

Imām al-Ghazālī
Mukhtaṣar ihyā' ‘ulūm ad-dīn

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IMĀM AL-GHAZĀLĪ

Mukhtaṣar
iḥyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn

The Iḥyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn
As abridged by himself

Translated from the Arabic,
and annotated by
Marwan Khalaf



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MARWAN KHALAF

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

By the publication of this book entitled *Mukhtaṣar*, we aim to acquaint an English-speaking readership with the abridged version of Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's magnum opus, the *Iḥyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn*, 'The Revival of the Religious Sciences', which has been regarded as one of the most important writings of the Islamic Tradition for nine hundred years and is esteemed and appreciated among Muslims worldwide like no other work.

According to the written records available to us today, the Master himself invested a great deal of energy in the preparation of this concise version to produce a volume that would enable him (cf. p. 23) to take his work along on his journeys.*

Whereas in the full-length version of his work, the author's knowledge and wisdom unfolds over the course of forty books, we here have only forty chapters; in these everything concerning human life from the cradle to the grave is discussed with refreshing brevity and unambiguous lucidity. The book opens with a fundamental discussion of questions of knowledge and faith which makes up its first quarter; its second quarter is devoted to questions of everyday life, such as the proper conduct in marriage and the like; this is followed in the third section by an exceedingly subtle description of the intricacies of the inner workings of the human soul and the 'miracle of the heart', and

* As in other cases of Ghazālī reception, doubts have been raised as to whether this abbreviated version was actually penned by the famous scholar himself; let it therefore be said that this essentially unanswerable question is of scant relevance, as the text presented here was given its final form through comparison with the corresponding passages of the full-length version, some of which were additionally appended by the editor, the authenticity of which is unquestioned.

the fourth part delineates the paths to salvation, and reaches its climactic conclusion in the last chapter 'Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife'. Throughout the book, topics are raised that are of interest not just to the religious-minded, but to mankind in general. The chapter on 'Intention, Sincerity and Truthfulness' (*an-niyyah wa l-ikhlāṣ wa ṣ-ṣidq*) for instance, focuses on the fundamental questions which turn an action into a good deed that brings its agent honour and helps us become true human beings. It might well come as the greatest surprise to one who has been brought up and taught in the Western tradition, that about one-thousand years before the German philosopher Immanuel Kant by his concept of 'good will' identified the intention as the main criterion for the morality of an action, Sayyidinā Muḥammad ﷺ, the Prophet of Islam, had already proclaimed to humanity this all-important principle for every action and (intentional) non-action.

With this book, Imam Ghazālī consolidated the legacy left by the Holy Prophet into a form that makes it indispensable reading for every Muslim, as well as for those inspired by the fundamental questions of our existence; the text also incites and encourages the yearning for those means whereby we might attain happiness in this life and the hereafter.

We are pleased to make this famous scholar's dogmatically precise and intellectually profound masterpiece, which in a unique way taps into the sources while simultaneously conserving them, accessible in such a convenient form, a shining star in the firmament of mankind's literary heritage.

Wa min Allāb at-tawfīq.

On the 8th day of Sha'bān 1434,
June 2013.

SALIM E. SPOHR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first of all thank the Almighty for granting me the time and ability needed for this task, and I beg forgiveness from Him, for anything that may draw his displeasure. And I say prayers and greetings on His Beloved Prophet, Muḥammad, the Arab, and the Hashemi.

I am eternally grateful to several people who were prime assistants in this humble work, listed in chronological order, and not in order of merit:

To my friend Aḥmad Ṭālib, who gave me the Arabic version of this book when he visited me in hospital, thus inspiring me to undertake the task on seeing the conciseness of the book, and its appeal to my lazy nature.

To my shaykh, and guide Shaykh Nāzim Al-Ḥaqqānī, for his spiritual guidance. He advised me as to the style of publication. May God sanctify his secret.

To my friend John Becket, who read the translation and corrected my English usage, and advised on the style as well. I am also grateful to his wife, Fatima, for giving me encouragement, as undoubtedly she gave John.

To my children, who put up with me and assisted. Being born British, their comments on my English usage were mostly devoid of sarcasm! Their expertise in the use of computers was a further redeeming factor for the time and money spent on their education.

I apologise to any readers who may take offence at anything I mentioned in the footnotes from my own mind.

Al-ḥamdu li-llāh and ṣalawāt on His Rasūl, peace be upon him.

