

IBN 'ARABĪ'S OWN SUMMARY OF THE *FUṢŪṢ*
"THE IMPRINT OF THE BEZELS OF
THE WISDOM"

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Introduction

THE importance of Ibn 'Arabī for Islamic intellectual history is well-known. His school determines the course of most metaphysical speculation within Sufism from the 7th/13th century onward, and in addition it profoundly influences later Islamic philosophy, especially in Iran.¹ The importance of Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (usually translated as the "Bezels of Wisdom") as the quintessence of his writings and thought and a major source of his influence is also well-known,² and is attested to by the more than one hundred commentaries written upon it.³

Ibn 'Arabī is also the author of a work called *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* (the "Imprint" or "Pattern of the *Fuṣūṣ*"), in which he summarizes briefly the main discussions of the *Fuṣūṣ* itself. Because of the importance of the *Fuṣūṣ* the *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* also takes upon a special importance, and for this reason it has been commented by a number of well-known figures of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, including Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunyawī and 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī.⁴

¹ On the influence of Ibn 'Arabī in Sufism, philosophy and elsewhere, see S.H. Nasr "Seventh-Century Sufism and the School of Ibn 'Arabī", *Sufi Essays*, London, 1972, pp.97-103.

² See S.H. Nasr. *Three Muslim Sages*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1964, pp.98-99.

³ See O. Yahya. *Histoire et classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn 'Arabī*, Damas, 1964 pp. 241-255; also the same author's Arabic introduction to S.H. Amoli, *Le texte des textes*, Tehran-Paris 1975, pp 16-33.

⁴ Yahya lists ten commentaries on this work in *Le texte des textes*, pp.35-6. See also *Histoire et classification*, pp.256-6. Yahya mentions in the latter work, p.407, that *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* has also been attributed to Ismā'īl ibn Sawdakīn al-Nūrī, a disciple of Ibn 'Arabī. But the fact that Qunyawī, Ibn 'Arabī's foremost disciple and according to most accounts his stepson, wrote a commentary upon it as a work of his own master would seem to be sufficient proof of its authenticity. This commentary, one manuscript of which is mentioned by Yahya as existing in Damascus, also exists according to Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, in a private collection in Mashhad.

Jâmî's work, *Naqd al-nuṣûṣ fi sharḥ naqsh al-fuṣûṣ*, written in the year 863/1459 is particularly famous in the East. This is indicated by a number of facts, including the large number of manuscripts of it which exist in various libraries.⁵ The title of this book, whose text is two-thirds Arabic and one-third Persian, means "Selected Texts in Commenting the *Naqsh al-Fuṣûṣ*", and indeed one of the most interesting points of the work is the large number of quotations gathered from various Sufi authors, which Jâmî has chosen with both metaphysical and mystical insight and literary taste.

In the introduction to *Naqd al-nuṣûṣ*, Jâmî writes as follows: "These are a few words gleaned from the texts of the spiritual elite which comment upon the meaning of the *Naqsh al-fuṣûṣ*, which Ibn 'Arabî . . . abridged from and dedicated to the principles and essential elements of the *Fuṣûṣ al-ḥikam*, which is the seal of his writings . . . (The present work is) like the patch-work cloak of the Sufis, each patch acquired from a different place and sewn to the others with the thread of appropriate-ness and the tie of harmony . . . Some (of these texts) are the blessed words of the magnanimous Shaykh (Ibn 'Arabî) himself, and some are the sacred sciences expounded by his followers, among the great Masters: such as . . . Ṣadr al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Iṣḥâq al-Qunyawî and his disciples and beneficiaries, including the perfect gnostic, Mu'ayyid al-Dîn al-Jandî, who is the first commentator of the *Fuṣûṣ al-ḥikam*, and Shaykh Sa'd al-Dîn Sa'îd al-Farghânî, who is the commentator of the *Poem of the Way of Ibn Fâriq*; and others, . . . especially the commentators of the *Fuṣûṣ al-ḥikam*".

The three names mentioned in the above passage are of particular importance, for they signify that in Jâmî's mind the most important figures in the school of Ibn 'Arabî are, after the Magister Maximus (al-Shaykh al-Akbar) himself, first Ṣadr al-Dîn Qunyawî (d. 673/1274-5). and then his disciples, Jandî and Farghânî. The fact that Qunyawî is the most important expositor of the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabî in the eastern lands of Islam has indeed been

⁵ Yahya mentions twenty in *Le texte des textes*, but I was able to find about fifty in the famous catalogues and another 25 in the Solaymaniyyah Library in Istanbul — and by no means can I claim to have done a thorough job of searching. It has also been printed in lithographed editions at least three times in India and Iran.

recognized,⁶ although it is remarkable that, as far as the present writer knows, no study of him has been made in Western languages.⁷ The reason that an intellectual figure of his magnitude — who should be considered second only to his master in the exposition of theoretical gnosis (*'irfân-i nazârî*) in Islam — could have gone so completely ignored⁸ can only be his proximity to Ibn 'Arabî, so that like the moon he has been effaced by the sun. In any case there is no doubt that all of the followers of Ibn 'Arabî's school in the East see their master through Qunyawî's eyes or the eyes of his immediate disciples. The disciples and students mentioned by Jâmî — only two of dozens of important figures, including such men as Fakhr al-Dîn 'Irâqî and Quṭb al-Dîn Shîrâzî — are also of prime importance in Ibn 'Arabî's school and deserve serious study.⁹ Jâmî goes so far as to say that all of the commentaries upon the *Fuṣûṣ* go back to that of Jandî,¹⁰ and a

⁶ See S.H. Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, p.99.

⁷ I am in the process of editing and translating his *Tabṣîrat al-mubtadi'*, a Persian work which introduces the reader to Ibn 'Arabî's metaphysical universe, but with remarkable simplicity and basing itself almost exclusively on the Quran and Hadith.

⁸ Even in the East it is only scholars like the great contemporary *hakîm* Sayyid Jalâl al-Dîn Âshtiyânî who are fully aware of his importance. See Âshtiyânî's *Sharḥ muqaddima-yi Qayṣari bar Fuṣûṣ al-ḥikam*, Mashhad, 1385/1966, p.337, footnote. The only work of Qunyawî which has been published in a modern edition is *I'jâz al-bayân*, 2nd edition, Hyderabad-Deccan, 1368/1949; also printed in Cairo as *al-Tafsîr al-ṣūfî lil-Qur'ân*, 1389/1969. Âshtiyânî is in the midst of printing his *Nuṣûṣ*. At least four of his works were published in lithographed editions in Iran in the nineteenth century.

⁹ Sayyid Jalâl al-Dîn Âshtiyânî has fortunately just recently begun the edition of both works mentioned by Jâmî, Jandî's commentary on the *Fuṣûṣ*, which has never been printed and the Persian version of Farghânî's commentary on the *Poem of the Way*. Farghânî also translated this work into Arabic and it was published in 1293 A.H. apparently in Cairo.

¹⁰ *Nafahât al-uns*, ed. by M. Tawḥîdpûr, Tehran, 1336/1957, p.558.

¹¹ See my Persian introduction to *Naqd al-nuṣûṣ*, in press.

¹² *Naqsh al-fuṣûṣ* was published in the *Rasâ'il* of Ibn 'Arabî in Hyderabad-Deccan, 1361/1948, but I have followed the far better text which has been established through a critical edition of Jâmî's *Naqd al-nuṣûṣ* based on six manuscripts (five of which were written during Jâmî's lifetime). I have also translated the remainder of *Naqd al-nuṣûṣ* and am preparing it for publication.

¹³ *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism — Ibn 'Arabî and Lao-Tzû*, *Chuang-Tzû*, Tokyo, 1966, Part One.

study of two of the most famous of these, by Qayṣarî and Kâshânî, has shown that at least some of their material has been derived almost word for word from his work.¹¹

What is presented below is a complete translation of Ibn ‘Arabî’s *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* along with an abridgement of Jâmî’s commentary, representing perhaps 15% of the total work.¹² Because of the extreme conciseness of *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* it is almost impossible to understand it without a commentary, and in fact a rather detailed one. I have tried to supply the minimum commentary necessary for an understanding of the text, as well as a few gleanings from Jâmî’s detailed selections from other texts which comment upon the main themes. The first and last chapters are translated more extensively — but by no means totally — both because of their importance and also to give the reader a better idea of the style of the complete commentary. Certain difficulties in understanding Ibn ‘Arabî’s work no doubt remain, but it is hoped that the publication of the translation of the whole text with clarifications where necessary will eliminate these. I have not indicated the sources of the material employed by Jâmî, except where he indicates it himself. The indication of sources along with numerous other notes and comments, will have to wait for the publication of the whole book.

The material in darker type is the text of Ibn ‘Arabî’s work. Additions in parentheses are my own. Finally it should be added that for a good deal of the terminology employed in the translation I am indebted to T. Izutsu’s brilliant study of Ibn ‘Arabî,¹³ probably the best work in European languages for explaining the intricacies of Ibn ‘Arabî’s doctrine, including many of the discussions dealt with here.

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I

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF
(THE NAME) ALLAH IN THE LOGOS OF ADAM

The *faṣṣ* of a thing is its epitome and quintessence. The *faṣṣ* or “bezel” of a ring is that with which it is decorated and upon which the name of its owner is written. “Wisdom” is knowledge of the realities, attributes and properties of things as they are in themselves and knowledge of words and of volitional acts in a manner which requires them to be appropriate to the circumstances (when they appear from the possessor of wisdom). *Al-ilāhiyyah* (“the Divinity” or “Allah”) is the name of the ontological level which embraces all of the levels of the divine Names and Qualities.

Therefore “the quintessence of the wisdom of (the name) Allah” consists of the epitome of all of the knowledge and religious sciences pertaining to the level of Divinity; or it is the place where that knowledge and those sciences are inscribed, i.e., the heart of the Perfect Man. So the purport of the title of this chapter is that the quintessence of this knowledge and these sciences, or the locus which is receptive toward them, is actualized in the Logos of Adam. And what is meant by “logos” throughout this work is the very prophet in question in respect of his particularities and the allotment determined for him and for his community by God.

Know that the Most Beautiful Divine Names, which if considered in principle number 99 or 1001, but if considered individually and in detail are beyond reckoning, for the Names are the determinations of the Name “Allah” within the realities of the possible beings (*mumkināt*), and they are infinite because of the infinity of the possible beings, demand in themselves the existence of the world in order that it become a mirror for their concealed lights and the locus of manifestation of their hidden secrets, in respect to which God said, “I was a hidden treasure and I wanted to be known, so I created the world.” And verily the Shaykh

(i.e., Ibn ‘Arabī) attributed this demand to the Names – which are the Essence qualified by attributes – and not to the Essence Itself, because the Essence in respect of Its absoluteness (*iṭlāq*) can have no property attributed to It, nor does It become determined by any quality or delimitation. So God in respect of the Name “Allah” brought the world into being as a body made complete (and ready for a spirit) and made Adam its spirit; and I mean by “Adam” the existence of the human microcosm. And He taught him the Names, all of them.

One of the Sufis has said concerning His words, “He taught Adam the Names, all of them” (Quran II, 31), “I.e., He placed within Adam’s primordial nature the subtle essence (*latīfah*) of each of His Names, and through those subtle essences prepared him to realize all of the Names of Majesty (*jalāl*) and Beauty (*jamāl*), which He referred to as His two hands. For, He said to Iblīs, ‘What prevented thee from falling prostrate before that which I created with My two hands?’ (XXXVIII, 76). Everything other than Adam had been created with one hand, because it was the locus of manifestation of either the attributes of Beauty, like the angels of mercy, or those of Majesty, like the angels of chastisement and the satans.”

God only taught the Perfect Man His Most Beautiful Names and placed them within him, because the Perfect Man is the spirit of the world and the world is his body – as was mentioned – and because the spirit governs the body and exercises free disposal (*taṣarruf*) within it through its spiritual and corporeal faculties, just as the Names are like spiritual and corporeal faculties for the Perfect Man. Just as the spirit governs the body and controls it through faculties, in the same way the Perfect Man governs the affairs of the world and controls them by means of the divine Names.

Know that every one of the realities of the essence of the Perfect Man and of his ontological level is an isthmus (*barzakh*) in terms of its comprehensive unity (*aḥadiyyat al-jam‘*), standing between one of the realities of the Sea of Necessity (*wujūb*) and a reality which is its locus of manifestation within the sea of possibility (*imkān*) and which is its “throne”, upon which that Necessary reality is seated. ⁽¹⁾ So when the perfect comprehensive theophany (*tajallī*) descends upon its locus of manifestation, the Perfect Man, he receives it through his perfect, com-

⁽¹⁾ The terminology here is Quranic, referring to the verse, “The All-Compassionate sat Himself upon the Throne” (XX, 5).

prehensive and unified reality, and that theophany courses through all of the realities within his nature. Then the light of theophany flows out from him onto that which is in conformity with it within the world. Therefore the bounties and blessings which descend upon the realities of the world through the theophany of the All-merciful only reach these realities after having become determined within the Perfect Man and colored by an added hue which did not exist before the determination of the theophany within him. Therefore the realities and archetypes of the world are his subjects, and he is the vicegerent (*khalīfah*) over them. And the vicegerent must look after his subjects in the most fitting and best manner. It is here that some of the Perfect Men are superior to others.

God manifests Himself to the heart of the Perfect Man, who is His vicegerent. And the reflection of the lights of His self-manifestation overflows into the world, which remains in existence by receiving this effusion (*favḍ*). As long as this Man is in the world, he seeks from God the aid of the theophanies of the Essence and of the “Merciful” and “Compassionate” Mercy ⁽²⁾ by means of the Names and Qualities of which the beings are the manifestations and the loci upon which they are “seated”. ⁽³⁾ So the world is preserved by this seeking of aid and by the effusion of theophanies as long as the Perfect Man remains within it. Therefore no meaning passes from the Inward (*bāṭin*) to the Outward (*ẓāhir*) except by his command. Therefore even if he does not know it because of the domination of his human qualities, he is the isthmus between the two seas — i.e. the two seas of the Outward and the Inward — and the partition between the two worlds. And to him is the reference in His words, “He let forth the two seas that meet together, between them an isthmus they do not overpass” (Quran LV, 19).

Therefore, or because the world is like the body and the Perfect Man is like the spirit, it is said that the world is a “great man”, for just as man consists of a body and a spirit which governs it, the world is made up of these two, although it is larger than man in form; but this statement is only true on condition of the Perfect Man’s existence within it, or the world, for if he did not exist within it, it would be like a discarded body without a spirit.

