lesser Resurrection is at the time of death, as the Messenger (S) said: "His Resurrection is ready for whoever dies. " Whatever is in the Greater Resurrection is foreshadowed in the Lesser Resurrection. We have discussed the details of this in The Revival; it would exceed the capacity of this book.

The point is that thou know that patience is a battlefield, and a battlefield is a place where there are two opposing armies. These two armies—one is the angelic cavalry and the other is the demonic cavalry—are gathered in the human breast. Therefore, the first step in the way of religion is involving oneself in this battle, for the demonic hosts have seized the field of the breast in childhood, and the angelic hosts have appeared at the approach of puberty. Consequently, so long as one has not triumphed over the carnal appetite, one will not achieve his (spiritual) happiness. So long as one does not fight and is not steadfast in battle, one will not prevail. Whoever does not involve himself in this war is he who has surrendered his guardianship to Satan. And whoever has controlled his appetite and made it obedient to the Law has prevailed over it, is as the Messenger (S) said: “God aided me in the battle with Satan so that he surrendered to me.” Usually one is engaged in earnest struggle. One time there is victory, another time rout; one time appetite prevails, and another time the religious impulse. That fortress will not be conquered save with patience and steadfastness.

**Disclosing Why Patience Is One Half of Faith and Why Fasting Is One Half of Patience**

Know that faith is not (just) one thing. Rather, it has many branches and kinds. As it is related in the Traditions, there are seventy-odd gateways to faith. The greatest of these is the declaration: *There is no god save God,* and the least is picking up trash from the road. No matter how many of these types there are, their sources are of three types: various kinds of (spiritual) knowledge, states, and deeds. No station of the stations of faith is devoid of these three.

For example, the true nature of repentance is remorse and this is a state of the soul. Its source is the knowledge that sin is a lethal poison. The corollary of this is that one should restrain one’s hand from sinning and become occupied with devotion. Thus, that state and this knowledge and these acts (of restraint and devotion), all three, are parts of faith and faith consists of these three. But, it may be that it is only credited to (spiritual) knowledge, because the source of this is that state which appears from knowledge; and from that state deeds are born. So, (spiritual) knowledge is like a tree, the alteration of the states of the soul due to knowledge are like the branches of the tree, and the deeds which are born from those states are like the fruit of the tree.
Disclosing the Necessity for Patience at All Times

Know that at all times the servant (of God) is not devoid of things that are in agreement with his desire, or in opposition to it. In both circumstances, patience is a necessity:

As for that which is in agreement with one’s desire, such as wealth, comfort, rank, bodily health, wife, children according to his wish, and the likes of these, steadfastness and patience is never more important than in these circumstances. For, if one does not take hold of himself and he exceeds the limits in ease and comfort and sets his heart upon them and becomes attached to them, hubris and tyranny are born in him. Indeed, it has been said that everyone is patient in adversity, but not in well-being—except the truly righteous person. When wealth and comfort became abundant in the time of the Companions, they said: “We were better able to be steadfast the time when we endured hardships than we are now when we are in comfort and wealth.” About this God Most High said: [And know] that your possessions and your children are a test. (Q. 8:28)

In short, being steadfastly patient in prosperity is difficult. The greatest defence against that is not being prosperous. Patience in ease is that one does not set one’s heart upon it or rejoice excessively because of it. He knows that is a loan and that it will soon be taken back. Indeed, one does not consider it itself to be comfort, for it itself is the cause of a loss of his degrees at the Resurrection. Therefore, he must engage himself in expressing gratitude for (those blessings) that God Most High gives of wealth and bodily health, and for every blessing that he has. In every one of these, patience is necessary.

As for those conditions that were are not in agreement with his desire, they are of three kinds: one is that which is of his choosing, such as devotion and the abandonment of sins; another is that which is not of his choosing, such as calamity and tragedy; and the other is that which is not originally of his choosing, but for which he has a choice in fending off or exacting retribution, such as in the annoyance of people.

As for that which is of one’s choosing, such as acts of devotion, patience is a necessity in that, as some acts of worship are difficult because they are tiring, such as formal prayer. Some are (difficult) because of stinginess, such as paying the poor rate. Some are from both—such as the Greater Pilgrimage—which are not possible (of fulfillment) without steadfast patience. In every act of devotion, patience is a necessity: at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. As for the beginning, one acquires sincerity in the declaration of the Intention, keeps it firm, and banishes hypocrisy from the soul. This is a difficult kind of steadfastness. Another is that one remain steadfast during (the performance of the act of devotion) according to its conditions and rules so that it not be tainted with any other thing. If it is to be during formal prayer, one should not look about or harbor any worldly thoughts. As for the end of the act of worship, one must be patient about disclosing what one has done and talking about it, and one must be steadfast with respect to vanity about that.

As for sins, there is no doubt but that abstention from them is not possible without patience. However much the appetite is stronger, the sinning is easier. It is for this reason that patience with respect to the sins of the tongue is more difficult, for the tongue is brought into action more easily. When talkativeness becomes a habit, the habit becomes nature. One of the armies of Satan is habit and it is because of this that tongue is fluent in slander, lies, self-praise, the defamation of others, and the like. There is a great suffering in being patient about uttering the words that will astonish and please people. For the most part, one cannot keep oneself from being involved, except by seeking safety in seclusion.

As for the second kind, it is that which is not of one’s choosing, such as people’s annoying him by hand and tongue, but he has a choice with regard to retaliation. It has the need of perfect patience to refrain from retaliation, or to keep oneself within proper limits when retaliating. One of the Companions says: “We did not count belief as belief so long as it was not accompanied by patience in (the face of) the vexations caused by others.” It was for this that God Most High said to the Messenger (S): “Let them torment thee and trust in Me”. Heed not their hurt and put thy trust in God. (Q. 33:48) He said: “Be patient with what they say and cut (thyself) off from them courteously”: And bear with patience what they utter and part from them with a fair leaving. (Q. 73:10) And He
Once the Messenger (S) was distributing goods. Someone said: "This is not for God"; that is, it was not just. The Messenger (S) was informed about this. He turned red and became upset, and then said: "May God have mercy upon my brother Moses (A) for he was troubled even more and remained patient for the sake of God." And he said: "God Most High says: If ye are punished and ye retaliate, ye have done several times (worse). If ye are patient, it would be better. If ye punish, then punish with the like of that wherewith ye were afflicted, but if ye endure patiently; truly, it is better for the patient. (Q. 16:126) And I saw written in the Gospel that Jesus (A) said: "The people who have come before me said: ‘Cut off a hand for a hand, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,’ and I do not nullify that, but I counsel you that ye not meet evil with evil. Rather, if someone strikes the right side of your face, present the left side. If a person takes your sash, give him your tunic. If someone takes you with himself a mile by force, go with him two miles." And the Messenger (S) said: "Give to whoever deprives you (of something). Do good to whoever does evil to you." Such patience belongs to the degree of truly righteous.

As for the third kind, which is that its beginning and the end are not dependent upon thy will, it is tragedy, such as the death of a child, or financial ruin, the ruin of body parts such as the eyes, ears, hands, and all other heaven-sent calamities, there is no patience more spiritually rewarding than that concerned with (these).

Ibn ‘Abbas says: "In the Quran there are three degrees of patience: steadfast patience in devotion increases devotion by three-hundred degrees; then, there are six-hundred degrees for steadfast patience in refraining from that which is forbidden; and third, steadfast patience in refraining from sin at the beginning of a sin, and there are nine-hundred degrees for that." And know that patience in public is the degree of the truly righteous. It was for this that the Messenger (S) said in supplication: "O Lord God, bestow enough certainty upon us so that the tragedies of the world become easy for us." And the Messenger (S) said: "God Most High says: ‘If I restore health to one of My servants upon whom I send an affliction and who is patient and does not complain, I shall return a better flesh and skin to him. Or, if I carry him off to My Own mercy, I shall do so.’”

David (A) said: "O Lord God, what is the recompense for him who endures patiently tragedy for Thy sake?" (God) answered: “I shall clothe him in the honored Robe of Faith and never take it back from him.” And he said that God Most High says: "I would be ashamed to take a reckoning and send to the Scales (of Divine Justice) or the Tribunal him upon whom I have sent a calamity to his body, or property, or children, and who met it with a beautiful patience.”

And the Messenger (S) said: “Waiting patiently for a pleasure is an act of worship.” And he said: “Whoever is afflicted by tragedy should say: ‘Verily we belong to God and to Him we shall return; 8 O God, reward me in my calamity and follow it with goodness from it for me. ’ God Most High will answer this his supplication.” He said: “God Most High asked: ‘Dost thou know what the reward for a person is whose sight I have taken? That I favor him with his seeing Me.’”

One of the saints had written these words upon a piece of paper: “Be patient for the judgment of thy Lord; thou art before Our Eyes.” Whenever some sorrow would touch him, he would take that piece of paper out of his pocket and read it. The wife of Fath Mawsili fell and broke her fingernail. She laughed. They asked her: “Didst thou not hurt thyself?” She replied: “The joy for the spiritual reward (of the affliction) made me heedless of feeling the pain.” And the Messenger (S) said: “One of the (ways of) honoring God Most High is that thou not complain in sickness and that thou conceal thy calamities.” Someone says: “I saw Salim, the client of Abu Hudhayfah, wounded and fallen in battle. I said: ‘Dost thou want water?’ He said: ‘Take my foot and pull me nearer to the water.’”