MARWAN KHALAF

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

A good friend of mine, Aḥmad, came to visit me in hospital after my first stroke, and he brought me a gift. It was a small book, titled *Mukhtaṣar Ibyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn* by Imām Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, who is known as *Ḥujjat al-Islām*.

This doubly good deed, visiting sick people and giving gifts, which is recommended by the Messenger of God, *may Allah honour him and grant him peace*, by saying, 'Visit the sick' and 'Give and exchange gifts,' deserved a response from me, which was, not, of course, sought nor expected by my generous friend.

So I decided to return the favour in part by translating that valuable book, for posterity, and to curry favour, with Imām Ghazālī, may God sanctify his secret.

Having never before attempted any project like this in any seriousness, it was not long before I realized its enormity for me: English not being my native tongue and Arabic being no less daunting, after forty years away from practicing it on a regular daily basis, in England. The satisfaction of the task was an inspiration for me to persevere, and I am truly thankful to the Almighty for the assistance I was feeling all along, with an underlying urge to continue, for I loved the subject matter, and the learning I was undoubtedly receiving with every letter, word, phrase and page of Ghazālī's inspirational writing on this, which to me is almost a holy subject!

So much rubbish is being put forth in print, speech and other media, concerning Islam; the most retrograde being, sadly, from so-called Muslims, within Islam, apart from that of outright enemies of Islam and others.

On the other hand I have the feeling that Islam is winning, and will continue to win and advance, for it is the religion of God, the *Dā'im*, the Permanent, and the Omnipotent, provided it is

practiced in good faith, good manners and gently, the way that Muḥammad ﷺ espoused and practiced.

As nothing can be perfect except God Almighty, my efforts must contain mistakes, errors, and slips, for which I abjectly apologize, to the readers and to Imām Ghazālī himself.

I invite comment, advice, and input to help me and the publishers to refine the book, and raise its standards wherever possible.

And '*min Allāb at-tawfiq*' ... from God is success.

London, 7 May 2012.

MARWAN KHALAF

مُخْتَصَرٌ إِحْيَاءُ عُلُومِ الدِّينِ

لِلشَّيْخِ الإِمَامِ حُجَّةِ الإِسْلَامِ
عَبْدِ بنِ مُحَمَّدِ أبِي حَامِدِ الفَرَّازِيِّ النُّوفِيِّ ٥٥٠ هـ
مُتَأَلِّفِ الإِحْيَاءِ نَفْسَهُ

مُدْرَسَةُ رَعْنَةَ عَلَيْهِ
بِعَنَايَةِ وَإِشْرَافِ النَّاظِرِ

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(*al-‘ibādāt*)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Foreword

Thank God for all His bounties; for even enabling us to thank Him; and *prayers and peace be upon* the Master of Messengers, Muḥammad, His Prophet, Messenger and Servant, upon his family and Companions, and upon his successors after him, his Ministers in his time.

I missed, in some of my travels, a facility for extracting from the '*Iḥyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn*' its essences, due to the difficulty of carrying it around with me, on account of its bulk. Hence I tackled this matter, seeking success and guidance from God and praising His Prophet.

It consists of forty chapters.

And God guides to the truth.

IMĀM GHAZĀLĪ

Abbreviations for eulogies:

ﷺ *ṣalla llābu ‘alaybi wa sallam, Allāb’s prayers and salutations be upon him or may Allah honour him and grant him peace* – this expression follows specifically after saying the name of the last prophet of Islam, Muḥammad.

ﷺ *‘alaybi s-salām, peace be upon him* – follows after naming any prophet other than Muḥammad, or one of the Archangels.

ﷺ / ﷺ *Allāb be pleased with him/her* – this phrase is usually uttered after a Companion’s name. For female Companions it is *raḍiya llābu ‘anbā* and for more than one person, it is *raḍiya llābu ‘anbum*:

ﷺ *Allāb be pleased with them.*

On Knowledge and imparting Knowledge

His Saying *‘Tarfa‘i llābu lladbīna āmanū minkum wa-lladbīna ūtū l-‘ilma darajāt* – God raises by degrees those of you who are believers and are granted Knowledge by degrees’ (Koran, 58:11). Ibn ‘Abbās, (the son of ‘Abbās), *Allāh be pleased with them* (ﷺ), said, ‘The Learned may rise among the Faithful by seven hundred degrees, between each two degrees is the distance of a five hundred year walk.’¹ And the Exalted said: *‘Qul bal yastawī lladbīna ya‘lamūna wa-lladbīna lā ya‘lamūn?* – Say: Can those who Know be of the same level as those who do not Know?’ (Koran, 39:9).