⁽²⁾ These two kinds of mercy, also called “the mercy of gratuitous gift” and “the mercy of obligation” are explained below in the Wisdom of Hūd (the tenth *faṣṣ*).

⁽³⁾ Again a reference to the verse, “The All-Compassionate sat Himself upon the Throne” (XX. 5).

And the Perfect Man is a book, the epitome and summary of the Mother of the Book, which consists of the ontological plane of the comprehensive Unity of the Name "Allah", which comprises the Necessary and active realities pertaining to the Names and the subtle essences of the Qualities pertaining to the level of Lordship, such that nothing escapes them, save inherent Necessity (*al-wujūb al-dhātī*), for the contingent and possible being has no share in that, or else the realities of things would be reversed.

And therefore, i.e. because man is the epitome of the ontological plane of "Allah" and comprises what it contains of the realities of the Names and Qualities in a comprehensive unity, He singled him out for the divine Form, even if the world also is in accordance with the Form, for whatever is nearer to oneness is more deserving of being attributed to God. and the form of man is the form of His comprehensive Unity, while the form of the world is His particularized form. For He said through the mouth of the Holy Prophet, "Verily God created Adam in His" divine and perfect "form" and according to His own all-comprehensive qualities of Lordship. And since it is possible that the pronoun in "His form" refers to Adam, as some people have claimed, he followed this with his words, and in another version, "in the form of the All-Merciful".

It has been said that "form" means appearance, and so it can only apply to bodies. So what is meant by "form" in this *ḥadīth* is "attribute", i.e., "Adam was created according to the Attributes of God", or, living, knowing, willing, powerful, hearing, seeing and speaking. Since Reality appears outwardly through form, the term has been applied figuratively to the Names and Qualities; for through them God appears in external reality. This is the point of view of the exoteric authorities.

But in the view of those who have attained the Truth, form is that without which the unseen and disengaged (*mujarrad*) realities cannot be conceived or manifested. And the form of God is Being determined by the other determinations through which It is the source of all acts relating to perfection and all active properties.

One of the Sufis has said, "If a questioner asks how 'form' can be attributed to God, we will answer that according to the exoteric authorities it as a figurative attribution, not a real one, because for them to apply the word 'form' to sensory beings is true and correct, and to intelligible beings is figurative. But for us, since the world in all of its spiritual, corporeal, substantial and accidental parts is the particularized

form of the ontological plane of 'Allah', and the Perfect Man is His summary form, the attribution of form to God is true and correct, and to what is other than He is figurative; for in our eyes nothing other than He possesses existence."

And He made him, or the Perfect Man, **the sought-after goal** and the desired end in the creation and maintenance of **the world, like the rational soul**, which is the goal in making perfect the body and harmonizing the natural and bodily constitution of **the human individual**.

The universal goal and the primary intention in the creation of the world was the knowledge and vision of the sons of Adam. The lamp of the determinations of contemplation's light and the mirror of the variations of Being's manifestation are his pure heart and penetrating understanding; and the focus of all of the kinds of knowledge and perception is the comprehensive unity of his knowledge and perception.

When man's created attributes are transformed into uncreated ones and the eyes of his spiritual insight are anointed with the antimony of Oneness, by means of all of his faculties and sense organs he contemplates the beauty of God and perceives absolute Being in all of the loci of theophany and manifestation. The fruit of the tree of his creation is nothing other than this knowledge and vision.

Man is eye, and the rest is skin: true sight is seeing the Friend.

When there is not sight of the Friend, the eye is better blind; were he Solomon, an ant is better than he. ⁽⁴⁾

Therefore, or because the goal of the creation and maintenance of the world is the Perfect Man, just as the goal of perfecting the body is the rational soul, **the world is destroyed with his disappearance**, i.e., the disappearance and transferral of the Perfect Man from it, just as the body decays and disappears when the rational soul leaves it; for verily God does not manifest Himself within the world without the intermediary of the Perfect Man. So with his withdrawal the replenishment which brings about the subsistence of its existence and perfections is discontinued. Hence the world is transferred with his transferral, and all of the meanings and perfections which were within it depart for the hereafter.

⁽⁴⁾ These lines are from Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, Book I, vss. 1406-1407 (Nicholson edition). Unless otherwise indicated the lines of poetry are usually by Jāmī.

Sadr al-Dīn al-Qunyawī writes in *al-Fuṭūḥ*: “The true Perfect Man is the isthmus between Necessity and possibility and the mirror which embraces the attributes and laws of Eternity together with those of contingency. He is the intermediary between God and creation, and through him and from his ontological plane the divine effusion and grace, which are the reason for the subsistence of ‘other than God’, reach the world, all of it, both the celestial and the terrestrial. If it were not for his being the isthmus which is not opposed to either of the two sides, nothing in the world would receive the unique succour of God, because of the lack of affinity and relationship; the succour would not reach the world and therefore the world would cease to exist.

“Verily the Perfect Man is the pillar of the Heavens and the earth. And because of this mystery, when he leaves the center of the Universe – that Universe which is the outward form of the divine All-comprehensiveness and of its Unity and the station of the vicegerency of the ontological plane of ‘Allah’ – and goes back to the Noble Pedestal and the Majestic Throne, which encompass the Heavens and the earth, the order of the Universe will be destroyed and the earth and the Heavens will be changed into other than themselves.

“Therefore the Prophet has said, ‘The hour (of the Resurrection) will not come as long as there is someone in the world who says “Allah, Allah”.’ And he emphasized by repetition that he means, ‘as long as there is someone in the world who truly says “Allah”,’ for if he meant ‘someone who says the word “Allah”,’ he would not have emphasized it by repetition. And there is no doubt that no one mentions ‘Allah’ with true mention – and in particular with this greatest and all-embracing Name, which contains in itself all of the Names – except he who knows God with perfect gnosis. It is as if he said, ‘The hour will not come as long as there is a Perfect Man in the world.’ It is he who is referred to as ‘the maintaining pillar’ or ‘he for whose sake (the world) is maintained.’ So when he is transferred (to the other world), the heaven will be split asunder, the sun will be darkened, the stars will be thrown down and scattered, the mountains will be set moving, the earth will be shaken and the Resurrection will come. ⁽⁵⁾

“Moreover, if it were not for his immutable permanence – in re-

(5) The last sentence is a reference to a number of Quranic verses: LV, 37; LXXXI, 1; LXXXII, 2; LXXXI, 3 and XCIX, 1.

spect of his being a locus of manifestation – within Paradise, whose place is the Noble Pedestal and the Majestic Throne, the situation of these two would be like that of the earth and the heavens (they would also be destroyed.) And verily I have qualified his immutable permanence with my words, ‘in respect of his being a locus of manifestation’, because of what God has informed me concerning the fact that Paradise does not encompass a Perfect Man. Of his reality there will only be in Paradise what is compatible with that world and what that world necessitates from God in respect to what it contains of man.

“Rather, I even say, ‘If hell were empty of him, it would not remain in existence; and it is through him that it is satiated.’ The Prophet refers to the Perfect Man with his words ‘the Foot of the All-compeller’ in the *ḥadīth*, ‘Verily hell will not cease to say, “Are there any more?”’, until the All-compeller places His foot upon it. And when the All-compeller places His foot upon it, parts of it will withdraw into other parts, and it will say, “Enough! Enough!”’ I was told by God that the foot placed in hell is what is left over in this world from the forms of the Perfect Men and is that which does not accompany them in the paradisaical state. And this remnant was alluded to as ‘the foot’ because of a subtle and sublime correspondence: the foot is the last part of man’s body; in the same way his physical form itself is the last of the parts of the absolute human form, for the forms of the world are all like bodily organs of the absolute and true human form. The physical state is the last form in which the human reality appears; and through the absolute and true human form all of the forms which I said were like bodily organs are supported and maintained.”

And the edifice is transferred to the hereafter because of him, i.e., because of man, or by reason of his being transferred there. As long as the Perfect Man is in the world, the world is preserved and the divine treasures protected. But when he is transferred from this world to the next and leaves the lower world to reside in the hereafter, and when no one remains among men who is qualified by the divine perfections and able to take his place, and when God makes him the treasurer of His own treasures, then all of the perfections and meanings which exist in the treasures of the world are removed along with that Perfect Man, the small amount which is in the world joins that which is waiting in the hereafter, and the work of keeping the treasury and being the vicegerent goes to the next world.

Hence he, or the Perfect Man, is the first in intention and desire, since God made him the intended aim and the final cause of the creation of the world. And it is in the nature of the final cause to be prior in knowledge and will, just as it is in its nature to be posterior in existence, as the Shaykh has indicated with his words, the last, i.e., the Perfect Man is posterior to other than himself, in creation in the chain of existent beings, for the first thing He created in external existence was the Supreme Pen, then the Guarded Tablet, then the Mighty Throne, then the Noble Footstool, then the elements, then the seven heavens, then the productions,⁽⁶⁾ then man: for he is the end of these creatures and the locus of their integration. And man is the outward, or that which is perceived, in his elemental and corporeal form and the inward also, or that which is not perceived, in station or rank, for this is in respect of his spirituality. Or we can say that man is the outward in the realm of concrete existence, through his comprehensive and unified form composed of body, soul, intellect, faculties and other things which can be called "created"; and he is also inward, but through his station, which is his vicegerency.

So in respect of his elemental and corporeal form, or the form of his comprehensive unity, he is a servant of God (Allah), created to worship his Lord; and in respect of his meaning and spirit, or his station, a lord, whose lordship is actualized in relation to the individual beings of all the world.

The Shaykh writes in *Inshā' al-dawā'ir*: "Man is two copies: an outward copy and an inward copy. His outward copy corresponds to the world in its totality, and his inward copy corresponds to the ontological level of the Divinity. Thus man is the universal in reality and unconditionally, for he is the receptacle for all beings, whether eternal or contingent. But beings other than he are not the receptacle for all beings, for the particular beings of the world are not receptacles for Divinity, and God is not a receptacle for servanthood. Rather the whole world is a servant, and God — glory be to Him alone — is a unique and eternal God who cannot be qualified by that which contradicts the attributes of Divinity, just as the world cannot be qualified by that which contradicts the attributes of contingency and servanthood. So man is the owner of two complete relations: a relation through which he enters the ontological

(6) The "productions" (*muwalladāt*) are the three kingdoms: animal, vegetable and mineral.

level of Divinity, and a relation through which he enters the ontological level of the cosmos. So he is called a 'servant' in respect of his being addressed by revelation and since he was not, then he was, like the world. And he is called a 'lord' in respect of his vicegerency, his Form and his Fairest Stature (Quran XCV, 4)."

For that reason, i.e., because man has an aspect of lordship through which he is in conformity with God, and an aspect of servanthood through which he is in conformity with creation, **He made him a vicegerent and in the same way He made his perfect sons vicegerents in all of the world, and his sons who have not reached perfection vicegerents in that which pertains to them, like the governance of a kingdom by the king and the running of a family by its head. And the lowest form of governing is the governing of the body by the individual. But the Greatest Vicegerency belongs only to the Perfect Man. And therefore, i.e., because the meaning of Adam comprises the two aspects of Lordship and servanthood, none of the creatures of the world has claimed for himself lordship except man, because of what he possesses of power and mastery, by being qualified by the attributes of Lordship and the active Qualities of the Necessary Being. So when he observed them in himself, but God had not opened the eye of his spiritual insight, he did not understand that they are the attributes of God reflected in the mirror of his preparedness (*isti^cdād*), and he imagined that they belonged to him personally. Therefore he claimed lordship and divinity, like the pharaohs. And in the same way no one in the world consolidated the station of servanthood in himself through falling down to its lowest levels except man, for when he observed those attributes and qualities in others and he imagined that they belonged to them personally, he acknowledged his servanthood to them, like those who worship idols. Therefore he worshipped stones and other minerals, which are the lowest and the most debased kind of being, for the ontological qualities in their receptive potency, such as life, knowledge and their concomitants, have not become actualized.**

So there is nothing greater and of higher rank than man in his lordship, or by reason of his being qualified by and manifesting the attributes of Lordship, for no rank is higher than this, and in the same way nothing is more lowly than him in his servanthood, or by reason of his being qualified by the attributes of servanthood, for just as Lordship is the highest of ranks, its opposite, i.e., servanthood, is the lowest.

Man is a two-sided mirror. On one side the properties of Lordship and on the other the defects of servanthood are reflected. When you look at the properties of Lordship, he is greater than all beings; and when you count the defects of servanthood, he is lower and more insignificant than all creatures.

When I find a trace of Thy Qualities in myself, God forbid that someone should be better than I!

But when my glance falls to my own state, in the two worlds there is none worse than I.

So if you have understood the preceding explanation, I have explained to you what is meant by "man". Look at his grandeur, which he has attained through the Most Beautiful Names, or having become qualified by them, and the fact that they seek him to be their perfect locus of theophany and their all-embracing locus of manifestation. Through their seeking him and their requiring his existence, you will come to understand his majesty and nobility, for the grandeur and nobility of the sought is only to the extent of the grandeur and nobility of the seeker; and in the same way through his appearance through them, or through those Names, and his existence through them, although in his own essence he is non-existent, you will understand his lowliness, for there is nothing more lowly than to be subject to the laws of nothingness and to stand in need of another for one's existence. So understand!

From this, or from this station, according to which it has been understood that man is a lord in respect of his inward part and a servant in respect of his outward, it is understood that he, or man, is a copy of the two forms, and corresponds to them: the form of God, which is embraced by the state of his inward all-comprehensiveness and concentration and the form of the world, which is encompassed by the state of his outward differentiation and dispersion. And these two forms are the two hands of God with which He created man.

What is man? An all-embracing isthmus, the form of creatures and of God placed within him.

He is a copy in synopsis whose content is the Essence of God and His ineffable Attributes.

Connected to the subtleties of the World of Power, inclusive of the verities of the World of Dominion,

His inward is drowned in the sea of Unity, his outward dry-lipped on the shore of separation.

There is not one of the Attributes of God which is not manifest in his essence.

He is knowing, hearing and seeing, speaking, willing, alive and powerful.

In the same way, of the realities of the Universe, everything is incorporated within him:

Take the Heavens or the elements, or take minerals, plants and animals;

The form of good and bad are written within him, the behaviour of devil and beast are kneaded in him.

If he was not the mirror of the Face of the Everlasting, why did the angels prostrate themselves to him?

He is the reflection of the beauty of the Immaculate Presence; if Iblīs cannot fathom this, so what?