Because of one’s weeping or sadness, the virtue of patience is not lost. Instead, it is lost by one’s loud railing, rending of garments, and excessive complaining; for the Messenger (S) wept when his son Ibrahim received the command. They said: “Didst thou not forbid this (weeping)?” He answered: “No, for this is a mercy. God Most High has mercy upon a person because He is Merciful.” It has been said that the beautiful patience is that the afflicted one be not distinguished among others by his rending of clothing, slapping his face, and wailing loudly. All of these are forbidden. Indeed, altering one’s states, putting one’s pants over one’s head, shortening one’s turban—all of these are improper. Rather, one should know that a servant (of God) is created without thee and is taken back without thee.

As Rumaysa, the mother of Salim and the wife of Abu Talhah, 13 said: “My husband was absent and one of our sons (died). I clothed him. When (my husband) returned, he asked: ‘How is the sick (boy)?’ I answered: ‘He has not been better than he is tonight.’ Then I brought food and he had his fill. That night, I dressed myself more attractively than usual so that he lay with me 14 and afterward we performed the greater purification. Then, I said: ‘I lent something to such-and-such a neighbor. When I asked for it back, he shouted and cried out and became upset.’ (My husband) said: ‘That is odd! A very foolish neighbor!’ Then, I said: ‘Our little boy was on loan from God Most High. He asked for his return and took him away.’ He said: ‘Verily we belong to God and to Him shall we return.’ (Q. 2:156) The next morning, he told the Messenger what had taken place the night before. (The Messenger) said: ‘May God Most High bless last night for thee, for it was a great night.’ Then the Messenger (S) said: ‘I entered heaven on the evening of the Night Journey and I saw Rumaysa, the wife of Abu Talhah.”

So, from all of this, thou hast learned that the servant of God is at no time without need of patience. Indeed, if one achieves freedom
from all appetites and goes into seclusion, in seclusion a hundred thousand temptations and various speculations raise their heads from within one that divert one from the remembrance of God Most High. Even though they be about permitted things, such as the time one has lost, that one’s life is one’s capital; it has resulted in a total loss. The remedy for this is that one keep oneself busy in continual praises, commemorations, and recitations. And, if one is the same in performing formal prayer, one should increase one’s effort and not leave off except for some work that settles one’s heart. It is related in the Traditions: “God Most High is inimical to the idle youth.” He said this for the reason that when a young person sits at leisure, his companion may be the temptations of Satan and his soul a nest of wicked thoughts. One is not able to dispel them except by the remembrance of God Most High. He must be busy with some craft, or with a service, or some work that will occupy him. It is not suitable that such a person sit alone. Instead, whoever is unable to do the work of the soul must keep his body busy.

Disclosing the Treatment for Patience

As the kinds of patience are not one, being patiently steadfast for each (kind) has a different difficulty and a different treatment, notwithstanding that all treatment is a compound of knowledge and practice. What we have said in the Pillar of Destroyers is all the medicine for patience. Here we shall expound upon one of them by way of example so that it will be a pattern by which the others may be known analogously.

As we have said, the meaning of patience is the firmness of the religious impulse as opposed to the carnal impulse and there is a kind of war between these two impulses. The plan of whoever sets two people at war with each other and wants one of them to win is to strengthen and aid that one which is supposed to triumph, and to weaken and deprive the other of aid. Now, when a person is overcome by the craving for sexual intercourse and cannot restrain his genitals—even if he would want to, he cannot keep his eye from looking and his soul from thinking, and he is unable to be patiently steadfast (against it). The remedy for that is first we weaken the carnal motivation, and that is done with three things:

We know that aid for (that craving) comes from good nourishment and food; so we withhold this aid and command fasting so that at night he eats dry bread and he eats little. Of course, he does not eat meat and delicious foods.

Another way is that we shut off that from which the sexual excitement comes. Its excitement is from looking at beautiful visages. He must go into seclusion and restrain his eyes and leave the passing places of women and youths.

The third is that he quiet (the impulse) with the lawful so that he escapes forbidden passion: he marries so that the carnal appetite becomes quieted. Usually, these lusts cannot be relieved without marriage.

The similitude of this animal soul is the stubborn beast of burden which we satisfy by first withholding its fodder until it is tamed. Another is that we remove the fodder from before it so that it does not see it. Another is that we give it that amount which calms it down. Each of these three treatments is the same for the appetite. It is the weakening of the appetite. However, strengthening the religious motivation is done by two things:

One is that thou whet his avidity for the benefit of wrestling with his appetite by his reflecting upon the Traditions that have come down concerning the spiritual reward for a person who is steadfast and patient. When (his) faith becomes stronger by the fact that the profit of carnal appetite will be for an hour while the profit of steadfast resistance to it will be eternal kingship, the religious motivation gains strength according to the strength of this faith.

The other is that he is made habituated to opposing the appetite little by little until he becomes bold, for when a person desires to become strong, he must test his strength and perform acts of strength. Little by little and bit by bit, he goes farther. A person who wants to wrestle with a strong man must first wrestle with persons who are weaker and test his strength with them to increase (his own) strength. It is for this that the strength of people who do hard work is greater. The treatment for obtaining patience in all affairs is this.

Disclosing the Virtue of Gratitude and Its True Nature

Know that gratitude is a great station and a high degree, but not everyone attains its truth. It is for this that God Most High said: Few of My servants are thankful. (Q. 34:13) Iblis sneered at Adam, and said (to God): “Thou wilt not find most of them grateful (unto Thee).” (Q. 7:17) Most of them will not be grateful.

Know that the attributes we have called “the Delivers” are of two kinds: One is in the preliminaries of the way of religion and is not in itself an objective, such as repentance, patience, fear, asceticism, and preventing public immorality. These are all means to another end, which is the way of religion. The second kind is the objectives and ends, such as love, zeal, satisfaction, the Unity (of God), and trust. Gratitude is among these. Whatever is the object remains in the Hereafter. As He said: And the conclusion of their supplication shall be: Praise be to God the Lord of the worlds. (Q. 10:10) Thus, it became necessary that it ought to be discussed at the end of the book, but because gratitude is related to patience, it is being discussed here.

The sign of greatness of its degree is that God Most High has made it the companion of His Own remembrance, saying Therefore remember Me, I shall remember you. Give thanks to Me, and reject Me not. (Q. 2:152) And the Messenger (S) said: “The
degree of the person who eats food and is grateful is the degree of the one who fasts and is patient.” And he said: “On the Day of Resurrection it will be called out: “Where are the praisers?” “No one will stand up except the one who has expressed gratitude to God Most High in all circumstances.” When the verse was revealed about the prohibition of the laying up of treasure, ‘Umar (R) said: “O Messenger of God, then what should we accumulate of wealth?” (The Messenger) answered: “A tongue remembering (God), a grateful soul, a patient body, and a believing wife.” That is, be content with these things of the world, for a believing wife is a companion in leisure from which remembrance (of God), gratitude, and patience result.

Ibn Mas‘ūd says: “Gratitude is one half of faith.”’ Ata says: “I was with ‘Ayshah and I asked her to relate some of the wonders of the states of the Messenger (S) to me. She said: ‘Which of his states was not wonderful? One night he came to me in sleeping clothes so that his naked body touched my body. Then he said: ‘O ‘Ayshah, let me go and worship God.’ I said: ‘I want to be close to thee, but go.’ He arose and took some water from the water skin and purified himself and poured out a little water. Then he stood up and performed formal prayer, weeping copiously, until Bilal came to go to the pre-dawn obligatory formal prayer. I said: ‘God Most High has forgiven all of thy sins; why dost thou weep?’ He said: ‘Then, I would not be a grateful servant. Why should I not weep while this verse was being revealed to me? Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the difference of night and day are tokens for the understanding, such as remember God standing, sitting, and reclining. (Q. 3:190-191)

That is, those who possess understanding lying down, sitting, and standing busy themselves with the remembrance (of God) and contemplate the wonders of the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth weep in gratitude at the degree which they have obtained, from joy, not from fear. As it is related: “One of the messengers passed by a small rock from which abundant waters were flowing forth. God Most High gave it the power of speech and it said: ‘Since this verse had been revealed: Its fuel is of men and stones , (Q. 2:24) 17 —men and stones will be the fuel of hell—I have been weeping like this.’ (That messenger) said: ‘O Lord God, turn this fear into faith,’ and this supplication was fulfilled. Another time, he passed by that stone, and it was still pouring forth abundant water. He asked: ‘Now, why art thou weeping?” (The stone) answered: ‘That weeping was from fear; this weeping is from joy.’” And this is a parable for the human soul which is harder than stone. It must weep, sometimes from sorrow and sometimes from joy, so that it may become soft.