And He said: *‘Innamā yakhsbā llāba min ‘ibādibi l-‘ulamā’* – Only those servants of Knowledge fear God.’ (Koran, 35:28). And further: *‘Wa tilka l-amthālu nadribubā li-n-nās, wa mā ya‘qilubā illā l-‘ālimūn* – And those examples we impart to people, but only the Knowledgeable fathom them.’ (Koran, 29:43).

It is related that he, *may Allāh honour him and grant him peace* (ﷺ), said, ‘Those of Knowledge are the Beneficiaries of the Prophets.’ And, ‘The most useful of people is the Knowledgeable who, when needed, imparts knowledge, and when not needed, enriches himself with it.’² Also, ‘Belief is naked: its dress is fear of God, its manifestation (outward decoration) is life, and its fruit is Knowledge.’³ He said ﷺ, ‘The nearest people to the rank of Prophethood are the people of Knowledge and the people of *jihād*; the people of Knowledge because they guide people to what the Prophets bring, whereas the people of *jihād* defend it with their swords.’⁴

He ﷺ said, ‘The learned man is the trustee of God on Earth.’⁵ And, ‘On the Day of Resurrection the power of attestation is granted to the Prophets, and then the Learned and then the Martyrs.’⁶

Faḥ al-Mawṣulī⁷ said, 'Is it not that the patient deprived of food, drink and medicine dies?' They replied in the affirmative. 'So it is with the heart, if deprived of Wisdom and Knowledge for three days, it dies.'

He tells the truth, for the nourishment of the heart is Knowledge and Wisdom, and in them is its life, as food and drink are life for the body.

For whosoever lacks Knowledge has a sick heart, and its demise is a certainty. He does not feel it, because the distractions of the world numb his senses. When, however, death lifts the veil of those distractions, the senses return and great pain is felt, together with endless regret. That is the meaning of his saying ﷺ, 'People are asleep; when they die, they become alert.'⁸

As for the rank of Knowledge, it is pointed to in his saying ﷺ, 'The Angels lower their wings upon seeing the seeker of Knowledge, in appreciation of what he is about.'⁹ Also, 'Seeking a single window of Knowledge is better for you than if you prayed a hundred *raka'āt*.'¹⁰

Abu d-Dardā' said, 'Whosoever does not see that seeking Knowledge is *jibād* is failing in his opinion, and in his mind.'

As proof of the advantage of teaching are His Words: '*Wa idb akbadha llāhu mītbāqa alladbīna ūtū l-kitāba latubayyinunnabu lin-nāsi wa lā taktumūnabu* – For God took a covenant from the people who were given the Book that they expose it to people and not withhold it' (Koran, 3:187). The Messenger of God ﷺ upon reciting these words said, 'Knowledge was never granted until God took a covenant from the recipient, akin to that He took from the Prophets, that "You expose it and do not withhold it".'¹¹

He said ﷺ, that he told Mu'ādh bin Jabal, when he appointed him to the Yemen, 'For God to guide through you but one man is better reward for you than the whole world and what it contains.'¹² And 'Umar, *Allāb be pleased with him*, said, 'Whosoever relates a Tradition (of the Prophet ﷺ) that is acted upon is rewarded by as much as the rewards gained by the actions carried out resulting from its narration.' Mu'ādh said, about teaching

and learning (and its narration is referred to, with authority, elsewhere), ‘Learn “Knowledge”,’ for its learning for the sake of God is in itself a benefaction (*ḥasanah*), seeking it is worship, participation in it is praising and eulogising Him, and its research is *jihād*. Teaching it is charity, and expending of it to the worthy is piety. It is the bosom friend in solitude, the companion in seclusion, the guide in joy and in sorrow, the minister among comrades, and the associate among associates. It is the guiding light on the path to Paradise – God elevating people with it to become leaders in virtue, guides to be followed towards the good, their paths legendary and their deeds coveted. The Angels desire to adorn them and with their wings to caress them. All things, soft and solid, praise them – even the creatures in the oceans pray forgiveness for them, as do the lions of the Earth and its cattle, and even the Heavens and their stars; for Knowledge returns life to hearts in the darkness of death, and lights to perception in darkness. It gives strength to bodies in weakness, God’s servant attaining through it the ranks of the virtuous, and the high stations. Contemplation of it is akin to fasting, and its deliberations are akin to the night prayers. And through it God is obeyed and by it worshipped, and His Oneness (*tawḥīd*) is professed. With it the link of birth is maintained, and it is the *imām* whose follower is application. He inspires the happy with it, while the wretched are denied it.¹³