II

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF IN- AND EX- SPIRATION IN THE LOGOS OF SETH

The first of the ontological levels which can be conceived of is the determination (*ta^cayyun*) which embraces all determinations and which possesses the comprehensive Unity (*aḥadiyyat al-jam^c*). The level which follows it is the level of Principiality (*maṣdariyyah*) and Effusion (*fayyāḍiyyah*). Adam was the form of the first level, just as Seth was the locus of manifestation for the second. Therefore the first *faṣṣ* to be mentioned was that of Adam, and it was followed by the *faṣṣ* of Seth, in keeping with external existence itself.

Since Adam after the loss of Abel sought a gift from the ontological level of God as “the Giver” to alleviate his grief, God bestowed upon him Seth purely as a gift and bestowal. In addition everything which Seth attained came purely as a gift. Therefore the Shaykh inevitably speaks about gifts and some of their kinds in this *faṣṣ*: **Know that gifts of God are comprised of numerous kinds: among them is that He should give a gift especially to manifest His bounty, without expecting anything in exchange from him who benefits, in terms of praise, thanksgiving, or what have you, by means of His Name “the Giver”. And it, or the gift received from the Name “the Giver”, is of two kinds: one is the gift of the Essence, pertaining to the Unity of all of the Names, for the Essence as It is in Itself does not bestow gifts or manifest Itself through theophanies, and the second is the gift of a Name.**

Now if you should say, “The gifts pertaining to the Name ‘the Giver’ are gifts of a Name, so how can they be divided into gifts of the Essence and gifts of a Name?” I would reply, “What is meant by ‘gift of the Essence’ is the gift whose source is the Essence without taking into account any one of the divine Qualities along with it – even though such a gift is not given without the intermediary of the Names and Qualities, for God does not manifest Himself in terms of His Essence to the existent beings except from behind the veil of one of the Names. And what is meant by ‘gift of a Name’ is a gift whose source is one of the Attributes in respect of its being distinguished and differentiated from the Essence.”

The gifts of the Essence occur only through a “divine” theophany, i.e., through the theophany of the Presence of the all-embracing Name “Allah”, which is the comprehensive Unity of all of the Names, not through the manifestation of the Essence, since there are no properties, designations, names, theophanies or anything else within the Unity of the Essence. Therefore the determination of the theophany comes from the ontological level of the divinity, and for this reason the theophany is attributed to the *divine* Essence, not to the Essence without restriction.

And the theophany from the Essence can only be according to the form of the locus of theophany – which is the servant – and according to his preparedness (*istiḍād*), just as God appears in the mirrors of the beings according to their preparednesses and receptivities, by manifesting His properties within them. Other than this is impossible.

But as for the gifts of a Name, they always are accompanied by a veil, i.e., the veil of determination according to a Name, according to

which a particular Name becomes differentiated from the others. **And the recipient does not receive this gift**, whether of the Essence or of a Name, **except according to his actual preparedness**, for the theophanies in the Presence of Holiness and the Spring of Oneness are one and whole in description, but they become colored when they descend according to the preparednesses of the recipients, their spiritual and physical levels, their times and places, and all of the concomitances of these things, like states, constitutions and particular attributes. So people think because of the diversity of effects that the theophanies themselves are multiple in reality, but this is not so. God said, "Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye" (Quran LIV, 50). Just as God is one in every respect, so also His effusion and His command have no multiplicity except in relation to the recipients.

It, or the preparedness, is what is meant by His words, "**He gave everything its creation**" (Quran XX, 50). So from that is the preparedness.

It may be that the gift, whether from the Essence or a Name, is due to asking on the part of him who has received it by the state of his preparedness, or the state which causes man to ask verbally. There is no escape from it, or from asking by the state.

Or it may be that the gift is due to asking verbally. Verbal asking is of two kinds: one is asking according to nature, in that the reason for asking is man's natural wish to hurry, for man was created ever hasty, and the second, which is asking but not according to nature, is also divided into two kinds. The first is asking in obedience to the divine command, according to His words, "Call upon Me and I will answer you" (Quran XL, 60), and the second is asking according to the demands of wisdom and gnosis, for he, or the asker according to the demands of wisdom and gnosis, is a commander who directs his subjects – whether they be all the inhabitants of the world, or those of a kingdom, or his family, or his body, and a master of the reins of their affairs, a protector of their interests, and one who knows that there are certain of their interests which divine Providence has ordained to be dependent upon asking. So he asks God and prays to Him to take care of these affairs. It is obligatory for him, or that asker, to strive to the extent possible to see that every one of his subjects who has a right receives it; what indicates this obligation is like his, i.e. the Prophet's, words, "**Verily you have a duty toward your family**" i.e. those who are worthy of your instruction and education, like wives and children in the macrocosm and like physical and spiritual faculties in the microcosm, "**your soul, your body and your guests.**"

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF
THE "MOST GLORIFIED" IN THE LOGOS OF NOAH

Since the Wisdom of the "Most Glorified" (*al-subbūh*) consists of the knowledge of the sciences pertaining to the "purification" (*tanzīh*) of God, the Shaykh begins the text concerned with this Wisdom with a discussion of purification: **Purification on the part of him, or the servant, who purifies God of certain things in accordance with the approval or disapproval of his ordinary mind and his reason is a delimitation and a specification by him of Him who is purified, in terms of what is other than those things purified from Him, for he has distinguished Him from that which does not accept to be purified from those things. So by analogy the absoluty also of whatever must be given this description is a delimitation through this absoluty. Therefore there is then naught but a limited being or a divinity, which he, or the servant who purifies it, has raised up by attributing absoluty to it.**

Just as the knowledge of him who purifies God with his mind is incomplete – for he is restricting the Unrestricted and delimiting the Limitless – in the same way he who "assimilates" (*tashbīh*) God to the creatures without purifying Him is mistaken, for assimilation is also delimitation and restriction of the Unrestricted – who has no limit which defines or confines Him.

But he who combines purification and assimilation, maintains each of them as permanent concerning Him and describes Him by both is the true gnostic and the realized Perfect Man. The Shaykh has said:

If you purify Him, you delimit; if you assimilate Him, you restrict.

But if you do both, you have been shown the right way: you are a leader in the gnostic sciences, a master.

And since the Shaykh has pointed out the deficiency of the knowledge of God according to attributes which only purify Him, and the

situation of knowledge which only assimilates Him has become known by analogy, he now mentions explicitly the perfect knowledge of God combining purification and assimilation, which the servant is commanded to attain by the Prophet, and for which according to the religious law he will be rewarded: **Know that the way of the truth through which He has sought that they know Him** in words like the *ḥadīth*, “I wanted to be known, so I created the world”, is **what the tongues of the Revelations have brought. So no intelligence can overstep it.** Rather, everyone must believe in it in the manner in which God meant it and not by interpreting it according to his own ideas. His mental “purification” must be in accordance with what God has sent down upon the tongues of His prophets and within the Books He has revealed to them; for otherwise, God is purified from the purification of the thoughts of human reason, for human reasons, which are determined within the particular and limited faculties of man’s constitution, are particular and limited in accordance with these faculties. And how should the limited and particular perceive absolute and disengaged realities in themselves unless it escape from its own limitations, or unless those absolute realities become limited according to its vision and existence?

But before the coming of the Revelations and the acquisition of knowledge and gnosis through them, knowledge of Him is to purify Him of the characteristics of contingency. So the gnostic (*ʿārif*) possesses two knowledges: a knowledge acquired by reason and demonstration before the coming of the Revelations, and a knowledge received from the bringer of the Revelation, but whose condition is that he turn over to God the true understanding of that with which they, or the Revelations, have come and stay away from rational demonstration; and that he believe in this knowledge in the way that God meant it without interpreting it with his reason or imposing his own ideas upon it, for verily the Revelations have only been sent by God because it is impossible for human reason to perceive by itself the verities as they really are within the divine Knowledge.

And if He unveils for him the understanding of it, i.e., of what the Revelations have brought, and if He gives him knowledge of what His intention is through the conditions imposed by the divine Law (*sharʿ*), which the reason cannot attain through its mental processes, that unveiling and awareness is because of the divine Gift relating to the Essence, which was already mentioned in the chapter on Seth.

IV

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF THE "MOST HOLY" IN THE LOGOS OF IDRIS

The Shaykh saw fit to devote this Wisdom to Idris because he was a prophet who went to the greatest lengths in purifying his soul through arduous ascetic practices and in sanctifying himself from the attributes of animality, until his spiritual nature gained complete sway over his animal nature and he totally cast off his body and made a journey to the Heavens (*mi^crāj*), where he spoke to the angels and the disengaged Intellects. And it is said that for sixteen years he neither ate nor slept, until only a transcendent intellect remained.

And since it is mentioned in the Quran concerning Idris that "We raised him up to a high place" (XIX, 57), and since "elevation" is of two kinds, the Shaykh alludes to these with his words, Elevation is of two kinds: One of them is elevation of place (*makān*), which is attributed to God according to various texts, like His words, "The All-Merciful sat Himself upon the Throne" (Quran XX, 5), and like the cloud mentioned in the words of the Prophet, "He was in a cloud, above which there was no air, and below which there was no air", in his answer to the bedouin who asked, "Where was our Lord before He created His creation?", and like the heaven mentioned in His words, "And it is He who in heaven is God" (Quran XLIII, 84); and the second is elevation of position (*makānah*) or rank, which must be attributed to God according to verses like: "All things perish, except His Face" (Quran XXVIII, 88).

And mankind are described by the two elevations, for they are moving about between knowledge of God and works for him. So some of them rise in the levels of the knowledge of God, like the gnostics; and others become ranked in the degrees of works, like the worshippers and ascetics; and some of them combine the two, like those who have reached perfection. So works pertain to place, i.e., they result in the elevation of place, like Paradise and its various degrees, and knowledge pertains to position, for it results in elevation within the degrees of nearness to God. This is because position pertains to the Spirit, just as place pertains to the body. So each of them necessitates what resembles and is similar to itself.

Hence elevation of position belongs to him who knows, and elevation of place to him who performs works. And whoso combines the two perfections possesses both elevations.

But as for the elevation of relative superiority (*mufaḍalah*), i.e. the elevation in which certain of the elevated are superior in relation to others, that is His words, or must be attributed to God according to His words, “And you are the uppermost, and God is with you” (Quran XLVIII, 35) where He affirms that those whom He is addressing possess a higher elevation and that He is with them in this elevation. Hence higher elevation must also be attributed to Him. So this, i.e., elevation of relative superiority, refers to His theophany in His loci of self-manifestation, which are multiple and graded in ranks. It does not refer to the Unity of His Essence. For in one theophany He is higher in elevation than in another theophany, like His words in the Quran, “Nothing is like Him” (XLII, 11) and like “Surely I am with you, I hear and I see” (Quran XX, 46) and like His words in the *hadīth*, “I was hungry and you fed me not”. So it becomes obvious that His elevation of relative superiority is from the point of view of the multiplicity of theophanies and aspects, not in respect to the Unity of the Essence, for verily at the level of Unity there is only real and intrinsic elevation, not relative elevation.

V

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF ECSTATIC LOVE IN THE LOGOS OF ABRAHAM

Since Abraham had realized the state of annihilation (*fanā'*) in God, and since it is possible that someone might imagine that he who has attained annihilation is purely and simply nothing, and “nothing” cannot be described by positive attributes, the Shaykh rejects this notion with his words, There is no escape in the station of annihilation in God from affirming the real existence of the servant who has been annihilated within Him, since here by “annihilation” is not meant that the existence of the servant becomes absolutely nothing. Rather, what is meant is that his human aspect is annihilated in his lordly aspect, since every servant possesses an aspect deriving from the divine Presence, which is referred to in His words, “Every man has his direction to which he turns” (Quran II,

148). And annihilation is only attained through perfect attentiveness directed toward the Presence of God, the Absolute, for by means of this the servant's godly aspect is strengthened until it gains ascendancy over the creaturely aspect to the point of subduing and annihilating it. And this attentiveness is only possible through the inherent love hidden within the servant. Its appearance can only come about through avoiding that which opposes it and is incompatible with it, i.e., through fearing God with respect to what opposes it. So love is the mount and godfearingness is the provision. And this annihilation necessitates that the servant become determined with godly determinations and lordly qualities, that he attain subsistence (*baqā'*) in God. Then these determinations will never disappear from him.

The annihilation of the possible being in the Necessary Being is through the disappearance of the effects of possibility, not the destruction of his reality, like the disappearance of luminosity in the light of the sun.

In the presence of the sun, the lamp is caught between existence and nonexistence.

Shaykh Junayd has said, "When the contingent is joined to the Eternal, not a trace of it remains."

When the Attributes of the Eternal have shone forth, then the mantle of temporality is burned. (7)

And the disappearance of the effects of possibility takes place in the subtle consciousness of the gnostic, in his awareness and perception, not in his body, spirit and humanity, even though in accordance with the saying, "The earth has a share from the cup of the generous", these also participate to some extent.

O brother, you are this very thought (of yours); as for the rest (of you), you are (only) bone and fiber.(8)

So you are that intelligence, the rest is covering, lose yourself not, busy yourself not with vain striving.

And then, when the existence of the servant who has been annihilated in God is affirmed, it is correct for things to be attributed to him

and for God to be his hearing, his sight, his tongue, his hand and his foot. ⁽⁹⁾ So He pervades his faculties and his organs with His He-ness (*huwiyyah*) according to the meaning which is appropriate to Him. And this, or God's being the hearing and seeing of the servant and His pervading all of his other organs and faculties, is the result of the love pertaining to supererogatory works (*ḥubb al-nawāfil*) and the proximity attained through it on the journey undertaken by the lover, within which wayfaring (*sulūk*) takes priority over divine attraction (*jadhbah*) and annihilation precedes subsistence, for God manifests Himself within the Name "the Inward" and becomes the organ of perception for the servant who is the locus of theophany.

But as for the love pertaining to obligatory works (*ḥubb al-farā'id*) and the proximity attained through it, or the result achieved through this love and proximity on the journey motivated by the Beloved, within which divine attraction takes priority over wayfaring and the primordial subsistence takes precedence over annihilation, since God manifests Himself in His Name "the Outward" and the servant who is the locus of theophany becomes the organ through which God perceives; that is that God should hear through you, in that the perceiver is God, and you are His organ of perception, and see through you. But the love pertaining to supererogatory works, or its result, is that you hear and see through Him, in that God is the organ of your perception.