The True Nature of Gratitude

Know that we have said that the stations of religion come with three fundamentals: knowledge, state, and deed. Knowledge is the basis, and from it, state arises; and action arises from state. Just as the knowledge of gratitude is the recognition of the blessings of God, the state is the joy of the soul for that blessing, and action is the employment of those blessings for that which is the desideratum of God. That action is both connected with the soul, with the tongue, and with the body. So long as all of this is not clear, the true nature of gratitude will not be clear.

As for knowledge (of gratitude), it is that thou recognize that every blessing thou possessest is from God, may He be praised and exalted! No one is His partner in this. So long as thou seest anyone in the midst of causes and thou lookest at him and see things as (originating) from him, (thy) knowledge of gratitude (to God) is not perfect. For, when a king bestows a robe of honor upon thee, but thou knowest that it was through the favor of a minister, thy gratitude to the king will not be unalloyed. Indeed, some of it will be to the minister. Thy joy will not all be in the king. Instead, some of it will be for the minister.

However, if thou knowest that the robe of honor comes to thee by the king’s patent, and the signature is made with pen and paper, this does not bring a diminishment (of gratitude to the king), because thou knowest that the pen and paper are utilized and that they had no control over anything. Indeed, if the treasurer also delivered it to thee, there is no loss (of gratitude to the king), because thou knowest that he had no part in it, that he was utilized (as the means of delivery). He cannot oppose what has been commanded (by the king). If he had not been commanded (to do so), he would not have delivered it. He is utilized, just as is the pen. In the same way, if thou perceivest the blessings upon the earth as from the rain, and thou perceivest the rain as from a cloud, and thou perceivest the salvation of a ship as from a steady wind, thine expression of gratitude for that is not complete. But, when thou learnest that the clouds, the rain, the wind, the sun, the moon, the stars, and everything that is—all are in the grasp of the power of God subjugated in the same manner that a pen is (subjugated) in the hand of a scribe, where the pen has absolutely no power of discretion, this (knowledge) does not bring any diminishment in gratitude (to God).

If a blessing reaches thee that a human being gives thee and thou thinkest it is from him, this is ignorance and a veil (hiding) the station of gratitude. Thou shouldst know, rather, that he gave thee that because God Most High sent him an agent that compelled him to decide to do that. However much he would have wanted to oppose that agent, he would be unable to do so. If he had been able to, he would not have given thee a single grain. The agent is that motive that fell into his heart and kept it before him: “Thy welfare in thy words, not in the world.” So long as all of this is not clear, the station of gratitude will not be clear.

Thus, when thou truly recognizest that all men are like the king’s treasurer, and the treasurer is like the pen—nothing is in the power of anyone save that which they are commanded to do—then thou can be grateful for these blessings to God Most High. Indeed, this spiritual insight itself is the essence of gratitude. As Moses (A) said in conversation with God: “O my God! Thou didst create Adam with Thine Own Hand of Power and Thou didst do such-and-such with him. How did he thank Thee?” (God) said: “He knew that it
was from Me, and his knowing is thankfulness to Me.”

And know that the divisions of the kinds of spiritual knowledge of faith are many. The first is sanctification, that thou know that God, may He be honored and exalted, is pure and free of all attributes of created things and all that comes to thought and imagination. The expression of this is: “Glory be to God!” 18 The second is that thou know that He is in this purity unique and He has no partner. The expression of this is: “There is no god but God!” 19 The third is that thou know that everything that exists, all of it, is from Him and is His blessing. The expression of this condition is: “Praise be to God!” 20 This is beyond both of the other two because both kinds of those kinds of spiritual knowledge appear beneath it. It was for this that the Messenger (S) said: “‘Glory be to God!’ is ten good deeds, ‘There is no god but God!’ is twenty good deeds, and ‘Praise be to God!’ is thirty good deeds.” Those good deeds are not the movements of the tongue with those words. Rather, those good deeds are the spiritual insights appearing in the soul that those words express. This is the meaning of the knowledge of gratitude.

As for the state of gratitude, it is the joy that appears in the soul from this spiritual knowledge. For everyone who sees a blessing from someone rejoices in that. However, this joy may have three aspects:

One is that if a king will go on a journey, he gives one of his own horses to a servant. If that servant becomes happy, it is because he was in need of a horse and he has gotten it. This is not gratitude to the king, for (the servant) would have become just as happy had he found the horse in the desert.

Another is the joy that comes from recognizing the favor of the king with respect to him and he starts to hope for further favors. This joy is (linked) to the benefactor, but is not for the benefactor. Instead, it is because of the expectation of (more) favors. This is counted as gratitude, but it is lacking.

The third degree is the joy that comes because he is able to sit upon the horse and go in attendance on the king so that he may see (the king). He wants nothing more from him except this. This is joy in the king, and it is the entirety of gratitude.

It is the same for a person to whom God has given some blessing and is gladdened by that blessing, not by the Benefactor. This is not gratitude. If he were delighted with the Benefactor—but because (the gift) was the proof of His satisfaction and favor—this is gratitude, but it is lacking. If it were because that blessing became the cause of leisure for religion so that he could engage in acts of worship and study, and seek proximity to His Presence, this would be the perfection of gratitude. Its sign is that he is sorrowed by every worldly thing that distracts him from His service and from Him. Instead, he recognizes the withdrawal (of a blessing) as a blessing and gives thanks for that. Moreover, he does not take joy in anything that is not his helper in the way of religion.

It is for this that Shibli, may God have mercy upon him, said: “Gratitude is that thou dost not see the favor; thou seest the Giver of the favor.” For anyone whose pleasure is nothing other than in the things perceptible to the senses—such as the carnal appetite, the eyes, and belly, and the genitalia—gratitude is not possible. Therefore, there is nothing lower than the second degree, for the first degree is not counted as gratitude.

As for the act of gratitude, it is with the soul, the tongue, and the body:

As for the soul, it is that one wish well for all mankind and not envy anyone for his blessings.

As for the tongue, it is that it one be modest and utter: “Praise be to God!” often and that it express to the Benefactor joy for blessings in all circumstances. The Messenger (S) asked someone: “How art thou?” He replied: “Fine.” (The Messenger) asked (again): “How art thou?” (The man) replied: “Fine, praise be to God!” (The Messenger) said: “That was what I was seeking.” The desire of the forefathers who used to ask each other how they were was that the answer be (an expression of) gratitude. The speaker and questioner share in the spiritual reward (of that exchange). Whoever complains becomes an offender, even if he is in affliction. What is more unbecoming than that one complain of the Lord of the seven heavens and the seven climes to an unfortunate person who does not have the power to do anything? Instead, one should give thanks for the affliction because it may happen that that affliction will be the cause of one’s (spiritual) happiness, if one is able to be patient a while.

As for the body, it is that each member is a blessing for one. Thou shouldst employ (the body) for that which it was created, and all
were created for the Hereafter. What He desires from thee is that thou occupy thyself with that. When thou hast used His blessings for His desired end, thou hast shown gratitude even though there is no part or portion for Him in that. For He is above such needs. The parable of this is the king who favors a slave and that slave is far away from him. He sends a horse and the provisions for the journey so that (the slave) may come to him and, because of proximity to (the royal) presence, become great and achieve a high rank. For the king, his proximity or remoteness with respect to himself are both the same, for in his kingdom nothing is increased or reduced by (the slave), but he desires the good for the slave. For, when the king is generous, he desires good fortune for his people—for them, not for himself.

Therefore, if that slave mounts the horse and heads for the royal presence, and uses those provisions on the way, he has shown his gratitude for the favor of the horse and the provisions. But if he mounts the horse and turns his back on the royal presence and goes farther away, he has shown ingratitude. If he delays and goes neither closer nor farther away, this is also ingratitude, but not to the degree of the former. And it is the same when a servant of God uses the favors of God Most High in obedience to Him so that he may attain the degree of proximity to the Divine Presence. (In this), he is showing gratitude, and if he expends (the favors) in sin so that he becomes more distant, it is ingratitude. If he delays or he uses them in lawful comfort, it is also ingratitude, even though its degree is not that of the former. When it is clear that gratitude for each blessing lies in that one use it for (achieving) the desire of God Most High, no one can do this except a person whose desire it is to discriminate between the aim of God Most High and that which He dislikes. This is a complex and subtle study to which we have referred briefly in this book. If a person desires more (about it), he should seek it in The Revival. No more than this is possible in this book.

**Disclosing That Ingratitude for Every Blessing Is That It Turn One away From His Wisdom and Not Be Used in the Manner for Which It Was Created**

Know that spending a blessing of God Most High in what pleases God is gratitude, but in what He dislikes is ingratitude. What He likes and what He dislikes cannot be known except through the Religious Doctrine and Law. Therefore, it is a prerequisite that a blessing be used in devotion, as is the command. However, for the perspicacious there is a way to understand the underlying purpose of affairs with pondering and reasoning, and by the way of inspiration. It is possible for a person to recognize that the underlying purpose for the creation of clouds is rain. In the creation of rain, there are plants; in the creation of plants, there is the nourishment of animals. The underlying purpose in the creation of the sun is the appearance of day and night so that night is for rest and day for livelihood.

