

Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt
Subtle Allusions

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Latā'if al-Ishārāt

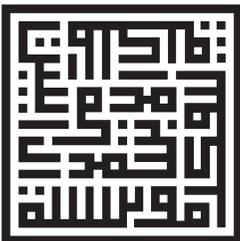
Subtle Allusions

*Great Commentaries
on the Holy Qur'ān*

Sūras 1–4

Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī

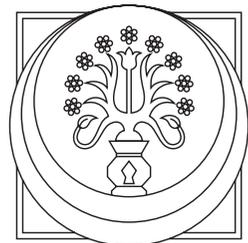
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General Editor's Introduction and Foreword

The Great Commentaries on the Holy Qurʾān project (www.altafsir.com) of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, Amman, Jordan (www.aalalbayt.org) is pleased to make available for the first time ever in English translation one of the most significant works of Sufi Qurʾān commentaries of the eleventh century. Al-Qushayrī's commentary, known as *Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt*, along with other works that appear in the Great Commentaries series, elucidates the meanings of specific Qurʾānic verses.

Previously published titles in this series include *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, *Tafsīr al-Jalālyan*, *Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās*, *Kashf al-asrār*, and *Asbāb al-Nuzul of al-Wahīdī*.

HRH Prince Dr. Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal
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Founder and Director of the *Great Tafsīr Project*;
Chairman of the Board of Trustees,
Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought
Amman, Jordan
2017 CE/1437 AH

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I would also like to thank my dear friend Gray Henry of Fons Vitae for her relentless energy and good cheer throughout the even lengthier task of publishing the books in this series. For this volume, Valerie Turner was a remarkably careful and thoughtful copy editor and proof reader. Muhammad Hozien did splendid work typesetting it. Early versions of the translation were read by several individuals. Yousef Meri provided very helpful comments on initial portions of the work and Khalid Williams gave excellent feedback on the entire translation. Everett Rowson was kind enough to look over and discuss the author's introduction and commentary on *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* with me at length. His comments on this particularly difficult part of the work were invaluable. Of course, any errors that remain in the translation are entirely my own. Annabel Keeler very generously supplied me with digital copies of the two manuscripts consulted for the translation.

Additional support for this translation came through a Simpson Grant in Support of Faculty Research and a sabbatical provided by Sarah Lawrence College. I had access to New York University's Bobst Library throughout the project thanks to the sponsorship of NYU's Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the importance of a Qurʾān study group that met for more than two and a half years in New York City, in which we read through and discussed nearly every line of this translation. It was my enormous good fortune to work with this remarkable group of serious thinkers and practitioners. The publication of this translation is dedicated to them.

Introduction to the Translation

L *aṭāʾif al-ishārāt* (*Subtle Allusions*) is a line-by-line commentary on the Qurʾān written by Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072). As its title suggests, this is not a simple work. Rather, its richness, depth, and nuance place it among the most important and illuminating works on the Qurʾān. Al-Qushayrī was a scholar with a refined and sharp mind honed through his extensive education in belles lettres (*adab*) and the religious sciences. The *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* reflects his mastery of the literary, exegetical, theological, and juridical discourses of his time. But al-Qushayrī was also a spiritual master who employed his intellectual abilities and literary sensibilities in writing the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* only insofar as they supported his primary objective, which was to provide very practical advice to the members of his Sufi community. When he comments on the various legal, ethical, theological, and metaphysical dimensions of Qurʾānic verses, al-Qushayrī continually focuses on the guidance they provide for spiritual aspirants (*murīdūn*), those who seek deeper knowledge and intimacy with God. The *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* includes the interpretations of al-Qushayrī and many other (unnamed) Sufis; it can therefore be read as a compilation of their transmitted wisdom. It can also be read, however, as a guidebook for those who long to attain their own understanding of the Book, as well as their own understanding of God’s signs in the world and in themselves. The “Teacher” (*al-ustādh*), as he was referred to in some later Sufi writings, speaks of the wisdom of the past, but always with the aim of fostering the attainment of wisdom among the living.¹

The *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* can easily be categorized as a Sufi commentary on the Qurʾān even though the words “Sufi” (*ṣūfi*) and “Sufism” (*taṣawwuf*) rarely appear in the work.² It is noteworthy that the words occur so infrequently, given al-Qushayrī’s key role in expanding the use of these terms elsewhere. His widely-read and influential *al-Risāla* (Epistle) on Sufism,

1 The pedagogical intent of the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* has been explored by Annabel Keeler in her “*Ṣūfi tafīr* as a Mirror: al-Qushayrī the *murshīd* in his *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*,” *Journal of Qurʾānic Studies* 8 (2006), 1–21; and Martin Nguyen’s *Sufi Master and Qurʾān Scholar: Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī and the Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

2 In the portion translated here the word “Sufis” (*al-ṣūfiyya*) appears only once (in the commentary on Qurʾān 2:113), and only one Sufi authority is identified by name (in the commentary on Qurʾān 2:4).

which was written concurrently with the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, was al-Qushayrī's attempt to rigorously defend and define the core elements of Sufism as a body of religiously and spiritually authoritative thought and practice.³ But while the *Risāla* can be seen as an attempt to define and shape a tradition, the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* avoids naming this tradition or the individuals associated with it. The result is a greater emphasis on the rich descriptive terms used to refer to those who have embarked on the "spiritual way or path" (*ṭarīqa*). At the most basic level, these travelers are "those who possess spiritual desire or aspiration" (*murīdūn*) and "those who seek" (*qāṣidūn* or *ṭalībūn*). Those who are further along the path are described as "those who possess deeper knowledge of reality" (*ʿarifūn* or *ahl al-ḥaqāʾiq*), "those who have embraced spiritual poverty" (*fuqarāʾ*), "lovers of God" (*aḥbāb* or *muḥibbūn*), "ecstatic finders of God" (*wājidūn*), "friends of God" (*awliyāʾ*), and "those who see nothing but God in everything" (*muwaḥḥidūn*). The more advanced individuals on the path have actualized spiritual potentialities that represent the quintessence of human states (*ṣafāʾ al-aḥwāl*). When al-Qushayrī speaks of the spiritual elect (*khuṣūṣ* or *khawāṣṣ*), he has in mind these rare individuals and those who seek to emulate them, in contrast to "ordinary people" (*awāmm*) who are Muslims but are not drawn to this spiritual path, or shy away from its demands. Although al-Qushayrī has in mind a spiritual hierarchy, it does not necessarily imply an external elite of Sufi leaders and practitioners; indeed he speaks approvingly of individuals of high spiritual worth who prefer to remain hidden and unrecognized. He also repeatedly criticizes those who make unwarranted claims to spiritual authority, and emphasizes instead the overwhelming authority of what is truly real (*istilāʾ sultān al-ḥaqīqa*). His repeated use of the terms "elect" (*khuṣūṣ* or *khawāṣṣ*) and "ordinary people" (*awāmm*) is therefore best understood as a way of distinguishing between those whose goal is the attainment of knowledge of deeper realities and higher states of intimacy with God, and those with more basic religious aspirations. Al-Qushayrī in no way dismisses salvific concerns, but he repeatedly differentiates between the desire for the rewards of the gardens of paradise and the desire for God Himself.

Al-Qushayrī's deeper concerns are reflected in the way in which he refers to God, more often using the word *al-ḥaqq* than the proper noun *Allāh*. When used to refer to God, *al-ḥaqq* can be translated as the "Real" or the "Ultimate Reality," but it also has the sense of what is rightfully due. Al-Qushayrī draws on both of these meanings in his references to *al-ḥaqq*, and in doing so emphasizes the divine invitation to human beings

3 See Jawid Mojaddedi, "Legitimizing Sufism in al-Qushayrī's 'Risāla,'" *Studia Islamica* 90 (2000), 37–50, and Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar*, 55–87.

to discover what is truly real and to respond to this ultimate reality in very active ways. He speaks not only of the “Real,” but also of the “rightful due of the Real” (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) and the “demands of what is truly real” (*muṭālabāt al-ḥaqqāʾiq*). For al-Qushayrī, reading the Qurʾān is not an intellectual exercise, nor merely a pious obligation, but rather a very serious exploration of what it means to be human in the fullest sense. Al-Qushayrī’s intention was to provide practical and accessible advice to those who aspire to read the Qurʾān in this way. However, his erudition in the scholarly, literary, and Sufi discourses of his time and place can be daunting for those approaching the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* for the first time. To help orient the reader, then, I offer a brief description of al-Qushayrī’s life and historical context, as well as a few comments on al-Qushayrī’s methodology and key terms, and suggestions for other texts and resources that might be useful to read in tandem with the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*.

Al-Qushayrī’s Life and Times⁴

Al-Qushayrī was born in 376/986 to parents from the Arab Qushayr and Sulaym tribes living in Ustawā, an agricultural region just northwest of the city of Nishapur in Persia. Arab tribes first migrated to this area of Khurasan in the first/seventh century with the conquests of the Sassanian Empire. Although 80 percent of the Persian population had converted to Islam by the time al-Qushayrī was born, and the descendants of the first Arab tribes were well assimilated into the local populations, they continued to maintain their tribal as well as religious identities.⁵ Al-Qushayrī’s father passed away while al-Qushayrī was still a child. It is likely that he was raised by his maternal uncle, who is described in at least one source as a prominent landowner (*dihqān*) in the region. Although al-Qushayrī’s primary spoken language may have been Persian, he received the education of an Arab aristocrat, which involved the study of the Arabic language and literature, as well as horsemanship, weaponry, and martial arts. As a young

4 The details of al-Qushayrī’s life given here are drawn from the most complete biographies of al-Qushayrī in English, Martin Nguyen’s *Sufi Master and Qurʾan Scholar*, 23–54 and Richard W. Bulliet’s *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 150–153. On the history of al-Qushayrī’s family, see Francesco Chiabotti, “Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), Family Ties and Transmission in Nishapur’s Sufi Milieu during the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” in *Family Portraits with Saints: Hagiography, Sanctity, and Family in the Muslim World*, ed. Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen and Alexandre Papas (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2014), 255–307.

5 Richard W. Bulliet, “Conversion to Islam and the Emergence of a Muslim Society in Iran,” in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 31. Cited in Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qurʾan Scholar*, 26.

man al-Qushayrī traveled to Nishapur in order to study fiscal administration, skills that were necessary for managing his estate. Nishapur, which was a large city by the standards of the time, had become an intellectual center of the Muslim world. Soon after arriving in Nishapur, al-Qushayrī met his first spiritual teacher, Shaykh Abū ʿAlī l-Daqqāq (d. 405/1015). At his urging, al-Qushayrī immersed himself in the study of the religious sciences of the Qurʾān and Sunna, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and theology (*kalām*). The relationship between the teacher and his disciple deepened to the point that al-Daqqāq arranged for al-Qushayrī to marry his daughter Fāṭima. After al-Daqqāq’s passing, al-Qushayrī became the shaykh of the school (*madrasa*) al-Daqqāq had founded, even as he continued to seek advice from another master in Nishapur, Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021). His study of the religious sciences continued as well, and included sessions with *ḥadīth* scholars he met with in Iraq and the Ḥijāz while traveling on pilgrimage to Mecca.

Al-Qushayrī was thus a highly educated individual of noble birth, whose position in the intellectual and Sufi elite of Nishapur involved both privilege and responsibility. This position also put him in increasing danger when factional disputes in the city intensified in the 420s/1030s and 430s/1040s. In his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī describes the tradition of Sufism as that which was primarily followed, at least in Nishapur, by those associated with the Shāfiʿī school of law and Ashʿarī theology. This “Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī-Sufi nexus” or “clique”⁶ was perceived as a serious threat by the more established elite in the city, those associated with the Ḥanafī school of law and Muʿtazilī theology.⁷ Al-Qushayrī became a prominent defender of Ashʿarī theology and wrote several treatises articulating and defending its principles. In 437/1045–46, the same year in which he began writing the *Risāla* and the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, al-Qushayrī issued a *fatwā* defending the orthodoxy of Ashʿarī theology. This placed him at odds with the Saljūq rulers who had seized the city in 429/1038, and in particular with the powerful Saljūq vizier ʿAmīd al-Mulk al-Kundurī (d. 456/1064) who had aligned the new government with the Ḥanafī-Muʿtazilī faction, despite having been educated by Shāfiʿī teachers himself.⁸ In 440/1048 al-Kundurī issued a condemnation of Ashʿarī theology and forbade its proponents from preaching, teaching or holding any religious office. In 446/1054 he had al-Qushayrī arrested along with three other Ashʿarī leaders. Al-Qushayrī was rescued by his supporters

6 Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 45–46.

7 For the differences between these legal and theological orientations in fifth/eleventh-century Nishapur, see Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 28–46. As for how they show up in al-Qushayrī’s *Laṭāʾif*, see Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qurʾan Scholar*, 205–236.

8 Bulliet argues that the alliances al-Kundurī made had more to do with local political expediency than religion (*Patricians of Nishapur*, 72).

a week later and left Nishapur for almost a decade, until al-Kundurī's death and replacement by Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092) in 455/1063. Although the most intense persecution of the Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī-Sufi elite occurred after al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* and *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* were completed, the environment in which these works were composed was a hostile one, with the Nishapuri elites jockeying for position with the tribal warlord turned sultan, Abū Ṭālib b. Mikā'il Ṭughril Beg (d. 455/1063). Most likely oblivious to the nuances of their different theological and legal positions himself, Ṭughril Bey relied on the expertise of al-Kundurī, his locally-educated vizier, to determine the best means of manipulating and coercing the elites in the city for political gain.⁹ Although these tensions are not directly detailed in the *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*, their traces can be felt in some passages of it, in which al-Qushayrī speaks about strife in communities and antagonism directed toward those on the "path" (*ṭarīqa*). Al-Qushayrī continually warns those who follow the path to avoid those who attack or seek to undermine their commitment.

In the portion of the *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* translated here, there is no mention of different schools of law or types of theology by name,¹⁰ even though al-Qushayrī's Ash'arī positions are very much evident in his commentary. Instead he differentiates and categorizes groups of people by their spiritual orientations and types of knowledge, and presents an expansive view of his own Sufi community and compatible individuals and groups. The distinctive orientations and characteristics of other groups are presented as either being worthy of emulation, as being in the early stages of spiritual development, or as antithetical to the aims of spiritual aspirants. One example al-Qushayrī gives of a group worthy of emulation are those who actively resist drawing any attention to their spiritual lives. He almost certainly has the "people of blame" (*malāmatiyya*) in mind, although he does not mention them by name.¹¹ Al-Qushayrī also describes the "young men" (*fityān*) whom he characterizes in the *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* and the *Risāla* as

9 Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam, the View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 122. While Bulliet looks to local politics as the major factor in the persecution of Ash'arīs in Nishapur, Nguyen notes that Central Asia had a longstanding Ḥanafī tradition. Whether or not they were ardent followers of this tradition, it was the tradition with which the Saljūq rulers were most familiar, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar*, 38–39.

10 On the paucity of attributions in the *Laṭā'if*, see chapter 5 in Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar*, 143–170.

11 Kenneth L. Honerkamp provides an excellent introduction to and description of the teachings of the *malāmatiyya* in Nishapur in his English translation of two Arabic texts: *Three Early Sufi Texts* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2003), 82–171. The texts translated are *Darajāt al-ṣādiqīn* (The stations of the righteous) and *Zalal al-fuqarā'* (The stumblings of those aspiring), written by al-Qushayrī's teacher Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021).

upholding the highest standards of behavior in their dealings with others.¹² Al-Qushayrī incorporates this “spiritual chivalry” (*futuwwa*) into his discussions of the virtues to be emulated by those on the path.¹³ Other spiritual orientations are presented in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* as positive, but less spiritually advanced. When ascetics (*zāhidūn*) and worshipers (*ʿābidūn*) are mentioned, for example, it is in passages that then mention individuals with deeper levels of commitment, intimacy, and knowledge. *Zāhidūn* and *ʿābidūn* are epithets that in al-Qushayrī’s time may have been applied to individuals among the Ḥanafī-Muʿtazilī elite and the populist movement known in Nishapur as the Karrāmiyya.¹⁴ They are epithets that also predate the use of the word Sufī.¹⁵ The mention of ascetics and worshipers in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* precedes the mention of epithets associated with Sufis, such as “spiritual aspirants” (*murīdūn*) or “those with deeper knowledge” (*ʿārifūn*). Similarly, types of knowledge and belief are presented in levels that are described as increasingly profound.¹⁶ Al-Qushayrī states, for example, that intellectual proofs concerning divine signs are much less compelling than spiritual insights, which themselves pale before “eyewitnessing” (*ʿiyān*). He acknowledges the value of intellectual modes of knowledge, but does not give them the same weight as the knowledge and intimacy associated with the methodology of the path. Although the intellect has its place in al-Qushayrī’s epistemology, “those who see things as they truly are” (*ahl al-ḥaqāʾiq*) make use of higher faculties, as I discuss below.

When al-Qushayrī speaks of non-Muslim religious groups, he does so in a framework that sees the Muslim community as the most perfected community in the spiritual development of humankind. There is a certain irony in this, given the violent intra-Muslim factionalism in Nishapur in his time, but this characterization must nonetheless be taken as a given in al-Qushayrī’s understanding of prophecy and religion, and should be understood in historical context. Although there were small communities

12 Al-Qushayrī discusses “spiritual chivalry” (*futuwwa*) in a section of his *Risāla*. In the Arabic edition edited by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. al-Sharīf (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1966) this appears in 2:472–479.

13 Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 43–45. Al-Qushayrī’s teacher al-Sulamī also wrote a treatise on *futuwwa*, which has been translated by Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi as *The Way of Sufi Chivalry* (New York: Inner Traditions, 1991). For an historical study of the movement, see Lloyd Ridgeon’s *Morals and Mysticism in Persian Sufism: A History of Sufi-Futuwwat in Iran* (London: Routledge, 2010).

14 For more on the Karrāmiyya, see C. E. Bosworth, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition, 4:667–669.

15 Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 41–43.

16 In *Sufi Master and Qurʾan Scholar*, Nguyen writes: “Composed in a consciously hierarchical fashion, all the interpretations and explanations of al-Qushayrī’s exegesis are channeled towards advancing the Sufi along the *ṭarīqa*,” 237.

of Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians in Nishapur in the fifth/eleventh century, the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* does not provide any evidence that al-Qushayrī had contact with these communities or knowledge of the writings of their traditions.¹⁷ There are passages in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* in which al-Qushayrī acknowledges a common divine source for the beliefs and practices of the “People of the Book,” but he more often portrays Magians (Zoroastrians), Jews, and Christians as representative of the lower states and attitudes of humans, individually and collectively. Although it is often suggested that Sufis have been, or are, more open to universal notions of religion, it would seem that Sufis living in the classical period of Islam rarely presented those of other religions as equals. Al-Qushayrī reflects the more common understanding of a hierarchy of religious communities and the superiority of Islam over any other religion or tradition. In one passage, al-Qushayrī emphatically states that those who do not walk under the banner of Muḥammad will not receive the same benefits and degrees of perfection as those who do.¹⁸

The historical context of life in fifth/eleventh-century Nishapur is also reflected in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* in al-Qushayrī’s unquestioning acceptance of a hierarchical structuring of gender and family relations. He embraces a benevolent patriarchal paradigm that affirms the authority men have over women and their greater rights (in inheritance, marriage, and polygamous relationships), and repeatedly links these rights to greater responsibilities. Men are urged to act with the utmost kindness to women in their care, especially those who have been orphaned, divorced or widowed. According to al-Qushayrī, the greater vulnerability of women is related both to their position in society and their weaker bodily and mental constitution. These were notions which were the norm of his time and place.¹⁹ What is

17 William Chittick writes, “In premodern times, discussions of religious differences like those that can be undertaken today were impossible. The great authorities of the past did not have what we now take for granted: access to peers in other religions and a wealth of books and information. Premodern scholars interpreted what little they knew about other religions in terms of the absolute truth of their own religious command. Practically no one had the means or the interest to look at the actual teachings of other religions or to learn about them by talking with their qualified representatives.” See “The Ambiguity of the Qurʾanic Command,” in *Between Heaven and Hell: Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others*, ed. Mohammad Hassan Khalil (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 65–86. In the same volume Tim Winter questions Chittick’s assumption regarding premodern scholars, with specific reference to Muḥyī l-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) (“Realism and the Real: Islamic Theology and the Problem of Alternative Expressions of God,” 122–150). See especially 147n59.

18 See al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qurʾān 4:113.

19 For example, see al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qurʾān 2:226, 2:228, 4:11, 4:34, and 4:129. For a recent discussion of the classical period of Sufism and issues related to gender, see chapter 1 in Sa’diyya Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn ʿArabī, Gender, and*

distinctive, however, about al-Qushayrī's approach to the legislative verses of the Qurʾān that address spousal and familial issues is the way in which he draws upon the traditions of refined behavior (*adab*)²⁰ and chivalry (*futuwwa*) that flourished in Nishapur during his time. When applied to Qurʾānic verses concerning marital relationships, this approach has the effect of softening the rough edges of patriarchal norms. For example, in his commentary on Qurʾānic verses 4:34 and 4:35, al-Qushayrī confirms the disciplinary role of a husband over his wife when the wife acts in a way that is injurious to the marriage. At the same time, however, he insists that this role demands a higher inner awareness on the man's part, as well as a higher standard of generosity and compassion toward his wife. He also points out that while men may have the right to their wives' obedience, they have no control over the affection and love their wives may or may not feel toward them. In his comments on Qurʾānic verses pertaining to marital strife, divorce, and widowhood, al-Qushayrī repeatedly refers to the emotional dimensions of these events and incorporates them into his discussion of legal and ethical points. While the approach is not one that supports an egalitarian view of men and women, it is one that repeatedly notes the abuses possible in hierarchically structured relationships and directs men to act with kindness toward their wives and the other women in their families. Al-Qushayrī urges his male readers to cultivate these higher ethical sensibilities by following the Qurʾānic text closely, alerting the reader to the verses that describe and promote human virtues, and pointing out subtleties in the Qurʾānic address that link these virtues to divine attributes. Al-Qushayrī's notions of "refined manners" (*adab*) and "chivalry" (*futuwwa*) are therefore as grounded in the Qurʾān as is his understanding of *sharīʿa* law.

Remarks on al-Qushayrī's Hermeneutics in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*

Al-Qushayrī was not the first Nishapuri exegete to explore the moral dimensions of the Qurʾān through the ethos of *adab*, nor was he the first to incorporate its literary elements.²¹ What is remarkable about the *Laṭāʾif*

Sexuality (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 35–60.

- 20 The word *adab* in Arabic refers to the cultivation of higher sensibilities, whether in the area of belles lettres or the refinement of character and conduct.
- 21 Al-Qushayrī's fellow Nishapuri al-Thaʿlabī is said to have been the first to extensively incorporate poetic and didactic literature from the secular belles lettres (*adab*) tradition into Qurʾān commentary, in an approach that Walid Saleh refers to as the "sacralization of secular *adab* literary styles." In his study *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition: The Qurʾān Commentary of al-Thaʿlabī* (d. 427/1035) (Leiden: Brill,

al-ishārāt, however, is how central the socio-ethical and literary dimensions of *adab* are to al-Qushayrī's approach to understanding the Qurʾān and how seamlessly and effectively these serve as exegetical tools. Because the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* is a line-by-line commentary, al-Qushayrī is able to demonstrate the synergy between legislative, ethical, and theological passages of the Qurʾān. Although he acknowledges and never wavers from his commitment to *sharīʿa* law, al-Qushayrī repeatedly urges his readers to aspire to more than its minimum obligations, commands, and prohibitions. This can be seen as a movement away from rule-based ethics toward a form of virtue ethics. But al-Qushayrī takes this even further, insisting that the refinement of one's social interactions in the world is a necessary precursor to deeper interactions and intimacy with the divine. In his comments on Qurʾānic verse 4:32, he writes:

It is said that if one's outward nature has not been refined through the different kinds of moral behavior (*muʿāmalāt*), one's inward nature has [likewise] not been refined by the different aspects of the mutual waystations (*munāzalāt*). How, then, could one hope to obtain intimate communications (*muwāṣalāt*)—that would be preposterous!

In this passage al-Qushayrī presents *adab* as a form of spiritual discipline.²² Moreover, he expresses his views on the refinement of character through rhymed prose, an *adab* literary device. Throughout the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, al-Qushayrī shifts back and forth between expository prose, rhymed prose, metaphors, and poetry. This gives him a great deal of flexibility to respond to the shifting style and content of the Qurʾān itself. Although al-Qushayrī acknowledges and participates in the kind of expository, legal, and theological exegesis found in other commentaries on the Qurʾān,²³ he does not confine himself to it; instead he adds aesthetic and emotive elements in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* that are surprisingly useful in pointing out aspects of the Qurʾān that are often buried in scholarly exegesis. The literary aspect

2004), Saleh argues that this approach explains “the moral nexus of the Qurʾān” in a much more expansive way than is possible in other forms of exegesis such as the *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy Qurʾān* of Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923).