So you perceive through supererogatory works according to the measure of the preparedness of the locus, which is you yourself, since God has manifested Himself in you through the attributes of hearing, seeing, etc. — for His theophany, according to whatever attribute it may be, is always in keeping with the measure of the preparedness of the locus of theophany, not according to what He is in Himself, for that cannot be embraced by any locus nor grasped by any place of manifestation. And He perceives through obligatory works every object of perception, without one being specified over another, for the perceiver in this case is God, and the effect of His all-embracingness penetrates to the organ. So understand.

(7) *Mathnawī*, III, 1391.

(8) *Mathnawī*, II, 277.

(9) Reference to the well-known *ḥadīth qudsī* in which God says (according to one of its versions), "The servant does not cease approaching me through supererogatory work until I love him, and when I love him I am the hearing through which he hears, the sight with which he sees, the tongue with which he speaks, the hand with which he seizes and the foot with which he walks."

VI

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF
TRUTH IN THE LOGOS OF ISAAC

Since the plane of limited imagination (*khayāl-i muqayyad*) is an image and an exemplar of the World of Absolute Image-Exemplars (*mithāl-i mutlaq*), and since everyone experiences this plane, anyone can find his way to the absolute (image) by observing the relative. By perceiving the characteristics of the branch he can gain insight into the root. Therefore the Shaykh does not refer to the World of Absolute Image-Exemplars, but limits himself to mentioning the plane of limited imagination. He says, **Know that the plane of imagination**, i.e. the level which embraces all of the images which take form within the imaginal faculty (*al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah*) contiguous to the human level and within any imaginer whatsoever – a level which is also called “the level of limited image-exemplars”, just as the World of Image-Exemplars is called “absolute imagination” – and whose relationship to the World of Image-Exemplars is like the streams which branch off from a great river, **is the plane which encompasses and includes every thing** existent in the external world and every non-thing, for it possesses the power to represent both. And all of it, i.e., the plane of imagination and the forms which appear within it, is veridical and corresponds to reality and is divided into two kinds: a kind in which the image imagined corresponds to the form in the external world, or in a plane external to the plane of imagination; and this is called “unveiling” (*kashf*); and a kind in which it does not correspond. Within the latter interpretation takes place.

And mankind here, or in the knowledge of the second kind of dreams and visions, are of two kinds: the knower, who knows what God means by the observed image, and the learner, who does not know, but who has the aptitude and capacity to advance to the level of knowledge. The knower is true to the vision, i.e., he gives it its due; and the learner deems the vision to be true, i.e. he takes the observed images as veridical and corresponding to reality in the external world, until God teaches him what He meant by the image which He has revealed to him and unveiled for him in the dream, like Abraham, when he saw in his dream that he was

sacrificing his son, but it was a ram which appeared in the form of his son. So he deemed his vision to be true and did not interpret it, because the majority of the things which the prophets and the Perfect Men observe take place in the World of Absolute Image-Exemplars. And everything which occurs within it is necessarily true and in correspondence with reality. So he thought he was observing within that world, and hence he did not interpret his dream. Therefore he deemed his vision to be true until God taught him that what was meant by the form of his son was the ram.

VII

THE QUINTESENCE OF THE WISDOM OF THE ALL—HIGH IN THE LOGOS OF ISHMAEL

Since Ishmael was a locus of manifestation of the divine Name “the All-High”, which is one of the names of the Essence, the Shaykh decided to explain in his Wisdom the two levels which this Name possesses: the Unity of the Essence, and the Unity of the multiple Names. Therefore he says in order to introduce his subject matter, **The existence of the world – which was not, and then was –**, as the Prophet said, “God was, and nothing was with Him”, **necessitates multiple relations (*nisab*) within its Originator, or Names or Attributes, etc., – whatever you like to call them.** So say, for it is incontestable, “**There is no escape, in the existence of the world from that**”, or from the actualization of the multiplicity of the Names in its Originator. **And through the totality of these relations and Names and the Unity of their multiplicity the world comes into existence, not in respect to the Unity of the Essence, for the One inasmuch as He is One is not the source of multiplicity inasmuch as it is multiplicity, for it is not correct to say that there should appear from something – whatever it may be – what is opposed to it in reality. And it is clear that Unity is opposed to multiplicity and the One to the many. So it is impossible that one of them should originate from the other. However, the One and Unity possess numerous relations, and multiplicity possesses a fixed unity. So when one of them becomes related to the other, it is in terms of this connecting link.**

So the world with its true multiplicity and relative oneness comes into existence from an Originator who is the One in Essence, or One with an inherent and true Oneness, to which is attributed a Unity of the multiplicity of relations in respect to the Names and Qualities, because the realities of the world demand that, i.e., this Oneness of the multiplicity of the Names, from It, i.e., the Originator.

Then the world, if it were not a possible being, would not be a receptacle for existence; but it is a receptacle for existence, so it is possible. And the possible being is that for which existence and nonexistence are equal. So in order to exist, it needs an agent to give predominance to its existence over its nonexistence, as well as receptivity towards existence on its own part. So the world did not come into existence except from two things: from a divine power, to which is attributed what we mentioned, i.e. a Unity of the multiplicity of the Names and Qualities in order to give predominance to its existence over its nonexistence, and from a receptivity towards existence on the part of the world; for if it had not been receptive, it would not have been a possible being, and its Agent and Originator could not have brought it into existence, for what is impossible does not accept to be brought into existence. Therefore, i.e., since the world only exists because of these two things, when He said "Be", which indicates that He possesses the power over the desired thing, He said "and it is", in such places as the verse, "His command, when He desires a thing, is to say to it 'Be', and it is" (XXXVI, 82). So He attributed the coming into existence to the world in respect of its receptivity.

One of the Sufis (^CAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī) has said, "The essence of the Name 'the Inward' is the same as the essence of the Name 'the Outward'. And the Recipient is the same as the Agent So the uncreated archetype (of every being) is His Essence. And Act and Receptivity are His two hands So He is the Active Agent with one of His hands, and the Recipient with the other. The Essence is one, and the multiplicity is formed by various imprints and pictures So it is correct to say that He has never brought anything into existence but His Own Self, and there is nothing but His Self-manifestation."

Although forms are many in your eyes, when you look closely, one Being has come repeatedly.

If we possess power and acts, they are not because of us; they are because He has come to appear through us.

VIII

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF
SPIRITUAL EASE IN THE LOGOS OF JACOB

“Religion with God is Islam” (Quran III, 19), and its meaning, or the literal meaning of the word “Islam”, is obedience. Whoever has something sought from him and obeys the seeker in what he sought is a “Muslim”, So understand, for this principle pervades all the creatures (i.e. all creatures are obedient to God and therefore “Muslim”), whether they are in agreement with or opposed to the divine command (or what God has “sought” from them). As for the extension of this principle to those creatures who are in agreement with and obey the divine commands and prohibitions, the reason is obvious and needs no explanation. But as for those who are opposed to and do not obey God’s commands and prohibitions, the reason is that the divine Command is divided into two parts: the “volitive” (*irādī*) and the “prescriptive” (*taklīfī*). So if certain people are opposed to God and do not obey the prescriptive command (according to which through religion God prescribes what the creatures should and should not do), they do obey the volitive command (or what God wills for them). One of the Sufis has expressed this as follows: “Verily God has an obligational command and an ontological command; therefore that which cannot be disobeyed is the ontological command.” Among the Persian verses which allude to these points are the following:

O Thou for whom everything I have hidden is manifest! I disobeyed Thee only in the hope of Thy forgiveness.

I gather that I have done many things against Thy command:
But, did I not do all that Thou desired?

Thou said, “Do it!” and bound my hand; Thou said, “Fire the arrow!” and cut off my thumb.

Although I am not obeying Thy command, in any case I am following Thy will.

And religion is two religions: a religion commanded by God, which

is what the prophets have brought; and a religion deemed valid by God in the same way that He deems the religion He has sent valid, for the aim of this second religion is in agreement with what God has desired from the Law established by Him, i.e., the perfection of souls in both knowledge and works. The latter is invention (*al-ibtidā^c*) within which is the glorification of God. So whoso observes it as it should be observed, seeking the good-pleasure of God, has attained salvation.

And the divine command is two commands: a command through an intermediary, or the intermediary of the prophets and messengers; so inasmuch as it is a command through an intermediary and does not take into account the ontological command, it contains nothing but its grammatical, i.e., imperative, form; and a command without intermediary. It is the latter command, the ontological command, which is actualized by the word "Be!" and which pertains to the coming into being of that which possesses no external existence but is known in the divine Knowledge. So it is this command whose disobeyal cannot be imagined, because it is impossible for the desired thing to contradict His will, as He says, Our only command "to a thing, when We desire it, is that We say to it 'Be', and it is" (XVI, 41), while that command through the intermediary may be disobeyed, or it may be disobeyed by him who is commanded to do something. And that would be when it is not in accordance with the command without intermediary.

Just as the existence of the servant is caused by God's bestowing existence upon him, in the same way the existence of the act which has been commanded is also by His bestowal. So as long as the ontological command does not attach itself to the commanded act, it is impossible for the servant to obey the prescriptive command. Indeed, how can a thing which does not possess existence in itself bestow existence upon another nonexistent entity and bring it from the concealment of nothingness to the wide-open plain of being? My friend, read the verse, "And God created you and what you do" (XXXVII, 96), and know that your being and acts come from the ineffable One.

If someone asks what profit there is in God's commanding the servant to do something and not wanting that thing to come to pass through him, we would answer that prescription is one of the states of the immutable archetype (*ʿayn thābitah*) of the servant, and the servant has a particular preparedness *vis-à-vis* the prescription which is opposed to the obeying of that command. So the archetype of the servant asks God

according to its special preparedness to prescribe for it something the possibility of whose acceptance He has not placed within its preparedness. So God prescribes for it according to the wish of the special preparedness, but He does not want the servant to perform the thing which he has been commanded, for He knows that in reality he does not possess the preparedness to accept that thing. Therefore He expects him to perform the opposite of what he has been commanded. And the profit and wisdom in this is the distinguishing of him who has the preparedness to accept the command from him who does not have it. And God knows best.

And that which is commanded without intermediary is nothing but the thing nonexistent in the external world but known in the divine Knowledge and existent with Him who commands in the particular manner (pertaining to the divine Knowledge), not that which exists (in the world) before the issuing of the command, for obviously it is impossible to bring into being that which (already) exists. This is in contrast to that which is commanded through an intermediary, for this is nothing but that which exists in the external world, since it is impossible to prescribe commands and prohibitions for that which does not exist externally.

IX

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF LIGHT IN THE LOGOS OF JOSEPH

Since luminosity dominates the World of Image-Exemplars, because of its proximity to the World of Spirits and the Worlds of the Names and Qualities above it – just as darkness dominates over the forms of the world of generation and corruption, since it is opposite to the World of the Spirits, which is the World of Light – and since it is the rule concerning everything which is an intermediary between two things that when its relation to one of the two is stronger than its relation to the other it is described by what the dominating side is described by and called by its name, the Shaykh called this Wisdom by the name “light”. For in reality it is the wisdom of “brightness” (*diyā*), not of pure light (*nūr*), which is not different from the Being of God.

The Shaykh calls brightness “light” when he says, **Light**, or other than true Light, which is the Essence of God, is **unveiled** or perceived in itself, **and through it unveiling**, or perception of other things, **takes place**. **And the most complete and penetrating light is the light through which is unveiled and perceived what God means by the forms seen by the imagination in dreams, i.e., the science of interpretation (*ta^cbīr*); for a single form appears in the imagination of different individuals in many and various meanings, because of the differences of the preparednesses of these individuals, the discrepancies among their constitutions, their differences in place and time, etc., but one of which is meant in the case of him who has seen the form. So whoso unveils it, i.e., the intended meaning, and distinguishes it from other meanings and interprets the form which has been seen, by means of that complete intelligible light is the possessor of the most complete light. His light is the most complete light because he discerned by means of it that which was in the extremity of obscurity and at the limit of ambiguity. And we only said that the one form appears in many meanings because in a dream one person of a group is called, so he makes the hajj in the World of Sensory Forms, and another of them is called, so he steals; and the form of the calling is one, but the interpretation is different, because of the differences between those who see the form. And in the same away another person sees in a dream that he is called, so he invites to God with sure knowledge: and another person sees that he is called, so he invites to error. This is because the calling shares with these two invitations in invitation as such; but that to which the viewers invite differs because of their disparity.**

Know that everything which appears in the sensory world is like that which appears in sleep. But people are neglectful of perceiving the realities and meanings which are embraced by the forms which appear in the world, just as the Prophet said, “People are asleep, and when they die, they awake.” And just as the gnostic knows through interpretation what is meant by the forms which are witnessed in dreams, so the gnostic who knows the realities of things also knows what is meant by the forms which appear in the sensory world. Therefore he passes from them to their intention. So when the gnostic sees a form or hears some words, or when a meaning falls into his heart, he infers from them their principles and knows what God means by them. For this reason it has been said, “Verily all things that happen in the world are messengers from God to the servant delivering their messages. He understands them who under-

stands them, and he turns away from them who is ignorant of them.” God said, “How many a sign there is in the heavens and the earth that they pass by, turning away from it” (Quran XII, 105), because of their lack of comprehension and the duration of their forgetfulness.

X

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF UNITY IN THE LOGOS OF HÛD

Since Hud was dominated by the contemplation of the Unity of the multiplicity of Lordship, for he was observing the directing of the one Lord (*rabb*) in the multiple vassals (*marbūbāt*) which are His loci of Self-manifestation, the Wisdom of Unity – i.e., the Unity of the Lordship – had to be set aside for his Logos.

The ends of the paths traversed by wayfarers, whether physical or spiritual, are all at God, and God is their end. This is because since God encompasses all things in being and knowledge and accompanies all things with a “withness” (*ma‘iyyah*)⁽¹⁰⁾ pertaining to His Essence and pure of mixture, incarnation, division and all that does not befit His Majesty, He is the end of every path and the goal of every wayfarer. In the Quran He added after His words, “And thou, surely thou guidest unto a straight path – the path of God, to whom belongs whatsoever is in the heavens, and whatsoever is in the earth”, the words, “Do not all things reach God at last?” (XLII, 52). Thus He announces that the end of all things is God. And everything walks upon a path, either spiritual or physical according to the traveller. And God is its end, for, “Unto God is the journeying” (Quran III, 26).