As for intellectual considerations, the merit of Knowledge cannot be obscure, for it is the means for nearness to God the Most High, and for His Proximity and good neighbourliness. It is eternal happiness and perpetual pleasure, which have no end, for in it are the glory of this world and the happiness of the Hereafter. This life is the garden of the Hereafter, and the man of knowledge sows with it for himself eternal happiness through the refinement of his ethics according to what knowledge dictates; and by teaching, he plants eternal happiness, for he is refining people’s ethics and calling them, with his knowledge, to that which draws them to God: ‘*Ud‘u ilā sabīli rabbika bi-l-ḥikmatī wa-l-maw‘izati l-ḥasana wa jādilhum bi-llati biya aḥsan* – Call to

the Way of your Lord by means of wisdom and pleasant exhortation, and debate with them with grace' (Koran, 16:125). For he is then calling the select with wisdom, the commoners with exhortation, and the obstinate with argument, thereby achieving salvation for his soul and those of others – and that is the perfection of man.'

SECTION

*Expounding on praiseworthy and deprecated knowledge;
and on primary obligations and secondary ones*

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, 'Seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim man and woman.'¹⁴ And what is obligatory for him, on reaching adolescence or on becoming a Muslim, is to know the words of the *shahādah*¹⁵ (the dual declaration¹⁶ 'There is no Deity but God, Muḥammad is his Messenger') and understand the meaning. But he is not (at that early stage) obliged to 'perfect' them by reciting proofs. It is sufficient for him merely to sincerely believe them with no doubt or equivocation, albeit by way of imitation.

As the Messenger of God ﷺ used to do with the 'rough' A'rāb¹⁷ once they took Islam, he has to begin work on learning the novelties of God's orders, such as praying according to the new instructions, about prayer at the allotted times, and preparing for it beforehand; similarly with fasting. He has to learn about the annual alms tax (*zakāb*) if he possesses anything on which it will become due when a year is up from when he took Islam, *zakāb* being a duty, a necessary duty. He must be alerted to the obligation of pilgrimage, but is not obliged to learn its intricacies at present, nor to set off to perform it, yet.

As the days pass, he is obliged to learn what he must do and what disobedient actions he must abandon, according to need. Should he have doubt about his beliefs, he is obliged to contemplate and delve into them, learning enough to enable him to remove the doubts; and further learn the knowledge by which

shall be his salvation from the destructive qualities of the ego (*mublikāt*) and the gaining of the higher degrees, the attainment of which is likewise a primary obligation for Muslims.

Beyond this, other kinds of knowledge are secondary rather than obligatory.

Know ye that knowledge is graded by its proximity to the Knowledge of the Hereafter and beyond; and just as the studies of jurisprudence are ranked higher than other subjects, so it is that knowledge which is to do with the essences of jurisprudence is preferred to that which concerns the outward judgments in jurisprudence. The jurist may determine whether a worldly matter is true or false; but above that in rank is the Knowledge by which worship is adjudged as being accepted or rejected (by the Almighty). That is part of Šūfī Knowledge, as will come later.

The eminent scholars whose Schools have been followed by people and whose teachings have guided them, all possessed both the jurisprudence of worldly affairs and that of Reality, and applied them.

This is seen from the descriptions of their conduct during their lives, and reports about their teachings. They are five: ash-Shāfi‘ī, Malik, Abū Ḥanīfah, Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal and Sufyān ath-Thawrī¹⁸, *Allāb have mercy on them*. Each one of them was *pious, an ascetic, a scholar of the Sciences of the Hereafter, as well as a scholar of outward jurisprudence, which concerns the worldly affairs of people, and (last but not least) their sole desire from all of their knowledge was the Divine Countenance.*

Of these *five attributes* the only one followed by present-day jurists is that of excessive dissemination and learning of the minutiae of worldly jurisprudence. The other four are only usable for the Hereafter, whereas this fifth one is usable both for worldly fame and for the Hereafter.

[Actions are judged by the resolve behind them. People use worldly jurisprudence for fame, claiming it raises them to the level of the five Scholars. What folly, like comparing Angels to blacksmiths! (*Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm ad-dīn.*)]

We relate here, of their statements, what attests to their possession of these four attributes (for their renown in the fifth is self-evident):

As for ash-Shāfi'ī, *may Allāb have mercy on his soul*, the pointer to his piety is that he used to split his night into three parts, one third for learning, one for prayer and one for sleep. Rabī' said, 'Ash-Shāfi'ī, *may Allāb forgive him*, used to read the Koran sixty times during Ramaḍān, and all that during his prayers;' and one of his Companions used to finish it once every night.