- 22 Al-Qushayrī's notion of *adab* as a spiritual discipline is consistent with that of his teacher al-Sulamī, who wrote a book entitled *Jawāmiʿ ādāb al-ṣūfiyya* (A collection of Sufi rules of conduct). The work has been translated into English by Elena Biagi (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2010).
- 23 Al-Qushayrī was, after all, a religious scholar himself, as Nguyen amply demonstrates in *Sufi Master and Qurʾān Scholar*. For his discussion of the Nishapuri school of exegesis and al-Qushayrī's place in it, see 88–120. For Nguyen's comments on a scholarly commentary attributed to al-Qushayrī, see “*Al-Taḥf al-kabīr*: An Investigation of al-Qushayrī's Major Qurʾān Commentary,” *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013), 17–45.

of al-Qushayrī's commentary is also evident in the close attention he pays to subtle details of language in the Qurʾānic address, and the adept way in which he suggests the deeper significance of these details.²⁴

Perhaps the most surprising literary device al-Qushayrī uses in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* is his citation of poetry, including a great deal of secular poetry that originated in entirely different contexts. In his research into the sources of the more than 400 poetic verses cited in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, Aḥmad Amīn Muṣṭafā located verses attributed not only to Sufis but also to such secular luminaries as al-Mutanabbī, Abū Nuwās, and Abū Tammām. In al-Qushayrī's hands, the very worldly sentiments and passions found in the poetry of these and other secular poets become expressions of deeper spiritual states and aspirations.²⁵ The love poetry he cites is particularly useful for demonstrating how al-Qushayrī prioritized his advice to readers. For al-Qushayrī, the acquisition of scholarly or juristic knowledge, and exertion in spiritual disciplines have roles to play in cultivating a relationship with the divine, but the most crucial task is the protection, fostering, and deepening of spiritual desire (*irāda*). Al-Qushayrī states that sincerity and commitment are foremost, and to lose one's desire is to lose the only value one brings to the spiritual path. Commenting on the sickness of hearts mentioned in Qurʾānic verse 2:10, al-Qushayrī writes: "There is a barrier between one whose spiritual desire has become weak and the intimate communications of nearness and whispered confidences." For al-Qushayrī, deeper knowledge (*maʿrifa* or *ʿirfān*) of the nature of reality and the human condition is not so much a matter of acquisition as it is an indicator of a relationship. Al-Qushayrī describes the Qurʾān as a book for lovers who eagerly seek news about their beloved. Commenting on the

24 For more on how al-Qushayrī draws upon the literary and socio-ethical dimensions of *adab* in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, see Kristin Zahra Sands, "On the Subtleties of Method and Style in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* of al-Qushayrī," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013), 7–16.

25 Al-Qushayrī was not the first Sufi to cite secular poetry as a way of describing spiritual experiences. His teacher al-Sulamī collected specific examples of this by Sufis who lived in the second/eighth to fourth/tenth centuries in his *Kitāb al-amthāl wa-l-istishhādāt* (The book of similes and illustrations). For an introduction to this work, as well as a critical edition of the Arabic text, see Gerhard Böwering and Bilal Orfali's *Sufi Treatises of Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 2009). Francesco Chiabotti discusses the role of poetic citations (*shawāhid*) in Sufi literature in his study of a collection of sayings from al-Qushayrī, which was compiled by one of his sons: "The Spiritual and Physical Progeny of ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī: A Preliminary Study in Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī's (d. 514/1120) *Kitāb al-Shawāhid wa-l-amthāl*," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013), 46–77. This work is also described and discussed in Mojtaba Shahsavari, "Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī and his *Kitāb al-Shawāhid wa-l-amthāl*," *Ishrāq* 3 (2012), 279–300.

phrase *that Book* in Qurʾānic verse 2:2,²⁶ al-Qushayrī cites a poem in which the messages of revelation are compared to love letters strewn about the bed of one who is heartsick:

Your writing is all around me,
it does not leave my bed.

There is healing in it for that
which I conceal.

When al-Qushayrī shares some of the messages he himself has received regarding subtle meanings of Qurʾānic verses, or the messages received by other Sufis before him, he is revealing information from cherished encounters. The messages he shares are not, in and of themselves, the point of his commentary; rather they are what al-Qushayrī calls external remains or tracings (*rusūm*) and should not be confused with actual intimate communications (*muwāṣalāt*). Nonetheless, he shares them because they provide guidance for cultivating the necessary receptivity of aspirants longing for a closer relationship with the divine.

Because spiritual desire is the key to deeper knowledge of, and intimacy with, the divine, al-Qushayrī repeatedly warns his readers against “becoming listless” (*fatra*). The most damaging thing an aspirant can do, according to al-Qushayrī, is to return to ordinary ways of thinking and behaving, or “habit” (*āda*), a term he uses to refer to the “default position”²⁷ of most human beings, a position in which their appetites and need for comfort are paramount. Those who choose their worldly attachments and ordinary ways of thinking and behavior cannot also choose the path of spiritual desire—the two are mutually exclusive. As long as the “people of habit” (*ahl al-āda*) meet the minimal requirements of the *sharīʿa*, they will be rewarded in the next life and will avoid its punishments. But for those whose objective is intimacy with God, the more immediate and intense punishment in this life is that of separation,²⁸ one of the signs of which is listlessness on the spiritual path. Throughout the *Latāʾif al-ishārāt* al-Qushayrī offers advice on how to avoid this and become the kind of sincere and unwavering lover who regrets every moment not spent with their beloved.²⁹

26 In other *tafsīr* works the phrase is interpreted as referring to either the Qurʾānic verses that had been revealed up to the point of the revelation of Qurʾānic verse 2:2, or to all the books revealed to prophets.

27 One of the meanings of the Arabic verb *āda* is “to revert.”

28 As al-Qushayrī says in his commentary on Qurʾān 3:188, “What punishment is more intense than being returned to creation and veiled from the Real?”

29 For more on this advice, see Kristin Zahra Sands, “The Problem of Listless Lovers in al-Qushayrī’s *Latāʾif al-ishārāt*,” online at <http://digitalcommons.slc.edu/facultyconfpapers/4/>.

When al-Qushayrī addresses matters of theology and *sharīʿa* in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, it is with this primary objective of intimacy in mind. His approach to understanding the nature of God’s attributes and acts, and what He has commanded and prohibited for human beings, is always rooted in a relational view of reality. The potential of human beings, and their most fundamental task, lies not only in their coming to know the nature of reality but also in their response to it in particular ways. Al-Qushayrī describes the basic dynamic of this response as one of harmony with (*muwāfaqa*), or opposition to (*mukhālafa*), the decrees and properties (*aḥkām*) of the Real (*al-ḥaqq*). The dynamic can also be understood through the terms faith (*īmān*) and disbelief (*kufr*). To have faith and belief (*īmān*) is to align oneself with the Real in a relationship of friendship and protection (*walāya*). Disbelief or infidelity (*kufr*) is a denial or rejection of ultimate reality and its essential beauty, goodness, and justice.

Furthermore, to comprehend what is ultimately real involves not only the study of what is commonly thought of as “facts and information,” but also to develop an increasing awareness of one’s subjective being and states. To use al-Qushayrī’s terminology, this entails reflection on perceived objects or “things” (*aʿyān* sing. *ʿayn*) and the traces or effects left by these things (*āthār* sing. *athar*), as well as the development of a deeper understanding and activation of the physical and spiritual faculties of perception in human beings. When al-Qushayrī talks about subtler and deeper types of faith and knowledge, he distinguishes between what the intellect (*ʿaql*) is able to grasp, and what can be perceived through the heart (*qalb*) and the innermost self or secret (*sirr*). The signs (*āyāt*) of God, whether they appear in the verses (*āyāt*) of the Qurʾān or in the external or inner worlds,³⁰ are read and understood differently depending on the human faculties involved. Commenting on the phrase *this is an exposition (bayān) for humankind* occurring in Qurʾānic verse 3:138, al-Qushayrī writes that this is “an exposition to some people through rational proofs (*adillat al-ʿuqūl*) to others through unveilings of hearts (*mukāshafāt al-qulūb*), and to others through the self-disclosure of the Real in their innermost selves (*tajallī l-ḥaqq fī l-asrār*).” Al-Qushayrī’s understanding of the intellect needs little explanation, other than to say that by it he means the faculty that engages in deductive and inductive reasoning. What is more challenging to understand is how he distinguishes these modes of cognition from what he most frequently refers to as “witnessing” (*shuhūd* or *mushāhada*), which occurs through the heart or the innermost self. Just as one needs to train and exert oneself to actualize the potential of the intellect, so one must cultivate the attitudes

30 Qurʾān 41:53 states: *We shall show them Our signs (āyāt) in the horizons and in their own souls until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.*

and actions that awaken and sharpen the more subtle human faculties. Some of what this discipline entails can be found in al-Qushayrī's commentary on Qur'ānic verse 4:36, a verse which enjoins believers to treat their neighbors well. Al-Qushayrī applies this to one's inner "neighbors" as well:

If the neighbor next to your home is entitled to your kindness and the observation of his right, then the neighbor next to your self (*nafs*), which is your heart (*qalb*), deserves even more that you do not neglect or disregard it, and that you do not enable vile thoughts to come to it. And if this applies to the neighbor of your self, then the neighbor of your heart, which is your spirit (*rūh*), is even more deserving that you protect its right and do not enable that which is in discord with it from the familiar comforts and things close [to the lower self]. The neighbor of your spirit, which is your innermost self (*sirr*), is even more deserving that you watch over its right and do not enable its absence from the homesteads of witnessing (*awṭān al-shuhūd*) at all times. The allusion in His words, *And He is with you wherever you are* [57:4] is unambiguous to the hearts of those who possess realization.

This passage is one of many in the *Latā'if al-ishārāt* that speak of the subtle spiritual faculties that people possess but often neglect. Al-Qushayrī's overall pedagogical method in his commentary is to give his readers a taste of higher states while also providing practical advice to move closer to these states. The higher state of "witnessing" is explained in this passage through the reference to Qur'ānic verse 57:4, which suggests a continual state of seeing and feeling God's presence. The advice to those who have not yet attained this state is to increase their level of awareness and responsiveness both outwardly toward one's physical neighbors, but also inwardly toward the spiritual faculties. Negative thoughts harm the heart (*qalb*) and the attachments of the lower self impede the spirit (*rūh*). To look to anything but God in every moment and circumstance is to violate the innermost self (*sirr*, the "secret" of human beings).

To look to anything but God as the source of all things is a kind of false "witnessing." Rather than recognizing God as the only "One who causes things to happen, brings things forth and causes them to remain,"³¹ most people limit their perceptions to secondary causes. They understand other people and events as the source of their happiness and unhappiness, and in doing so fall into what al-Qushayrī claims is a form of hidden idolatry, positing partners with God. Examples of this delusional and harmful way

31 See al-Qushayrī's commentary on Qur'ān 4:36.

of thinking and behaving can be found in his commentary on the phrase *and associate nothing with Him* in Qurʾānic verse 4:36: “The subtle forms of showing off, the hidden acts of guile, the secret places of pride, acting to be seen by created beings, seeking the pleasure of their praise and wilting at their rejection and censure—all that is hidden idolatry (*shirk khafī*).” This passage is also an example of al-Qushayrī’s criticism of any thought or behavior patterns that solidify and affirm the ego, an error that he describes elsewhere as a mirage that leads nowhere and brings only pain. The one who says “mine, through me, from me, and I” rather than “Yours, through You, from You, and You” has forgotten the divine agency, power, and kindness that precedes every thing that comes into the world.³² On the other hand, those who recognize the truth of *the affair belongs entirely to God* (3:154) have been liberated from the endless and stifling demands and delusions of the lower self. According to al-Qushayrī, such a person “finds rest from the pains of his own planning (*tadbīr*) and lives in the spaciousness of witnessing His decree (*taqdīr*).”³³ Anyone who gives up the rulings (*aḥkām*) of the self for the rulings of God remains calm beneath the streams of God’s decrees, and is released from the “grip of changing circumstances” and the “turbulence of self-direction.”³⁴ Witnessing God in all people and events is not a withdrawal from the world but rather a transformation of one’s way of viewing it and one’s way of being in it. Al-Qushayrī’s understanding of the notion of witnessing informs the way in which he approaches the Qurʾān. Far from privileging the intellect and the scholarly exegesis it produces (though he acknowledges its importance), al-Qushayrī invites his readers to turn their attention to the heart and the innermost self, which receive and process information in entirely different ways.

Helpful Tools for Reading the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*

The *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* makes extensive use of the technical vocabulary of Sufism as defined and explained in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*. For this reason, it can be very useful to consult this work to better comprehend the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*. In passages in which the use of technical terms or the names of spiritual stations are particularly significant, footnotes to the translation refer the reader to the relevant passages in the *Risāla*.³⁵ Because there are several English translations of this work, the page numbers of the translations are not provided here, but can be easily located from the titles given for the sections of the *Risāla*. The only complete English translation of the

32 See al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qurʾān 2:9.

33 This appears in al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qurʾān 3:154.

34 See al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qurʾān 3:159.

35 The page numbers given refer to the two-volume Arabic edition *al-Risāla al-qushayriyya*.

Risāla is Alexander D. Knysh's *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism*.³⁶ Two earlier English translations, one by Barbara von Schlegell³⁷ and another by Rabia Harris present the chapter on spiritual stations.³⁸ The chapter on technical terms has been translated by Michael Sells, along with very helpful explanatory notes, in his *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mī'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*.³⁹ These translations have greatly informed my own translations of select passages from the *Risāla* found here in the footnotes to the *Latā'if al-ishārāt*.

In addition to assuming that his readers have a degree of familiarity with Sufi terms, al-Qushayrī takes for granted basic knowledge of the Qur'ānic commentary tradition (*tafsīr*). Some of his comments are difficult to understand without knowledge of non-Sufi Qur'ān commentaries. Although some footnotes with basic information have been provided in this translation, the reader might also find it useful to consult the English translations of commentaries posted online through the Great Commentaries of the Qur'ān project of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought.⁴⁰ The recently published *Study Quran* provides short but comprehensive summaries and discussions of the most significant classical commentary material for each verse of the Qur'ān, which makes it an invaluable resource.⁴¹ Other important resources are Mahmoud Ayoub's *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*⁴² and John Cooper's English translation of al-Ṭabari's commentary (d. 310/923).⁴³ Some English translations of the

36 *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism: Al-Risāla al-qushayriyya fi 'ilm al-tasawwuf*, trans. Alexander D. Knysh (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 2007). Note should also be made of the German translation with comments by Richard Gramlich, *Das Sendschreiben al-Qušayris über das Sufitum* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989).

37 *Principles of Sufism by al-Qushayri*, trans. B. R. von Schlegell (Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1990). As Knysh notes, the translation omits the sections on Sufi etiquette, practice, morals, and ethics.

38 *The Risalah: Principles of Sufism*, trans. Rabia Harris (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2002).

39 *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mī'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*, trans. and ed. Michael A. Sells (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996), 97–150.

40 Currently, there are three English translations of non-Sufi commentaries available online at altafsir.com in the *tafsīr* section: *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, translated by Feras Hamza; *Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās*, translated by Mokrane Guezzou; and *Asbāb al-nuzūl* by al-Wāḥidī, translated by Mokrane Guezzou. These works are also available in printed editions through Fons Vitae (Louisville, KY).

41 *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. Seyyid Hossein Nasr, et al. (HarperCollins Publishers, 2015).

42 Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*, Volume 1 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984) covers the first two *sūras* of the Qur'ān; Volume 2 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) covers the third *sūra*. In these books Ayoub selects and summarizes material from thirteen classical and modern commentaries.

43 Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabari, *The Commentary on the Qur'an*, vol. 1, trans. John Cooper (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). The volume ends

Qurʾān provide footnotes that incorporate *tafsīr* material.⁴⁴

Another text that might be useful to read alongside the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* is Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī's *Kashf al-asrār* (The Unveiling of the Mysteries). Maybudī's commentary is divided into three sections, the first of which is a Persian translation of the Qurʾān. The second section provides material from the non-Sufi commentary tradition, partially in Persian and partially in Arabic. The third section, which is the literary and mystical section, includes a significant amount of material taken from al-Qushayrī's *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*. Sometimes this material is a direct translation of al-Qushayrī's Arabic into Persian, without attribution, and sometimes the material is Maybudī's expansion or adaptation of al-Qushayrī's comments. William Chittick has translated most of this third section into English.⁴⁵ Although Maybudī never mentions al-Qushayrī by name, his appreciation for the work is evident in his extensive borrowing and expansion of the text, and his comments can therefore be a very useful aid to more fully comprehending the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*.⁴⁶

Al-Qushayrī himself only rarely provides information on the scholarly, literary or Sufi sources he draws upon in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*. Scholars have, however, traced a significant amount of the poetry and *ḥadīth* al-Qushayrī cites. As mentioned, Aḥmad Amīn Muṣṭafā sourced most of the poetry found in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* in his *Takhrij abyāt laṭāʾif al-ishārāt lil-Imām al-Qushayrī*.⁴⁷ Brief references to some of his findings are provided in the footnotes to this translation. As for the *ḥadīth* found in the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Raḥmān has sourced most of it in footnotes provided in a reprint of the Basyūnī Arabic edition (described below).⁴⁸ The translation here gives selected references from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's sourcing, focusing primarily on references to the six canonical Sunni collections of *ḥadīth* and other early collections.

at 2:103.

44 For example, Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qurʾān* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980), and A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qurʾān: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1989).

45 Rashīd al-Dīn al-Maybudī, *Kashf al-asrār* (The Unveiling of the Mysteries), an abridged English translation by William C. Chittick is available online at altafsir.com and in print from Fons Vitae (Louisville, KY, 2015).

46 For studies of Maybudī's commentary, see Annabel Keeler, *Sufi Hermeneutics: The Qurʾān Commentary of Rashīd al-Dīn al-Maybudī* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), and William C. Chittick, *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

47 Aḥmad Amīn Muṣṭafā, *Takhrij abyāt laṭāʾif al-ishārāt li-l-imām al-Qushayrī: wa-dīrāsāt al-manhaj al-Qushayrī fī l-istishhād al-adabī* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿāda, 1986).

48 Abū Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Tafsīr al-Qushayrī l-musammā Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000).

The English Translation of the Qurʾān

The English translation of the Qurʾān that appears in this work is that of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, with minor adaptations.⁴⁹

Notes on the Edition and Manuscripts Used for This Translation

The primary source used for this translation of the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* was the printed edition edited by Ibrāhīm Basyūnī and published in Cairo in 1068–71.⁵⁰ Two additional manuscripts were consulted to clarify obscure passages and to fill in the lacunae of the Basyūnī edition.⁵¹ The more complete manuscript consulted was the MS Köprülü 117 (now cataloged as MS Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 117). It is referred to in the translation footnotes as MS K117. The second manuscript was Yeni Cami 101, which includes al-Qushayrī's introduction through the end of his commentary on *Sūrat al-Baqara*, and is referred to in the translation notes as MS Y101.⁵² The differences between these two manuscripts are negligible. The differences between the printed Basyūnī edition and the manuscripts are most notable in al-Qushayrī's introduction and his commentary on *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, where the manuscripts are clearly superior to the printed edition. Beginning with the commentary on *Sūrat al-Baqara*, however, the differences between the printed edition and the two manuscripts are not as extensive. Unless otherwise noted, the translation follows the printed Basyūnī edition.

Transliterations and Abbreviations

The translation provides Arabic transliterations for key terms and to demonstrate al-Qushayrī's continual shifts into rhymed prose. It is impossible to do justice to the way in which al-Qushayrī shifts between prose, rhymed prose, and poetry in an English translation. When Maybudī incorporated al-Qushayrī into his *Kashf al-asrār*, he created a new literary work by

49 The entire translation is available for download from altafsir.com.

50 Abū'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt: Taḥsīn ṣūfi kāmil li-l-Qurʾān al-karīm*, ed. Ibrāhīm Basyūnī, 6 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabi, 1968–71).

51 I am very grateful to Annabel Keeler for supplying me with digital copies of these two manuscripts. The lacunae found in the Basyūnī edition have been filled in with material from the manuscripts, with the exception of one larger section of commentary on Qurʾān 2:83 and 2:84 that appears in the two manuscripts but is missing from the Basyūnī printed edition.

52 For more information on the printed editions and manuscripts of al-Qushayrī's *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, see the article by Martin Nguyen and Francesco Chiabotti, "The Textual Legacy of Abū l-Qāsim al-Qūshayrī: A Bibliographic Record," *Arabica* 61 (2014) 339–395.

writing his own rhymed prose in Persian and by citing more Persian than Arabic poetry. One of the Persian poets he cites most frequently is Sanāʾī of Ghazna (d. 525/1131). Nothing like that has been attempted here, but transliterations have been provided for some passages, either in part or in full, in order to give the reader a taste of al-Qushayrī’s style of rhymed prose. Not all of the rhymed prose in the *Latāʾif al-ishārāt* is transliterated here, but enough has been given to demonstrate to the reader how frequently it occurs in the original Arabic and how much it shapes the text. The poetry al-Qushayrī cites is introduced by phrases such as “They say,” “One of them recited,” and “The one who spoke for them said.”

For the sake of brevity, the honorifics that follow the mention of God, the Prophet Muḥammad, the prophets, and key Muslim figures appear in glyphs as follows:

	ʿalayhi al-salām or ʿalayhim al-salām (“peace be upon him/ them”)
	raḥimahu Llāh (“may God have mercy on him”)
	raḍiya Llāh ʿanhā (“may God be well-pleased with her”)
	subḥānahu (“glory be to Him”)
	subḥānahu wa-taʿālā (“glory be to Him, Most High”)
	ṣallā Llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam (“may God bless him and grant him peace”)
	ṣallā Llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam wa-ʿalā āhlihi (“may God bless him and his family and grant them peace”)
	ṣalawāt Allāh ʿalayhi and ṣalawāt Allāh ʿalayhim (“may God’s blessings be upon him/ them”)
	taʿālā (Most High)



Plates

Manuscripts and Printed Edition



A page from Yenî Camî 101

تراثنا

المجلد الأول

من

لَطَائِفُ الْإِشَارَاتِ

تفسير صوفي كامل للقرآن الكريم

للإمام القشيري

تم له رفقه وعل عليه

الدكتور إبراهيم بيوني

صدر له

الأستاذ حسن عباس زكي

دار الكتاب العربي للطباعة والنشر
بالمسامة

The Commentary

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[Author's Introduction]

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise be to God who has opened the hearts of His friends (*awliyā*) with deep knowledge (*ʿirfān*) of Him and made the way of the Real¹ clear by the glimmering light of His proof for those who desire His path (*ṭarīqa*). He has granted help² to those who seek realization (*taḥqīq*) of Him. He revealed the Qurʾān³ as a guidance and illustration to His chosen one Muḥammad ﷺ, as a miracle and clear evidence. He placed deep knowledge (*maʿrifā*) and interpretation (*taʾwīl*)⁴ of it in the breasts of the scholars (*ʿulamā*), honoring them with knowledge (*ʿilm*) of its stories and revelation and providing them with faith in its clear and ambiguous [verses], its abrogating and abrogated [verses],⁵ and its promises and threats. He honored the chosen ones (*aṣfiyā*) among His servants with understanding the subtleties (*laṭāʾif*) of the secrets He placed in it. He selected them⁶ to seek insight (*istibṣār*) into the intricacy of the allusions (*ishārāt*)⁷ He included in it, and into the secret of its symbols (*rumūz*) in the hidden things He has shown to their innermost selves (*asrār*). They understand, because of what they have been accorded from the lights of the unseen, what has been concealed from others. Then they speak based on the ranks of their lights⁸ and capabilities, and the Real ﷻ inspires them by that [with] which He honors them. Through Him they speak of [the Book], tell of its subtleties, allude to it, and speak eloquently of it. The judgment goes back

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- 1 The word that al-Qushayrī uses most frequently to refer to God is “the Real” (*al-Ḥaqq*), which can also be translated as “the Truth.”
 - 2 The translation follows the word “help” (*naṣr*) from MSS K177, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a. The Basyūnī edition has the word “insight” (*baṣīra*).
 - 3 The translation follows MSS K177, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a. The Basyūnī edition has the word “criterion” (*furqān*).
 - 4 Al-Qushayrī uses the term *taʾwīl* throughout his commentary to refer to rational interpretation of the Qurʾān. His use of the term is sometimes descriptive, as it is here, but more frequently it has a negative connotation.
 - 5 “Abrogated” (*mansūkh*) has been added on the basis of MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a.
 - 6 In the Basyūnī edition there is a blank which has been completed with *istakhlāṣahum* from MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a.
 - 7 Al-Qushayrī distinguishes the “subtleties” (*laṭāʾif*) and “allusions” (*ishārāt*) of Sufi commentaries from commentaries based on rational interpretation (*taʾwīl*) or explanatory exegesis (*tafsīr*).
 - 8 “Their lights” (*anwārihim*) has been added from MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a.

to Him in all that they mention or pass over.