So each of them, i.e., each of the paths, is a straight path, but there is no glory in His unrestricted relations where all differences are removed, like His unrestricted “withness” and accompaniment (of every being), the

⁽¹⁰⁾ Just as “God is with the patient” (II, 153), “with the godfearing” (II, 194), “with them while they meditate at night discourse unpleasing to Him” (IV, 108), etc., He is also with all other things as well, for He “embraces every thing in mercy and knowledge” (XL, 7). The term “withness” refers to this quality of not being separate from any being.

unrestricted straightness of His path, the fact that all Paths without restriction lead to Him in respect of His all-embracingness, and the unrestricted attention of His Essence and Attributes to creation – for verily there is no difference between His attention toward creating the Throne and the Supreme Pen on the one hand and His attention toward creating an ant on the other in respect of the Unity of His Essence and in respect of the act of paying attention. He said, “Thou seest not in the creation of the All-Merciful any disparity” (LXVII, 3). And this is also the case with the “withness” and the accompaniment by the Essence, for He encompasses “everything in mercy and knowledge” (Quran XL, 7). And here His mercy is His Being, for it is existence alone which things have in common despite their disparities and differences. And His knowledge at the plane of the Unity of His Essence does not differ from His Essence, nor is it distinguished from it, for here there is no multiplicity in any respect.

Therefore if it is merely established that He is the goal of everything, the end of every path and with everything, and that He encompasses both the inward and outward aspects of all things, the benefit does not become general, nor does felicity become complete. The benefits only appear according to the differentiation of degrees and stations, the differences among directions and paths, and the discrepancy among those things to which He calls and attracts you. Therefore God calls us to worship Him according to the path which connects us to our own particular felicity – which is the attainment of salvation and high degrees – not any path, for surely although every path will take us to Him according to one of the Names – for in one respect, every Name is the same as the Named – this brings no benefit or felicity; for the Names are different in respect of their natures and effects. How is “He who harms” comparable to “Him who gives benefits”, or “the Bestower” to “the Preventer”? And how is “the Avenger” comparable to “the Forgiver”, or “the Benign Benefactor” to “the Vanquisher”?

And it, i.e., the path which leads to our felicity, is what He prescribed for us through the tongue of the Prophet.

So owing to the first thing mentioned, i.e., that He is the end of every path and encompasses all things, His “mercy embraces all things” (Quran VII, 156); therefore the outcome and the ultimate issue is felicity, wherever the servant may be, whether in Paradise or hell. And since someone might imagine that felicity is to reach Paradise and its various degrees – so how should the end of everyone be Paradise, when some of

them remain forever in the Fire? – the Shaykh generalizes his statement by saying, **and it**, i.e. felicity, is **attaining that which is in agreement** (*mulā'im*) with the constitution of the servant, whether it be the degrees of Bliss or the levels of hellfire.

The divine mercy is of two kinds: first is the absolute mercy of the divine Essence, the “mercy of gratuitous gift” (*imtinān*), and it is this mercy which “embraces all things” (Quran VII, 156). From this mercy is derived every gift which is given without having been asked for, without a need existing, and without its being the recipient’s due or the result of a merit permanently fixed within him or an act resulting in God’s good-pleasure, as for example the blessings which are received in Paradise by a certain people in keeping with the mystery commonly known as “grace” (*ināyah*) and referred to in the *hadīth* of the Prophet which says that there will remain empty places in the Garden which God will fill with some of His creatures who have never done any good, to accomplish His previous decision and His words (in the *hadīth*), “To each one of you two (Heaven and hell) your fill.”

The other mercy flows from the mercy of His Essence but is separated from it by certain conditions, including the “prescription” referred to in His words, “Your Lord has prescribed for Himself mercy” (Quran VI, 54) and “I shall prescribe it (My mercy) for those who are godfearing” (Quran VII, 156). So it is limited and conditional upon certain acts, states, etc.

The Shaykh refers to these two kinds with his words, **And among mankind is he who attains mercy from pure gratuitous gift** and sheer grace, without a precedent act which would require it or works which would attract it; on the contrary, by means of it he gains the power to perform all of his acts and works. **And among them is he who attains it in respect of obligation**, or in respect of its being obligatory upon God, since He has obligated Himself to bestow it in recompense for acts which He has prescribed. But this also is a gratuitous gift, for the servant is obliged to obey his master and carry out his commands. So when he obliges himself to give something in return, that is a mercy and gratuitous gift to the servant. The Shaykh refers to this point with his words, **And he attains the reason for gaining it**, i.e., the reason for gaining the “mercy of obligation”, which is the obligation itself, **from pure gratuitous gift**.

But as for the godfearing servant, for whom God has prescribed

mercy, as He says, “I shall prescribe it for those who are godfearing”, he has **two states**: the first of them is a **state in which he is a protection**⁽¹¹⁾ for God from **blameworthy things** and from imperfections, by attributing them to himself, not to Him. And this is necessitated by fathoming the reality of things, for **blameworthy and ugly things** are all the effects of the nothingness which pertains to the servant, the possible being who receives existence. And the second is a **state in which God is a protection for him** from attributing to himself praiseworthy things, for he attributes virtues, beauties, praiseworthy qualities and perfection to God. So He is a protection for him from attributing to himself those things which do not truly pertain to his individual reality, for they are ontological matters, and Being belongs to God alone, or rather, Being *is* God in reality. And it, or God’s being a protection for him, is obvious, because things pertaining to Being obviously return to Him.

XI

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF DIVINE OPENING IN THE LOGOS OF ŞÂLIḤ

Since the realities require and the knowledge of them as they are in themselves demands **that results**, whether in the mind or in the external world, only **issue from numerical oddness**, and since **three is the first of the odd numbers**, since oddness as usually defined is that a number capable of being subdivided into whole numbers cannot be subdivided into two equal parts, whereas the number one cannot be subdivided into whole numbers; **God brought about the effusion of existence upon the world from three things: His Self or Essence, His Will and His Word. And the Reality**, i.e. the divine He-ness in these three forms, is **one, while the relations are different. Therefore He said**, alluding to the three things, **“Our only words to a thing, when We desire it, is that We say to it ‘Be’, and it is”** (Quran XVI, 40), thus alluding to the Essence in three places

(11) Here it is helpful to know that the word translated as “godfearing” (*al-muttaqī*) comes from the same root as the word for “protection” (*al-wiqāyah*) and means literally “protecting oneself”, “being wary”, or “fearing”, and hence also “protecting God’s interest in something”, “fearing God with regard to something” or “showing regard for something for God’s sake”

(“We” and “Our”), to the Will in one place (“desire”) and to the Word in two places (“words” and “say”).

And do not let the combination of the premisses in philosophical reasoning veil you from confirming what we have said about oddness being necessary for a result to be achieved, even though the premisses are made up of four parts, i.e. the subject and object of each of the two premisses, for in reality they are three, since a single one of the four, i.e., the middle term, is repeated in the two premisses. So understand this. Therefore it remains valid to say that it is triplicity which brings about results, whether in the mind or in the external world. And the world is a result, without doubt.

XII

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF THE HEART IN THE LOGOS OF SHU‘AYB

Know that the heart, that is, the heart of the knower of “Allah”, for the heart of other than he is not called a heart in Sufi terminology, unless metaphorically, as has been said:

The heart is a window upon the Lord: why do you call
the house of the devil a heart?

That which you have metaphorically called a heart – go,
throw it to the dogs!

And I said the knower of “Allah”, because the heart of the knower of any of the other divine Names does not possess the comprehensiveness which will be mentioned shortly. The Name “Allah” is the comprehensive unity of all of the divine Names. So any heart which comes to know it has come to know all of the Names. But no knower of any of the other Names knows the Name “Allah”, for the knowledge of these Names does not necessitate its knowledge. Concerning such a heart the poet has said,

This is a pearl from the ocean of Intimacy, not a heart, the
divine Majesty’s spring of effusion, not a heart.

The story has become long and words drawn out: it is the sum of the mysteries of God, not a heart.

Although it, or the heart, comes to exist through the mercy of God, it is nonetheless wider than the mercy of God, because God has let us know that the heart of the servant embraces Him, for He said through the tongue of His Prophet, “Neither My earth nor My heaven embrace Me, but the heart of My believing servant does embrace Me”. In contrast His mercy does not embrace Him, for its sway is only exercised over contingent beings. And this is a wondrous matter, if you understand.

When God – as reported in the collections of hadith – undergoes constant changes of form on the Day of Resurrection, i.e., the forms of the beliefs of men in accordance with their receptivities and preparednesses, **although in Himself He does not change** from what He is in respect of Himself, then hearts which receive theophanies are for Him like containers for water. The water assumes form according to the form of the containers, although in itself it does not change from its essential reality. So understand the symbol we have mentioned, in order that you might understand the state of Him who is symbolized, for just as water has no shape in itself by which it becomes determined – rather, it takes the shape of its container – in the same way God, the Absolute, has no particular form in His Essence according to which He manifests Himself. On the contrary, He manifests Himself in the form of the servant who receives the theophany; for theophany only descends upon its loci in accordance with their preparednesses and their ontological receptivities. Likewise their preparednesses within the plane of objective existence are only the result of their Unseen and “unmade” (*al-ghayr al-majʿūl*) preparednesses in the ontological level of the Essence’s Knowledge of Itself. So whenever a locus on the plane of objective existence receives a theophany, it only reaches him in the form of his eternal and immutable archetype.

The theophanies of God follow the beliefs of men, and the beliefs of men follow individual ontological preparedness, and individual ontological preparedness is in accordance with the universal unmanifest preparedness, which is the attribute of the immutable archetypes of those who receive the theophany. And the immutable archetypes are the effusion of the Most Holy Emanation, which is the theophany of the Essence in the forms and preparednesses of the archetypes. And here there is a great difference, for some of the archetypes are the form of particular Names, with their differences in degree; some of them are the form of universal Names,

likewise with their various differences; and some are the form of the Name which embraces all the particulars and universals.

So God has two theophanies: one is the unmanifest theophany of the Essence, which is the effusion of the immutable archetypes along with their general preparednesses – and there is no doubt that the scope and capacity belonging to the preparedness of the locus of theophany is in accordance with the scope and capacity of the archetype. And the second is the ontological and visible theophany, which follows the preparedness, compass and scope of the locus.

And since beliefs are various, and preparednesses are different, whenever God manifests Himself, anyone who has limited Him to the form of a particular description denies Him in other than that form. Whereas whoever has disengaged Him from the limitation of one form other than another – like the Perfect Men and the gnostics – does not deny Him in any form of theophany. Rather, he glorifies Him as he should and performs the worship worthy of His station, for the theophanies of God possess no end at which the perfect gnostic and the understanding knower of God might stop.

Wear the turban, or the dress, or the robe! By thy father, it will only increase my love!

Do you not see that God “Every moment is in a state” (Quran LV, 29)? In the same way, the heart is constantly undergoing transformation in accordance with His transformations in the states of its consciousness. Therefore He said, “Surely in that”, i.e. in the Quran, “there is a reminder to him who has a heart” (L, 37) which undergoes transformation according to different forms and attributes. He did not say, “who possesses a reason”, because the reason becomes limited according to particular beliefs, so the Divine Reality – Who is infinite – becomes restricted in that which it perceives, in contrast to the heart, for since it is a locus for diverse theophanies from the levels of Divinity and Lordship and since it undergoes transformation according to the forms of these theophanies, it remembers its forgotten existence before it appeared in this physical and elemental level, and it finds here what it had lost, as the Prophet said, “Wisdom is the believer’s stray camel.” So understand!

XIII
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF
THE POWER IN THE LOGOS OF LOT

God said, "God is He that created you of weakness, then He appointed after weakness strength, then after strength He appointed weakness" (XXX, 54). Now the first weakness without dispute is the weakness of the constitution in the understanding of both the majority and the elite (the exoteric authorities and the Sufis). And the strength which is after it, or after the original weakness, is the strength of the constitution, to which is added in the understanding of the elite the strength of the spiritual state (*ḥāl*), which gives man the power to exercise free disposal (*taṣarruf*) and domination (*ta'thūr*) in the world through Intention (*himmah*). And the second weakness is the weakness of the constitution, to which is added in the understanding of the elite the weakness attained through knowledge, or the knowledge of God, which weakens man and extracts him from his accidental strength and returns him to his original weakness, until it joins him to the clay which was his origin. So he has no power over anything, and he becomes in himself and in his own personal essence, disregarding the manifestation of the divine Qualities within him, in his own eyes like a suckling infant with its mother, for just as the infant sees no power or strength in itself and entrusts itself completely to its mother, who feeds and nurtures it, the gnostic assumes the same relation to the Real Being and Absolute Lord.

And therefore, because of the weakness resulting from the knowledge of God and the lack of power to exercise free disposal over anything, Lot said, "O would that I had power against you", i.e., O would that I had power in the form of a strong Intention with which to resist and oppose you, "or might take refuge in a strong pillar" (Quran XI, 80), meaning by "strong pillar" according to the exoteric interpretation the strong tribe, which vanquishes its enemies. And the Prophet says, indicating what Lot meant by "strong pillar" according to the esoteric interpretation, "God have mercy on my brother Lot. He was taking refuge in a strong pillar", meaning by that, "the weakness resulting from knowl-

edge”, i.e., through these words he indicates the weakness which had overcome Lot because of his knowledge of God, since he first shows his sympathy for him by praying for mercy for him, and this tells of his weakness and incapacity. Then he links him to himself through brotherhood, which shows that Lot shared with the Prophet in this weakness, which is so obviously actualized in the latter. So the “strong pillar” is God, who governs him and nurtures him.

XIV

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF DESTINY IN THE LOGOS OF EZRA

“To God belongs the argument conclusive” (Quran VI, 149) against His creatures, for they are the known by God, and the known, whatever it may be, bestows upon the knower of it, whoever he may be, or makes him perceive what it is in itself, i.e. in its own essence in terms of the states which occur for it for all eternity and their preparednesses, and that perception is knowledge. And knowledge has no effect upon what is known, in the sense that it might occasion within the known that which is outside of its own essence; rather, it follows the known, and judgment concerning the known is subordinate to it. So there is no judgment by the knower concerning the known except according to it. i.e., according to the known and what it requires in respect of its particular and universal preparedness. Therefore God did not appoint unbelief and disobedience for the creatures by Himself. Rather, He appointed it because of the requirements of their immutable archetypes and because of their seeking through the tongue of their preparedness that He make them unbelievers and disobedient, just as the individual essence of a dog requires the form of a dog and that it be considered ritually impure. And this is the very secret of destiny.