It is clear that everyone knows these and their like, but there are many underlying purposes in the sun beyond that, which not everyone can apprehend. There are numerous stars in the sky for which not everyone knows what the underlying purpose in their creation is. Just as with respect his own limbs, everyone knows that the hands are for grasping, the feet are for walking, the eyes for seeing, but he does not know what his liver or spleen is for. He does not know for what reason his eye was created in ten layers. Therefore, some of underlying purposes are subtle and others even subtler, which are understood only by specialists. A discussion of this would be lengthy.

This much is necessary, that one must know that a human being has been created for the Hereafter, not for this world. Whatever is a human being’s portion in this world has been created to be his provision for (the journey) to the Hereafter. One must not suppose that everything has been created for him, lest he say about something in which he sees no benefit for himself: "Why was it created? What wisdom is there in their creation?" (Or) lest he say: "Why were flies created? Why were snakes created?" He must realize that ants are also perplexed as to why thou wast created so that thou step upon them and kill them carelessly. Its perplexity is the same as thy perplexity. Indeed, because of the perfection of the Divine munificence, it is necessary that whatever is possible to come into existence of animals, plants, minerals, etc., come into existence in the best manner of all species and types. Then, everything which each one requires appropriate to its necessity and need and for its beauty and adornment, comes into existence; for there, there is no restriction or stinting.

And the reason for anything’s not coming into existence in perfection and beauty is that there is no place for its acceptance because there is some attribute working in opposition to it. It may be that in that opposition there is a purpose for some other work: for it is not possible for fire to accept the coolness and delicacy of water, because heat does not accept cold, as it is its opposite. Too, its heat is the point (of its existence). Eliminating (that quality) from it would also be a deficiency. In fact, the moisture from which He created the fly He created because the fly is more perfect than that moisture. The moisture is (potentially) capable of that perfection. (The realization of that potential) was not held back from it, for such a restriction would be stinting. (The fly) is more perfect because heat is the point (of its existence). Eliminating (that quality) from it would also be a deficiency. In fact, the moisture from which He created the sun was more perfect because it does not have the basis or the (potential) capability for that. In it, there are life, power, sensation, movement, and strange shapes and organs that are not in that moisture. (The realization of that potential) was not held back from it, for such a restriction would be stinting. (The fly) is more perfect because it does not have the basis or the (potential) capability for that.

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He did not create a human being from that moisture because it did not have the basis or the (potential) capability for that. In it, there were attributes that were in opposition to the attributes which are the conditions for the creation of a human being. However, He withheld nothing that was necessary for the fly: wings, legs, eyes, mouth, head, stomach, a place for food to enter, a place for food to stop and be digested, and a place for its excretion. He did not withhold anything which was necessary for its body to be small, delicate, and light. Because it needed sight and its head was small, on which lidded eyes would not be possible, He created for it two lidless beads, like two mirrors, so that images could be displayed in them and it could see. Since eyelids are for the purpose of preventing dust from settling on the eyes, (the fly) sweeps it away. When the mirror is tarnished and since it does not have eyelids, He created two extra arms by which those two beads are swept clean every so often and are cleaned. Then, the two arms rub together and brush each other off.
The point of saying this is so that thou know that divine mercy, grace, kindness, and favor are general, not reserved to mankind. For, every worm and gnat has been given that which it should have in perfection. Even the gnat has been fashioned in the same manner that an elephant has. It has not been created for a human being, because it was created for itself, just as thou hast been created for thyself. Thou didst not have a relationship or some patronage before creation by which thou wert deserving of a creation that others did not have. Instead, at that time, the sea of Divine Generosity was an ocean in which there was every thing. One of those things is thou, another is an ant, another a fly, another an elephant, and another a bird. It is thus, notwithstanding that the imperfect among them are sacrificed for the perfect, and (since) a human being is more perfect than (anything else) which is on the earth, more things have necessarily been sacrificed for him.

Moreover, beneath the earth and at the bottom of the sea there is many a thing of which man has no portion, but which has been created externally and internally with the same careful attention. Perhaps, the beauty and design on its exterior is such that man would be incapable of (drawing) that. Now, this is related to the studies of the seas in which most scholars are weak, and the discussion of this would be prolonged.

The point of this is that thou should not call thyself one of the chosen of the Divine Presence so that thou measure everything according to thyself and thou say about that in which there is no benefit (for thee): "Why was this created? There is no purpose in it!" When thou hast understood that the ant was not created for thee, know that the moon, the sun, the stars, the heavens, and the angels, all of these also were not created for thee, even though thou hast some benefit from them; just as the fly was not created for thee, even though thou have some benefit from it. For, it has been chosen to eat all that is unpleasant to thee and would putrefy, in order to lessen the unpleasant stench. The butcher was not created for the fly, even though there is a benefit from him for the fly. Thy supposition that the sun rises for thy sake every day is like the supposition of the fly that imagines that the butcher goes to his shop every day for its sake so that it will be able to eat its fill of blood and unpleasantnesses. Just as a butcher himself turns to other work so that he does not remember the fly, even though the leavings of his work is the life and sustenance of the fly, the sun is turned to the service of the Divine Presence in its circumambulations and movements and does not remember thee, even though the leavings of its light enable thine eyes to see and the earth is tempered by the leavings of its temperament so that the plants which are thy food may grow. Therefore, there is for us in the purpose of creation that which has no connection with thee and, with respect to the meaning of gratitude, is not useful. There is also much that is related to thee, all of which cannot be mentioned. We shall give a few examples:

One is that eyes have been created for thee for two things: one is that thou know the way to satisfy thy needs in this world, the other is that thou contemplate the wonders crafted by God Most High so that thou may recognize His greatness. When thou lookest at someone not of the prohibited degrees, thou hast become guilty of ingratitude for the blessing of the eyes. Indeed, the blessing of the eyes is not complete without the sun, for without it, they do not see. The sun is not possible without heaven and earth because night and day appear from heaven and earth. And yet thou, with that one glance (at the forbidden) hast been ungrateful for the blessings of the eyes and the sun; indeed, for the blessings of the heavens and the earth. It is for this that it is related in the Traditions: "Heaven and earth curse whoever commits a sin."

Thou hast been given hands so that thou may make ready thine own affairs with them; in order to eat, wash thyself, and the like. When thou usest them to commit a sin, thou hast become guilty of ingratitude for their blessing. Indeed, for example, if thou cleanest thyself after a bowel movement with thy right hand or take the Scripture in thy left hand, thou art guilty of ingratitude. Thou hast violated that which is desired by God Most High, and that is equity. Equity is that the noble be for the noble and the ignoble be for the ignoble. Of thy two hands, one is usually stronger than the other, that is the more noble. Thine acts are of two kinds: some are lowly and others noble. One must perform that which is noble with the right (hand) and that which is ignoble with the left (hand), in order to act equitably. If not, like an animal, thou hast eliminated purpose and equity.

If thou spickest in the direction of prayer, thou hast been ungrateful for the blessing of the directions and the blessing of the direction of prayer. The directions are all equal, but God Most High has changed one of them into the direction of prayer for thy benefit so that it will be able to eat its fill of blood and unpleasantnesses. Just as a butcher himself turns to other work so that he does not remember the fly, even though the leavings of his work is the life and sustenance of the fly, the sun is turned to the service of the Divine Presence in its circumambulations and movements and does not remember thee, even though the leavings of its light enable thine eyes to see and the earth is tempered by the leavings of its temperament so that the plants which are thy food may grow. Therefore, there is for us in the purpose of creation that which has no connection with thee and, with respect to the meaning of gratitude, is not useful. There is also much that is related to thee, all of which cannot be mentioned. We shall give a few examples:

Thou performest ignoble acts such as voiding wastes, spitting, and noble acts, such as the obligatory purification and formal prayer. When thou holdest all equal, thou hast lived as an animal and thou hast negated what is due for the blessing of intellect, in which equity and purpose appear, and what is due the blessing of the direction of prayer. If, for example, thou bestakest the branch of a tree and throw it down needlessly, or thou tossest away a bud, thou hast negated the blessing of thy hand and the blessing of the tree, for that branch had been created and in it there are veins that draw nourishment to itself. In it, the capacity to take nourishment and other capacities have been created. It is for a task for which it becomes useful when it reaches maturity. It is ingratitude to block those channels (of nourishment), except out of necessity for the perfection of thine own needs. In that case, its perfection is sacrificed for thy perfection. For, it is equity that the imperfet be sacrificed for the perfect.

If thou bestakest the property of another, it is ingratitude even if thou needest it, because the need of the owner precedes and takes precedence over thy need, however much that in reality a servant (of God) has no property. Rather, the world is like a spread table and the blessings of the world are as the foods placed upon it. The servants of God Most High are like the guests at that table that is the property of no one. But, since each morsel is not promised to all, it is not proper that one guest seize whatever another takes in his hand from him to put into his mouth. The property of the servants (of God) is nothing more than this. As for the guest who is unable to seize any food and put it some place where the no one else can get at it, it is not right for anyone to have anything to do with more than he needs for himself and place it in a cupboard and not give it to the needy.
However, this is not comprehended in the obvious opinion because each individual’s need is not known. If we open this path, everyone will take the goods of others and say: “Thou hast no need of this.” Therefore, we have left this to rule of necessity, though it is contrary to wisdom. The prohibition against the accumulation of property has come for this, especially with respect to the hoarding of foodstuffs that are the people’s sustenance. Whoever hoards in order to sell at a high price is under the curse of God Most High, for it is the people’s sustenance. When a business is made out of that, (food) is blocked and does not reach the needy quickly. This is also forbidden with regard to gold and silver, because God Most High created gold and silver for two basic purposes:

One is in order to manifest the value of goods, because not everyone knows how many slaves a horse is worth, or how many garments a slave is worth. These must be sold for each other. Thus, there is the need for something by the standard of which all may be understood. He created gold and silver so that they would be like a magistrate disclosing the value of every thing. Anyone who hoards them in a treasury is as though he has imprisoned a magistrate of the Muslims, and anyone who makes ums and ewers of them is as though he has commanded the magistrate of the Muslims to porterage and weaving. For, the purpose of a ewer is to hold water and it could have been made of clay or copper.