Imām Jamāl al-Islām Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī رحمته الله said: Our book includes some of the Qurʾānic allusions (*ishārāt*) ascribed to the people of deep knowledge (*ahl al-maʿrifa*), either from the meanings which they have mentioned or from their fundamental premises. We have been brief out of fear of wearying [the reader]. [We] seek the help of God most high with the benefits of grace, absolve ourselves from all power and strength, seek refuge from error and idle talk,⁹ ask [instead] for the most correct speech and action, and request blessings on our master Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, and humbly seek His aid¹⁰ so that He may complete for us the best outcome by His grace and favors. The undertaking of this book was made possible in the months of the year 437/1045–46,¹¹ and through God will be its completion, if God most high, may He be glorified and exalted, wills.



9 The translation follows the word “idle talk” (*khaṭal*) found in MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a. The Basyūnī edition has the word “defect” (*khalal*).

10 “Humbly seeking aid” (*mutaḍarrīʿin*) has been added here from MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a.

11 This is the date found in MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a. The Basyūnī edition has 434/1042–3.

سُورَةُ الْفَاتِحَةِ

Sūrat al-Fātiḥa

This *sūra* is called the opening (*fātiḥa*)¹ of the Book. In initiating the [divine] address and the Book to the lovers with [this *sūra*], there is the most sublime happiness and the noblest good because it is the cause of communion (*sabab al-wiṣāl*)² and lays the groundwork for the state (*taʿsīs al-ḥāl*).³ Regarding its meaning it is said:

I will ransom you even
with all the days of my life,
a ransom of days in which
I came to know you.⁴

And it is said:

May God bless my having become
acquainted with you.
Without that there would have been
no place for passion in my heart.⁵

The Messenger of God ﷺ⁶ was not expecting what occurred and nothing like it had crossed his mind. When Gabriel ﷺ appeared to him, he began to flee. His preference would have been to distance himself from this

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- 1 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a: *hādhihi al-sūra tusammī fātiḥat al-kitāb*.
 - 2 In the Basyūnī edition there is a blank that has been completed with the phrase *sabab al-wiṣāl* found in MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a.
 - 3 *Taʿsīs al-ḥāl* has been added from MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a.
 - 4 This verse, which is incomplete in the Basyūnī edition, could not be located in Muṣṭafāʾs *Takhrīj*. The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been completed with the words “in which I came to know you” (*ʿaraftuka fihā*) found in MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a.
 - 5 Muṣṭafāʾ states that this verse is attributed to Abū Tammām. He also traces it to Shibli in al-Sulamīʾs *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* (Muṣṭafāʾ, no. 11, p. 47).
 - 6 *Rasūl Allāh* has been added from MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a.

affair.⁷ He sought refuge at the house of Khadija,⁸ saying, “Cover me, cover me. Wrap me up, wrap me up.” He used to practice devotions at Hirāʾ and seclude himself there for days. The affair came on suddenly, an unexpected and surprising event, just as it is said:⁹

Her passion came to me
before I knew passion.

It found my heart empty
and took up residence.¹⁰

[The Prophet] ﷺ was content to have it said of him that he was an employee of Khadija’s, but the Real ﷻ insisted that he be the chief of those who come first and last, for He said, *Yā Sīn. By the Qurʾān full of wisdom* [36:1]. Its meaning is *Yā sayyid*.¹¹ [God] raised him to the most honored of ranks, even if he did not aspire to it with the slightest hope. The way (*sunna*) of God most high is to place His secrets only with one whose worthiness has been falsely underestimated. This is why they were astonished about [Muḥammad’s] situation. They said, “How can He prefer the orphan of Abū Ṭālib among created beings?” But truly [Muḥammad] ﷺ had already been chosen by Him ﷻ in preference to all others of his kind.¹²

This one, even if
he were to appear in rags¹³
and was in want
of riches,
is the one
I prefer to praise
over my brother,
my neighbor,

7 The affair of receiving revelation from the angel Gabriel.

8 The Prophet’s wife.

9 There are several blanks and minor discrepancies between the Basyūnī text and the two manuscripts consulted here. The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2a for this paragraph.

10 Muṣṭafā states that this verse is attributed to the *Dīwān* of Majnūn Laylā (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 111).

11 The letters *yā sīn* are sometimes said to be abbreviations for “O *sayyid*,” a way of addressing the Prophet Muḥammad that acknowledges his pre-eminent rank and qualities.

12 The translation for this entire paragraph follows the text in MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2b.

13 Basyūnī has a blank between *hadhā* and *aṭmār*, which has been filled in here from MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2b: *hadhā wa-in aṣbaḥa fī aṭmār*.

and the possessor of dirhams
and dinars,
and the one with
much authority.¹⁴

Before his prophecy [Muḥammad] ﷺ was considered by the people to have a praiseworthy character, a beautiful and commendable reputation, and he was considered trustworthy (*amīn*) by everyone. They used to call him Muḥammad al-Amīn. But when these circumstances [of revelation] occurred, they changed his name, distorted how he was described, and disparaged his reputation. One person would say he was a magician, another would say a soothsayer, another would say a liar, and another a poet:¹⁵

They spread in the clan
the ugliest story for us.
They had been peace for us
but they became for us war.¹⁶

Talk of love,¹⁷ then, is never spared from censure. Yet as it is said:

I find blame in passion
for you sweet.
Out of love of hearing you mentioned,
let them blame me.¹⁸

What harm was there to him from their ugly speech, when the Real ﷻ has said, *And verily We know that your breast is [at times] oppressed by what they say. So glorify the praise of your Lord [15:97–8].* That is to say, “Listen

14 Muṣṭafā notes the differences between these lines and the lines quoted in *Tazyīn al-aswāq* and another collection of poetry. He does not give the name of the poet but explains the story behind the verses. The story relates to a young man who came before the Caliph Mu‘āwīya and told him that his wife was taken from him by her father and given to a much richer man who worked as an administrator for the caliph. Upon hearing the story, Mu‘āwīya ordered his administrator to divorce the woman. He then asked her to choose which man she wanted for her husband. She chose the much poorer man and recited these verses. (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 58).

15 The translation for this paragraph again follows MSS K117, fol. 1a and Y101, fol. 2b.

16 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to trace these verses to any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p. 27).

17 The translation follows the phrase *ḥadīth al-maḥabba* from MSS K117, fol. 1b and Y101, fol. 2b instead of the phrase *ṣifat al-muḥibb* found in the Basyūnī edition.

18 Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to Abū l-Shiṣ, and gives numerous books in which it is cited. He also attributes it to ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh al-Ja‘farī b. Abī Ṭālib (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 103). Al-Qushayrī cites the verse again in his commentary on Qur‘ān 3:37.

to what is said about you [and respond] with beautiful praise for Us.”

This *sūra* is also called the mother (*umm*) of the Book. The mother of something is its source, and the leader (*imām*)¹⁹ of anything is the one who is given precedence (*muqaddam*). Because this *sūra* includes something on the matter of servanthood (*ʿubūdiyya*) [as well as] praise of God in the beauty of His Lordship (*rubūbiyya*), its perfection is from the excellent qualities without which obligations are not sound. [The Prophet] ﷺ related from [God] ﷻ, “I have divided the prayer in halves between Me and My servant,”²⁰ and this refers to the recitation of this *sūra*. So it became the mother of the Book and a source for the subtleties of special gifts (*laṭāʾif al-karāmāt*), the wonders of being drawn near, and [the] obligation [of being a servant].

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1:1] *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

The *bā* in *bismillāh* [“in the name of God”] is a grammatical particle of implication.²¹ That is to say “by means of God” (*bi-Llāh*), new things become manifest and by means of Him created things exist. There is nothing from any newly created thing (*ḥādīth makhluq*) or sequence of events (*ḥāsil mansūq*); or from any perceived thing (*ʿayn*) or trace left by a thing (*athar*), etc.; or anything else from rocks or clay, grass or trees,²² any impression left on the ground (*rasm*) or ruins left standing (*ṭalal*),²³ or any determination (*ḥukm*) or causes (*ʿilal*) [of things or events], that has existence (*wujūd*) except by means of the Real. The Real is its sovereign. Its beginning is from the Real and its return is to the Real. Through Him the one who declares the unity [of God] finds (*bihi wajada man waḥḥada*) and through Him the rejecter abandons faith (*wa-bihi jahada man alḥada*).

19 The words *umm* and *imām* come from the same root: *a-m-m*.

20 In his reprinting of the Basyūnī edition of al-Qushayrī’s *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Raḥmān provides additional information on most of the *ḥādīths* al-Qushayrī cites. He notes that this *ḥādīth* can be found in al-Tirmidhī and others (see ʿAbd al-Raḥmān’s edition for the full details).

21 That is, the particle indicates an implied meaning, which al-Qushayrī explains in what follows.

22 Qurʾān 55:6 uses these two words, saying *and the grass and trees prostrate*.

23 For the use of classical Arabic *nasīb* terms such as *rasm* and *ṭalal* by al-Qushayrī and other Sufis, see Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 56–74 and 338n43. Note the mixing of terms from different types of discourse (that is, the Qurʾān, poetry, and theology) in this paragraph. Al-Qushayrī uses these types of discourse throughout his commentary, but does not usually combine them in a single sentence, as he does here.

Through Him the one who acknowledges comes to know (*bihi ʿarafa man iʿtarafa*), and through Him the one who commits [harmful acts] remains behind (*wa-bihi takhallafa man iqtarafa*).

He said, “*In the name of God*” rather than “In God.” According to some people, this is a way of seeking blessing through the mention of His name. According to others, it is because of the difference between this [wording] and oaths. According to scholars, it is because the name (*ism*) is the thing that is named (*musammā*). In the view of the people of deep knowledge (*ahl al-ʿirfān*), [the wording is such] in order to seek the purification of hearts from attachments (*li-istiṣfāʾ al-qulūb min al-ʿalāʾiq*) and the liberation of the innermost selves from obstacles (*li-istikhlāṣ al-asrār ʿan al-ʿawāʾiq*) so that the word “God” may enter into a clean heart (*qalb munaqqā*) and purified innermost self (*sirr muṣaffa*).

Upon the mention of this verse, some people are reminded by the [letter] *bāʾ* of His beneficence (*birr*) with His friends, and by the [letter] *sīn* of His secret (*sirr*) with his chosen ones, and by the [letter] *mīm* of His grace (*minna*) to the people of [His] friendship (*ahl al-walāya*). They know that by His beneficence, they come to know His secret, and by His grace to them they preserve His command, and by Him ﷻ they recognize His measure.²⁴

Other people, upon hearing “In the name of God,” are reminded by the [letter] *bāʾ* of the immunity (*barāʾa*) of God ﷻ from every evil, and by the [letter] *sīn* of His soundness (*salāma*) from any defect, and by the [letter] *mīm* of His magnificence (*majd*) in the exaltedness of His description.

Others are reminded by the [letter] *bāʾ* of His splendor (*baḥāʾ*), and by the [letter] *sīn* of His radiance (*sanāʾ*), and by the [letter] *mīm* of His dominion (*mulk*).

Because God ﷻ has repeated the verse *In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful* in every *sūra* and it has been established that it is part of them, we intend to mention new and non-repetitive remarks concerning the allusions of this phrase in [the commentary for] each *sūra*. Because of this we will not²⁵ examine the words exhaustively here. Through Him there is confidence.

24 Unlike those who *measured not God with His true measure* (Qurʾān 6:91, 22:74, 39:67).

25 The negative particle *lām* is missing in the Basyūnī edition but has been added on the basis of MSS K117, fol. 1b and Y101, fol. 3a.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١﴾

[1:2] *Praise be to God*

The real meaning of **praise** (*ḥamd*) is extolling the One who is praiseworthy (*maḥmūd*) by mentioning His sublime attributes and beautiful acts. The [letter] *lām* here [from the particle *al* in *al-ḥamdu li-Llāh*] indicates an all-comprehensive category,²⁶ since all praiseworthy acts are God's سُبْحَانَهُ, either by attribution (*wasf*) or creation (*khalq*). Praise belongs to Him because of the manifestation of His sovereign power, and gratitude belongs to Him because of the abundance of His goodness.²⁷ Praise belongs to God because of what He is due from His sublimity and His beauty, and gratitude belongs to God because of the plentitude of His favors and the preciousness of His gifts. The praise for Him سُبْحَانَهُ which is from Him is from the attributes of His speech and word,²⁸ and the praise of Him which is from His creation is by virtue of His favors and His might. His sublimity and His beauty are His due because of the attributes of grandeur. They are His entitlement because of [His] qualities of exaltedness and loftiness. Eternal existence belongs to Him. Noble generosity belongs to Him.²⁹ Unique permanence belongs to Him, as do everlasting being, eternal remaining, endless splendor, and perpetual praise.³⁰ Hearing and seeing belong to Him, as do divine decree and measure, speech, might and power, mercy and generosity, entity (*ʿayn*) and existence (*wujūd*), the beautiful face (*al-wajhu dhū l-jamāl*) and the sublime measure (*al-qadru dhū l-jalāl*).³¹ He is the One, most high. His grandeur is His garment, His loftiness is His brilliance, His magnificence is His exaltedness, His being is His essence, His eternity without beginning is His everlasting eternity, His timelessness is His endless eternity, His truth is His self,³² and His permanence is His entity. His perpetuity is His remaining,

26 The particle *al* corresponds to the definite article “the” in English.

27 Throughout this passage, al-Qushayrī uses rhyming patterns to great rhetorical effect, as in these two sentences: *lahu al-ḥamdu li-zuhūri sultānihi wa-lahu al-shukru li-wufūri ihsānihi*.

28 The translation follows the words *kalām* and *qawl* found in MSS K117, fol. 1b and Y101, fol. 3a. The Basyūnī edition has the words “perfection” (*kamāl*) and “power” (*ḥawl*).

29 Al-Qushayrī presents the attributes of God in rhyming pairs, as in these two sentences: *lahu al-wujūdu al-qadīm wa-lahu al-jūdu al-karīm*.

30 MSS K117, fol. 1b and Y101, fol. 3a include additional divine attributes here: “everlasting loftiness, knowledge, will, judgment, sovereignty, power, life, names, and attributes.”

31 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 1b and Y101, fol. 3a, from “entity” (*ʿayn*) to the end of the sentence, since this version more faithfully reflects al-Qushayrī’s rhyming patterns.

32 The translation follows the word “self” (*nafs*) found in MSS K117, fol. 1b and Y101, fol. 3a. The Basyūnī edition has the word “certainty” (*yaqīn*).

His decree is His measure, His sublimity is His beauty, His prohibition is His command, His wrath is His mercy, and His desire is His will. He is the King by His invincibility (*jabarūt*) and the One in His dominion (*malakūt*). God the blessed and glorified! Glory be to Him, how weighty is His affair!

The Real ﷻ knows the intensity of the spiritual desire (*irāda*) of His friends to praise and extol Him and their inability to perform the praise due to Him in accordance with His exaltedness and radiance. Therefore He informed them that He has praised Himself in the opening of His address in His words, *Praise be to God*, and they are revived after being lowly and experience life after being dead, and their innermost selves take on the perfection of strength [through God]. For they have heard the praise of the Real about the Real in the speech of the Real. They explain the symbol as a matter of finding resemblances and say:

A moon is attributable to her face
because of her face [itself].

Kohl is attributable to her eyes
because of her eyes [themselves].³³

When the Prophet, the speaker to the first and the last, the master of those who use language skillfully, and the leader of those who are eloquent, heard [God's] praise of Himself and His laudation of His Truth, he knew that what is most appropriate in this situation is to hold one's tongue. So he said, "There is no way to enumerate the praise due to You, You are as You have praised Yourself."³⁴

If her words
had reached David's ears,
he would not have sung
his melodies.³⁵
Su'ād sang
with her voice and
the melodies of David
became mute in embarrassment.³⁶

33 Muṣṭafā attributes these lines to the poet al-Rashīd (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 92).

34 ʿAbd al-Rahmān gives Ibn Ḥanbal and others as a source for this *ḥadīth*.

35 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to trace this verse to any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 12, p. 47).

36 These lines could not be located in Muṣṭafā. The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 2a and Y101, fol. 3b with the word "became mute" (*takhārasat*) over Basyūnī's "were left helpless" (*takhādharat*).

The classes of those who give praise are different because of the disparity in their states. One group praises Him based on what they have obtained of the favors and kindnesses He grants through His helping and defending, removing and granting. What they understand concerning His goodness to them is no more than what they acknowledge of His favors to them. [God] (may His mention be exalted) said: *And if you were to count God's grace, you could never reckon it* [14:34 and 16:18]. Another group praises Him based on what He has made to appear³⁷ to their hearts (*qulūb*) from the wonders of His kindnesses, and the hidden things His beneficence has placed in the inner secrets of their hearts (*sarāʿir*), and what He has unveiled to their innermost selves (*asrār*) from the secret of His unseen, and what He has singled out for their spirits (*arwāḥ*) from the unexpected intuitions of His glories. Other people praise Him upon witnessing what is unveiled to them through Him regarding the attributes of eternity. After observing [His] exaltedness and nobleness, they no longer pay any attention to allotments or favors. There is a difference between those who praise Him for His exalted sublimity and those who give thanks to Him for the existence of His gifts, just as the one who spoke for them said:

It was not poverty that drove us away
from the land of kinsfolk.

We were just happy
to come to see you.³⁸

Other people praise Him, annihilated in the expressions of praise that have caused them to speak. They speak through the realities of declaring His unity, realities that have eradicated their innermost selves. They speak of Him through Him and allude to Him through Him. The decrees flow over them,³⁹ turning them this way and that. Their outward condition is protected by the attribute of separation, while their innermost selves are seized by the force of the gathering of the gathering (*jamʿ al-jamʿ*).⁴⁰ As they say,

37 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 2a and Y101, fol. 3b with the verb *alāḥa* rather than Basyūnī's *lāḥa*.

38 Muṣṭafā says the verse is mentioned in *Risālat Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī* and attributed there to Abū Naṣr al-Mikālī. He also provides two other versions from other sources (Muṣṭafā, no. 7, p. 44).

39 The translation follows the conjugation of the verb *tajrī* from MS K117, fol. 2a rather than *yujrī* as found in the Basyūnī edition.

40 Al-Qushayrī discusses the term “gathering” (*jamʿ*) in relation to “separation” (*farq*) in the sections on “Gathering and separation” (al-Jamʿ wa-l-farq) and “The gathering of the gathering” (al-Jamʿ wa-l-jamʿ), *Risāla*, 1:207–210.

The explanation of the explanation of the Real,
You are its explanation

Every meaning of the unseen,
You are its mouthpiece.⁴¹

[1:2] *Lord of all worlds*

The *Lord* (*rabb*) is the *Sayyid*⁴² and the *worlds* are all created things. What is being specified in the plural term “worlds” includes rational beings and inanimate things since He is the Master (*mālik*) of [all] perceived things (*ʿyān*).⁴³ He forms them and brings into existence the outward markings and dwellings that characterize them.

His name *Lord* (*rabb*) also indicates the cultivation (*tarbiya*) of created beings, since he is the caretaker (*murabbī*) of the souls of the worshipers (*nufūs al-ʿābidīn*) through the giving of support (*taʿyīd*), the caretaker of the hearts of seekers (*qulūb al-ṭālibīn*) by giving direction (*tasdīd*), and the caretaker of the spirits of those with deeper knowledge (*arwāḥ al-ʿārīfīn*) by the affirmation of unity (*tawḥīd*). He is the caretaker of the bodily forms (*ashbāḥ*) by the finding (*wujūd*) of blessings, and the caretaker of the spirits (*arwāḥ*) by the witnessing (*shuhūd*) of generosity.

The name *Lord* (*rabb*) also indicates His improvement (*iṣlāḥ*) of the affairs of His servants. It is said, “I tanned or seasoned (*rabaytu*) the hide.”⁴⁴ So He is the one who seasons the affairs of the ascetics (*umūr al-zāhidīn*) in the beauty of his care (*riʿāya*), and He is the one who seasons the affairs of the worshipers (*umūr al-ʿābidīn*) in the goodness of His sufficiency (*kifāya*), and He is the one who seasons the affairs of the ecstatics (*umūr al-wājidīn*) in His eternal solicitude (*ināya*). He improves the affairs of some and they are enriched by His gifts. He improves the affairs of others and they long to meet Him. He improves a third group and they are rightly directed toward meeting Him. The one who spoke for them said:

As long as the stars of your glory
are fortunate

41 Muṣṭafā notes a similar but more succinct version of this verse in the *Dīwān* of al-Ḥallāj (Muṣṭafā, no. 29, p. 118).

42 The word *sayyid* means one whose rank, authority, and qualities are far above others.

43 MSS K117, fol. 2a and Y101, fol. 3a have the word “everything other than Him” (*aghḡyār*) here rather than *ʿyān*.

44 The translation follows the word *al-adīm* in MS K117, fol. 2b and Y101, fol. 3b rather than *al-adīm* in the Basyānī edition.

I do not care whether
people live or perish.⁴⁵

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

[1:3] *The Compassionate, the Merciful*

Both names are derived from [the word] mercy (*raḥma*). Mercy is an eternal attribute and it is the [divine] desire for blessing (*irādat al-nīʿma*). According to the [scholarly] experts (*ahl al-taḥqīq*), these are two nouns denoting intensification with no distinction between the two [in terms of the recipients of the mercy].

[Others have] said *the Compassionate* (*al-raḥmān*) is the more emphatic and more complete in expressiveness. Nothing other than the Real سُبْحَانَهُ is called *raḥmān* without restriction, whereas *the Merciful* (*al-raḥīm*) can be used to describe others. By means of His mercy the servant comes to know that He is the Compassionate. If not for His mercy no one would know that He is the Compassionate. Whether mercy is the desire for blessing or the blessing itself, as some would have it, the blessings themselves are varied and their degrees are different, for one blessing is a blessing for bodily forms and outward circumstances (*al-ashbāḥ wa-l-zawāhir*) and the other blessing is a blessing for spirits and inner secrets of the heart (*al-arwāḥ wa-l-sarāʿir*).

In the system of those who distinguish between the two, *the compassionate* (*raḥmān*) is a specific term with a general meaning, while *the merciful* (*raḥīm*) is a general term with a specific meaning.⁴⁶ As the Compassionate He provides comfort for all people in the circumstances of their external lives (*zawāhir*), whereas the Merciful grants success to the believers for the life found in the inner secrets of their hearts (*sarāʿir*). He is the Compassionate by that which He gives in comfort (*rawwaḥa*) and the Merciful by that which He gives in glimmers (*lawwaḥa*).⁴⁷ Giving comfort (*tarwīḥ*) is through acts of beneficence (*mabārr*) and the giving of glimmers (*talwīḥ*) is through lights (*anwār*). [He is] the Compassionate

45 This verse could not be located in Muṣṭafā.

46 The view referred to here is that the word *raḥmān* refers only to God and His mercy to all beings, while *raḥīm* is an attribute that can also be used to describe human beings. When used in relation to God, it refers to His specific mercy to believers.

47 By the verb *lawwaḥa* here, al-Qushayrī is referring to the “glimmers” (*lawāʾiḥ*) he discusses in the section on “Glimmers, gleams of the rising, and flashes” (al-Lawāʾiḥ wa-l-ṭawālīʿ wa-l-lawāmiʿ); these are “rays from the suns of deeper forms of knowledge” (*Risāla*, 1:228–230).

through the unveiling of His manifestation (*tajallī*) and the Merciful through the kindness of His being a friend and protector (*tawallī*). [He is] the Compassionate through what He gives in faith (*īmān*) and the Merciful through what He confers in deep knowledge (*ʿirfān*). Or [He is] the Compassionate through what He grants in deeper knowledge (*ʿirfān*) and the Merciful through what He undertakes in forgiveness (*ghufrān*). Or [He is] the Compassionate through what He gives in blessing in forgiveness (*ghufrān*) and the Merciful through what He bestows in good pleasure (*riḍwān*). Or [He is] the Compassionate through what He honors in good pleasure (*riḍwān*)⁴⁸ and the Merciful through what He gives in blessing in vision and eyewitnessing (*ʿiyān*). Or [He is] the Compassionate through the success He gives and the Merciful through what has been realized. Granting success (*tawfiq*) is for transactions and behaviors (*muʿāmalāt*) while realization (*tahqīq*) is for intimate communications (*muwāṣalāt*). The transactions and behaviors are for those who seek (*qāṣidūn*) and the intimate communications are for those who find (*wājidūn*). [He is] the Compassionate through what He bestows as a favor for them and the Merciful through what He deflects from them, for the bestowal of favors (*ṣarf*) is beautiful caretaking (*riʿāya*) while defending (*dafʿ*) is the best solicitude (*ʿināya*).