Al-Ḥusayn al-Karābīsī,¹⁹ *Allāb have mercy on his soul*, said, 'I stayed with ash-Shāfi'ī more than once. He used to pray for about one third of the night. I never saw him read more than fifty verses (and if he went on, he did a hundred) without, upon reciting one that mentioned mercy, asking God Almighty of it for himself and all believers; nor one that contained torment but that he sought refuge from it, asking of God Almighty salvation from it for himself and all believers.' His reading of only fifty verses is but a sign of the depth of his understanding of the Koran.

Ash-Shāfi'ī said, 'I never ate my fill the last sixteen years, for it makes the body heavy, hardens the heart, removes discernment, brings on sleep and weakens one's worship.' And he said, 'I never swore by God Almighty, neither in truth nor falsehood.' He said that when he was once consulted about a certain matter, he went silent. When asked why he did not reply, he said he was waiting until he knew which was preferable, 'My silence or my answer?'

Aḥmad bin Yaḥyā said, 'Ash-Shāfi'ī left the Lantern Market one day, so we followed him. A man was heard swearing at a man of the people of Knowledge. Ash-Shāfi'ī turned to us and said, "Chasten your hearing of listening to gross speech, as you would chasten your tongues of speaking it, for the listener is a partner of the speaker. The vulgar looks for the worst thing in his vessel (heart), and aims to empty it into yours. Happiness comes to the intended recipient of the word of the vulgar if he is able to fend it off, just as suffering comes to the speaker thereof".' And

ash-Shāfi‘ī said, ‘A wise man wrote to another, ‘You have been granted Knowledge (of God), so do not contaminate it with the darkness of sin, lest you should remain in the dark, when the Learned seek (God) with light of their Knowledge (seeking like with like).’

As for his ascetic attribute, he said, *may Allāb grant him mercy*, ‘He who claims that he possesses the combination of the love of this world and the love of its Creator lies.’

Once his whip fell from his hand and someone picked it up for him; he rewarded him with fifty *dīnār*. The generosity of ash-Shāfi‘ī is more renowned than the sun.

(The depth of his asceticism), fear of God Almighty and the dedication of his efforts for the Hereafter are illustrated by what was related about him that, when listening to Sufyān bin ‘Uyaynah relating one of the Traditions on compassion, ash-Shāfi‘ī fainted. He (Sufyān) was asked ‘Has he died?’ He replied ‘If he has, then his era has lost its most eminent.’

Once someone read: ‘*Hādba yawmu lā yanṭiqūn* – This is the day when they shall be dumbfounded’ (Koran, 77:35). Ash-Shāfi‘ī was observed to change colour, develop gooseflesh, shudder and fall unconscious. Upon reviving he said, ‘God, I take refuge in You from the status of liars, and the denial of the unwary. God, to You the hearts of the learned submit, and the necks of those that crave The Bowing (*rukū‘*). God, grant me of Your bounty, enshroud me with Your protection and assist me and forgive my shortcomings with Your Generous Countenance.’

That he was a Scholar of the inner secrets of hearts is gleaned from his answer when asked about hypocrisy (vainglory). He replied, instinctively, that it was temptation which is placed in the field of vision of scholars’ hearts, and which the eyes of their desires make them make a bad choice of, thus corrupting and wasting their deeds.

He also said, ‘If you fear for yourself vanity, contemplate, Whose acceptance you seek? Which Paradise you prefer? What torment you flee²⁰? What well-being you enjoy? And what calamity you recollect (awaits you)?’

The evidence that with his jurisprudence and debate he sought the Divine Countenance lies in his statement, 'I would love for people to benefit from this knowledge, and that none of it be attributed to me.' This is decisive proof that he did not seek with it fame among people, and vainglory.

He also said, 'I never debated with anyone at all while wishing them to be wrong, nor spoke to anyone at all that I did not wish them success, guidance and assistance, and that they be granted the auspices and protection of God Almighty. And I never spoke to anyone, ever, without wishing that God Almighty reveal Divine Justice on their tongue or on my tongue.'

Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal said, 'In the last forty years I have not prayed one prayer in which I failed to make supplications for ash-Shāfi'ī.'

As for Imām Malik, *Allāb have mercy upon him*, he was likewise endowed with these five attributes; for he was once asked about seeking Knowledge (of God) and said, 'Fine and good: observe Who is your Constant Companion from morning till night, and accompany Him.' Ash-Shāfi'ī, *Allāb have mercy upon him*, said, 'Once I saw that he was asked about forty matters, to thirty-two of them his reply was "I don't know".' His asceticism and fear of God are more known than can be verbalised.