The other basic purpose is that these two materials are valued and everything may be obtained by means of them. Everyone desires them, for whoever possesses gold possesses everything. Perhaps a person has a garment but is in need of food. The person who has food does not have a need for a garment to sell 32 (the food) for it. God Most High created gold and silver and made them valuable so that business may be carried on by their means so that those who do not have any (goods) may obtain their needs through them. When gold begins to be sold for gold and silver for silver, so that there is a profit in them, these two (precious metals) become engaged with each other and are tied to each other so that they are no longer the means of other transactions.

So, do not suppose that there is in the Religious Law anything that is other than (God’s) purpose and justice. Rather, everything that there is (in it) is as it should be. However, some of these purposes are so subtle that no one knows them other than the prophets. Others no one knows except the great religious scholars. Any scholar who has taken up his task by following the superficial is deficient and he is close to the (level of understanding of the) common folk.

When (a good religious scholar) comes to know these underlying purposes, those (things) which the jurisprudents hold to be repugnant, he holds to be forbidden, so that when one of the great put on his left shoe first by mistake, he paid so many donkey-loads of wheat in atonement! But if one of the common folk breaks the branch of a tree, or spits in the direction of prayer, or picks up the Scripture with his left hand, we do not object so much for this lapse, because he is one of the common folk, and the common folk are closer to beasts and do not have the patience to observe these rules. His circumstances are so remote from underlying purposes that such niceties do not appear important to him. For, if a person sells a freedman on Friday at the time of the call to formal obligatory prayer, he is not chastised because a business transaction at that time is disapproved of; but because the crime of selling a freedman overweighs that disapproval. If a person has a bowel movement in the prayer niche (of a mosque) with his back to the direction of prayer, there is no room left for the chastisement due, because he turned his back toward the direction of prayer for his bowel movement when the crime (of using the prayer niche for a bowel movement) itself is so disgusting that that nicety is not an issue. Leniency with the actions of the common folk is of this kind. The superficial opinion is for the commons. However, the wayfarer on the path to the Hereafter must not look at the superficial opinion but observe all of these niceties so that he may become closer to the angels in justice and purpose. If not, in his abandonment (of the world), he is close to the brutish beasts, like a commoner.

Disclosing That Which is the True Nature of Blessings

Know that that which God Most High has created with respect to a human being is of four kinds:

The first is that it is beneficial both in this world and in the next world, such as knowledge and a good character. The true blessings in this world are these.

The second is that which is harmful in both worlds, such as ignorance and a bad character. The true afflictions of this world are these.

The third is that it is a comfort in this world and a sorrow in the next world, such as an amplitude of worldly comforts and the enjoyment in them. These are blessings in the opinion of fools and afflictions in the opinion of the wise. This is like the hungry person who must have honey, but in it, there is poison. The one who is a fool does not know that there is poison in it and counts it a blessing; his greed conceals the harm. The one who is wise knows that it is an affliction and harmful.

The fourth is that there is in it sorrow in this world, but a comfort in the next world, such as asceticism and opposition to the carnal appetites. To the possessors of spiritual insight this blessing is as bitter medicine to the intelligent sick, but it is an affliction in the opinion of fools.

Excursus: [It Is Proper That Some Thing Be a Blessing for One Person and a Detriment to Another.]

Know that most of the goods of the world are mixed. There is both evil and good in them, but anything is a blessing (when) its benefit exceeds its detriment. This varies according to individuals. Wealth, in an adequate amount, is more of a benefit than a harm.
(However), in that which exceeds sufficiency, there is more harm than benefit with respect to most persons. But there is the person
for whom a little is also harmful. The reason for this is that the greed for more overcomes him, while if he had not had anything, he
would not have desired anything. And there is the person who is perfect; having much does not harm him because he can aid the
needy at the time of their need. So, by this thou knowest that it is proper that a thing be both a blessing with respect to one person
and a detriment with respect to another.

**Excursus: [The Most Complete Good Is Knowledge and the Most Complete Evil Is Ignorance.]**

Know that whatever people consider to be a good is not beyond three states: Either it is pleasant at the moment, or it is beneficial in
the future, or it is good in itself. Whatever they consider evil is either immediately unpleasant, or is harmful in the future, or is in itself
unseemly. Therefore, the most complete good is that in which all three aspects are collected: it is pleasant and good, and is beneficial
as well. This is nothing other than knowledge and wisdom. The most complete evil is ignorance, which is unpleasant and ugly, and is
harmful as well.

Know that nothing is more pleasant than knowledge, but only for the person whose soul is not ailing. And know that ignorance is
painful and unpleasant at the same time. Whoever does not know something and wants to know it perceives the pain of his ignorance.
And ignorance is unseemly, but this unseemliness does not appear (externally) on him; it is within the soul. It has distorted the form of
the soul, and this is uglier than external ugliness.

There is the thing that is beneficial in the future but is unpleasant, such as cutting off a finger to prevent the total ruin of a hand. And
there is the thing that is beneficial in one way but harmful in another, such as when one throws goods into the sea—when the ship is
about to sink—in order to save oneself. 33

**Excursus: [There Are Three Degrees of Delights and Pleasures.]**

People say thus: that everything which is good is a blessing. Delights and pleasures are of three degrees:

The first (degree) is that which is the more ignoble, and that is the pleasure of the stomach and the genitalia. People know these best
and occupy themselves with them. Whatever they seek, they do for their sake. The proof of their baseness is that all animals are
partners with (man) in these, and (the animals) exceed man in them. The eating and copulation of animals is considerable. Indeed, the
fly, the ant, and the worm, are all equal to man in this and his partner. When a person gives himself entirely to these (pursuits), he
suffices for the degree of the insects of the earth.

The second degree is the pleasure of victory, chieftainship and the overcoming of others. It is the faculty of anger. Even though it is
nobler than the pleasures of the stomach and the genitalia, it is still ignoble, for some of the animals share in this, even though all do
not. But among the lions and leopards there is that greed for pride, victory and overcoming (others).

The third degree is knowledge, wisdom, and the spiritual knowledge of God Most High and the wonders of His handiwork. This is
noble, for no animal shares in these. Indeed, these are the attributes of the angels; rather, the attributes of God Most High! Anyone
whose pleasure lies in these and in nothing other than these is perfect. Anyone who does not have any pleasure in them is wholly
deficient. Rather, he is ailing and is on his way to perdition. Most believers are of these two kinds. Rather, they obtain pleasure in
both the former and the latter, and in other things as well, such as the pleasure of chieftainship and carnality. However, for one who is
dominated by the pleasure of spiritual knowledge, that (pleasure) veils and overcomes the others. Whoever is overcome by the other
—and this be by effort—is nearer the degree of deficiency, but if one strives so that the other triumphs—that is the meaning of the
preponderance of the scale-pan of good deeds.

**Disclosing All of the Kinds of Blessing and Their Degrees**

Know that the true blessing is the (spiritual) happiness of the Hereafter, and that is a desirable end in itself, not for any other blessing
which lies beyond it. It is four things:

One is an eternal life that cannot be affected by annihilation. The second is the joy that is not mixed with sorrow.

The third is a knowledge and a revelation that are free of the dark turbidity of ignorance.

The fourth is a freedom from want that cannot be invaded by poverty or need. In short, this comes with the continual witnessing of the
Divine Presence and the Godhead, which are not affected by boredom or decrease. This is a true blessing, and everything we count
as a blessing in this world is for its sake and a means and a way to it. It is not the desired end in itself. The perfect blessing is that from
which is desired, not anything else. For this the Messenger (S) said: “Life is the life of the Hereafter.” The Messenger (S)
said this once in the extremity of sorrow to console himself for the misery of the world, and he said it once in the extremity of
happiness during the Farewell Pilgrimage in which his task had achieved perfection and all the people had turned their faces towards him while he was sitting on a camel. He was being asked about the acts of the Pilgrimage. When he saw that that was over, he uttered those words so that his soul would not be deflected by the pleasures of the world. Someone said: “O Lord God, I ask of Thee the perfect blessing.” The Messenger (S) heard what he had said and asked (the man): “Dost thou know what the perfect blessing is?” The man answered: “No.” The Messenger (S) said: “It is that thou enter Paradise.”

As for the blessings of the world, whatever is not a means to the Hereafter is not truly a blessing, and that which is the means to the Hereafter is divided among sixteen things: four are in the soul, four in the body, four external to the body, and four common to the twelve.