﴿﴾ مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

[1:4] *Master of the Day of Judgment*

The **master** (*mālik*) is the one who has sovereignty (*mulk*). The sovereignty of the Real ﴿﴾ is His power over creating (*ibdāʿ*). King (*malik*) is a more intensive form than master (*mālik*)⁴⁹—He سُبْحَانَهُ is both King and Master and sovereignty is His. Just as there is no god but He, there is none with the power to create except Him. He is alone in His divinity and singular in His sovereignty. He rules the souls of His worshipers (*nufūs al-ʿābidīn*) for He has granted agency to them (*ṣarrafahā*) in His service. He rules the hearts of those with deeper knowledge (*qulūb al-ʿarifīn*) for He honors them (*sharrafahā*) with knowledge of Him. He rules the souls of the seekers (*nufūs al-qāṣidīn*) for He holds them in his thrall (*tayyamahā*). He rules the hearts of the ecstatics (*qulūb al-wājidīn*) for He bewilders them (*hayyamahā*). He rules the bodily forms (*ashbāḥ*) of those who worship Him and He is kind to them with his gifts and favors. He rules the spirits

48 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 2b and Y101, fol. 4a: *bal al-rahmān bi-mā yukrimu min al-riḍwān*.

49 The word in this Qurʾānic verse is read either as *mālik* or *malik*.

(*arwāḥ*) of those whom He loves⁵⁰ and He unveils the attribute of His majesty to them and the quality of His beauty. He holds the reins of the masters who profess [His] unity: He turns them about wherever He wills as He wills and He grants them success wherever He wills as He wills. He does not entrust them to themselves for even a moment. He does not transfer power to them in their affair for even the shortest period of time. He is for them in place of themselves and He has annihilated them from themselves to Him.

His beneficence rules the hearts of the worshipers and they desire His gifts. His authority rules the hearts of those who declare unity and they are content with His abiding. He teaches the masters who profess [His] unity that He is their Master (*mālik*) and their own choosing (*ikhtiyār*) drops away from them. They come to know that the servant has no ownership. The one who has no ownership has no power of decision (*ḥukm*) and the one who has no power of decision has no free choice. For them there is no turning away (*īrād*) from obedience to Him, no resistance (*ītirād*) to His decision, no working against (*muʿāraḍa*) His choosing, and no move to (*taʿarruḍ*)⁵¹ oppose Him.

The Day of Judgment is the day of recompense and resurrection, the day of reckoning and gathering. The Real ﷻ repays each as He wishes, and on the day of reckoning there are those who are accepted by His favor and not for their acts, and those who are rejected by His decision and not for their sins.⁵² For the enemies, He settles the accounts and then punishes them. For the friends, He chides them in a mild way and then draws them close:

A people who,
when they vanquished us,
were generous
in letting us go.⁵³

50 Basyūni has a footnote saying there was something obscure after this, which may have been *and they love Him*, a reference to Qurʾān 5:54. MSS K117, fol. 2b and Y101, fol. 4a end with “whom He loves.”

51 In this sentence al-Qushayrī is playing with different verbal nouns that derive from the same root *ʿa-r-d*.

52 This is the first of many passages in al-Qushayrī’s commentary that reflect his Ashʿarī views on predetermination.

53 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to trace these lines to another source (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 111).

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥٧﴾

[1:5] You [alone] we worship, and You [alone] we ask for help

Its meaning is “we worship You and we ask for help through You,” but beginning with the mention of the object of worship is better than beginning with the mention of the servant’s attribute,⁵⁴ which is his worship and seeking help.⁵⁵ This is a more eloquent wording and more pleasing to the ears. Worship is bringing the utmost humility in harmony (*muwāfaqa*) with the command, standing wherever the law stands, and asking for help in seeking the assistance of the Real.

Worship (*ibāda*) refers to the exertion of effort and strength, while asking for help (*istiāna*) indicates the search to attract power and grace. So in worship the honor of the servant becomes manifest and in asking for help kindness comes to the servant. In worship he finds his honor and in asking for help he is granted security from harm. The outward aspect of worship is humbling oneself (*tadhallul*) but its inward truth is becoming powerful (*ta‘azzuz*) and beautiful (*tajammul*):

When necks are brought low (*dhallalat*)
in being brought near,
between us, their glory (*‘izz*)
is in their humility (*dhull*).⁵⁶

Its meaning is:

As soon as you caused me
to submit to *dhāl* and *lām*,⁵⁷
you met me
in *‘ayn* and *zā*.⁵⁸

Worship is the promenade of the seekers (*qāsidūn*), the recreation of the aspirants (*murīdūn*), the meadow of intimacy for the lovers (*muḥibbūn*), and the pasture of delight for those with deeper knowledge (*‘ārifūn*). Their eyes are cooled by [worship], their hearts find joy in it, and their spirits

54 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 2b and Y101, fol. 4b: *ṣifat al-‘abd*.

55 Al-Qushayrī is commenting on the fact that the pronoun “You” is placed before the verb, *iyyāka na‘budu wa-iyyāka nasta‘in* rather than *na‘buduka wa-nasta‘inuka*.

56 Muṣṭafā attributes these lines to Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābi (Muṣṭafā, no. 34, p. 99).

57 The letters in the word *dhull*.

58 The letters in the word *‘izz*. Muṣṭafā provides what he refers to as the correct version of this verse from al-Qushayrī’s *Sharḥ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā* (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 122).

have rest from it. [The Prophet] ﷺ alluded to this in saying, “Give us rest, O Bilāl.”⁵⁹ One created being said about another created being:

O people, my blood revenge
belongs to my Asmāʾ.

Anyone near and far
knows it.⁶⁰

Do not call upon me
except by “O servant of her”

For that is the most truthful
of my names.⁶¹

To ask for help is to alight in the environs of His generosity, to put your burden down in the courtyard of His munificence, and to submit your burden to the hand of His rule.⁶² So you seek Him full of hope, take long strides toward Him, hope in Him with powerful anticipation, have faith in His eternal generosity, trust in what has already been chosen (*ikhṭiyār sābiq*), and cling to the strong rope of His liberality.

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾

[1:6] *Guide us to the straight path*

Guidance (*hidāya*) is direction (*irshād*), and its basic meaning is to influence someone’s inclinations. The one who is guided is one who is aware of the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* and prefers His good pleasure and has faith in Him. The command in this verse is elided, for the meaning is “Say: Guide us.” The believers are already being rightly guided in the present moment, so the meaning is to petition for ongoing and ever increasing [guidance]. The *straight path* is the true path upon which are the people who declare God’s oneness.

59 Bilāl was appointed the caller to prayer (*muʾadhdhin*) by the Prophet Muḥammad. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān mentions the Qurʾān commentaries of al-Ṭabarānī and Ibn Kathīr among other sources for this *ḥadīth*.

60 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 3a and Y101, fol. 4b: *yaʿrifuhu al-ḥāḍir wa-l-nāʾī*.

61 Muṣṭafā states that these verses are mentioned in al-Qushayrī’s *Kitāb al-mirāj* without attribution. Slightly different versions appear in two other works cited by Muṣṭafā, attributed to Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Maghribī l-Zāhid in one (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 22). Similar lines can be found in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, only there the woman’s name is Zahrāʾ (*Risāla*, 2:431).

62 The translation in this sentence follows the text found in MSS K117, fol. 3a and Y101, fol. 4b, which better reflects al-Qushayrī’s style and use of metaphor.

The meaning of *guide us* is “cause us to incline to You,” “take us as Yours,” “be our guide (*dalīl*) to You,”⁶³ “facilitate our way to You,” “arouse our aspiration for You,”⁶⁴ and “bring our concerns together through You.”

“Prevent our innermost selves from witnessing all others (*aghyār*). Show in our hearts the rising of lights (*anwār*). Keep our seeking of You from the blemish of traces or effects (*āthār*).⁶⁵ And cause us to rise from the waystations of studying and reasoning to gather (*jamʿ*) [together] on the plains of nearness and communion.”

“Take away our comfort with simulacra (*amthāl*) and outward appearances (*ashkāl*) through the intimate kindnesses and secrets you share with us [as we] find communion and witness the sublime and beautiful.”

“Direct us to the Real so that we will not put our trust in the intermediaries of [our] deeds, and so that the dust of vain opinions and suppositions will not fall upon the intent to profess divine unity.”

Guide us to the straight path, that is, “Remove from us the darkness of our states so that we may be illuminated by the lights of Your holiness from the shadows of our own seeking. And lift from us the shadow of our effort so that we may gain insight by the stars of Your liberality and find You through You.”

“*Guide us to the straight path* so that no associate from Satan’s insinuations and whisperings, and no friend from the inclinations and murmurings of the lower selves become our companions. Let not any stay in the familiar territories of blind following (*taqlīd*) keep us from the communion [of lovers]. Do not let reliance on routine instruction come between us and insight. Do not let any harm from drunkenness or indulgence seduce us, nor any conjecture or habit, laziness or weak desire, or coveting of wealth or increase.”

The straight path is that to which the Book and the *sunna* are a guide (*dalīl*), and there is no authority for innovation concerning it and no other way (*sabīl*) to it. *The straight path* possesses a soundness to which the guideposts of divine unity (*dalāʾil al-tawhīd*) bear witness and the testimonies of realization (*shawāhid al-taḥqīq*) pay heed. *The straight path* is that upon which the pious forefathers (*salaf*) of the community tread and of its rightness the guideposts of admonition speak. *The straight path* is that which separates the traveler (*sālik*) from his worldly fortunes and concerns

63 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 3a and Y101, fol. 4b in ‘*alayka* over ‘*alaynā* as found in the Basyūnī edition.

64 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 3a and Y101, fol. 4b in *laka* over *lanā* as found in the Basyūnī edition.

65 In other words, “keep us from looking to the traces or effects (*āthār*) of divine action in the world rather than to the Originator of these actions, the Real ﴿﴾.”

(ḥuḏūz) and the seeker (*qāṣid*) from his rights (*ḥuqūq*). *The straight path* is that which brings its traveler to the courtyard of unity. It calls its follower to witness the trace and effect of solicitude and liberality (*jūd*) so that he will not think it the result of [his own] endeavor (*majhūd*).

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

[1:7] *the path of those whom You have favored*

It means “the way (*ṭarīq*) of those whom You have favored with guidance to the straight path”—these are the friends (*awliyā*) and chosen ones (*aṣfiyā*). It is said that it is “the way of those whom You have annihilated from themselves and raised up through You for You. They do not stop along the way and the secrets of the divine ruse (*makr*) do not keep them from You.” It is said that it is “the path of those whom You have favored with upholding Your rights (*ḥuqūq*) without detours seeking to attract their worldly portions (*ḥuḏūz*).”

It is said that it is “the path of those whom You have purified from their [human] traces (*āthār*) so that they reach You through You.”

It is said that it is “the path of those whom You have favored to the point that they are wary of⁶⁶ the tricks of Satan, the errors of the lower selves, and the imaginings of opinions and conjectures about arriving before the mortal human traces (*āthār al-bashariyya*) are extinguished.”

It is said that it is “the path of those whom You have favored with reflective thought (*naẓar*), [those who] seek help through You, declare themselves free of power and strength, witness the felicity that has already been determined for them, and have knowledge through the affirmation of Your unity of that which will come to pass, [thus] causing happiness and harm.”

It is said that it is “the path of those whom You have favored with being mindful of refined behavior (*adab*)⁶⁷ at the times of service,⁶⁸ and [with] being filled with the quality of awe (*hayba*).”⁶⁹

It is said that it is “the path of those whom You have favored by causing them to be mindful of the refined behaviors (*ādāb*) and precepts (*aḥkām*)

66 The translation follows the word *taḥarrasū* found in MSS K117, fol. 3b and Y101, fol. 5a rather than the word *taḥarrarū* found in the Basyūnī edition.

67 The term “refined behavior” is discussed in the “Section on refined behavior” (Bāb al-adab) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 2:558–564.

68 That is, at the times of obligations such as prayer or fasting.

69 The term “awe” is discussed in “Awe and intimacy” (al-Hayba wa-l-uns) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 1:199–200.

of the law, [even while they are] under the sway of the unexpected intuitions of realities (*bawāḍih al-ḥaqāʾiq*),⁷⁰ so that they do not go beyond the limit of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and do not violate any of the precepts of the law (*sharīʿa*).”

It is said that it is “the path of those whom You have favored so that the suns of what they have come to know will not extinguish the lights of their scrupulousness (*waraʿ*)⁷¹ and they will not neglect any one of the precepts of servanthood (*ʿubūdiyya*)⁷² at the time of the manifestation of the authority of reality (*sulṭān al-ḥaqīqa*).”⁷³

غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧﴾

[1:7] *not [the path] of those against whom there is wrath, nor of those who are astray*

Those against whom there is wrath are those hit by the blows of abandonment (*hawājim al-khidhlān*) and overtaken by the afflictions of deprivation (*maṣāʾib al-ḥirmān*). They suffer the punishment of rejection (*saṭwat al-radd*) and are overwhelmed by the unexpected raids of repulsion (*bawāḍih al-ṣadd*) and banishment.

It is said that they are those afflicted by the ignominy of abasement (*hawān*) and the calamity of loss (*khusrān*) [because they] have occupied themselves in the present moment in seeking worldly things. In truth it is a deception (*makr*)⁷⁴ for they suppose that they are [standing] on something [58:18],⁷⁵ but the Real has a secret regarding their misery.

It is said that they are those who, for a time, were delighted by the fragrances of drawing near, but then the Real مَسْكَنَةٌ exposed the remoteness

70 Al-Qushayrī uses the term *bawāḍih* in both positive and negative ways. In this paragraph, the word is used to describe unexpected intuitions of realities. Three paragraphs later he uses it to describe unexpected unpleasant events. See the section “Unexpected raids and onslaughts” (al-Bawāḍih wa-l-hujūm), *Risāla*, 1:231.

71 See the “Section on scrupulousness” (Bāb al-waraʿ) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 1:284–291.

72 See the “Section on servanthood” (ʿUbūdiyya) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 2:428–432.

73 The translation of the last part of this sentence follows MS Y101, fol. 5a, which is the same as MS K117, fol. 3b except for the word “precepts.” Al-Qushayrī uses the phrase “authority of reality” (*sulṭān al-ḥaqīqa*) to distinguish ephemeral power from true and lasting power. The use of the word *sulṭān*, with its connotations of absolute political power, emphasizes the fact that worldly power and authority is only an illusion.

74 Basyūnī has “misery” (*shaqāʾ*), but in parentheses, so he seems to have been guessing. The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 3b and Y101, fol. 5b here with the word *makr*.

75 I am thankful to Joseph Lumbard for pointing out to me that the phrase al-Qushayrī uses here is quoted from Qurʾān 58:18.

of their situation.⁷⁶ In them, the communion [of lovers] was exchanged for distance. They craved nearness but did not find the object of their desires. Those are the ones whose striving was in vain and whose thinking went wrong.

It is said: *not [the path] of those against whom there is wrath* in [their] forgetting [His] granting of success and shutting their eyes to [His] support, *nor of those who have gone astray* from witnessing the [divine] choice already made (*sābiq al-ikhtiyār*) and the flow of changing events and decrees (*al-taṣārīf wa-l-aqdār*).

It is said: *not [the path] of those against whom there is wrath* in their neglecting the refined behaviors of service and their carelessness in performing the obligations of obedience.

It is said: *not [the path] of those against whom there is wrath* [refers to] those who have been cut off in the deserts of absence. Anxieties have scattered them in the torrents of ways of conjecture.

The servant says “Amen” (*āmīn*) when reciting this *sūra* and this is recommended practice (*sunna*). Its meaning is “O Lord, I act. Do You respond.” It is as if, in saying this, one calls out for God to grant success for [their] actions (*al-tawfiq li-l-ʿamāl*) and the realization of [their] hopes (*al-tahqīq li-l-āmāl*). His feet are planted on the plains of need. He whispers to the presence of munificence with the tongue of supplication and implores the presence of generosity by absolving himself of power, energy, strength, and ability. And indeed the most powerful instrument for the one in need is to hang on, seeking assistance without stopping, so that he will be proven true through the sincerity of his crying for help.



⁷⁶ The translation follows the word *naʿy* found in MS K117, fol. 3b rather than the word *bāb* in Basyūnī's edition.

سُورَةُ الْبَقَرَةِ

Sūrat al-Baqara

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

The word *ism* (“name”) is derived from *sumūw* (“loftiness”) and *sima* (“sign or characteristic”). The way of one who practices remembrance of this name can be characterized (*yattasimu*)¹ outwardly by different types of intense efforts (*mujāhadāt*) and can be elevated (*yasmū*)² [inwardly] through aspiration to the places of witnessings (*mushāhadāt*). As for those who are not characterized by [these] modes of behavior (*mu‘āmalāt*) outwardly, and [those who] have lost the loftiness of aspiration for intimate communications (*muwāṣalāt*) in the inner secrets of their hearts—one will not find the subtleties of remembrance in their speaking (*qāla*) or the generous gifts of nearness in the most felicitous state (*ḥāla*).

The meaning of *Allāh* (“God”) is the One who possesses divinity (*ilāhiyya*) and divinity lays claim to the attributes of majesty (*jalāl*). The meaning of *bismillāh* (*In the name of God*) is “in the name of the One who is unique in strength and power.” *The Compassionate, the Merciful* is the One who is the only One to initiate grace and help. Hearing the divinity [in the phrase “*In the name of God*”] causes awe and eradication (*iṣṭilām*) while hearing “*the Compassionate*” causes nearness and reverence (*ikrām*). Everyone whom the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* treats with kindness upon hearing this verse is tossed between wakefulness (*ṣaḥw*) and effacement (*maḥw*), subsistence (*baqāʾ*) and annihilation (*fanāʾ*).³ When He unveils the attribute of divinity to such a one, He causes him to witness His majesty and his state is

1 A verb derived from the same root (*w-s-m*) as *sima*.

2 A verb derived from the same root (*s-m-w*) as *sumūw*.

3 These four terms are explained in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* in the sections on “Wakefulness and drunkenness” (al-Ṣaḥw wa-l-sukr), “Effacement and affirmation” (al-Maḥw wa-l-ithbāt), and “Annihilation and subsistence” (al-Fanāʾ wa-l-baqāʾ), *Risāla*, 1:217–219, 222–223, 211–213.

effacement. When He unveils the attribute of compassion to him, He causes him to witness His beauty and his state is wakefulness:

I disappear when I witness You,
then become alive again.

How often have I come to life before You
and how often have I passed away.⁴



[2:1] *Alif lām mīm*

According to some people, these isolated letters at the beginning of the *sūra* are among the ambiguous [verses], the interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of which is known only to God.⁵ They say every book has a mystery and the mystery of God in the Qurʾān is these isolated letters.

According to other people they are acronyms for His names: the *alif* is from the name “Allah,” the *lām* indicates His name *al-Laṭīf* (“the Subtle”), and the *mīm* indicates His names *al-Majīd* (“the Glorious”) and *al-Malik* (“the King”).

It is said that God made an oath by means of these letters, an honor they hold because they are the basic elements of His names and His speech.

It is said that they are the names of *sūras* [of the Qurʾān].

It is said that the *alif* indicates the name Allāh, the *lām* indicates the name Jibrīl (Gabriel), and the *mīm* indicates the name Muḥammad ﷺ, since this Book descended from God on the tongue of Gabriel to Muḥammad ﷺ.

Among the [Arabic] letters, *alif* is independent (*inʿaradāt*) in its form because it does not connect to other letters in writing; all but a few of the letters connect.⁶ By contemplating this quality, the servant becomes aware of the need of all creation for Him and His self-sufficiency from all.

It is said that the sincere servant remembers from the status of the *alif* the absolute freedom of the Real ﷻ from being particularized by place. All of the letters have a place in the throat, the lip, or the tongue, etc., for articulation, except *alif*. It is His “He-ness” (*huwīyya*),⁷ and is not ascribed

4 This verse was not located in Muṣṭafā.

5 A reference to Qurʾān 3:7.

6 In Arabic script, the *alif* is one of six letters (out of a total of twenty-eight) that do not connect to the letter after them in a word.

7 *Huwīyya*, from “he” (*huwa*) can also be translated as “essence” or “ipseity.”

to any place.

It is said that the allusion in [the *alif*] is to the servant's standing alone (*infirād*)⁸ for the sake of God ﷻ so that he would be like the *alif* which is not connected to any letter, and [he] would not abandon the state of standing straight and upright before Him.⁹

It is said that by His address *alif*, the servant is called in his innermost self to withdraw (*infirād*) [his] heart to God most high. At His address *lām*, he is asked to yield (*līn*) to Him in considering His due. On hearing the *mīm* he is asked to conform (*muwāfaqa*) to His command regarding that which has been entrusted to him.

It is said that each letter has a specific form and the *alif* is alone (*infaradat*) in its being a vertical line, set apart from connection with other letters like it, so He assigned the beginning of the Book for it. This is an allusion to the fact that anyone who has renounced [their] connection with simulacra (*amthāl*) and distractions (*ashghāl*) will attain the good fortune of sublime rank and will win the ultimate degree. He becomes worthy of speaking with the detached letters (*al-ḥurūf al-munfarida*) which are not combined, following the custom of lovers (*sunnat al-aḥbāb*) in veiling the state and hiding the affair of [their] story from strangers. Their poet said:

I said to her, “stop” (*qultu lahā qif*)
She said, “*qāf*.” (*qālat qāf*)¹⁰

She did not say, “I have stopped (*waqaftu*)” so that no onlooker would see, nor did she say, “I will not stop (*lā aqif*)” out of respect for the heart of the beloved, but rather she said [only] “*qāf*.”¹¹

It is said that there are many expressions (*ibārāt*) for ordinary people (*umūm*) and [many] symbols (*rumūz*) and allusions (*ishārāt*) for the elect (*khuṣūṣ*). He made Moses hear His words in a thousand (*alf*) places while He said to our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, “*Alif* . . .” and [Muḥammad] said, “I was given the all-comprehensive words (*jawāmiʿ al-kalim*) and then the

8 *Infirād* is the verbal noun of the verb *infarada*, the word al-Qushayrī uses several times in this section to describe the characteristics of the letter *alif*.

9 Literally, “between His Hands” (*bayna yadīhi*).

10 Muṣṭafā states that Abū Ishāq al-Zajjā recited this verse to show that Arabs used single letters to indicate words. In this case, the letter *qāf* indicates the words *lā aqif*, which means “I will not stop” (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 80). It could also be understood as indicating the perfect tense of the same verb, *waqaftu* (“I have stopped”). The second line of this verse appears in the Basyūnī text but not in MSS K117, fol. 4a and Y101, fol. 6a. It has been omitted since it is not related to the point al-Qushayrī is making.

11 In other words, she speaks in the “code” of lovers that allows for a hidden expression of intimacy.

speech (*kalām*) was shortened for me.”¹²

Someone said: My master said to me, “What afflicts you?” I said, “Do you dislike me?” He said, “*Lām alif*.”¹³

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ

[2:2] *That Book, in it there is no doubt*

It is said that *that Book* means “this Book.”¹⁴

It is said that [*that Book*] is an allusion to that which preceded its revelation in the [divine] speech.

It is said [that it means] “*that Book* whose revelation I promised to you on the Day of the Covenant.”

In it there is no doubt for this is the time of its revelation. It is said, “*that Book* within which I prescribed mercy on Myself for your community—there is no uncertainty [regarding that] for it has been verified by what I have said.”

It is said that “[*that Book* is] the Book that is My predetermination (*sābiq ḥukmī*) and My eternal decree (*qadīm qadāʾir*), because in it there is no doubt regarding those for whom I have ruled happiness or those whom I have sealed with wretchedness.”¹⁵

It is said that [it means], “My determination (*ḥukm*) is what I have said: without doubt My mercy precedes My wrath.”

It is said that [it is] an allusion to the faith, knowledge, love, and goodness that is written in the hearts of His friends. Surely the Book of the lovers is something cherished by the lovers, especially when deprived of meeting. In the Book of the lovers, [they find] their consolation and intimacy, their healing and refreshment. With respect to this, they recite:

Your writing is all around me,
it does not leave my bed.

12 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives Muslim and Ibn Ḥanbal among others as sources for this *ḥadīth*. Lane quotes authorities who understand the *ḥadīth* as meaning “I have had communicated to me the Qurʾān, in which many meanings are comprised in a few words” (E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* [Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1984] 1:458). Al-Qushayrī quotes the *ḥadīth* again in his commentary on Qurʾān 2:50.

13 *Lām alif* spells the word *lā* in Arabic, which means “no.”

14 The word “that” (*dhālika*) in this Qurʾānic verse is commonly interpreted to mean “this” (*hādha*).

15 For the concept of God’s “sealing,” see Qurʾān 2:7, 6:46, 42:24, and 45:23.

There is healing in it for that
which I conceal.¹⁶

They also recite:

The book brought
what is most cooling to our eyes,
a healing for hearts;
thereby the utmost limits of desires are granted.
People divided happiness
into portions
among themselves.
The most fortunate of them was I.¹⁷

هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢﴾

[2:2] *A guidance for the God-fearing*

That is, [it is] an explanation and proof, a light and a highway for those whom the Real ﴿﴾ has protected from the darknesses of ignorance, and given insight with the lights of the intellect, and selected for the realities of connecting (*waṣl*). For the friends (*awliyāʾ*) this Book is a healing (*shifāʾ*) and for the enemies (*aḍāʾ*) [it is] blindness and affliction (*balāʾ*). The one who is God-fearing (*muttaqin*) is one who fears (*ittaqa*) looking to his own fear of God (*taqwā*); he does not rely on it nor does he consider that he can be saved except through the grace of his Protector.