In Abū Ḥanīfah's case, it was known that he used to stay up in devotions half the night. When someone once pointed at him and said, 'This is the man who stays up all night,' he did stay up all night from then onwards and said, 'I am too embarrassed (before God) to be described by that which is not in me.'

Likewise Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal and Sufyān; their asceticism and their fear of God are too well known to need mentioning, and during this book legends will be related that show this is so.

So, observe those who claim to emulate them, are they truthful in their claims or not?

SECTION

*Not all types of knowledge are praiseworthy
– referring to sorcery, talismans,
astrology, philosophy and the like*

Sorcery and talismans (by their nature) lead to a plethora of harms.

The stars (astrology) do so (too) because he ﷺ said they were to be avoided, ‘If astrology is mentioned, desist.’²¹ He only ordered us to desist because man loves to be impressed by effects, meaning intermediaries, tangible or imagined. He is thereby probably distracted from the Source of the effects.

Philosophy is deprecated because it leads to conclusions that contradict *sharī‘ah* (Divine Law).

Mathematics, while it cannot be denied or contradicted, may serve ulterior (evil) motives, so its use should be minimal, according to necessity.

And of the sciences: medicine as needed.

And of the stars, only enough for working out navigational positions, and the direction of the *qiblah* (Mecca).

SECTION

*The etiquette of the tutor
and of the pupil (the seeker)*

The pupil’s ethics and duties are numerous, but we arrange their variations in seven categories:

FIRST DUTY: Prime place is given to inner cleanliness from bad manners, for as he ﷺ said, ‘Religion is built on cleanliness’²², and the required cleanliness is not of clothing but in the heart – as evidenced by His Statement: ‘*Innamā l-musbrikūna najas* – Polytheists are but dirty’ (Koran, 9:28), showing that dirtiness is not confined to clothing, for unless the inner heart (*bā‘īn*) is

cleansed of corruption, it will not accept the useful knowledge in religion, nor would it be susceptible to illumination by the Light of Knowledge.

Ibn Mas'ūd said, 'Knowledge is not endless tales, but a light cast into the heart.'²³ And some seekers said, 'We learned knowledge for other than God, but Knowledge refused to be other than for God.' In other words, Knowledge was refused and denied us, so its reality was not revealed and thus we gathered only its verbalisation and tales.

SECOND DUTY: To reduce his worldly connections, and move away from his homeland, so that his heart can dedicate itself to knowledge, for God did not grant a man two hearts within him, hence it was said, 'Knowledge does not grant you part of itself until you give it the whole of yourself.'

THIRD DUTY: Not to be too proud to learn; nor conspire against the teacher but, on the contrary, relinquish to him the reins of choice over his affairs. Like the helpless patient hands over the choice of prescribing one type of cure rather than another.

He must constantly serve a teacher, as was related about Zayd bin Thābit, who had prayed at a funeral, and a mule was brought to him to mount, when Ibn 'Abbās approached him and held his stirrup. Zayd said, 'Oh, uncle of the Messenger of God, no!' Ibn 'Abbās retorted, 'That is what he ﷺ ordered us to do with the learned and great.' Zayd took his hand and kissed it, saying 'And this is what he ordered us to do with the members of the family of our Prophet ﷺ.'²⁴

He ﷺ said, 'It is not of the manners of a faithful person to adulate, except if seeking Knowledge of God.' And it was said 'Knowledge is a war against the arrogant, as a river is a war against a high obstacle.'

FOURTH DUTY: To guard against listening to disagreements from people, for it results in shock and confusion, his heart tending, as a novice, to lean towards everything cast before it, particularly towards disruptive ways, equating with laziness and falsehood.

Novices (in the beginning) may not emulate the conduct of the ‘Complete’; so much so that some said, ‘He who visits us at the beginning becomes a friend; and he who visits us at the conclusion becomes an infidel.’

For the Complete One becomes still, except when performing his obligatory prayers, and has juxtaposed his supererogatory worship with the exercises of his heart and the constant observance of the Almighty. The unwary and heedless attribute to him (the Complete Man, in his stillness and serenity) laziness and falsehood; but the Koran describes them thus: *‘Wa tarā al-jibāla taḥsabuhā jāmidatan wa biya tamurru marra ṣ-ṣabābi ṣun‘a llābi lladbī atqana kulla shay’* – And you observe the mountains and to you they seem still, while in reality they are moving, like the movement of clouds; the artistry of God, Who perfected everything’ (Koran, 27:88).²⁵

FIFTH DUTY: Not to leave any branch of the branches of praiseworthy knowledge until he has seen its purpose. Taking his age into consideration, he completes it; otherwise he has to select (of the branches) according to importance, and selecting the more important is impossible without surveying the whole.