As for the four that are in the soul, they are the knowledge of spiritual contemplation, the knowledge of mutual relations, chastity, and a just balance.

As for the knowledge of spiritual contemplation, it is to know God Most High and His attributes and His angels and messengers.

As for the knowledge of mutual relations, it is that which we have discussed in this book: the obstacles on the path, as we have said in The Pillar of the Destroyers; the provisions for the path, as in The Pillar of Mutual Relations; and the stages of the path, as in The Pillar of the Deliverers. All are completely made known in this book.

As for chastity, it is that one attains the perfection of a good character in the shattering of both the power of carnal passion and the power of anger.

A just balance is that one not eliminate appetite and anger, for that would be detrimental, but one should not permit them to master one so as to go one’s head, for that would be an inundation. Instead, they should be weighed with sound scales, as He said: That ye exceed not the measure, but observe the measure strictly, nor fall short thereof. (Q. 55:8-9)

All of these four are not complete save with the blessings that are of the body, and they are four: good health, strength, beauty, and a long life. As to the need for health, strength, and a long life for the happiness of the Hereafter, it is not hidden, for without them thou dost not obtain the perfection of knowledge, work, a good character, and the moral excellences in the human soul, which we have mentioned.

However, there is less need for beauty, but the requirements of a good-looking person are more readily satisfied. (Personal) beauty is like rank and wealth in that respect. Whatever is useful for the important wants of the world may be of use in the affair of the Hereafter, since the provisions of the world are the cause of the leisure of the Hereafter: the world is the farmland of the Hereafter. Also, a good exterior is an indication of a good interior; for that is also a favor obtained at the moment of birth. Usually, when one is adorned externally, internally one is also adorned with a good nature. It is for this that it has been said: “Thou dost not see any ugly person whose countenance is not more beautiful than that which is inside him.” The Messenger (S) said: “Ask your needs from those of pleasant appearance.” And ‘Umar said: “When the imams for leading formal prayer are equal in knowledge of the Law, recitation (of the Quran), and piety, choose the best-looking one. Know that we do not desire this handsomeness to arouse passions, for that is a trait of women, but that he be of good stature, with regular features, so that souls and eyes will not be repulsed by him.”

As for the blessings needed that are external to the body, they are: wealth, rank, family, household, party, tribe, and great lineage.

The need of the Hereafter for wealth is from the aspect that how can a person who does not have anything, and is everyday engaged in the search for food, study and do anything (else)? Therefore, an adequate amount of wealth is a religious blessing.

As for rank, that is needed because whoever does not have it is always in shame and disdain. He is not safe from the attack of enemies. But, there is harm in an excess of wealth and rank. It is for this that the Messenger (S) said: “Whoever rises in the morning and is in good health, secure, and has the day’s food, it is as though he has the whole world.” This cannot happen without rank and money. And the Messenger (S) said: “How good an aid to devoutness to God is wealth!” (Sufficient) wealth is a good help to piety.

As for family and offspring, they are a blessing in religion, for a family is the cause of rest from working much and a security against the evils of the carnal appetite. Concerning this, the Messenger (S) said: “An honorable wife is a good helper for religion.” And ‘Umar asked: “What of the world’s wealth should I amass?” (The Messenger) replied: “A tongue remembering (God), a grateful soul, and a believing wife.” Children are the cause of good supplications after death and a help in life. Good children are like a man’s hands, feet, feathers, and wings; they render works successful. This is a blessing if one is wary of their detriment, which is the ambition on their behalf that turns one to the world.

As for an honorable lineage, it is a blessing because leadership is reserved for those of the line of Quraysh. The Messenger (S) said: “Choose for your seeds the suitable; beware of the greenery of manure.” He has said: “Sow your seed in a suitable place and beware of the greenery that is on top of a dung heap.” They asked: “What is that?” He answered: “A beautiful woman from a family of unknown origin.” Know that with this lineage he did not intend mastery of the world, rather, the religious lineage that comes
with the righteous and the scholarly, for this too is a blessing. Character usually spreads from its origin: the righteousness of the root is an indication of the righteousness of the branch, as God Most High said: And their father had been righteous... (Q. 18:82)

And those four blessing that are common to all, they are: guidance, rectitude, confirmation, and finding guidance. There is no blessing without its divine grace. The meaning of divine grace is the setting up of a concordance between the decree of God Most High and the desire of the servant of God. It is both in evil and in good. However, the term has customarily come to refer to the joining of the desire of the servant of God and the (divine) decree in which lies the servant’s well-being. This is fulfilled with four things:

The first is guidance of which no one is not in need, for if a person is seeking the happiness of the Hereafter and if he does not know the way, but knows the wrong way, what is the profit? Therefore, the creation of things without guidance is not enough. For this, God Most High put (us) under an obligation for both, saying: (Moses) said: Our Lord! is He Who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it aright; (Q. 20:50) and He said: (God) is He Who measures, then guides. (Q. 87:3) And know that there are three degrees of guidance:

The first (degree) is that one distinguish between good and evil. He has given this to all rational beings: some (distinctions are made) by the faculty of the reason and some by the words of the prophets, by that which He said: And guide him to the parting of the mountain ways? (Q. 90:10) He desired to show the way of good and evil to (the Messenger). And by that which He said: (The Thamud) preferred blindness to the guidance. (Q. 41:17) He meant that whoever is deprived of this guidance, either by reason of envy or pride, or because of worldly affairs, does not heed the prophets or the religious scholars. If (that were) not so, no rational person would be incapable of this.

The second degree is the special guidance that appears little by little between religious conduct and striving, and opens the way to the underlying purpose. This is the fruit of striving. As He said: As for those who strive in Us, We surely guide them to Our paths. (Q. 79:69) He said that when one strives, We Ourselves shall guide him to the way. He did not say: “We Ourselves shall guide (him) to Us.” And that which He said is also this: And as for those who walk aright, He adds to their guidance... (Q. 41:17)

The third degree is the guidance reserved for the select. This light appears in the world of prophethood and sainthood. This guidance is to God Most High, not to the way of God. This is in a manner for which the intellect does not have the strength, for it comes of itself to (him). That which He said: Say: Lo! The guidance of God is the Guidance! (Q. 6:71) means that it is absolute guidance (par excellence). He called it “Revival” and said: Is he who is dead and We have raised him unto life and set for him a light wherein he walks among men as him whose similitude is in utter darkness? (Q. 6:122)

As for rectitude, it is that the impulse to travel with the way guidance appear in one. As He said: And We gave Abraham his rectitude. (Q. 21:51) A child who has reached puberty is not called rightly guided 39 if he knows how property is preserved and does not do so, even though he has received guidance. 40

As for finding guidance, it is that the motion of one’s limbs move with ease from the aspect of that which is right so that one may quickly attain his goal. So, the fruit of guidance is in spiritual knowledge, the fruit of rectitude is motive and desire, and the fruit of finding guidance is in the power and tools of movement.

As for support, it is composed of the help of the angels from the unseen internally with the sharpness of perception, and externally with the power of strength and movement. As He said: When I strengthened thee (Mary) with the Holy Spirit. (Q. 5:110) Chastity is close to this. That is that an impediment appear inside one blocking the way to sin and the darkness of the way, but one does not fully understand where the impediment comes from. As He said: And she certainly desired him, and he (Joseph) would have desired her if it had not been that he saw proof of his Lord. (Q. 12:24)

These are the blessings of the world that are the provision for the Hereafter, and these have need of other causes, and these causes have need of other causes, until at the end (of the sequence) one reaches the Guide of the Perplexed and the Lord of Lords, Who is the Causer of Causes. A discussion of all the links in the chain of causes would be lengthy; let what we have said here suffice.

Disclosing the Cause of Shortcomings of People in Gratitude

Know that there are two reasons for the people’s shortcomings in expressing gratitude:

One is the ignorance of the many of the blessings of God Most High, for no one knows the limits, amount, and number of the blessings of God Most High. As He has said: And if ye count God’s blessings, ye will not be able to number them. (Q. 14:34) We have discussed some of the blessings of God Most High in The Revival so that it may be understood by analogy that it is not possible to know all the blessings. Further elaboration in this book is not possible.
The other reason is that a person does not count as a blessing (for himself) any blessing which is common to all. He never gives thanks for the fine air which he breathes or helps the spirit in his heart and which tempers the heat for the heart. If one breath is stopped, he will perish; yet he does not acknowledge this itself as a blessing. Like this, there are a hundred thousand blessings which he does not know, save when he goes to a place for a time where the air is foul and he suffocates, or because the air is hot in a hot bathhouse where he is confined. When he leaves (such a place), perhaps at that time, he will recognize the value of this blessing. Moreover, he does not give thanks for sight so long as he does not have a pain in his eyes or become blind. In this, he is like the bad slave who, so long as he is not beaten, does not know the value of blessings. If he is not beaten, he becomes cocky and negligent. Therefore, the solution of this is that one keep the blessings of God Most High fresh in one’s soul, as we have explained in detail in The Revival, and that is appropriate for a perfect man.