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ

[2:3] *Who believe in the unseen, and maintain the prayer*

The true meaning of belief (*īmān*) is affirmation (*taṣdīq*) and then actualization (*taḥqīq*), both of which are brought about by God's granting of

16 Muṣṭafā points out that this verse is also quoted without attribution in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 103). The additional line he cites does not appear in the *Risāla* (1:276).

17 Muṣṭafā traces a slightly different version of these verses to Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin (Muṣṭafā, no. 3, p. 111).

success (*tawfiq*). The affirmation is in the pledge (*ʿaqd*)¹⁸ and actualization is through the exertion of effort (*jahd*) in preserving the pact (*ʿahd*) and observing the limit (*ḥadd*). The believers are those who affirm (*ṣaddaḡū*) their commitment (*ʾitiḡād*) and then are sincere (*ṣadaḡū*)¹⁹ in their effort (*ijtihād*).

As for the unseen, what the servant knows of it is limited to what is necessary. The servant understands each religious matter by a kind of reasoning (*istidlāl*), a mode of mental examination (*fikr*) and calling forth of evidence (*istishhād*). So the belief is invisible (*ghaybī*) within it. The Lord ﷻ is unseen (*ghayb*) and what the Real speaks about with regard to the gathering and the resurrection, the reward and the place of return, and the reckoning and punishment, is unseen.

It is said that only someone who has the lamp of the unseen with him believes. Those who are supported by the demonstrative proof of intellects (*burhān al-ʿuḡūl*) believe through the corroboration of knowledge (*dalālat al-ʿilm*) and what points to certainty (*ishārat al-yaḡīn*). The veracity of reasoning (*ṣidḡu al-istidlāl*) brings them to the courtyards of seeking insight (*istibṣār*), and what is correct in the evidence they call forth (*istishhād*) carries them to the elevated observation points of stillness. Their faith in the unseen comes through the types of knowledge (*ʿulūm*) they possess, crowding out the causes of doubt. [Others] receive deeper instruction (*taʿrīf*) through curtains of lights He has lowered down over them. Through the glimmers of clear evidence (*bayān*), He has freed them from the need for any reflection (*fikr*) and vision (*ruʿya*), any seeking of pure intuitions (*khawāṭir zakiyya*) or rejection of ignoble urgings (*dawāʿin radiyya*).²⁰ The suns of their innermost selves rise and they no longer have any need for the lamps of their reasoning (*istidlāl*). Regarding this they have recited:

From your face my night has become
the sun of the bright morning.

The darkness in the air
is elsewhere.

People are in
the twilight of darkness.

18 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 4b and Y101, fol. 6b here with *ʿaqd*, rather than the word “intellect” (*ʿaql*) found in the Basyūni edition.

19 “Those who affirm” (*ṣaddaḡū*) and “those who are sincere” (*ṣadaḡū*) are both verbs derived from the root *ṣ-d-q*.

20 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 4b and Y101, fol. 6b.

While we, from your face,
are in the bright morning light.²¹

They also recite:

The sun of the one who loves you
has appeared at night.

[The night] is illuminated
since she²² does not set.

The sun of day
sets at night,

while the sun of hearts
never disappears.²³

Anyone who believes in the unseen through witnessing the unseen (*ghayb*) becomes absent (*ghāba*) in witnessing it. He becomes an absent one who is himself unseen (*fa-ṣāra ghayban yaghīb*).

As for maintaining prayer, it is maintaining its pillars and practices, and then absenting oneself (*ghayba*) from witnessing them, looking instead to the One to whom prayer is offered. Thus one will preserve the precepts of the command for Him in what is performed for Him from Him, effaced from regarding [the act of prayer]. Souls such as this face the *qibla* with their hearts immersed in the realities of the communion [of lovers]:

I see myself, when praying,
turning my face toward her
even though the direction of prayer
is the other way.

I pray but don't know whether
I have completed
the two [*rakats*] of the morning prayer
or eight.²⁴

21 The translation follows the version of these lines found in MSS K117, fol. 4b and Y101, fol. 6b: *layli min wajhiki shams al-ḍuḥā wa-innamā l-ḥulma fi l-jaww al-nās fi l-ṣadafa min laylihim wa-naḥnu min wajhiki fi l-ḍawʿ*. Muṣṭafā notes that al-Qushayrī cites this passage elsewhere in his *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* and his *Risāla* (Muṣṭafā, no. 6, p. 59). The version of the poem in the “Section on advice for aspirants” (Bāb al-waṣiyya li-l-muridin) in the *Risāla* is slightly different than the one here (*Risāla*, 2:732).

22 The word “sun” (*shams*) is grammatically feminine in Arabic.

23 Muṣṭafā traces these lines to al-Ḥallāj’s *Dīwān* (Muṣṭafā, no. 9, p. 27).

24 Muṣṭafā attributes a slightly different version of these lines to the *Dīwān* of al-Majnūn (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 122).

Ordinary people strive, when beginning to pray, to direct their hearts back to the awareness of what they are performing as an obligation, yet they do not turn back from the torrents of forgetfulness. The elect, on the other hand, direct their hearts back to the awareness of what they are performing, yet they do not turn back from the realities of the communion [of lovers]. What a difference between one who attends to the precepts of the law but is absent in the familiar territories of his forgetfulness, and the one who turns back to the precepts of the law but is absent in the realities of communion.

﴿ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴾

[2:3] *and of what We have provided them expend*

“Provision” (*rizq*) is that from which mankind derives benefit. The *tafsīr* tradition says that they **expend** their wealth either through supererogatory acts or obligatory acts, according to the details of [juridical] knowledge. However, the allusion [in the verse] explains that they do not hold back anything from God ﷻ of that which has been made easy for them. They **expend** their lower selves in the refined manners of servanthood (*ādāb al-^cubūdiyya*) and they **expend** their hearts in the perpetual witnessing of lordship (*mushāhadat al-rubūbiyya*). The followers of the law (*sharī'a*) expend with respect to wealth (*amwāl*) and the masters of reality (*ḥaqīqa*) expend with respect to states (*aḥwāl*). [The followers of the *sharī'a*] are those for whom the 2.5 percent [alms]²⁵ is sufficient, with one's entire wealth taken into account [in determining] the minimum amount, according to the practices of the *sunna*. As for the people of realities, if they grant even a moment of the entirety of their states to themselves and their own worldly fortunes, the resurrection looms before them.

The ascetics (*zāhidūn*) **expend** the pursuit of their own whim or passion (*hawā*) on the path, for they prefer the good pleasure of God over their own desires. The worshipers (*ābidūn*) **expend** their ability and power in the way of God, constantly clinging to their fear of God (*taqwā*),²⁶ privately and publicly. The aspirants (*murīdūn*) **expend** in His way what distracts them from remembering their Protector (*mawlā*), so they do not pay any attention to anything in their present world or their world to come. Those with deeper knowledge (*ārifūn*) **expend** in the way of God everything other than their Protector (*mawlā*), so the Real ﷻ draws them near and gives

25 The obligatory amount of almsgiving (*zakāt*).

26 The translation follows the word “fear of God” (*taqwā*) found in MSS K117, fol. 5a and Y101, fol. 7a rather than the word *nufūs* found in the Basyūnī edition.

them refuge and by virtue of being alone with Him, He suffices²⁷ for them.

The rich **expend** from their blessings for the sake of what is to come while the poor (*fuqarā'*)²⁸ **expend** from their aspirations for the sake of turning [to God]. It is said that [the instruments of] the servant are his heart, his body, and his possessions. Thus by their faith in the unseen, they [serve] through their hearts, by their praying they [serve] through their lower selves, and by their expenditure they [serve] through their possessions, so that they become worthy of the special favors (*khaṣā'is*) of drawing near to that which they serve and worship. When they exist entirely through²⁹ His Truth, they become deserving of the perfection of intimate friendship (*khuṣūsiyya*).

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ
مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٤﴾

[2:4] *and who believe in what has been revealed to you; and what was revealed before you; and of the hereafter, they are certain.*

Their belief in the unseen necessarily requires their belief in the Qurʾān and in what God has revealed in the books before the Qurʾān, but He repeats the mention of belief here for the purposes of specification (*takhsīs*) and corroboration (*taʿyīd*). To affirm (*taṣdīq*) [Muḥammad's role as] the intermediary ﴿﴾³⁰ in some of what he has communicated obligates the affirmation of him in all that he has communicated, since the evidence of his sincerity bears witness generally, without any restriction. They have certainty in the hereafter because they have witnessed the unseen:

When the Messenger of God ﴿﴾ asked Ḥāritha, “How is your state?” He said, “I have become one who submits to God in truth and it is as if I were with the people of the garden exchanging visits, and as if I were with the people of the fire clamoring to one another, and as if I were with the throne of my Lord in plain sight. The Messenger

27 The translation follows the phrases “He gives them refuge (*āwāhum*)” and “He suffices for them (*kaḥāhum*)” from MS K117, fol. 5a.

28 Al-Qushayrī uses the word “the poor” (*fuqarā'*) to mean both the indigent and those who have attained the spiritual station of poverty. See the “Section on poverty” (Bāb al-faqr), *Risāla*, 2:536–549.

29 The translation follows the preposition “through” (*bi*) found in MSS K117, fol. 5a and Y101, fol. 7a rather than “for the sake of” (*li*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

30 That is, Muḥammad.

of God ﷻ said, “You have it right, so keep to it.”³¹

‘Amir b. ‘Abd al-Qays³² said, “If the veil were to be lifted, it would not increase my certainty.” The real meaning of certainty is to rid oneself of indecisive guessing (*takhmīn*) and to avoid loose conjecturing (*ẓunūn*).

أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾

[2:5] *Those are upon guidance from their Lord; those are the ones that will prosper*

It means, “[Those are] in possession of clear evidence, certainty, unveiling, and realization from their Lord.” He discloses Himself to their hearts first by His signs, then by His attributes, and then by His reality and essence.

Some people *are upon guidance from their Lord* by means of rational proofs (*dalā'il al-ʿuqūl*). They apply [these proofs]³³ properly and therefore attain truths of different types of knowledge (*ḥaqā'iq al-ʿulūm*). Other people possess insight (*baṣīra*) into the courtesies of drawing near, so that through witnessing the mercy and generosity [of God] they attain the perspicuity (*bayān*) of certainty. The truth appears to others in their innermost selves so that they witness the reality of the eternally sought and impenetrable (*ṣamadiyya*), and they attain to the source of the faculty of insight by virtue of deeper knowledge (*ʿirfān*).

Those are the ones that will prosper: Prosperity is to succeed in one’s objective and to win what is sought. He grants the folk³⁴ subsistence (*baqāʾ*) at the place³⁵ of meeting and they succeed in subduing the enemies that are the clamor of the false notions (*hawājīs*) of the lower self. Then the

31 Basyūnī mentions in a footnote that al-Ṭabarānī’s *Muʿjam al-kabīr* classifies this *ḥadīth* as having a weak chain of transmission (*isnād*). ‘Abd al-Raḥmān cites a few sources for the *ḥadīth*, including al-ʿUqaylī’s *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ al-kabīr*. Al-Qushayrī cites a shorter and slightly different version of this *ḥadīth* in his commentary on Qurʾān 2:50.

32 This is one of the rare places in the *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* where al-Qushayrī mentions an individual by name. The same quote appears in the “Section on certainty” (Bāb al-yaqīn), *Risāla*, 1:393.

33 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 5a and Y101, fol. 7a, which have the pronoun *hā* (referring to the proofs), rather than the Basyūnī edition which has the dual pronoun *humā*.

34 Al-Qushayrī seems to be using the word “folk” (*al-qawm*) here to refer to Sufīs, as he does in many places in his *Risāla*.

35 The word “place” (*mashad*) can mean the “place of assembly.” Al-Qushayrī may also have in mind another meaning of this word, which is the “place where a martyr dies,” in this case meaning the place where the individual self is annihilated (*fanāʾ*).

thoughts (*khawāṭir*)³⁶ that come to hearts disappear and they stand by the Real for the Real without the intermediary of an intellect (*‘aql*), or recourse to memory (*dhikr*) and reflection (*fikr*).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾

[2:6] *As for the disbelievers, alike it is for them whether you have warned them or have not warned them, they do not believe.*

Those who are veiled by the covering of their own qualities are kept from witnessing His truth. The allusion here is that both are the same to them—the words of one who tries to lead them to the Real (*ḥaqq*) or the words of one who aids them in seeking to attract worldly fortune (*ḥazz*). Nay, they are more inclined to the calls to heedlessness and prefer to pay attention to them. How could they not, when they are marked with the branding of separation, locked in the prison of absence, and barred from the place of nearness. None of them will attain faith (*īmān*) because they have no security (*amān*) from the Real. Because they have not been granted security (*lam yuʿmanū*) they do not believe (*lam yuʿminū*). A decision (*ḥukm*) God has already made is inalterable and a word from Him is final. [God’s] power cannot be opposed. Fearsome attacks will surprise those who contest what has been decreed by the Real and the decision [of the Real] will catch them unaware.

It is said that the disbeliever does not desist from his error because of the misery that is already his. Likewise the one who is bound by the shackles of his lower self is veiled from witnessing the unseen and His reality, for he cannot see the right way or pursue the right course. It is said that for the one who remains in the darkneses of his foolishness, the advice of sound guides and the fictions of those who speak falsely are equal to him, for God has removed from his states the blessings of being able to judge between two things. He does not come with an ear to acceptance and pays little attention to the one who calls to right conduct. As it is said:

My sincere advice (*naṣīhatī*)
is the concern of the sincere (*naṣūḥ*).

36 Al-Qushayrī uses *khawāṭir* as a general term for thoughts and inspirations that come from both reliable and unreliable sources. See his section on “Thoughts” (al-Khawāṭir), *Risāla*, 1:242–243.

The disobedience of the sincere
is My concern alone.³⁷

It is also said that whoever has strayed from bearing witness to the favors that have been allotted to him imagines that the matter comes from what he does and does not do.³⁸ [Such a person] relies on his own actions and is blind to witnessing [God's] gifts (*fa-ittakala ʿalā aʿmālihi wa-tāʾmā ʿan shuhūd afdālihi*).

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ
وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشْوَةً وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

[2:7] *God has set a seal on their hearts, and on their hearing; and on their eyes is a covering; and for them will be a mighty chastisement.*

The seal on something prevents anything from entering it or coming out. Similarly, the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* has determined that the ignorance and error in the hearts of His enemies will not be removed, nor will any insight or guidance enter into them. There is a covering of forsakenness over the hearing of their hearts. The faculties of hearing have been blocked from receiving the speech of the Real with respect to belief, so the whisperings of Satan and the murmurings (*hawājis*) of their lower selves distract [the heart] from listening to the intuitions (*khawāṭir*) that come from the Real. As for the elect, the intuitions that come from different kinds of knowledge (*ʿulūm*)³⁹ and preoccupation with the results to questions in their hearts—these distract their hearts from the secrets of the Real coming to them without intermediary. That is only for the elect of the elect. For this reason the Messenger of God ﷺ said, “There have been inspired men (*muḥaddathūn*) in communities and if there is one in my community, it is ʿUmar.”⁴⁰ This inspired one is singled out from the elect just as the one who possesses different types of knowledge is singled out from among ordinary people.

37 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to trace this verse to any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 42). Although al-Qushayrī sees the abandonment of disobedience as praiseworthy, he understands this abandonment as an act originating in divine generosity (see his commentary on Qurʾān 3:102). In his commentary on the command to obey in verse 3:32, al-Qushayrī notes that the verse says that *God loves not the disbelievers*. Al-Qushayrī adds, “He did not say “the disobedient” (*ʿāṣūn*) but rather “the disbelievers” (*kāfirūn*), so the address indicates that He loves the believers even if they are disobedient.”

38 Literally, his movements (*ḥarakāt*) and states of rest (*sakanāt*).

39 Here al-Qushayrī means legalistic or intellectual types of knowledge.

40 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān gives al-Zabīdī among other sources for this *ḥadīth*.

There is a covering over the eyes of outsiders so they will not see either by the “sight” (*baṣar*) of different kinds of knowledge or by the inner sight (*baṣīra*) of realities. *And for them will be a mighty chastisement* because of their supposing that they have something and their heedlessness of what they have been given in tribulation in the present (*fi l-hāl*) and the end (*wa-l-ma’āl*), in their separation in the here and now (*fi l-‘ājili furqatihi*) and their burning in what is to come (*wa-fi l-‘ājil ḥurqatihi*).⁴¹

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَيَوْمَ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾

[2:8] *And some people there are who say, “We believe in God and the last day”; but they are not believers.*

They stayed firm in their hypocrisy and persisted in deceiving the Muslims, so God tore off their veils by His saying, “*but they are not believers.*” Thus it is said:

Whoever adorns himself with something
other than what is in him,
the test exposes what
he is only pretending.⁴²

When their words were stripped of their meanings, the harm they received from them was greater than the benefit they had imagined in them, for God most high said, *Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest level of the fire* [4:145]. If it were not for their hypocrisy, their punishment would not have been increased.

It is said that when they lacked true sincerity in their states (*ṣidq al-aḥwāl*), the correct words (*ṣidq al-aqwāl*) were of no benefit to them. God most high said, “*God bears witness that the hypocrites truly are liars*” [63:1] for they used to say, “We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of God.” In a similar way, the one who outwardly declares what he has not yet realized will immediately be exposed before the masters of realization. It has been said:

O you who claim
love for Sulaymā

41 The translation of this sentence follows MSS K117, fol. 5b and Y101, fol. 7b.

42 Muṣṭafā traces this verse to Abū ‘Amr b. al-‘Alā’ (Muṣṭafā, no. 6, p. 120).

You have nothing from her,
not even nail clippings.

You are only like a *wāw*⁴³
in [your] love for her

attached in spelling
in the wrong place to ʿAmr.⁴⁴

يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ
إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

[2:9] *They would deceive God and the believers; and they only deceive themselves; and they are not aware.*

The harm of their deception and the punishment for it comes back to themselves, so it is as if they have deceived themselves in actuality, for they devalue and belittle themselves. No one suffered the harm of their actions but themselves—they cut off their own lifeblood. When there is one who knows the true nature of things, the one who desires to deceive him only deceives himself.

The allusion in this verse is to the one who has forgotten [God’s] prior kindness. He says, “mine, through me, from me and I,”⁴⁵ slandering in his delusion and conjecture [what should be] “Yours, through You, from You, and You.” This delusion is the most difficult of punishments because he sees a mirage (*sarāb*) and thinks it is drink (*sharāb*) until he comes to it and finds it to be nothing, and he finds God there, who pays him his account in full [24:39].

فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا^ص

43 A letter of the Arabic alphabet.

44 The letter *wāw* is added in spelling to the name ʿAmr to distinguish it from the name ʿUmar, but it is not pronounced. Muṣṭafā traces these lines to Abū Nuwās’s *Dīwān* (no. 7, p. 59).

45 As Basyūnī points out in a footnote, this sentence echoes one in the “Section on unity” (Bāb al-tawḥīd) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 2:587.

وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

[2:10] *In their hearts is a sickness; and God has increased their sickness; and there awaits them a painful chastisement because they used to lie.*

In the hearts of the hypocrites is the sickness of making partners [with God] (*shirk*)⁴⁶ and God increases their sickness in their imagining that they have been saved by deceiving the Muslims. The pain of their grievous punishment will reach them in the end. The allusion pertains to whoever has confused his ultimate objective (*qaṣd*) with his worldly concerns (*ḥaẓẓ*) and mixed his spiritual desire (*irāda*) with his whims (*hawā*), taking one step forward with spiritual desire and one step backward with worldly concerns, and following the lower self. He is neither a sincere seeker (*murīd*) nor permanently neglectful.⁴⁷ If the hypocrites had been sincere in their beliefs, they would have been safe from the punishment in the hereafter just as they were safe from paying the *jizya* tax and the like in this world in the manner of polytheists and *dhimmi*s.⁴⁸ Similarly, if the seeker (*murīd*) had been sincere in his spiritual desire, he would have reached out in his heart to the realities of the communion [of lovers] and the blessings of sincerity would have reached him and he [would have] attained what he desired. But his state is as it has been said:

We have not been firm
but justice will be firm with us without bending.

If we had been sincere (*khalaṣnā*),
we would have been saved (*takhallaṣnā*) from tribulation.⁴⁹

There is a barrier between one whose worship has become weak and the degrees of the gardens (*darajāt al-jannāt*). There is a barrier between one whose spiritual desire has become weak and the intimate communications of nearness and whispered confidences (*muwāṣalāt al-qurb wa-l-munājāt*).

As for those who rely on this world and follow [their] whims, their reliance on the abode of illusion is an illness of their hearts. The increase in their disease will increase as their greed increases. The more they find

46 MS K117, fol. 5b has the word “doubt” (*shakk*) here rather than *shirk*, which is the word found in the Basyūnī edition and MS Y101, fol. 8a.

47 The translation follows the word *ghāfil* from MSS K117, fol. 5b and Y101, fol. 81 rather than the word “discerning” (*āqil*) from the Basyūnī edition.

48 *Dhimmi*s refer to peoples of other revealed religions who were given a protected status provided they accepted the sovereignty of Muslim rule and paid the *jizya* tax.

49 This verse was not located in Muṣṭafā.

something from [this world], the more their greed multiplies for what they have not found, hastening the punishment for them. Among [their] immediate punishments are the dissipation of their aims and then the loss of all pleasure in their lives. They are kept by [these punishments] from their Protector (*mawlā*). There will be no enjoyment for them nor rest in what they have preferred when [they] follow their own whims. This is the requital for anyone who abandons the companionship of his Protector. It is said regarding this:

She changed and we changed.
Alas to anyone who
has sought but did not find a
replacement to let him forget.⁵⁰

The allusion in [the words] *the painful chastisement because they used to lie* is to the grief on the Day of Unveiling when they see how those like them who were sincere (*ṣadaqū*) have arrived (*waṣalū*) and they see themselves and how they have lost (*khasirū*).

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾
أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

[2:11] When it is said to them, “Do not [foment] corruption in the land,” they say, “We are only putting things right.”

[2:12] Truly, they are the agents of corruption, but they perceive not.

This alludes to the fact that when thoughts of warning came secretly to their hearts, calling them to right conduct, they followed self-indulgent interpretations (*rukhaṣ al-taʿwīl*) and deceived themselves about that which bore witness to the hardness of their hearts. When they denied the proof of the Real in the thoughts that came to their hearts, God took the blessing away from their states and in its place gave them a deaf ear to the Real. Their affliction is in their resistance to the path (*ṭarīqa*) and their loss of belief in it.

Just as an apostate is a more intense enemy to Muslims, so the one who

50 Muṣṭafā corrects the problems he notes in this verse through reference to a very similar verse attributed to al-Mustaẓhir bi-Llāh: *tabaddalū wa-tabaddalnā wa-akhsarnā man ibtaghā badalan minnā fa-lam yajid* (Muṣṭafā, no. 14, p. 47). Al-Qushayrī cites this verse again in his commentary on Qurʾān 3:116.

returns from spiritual desire (*irāda*) to the world and ordinary customs is the worst of people in rejecting this path, and the most distant from its followers. As the proverb goes, “Anyone who loses their stored grain to fire wishes the same for others.” According to the sincere among those [on the path], the help of those who have deserted the way of spiritual desire should not be accepted, just as the Messenger ﷺ did not accept the almsgiving (*zakāt*) of Tha’laba.⁵¹

It is said that it is sufficient to expose those who lie by saying to such a person’s face, “You have lied.” When they said, “*We are only putting things right*,” the Real ﷻ showed them to be liars and He said, “*Truly, they are the agents of corruption, but they perceive not*,” meaning “We are aware of them and have exposed them.”

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَهْمْ ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا ءَامَنَ
السُّفَهَاءُ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

[2:13] *When it is said to them, “Believe as the people believe,” they say, “Shall we believe as fools believe?” Truly, they are the foolish ones, but they know not.* Here the allusion is to the hypocrites who, when they were called to the Real, described the Muslims as foolish. Similarly, when the wealthy are commanded to renounce this world, they describe the people of right conduct as lazy and weak. They say the poor (*fuqarā*) have nothing because they have no wealth, no status, no comfort, and no livelihood. In truth, they [the wealthy] are the poor and they are those who are tested. They fall into ignominy out of fear of ignominy, and struggle with abasement out of fear of abasement. They construct castles (*quṣūr*) but live in tombs (*qubūr*). They adorn the cradle (*mahd*) but are wrapped in the grave (*lahd*). They gallop in the fields of heedlessness (*ghafla*) but stumble in the wadis of grief (*ḥasra*). Soon they will come to know, but then their knowledge will not benefit them. Nothing will be of use to them.