Now if you say, “The archetypes and their preparednesses are an effusion from God; therefore He has made them like that”; I will answer, “The archetypes are not ‘made’ (*maʿcūl*), they are intelligible forms belonging to the Divine Names which are not posterior to God except at the level of their own reality, but not in respect to time. So they are

eternal, unchanging and immutable. When it is said that they are an 'effusion', this means that they are posterior to Him considered at the level of their own reality (not that they are created)."

Know that every messenger is a prophet, and every prophet is a saint; so every messenger is a saint. So the messengers are of the highest rank, since they combine the three levels; then the prophets, since they combine two. But the level of their sanctity is higher than that of their prophecy, and their prophecy is higher than their messengerhood, for their sanctity is their aspect of divinity, since they have been annihilated in God; and their prophecy is their angelic aspect, since through it comes their relation to the angelic world, from which they receive revelation; and their messengerhood is their aspect of humanity, which corresponds to and establishes contact with the human world.

The Shaykh writes, "When you hear from one of the people of God (the Sufis), or it is related to you that he has said, that sanctity is higher than prophecy, he does not mean anything other than what we have said", i.e., that the sanctity of the prophet is higher than his prophecy. "Or if he says that the saint is above the prophet and the messenger, verily he means by that 'in the same person'. This is because the messenger in respect of being a saint is more perfect than he is in respect of his being a prophet or messenger, not that the saint who follows him is higher than he."

XV

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF PROPHECY IN THE LOGOS OF JESUS

Among the properties of the spirit, which is a breath of the Merciful possessing life as one of its inherent attributes, is that it never passes over a thing from among the receptacles and it never touches anything with its form pertaining to the World of Image-Exemplars **without that thing coming to life. But when that thing comes to life, the power of free disposal of the spirit will be according to that thing's constitution and preparedness, not according to the spirit itself, for it is sacrosanct** and has no fixed measure or particularized aspect. So if that thing possesses a harmonious constitution receptive to life, all of the properties of life in-

cluding sensation and movement will appear within it according to its particular constitution. And if not, then a trace of life will appear in it, according to its form, like the low of the Calf as will be mentioned.

Do you not see that God's breathing (*nafkh*), or the divine spirit breathed, **into bodies made complete** (and ready) to receive the breathing of the spirit, **in spite of its being pure** of the characteristics of those bodies **and** (in spite of) **the elevation of its ontological level** in itself and the fact that it is situated **at a level where** it is beyond being delimited by their attributes, **how its free disposal**, or the free disposal of the spirit within the body into which it has been breathed or within other things by means of the body, **will be to the extent of the preparedness of that body which is breathed into** and its receptivity, not in accordance with the spirit in itself? **Do you not see how the Samaritan, when he understood the effect of the spirits** upon that which they pass over and touch "seized a handful of dust from the messenger's track" (Quran XX, 96), i.e., from the track of the Faithful Spirit, or Gabriel, whose image-exemplar had appeared upon Burāq ⁽¹⁾, who was also a spirit appearing in the form of an image-exemplar? So the spirit affected the dust which it had passed over, causing life to course through it, and the Samaritan knew this through his inner light and the power of his preparedness. So he seized a handful of dust from his track and cast it into the form of the Calf made from the ornaments of the people. **So the Calf lowed** after it came to life (cf. Quran VII, 148), **and that is the result of the preparedness of its constitution**, which followed the form of the Calf. And had it been the form of another animal, the sound appropriate to that form would have been attributed to it.

1) Burāq is the celestial steed, famous in particular because upon him the Prophet made his ascension to Heaven (*mi^rrāj*).

XVI

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF THE ALL—MERCIFUL IN THE LOGOS OF SOLOMON

Since she, or Bilqīs (the queen of Sheba), **belonged** sincerely to him, or Solomon, in that she was obedient to him and believed in him, without being aware of it, **she said** to her people **concerning the letter of Solomon** when the Hoopoe cast it to her, and she showed it to them (Quran XXVII, 29), **with** the aim of manifesting the **power** of her Intention and exercising free disposal with it among them so that they would obey him, **that it was “an honorable letter”** (Quran XXVII, 29) .

When Bilqīs opened Solomon’s letter and became aware of its contents, the divine grace which had encompassed her beforehand and the link formed by her innate compatibility came into motion. She believed and obeyed, and presented its contents to her followers and adherents, in order that everyone who shared with her in that homogeneity and compatibility would come forward and accept what the letter had said. For the basis of faith in the prophets and messengers is this compatibility and homogeneity, not the observing of miracles or the witnessing of wonders.

And **Asif**, Solomon’s vizier, **only manifested the power** and concentration of Intention to **bring the throne**, or the throne of Bilqīs from Sheba before the viewer’s glance returned to him, **without Solomon**, although Solomon was stronger and more powerful than he, **in order to let the jinn know that Solomon’s eminence was mighty, since this ability** and powerful exercise of free disposal **was possessed by one of his attendants**. So what would have been the case if Solomon himself had exercised free disposal?

The superiority of **Asif** over that jinn who said, “I will bring it to thee, before thou risest from thy place” (Quran XXVII, 39), was in the exercise of the power of free disposal through his soul with the aid of cosmic influences and the natural properties of things, for the returning of the glance to the viewer is faster than his rising from his place (referring to **Asif**’s words in the Quran, “I will bring it to thee, before ever thy glance returns to thee” (XXVII, 40). So **Asif**’s action was more

perfect than that of the jinn, for he exercised his free disposal upon the individual essence (*ʿayn*) of the throne by depriving it of existence and recreating it in one instant. He deprived it of existence in its (original) position and gave it existence in front of Solomon, for the word of the Perfect Man is like the word of God concerning something he wants to come into existence. When he says “Be!”, at that very instant that thing comes into existence – however, with the permission of God – because God has become his members and his physical and spiritual faculties. And it was because of this relationship (between him and God) that this Perfect Man was the vizier of Solomon.

And since she, or Bilqīs, **said** in answer to the question concerning her throne, which was, “Is thy throne like this? (Quran XXVII, 42), “It seems the same” (XXVII, 42), one can detect her knowledge of the renewal of creation at each instant, for she said, “It seems”. And he showed her the pavillion of crystal, so she supposed it was like a spreading water “and she bared her legs” (Quran XXVII, 44) so the water would not touch her clothing. **But it was not a spreading water** in reality, just as the visible throne brought into existence before Solomon was not the same throne which she left in Sheba in respect of its form, for it had discarded the first form and assumed another, while the substance, upon which the two thrones imposed successively their forms, was one. So he showed her by that that the state of her throne was like that of the pavillion: as for the throne, because it was deprived of existence, and what the Creator created was similar to that which had vanished; and as for the pavillion, because in its extreme delicacy and limpidity it became similar to clear water, while (in reality) it was different. So he showed her with his actions that she was right in her words, “It seems the same.”

And this, or the renewal of creation at each instant, is not particular to the throne of Bilqīs; rather it is valid in all of the world, both its celestial and terrestrial parts, for the whole world is in constant change, and the individual determination of everything that changes is perpetually renewed. So in each instant a determination other than the determination which existed in the previous instant comes into being, although the One Essence which undergoes these changes remains in its state; for the One Essence is the Reality of God, which becomes determined according to the First Determination as necessitated by His knowledge of His Essence. And It is the same as the intelligible substance which receives these forms which are called “the world.” All of the forms are accidents which It undergoes and which change at every instant. But those who are veiled do

not know this, so they are in doubt about this constant renewal in all things (reference to Quran L, 15: "Yet they are in doubt about a new creation.")

The sovereignty which will not belong to anyone after him, referred to in Solomon's prayer, "My Lord! Forgive me and bestow upon me a sovereignty such as shall not belong to any after me" (Quran XXXVIII, 36), is **manifesting** within the visible world (*shahādah*) **the totality** of the sovereignties pertaining to the world **by way of exercising free disposal within it**, i.e., 'within the world, not manifesting only some of these sovereignties, for each of the individual sovereignties which God bestowed upon Solomon has been shared (by one or another of the prophets and saints); and not the power and ability over the totality without manifesting it, for the Poles and Perfect Men before and after him realized this station, but they did not manifest it.

The subjugation of the winds (cf. Quran XXXVIII, 36) with **which** Solomon was distinguished and preferred over others and which God made part of the sovereignty which was not bestowed upon any one after him, **is the subjugation of the fiery spirits**, which are the spirits of the jinn, as God said, "And He created the jinn of a smokeless fire" (LV, 15), **because they**, or the fiery spirits, **are spirits** which exercise free disposal **in the winds**, which are like their bodies.

God's words, "**Without reckoning**", when He said to Solomon, "This is our gift; bestow or withhold without reckoning" (Quran XXXVIII, 39), mean: **Thou wilt not, O Solomon, be made answerable** in the hereafter **for them**, or for what God granted thee of sovereignty, wealth, subjugation of the winds, etc. The Shaykh says in the *Fuṣūṣ*, "We know from the direct tasting granted in this path that Solomon's asking (for a sovereignty such as would not belong to anyone after him) was by the command of God. And when petition occurs according to the divine command, the petitioner receives the full reward for his petition", because he is obedient to his Lord and following His command. "And if God wills, He fulfills his wish in what he has sought from Him; and if He wills, He withholds, for verily the servant has carried out what God has made obligatory upon him in terms of obeying His command in what he asks of his Lord. Now if he asked this on his own without the command of his Lord, he would be asked for an accounting of it."

XVII

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF
EXISTENCE IN THE LOGOS OF DAVID

Since the station of prophecy and rank of messengerhood are a distinction conferred by God and one of the infinite divine gifts – not a reward deriving from a previous act, nor a gift springing from the expectation of a subsequent thanksgiving or worship – and in the same way since most of the gifts which derive from this station are effusions of pure bounty and beneficence and of perfect mercy and gratuitous gift, in this Wisdom the Shaykh alludes to some of the gifts which David received with his words, **He gave David as a bounty**, i.e., as grace and gratuitous gift, **knowledge of Himself not necessitated by his works**. **For if his works had necessitated it, it would have been a reward**, whereas it has already been mentioned that prophecy and messengerhood are a distinction conferred by God and unrelated to acquisition and effort, just as are most of the gifts and favors which pertain to this station. **And in the same way he gave him Solomon, for He said, “And we gave unto David Solomon” (XXXVIII, 30). And there remain His words, “And We gave David bounty from Us” (XXXIV, 10). Was this gift referred to as a “giving of bounty” the giving of a reward for his works, or did it mean a gratuitous gift?** Obviously it is the second, because He mentioned that He gave David bounty, and He did not say that He gave him what He gave him as a reward for his works; and He did not seek recompense from him for that bounty. When He did seek thanksgiving for that through works, He sought it from his House, not from him, as He said, “Perform works, O House of David, as thanksgiving” (XXXIV, 13), because blessings upon the forebears are blessings upon the descendents. So in David’s case it was the bestowal of a gratuitous gift and a grace, and recompense was sought from his House. **And He said, after seeking thanksgiving from the House of David in the form of works, “and few are those who are truly thankful among My servants” (XXXIV, 13), employing the intensive form, or “truly thankful” (*shakūr*), in order that it might embrace “prescriptive thanksgiving” (*shukr al-taklīf*), which the servants are required to perform**

according to the prescriptions of the Divine Law, and “voluntary thanksgiving” (*shukr al-tabarru^c*), which is not prescribed, but which the servants perform voluntarily, for to intensify one’s thanksgiving is to perform both of its kinds. **Voluntary thanksgiving** is referred to by the words, “**Shall I not be a thankful servant?**” – the words of the Prophet, when he stayed awake the whole night until his feet became swollen, and it was said to him, “Refrain, for God has forgiven thee thy early sins and the later,” and he answered the above. **And prescriptive thanksgiving is that which is commanded by God, like His words, “And give thanks to God” (II, 172) and His words, “And be you thankful for the blessing of God” (XIV, 114). And between the two kinds of thanksgiving there exists a difference of degree or qualitative disparity which is equivalent to the difference between the two kinds of people who render thanks; so just as he who renders thanks voluntarily is more excellent than he who renders it as a result of prescription, in the same way voluntary thanksgiving is more excellent than prescriptive thanksgiving. This is patent and obvious for him who understands things from God, and not on the basis of his own reason.**

And David is specifically appointed to the vicegerency (*khilāfah*) by God to judge among men and exercise free disposal among men, for God said, “David, behold, We have appointed thee a vicegerent in the earth, therefore judge between men justly” (XXXVIII, 26); and the imamate, i.e., he is also specifically appointed to his imamate, for imamate in relation to vicegerency is like sanctity in relation to prophecy, since every vicegerent is an imam but not the reverse. Whereas other than he, or other than David, like Adam or Abraham, is not so. As for Abraham, this is because God’s words concerning him were, “Behold, I make you an imam for the people” (II, 124). He did not say “vicegerent”, even though we know that here the imamate is a vicegerency; but it is not as if He had mentioned it by its most particular name, i.e., vicegerency itself. And as for Adam, although his vicegerency was stipulated by the text of the Quran, it is not like the stipulation concerning David. For God said to the angels, “I am setting in the earth a vicegerent” (II, 30); He did not say, “I am setting Adam as a vicegerent”. And what is mentioned afterwards in his story does not indicate that he is that very vicegerent whom God stipulated in the Quran. And also He did not make explicit His appointing him a judge among men. And here we are only talking about explicit mention in the text of the Quran.

And he who has been given general vicegerency by God has been given rule and free disposal in all the world; and David was of this type, and therefore he was given the power of free disposal over the various kinds of beings, as the Shaykh indicates with his words: **the mountains' echoing God's praise with him** – for whenever he chanted and echoed the praise of God, the mountains would chant and echo it with him (cf. Quran XXXIV, 10) – and likewise **the birds' echoing praise with him announce the agreement**, or the agreement of these two kinds of being with him and their obedience to him. And the reason these two kinds were specified as agreeing and concurring is that they are the beings the most disdainful of man, the most elevated above him, and the most inclined to reject obeying him, because of the sway which hardness and lightness hold over them. Obviously both of them refuse to obey or to accept the power of free disposal over them: as for the first, because of the extremity of its “grossness” and heaviness, which refuses to be influenced; and as for the second, because of its extreme lightness and the fact that it is not fixed before the agent when it is influenced and controlled. Evidently if these two extremes with their exaggerated refusal and their disdain do obey David and agree with him, **the agreement of man with him is more suitable**, for man has a position between the mountains and the birds and approaches a state of equilibrium. Necessarily David's relationship to man is firmer and more manifest (i.e., it was much easier for him to exercise free disposal over man).