As for the remedy for the imperfect man, it is that he go to the hospital and go to sultan’s prison every day and go to the graveyard every day so as to see diverse afflictions and recognize his own well-being. Perhaps (then), he will occupy himself in giving thanks. When he goes to the graveyard, he knows that all of those dead are in the hope of a single day of life so that they could make up for their faults, but they shall not obtain it—while he has been given long days ahead of him, the number of which he does not know.

As for not being grateful for common blessings, such as the air, the sun, and the clear eye, and (as for) considering all blessings to be material things, and (only) that which belongs to one. One must realize that this is ignorance. For, the state of being a blessing does not depart from something because it is common. Moreover, if one reflects, he has many special blessings. There is no one who does not imagine that no one has an intellect such as he has, or that there is no character like his. It is because of this that he calls others fools and ill-natured, for he does not think that he himself is like that. Therefore, one must occupy oneself in giving thanks, not in criticizing people. Indeed, there is no one who does not have disgraceful acts and faults that he knows, but no one else does and that God Most High has kept veiled. Instead, if one reviews them in memory and thought, should people learn of them, one would be very embarrassed and put to shame. This is something private for every person. He must be grateful for that. He must not hope or speculate about that from which he is excluded so as not to remain deprived of gratitude. Rather he should reflect upon that which was given to him without his merit it.

Know that one must also give thanks for affliction, because except for unbelief and sin, there is no affliction in which it is not possible for there to be some good which thou dost not know, but God Most High knows better what is good for thee. For every one of five kinds of affliction one must give thanks:

One is an affliction that is in the body or in worldly affairs, not in religious affairs. Someone said to Sahl Tustari (R): “A thief entered my house and stole all of my goods.” (Sahl) said: “What wouldst thou have done if Satan had entered thy soul and had stolen thy faith?”

The second is that there is no illness or affliction other than which something cannot be worse. One should give thanks that it is not worse than it is. Whenever a person who deserves to be beaten with a thousand blows is not beaten with more than a hundred, there is cause for gratitude. One of the shaykhs was walking about. From above someone emptied a basin of ashes upon his head. He gave thanks. He was asked: “Why didst thou give thanks?” He replied: “A person who merits fire has been saved with ashes. That is cause for gratitude. One of the shaykhs was walking about. From above someone emptied a basin of ashes upon his head. He gave thanks. He was asked: “Why didst thou give thanks?” He replied: “A person who merits fire has been saved with ashes. That is cause for gratitude.

The third is that a person does not count as a blessing (for himself) any blessing which is common to all. He never gives

The fourth is that affliction has been forewritten for thee on the Guarded Tablet and is part of the way (to the Hereafter). When it has been eliminated from the way and cast behind, it is cause for gratitude. Shaykh Abu Sa’id, may God have mercy upon him, fell off his donkey. He said: “Praise be to God!” They asked him: “Why didst thou say that?” He answered: “I have undergone the falling off of a donkey.” That is, it was inevitable because it had been foreordained and ordered in the Divine Decree.

The fifth is that an affliction in this world is a spiritual reward in the Hereafter from two aspects: one is that there is a great spiritual reward for it, as has been related in the Traditions. The other is that at the head of all sinning is affliction for the world, so that the
world becomes thy Paradise and going to the Divine Presence is thine imprisonment. The soul of whoever has been afflicted with the afflictions in the world is repelled by the world and the world becomes his prison, while death is his liberation. There is no affliction that is not a discipline from God Most High. If a child is intelligent, he will give thanks when his father disciplines him, for there is much benefit in that. In the Traditions, it is related: “God Most High attends to His Own friends with afflictions, just as ye attend to the sick with medicine and potions.”

Someone said to the Messenger (S): “I have been robbed.” He said: “There is no good in the person whose property is not taken or whose body does not become ill, for God Most High pours affliction upon the servants whom He loves.” And he said: “There are many levels in heaven which the servant (of God) cannot attain by his own efforts. God Most High raises them to them by affliction.”

One day the Messenger (S) was looking at the sky. He laughed and said: “I remain astonished at the decree of God Most High with regard to the believer. If He commands a blessing, he is content that it is for his good, and if He commands an affliction, he is content that it is for his good.” That is, he suffers the latter and is grateful for the former because there is goodness in both. And the (Messenger) said: “The healthy will wish at the Resurrection that their flesh had been cut away with the talons of a leather currier out of pique for seeing the many (high) degrees of the afflicted.”

One of the messengers said: “O Lord God, why dost Thou pour blessings upon the unbelievers and why dost Thou pour afflictions upon the believers?” He answered: “The afflictions and the blessings for My servants are all from Me. I want the believers to see Me at the time of death purified and without sin. I make the afflictions of this world (theirs) atonement. In the unbelievers, there are goodnesses. I want to recompense (them) for those with worldly blessings so that when one sees Me (on the Day of Resurrection), he will have no claim left upon Me so that I may punish him fully. When this verse was revealed, that whoever does evil will see his requital: He who does wrong will have the recompense thereof. (Q. 4:123) (Abu Bakr) the Truly Righteous said: “O Messenger of God, how shall I be saved with this?” (The Messenger) answered: “Dost thou not become ill? Dost thou not sorrow? That is the requital of the believer.”

Solomon (A) had a child that died. He sorrowed greatly. Two angels came to him in the form of two litigants. One said: “O messenger of God, I sowed seed in a field. This man trampled upon it.” The other said: “He sowed the seed on a highway. As there was not room to the left or right, I walked over it.” Solomon said: “Didst thou not know that thou hadst sown the seed on a highway that would not be empty of travelers?” He answered: “O Solomon, didst thou not know that human beings are on the highway of death that thou hast donned the garments of mourning at the death of a son?” Then Solomon repented and sought forgiveness (of God).

‘Umar (bin) ‘Abd al-‘Aziz saw his own son sick and in danger of death. He said: “Son, thou goest before me and will be in my scales. I prefer that to my being in thy scales.” He said: “O father, I desire that which thou desirest and preferrest.”

Ibn ‘Abbas (R) was informed that his daughter had died. He said: “Verily we belong to God and to Him we shall return.” (Q. 2:156) He covered her nakedness and made sufficient provision and earned spiritual reward. Then he rose and performed two bows of formal prayer and said: “Thus He has commanded: Seek help in steadfastness and prayer. (Q. 2:153) I have performed both.”

And Hatim Asamm, may God have mercy upon him, said: “God Most High will make four persons witnesses for four groups on the Day of Resurrection: Solomon for the rich, Joseph for the slaves, Jesus for the poor, and Job for the afflicted.

Let this suffice for the study of gratitude in this book.

Summary of the Contents of

the Complete Alchemy of Happiness

As for (the Alchemy’s ) Prolegomena, it is about the knowledge of four things; and its Pillars are the four forms of conduct. For each Pillar, there are ten Chapters, as is found in the Contents: four Topics, four Pillars, and (each Pillar having) ten Chapters. [All of this book and its contents are what has been cited, should God Most High will it!]

The Prolegomena on Being a Muslim

The First Topic: That is to know the true nature of oneself.

The Second Topic: That is to know God.

The Third Topic: That is to know the true nature of the world.

The Fourth Topic: That is to know the true nature of the afterlife.

[And these four studies are in fact (the knowledge of) being a Muslim.]
The (Four) Pillars of Being a Muslim

These Pillars of Being a Muslim are divided into four: Two concerning externals, and two concerning internals. The two Pillars concerning externals are: the First Pillar, the execution of God’s commandments, and this is called the Acts of Worship. The Second Pillar is about observing proprieties in movement and rest and in social intercourse, which is called Mutual Relations.

As for the two Pillars concerning internals, the first [the Third Pillar] is about the cleansing of the heart of immoral traits, such as anger, miserliness, envy, pride, and conceit. These traits are called the Destroyers and obstacles on the road of faith. The other Pillar [the Fourth Pillar] is the adornment of the heart with desirable traits, such as patience, gratitude, love, hope, and trust (in God). They are called the Deliverers.

The First Pillar is about the Acts of Worship and has Ten Chapters. The first chapter: making right the beliefs of the orthodox and the congregation; the second chapter: engaging in the search for knowledge; the third chapter: concerning purification; the fourth chapter: concerning performing formal prayer; the fifth chapter: concerning the poor rate; the sixth chapter: concerning fasting; the seventh chapter: concerning performing the greater Pilgrimage; the eighth chapter: concerning the recitation of the Quran; the ninth chapter: concerning the Remembrance of God and Glorifying Him; and the tenth chapter: observing the formulae and the times of worship correctly.

The Second Pillar is about Mutual Relations and also has Ten Chapters. The first chapter: the rules of eating; the second chapter: the rules of marriage; the third chapter: the rules of business and trade; the fourth chapter: concerning seeking the lawful; the fifth chapter: the rules of social intercourse; the sixth chapter: the rules of seclusion; the seventh chapter: the rules of travel; the eighth chapter: the rules of the whirling dance; and ecstasy; the ninth chapter: the rules of enjoining the good and prohibiting the bad; and the tenth chapter: the rules of governing.