51 The reference is to Tha’laba b. Ḥāṭib al-Anṣārī l-Awsī. The story can be found in *Tafsir al-Jalālayn*, trans. Hamza, in the commentary on 9:75–77. He was a man who asked the Prophet to pray on his behalf for wealth, which he promised he would use to help those in need. The Prophet prayed for him and he became wealthy but he reneged on his promise. Some time later, he came to Muḥammad and wanted to pay the alms tax (*zakāt*) but the Prophet said that God had forbidden him to accept it from him, whereupon he began to throw earth on his head in remorse.

When the dust clears
 you will see
 whether a horse or a donkey
 is beneath you.⁵²

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا
 مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي
 طُغْيَانِهِم يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

[2:14] *When they meet those who believe, they say, “We believe”; but when they go apart to their devils they say, “We are with you; we were only mocking.”*

[2:15] *God [Himself] mocks them, leaving them in their insolence, bewildered.*

The hypocrites wanted to maintain their relations with disbelievers while associating with Muslims, so when they appeared before Muslims they said, “*We are with you*” and when they were alone with those like them among the disbelievers, they voiced their loyalty to them. They wanted to have relationships with both sides but they were excluded from both. God most high said, “*Wavering, all the time—not to these, neither to those*” [4:143]. Similarly, anyone who wants to combine the path of spiritual desire (*irāda*) with [one’s habitual behavior] with ordinary people (*ahl al-āda*) [should know that] this cannot be done since the two opposites cannot be combined. “The servant who has contracted with his master to be freed is still a servant until the last dirham [is paid].” When night draws nigh, day slips away. Anyone who has a hodgepodge (*khalīṭ*) in every corner (*nāḥiyya*) and a heart bound (*rabīṭ*) in every nook (*zāwiyya*) is headed for disaster. First one group and then another take turns dwelling in his heart, so that it is forever ruined.⁵³ There is no pleasure for him in life nor does he truly possess any provision⁵⁴ from his heart. The one who spoke for them said:

I see you as someone left over
 from the people of Moses

52 Muṣṭafā traces this verse to Badī al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p. 59).

53 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 6b and Y101, fol. 9a.

54 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 6b and Y101, fol. 9a with the word “weight” (*wazn*) rather than “provision” (*rizq*), as found in the Basyūnī edition.

for they do not wait
patiently for food.⁵⁵

When the hypocrites said, “*we were only mocking*,” God most high said, “*God [Himself] mocks them*,” that is, He requites them for their mocking. Similarly when people put the reins in the hands of carnal desires, they are lured into the wadis of separation. Their feet are not firmly planted in a place, so they wander in the labyrinth of absence. Just as he leaves the hypocrites *in their insolence, bewildered*, he prolongs the period [in which they dwell with] their confused hopes. So when the times of their deaths draw nigh, their hopes are at their highest, while their actions are at their lowest. That is the requital for what they did and the noxious result of what they produced. The beautification of their ugly acts in their eyes is the worst of their punishments, and their being content with their listlessness is their greatest misfortune.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَى
فَمَا رَبِحَتْ تِجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

[2:16] *Those are they who have bought error for guidance; so their commerce has not profited them; nor are they guided.*

This alludes to those who have neglected what is due (*ḥuqūq*) by remaining in the familiar territories of worldly fortunes (*ḥuzūz*). [They] have lost their bargain, *so their commerce has not profited them*. Those who are content with this world over the next are in manifest loss. Those who prefer this world or the next over the Real have the most intense loss. Although the one who suffers the loss of [the gardens] of bliss will come up short, the one who is afflicted with distance from intimate conversation and the disengagement of his heart from his Protector, the one who remains in the captivity of carnal desires with no messenger [reaching] his heart, the one without attainment for his spirit, without intimate conversation with Him, without approach to Him, without the witnessing [of Him] in his innermost self—this is the one who [truly] suffers and is afflicted. If even a moment slips away, his Lord has slipped away. Moments have no substitutes or alternates. Thus someone said:

55 Muṣṭafā traces this verse to Abū Nuwās in several works, including his *Dīwān* (Muṣṭafā, no. 3, p. 103). The poem refers indirectly to Qurʾān 2:61.

You were the pupil
of my eye.

[The organ] by which I see
wept for you.

Anyone who has a will after you,
let him die,

for I used to be
a guard over you.⁵⁶

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ
ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلْمَةٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

[2:17] *Their likeness is as the likeness of one who kindled a fire, and when it illumined [the area] all about him God took away their light and left them in darkness, unable to see,*

The similitude God سبحانه strikes here for hypocrites is that of someone who kindles a fire in the beginning of the night, then the fire is extinguished and he is left in the darkness. Similarly, something of the benefits of this world appear to the hypocrites outwardly but then they are afflicted in the hereafter by the pain of the punishment. Or [it may be that] something of their affirmation (*iqrār*) flashes, but then they remain in the darkness of their denial (*inkār*).

The allusion in this verse is to one who has a beautiful beginning, traveling the path of spiritual desire (*ṭarīq al-irāda*). He toils for a time and endures one difficulty after another. He then returns to this world before having reached the truth and reverts to the darkneses of human nature within him. His stem sprouted but did not bear fruit. His branch blossomed but did not ripen. He hastened the eclipse of listlessness over the moons of His presence. The hand of subjugation rejected him after the tongue of kindness beckoned him. His heart moved away from closeness and his lower self became full of rancor toward the seekers. He is as it is said:

When passion settled in⁵⁷
and we said we were happy,

56 Muṣṭafā traces these lines to Ibrāhīm b. al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ṣūl, as well as others. It is a lamentation for a lost son (Muṣṭafā, no. 9, pp. 59–60).

57 The translation follows the verb “settled in” (*qarra*) rather than “was complete” (*tamma*)

we thought we were secure
from growing apart.

Division sent its messengers
in secret

and destroyed what we had brought together
in our union.⁵⁸

The allusion in this verse also pertains to one who grasps [only] the lowest level of comprehension but makes claims far above what he [knows]. When the ongoing increase⁵⁹ he possesses in his states is cut off, he remains in the darkness of his claims.

There is also [an allusion to] the one who relies on the rubble and glitter of this world. When [his] states become like a well-trodden road, helped along by hope and rising expectation, death appears as an ambush of the divine ruse. He leaves everything (*yatrūk al-kull*) but carries the burden forth (*yaḥmil al-kall*).

صُمُّ بَكْمٍ عُمَىٰ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

[2:18] *deaf, dumb, blind, they shall not return*

Deaf to hearing the calls of the Real with the ears of their hearts, *dumb* to whispered conversation with the Real with the tongue of their innermost selves, *blind* to witnessing the flow of decreed events with the eyes of their faculties of insight. *They shall not return* from their persistent shamelessness nor can they be deterred from their wholehearted embrace of errors.

It is said *deaf* to hearing through the Real, *dumb* to speaking through the Real, *blind* to studying creation through the Real. There was no pre-determination for them to desist (*iqḷāʿ*), and no allotment to help them by means of being deterred (*irtidāʿ*).

أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصْبِعَهُمْ

as found in MSS K117, fol. 6b and Y101, fol. 9a.

58 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to trace this verse to any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 4, p. 111).

59 There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition which has been filled in with the word *mādda* from MSS K117, fol. 6b and Y101, fol. 9b.

فِي ءَاذَانِهِم مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

[2:19] Or as a cloudburst out of the heaven in which is darkness, and thunder, and lightning—they put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps, cautious of death; and God encompasses the disbelievers.

The meaning of His saying, “Or,” is that He gives either one of these two similitudes for [the hypocrites]. He compares the Qurʾān to rain descending from the heaven and compares the promises and threats in the Qurʾān to the thunder and lightning in the rain. He compares their seeking refuge to [the ways they] flee from hearing the Qurʾān, distance themselves from attentiveness, and neglect to try to gain insight, to those who put their fingers in their ears against hearing the sounds of thunder.⁶⁰ Similarly, the allusion is to the heedless, when the admonitions of those who admonish reach their ears, or the lights of felicity shine on their hearts. If they would desist from their blind heedlessness, they would be happy. But they keep each other distracted by false hopes and have resolved upon their corrupt path. They make weak excuses and swear by God, “Had we been able, we would have gone forth with you,” destroying their souls [9:42] and they bring about their destruction by their own hands.

Truly when the noble one
gives you his love,
he veils the ugly
and brings the beautiful to light.

Similarly, when the one who is tired
wants to break things off,
he becomes weary of being together
and says, “That was that.”⁶¹

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَرَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ
وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ

60 There is a line of text missing in Basyūnī which has been completed from MSS K117, fol. 7a and Y101, fol. 9b.

61 Muṣṭafā found these lines in *Muḥāḍarāt al-ʿudabāʾ* but without attribution (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 112).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

[2:20] *The lightning well-nigh snatches away their sight; whensoever it gives them light, they walk in it; and when the darkness is over them; they stop; had God willed, He would have taken away their hearing and sight; Truly, God has power over all things.*

Part of the similitude of the hypocrites—as also the heedless—is that when they are present at public sermons, or their hearts incline to gentleness, or some terror overwhelms them, their states move closer to repentance and their longing to turn [to God] becomes stronger. But when they revert to their own planning⁶² and seek counsel from those close to them, their family and offspring urge them to return to their world. They offer their advice, frightening them with weakness and dependency, so that their resolve becomes weak, their spiritual desire (*irāda*) declines and they become as it is said:

Whenever he repents
he returns to his ignorance,
just as the one who is feeble
suffers a relapse.⁶³

He said, “*had God willed, He would have taken away their hearing and sight,*” meaning the outward hearing and seeing of the hypocrites as well as their being deaf and blind inwardly. The same [is true] for the heedless and those who are content with the external aspects of Islam—God most high has the power to negate the positive outcome (*tawfīq*) of their practice of outward acts of obedience (*ẓāhir al-ṭāʾāt*), just as He has the power to negate the realization (*taḥqīq*) of what they have discovered from the most felicitous states (*ṣafāʾ al-ḥālāt*).

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي

62 Basyūnī has the word “contemplation” (*tadabbur*) here, but the word “planning” (*tadbīr*) from MSS K117, fol. 7a and Y101, fol. 9b makes more sense. Al-Qushayrī frequently uses the word *tadbīr* to describe the error individuals make when they imagine that they can direct the events in their lives.

63 Al-Qushayrī also cites this verse in his commentary on Qurʾān 4:81. Muṣṭafā traces the verse to Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbd al-Quddūs and adds another line: *The shaykh does not abandon his morals until he is hidden in the earth of his tomb* (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p. 73).

﴿ خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴾

[2:21] *O people, worship your Lord who created you and those that were before you, so that you may be fearful.*

Worship (*ʿibāda*) is becoming harmonious (*muwāfaqa*) with the command and it is pouring all energy into requests for realization (*taḥqīq*) of the unseen. The declaration of oneness (*tawḥīd*) enters one through the heart, disengagement (*tajrīd*) [enters] through the innermost self, becoming single-minded (*tafrīd*) [comes] through intention (*qaṣd*), and humility [comes] through the self. Surrender (*istislām*) is to the decree (*ḥukm*).

It is said, “worship Him” by renouncing prohibited things, persevering in performing acts of obedience, welcoming obligatory acts with humility and lowliness, and avoiding detours through the waystations of laziness and indifference.

His saying “*so that you may be fearful*” is to bring the command closer to them and to make it easier. By the word “may” He keeps them at the bounds of fear and hope.

The real meaning of “fear of God” (*taqwā*) is protecting oneself through conformity [to God’s command]⁶⁴ from the threats of punishment.

﴿ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ ۗ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

[2:22] *He who assigned to you the earth for a couch and heaven for an edifice; and sent down from the heaven water, wherewith He brought forth fruits for your provision; so set not up compeers to God, while you know.*

He is made known to them by the mention of the favors He has granted in the creation of the heaven for them as a roof raised (*saqf marjūʿ*), the establishment of the earth for them as a couch laid out (*farsh mawḏūʿ*), and

64 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 7a and Y101, fol. 10a in the words *bi-l-wifāq*, which echo the use of the word from the same root *muwāfaqa* in the first paragraph of this section. Basyūnī has *wa-l-wafāʿ* and added *bi-l-ṭāʿa* to correct the meaning. His reading, however, is also plausible as he demonstrates in a footnote comparing this sentence to a similar passage in the *Risāla*.

the bringing forth of plants by the rain for them as a provision gathered (*rizq majmūʿ*). It is said that He freed them from any obligation to simula-cra (*amthāl*) by eliminating for them any necessary cause (*ʿilla*).⁶⁵ So the heaven is sufficient for them as a covering, the earth as a bed, the permissible things as provision, obedience as a trade, worship as an occupation, remembrance as an intimate friend, and the Lord as a guardian—*so set not up compeers with God* and do not attach your hearts to others in seeking what you need. The Real ﴿﴾ is One alone in creating, there is no originator other than Him. When you imagine anything in events beneficial or harmful, good or bad, as originating from a created thing, this is in actuality a kind of idolatry (*shirk*).

While you know [refers to the fact] that it is not appropriate to raise the matter of your need with someone who has his own need. The attachment of one in need to another one in need and the reliance of the weak on the weak increases poverty and will not stop harm from taking place.

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ ۚ
وَأَدْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَإِنْ لَّمْ
تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ
أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

[2:23] *And if you are in doubt concerning what We have revealed to Our servant, then bring a sūra like it; and call your witnesses besides God if you are truthful.*

[2:24] *And if you do not and you will not, then fear the fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for disbelievers.*

65 As al-Qushayrī says in one of his theological works, “There is no cause (*ʿilla*) for His action (let Him be praised), wherefore one does not use the expression ‘why did He act,’ since if there was a cause for His action and it was eternal, it would entail the eternity of its effect and this is impossible; and if it were temporally contingent, it would have another cause unto infinity and this is impossible, while if the cause needs no cause, the rest of contingent entities have no need of a cause” (Richard Frank, “Two Short Dogmatic Works of Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī: Second Part: Edition and Translation of ‘*al-Fuṣūl fī l-uṣūl*.’” in *Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism in Medieval Islam*, vol. 1: *Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalām* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), ch. XV, p. 78).

He covered the eyes of outsiders so that they did not see His beloved⁶⁶ ﴿ and they wandered in the wadis of conjecture because they had lost the light of solicitude. When the Messenger brought signs to them and made miracles appear, it only increased their doubts and suspicions. This is the way of those who have turned away from the Real ﴿سُبْحَانَكَ. The illumination of proofs only increases their blindness to the truth. God most high said, *But signs and warners do not avail a folk who will not believe* [10:101]. In order to bring them to admit the proof, He informed them of their inability to compete with the miracle He gave them in the Qurʾān, [a miracle] which was triumphant over humankind from the first to the last. He made them acknowledge⁶⁷ that even if they were to make common cause among themselves and strengthen themselves with others like them, and exert their utmost efforts and stratagems, they would not be able to bring a *sūra* like any *sūra* of the Qurʾān. He said, “*If you do not*” and then stated that they could not and would not do it, for He said, “*and you will not.*” It is as if He said, “Look to yourselves and be wary of the idolatry that leads to the punishment of the fire whose *fuel is men and stones.*” If stones, with all their hardness, cannot withstand this fire, how can men with their weakness bear it? When the hearts of the believers became terribly concerned from hearing mention of the fire, He strengthened them and said, “*prepared for disbelievers.*” In that is good news for the believers. This is the way of the Real ﴿سُبْحَانَكَ. When He causes fear in His enemies, he brings glad tidings to His friends.

Just as the deception of the disbelievers vanishes when it encounters the miracles of the prophets ﴿, similarly the claims of the confused disappear when the lights of the truthful appear. The mark of the one who makes false claims is the return of driving cries (*rujūʿ al-zajr*)⁶⁸ to the heart. The mark of the one with truthful intent is the occurrence of the [divine] subjugation (*wuqūʿ al-qahr*) of the heart. It is a rare individual who can separate and distinguish between [these two types of occurrences in the heart].⁶⁹

66 That is, the Prophet Muḥammad.

67 The translation follows the words *qarrara ʿalayhim* found in MSS K117, fol. 7b and Y101, fol. 10a rather than the words *qaddara ʿalayhim* in the Basyūnī edition.

68 Al-Qushayrī uses the words *zajr* (verbal noun) and *zawājir* (plural of the active participle *zājira*) to refer to calls to forbidden or unseemly actions, as he indicates in his commentary on Qurʾān 37:2: *and by the drivers driving* (fa-l-zājirātī zajran). One of the meanings of the word *zajr* is the crying out to animals in a loud way to urge them to hold back or move onwards more quickly (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:1216). See also al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qurʾān 2:269 for a similar comparison of God’s subjugation of the heart versus its yielding to the driving cries of other forces.

69 See al-Qushayrī’s discussion of how thoughts and suggestions come from different sources (the lower self, Satan, angels, and the Real) in the section on “Thoughts” (Khawātir), *Risāla*, 1:242.

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

[2:25] *And give glad tidings to those who believe and perform righteous deeds that theirs shall be gardens underneath which rivers run*

The glad tidings of the gardens are included to inform [us] of the blessings that await the general body of believers, according to the description which is explained in the *tafsir* literature. In addition to these blessings, [the verse] alludes to the glad tidings for the elite—immediate blessings that God has granted to them specifically. That which is to come is the gardens of the reward (*mathwaba*) while these are the gardens of nearness (*qurba*). Those [for believers] are the meadows of recreation (*nuzha*) while these [for the elite] are the meadows of intimacy (*zulfa*). Those are the gardens of favors (*afḍāl*) while these are the gardens of communion (*wiṣāl*). Those are the raising of degrees (*darajāt*) while these are the refreshment of intimate conversation (*munājāt*). That is the matter of His generosity (*jūd*) while this is independence⁷⁰ through His existence (*wujūd*). That is the refreshment of mortal beings (*abshār*) while this is the promenade of the innermost selves (*asrār*). That is the kindness of giving to the external forms (*zawāhir*) while this is the unveiling of the covering from the innermost secrets of hearts (*sarā'ir*). That is the kindness of His gifts and favors (*wa-tilka lutfu nawālihi wa-afḍalihi*) while this is the unveiling of His Beauty and Majesty (*wa-hadhihi kashfu jamālihi wa-jalālihi*).

كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَنُوتُوا
بِهِ مُتَشَبِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

[2:25] *whenever they are provided with fruits therefrom, they shall say, “This is what we were provided with before”; they shall be given it in perfect semblance; and there for them shall be spouses purified; therein they shall abide.*

The blessings of the people of the garden will be renewed for them in every

70 The translation follows the word “independence” (*istiqlāl*) found in MSS K117, fol. 7b and Y101, fol. 10b rather than *ishtīrāl* from the Basyūni edition. Presumably, al-Qushayrī means independence from everything other than God. See his commentary on Qurʾān 3:148 where he speaks of the independence of the innermost self through God’s existence.

moment. They will think that the second [blessings] will be like the first, but when they taste it they will find it beyond what came first. Similarly the states of the innermost consciousnesses of the people of realities are forever rising. When one of them has risen from one place, he imagines that what he will meet in this [new] breath will be like what came previously. When he tastes it, he finds it more than that many times over, just as the one who spoke for them said:

From your love,
I kept stopping at a waystation.
The bewilderment of the deepest hearts
does not stop.⁷¹

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي ۚ أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا ۚ ﴾

[2:26] *God is not ashamed to strike a similitude even of a gnat, or anything above it.*

For God most high, being ashamed would mean the relinquishment (*tark*) [of His free agency]. When He describes Himself as being ashamed of something, it means He does not do that, and when it is said, “He is not ashamed,” it means He does not mind doing that.

Creation, in relation to the existence of the Real, is in actuality less than a speck of dust in the air (*habāʾ fi hawāʾ*) because this is the perishing of one limited thing in another. Therefore the two—the throne and the gnat—are the same in His power. The creation of the throne is not too troublesome or difficult for Him and the creation of the gnat is not too insignificant or easy for him. He *سُبْحَانَهُ* is too holy to be attached to difficulty or ease. Since the matter can be described in this way, He is not ashamed to strike a similitude of the gnat, just as He is not ashamed to strike a similitude of the throne and what is below it.

It is said that one aspect of the similitude of the gnat is the fact that when it is hungry, it becomes strong⁷² and flies, but once it is satiated it splits open and dies. Similarly, *Surely mankind goes too far, for he thinks himself self-sufficient* [96:6–7].

71 Muṣṭafā states that Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī was said to have passed away upon hearing this verse. He gives several works by al-Qushayrī and others in which it is quoted (Muṣṭafā, no. 35, pp. 99–100).

72 The word *qawiyat* in MSS K117, fol. 7b and Y101, fol. 10b corrects the error in the Basyūnī text.

It is said that *or anything above it* means a [larger] flying insect (*dhubāb*). [Here] one aspect of the allusion is the insolence of the fly, in that it keeps returning no matter how much it is driven away. If that [quality] were to be in the lion, no human being would be safe from him. But when He created power in the lion, He created in him an aversion to humankind. When He created insolence in the fly, He created weakness in him, calling attention through this to the perfection of His wisdom and the effectiveness of His power.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا

[2:26] *as for the believers, they know it is the truth from their Lord; but as for the disbelievers, they say, “What did God desire by this as a similitude?”*

As for those for whose eyes of inner consciousness have been opened, they do not look to others or to traces or effects (*āthār*) unless it is to take heed (*ītibār*)⁷³ or to increase the effectiveness of the faculty of insight (*ibtisār*). But for those whose eyes are like a drunken man’s⁷⁴ by virtue of their heedlessness, similitudes only increase their ignorance and doubt.⁷⁵

يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفٰسِقِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

[2:26] *Thereby, He leads many astray and thereby guides many; and thereby He leads none astray but the wicked.*

This Book is a healing and mercy for some people and a trial and misfortune for others. Those who acknowledged Him on the Day of the Covenant by the lights of [divine] assistance when they heard His words, *Am I not*

73 The root of the noun *ītibār* is ^ʿ-b-r, which means “to cross over.” Al-Qushayrī uses the word *ītibār* here to indicate “taking heed” in the sense of the study of created things as indicators of hidden realities—in other words, the “crossing over” from viewing one level of reality to another. Qurʾān 59:2 says, *So take heed (ītabirū), O you who have eyes!*

74 A reference to Qurʾān 15:14–15. *Sukkirat al-absār* can mean the blurry vision of a drunkard but also carries the connotation of being bewitched: *And even if We were to open for them a gate from the heaven, and they were to continue ascending through it, they would say, “It is merely that our eyes have been dazzled. Nay, we are a folk bewitched!”*

75 Here the translation follows MSS K117, fol. 8a and Y101, 11a, omitting the word “fetters” (*ankāl*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

your Lord? [7:172] remembered, at the time of the arrival of the intermediary ﷺ,⁷⁶ the primordial nature of His promise and the precedence of His love, so they increased greatly in their insight. [But] those whom He marked with the ignominy of separation and [those whom He] made speak that day about the reckoning and the terror only increased their denials when the prophetic call arrived. The one with true proofs would not be hidden from them today if they had not already strayed. Because of that, God most high said, *and thereby He leads none astray but the wicked.*

الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ
 أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

[2:27] *Those who break the covenant with God after its solemn binding, and who cut what God has commanded to be joined; and who do corruption in the land—they shall be the losers.*

In this, the allusion is to the state of one who has traveled the way of spiritual desire (*irāda*), then returned to what ordinary people have. Although he claimed to be willing to abandon his lower self, he proved insincere when things became serious. He gave up allusions to reality (*ishārāt al-ḥaqīqa*)⁷⁷ for concessions to the *sharīʿa* (*rukḥaṣ al-sharīʿa*). Just as the return of one who travels the way with his [outward] self (*nafs*) is not praiseworthy so long as a dirham remains in his bag, so the return of one who seeks with his heart (*qalb*) is not pleasing so long as a breath (*nafas*) remains in his spirit (*rūḥ*):

Verily those who have died
 to the religion of whims
 find the decree of death
 a sweet watering place.⁷⁸

And who cut what God has commanded to be joined: The cords of the Real are joined through the cutting of the cords with creation. The joining of what belongs to Him is not completed without cutting what belongs to you. When the matter is the reverse, it is the opposite.

Among that which the servant has been commanded to join is the

76 That is, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

77 Here the translation follows the use of the plural *ishārāt* in MSS K117, fol. 8a and Y101, fol. 11a.

78 Muṣṭafā states that this verse is attributed to ʿAmr b. Qinān (?) (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 92).

protection of the sacred relationship⁷⁹ of the people of this path. One expends sincere concern to achieve [this joining], rather than offering favors. [The servants' outward] efforts of concern are dedicated (*mawqūfa*) to connecting the cords of this path and arranging its conditions, while their hearts are directed (*maṣrūfa*) in expectation of the guardianship of God most high for His people. The corruption of this path *in the land* [happens] when [elders on the path] do not pay attention to the small details of the affairs [of those less advanced on the path]. They make themselves too busy to guide an aspirant (*murīd*) with their words and too busy to sharpen the aim of a seeker (*qāṣid*) with their concerned efforts. This is some of what they neglect that displeases the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*.