XVIII

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF BREATH IN THE LOGOS OF JONAH

His blessing, or the blessing of Jonah, **returned upon his people**, for they believed, and their belief profited them and removed the chastisement from them (Quran X, 98), **because God attached them to him** in the way that the part is attached to the whole or the branch to the root; and the properties of the root are valid for the branch. Therefore, when the grace and mercy of God reached Jonah, it also reached his people, as He said, “Why was there never a city that believed, and its belief profited

it? – Except the people of Jonah” (X, 98). **And that**, or the return of his blessing upon his people, **was in spite of his anger for Him**, when his breast became straitened by the extent to which he reminded them but they did not remember and continued in their disbelief, so he left them. And he thought that would be permissible, since he only did it out of anger for God, zeal in His religion and hatred for disbelief and the disbelievers. But he should have been patient and awaited permission from God to leave them. So he was stricken with the belly of the fish. And since his blessing returned upon them in spite of his being angry with them for God, **how would it have been if his state with them had been the state of satisfaction?**

He thought well of God, as He reported, “And he thought that we would not straiten him” (XXI, 87), or We would not harass him for his leaving his people without waiting for God’s command, so **He delivered him out of grief** because of the blessing of that thought. **Even so does He deliver the believers** (cf. Quran XXI, 88), i.e., those who are sincere in their states, like Jonah was sincere in his state, i.e., his anger in God. **And in His kindness and His grace towards him, He “caused to grow over him a tree of gourds”** (XXXVIII, 146) – for one of the benefits of this kind of tree is that flies do not gather near it – so he took shelter in its shade **when he came out** of the fish’s stomach **like a baby bird** without feathers; **for if flies had alighted on him, they would have annoyed him.** Then **when he cast lots with them**, i.e. the people of the ship, when he left his people in anger and boarded the ship, and it stopped; so they said, “There is a runaway among us”, it being the belief of sailors that a ship will not move if it is carrying a runaway; **he made himself one of them**, i.e., one of the people of the ship, so he said, “Cast lots”, and the lot came out against him, so he threw himself in the water. **So the mercy embraced all of them** as a result of the blessing of his making himself one of them during the casting of lots; for the fish swam along with the ship, lifting its head out of the water while Jonah breathed within it and praised God. And it did not leave them until they reached the shore. It spit him out healthy, nothing of him having changed. So when they saw that, Mercy encompassed them, and they submitted their wills to God.

XIX
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF
THE UNSEEN IN THE LOGOS OF JOB

Since complaint to God does not contradict patience – and therefore God praised Job for his patience even though he prayed for the removal of his affliction – nor did he, i.e., Job, oppose the divine Omnipotence by being patient and refraining from complaining to Him; rather he complained and called out to Him, “Behold, affliction has visited me, and Thou art the most merciful of the merciful” (Quran XXI, 83); and this lack of opposition was known from him, God gave him his household by bringing to life his sons and daughters who had died and He provided him with children the like of them with them.

And he stamped his foot at his Lord’s command, since God commanded Job with the words, “Stamp thy foot! This is a laving-place cool, and a drink” (XXXVIII, 42). So he removed through that stamping his pains and his ills, and there sprang up also through that stamping from beneath his feet water, which is the secret of life, and its root, for verily through water come alive those physical and elemental bodies which are alive. Therefore it is the root of life, or the life which courses through every natural, or physical and corporeal, living thing. For from water he was created, and through it he recovered from his pains and ills. So He made it a mercy from Him and a reminder to us and to him.

And He treated him kindly in the oath he had made, when he swore during his illness to beat his wife with a hundred lashes if he recovered. So when he recovered, God ordered him to take a bundle of rushes and to strike his wife with it (Quran XXXVIII, 45). So God expiated his oath with the easiest thing for him and for her. And He told us about this to teach us and to authorize us to discriminate among those who fulfill their oaths, for we still have this authorization (to act gently in fulfilling oaths). It has been related that the Prophet was brought a weakling who had committed adultery with a slave girl. So he said, “Take the branch of a date tree containing a cluster of one hundred stalks, and strike him with it once.”

And expiation was appointed and promulgated in the community of Muhammad to veil them from the punishment directed toward them for breaking oaths. In this sentence there is an allusion to the fact that the word "expiation" (*kaffārah*) comes from the root "to cover" (*kufir*), since it covers the person who makes the oath and protects him from the punishment for breaking it. Expiation is an act of worship which God commanded, and commanding it before the fact is to command the breaking of oaths, since the actualization of the first is dependent upon the actualization of the second. Therefore breaking oaths is commanded by God, but when he, or the person who has made the oath, has seen something better than what he had sworn to do. Then He will respect the oaths, i.e., God will respect their right because they include His remembrance (*dhikr*), since He has prescribed expiation as a means to prevent the swearer from being punished. Even though he is committing an act of obedience, he is remembering God in his oath with one of his members. So the member which remembers Him, which is the tongue, seeks the result of His remembrance in terms of mercy, reward and His protecting it – along with the other members – from punishment; for it is the part which remembers which protects the others, just as the world is protected by the existence of the Perfect Man. The fact that he is disobedient or obedient is another factor, which in no way affects that member which remembers in terms of reward or punishment; for man in respect of his being compounded of different spiritual and physical realities is a multiplicity, even though he is one in terms of his unified whole. And the obedience or disobedience of one part of him does not necessitate the obedience or disobedience of another part.

XX

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF DIVINE MAJESTY IN THE LOGOS OF JOHN

Know that there is no being in existence whose multiplicity of attributes and acts is consumed by the oneness of its essence in such a way that every number and everything numerable are annihilated within it except God. So part of His grace to John was that He gave him a share

of this perfection, and so He placed him in His Own station. He incorporated his name, his qualities and his acts into the oneness of his essence by combining within his name the denotation of all these three. Thus they became united in verbal existence: his name denotes his essence by being his proper name; it denotes his acts because it is a form (Yaḥyā) related to a verb which indicates his revivification (*iḥyā'*) of the remembrance of Zachariah; and it denotes his qualities because he only revived the remembrance of Zachariah by becoming qualified by his attributes and manifesting them.

Since oneness requires priority (*awwaliyyah*) and not being preceded by others, **He placed him, or John, in His position in the priority of names,** for just as the Name "Allah" possesses priority in that no one was named by it before Him, He bestowed upon him priority in his name; for **He did not appoint for him beforehand a namesake** (Quran XIX, 7). **And after that, i.e., after He gave him priority in that name, he was followed in his name by others, in order that it might trace back to him** and he might be the source of designation by this name.

The Intention, which is one of the inward causes (of things and events), of his father, Zachariah, affected him when his heart, or the heart of Zachariah, was filled with the love of Mary, for verily the first reason for the existence of John was that his father deemed Mary's state to be good. So he concentrated his Intention while seeking refuge in God through supplication, and his Lord answered him and bestowed upon him John. **So He made him chaste through this mental image, i.e., by reason of Zachariah's forming an image of Mary and deeming her states to be good while he directed his Intention toward the existence of John.**

And the philosophers have come to know of the likeness of this, for (they say) when a person has intercourse with his wife, at the time of discharging sperm into her womb he should maintain within his soul and she should also maintain within her soul the image of the most excellent of beings, for the child will partake of that image, from its states, attributes and moral qualities, to an ample degree and full share, if not completely, for the child only takes form according to those psychic qualities and attitudes, physical contingencies and imaginal and mental forms which hold sway over the parents.

XXI

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF THE MASTER IN THE LOGOS OF ZACHARIAH

You have already come to know that Intention is one of the inward causes, and inward causes are stronger in their domination than ordinary outward causes and more deserving of being attributed to God. For this reason the inhabitants of the World of Command (*amr*) are stronger than the inhabitants of the World of Creation. In addition, let us remember the matter of, "And We set his wife right for him" (Quran XXI, 90), for if it were not for the succour of God to Zachariah and his wife by means of an Unseen power of Lordship outside of ordinary causes, his wife would not have been set aright and she would not have been able to bear a child. Therefore when God gave him the good news of John, he found it strange and said, "O my Lord, how shall I have a son, seeing my wife is barren, and I have attained to the declining of old age" (XIX, 8). So God answered him with His words, "Said He, 'So it shall be; the Lord says, 'Easy is that for Me, seeing that I created thee aforetime, when thou wast nothing'''" (XIX, 9); i.e., even if something like this is difficult, or rather impossible, in terms of outward causes, in respect to the Possessor of Perfect Power, of Strength and of Might it is easy. Then just as that power coursed from God into Zachariah and his wife, it went from them to John. Therefore God said to him, "O John, **take the Book forcefully**" (XIX, 12).

When Zachariah attained to the mercy of Lordship, i.e., God's nurturing him through bounty and succour and accomplishing that which was for his well-being, and also setting things right for him, as indicated by His words, "And We set his wife right for him", he concealed his call to his Lord and his prayer to Him from the hearing of those present. So he called Him in his secret center (*sirr*) (cf. Quran XIX, 3), in order that his Intention might be the most concentrated and the farthest from dispersion and its effect might be the greatest. So it, i.e. his secret call, gave rise through the power of its effectiveness to that which is not usually given rise to, i.e., John, who was born between a declining old man and a

barren old woman, for whom it is not usual to bear children, for barrenness prevents production. Therefore He said, “the barren wind” (LI, 41), and He distinguished between it and “the winds fertilising” (XV, 21), for these are such winds as produce good by bringing forth rain clouds, whereas “the barren wind” is what is opposed to them, for wherever barrenness exists, it prevents production. And God made John the inheritor of what he, or Zachariah, possessed, i.e., knowledge, prophecy, prayer for guidance, the avoidance of error, etc., through the blessing of his prayer, when he said, “So give me from Thee a kinsman who shall be my inheritor and the inheritor of the House of Jacob” (XIX, 5-6). So he, or John, was similar to Mary in inheritance, for when Zachariah became Mary’s guardian, he caused her to be his heir in some qualities of perfection; or (he was similar to her) in being chaste; for she was one of the things which was with Zachariah, because he was her guardian. So when John inherited what was with him, he inherited some of her qualities, so he resembled her in them. And in the same way He made him inheritor of a group of the House of Abraham, i.e., prophets, saints and men of knowledge, in the above mentioned things.

XXII

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF INTIMACY IN THE LOGOS OF ELIAS

He, that is, Elias, says, addressing his people who adhered to the worship of an idol whom they called “Baal”, “Do you call on Baal, and abandon the Best of creators?” (Quran XXXVII, 125), and thus he makes creatorship a quality shared by God and what is other than He. And God says, “Is He who creates as he who does not create?” (XVI, 17), affirming that creation belongs to Him and negating it from others. So apparently there is a contradiction between these two verses. Therefore the Shaykh points to their reconciliation with his words, so the “creation” by mankind understood from Elias’s words is determination (*taqdīr*), and the other creation is the bestowal of existence (*ijād*).

XIII
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF
VIRTUE IN THE LOGOS OF LOQMAN

Since Loqman knew that associating others with God is a mighty wrong to that which is being associated with Him, because that which is associated is a determined being identical with the Absolute Being of God according to the determination, which is one of His states or theophanies; while the associator believes that it is a being other than and sharing with Him in the level of Divinity – thus he has not put it in its place, which is precisely how “wrong” is defined – then it, or association, is one of the wrongs done to the servants in Loqman’s mind, because that which is associated, whatever it is, is one of His servants.

And he, or Loqman, possessed directives concerning the Divinity, such as belief in Him, not associating anything with Him, obeying His commands and avoiding what He prohibited, the directives of the messengers. And God witnessed that He gave him wisdom (*ḥikmah*) (Quran XXXI, 12) – so he bridled (*ḥakama*) his soul with it – and when He gave him wisdom, He gave him the comprehensive good, or the good which comprehends and embraces many particulars, as He said, “And whoso is given wisdom has been given much good” (II, 269).

XIV
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF
THE IMAMATE IN THE LOGOS OF AARON

Aaron to Moses, when he made him vicegerent over his people and went to meet his Lord at the appointed time, is in the position of the deputies (*nawwāb*) of Muhammad to Muhammad after his withdrawal

from this physical level of existence on his way to his Lord. So just as Muhammad's deputies among the Perfect Men and the Poles are his heirs and vicegerents in his community — they exercise free disposal within it as he did — so Aaron was the heir to Moses and his vicegerent among his people and exercised free disposal among them as he did. So let the saint who is an heir and inherits from the prophets before him consider from whom he inherits, for the heir is either Muhammadan, or non-Muhammadan; and the non-Muhammadan may be the heir to Moses, Jesus, Abraham or others of the prophets; and let the heir also consider in what he is asked to act as deputy and heir, whether in knowledge, state and station altogether, or in knowledge without state and station, or in knowledge and state without station. So the soundness and strength of his inheritance from the prophet will help him to take his benefactor's place in it, or take the place of that prophet who is as it were his benefactor in what he has been asked to act as deputy. So he takes knowledge for example from the source from which the prophet from whom he inherits also takes it. For verily the sciences of the prophets are divine gifts and are the result of unveiling through theophany; they are not acquired or earned. Therefore it is necessary that true inheritance also be the result of a gift, not transmitted or rational, and that the saint-inheritor inherits his knowledge from the source from which the prophet and messenger acquired their knowledge. The king of the gnostics Abu Yazid al-Bastami said to some of the exoteric scholars and transmitters of laws, traditions and sayings, "You take your knowledge dead from the dead, and we take our knowledge from the Living who does not die." The same is true of states and stations. So whoso does not take them from God as the men of old took them, but rather memorizes their words and sayings and transmits from them, is not a true inheritor, but is only so figuratively speaking.

So whoever of the saint-inheritors partakes of his character traits, i.e., the character traits and attributes of the prophet from whom he inherits, in his exercise of free-disposal is as if he were he, as the Prophet said, "The men of knowledge of my community are like the prophets of the Children of Israel."