SIXTH DUTY: To give attention to the noblest knowledge, the Knowledge of the Way to the Hereafter, meaning the chapters of devotional practice (*mu‘āmalab*) and that of the Knowledge of Revelation (*‘ilm al-mukāshafab*)²⁶. Devotional practice results in revelation, and revelation is knowing God Almighty. This is a light cast by Almighty God into a heart which is purified by ‘devotion and struggle’ (*mujāhadab*) and which achieves the rank in belief attained by Abū Bakr, *Allāb be pleased with him*. It is related, from the sayings of the Master of Islamic Law himself, *Allāb’s greetings and peace be upon him*, ‘Were the belief of all the inhabitants of the Earth to be weighed against the belief of Abū Bakr, his would tip the scale,²⁷ due to a secret deposited within his heart and not to choice or reasoning.

What is amazing about someone who claims to heed this Tradition of the Messenger of God ﷺ is that he will then deride similar words, when uttered by Sufis! He claims that it is one of

the trifles (and superstitions) of Sufis! Take any notice of him, and you shall have lost your capital and blackened your heart.

Be careful to know that secret, which is beyond the wares of jurists and theologians. And nothing guides you to it, except your diligence in seeking it.

Know ye that the noblest Knowledge, and its highest degree, is the Knowledge of God Almighty. It is an ocean whose depth cannot be fathomed. The highest ranks in it, among humans, belong to the Prophets and (then) the Saints (*awliyā'*), followed by those after them (of the [*Knowledgeable* ²⁸] Scholars).

It was related that one of two pious wise men was observed with a parchment in his hand that read, 'Once you have perfected anything, then do not imagine that you have perfected everything, until you know God Almighty, and know that He is the Initiator of causes and Provider of all things,' while in the hand of the other was a parchment stating, 'Before I got to know God, I used to drink and get thirsty until I knew him, whereupon my thirst was quenched without drinking!'

SEVENTH DUTY: For the seeker to aim to immediately adorn his heart by whatever takes him towards God Almighty and closer to the company of the higher echelons of (His) Friends;²⁹ and not seek by it leadership, wealth and rank.

The duties of the guide and teacher

The best teacher is he who possesses knowledge and application of that knowledge, and this is referred to as great in the Heavens; he should not be like a needle, clothing others while it is itself naked; nor a lantern's wick, affording illumination for others as it perishes (burns). In rhyme:

*Şirtu ka'annī dbubālatun nuşibat,
tuđī'u li-n-nāsi wa hiya tahtariqu.*

I became a wick lit-up to illuminate,
Burning himself, for the sake of others.

Whosoever dons the mantle of teaching has acquired a great responsibility; so let him maintain his ethics and duties.

FIRST DUTY: Compassion for the pupil, and treating him like a son, as he ﷺ said, 'I am to you but like a father to his son.' He is the father in reality: for the parent is the cause of the transient life, while the teacher is the cause of the remaining, permanent life; thereby he takes precedence over parents.

Teaching for the sake of this world is destructive of the soul, and what destruction!

Being so, let the pupils of a teacher love one another, for the teachers, and the sons of the Hereafter, are travelling towards God Almighty and following The Path on the Way to Him. The world, its years and its months are all inns along the road. Therefore it is incumbent upon companions travelling from town to town to show mutual love and endearment. If it is so (for ordinary travellers), what about while travelling towards God Almighty and the highest Heaven, with the Path free from obstacles or crowding? And, as the Almighty says: '*Innamā l-mū'minūna ikhwāb* – Believers are but brothers' (Koran, 49:10).

SECOND DUTY: To emulate him, *peace be upon him*, by not seeking fees for teaching. God Almighty said: 'We do not want from you wages or gratitude' (Koran, 76:9). And, even if he has done them a favour, he owes them one, since they are the reason for his advance towards God Almighty, by sowing knowledge and belief in their hearts.

THIRD DUTY: Not to put off until tomorrow a recommendation, such as forbidding the pupil from donning a rank before he is worthy of it; or from going into secret knowledge before perfecting the manifest.