Part of breaching the covenant [happens] when your innermost self turns away from witnessing Him for even a moment. Part of the cutting off of what you have been commanded to join [takes place] when even a breath appears of your worldly concerns at any moment [causing you to not] uphold His right. Part of your corruption in the land is any hour which passes you in which you do not see Him. Surely that is the manifest loss, the grave trial, and the vast calamity.

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

[2:28] *How do you disbelieve in God, when you were dead, and He gave you life; then He shall make you dead, then He shall give you life, then to Him you shall be returned!*

These are words to provoke astonishment and gravity in the servant—with the signs that have been made clear, his heart should not incline to disbelief.

It is said that He makes Himself known to creation by the glimmers of His proofs and the flashes of His signs.⁸⁰ He said, *When you were dead*, meaning a drop of sperm, its parts all the same, *and He gave you life* as a human being with some of the parts of the sperm designated to be bone,

79 The word translated here as “sacred relationship” is *dhimām*. The word suggests a pact of protection of others with regard to their rights, security, and honor. Lane describes it as “a thing that should be sacred, or inviolable; or which one is under an obligation to reverence, respect, or honour, and defend” (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:976).

80 In the section on “Glimmers, gleams of the rising, and flashes” (al-Lawā’ih wa-l-ṭawāli’ wa-l-lawāmi’), al-Qushayrī describes the “glimmers” and “flashes” as precursors to the “suns of recognition” (*Risāla*, 1:228).

some parts flesh, some parts hair, and some parts skin, etc.

Then He shall make you dead in making you bones and fragments,⁸¹ *then He shall give you life* in raising you up after you were dead, *then to Him you shall be returned*, meaning to whatever He previously determined [for you] in happiness or misery.

You were dead through your ignorance of Us, *and He gave you life* in your knowledge of Us, *then He shall make you dead* to what you have witnessed, *then He shall give you life* through Him in taking you from yourselves, *then to Him you shall be returned*, meaning [returned] to preserving the precepts of the law and carrying out what is due.⁸²

It is said, *you were dead* because your lower selves remained and *He gave you life* through the annihilation of your lower selves, *then He shall make you dead* from witnessing [this annihilation], so that you will not pay heed to it and corrupt yourselves. *Then He shall give you life* by taking you from yourselves, *then to Him you shall be returned* by your being turned about in His grasp ﷻ.

It is said that He holds their states in check so that there is no perpetual life and no complete annihilation. The more they⁸³ say, “this is life”—while they are thus—the more He turns them and annihilates them. Whenever they become annihilated, He affirms them and gives them subsistence, so they are forever between negation and affirmation, between subsistence and annihilation, and between wakefulness and erasure.⁸⁴ His way is like this with them.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا

[2:29] *He it is who created for you all that is in the earth;*

He made all created things subject to [human beings], meaning that they obtain benefit from [created things] in everything: [human beings] dwell

81 A reference to Qurʾān 17:49 and 17:98: *And they say, “What, when we are bones and fragments, shall we really be raised up in a new creation?”*

82 That is, the states you experience will not keep you from following the precepts of the religious law.

83 Nothing in al-Qushayrī’s text directly indicates who is meant in this paragraph. But he is clearly talking about those rare individuals who experience the more advanced states on the path.

84 Many of the terms in this paragraph are discussed in sections of al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*: “Annihilation and subsistence” (Fanāʾ wa-l-baqāʾ), 1:211–213; “Wakefulness and drunkenness” (al-Ṣaḥw wa-l-sukr), 1:217–219; “Effacement and affirmation” (al-Maḥw wa-l-ithbāt), 1:222–223.

on the earth, live under the sky, are guided by the stars, and benefit in one way or another from every created thing. Furthermore, [if human beings] were to reflect upon any perceived thing or effect (*‘ayn wa-athar*), they would recognize the perfection of His power and the appearance of His lordship in [that thing or effect].

It is said that He has paved the way of knowing for them and awakened them to the ways of beautiful behavior. Moreover He taught them the most sublime aspiration inasmuch as He claimed their works and states for Himself alone, for He said, *Do not prostrate to the sun and moon* [41:37].

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ
 وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

[2:29] *then He turned (istawā) to heaven and leveled the seven heavens and He has knowledge of all things.*

The things that have been brought into existence (*akwān*) are laid out in a uniform way (*istawat*) by His power; it is not that the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* in His Essence sat Himself down (*istawā*) on any created thing.⁸⁵ How could that be! Unicity (*aḥadiyya*) and Self-Sufficiency (*ṣamadīyya*) are His reality. What some have imagined regarding the possibility of Him being in a specific place is absurd since one “sits” in a place but the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* in His Essence does not sit in any place.

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ
 فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ
 لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

[2:30] *And when your Lord said to the angels, “I am appointing on earth a viceregent,” they said, “What, will You appoint therein one who will do corruption therein and shed blood, while we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?”; He said, “Assuredly, I know what you know not.”*

85 *Istawā* has all of the meanings referred to in this verse and al-Qushayrī’s commentary: to turn toward something (in a straight way, like an arrow); to become level or uniform, or to sit oneself down on something (in a firm and steady way).

This is the beginning of the disclosure of His secret regarding Adam and his progeny. He commanded that clay be extracted from every patch of ground and then commanded that it be left to ferment for forty mornings. Every one of the angels was full of amazement: “What is the property (*ḥukm*)⁸⁶ of this clay?” When He assembled [Adam’s] form, they had never seen anything like it in marvelous craftsmanship and astonishing wisdom. So when He said, “*I am appointing on earth. . .*” conjectures were thrown about, hearts were scattered, and accusations were made. It was just as [the poet] said:

How often I have seen
 someone beautiful
 but among mortals my choice
 has fallen upon you.⁸⁷

It is said that God ﷻ created all the things He created, but did not say about any of them what He said about Adam, when He said, “*I am appointing on earth a viceregent.*” The external sense of these words resembles mutual consultation, if it were to be [part of a conversation] among created beings. The Real ﷻ created the gardens with what is in them and the throne with what it has in well-ordered parts and perfect forms, but He did not say, “I am creating a throne or a garden or an angel.” Yet He said of Adam, “*I am appointing on earth a viceregent,*” as a way of conferring honor and distinction.

The words of the angels, “*What, will You appoint therein one who will do corruption therein?*” were not an objection to the divine decree but rather a way of seeking to understand it. To interpret the expression in such a way as to absolve the angels of any blame is more fitting, since they are sinless. God most high said [in reference to the angels, that they are those], *Who do not disobey God in what He commands them* [66:6].

Others have said that in this speech the Real ﷻ revealed the hidden haughtiness of [the angels’] obedience and the attention they paid to their own acts in their hearts. They spoke openly about the hidden affairs of

86 Al-Qushayrī uses the word *ḥukm* to describe how God wisely judges and determines specific things, acts, and occurrences. As a legal term, it means how acts are categorized according to the *sharīʿa*. Al-Qushayrī uses the word in this sense but also in a much broader sense to describe how God has determined the specific components and events of the universe with His wisdom (*ḥikma*). Depending on the context, in this translation *ḥukm* is translated as “property,” “precept,” “decision,” or “decree.”

87 Muṣṭafā traces a slightly different version of the verse to al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād [that is, Ibn ʿAbbād]; this version has the phrase *li-shaqwatī* instead of “mortals” (*al-warā*). With this phrase, the verse reads, “but because of my misfortune my choice has fallen upon you” (Muṣṭafā, no. 12, pp. 60–61).

their innermost selves in saying, “*While we glorify You with praise.*” Then, verily, the Real سُبْحَانَهُ informed them that the merit of knowledge is more perfect than the merit of action and that while they have the greater part and superiority in action Adam has the greater and more abundant part of knowledge. Hence his merit and rank were made apparent.

It is said that the Real سُبْحَانَهُ did not say, “They will not do corruption therein and will not shed blood”⁸⁸ but rather, “*Assuredly, I know what you know not* regarding my pardon of them.” Its meaning is, “*You* know their disobedience but *I* know my pardon of them.”⁸⁹

It is also said that in [the angels’ mention of their] glorification, there is the disclosure of their act and the publicizing of their special qualities and merit, whereas in His pardoning of the disobedient among the children of Adam, there is the disclosure of His سُبْحَانَهُ generosity and mercy. The Real سُبْحَانَهُ does not need the obedient acts of anyone. Indeed, if [the angels] are deserving of praise, and this is clear because of their glorification, [then] God, the Real سُبْحَانَهُ⁹⁰ [is even more] worthy of praise because of [His] pardoning.

It is said, “*Assuredly, I know what you know not* of the purity of the beliefs of the faithful among them in their love for Us and the maturity of their innermost hearts in preserving Our covenant, even if their outward selves are sullied by disobedience,” just as it is said:

When the lover
has committed a single sin,
his good qualities
produce a thousand intercessors.⁹¹

It is also said, “*Assuredly, I know what you know not* of My love for them. You disclose your states while I have hidden My secrets in them from them.” Regarding this [the poets] have recited:

Those who defame
have not diminished your rank
with me, nor has
the slander hurt you.

88 Here the translation follows MSS K117, fol. 8b and Y101, fol. 12a in the use of the pronoun “they” rather than the pronoun “you” found in the Basyūnī edition.

89 This sentence has been added from MS K117, fol. 8b.

90 The translation follows the word “the Real” (*ḥaqq*) found in MSS K117, fol. 8b and Y101, fol. 12a rather than the word “Creator” (*khāliq*) in the Basyūnī edition.

91 Muṣṭafā located the verse in several sources but with no reliable attribution (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 76).

It is as if by criticizing you
they have praised you
in my sight,
but they do not know.⁹²

It is also said, “*Assuredly, I know what you know not* of the breaking of the hearts [of humankind], even though they have done ugly acts, and [I know of] the immoderation of your hearts in disclosing your glorification and sanctification. You [angels] are in the rank of harmony (*wifāq*), with the sinlessness of your acts, and the adornment of your glorification, while they [humankind] are disavowed by their own witnesses and are lowly in their hearts. Truly, because of the breaking of the hearts of servants there is a powerful protective pact (*dhimām*) with Us.”

It is said, “What significance is there to your glorification if not for My grace?” And, “What harm is there in their sins when there is My pardon?”

It is also said, “I clothed you with your obedience and clothed them with My mercy, so you are in the vest of your obedience and the garb of your sanctification and glorification, while they are enveloped in My pardon and veiled in My mercy. I have clothed them with the robe of My generosity and wrapped them in the cloak of My pardon.”

It is said, “My protection from sin has made you felicitous, yet they have received My mercy. My protection to you from sin is connected to your existence while the relationship of My mercy to them is eternal.”

It is said, “While your virtuous one (*muḥsin*) may take precedence in sinlessness, their sinner (*mujram*) is drowned in mercy.”

It is said. “Their reliance on Me purifies their states. It causes them to seek protection in the acknowledgment of ignorance, so [the servants] declare themselves free of different types of knowledge except to the degree granted them by the Real.” *They said, “Glory be to you! We know not except what You have taught us”* [2:32].

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي
بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

[2:31] *And He taught Adam the names, all of them; then He presented them*

92 Muṣṭafā attributes these verses to Abū Nuwās based on several sources, and to al-ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf based on another (Muṣṭafā, no. 11, p. 28).

to the angels and said, “Now tell Me the names of these if you speak truly.”

The general expression (‘*umūm*) in His saying, *names*, necessarily implies comprehensiveness,⁹³ while the connection of this word to *all of them* indicates all-inclusiveness and verification [of the meaning of each].⁹⁴ Just as He taught [Adam] the names of created things—all of them (according to what is articulated in the *tafsīr* of Ibn ‘Abbās and others)—He also taught him the names of the Real *سُبْحَانَ*. But He only disclosed to [the angels] the locus He chose for knowledge of the names of created things and by that [disclosure] the measure of [Adam’s] superiority over them. As for [Adam’s] uniqueness in knowing His names *سُبْحَانَ*, that was a secret of which no angel who is near (*malak muqarrab*)⁹⁵ was aware. One who does not have a rank equal to Adam in knowing the names of created things—what hope could there be in his approaching the names of the Real and grasping the secrets of the unseen? Since being selected to know the names of created things makes it proper for the angels to prostrate before him, what is one to think about being selected to know the names of the Real *سُبْحَانَ*? What is owed to one who is honored with that?

It is said that the special status of the angels is in [their] glorification and sanctification [of God]. These acts of obedience are appropriate for created beings, for surely obedience is the mark of servants, and servants alone. [On the other hand], knowledge, in general, is a kind of commendation (*madh*) that is absolutely necessary in describing the Real *سُبْحَانَ*, one that is not appropriate for anything other than Him. Among the category of created beings, there is no one more perfect in honoring Him than the one who honors Him through His own explanation of His attributes.

It is said that He honored [Adam] privately with what He taught him, and then explained His selection of him and His giving him precedence on the day of the public revealing [of Adam to the angels].

It is said [that in the words] *then He presented them*, the [word] “then” (*thumma*) is a particle of extension or delay. [It might refer] to Adam, in which case it means He gave him time for that which had been established in his heart to recognize what became known to him by His truth. Then at the time [of the public revealing] He asked him about what he had recognized as true and [what he] knew with certainty. Or [the “then” might refer] to the angels when He said to them, in order to frighten them, *Now tell Me*. Because He had not presented the information to them, they were bewildered. Because He had presented it to Adam, he responded and

93 In other words, “names” indicates a general but comprehensive category.

94 That is, the knowledge given to Adam was not just a general overview of *the names*, rather it was exhaustive and detailed.

95 *The angels who are near* (al-malā’ika al-muqarrabūn) are mentioned in Qur’ān 4:172.

gave information (*ajāba wa-akhbara*), spoke and was successful (*naṭaqa wa-aflaha*), and this was a manifestation of His prior solicitude in his affair.

His words “*if you speak truly*” contain an allusion to the fact that [the angels] objected to the claim of special status, and the advantage and privilege conferred upon Adam, so He informed them that the preference (*fadl*) is in the eternal (*qadīm*) selection of [Adam], not in the offering (*taqdīm*) of their glorification. The Real ^{سُبْحَانَهُ} knew that their types of knowledge did not include knowledge of the names of created things, but then He charged them with saying what [the created things] were. This became the clearest of proofs that the affair was His affair and the decree His decree. To Him belongs the imposition of obligation (*taklif*) on the one who is asked to obey. [This] is a reply to those who imagine that the decrees of the Real ^{سُبْحَانَهُ} are dependent on what the heedless deem to be good in their claims based on rational determinations. No, rather it belongs to Him to charge what He wills on whom He wills. The beautiful is what He decrees to be beautiful and the ugly is what He decrees to be ugly.⁹⁶

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣٢﴾

[2:32] *They said, “Glory be to You! We know not except what You have taught us. Surely You are the Knower, Wise.”*

[The angels] offered praise before they made their apology and declared the truth of His judgment over any objection they might have. It means, “We have no knowledge of that which You have asked us about and there is no blame that can be directed to You for charging those who are incapable with something You know they cannot do. *Surely You are the Knower, Wise*, that is, what You do is true and sincere, there is none who can pass judgment over You, and there is no foolishness nor ugliness from You.”

قَالَ يٰٓأَادَمُ اٰنْبِئْهُمْ بِاَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا اٰنْبَأَهُمْ بِاَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ لَكُمْ اِنِّيٓ اَعْلَمُ غَيْبِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا

96 Basyūnī adds a note saying that this is a reply to the Muʿtazila who judged divine actions by human intellectual standards.

كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

[2:33] *He said, “Adam, tell them their names”; And when he had told them their names, He said, “Did I not tell you that I know the unseen in the heavens and the earth? And I know what you reveal and what you were hiding.”*

Among the traces of the divine solicitude to Adam ﷺ is that when He said to the angels, *Now tell Me* [2:31], they were seized with a fear of speaking, especially since He asked that they tell Him something that with their type of knowledge [they] did not comprehend. But because of the information Adam ﷺ had, [God] directed him to inform [the angels], saying, “*tell them their names,*” and Adam was not overly fearful of speaking to them. When Adam ﷺ informed them of the names that they did not know [because of the type of knowledge they had], his merit became apparent to them, and He said, “*Did I not tell you that I know the unseen in the heavens and the earth?*,” meaning “[I know] the different types of knowledge of creation which you do not.” “*And I know what you reveal* regarding [your] acts of obedience and [what you] hide in believing in [your] superiority over Adam ﷺ.”

When the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* wanted to choose Adam, He protected him, taught him, and showed him the effects of his care until [Adam] said what he said [about the names]. When He wanted to execute His decree (*ḥukm*) regarding him, He caused forgetfulness to enter him so that he forgot His covenant in the presence [of God] and transgressed His limit. God most high said, *And We made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot, and We did not find in him any constancy* [20:115]. The moment favored by the [divine] solicitude promoted knowledge and goodness completely, while the moment in which the [divine] decree took effect returned him to the state of forgetfulness and disobedience. Thus are the decrees of the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* in what they make come and go. The worshiper is made lowly by His decree and He is the *doer of what He desires* [11:107, 85:16].

When they imagined [that they could] obtain preference for themselves by their glorification and sanctification, He informed them that the carpet of majesty is too holy to be adorned by the obedience of those who obey or to be defiled by the errors of [those who] stubbornly deny. Their returning to prostration before Adam made manifest [God’s] lack of need for the agreement (*wifāq*) or opposition (*khilāf*) [of created beings].

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوْۤا اِلَّاۤ اِبْلِیْسَ

أَبِي وَأَسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

[2:34] *And when We said to the angels, “Prostrate yourselves to Adam; so they prostrated themselves, except Iblīs, who refused and disdained; and so he became one of the disbelievers.”*

The prostration was not a form of worship (*ʿibāda*) to [Adam], in and of himself, but rather a way of conforming (*muwāfaqa*) to [God’s] سُبْحَانَهُ command. It was as if their prostration to Adam was worship of God because it was by His command. It was a way of showing respect to Adam because He commanded them to, in order to honor his affair. So it is as if that was a kind of submission (*khudūʿ*) to [Adam], but one that should not be called worship because the true meaning of worship is the utmost submission (*nihāyat al-khudūʿ*) and that is not appropriate toward anything but [God] سُبْحَانَهُ.

It is said that He explained that His سُبْحَانَهُ sanctity is through His own majesty (*bi-jalālihi*), not through their acts (*lā bi-afʿālihi*), even though the adoption of the beautifying [acts] of their sanctification and glorification is credited to them. He who is exalted (*yajillu*) is the One who has exalted Himself (*ajallahu*) by His own exaltation (*ijlālihi*), not by their acts (*lā bi-afʿālihi*), and the One who is mighty (*yaʿizzu*) is the One whose power has been made mighty (*aʿazzahu*) by His own might (*ʿzāzihi*). His power is exalted beyond the exaltation of created beings (*jalla ʿan ijlāl al-khalq qudruhu*) and His mention is magnified beyond the magnification of created beings (*ʿazza ʿan ʿzāz al-khalq dhikruhu*).

His words, *So they prostrated themselves, except Iblīs* [means Iblīs] refused in his heart (*qalb*) and disdained to prostrate with his self (*nafs*). He was among [those who] disbelieved in [God’s] prior determination (*ḥukm*) and knowledge (*ʿilm*). In the time period in which Iblīs was emboldened by his obedience, he used to strut about in the vest of his conformity [to God’s command and decree]. [The angels] acknowledged his superior rank and believed in the worthiness of his distinction. His affair became, as [the poet] said:

The lamp of communion
was shining between us.

A wind of separation blew on it
and it was extinguished.⁹⁷

97 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 81).

[Iblīs] used to consider himself deserving of the claim to superiority (*istijāb al-khayriyya*) and worthy of nearness and special status (*istihqāq al-takhṣīṣ wa-l-khuṣūṣiyya*).

He passed the night well
and the world was peaceful.

He woke up one day
and times had changed⁹⁸

No prior obedience benefited him, no previous reply freed him, no intercession of any intercessor reached him, and no prior solicitude held him fast. When fate prevails over someone, toil does not benefit (*wa-man ghalabahu al-qadā' lā yanfa'ahu al-ʿanāʾ*). What originated from Adam was a human error (*hafwatun bashariyya*) so he experienced a singular mercy (*raḥmatun aḥadiyya*). But Iblīs experienced eternal misery (*shaqwatun azaliyya*) and succumbed to fate and destiny (*qismatun wa-qadiyya*). His hope was lost and his toil was in vain (*khāba rajāʾuhu wa-ḍalla ʿanāʾuhu*).⁹⁹

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ
شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

[2:35] *And We said, “Adam dwell and your wife in the garden and eat thereof with ease where you desire; but do not come near this tree lest you be evildoers.”*

[God] settled [Adam] in the garden but with his entry established the tree [by which he was] tested. If not for the prior decree, this blossoming tree would have been changed to a withered one, its greenery dried out, its existence forgotten, and Adam’s hand would not have reached for its leaves to piece them together [to clothe] himself,¹⁰⁰ and what happened to him would not have happened. If this tree had kept growing so that his hand could not reach it, all that confusion would not have occurred in his affair, but what had been predetermined appeared from the decree. There was no place better than the garden, no human being more intelligent than Adam, no better counselor than the suggestions of the Real to him. There was nothing unusual (*lā gharība*) prior to [Adam’s] doing what he did, and no resolve (*lā ʿazīma*) more powerful than his resolve. But divine power cannot

98 Muṣṭafā does not give any other references for this verse (Muṣṭafā, no. 12, p. 28).

99 Two lines have been transliterated here to give an example of the rhyming patterns throughout the paragraph.

100 A reference to Qurʾān 7:22 and 20:121.

be contested and the decree cannot be opposed (*wa-lakinna al-qudrata lā tukābara wa-l-ḥukma lā yuʿāraḍa*).

It is said that when He said to him, “*dwelling and your wife in the Garden and eat thereof with ease*,” [He] was alluding to the fact that it is natural for created beings to dwell comfortably with other created beings, and to want to seek worldly things. Alone, Adam ﷺ had nothing but good and freedom from trial, but when one like him, his spouse, came, the fangs of sedition (*anyāb al-fitna*) appeared and the door to tribulation (*bāb al-miḥna*) was opened. When [Adam] dwelled together with Eve, he followed her in what she suggested to eat and what happened happened. Indeed it is said:

There is an ancient disease
in the children of Adam,
which is the youthful passion
of one human being for another.¹⁰¹

Whenever anything is prohibited to the son of Adam, his yearning to approach it increases. Everything was permitted to Adam ﷺ in the garden—only one tree was prohibited. In what has been transmitted about this, there is no mention of his hand reaching out toward anything that was permitted to him. [Rather] he lost his patience and plunged into what was prohibited to him—this is the attribute of created beings.

The information given relates to what happened after Adam’s entry into the garden, and in what led to his leaving it. When [God] said, *I am appointing on earth a vicegerent* [2:30], how could [Adam] have remained in the garden?

It is said that Adam ﷺ became the object of praise (*maḥmūd*) for the angels and the object of prostration (*maṣjūd*) for all. On his head was the crown of communion (*wuṣṣla*), on his waist the belt of closeness (*qurba*), and on his neck the necklace of nearness (*zulfā*). There was no one above him in rank, no individual like him in high status. The call went out at every moment, continuously, for him, “O Adam, O Adam!” But before nightfall his clothes were stripped from him, his intimacy robbed, and the angels drove him out, violently, [and made him] leave without delay:

I thought I was safe but He ordained for me
a ruse from my place of security.

101 Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to Ashjaʿ al-Sulamī (Muṣṭafā, no. 6, p. 112).

Like this are those
who think themselves safe from lovers.¹⁰²

When Adam ﴿﴾ lost his way, he did not remain but an hour and left with a thousand rebukes. It was as [the poet] said:

The gifts of their youth belong to God.
They set out in the morning
like kings and returned at night
like paupers.¹⁰³

[God] prohibited [Adam] from approaching the tree by His command (*bi-amrihi*), and from this cast him away by His compelling force (*bi-qahrihi*), and disguised him with His secret in him (*bi-sirrihi*).

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ ۖ

[2:36] *Then Satan caused them to slip therefrom and brought them out of what they were in*

He **caused them to slip** (*azallahumā*), that is, “he made them slip” (*ḥamalahumā ‘alā l-zalla*). In actuality nothing gave them free agency except the divine power and nothing turned them about except the divine decree. He **brought them out of what they were in** publicly with respect to rank and degree, but [secretly] their standing only increased in nobility and worth in the determination of the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*.