The Third Pillar is about Overcoming the Obstacles on the Road of Faith, which are called the destroyers, and also has Ten Chapters. The first chapter: concerning the disclosure of the discipline of the self, the treatment for bad character, and the obtaining of a good character; the second chapter: concerning the appetites of the stomach and the genitalia; the third chapter: concerning the remedy for bad language and the calamities (resulting from) speech; the fourth chapter: concerning treating the diseases of anger, hatred, and envy; the fifth chapter: concerning the love of this world and the sickness of greed; the sixth chapter: concerning the treatment of stinginess and avarice for the accumulation of wealth; the seventh chapter: concerning the treatment of the love for high rank and pomp and its evils; the eighth chapter: concerning the treatment of hypocrisy and sowing discord in worship; the ninth chapter: concerning the treatment of arrogance and concert; and the tenth chapter: concerning the treatment of heedlessness, error, and pride.

The Fourth Pillar is about the Deliverers and also has Ten Chapters. The first chapter: concerning repentance and emerging from darkness; the second chapter: concerning patience and thankfulness; the third chapter: concerning fear and hope; the fourth chapter: concerning dervishhood and asceticism; the fifth chapter: concerning truthfulness and sincerity; the sixth chapter: concerning reckoning and guarding; the seventh chapter: concerning meditation; the eighth chapter: concerning (Divine) Unity and trust (in God); the ninth chapter: concerning love and zeal; and the tenth chapter: concerning the remembrance of death.

In this work, we explain these four topics and the forty points for Persian speakers. We have refrained from penning long, abstruse phrases and fine, difficult distinctions so that the general public may comprehend it. Should a person have the desire for more detailed and refined information about this, he must consult books in Arabic, such as The Revival of the Religious Sciences, The Jewels of the Quran, and other works that we have written about these matters in Arabic. The object of this book is the general public, who have cried for such a book in Persian. The level of discourse must not exceed their ability to understand.

May God Most High purify their intention in their earnest request and our intention in complying with it. May He [bless us with favor and] keep it pure from the pitfalls of hypocrisy and the offense of dissimulation. May He open wide the hope of His mercy and the right path. May He grant facility and success so that that which is said becomes faithful to behavior, for words without action are a waste and declaring without practicing will be a cause of trouble in the Hereafter. We seek refuge with God from that.

Bibliography of the Translator

This is not a bibliography devoted to Ghazzali and his works but rather to the sources used in preparing this translation. Neither is it an
exhaustive list of all the books I have consulted in preparing this translation and the notes, but it does give the chief ones. When a
work is noted (usually by the abbreviation at the end of the bibliographical reference) at the end of a footnote between parentheses, it
indicates that it was the principal source for the note, although works may have been consulted.

For the translation itself, in addition to the basic texts edited by HK and AA, I have consulted standard references (cited by the
abbreviated names used in the list below at the end of the entry) including the dictionaries of Steingass, Aryanpour, Mu’in, Hughes,
Nadwi; translations of the Holy Quran by Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Ali, Arberry, etc., and the Holy Bible (King James and
Revised Standard versions).

Resources consulted for the general and biographical footnotes include: Fihrist (invaluable for its biographical notes in addition to the
intrinsic worth of the text), EI, SEI, IKh, Bosworth, Bukhari, Hughes, ‘Attar, Hujwiri, Lata’if, AIH, HOH, Khalid, Sirah, Ibn Ishaq,
Hussain, Tabaqat, CIH, Rahman, and Qushayri.


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From the Creation to the Flood: The Creation, the Mesopotamian Genesis, Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, the Fall, Cain and Abel, Enoch-Idris, Harut and Marut, Noah, the Flood, Noah’s Son; Glossary, Coded Bibliography, Index.

Abraham: Abraham, the Idols and the Fire, Sarah, Isaac, Ishmael, the Sacrifice, Moriah, Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah, Nimrod, Hud, Saleh; Maps, Glossary, Coded Bibliography, Index.

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Armageddon: The Second Coming, the Paraclete, Millenarianism and Armageddon (from Jesus above, published separately); Glossary, Coded Bibliography, Index.
"Patience" (sabr): this is the usual rendering of sabr, but one should think more of the patience of Job—the endurance of suffering and privation, steadfastness without complaint—rather than the aspect of waiting and expectation that modern usage of the English word conveys. Perhaps “patient endurance” better conveys the meaning. Among the definitions given by Steingass under the heading sabr, the following are pertinent: “being patient, waiting patiently; patience, toleration, endurance; resignation…”

2 In its various verbal and nominative permutations, it is actually mentioned close to ninety times in the Quran. (Baqi)

3 “compulsion” (bayist): The Persian word bayist is a verbal form meaning “it is necessary; it behooves.” Here it is used nominally. The equivalent passage in the Arabic The Revival uses the word sirs, “avidity, greed, craving.” Bayist is a stronger word and “compulsion” is used because it is stronger, and also to differentiate it from other forms of craving for which other words are commonly used.

4 “Recording Angels”: Kiramul-Katibin.

5 “Arafah”: The patient standing on the Plain of Arafah to demonstrate one’s attendance and readiness to fulfill the commands of God Most High. It is the climax of the Pilgrimage.

6 Compare: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill them.” (Matthew 5:17) “Ye have heard it was said that: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would sue thee and take away thy coat, give him thy cloak also; and if anyone forces you to go with him for one mile, go with him for two miles.” (Matthew 5:38-41)

7 “a pleasure” (faraj): the word often has the connotation of sexual pleasure.

8 Q. 2:156.

9 The wife of Fath Mawsili: No other information about her from available standard sources at present.

10 Salim: No other information about him from available standard sources at present.

11 That is, as he was fasting, though wounded, he would not drink water until the sun set (the time of breaking the fast)—if he survived that long.

12 “received the command”: that is, died.

13 Rumaysa, the mother of Salim and the wife of Abu Talhah: No other information about her from available standard sources at present.

14 “so that he lay with me”: literally, “he gratified his need of me.”

15 “the same”: that is, diverted from the concentration necessary for meaningful prayer.

16 “Women and youths”: literally, “women and children (kudakan).” In such a context, this usually refers to young teenagers.

17 This is a phrase from the verse. The full text is: And if ye do it not (produce a chapter like a Quranic chapter) and ye can never do it - then guard yourselves against the fire prepared for the disbelievers, whose fuel is of men and stones. (Q. 2:24)

18 “Glory be to God!”: Subhana-llah!

19 “There is no god but God! La ilaha illa-llah!”

20 “Praise be to God!”: Al-hamdu-lillah

21 “desire” (mahbub): in this case, the thing desired or loved. Of course, mahbub is also a term of endearment meaning “beloved.”

22 “underlying purpose” (hikmat), or “divine mystery.”

23 “wings” (par wa bal): literally, “feathers and wings.”

24 “legs” (dast wa pay): literally, “arms and legs, that is “limbs.””

25 “in the same manner”: that is, with the same care and attention to its needs.
During this discussion, al-Ghazzali uses the terms “perfect” and “imperfect” forms of life, whereas today we would probably say “higher” and “lower” forms of life. Do we see a theory of the survival of the fittest in this passage?

“someone not of the prohibited degrees” (na mahrami): someone (of the opposite sex) with whom marriage (and therefore sexual intercourse) is possible.

“the Scripture” (mushaf): that is, the Holy Quran.

This refers to the right-handedness with which most people are born.

Because the left hand is used to wash the privates after voiding urine or excrement while food is eaten with the right hand, the right hand is reserved for noble tasks, such as touching the Quran, and shaking hands; while the left is used for the lowly or more ignoble functions of life.

“the House”: the Kabah at Makkah, which is the direction of formal prayer.

“sell” (furushad): In this context, it means “barter, exchange.”

By lightening its load.

“the Farewell Pilgrimage” (Hajj al-Wida’): perhaps the climax and culmination of the Prophet’s life. It took place a few months before his death in AH11/632CE. All Arabia had accepted Islam, the Islamic commonwealth was established, and the stage was now set for Islam to become a world religion. The Farewell Pilgrimage is the model for all subsequent pilgrimages. It was in the Prophet’s sermon at Arafat that what is almost certainly the last verse of the Quran was revealed, signifying the completion of his mission: This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favor unto you and have chosen for you as (your) religion Islam. (Q. 5:3)

“family” (ahl): wives, also family in the sense of the extended family including, besides one’s own wife and children, relatives such as aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws, etc.

“household” (haram): or “harem.” This term, which conjures up such florid fantasies in the Western mind, simply refers to something private or restricted; not necessarily a seraglio. Here, it refers to wives and children. It is also the term used to describe the great mosque precincts of Makkah, Madinah, Jerusalem, etc. In his exposition of these terms below, Ghazzali omits “household,” incorporating it into the category of “family.”

“party” (guruh): or group. A group of men one may count on for support, both from among one’s relatives and from other clans. The people one associates with in some enterprise which serves to bind them together, such as military units, caravans, and the Pilgrimage.

“leadership” (imamat): In this context, it refers to the caliphate, that is, the leadership of the entire Islamic world.

“rightly guided” (rashid): here used in the sense of “mature.”

“rectitude” (rushd): the Arabic root (r-sh-d) contains within it both the meanings such as “growing, growth, maturation,” as well as being “rightly guided, righteous, orthodoxy, and following the right way.” Al-Ghazzali is making use of both senses here.