FOURTH DUTY: To advise the student, and forbid bad manners, not explicitly, but by example, for open criticism destroys the veil of prestige. He must himself be upright, and then demand uprightness from him, otherwise advice is futile, because emulation of deeds is firmer than emulation of words.

SECTION

*On the disadvantages of knowledge
and the distinguishing features of scholars
of the Hereafter, and those of bad scholars*

The Messenger of God, *peace be upon him*, said, 'The harshest punishment on the Day of Resurrection will be dealt to a scholar whom God has not granted benefit from his knowledge,'³⁰ and said, *peace be upon him*, 'Whoever gains knowledge but does not gain guidance will not gain anything but distance from God.'³¹ And be certain that a scholar, by diving into knowledge, is denied safety: it is either doom or eternal happiness.

Al-Khalīl bin Aḥmad said, 'Men are of four kinds: A man who knows, and knows that he knows, is a learned man, so follow him. A man who knows, but does not know that he knows, is asleep, wake him up. A man who does not know, and knows that he does not know, is seeking, so teach him. And a man who does not know that he does not know, is ignorant, beware of him.'

Sufyān said, 'Knowledge beckons endeavour: it had better respond, else it leaves.' And the Almighty said: '*Watlū 'alayhim nabā'a lladī ātaynāhu āyātīnā fansalakka min-hā* – And relate to them the tale of the one to whom We offered Our Signs but he turned away from them' (Koran, 7:175).

The scholars of the Hereafter are the ones who do not use their religion for worldly gains, nor sell the Hereafter for the world, knowing the glory of the Hereafter, and the ignominy of the world. He who does not realise the antagonism between the Here and the Hereafter, and its ordeal, is not of the people of Knowledge of God. And whoever denies this denies the evidence in the Koran, as well as the Revelation, and all the Holy Books sent down, as well as the statements of all the Prophets. Whoever knows this but does not practise it is the captive of Satan, for his desires have destroyed his soul, and he is overcome by his heedlessness. Anyone emulating him perishes.

How can he possibly be considered to belong to the party of the people of Knowledge, with his qualifications?

Addressing David, *peace be upon him*, He said: ‘Do you realise what I do to a scholar, should he prefer his desires to My Love? I deprive him of the pleasures of My Address. O David, do not enquire about Me from a scholar drunk with the world, lest he should turn you away from the path of My Love. They are the highwaymen on the path of My Servants. O David, if you see a Seeker, be a servant to him; O David, whosoever is returned to Me in fight, I record him as a martyr, and he whom I consider a martyr, I do not torment him in Hellfire, ever.’

And al-Ḥasan said, ‘The punishment for scholars is the death of the heart; and the death of the heart is the seeking of the world by the labour of the Hereafter.’

‘Umar, *Allāb be pleased with him*, said, ‘If you see a scholar who loves the world, then accuse him of abusing your religion, for every lover swims in what he loves.’³²

Yaḥyā bin Muḥammad ar-Rāzī³³, used to say to worldly scholars: ‘O you who claim knowledge! Your palaces are Caesarean, your homes Khosroean, your dress external, your boots Goliathan, your mounts Qaroonian, your vessels Pharaonic, your foul deeds are from the Time of Ignorance and your beliefs are Satanic. Where are you in relation to the *sharī‘ah* of Muḥammad?’³⁴ Then he would break into:

*And the shepherd of the flock fends the wolf from it;
But what if its shepherds be themselves the wolves?*

And it was said:

*O lip readers, O salt of the earth,
If the salt turns foul, who will refine it?*

And know that the most appropriate for a pious scholar is for his food, attire, home and all that is related to his worldly affairs to be modest, not tending to luxury and finery, and not to exaggerate in this luxury if he does not exaggerate in denying it. And he

should beware of visiting sultans and those in authority (avoiding doing so) to the best of his ability, for fear of temptation.

SECTION

On the Intellect (the Mind) and its nobility

It is the spring of knowledge; and testimony to its nobility is his saying ﷺ, 'Intellect was the first thing God created. He told it to approach Him, so it did; then told it to retreat, and it did. So He said: "By My Majesty and Might, I have not created a creation more generous to Me than you – by you I take, and by you I give; by you I reward, and by you I punish."'”³⁵

And he ﷺ said, 'I asked Gabriel what is the *su'dud*?’³⁶ He said 'The Intellect.'³⁷

The essence of the Intellect is that it is an impulse by means of which theorems and theories are worked out; and it is as if an illuminant is cast into the heart, which is thereby primed for understanding things. This varies with the variations in instincts.

And God Knows best.