XXV

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF ELEVATION IN THE LOGOS OF MOSES

Know that when God willed to manifest His perfect signs in the Logos of Moses, and the effect of this will coursed through the celestial and terrestrial causes – such as the positions and movements of the heavens which prepare the substances of the world, the mixtures of the elements, and the preparednesses made receptive and ready to manifest all of this – and when the time of his appearance drew close, numerous human constitutions became determined in accordance with the realities of what existed within Moses's spirit before the determination of his perfect and prophet-worthy constitution, and to these constitutions particular spirits became attached. At the same time the sages of the period told Pharoah that his end and the end of his kingdom would be at the hand of a child born in that time. So Pharoah ordered the death of all of the sons born to the Children of Israel as a precaution against what God had foreordained and predestined, not knowing that there is no way to resist His destiny or delay His command. Hence this became the cause of these spirits being combined in their own world, their becoming attached to the spirit of Moses and their not being dispersed and scattered far from him by means of bodily attachments and being immersed in the physical world. Therefore he became strengthened by them, their characteristics combined within him, and he was aided by their faculties. All of this was a particular favor of God to Moses and a confirmation, by aiding him with those spirits, like His aiding him with the celestial Spirits. So when Moses's spirit became attached to his body, those spirits, as well as the celestial Spirits, cooperated in aiding him with power and victory, and their life coursed into him. To this the Shaykh alludes with his words,

The life of everyone whom Pharoah killed for his sake coursed into him. Therefore his flight when he was afraid that they would kill him was only to save the life of those who had been killed. So it is as if he fled for the sake of others, i.e., those children who had been killed. Therefore, because of his mercy and compassion for others, God bestowed upon him messengerhood, which is a particular rank within prophecy, speaking (to

him) without intermediary (cf. Quran VII, 144) and the imamate, which is **dominion**, or domination over and the exercise of free disposal in the world. Then, since He had given him the gift of speaking (to him), **He spoke to him in the very form of his need**, i.e., in the very form of what he required, or fire, because of the complete concentration of his **Intention upon it**. So we come to know from the theophany of God in the form of the fire because of the concentration of Moses's Intention upon it **that concentration produces effects**. And it, or concentration (*jam-^ciyah*), is acting and producing effects through Intention, which is aspiration and the turning of one's attention toward something with all of one's faculties.

And when the like of this was known by him who knew among the believers and those who obey God, as well as others, he, or some of them, **strayed from the path of his own guidance** by acting through the concentration of his Intention in something not pleasing to God, while **other than he was guided by it**, i.e., by acting through the concentration of his Intention in something pleasing to God. **So He put it**, or acting through Intention and concentration, **in the place of the Quran in the similitude struck concerning it**: **He said**, "Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many; and thereby He leads none astray save the ungodly" (II, 26), and they, or the ungodly, **are those who have deviated from the Path of Guidance which is in it**. Here the Shaykh alludes to one of the inner meanings of this verse, for "*Qur'ān*" means literally "gathering" and "concentration."

XXVI

THE QUINTESENCE OF THE WISDOM OF EVERLASTING REFUGE IN THE LOGOS OF KHALID

He, or Khalid, made his sign indicating his prophecy to be after he departed for his Lord, so he let his sign perish, since he did not manifest it during his lifetime, and he let his people perish also, for he did not show it to them, so they let him perish. Therefore the Prophet said to Khalid's daughter, "Welcome to the daughter of a prophet whose people let him perish!" And it was only his sons who let him perish, since they did not

let the people who were believers open his grave because of the shame which befalls the Arabs resulting from their customs pertaining to the zeal of the "Age of Ignorance" (before Islam).

Khalid's story is as follows: he dwelt with his people in Aden. A great fire came out of a cave and destroyed the farms and flocks, so his people sought refuge with him. Khalid began to beat the fire with his staff until it retreated before him back into the cave. Then he said to his sons, "I shall enter the cave after the fire and extinguish it." And he ordered them to call him after three full days, for if they were to call him before that, he would come out and die. But if they waited three full days, he would come out healthy. So when he entered, they waited two days. Then Satan filled them with unrest and they did not wait the full three days but thought that he had died. So they called him, and he came out of the cave with a wound on his head which had been produced by their call. So he said, "You have caused me to perish, and you have let my words and instructions perish."

Then he told them that he would die and ordered them to bury him and watch over his grave for forty days, for a flock of sheep would come to them led by a donkey whose tail had been cut off. So when the donkey stopped before his grave, they should open it and he would rise up and tell them about the states of the Isthmus with certainty and having observed them. So they waited forty days, and the flock came led by the bob-tailed donkey. It stopped before his grave, and the believers among his people made as if to open it. But his sons refused to let them in fear of disgrace and lest they be called "the sons of him whose grave was opened." So it was the pagan ignorance of the Arabs which prompted them in this manner, and they caused his instructions to perish and let him perish.

XXVII

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF SINGULARITY IN THE LOGOS OF MUHAMMAD

The Wisdom of Singularity was dedicated to the Logos of Muhammad because he is the first determination with which the One Essence determined Itself before it manifested Itself in any of the other infinite Self-determinations. And these Self-determinations are ranked according to genus, species, kind and individual, some of them included under the others. So he encompasses all of the Self-determinations, and he is one and singular in existence, without parallel, for no Self-determination is equal to him in rank; and there is nothing above him but the Absolute One Essence, which is "purified" from every determination, attribute, name, designation, definition and description. So to him belongs the absolute singularity. In addition, singularity was actualized for the first time through his immutable archetype, since the first archetype to be effused by means of the Most Holy Emanation was his. So he attained through the unique Essence, the level of Divinity and his immutable archetype the supreme singularity.

His miracle (*mu^cjizah*), which proves his prophecy, is the **Quran**, which is his self and his reality in respect of its embracing all realities, or the verbal expression which is indicative of this all-embracingness and which came to him from God. In either case, the **Quran** is **miraculous**, for this all-embracingness and concentration is not possessed by any of the realities, because all of the realities are contained within the Muhammadan Reality as the part is contained in the whole; nor does any revealed book denote such an all-embracingness and concentration, for the **Quran** is the comprehensive unity of all the divine books.

God in His Essence is independent of the world and its inhabitants. But His infinite Names require that each have a locus of manifestation, so that the effect of that Name will appear in that locus, and the Named – which is the Essence – will reveal Itself in that locus to him who professes the divine Unity. For example, "the Merciful", "the Nourisher", and "the Vanquisher" are each a Name of God, and their

manifestation takes place through the merciful and the object of mercy, the nourisher and the nourished, and the vanquisher and the vanquished. So as long as there is no merciful or object of mercy in the world, mercifulness will not become manifested; and in the same way nourishing and vanquishing. Moreover all of the Names must be judged analogously. Therefore the reason for the manifestation of all particular beings is the demand of the Names of God. And all of the Names are under the sway of the Name "Allah", which encompasses and comprehends them. Moreover this Name also necessitates a universal locus of manifestation, which because of its all-comprehensiveness would correspond to the all-comprehensive Name and be the vicegerent of God in conveying effusion and perfections from the Name "Allah" to what is other than it. That all-comprehensive locus is the Muhammadan Spirit, which is referred to by the *ḥadīths*, "The first thing created by God was my Spirit" or "my Light."

The root and the origin of all creatures is the ontological level of the Reality of Realities, which is the Muhammadan Reality or the Light of Ahmad, the form of the One Unique Presence. That ontological level embraces all divine and cosmic perfections and establishes the measure of all the levels of human, animal and angelic harmonies. The world and its inhabitants are the forms and the parts of his particularization, and Adam and his children are subjugated toward the goal of his perfection. To this reality refer the words of the *ḥadīths*, "I am the master of the children of Adam" and "Adam and those who come after him are under my banner."

And since one of the inner meanings of the word "Quran" is concentration of the Intention, as was indicated in the chapter on Moses, the Shaykh wants to show that this concentration is also a miracle, so he says, **And concentration upon one thing is a miracle, because of the multifarious realities which man embraces** and his multiple and various spiritual and physical faculties. And each of these realities and faculties has a particular requirement and a determined property which differs from the requirements and properties of the others. So concentration – which is the absorption of that multiplicity by oneness – shatters the habits of the majority, and thus it is a miracle.⁽²⁾ Now man, who is multiple through his different faculties, is **like the Quran**, which is multiple and diverse **through its multiple verses and through its being the Word of**

2) Two words are commonly used in Arabic for miracle, *muʿjizah* and *khāriq al-ʿādah*, the latter of which means literally "shattering of habit."

God unconditionally, without quoting the words of others, and **the words of God**, in the sense that He has spoken them, **but quoted by God from others**. So in respect of its being the **Word of God unconditionally**, it is **miraculous**, although not in respect of its quoting the words of other speakers; and **it**, or the Quran's being multiple through its multifarious verses and one in its being the **Word of God**, is **concentration** which demands that it be miraculous. **So also is the concentration of the Intention** of man with its multiple realities.

God said, **"Your companion"**, i.e., Muhammad, **"is not possessed"** (LXXXI, 22), the word usually understood to mean "possessed" (*majnūn*) being from the root *jnn*, which means to hide or conceal, i.e., **nothing has been concealed from him**; **"and he is not niggardly"** (LXXXI, 24), so he **was not niggardly with anything belonging to you**, i.e., with anything which you are worthy of and your preparedness demands; **"and he is not suspected"**, as some authorities have read this same verse, i.e., **no one ever suspected him of being niggardly with anything** which he had from God **which belonged to you**, for he delivers to everyone who has a right his due and effuses upon him everything he needs and is entitled to.

Since fear is not actualized unless accompanied by being astray (*ḡalāl*), which is bewilderment (*ḡayrah*); for fear is the heart's being stripped of the serenity of security because of expecting the possible occurrence of something distasteful; and there is no doubt that expecting the distasteful without being sure of it is a kind of bewilderment and uncertainty. So since the Shaykh wants to negate fear from him, he points out that he was not astray, just as God said, **"Your companion is not astray, neither errs"** (LIII, 2). But it is necessary to know that "being astray" has three stages: a beginning, a middle and an end, and the straying which is negated from him is the first two stages, for the third stage is his spiritual station in which he sought increase with his words, "My Lord, increase my bewilderment in Thee." It is to this that the Shaykh alludes with his words, i.e., **he did not fear in his bewilderment**, which is the third stage and which is desired by the Perfect Men and never surpassed by them. And he did not fear in this stage because it was his nature to know that the ultimate goal in the knowledge of God is bewilderment, and **he who knows that the ultimate goal in the knowledge of God is bewilderment has been guided aright and is thus the possessor of guidance and eloquence in affirming bewilderment**. And bewilderment is the goal, so how should he fear within it?

Know that the first stage of being astray pertains to the bewilderment of the beginners, or the generality of men, the properties of the second appear in those of intermediate rank among those who possess unveiling while still being veiled, and the properties of the third pertain to the greatest of those who have attained to the Truth.

The cause of the first and common bewilderment is that man is an indigent seeker in his essence. So not one instant passes him by without his being in search. In reality this search is directed at the Perfection which is the true goal of the seeker, but the goals become determined according to the aspirations, intentions and relationships which motivate and incite. So as long as a goal to which he gives foremost importance or a religion or belief to which he binds himself does not become determined for man, he remains bewildered and agitated. The first thing which removes this bewilderment is the determination of a quest to which he gives first importance, then the knowledge of the path to attain it, then the factors which can bring about its attainment, then those things to which recourse can be had to attain the goal, then the knowledge of the obstacles and the way of eliminating them. So when these things are actualized, the bewilderment disappears.

Then, once a goal has been determined for man and he has given first importance to something which he sees as his end, his state is one of two kinds: either that thing embraces him in such a way that nothing remains with which to seek for more, such as is for the most part the state of the people of religions and creeds; or some sobriety remains, and you see that although he leans upon a certain state and a particular thing, he sometimes inquires and looks around, wondering if he might not find something more perfect than what he has embraced. So if he finds that which agitates and awakens him, he moves on to the compass of the second stage.

His state in the second stage is like his state in the first in that either he remains listless and indifferent towards seeking for more, or something remains in him which prevents him from finding rest and peace — especially when he sees that the people of the intermediate stage have split up into numerous factions, each of which sees that it and those who agree with it have attained the goal and that others have gone astray. And he sees the source and place of adherence of each denomination and that none of them has a leg upon which to stand. He sees possibilities knocking and contradictions manifest, so he becomes bewildered and does not know which of the beliefs is the most correct in reality. He remains

bewildered until at last the qualities of one of the stations upon which the people of religious beliefs support themselves gain sway over him so that he is attracted to it and gains tranquillity; or else grace – or grace along with his sincerity in aspiration, his earnest determination and his strenuous efforts – lifts from him the veil, so he becomes one of the people of unveiling.

His state at the beginning of the station of unveiling is like his previous states in that when he hears the celestial voice speaking to him, when he contemplates exalted visions and when he sees how well God has dealt with him and all that he has attained which has eluded most of the people of the world, some or all of this either enralls him completely, or there remains something in him of the burning thirst of aspiration. So he looks at God's words, "It belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him, except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or that He should send a messenger and that he reveal whatsoever He will, by His leave; surely He is All-high, All-wise" (XLII, 51), and its like among the divine allusions and prophetic admonitions, and he becomes aware that in the case of everything that arrives through a veil or becomes determined through an intermediary, necessarily the veil and the intermediary have a certain effect, so that which arrives does not retain its original purity. Then possibilities begin knocking, especially when he comes to know the secret of his spiritual state or station and the attributes which dominate it, and that each of these has an effect which manifests itself to him and is brought into relation with him. So he does not become tranquil, and no desire remains in him for the divine presence from a particular aspect or special point of view. He goes beyond the levels of the Names and Qualities and all of the properties, acts and theophanies which pertain to them. So God does not become determined for him according to a particular spiritual or physical aspect with respect to the Outward or the Inward or according to various fields of knowledge, modes of perception, beliefs, visions, traditions or descriptions, because of his awareness of the Majesty of God and of the fact that He is not limited to all or any of these things, and because he does not become satiated, nor does his Intention stop at one of the goals at which the people of the stopping places ⁽³⁾ stop – even though they are right and they have stopped with God, for Him and in Him. Rather he perceives through his primordial nature that

3) *Ahl al-mawāqif*, i.e., those whose archetypes and preparednesses are limited in certain respects and who therefore stop short in the spiritual ascent before attaining the ultimate goal

without any doubt he has a resting-place within His Being, and he turns toward it with the greatest part of himself, or rather with all of himself, and he places his presence in his attention to God in the manner that God knows Himself in Himself by Himself, not in the way He knows Himself in other than Himself, nor in the way that others know Him, and not in accordance with knowledge accorded by grace or earned.

And this state is the first of the states of the people of the final bewilderment, which is desired by the greatest spiritual luminaries but which they do not exceed; rather they ascend in it for ever and ever, in the world, in the Isthmus and in the Hereafter. They have no fixed goal in the Outward or the Inward, for they do not hold God to be determined by any station according to which He becomes delimited in their inward or outward parts, and therefore distinguished from any other quest. Rather He has shown them that He encompasses them from all of their hidden and manifest directions and that He reveals Himself to them in them, not in any one thing, direction, name or level. So they enter the Trackless Desert in His contemplation, and their bewilderment is from Him, through Him and in Him.