وَقُلْنَا أَهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ

[2:36] *and We said, “Go down some of you an enemy to the other”*

Although He sowed enmity between the two of them and Satan, [God] *سُبْحَانَهُ* was with Adam and sided with him in the victory decreed for them.¹⁰⁴

Satan has little weight to assert his enmity because the power of the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* is unassailable. God most high said, *Truly over My servants you shall have no warrant* [15:42].

102 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 13, p. 28).

103 Muṣṭafā traces the first part of the verse to Abū l-Ṣalt (Muṣṭafā, no. 42, p. 101–102).

104 The translation follows the wording *li-maḥkūm lahum bi-l-zafr* found in MSS K117, fol. 10a and Y101, fol. 14a.

If Satan were to have authority to seduce others, he would have had the possibility of guiding himself. How can that be? The unique ability to create every thing is one of the characteristics that describe [God] سُبْحَانَهُ.

﴿ ٣٦ ﴾ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

[2:36] *and in the earth a dwelling shall be yours, and enjoyment for a while.*

The place of assembly and familiarity for corporeal forms (*ashkāl*) are the regions of the earth. The place of acquaintance and pasture for the spirits (*arwāḥ*) is beyond¹⁰⁵ the throne. The expression “beyond” (*warā*), though, is a metaphor or hyperbole here. How could aspirations have any connection to events? How could the ascent of intentions toward realities share a location with anything else?¹⁰⁶

﴿ ٣٧ ﴾ فَتَلَقَىٰ آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۖ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

[2:37] *Thereafter Adam received certain words from his Lord and He relented to him; truly He is the Relenting, the Merciful.*

Words flowed from the tongue of Adam in the company of the Real سُبْحَانَهُ and words came from the Real سُبْحَانَهُ to the ears of Adam. They have recited:

When we are afraid
of the eyes of observers,
the secrets in the hearts
speak.¹⁰⁷

The Real سُبْحَانَهُ spoke in general terms about that [conversation] in order to keep the story veiled, or to leave open the possibility of equivocal meaning (*iḥtimāl*), different opinions (*ẓunūn*), and a place for interpretation (*taʿwīl*) regarding what it might mean.

105 The translation follows the word “beyond” or “behind” (*warā*) from MSS K117, fol. 10a and Y101, fol. 14a rather than the word *ridā*, found in the Basyūnī edition, which in this context would mean “the light of the throne.”

106 The meaning of this passage is obscure. Perhaps al-Qushayrī is suggesting that spirits (*arwāḥ*) are composed of aspirations (*himam*) and intentions (*quṣūd*) that exist outside the dimensions of space and time.

107 According to Muṣṭafā, this verse is found in *Dīwān Majnūn Laylā* (Muṣṭafā, no. 14, p. 28).

It is possible that the words of Adam ﴿﴾ may have been an excuse and justification, and the words of the Real سُبحَانَهُ were by way of acceptance and favor. According to the *tafsir* traditions, the words of God most high to him were, “Are you in flight from Us, O Adam?” Likewise, Adam’s words ﴿﴾ to Him were, *Our Lord we have wronged ourselves* [7:23], and he said, “Are You the one evicting me from the garden?” He said, “Yes.” Adam said, “Will You return me to it?” and He said, “Yes.”

It is said that when He commanded his expulsion from the garden, He made a provision (*zād*) for him, as He told him he would, in His exalted speech, so that it would be a remembrance and preparation [for his journey] (*‘atād*):

I remember the days of protection,
then my liver
goes weak from
fear of being cut off.¹⁰⁸

The conversations of lovers cannot be explained and outsiders will not fully understand them. The decree for the unseen was thus by way of allusion (*ishāra*), and not by the meaning provided by commentary (*tafsir*) or interpretation (*ta’wīl*). The Real سُبحَانَهُ wanted this to suggest the state of lovers at the time of separation. In times of farewell, it is said, “When you leave me, do not forget me (*idhā kharajta min ‘indī fa-lā tansa ‘ahdī*). If some day you hear little news of me (*khabarī*), do not choose another in place of me (*ghayrī*)!” And it is also possible to say, “If your coming (*wuṣūluka*) must elude me, at least do not let your emissary (*rusūluka*) be delayed.”

قُلْنَا أَهْبَطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ
فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

[2:38] *We said, “Go down from it all together, yet there shall come to you from Me guidance, and whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.”*

When one displays bad manners on the carpet, one is shown the door. When Adam ﴿﴾ behaved badly at the fountain of nearness, God most high said, “Go down some of you an enemy to the other; and in the earth a

108 Muṣṭafā notes several individuals to whom this verse is attributed, including Majnūn Laylā (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 76–77).

dwelling shall be yours [2:36]—after you had a place of nearness for dwelling and enjoyment for a while.” They were enjoying ease, but in the end they returned to want. They have recited:

When they became poor they clung¹⁰⁹ to poverty
hoping for a reward.

Even when things were easy for them
they hastened to return to that state.¹¹⁰

At the same time that [God] expelled [Adam] from the garden and caused him to descend to the earth, He gave him the glad tidings that He would return him to his [former] condition if his heart were inclined to return. He said, “*Yet there shall come to you from Me guidance, and whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.*”

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ
هُم فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

[2:39] *As for the disbelievers who deny Our signs, those shall be the inhabitants of the fire, abiding therein.*”

Those who receive favors without gratitude and pay no heed to affirming (*taṣdīq*) and recognizing (*taḥqīq*) [the truth] will have a painful punishment in the end (*muʿajjal*) and a separation in the here and now (*muʿajjal*).

يٰۤاِبْنَٓ اِسْرٰٓءِيْلَ اذْكُرْ اَوْ نِعْمَتِي الَّتِي اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ ﴿٤٠﴾

[2:40] *O children of Israel, remember My favor wherewith I favored you;*

The real meaning of “favor” (*niʿma*) according to the scholars is unadulterated pleasure, as well as that which causes [the pleasure]. According to the people of reality, favor is what causes you to witness, remember, or brings you to the One who grants the favor, or does not veil you from Him. It can be divided into the favor of mortal beings and external things (*abshār*

109 The translation follows the word “clung to” (ʿuḍū) found in MSS K117, fol. 10b and Y101, fol. 14a, which corresponds to versions of the poem found elsewhere by Muṣṭafā.

110 Muṣṭafā gives several slightly different versions of the verse, one of which is attributed to Aʿrābī (Muṣṭafā, no. 13, p. 61).

wa-ḡawāhir), and the favor of spirits and the innermost secrets of hearts (*arwāḥ wa-sarāʿir*). The first are types of comforts and the second are modes of witnessings and unveilings. Among the inner favors are the knowledge of hearts and the love of spirits and the witnessings of the innermost hearts.

It is said that He commanded the children of Israel to remember the favors and He commanded the community of Muḡammad ﷺ to remember the One who grants them. There is a difference between those who are told, *remember My favor* and those who are told, *So remember Me, I will remember you* [2:152].

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ

[2:40] *and fulfill My covenant, and I shall fulfill your covenant; and have awe of Me.*

[For the terms of the covenant], He سُبْحَانَكَ asks for the safekeeping of knowledge (*maʿrifa*) and we ask for the means to forgiveness (*maghfira*). He asks for the safekeeping of His love (*maḡābb*) and we ask for the kindness of His reward (*thawāb*). He asks for presence at the door (*bāb*) and we ask for the generous place of return (*maʿāb*).

“*Fulfill My covenant* by safeguarding the secret (*sirr*), *and I shall fulfill your covenant* with beautiful kindness (*birr*).”

“*Fulfill My covenant* which you accepted on the Day of the Solemn Binding (*mīthāq*), *and I shall fulfill your covenant* which I insured for you on the Day of the Encounter (*talāq*).”¹¹¹

“*Fulfill My covenant* by not preferring others (*ḡhayrī*) to Me, *and I shall fulfill your covenant* in not barring you from My kindness and goodness (*khayrī*).”

“*Fulfill My covenant* by caring for the things I entrusted to you (*wadāʿi*) *and I shall fulfill your covenant* in what has been made lasting for you in the splendors of the flashes (*lawāmi*) and the gleams of the rising (*ṭawāli*).”¹¹²

“*Fulfill My covenant* by safeguarding My secrets (*asrārī*) *and I shall fulfill your covenant* in the beauty of My acts of kindness (*mabārrī*).”

“*Fulfill My covenant* by continuing to seek knowledge of Me (*irfānī*) *and I shall fulfill your covenant* in continuing My beneficence (*iḡsānī*).”

111 The Day of the Encounter (*yawm al-talāq*) is mentioned in verse 40:15.

112 See the section on “Glimmers, gleams of the rising, and flashes” (al-Lawāʿiḡ wa-l-ṭawāli wa-l-lawāmiʿ), *Risāla*, 1:228–230.

“*Fulfill My covenant* by performing service to Me *and I shall fulfill your covenant* with kindness in accepting it from you.”

“*Fulfill My covenant* by performing [your] best efforts and works (*al-mujāhada wa-l-muʿāmala*) *and I shall fulfill your covenant* by [means of] ongoing intimate communication and witnessing (*al-muwāṣala wa-l-mushāhada*).”

“*Fulfill My covenant* by absolving yourself of power and strength (*al-ḥawl wa-l-munna*) *and I shall fulfill your covenant* by conferring abundance and grace (*al-ṭawl wa-l-minna*).”

“*Fulfill My covenant* by favoring [Me] (*tafḍīl*) and relying [on Me] (*tawakkul*), *and I shall fulfill your covenant* by being sufficient [for you] and bestowing favor (*tafaḍḍul*).”

“*Fulfill My covenant* with sincere love (*maḥabba*), *and I shall fulfill your covenant* with the perfection of nearness (*qurba*).”

“*Fulfill My covenant* by being content from Me with Me, *and I shall fulfill your covenant* by giving you satisfaction in yourselves.”

“*Fulfill My covenant* in the abode of the unseen on the carpet of service (*bisāṭ al-khidma*) by tightening the belt of obedience and exerting the utmost effort, *and I shall fulfill your covenant* in the abode of nearness on the carpet of communion with perpetual intimacy, vision, the hearing of [your] speech, and the perfection of nearness.”

“*Fulfill My covenant* by renouncing carnal desires (*shahawāt*), *and I shall fulfill your covenant* by being sufficient for you with these demands (*muṭālabāt*).”

“*Fulfill My covenant* by forever saying, ‘My Lord, My Lord,’ *and I shall fulfill your covenant* by saying to you, ‘My servant, My servant.’”

And have awe of Me, that is, “fear Me alone because of My unique power to bring things into existence.” Fear is not appropriate toward those who possess not even a particle or a speck.

وَعَامِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُونُوا أُولَٰ كَافِرٍ بِهِ ۗ
وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَإِلَيَّ فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٤١﴾

[2:41] *And believe in what I have revealed, confirming that which is with you; and be not the first to disbelieve in it. And do not sell My signs for a small price; and fear Me.*

The allusion is to the fact that the belief of [the servant] is a combination of clear evidence (*bayān*) and his belief [that he reaches] through demonstrative proof (*burhān*).¹¹³ The generality of believers believe through demonstrative proof based on reasoning (*istidlāl*), while the elite of the believers believe through clear evidence by virtue of being drawn near. The Real ﷻ has drawn near to them and so they believe in God. The final states of their belief are through eyewitnessing (*iyān*) and that is for the elect of the elect.

And be not the first to disbelieve in it: “Do not [be the ones to] introduce disbelief (*kufr*) as an ongoing practice (*sunna*),”¹¹⁴ for surely the responsibility of the initiator in what he practices is greater than the responsibility of the imitator in what he follows.

And do not sell My signs for a small price: “Do not prefer your cheap worldly portion (*ḥazz*) over the grandeur of My truth (*ḥaqq*).”

And fear Me: Those who fear His punishment are many, but those who are in awe of knowing and seeing Him are rare.

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

[2:42] *And do not obscure the truth with falsehood; and do not conceal the truth while you know.*

“Do not imagine that the two opposites can be joined for you in harmony or that you can be in one state in two places,” [for the servant] is either open-hearted in truth (*mabsūt bi-ḥaqq*) or tied to worldly concerns (*marbūt bi-ḥazz*). The occurrence of the two situations at the same time is impossible.

“**And do not obscure the truth with falsehood**, defiling (*tadnīs*), **and do not conceal the truth**, deceiving (*talbīs*), **while you know** that sanctification (*taqdīs*) is the right of the True (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*).” They have recited:

O you who are marrying
al-Thurayā to Suhayl,¹¹⁵

113 The Qurʾān uses both words to describe information given to man: *bayān* occurs in 3:138, 55:4, and 75:19; and *burhān* in 4:174, 12:24, and 28:32.

114 To understand “disbelief” (*kufr*) as a practice, it is helpful to remember that one of the meanings of the word is to deny the favor and blessing of God, that is, to be ungrateful.

115 Muṣṭafā identifies al-Thurayā as the daughter of ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Ḥārith b. Umayya b. ʿAbd al-Shams. He gives Suhayl’s full name as Suhayl b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf, and says he was from Yemen (and therefore far from al-Thurayā’s clan). But the names are also the names of two stars (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* 1:1454).

by your acknowledgment of the everlasting existence of God,
how can they meet?

She is of the northern region
when she rises

while Suhayl
is from the south.¹¹⁶

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَعَانُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَرْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّكْعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

[2:43] *And establish prayer, and pay the alms, and bow with those that bow.* “Keep in mind the good manners of presence (*ḥaḍra*), for the preservation of good manners is the most perfect type of service (*khidma*).” The allusion in giving alms (*zakāt*) is to the almsgiving of aspirations, just as you fulfill the almsgiving of wealth. The one who spoke for them said:

Everything has
an almsgiving to be paid.

The almsgiving of beauty
is a mercy like Mine.¹¹⁷

Through the abundant increases in aspirations and the subtleties of vision He brings about in those who pursue and seek,¹¹⁸ they are lifted up and their states become states of bewilderment.¹¹⁹

“*And bow with those that bow*, following the traditions of the pious forefathers (*salaf*) in what they used to do, avoiding the practice of isolation, for being in a dense congregation (*ghumār*)¹²⁰ is sounder than being separated from people.”

116 Muṣṭafā traces the verse to ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p. 112), as does Lane (*Arabic-English Lexicon* 1:1454).

117 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse elsewhere (Muṣṭafā, no. 3, p. 92).

118 The translation follows “those who seek” (*al-murīdūn*) from MSS K117, fol. 11a and Y101, fol. 15a.

119 The Basyūnī edition has a blank here, which has been filled in with *tatahayyarū aḥwāl* from MS K117, fol. 11a.

120 In his entry on the word *ghumār*, Lane references a *ḥadīth*, “I shall be among the dense congregation of the people” (*akūnu fī ghumāri al-nās*), which al-Qushayrī probably has in mind here (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* 2:2292).

﴿أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ
أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ﴾

[2:44] *Will you bid others to piety and forget yourselves, while you recite the Book? Do you not understand?*

“Will you rouse others to be foremost while you are content to lag behind?” It is also said, “Will you call created beings to Us while you hang back from Us? Will you give drink¹²¹ to the delegations while you yourselves hold back from the water? Will you vie with others, arguing with them over particulars, content, in your bankruptcy, with externals?”

It is said, “Do you look to the weight of a speck or the measure of a grain in people,¹²² while you tolerate¹²³ the mounds of sand and mountains in yourselves?” The one who spoke for them said:

Do you look
to the mote in my eye
when you do not see
the beam in your own?¹²⁴

It is also said, “Do you give the choicest drink while you do not drink in turn?”

“*While you recite the Book?* Then you persist obstinately with clandestine claims, denying the shameful thoughts (*faḍīḥāt al-khawāṭir*) and the unmistakable driving cries [to blameworthy things] (*ṣarīḥāt al-zawājir*)¹²⁵ hidden in your hearts. *Do you not understand* that these are blameworthy qualities (*dhamīmun min al-khiṣāl*) and ugly acts (*qabīḥun min al-fi‘āl*)?”

121 The translation follows the word *tusharribūna* from MSS K117, fol. 11a and Y101, fol. 15a rather than the word *tusarriḥūna* found in the Basyūnī edition.

122 The translation follows the word *al-khalq* from MSS K117, fol. 11a and Y101, fol. 15a rather than the word *al-ḥaqq* found in the Basyūnī edition.

123 The translation follows the word *tusāmiḥūna* from MSS K117, fol. 11a and Y101, fol. 15a rather than the word *tusāhimūna* found in the Basyūnī edition.

124 Muṣṭafā gives no other source for this poem than al-Qushayrī (Muṣṭafā, no. 14, p. 61).

125 See note 68 on the words *zajr* and *zawājir* in the commentary on Qur’ān 2:23–24.

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

[2:45] *Seek help in patience and prayer. For it is grievous, except to the humble,* While patience (*ṣabr*) weans the lower self from familiar things (*maʿlūfāt*), prayer turns one's attention to the pursuit of intimate communications (*muwāṣalāt*). Patience indicates fleeing from anything other [than God] and prayer indicates perpetual standing in the presence of the unseen. Seeking help by these means takes a great deal of rigor unless the Real discloses Himself to one's heart, for in the transmitted tradition [it says], "Truly when God most high discloses Himself to something, it becomes humble to Him."¹²⁶ When the Real discloses Himself He lightens and makes easy what creatures must take on.¹²⁷ This is [true] because assuming responsibility for acts of obedience is a religious obligation (*taklīf*) that is a burden, whereas the disclosure [of God happens] by witnessings and through realization (*taḥqīq*), and ends in communion (*tamām al-wuṣla*) and perpetual nearness (*dawām al-zulfa*).

It is said, "Seek help through Me for patience with Me, and seek help from Me to preserve for you your prayer for Me so that the incoming (*wāridāt*)¹²⁸ unveilings and awe will not overwhelm you so much that you will be unable to serve [Me]." Surely it is a great blessing from the Real, that He decreases the onslaughts of ecstatic finding (*saṭawāt al-wujūd*) upon the heart at the time of unveiling; [thus] the servant is able to perform the acts of separation.¹²⁹

There are several kinds of patience, all of them praiseworthy. There is patience in God, patience for God, patience through God, and patience with God. There is only one type of patience which is not praiseworthy and that is the type of patience which keeps one from God.

Patience is beautiful
in all abodes

126 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān gives al-Nasāʾī and others as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

127 The translation follows the word *tawallā* from MSS 117 fol. 11a and Y101, fol. 15a rather than the word *tawaqqā* in the Basyūnī text.

128 In a section entitled "The incoming" (al-Wārid), al-Qushayrī describes *wāridāt* as thoughts, feelings or experiences that come without invitation to the heart (*Risāla*, 1:245).

129 Al-Qushayrī uses the term "separation" (*farq*) to refer to the acts performed by the servant, in contrast to what comes from God, which is a gathering (*jamʿ*). See the section on "Gathering and separation" (al-Jamʿ wa-l-farq), *Risāla*, 1:207–208.

except in resisting you,
for then it is blameworthy.¹³⁰

الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّعُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

[2:46] *who reckon (yaẓunnūna) that they shall meet their Lord, and that to Him they are returning.*

It is said that the word “to think” (*ẓann*) is used here to mean “certainty” (*yaqīn*), which would be the most obvious [meaning].¹³¹ What is meant by it is “reckoning” (*ḥusbān*). Those who reckon with the reckoning of certainty (*ẓanna ẓann al-yaqīn*) are those who experience the communion [of lovers]. Those who reckon by the reckoning of guessing (*ẓanna ẓann al-takhmīn*) are those who experience separation.

[The phrase] *they shall meet their Lord* (*mulāqū rabbihim*) is in a grammatical form appropriate for the past, present, and future. Because the folk¹³² have recognized the truth of what will be, according to the decrees of the unseen, they have reached the point that it is as if the promise has already been determined for them and the unseen is present for them.

يَبْنَئِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَذْكَرُوا نِعْمَتِي الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ
عَلَىٰ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

[2:47] *O children of Israel, remember My favor wherewith I favored you, and that I have preferred you above all the worlds;*

He called the children of Israel to bear witness to the favor or bounty (*fadl*) granted to them, saying, “*and that I have preferred you (faḍḍaltukum) above all the worlds.*” He called the Muslims from the community of

130 Muṣṭafā states that this verse is attributed to al-ʿUtba Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAmr b. Muʿāwiya b. ʿUmar b. ʿUtba b. Abī Sufyān, who is said to have recited it when his son died. Among others to whom it is attributed are Abū Tammām and al-Shiblī (Muṣṭafā, no. 4, p. 104). Al-Qushayrī cites a slightly different version of the verse in the “Section on patience” (Bāb al-ṣabr), *Risāla*, 1:399.

131 Here al-Qushayrī is referring to *tafsīr* works such as that of al-Ṭabarī that explain how *ẓann*, which usually implies doubt, can sometimes mean reckoning or certainty (al-Ṭabarī, *Commentary on the Qurʾan*, trans. Cooper, 287).

132 Basyūnī explains in a footnote that al-Qushayrī means the Sufis here.

Muḥammad ﷺ to bear witness to the favor or bounty of God Himself, saying, “Say: ‘In the bounty of God, and in His mercy in that let them rejoice’” [10:58]. What a difference between those who bear witness to the favor or bounty they receive and those who bear witness to the bounty of their Lord Himself! The servant’s acknowledgment of the favor granted him implies gratitude, but with the danger of self-conceit (*iʿjāb*). But the servant’s acknowledgment of the bounty of the Real—the One whose majesty is in His description and His beauty in the worthiness of His attribute—involves praise, which leads to [God’s] approval (*ijāb*).

وَأَتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا
يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

[2:48] *and fear the day when no soul for another shall give satisfaction, and no intercession shall be accepted from it; nor any compensation (‘adl) be taken, neither shall they be helped.*

He causes fear in ordinary people by His acts, for He said, *fear the day and fear the fire* [2:24, 3:131]. But He causes fear in the elect by His attributes, for He said, *And say: “Act, for God will surely see your actions, and [so will] His Messenger”* [9:105], and He said, *And you are not occupied with any business. . . but We are witnesses over you when you are engaged therein* [10:61]. He causes fear in the elect of the elect by Himself, for He said, *God warns you of His Self* [3:28, 3:30].

[The word] “compensation” (*‘adl*) [here] means “ransom” (*fidā*).

On the Day of the Resurrection no intercession will be heard except for the one whom the Real has commanded to intercede for Him. He has permitted it and He, in actuality, is the greatest intercessor even though the term “intercessor” is not applied to Him because it is without [divine] instruction (*tawqif*).¹³³ It is said about it:

Praise be to God
in gratitude,
for everything good
is with Him.

133 Like other Ashʿarīs, al-Qushayrī believed that the names of God should include only those used to describe Him in the Qurʾān or in sound ḥadīths.

The lover has become
my intercessor
to my intercessor
to Him.¹³⁴

The intercession of intercessors will not benefit those who have been hit by the calamity of fate. There will be no helpers for them, nor ransom accepted from them, even if they had the fill of the heavens and earths.

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُدَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ
وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَٰلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

[2:49] *And when We delivered you from the folk of Pharaoh who were visiting you with evil chastisement, slaughtering your sons, and sparing your women; and for you therein was a tremendous trial from your Lord.*

Whoever has patience in God with the affliction of His enemies (*a'dā'ihī*), God will compensate him with the companionship of His friends (*awliyā'ihī*) and He will grant him His beautiful gift (*ʿatā'ihī*). The children of Israel were patient in enduring injury from Pharaoh and his people, so He appointed prophets from among them and made them kings. He gave them what He had not given anyone in all the worlds.

And for you therein was a tremendous trial from your Lord: It is said that [it was] a great blessing (*ni'matun ʿazīma*) and a severe trial (*miḥnatun shadīda*). In truth, what [came] from God was externally a trial (*miḥna*) but it was really, for the one who recognized it, a blessing (*ni'ma*) and a kindness (*minna*).

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمْ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

[2:50] *When We divided for you the sea, and We delivered you, and drowned Pharaoh's folk, while you were beholding.*

The perceptive faculties (*baṣā'ir*) of the children of Israel had become

134 Muṣṭafā attributes the verse in a somewhat different version to al-Buḥṭurī, with the word “leader” (*amīr*) instead of “lover” (*ḥabīb*) (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 120). The translation follows MSS 117 fol. 11b and Y101, fol. 15b here, with “my” added to “intercessor” in two places. This is how the verse appears in the other versions located by Muṣṭafā.

diminished, so He showed them miracles openly (‘ayānan), whereas the perceptive faculties of this community [Muslims] were sharp, so He unveiled His signs to them secretly (*sirran*). This is His سُبْحَانَهُ way (*sunna*). For those who are sharper in the perceptive faculty, the matter will be more subtle for them and the allusions within it more abundant. [The Prophet] ﷺ said, “I was given the all-comprehensive words (*jawāmi‘ al-kalim*) and then the speech (*kalām*) was shortened for me.”¹³⁵

When [the children of Israel] saw these manifest signs in the splitting of the sea and the drowning of the people of Pharaoh, they were seized with doubt, and said, “They did not drown even though they were cast into the sea,” but the children of Israel *did* see them drowning. On the other hand, in this community, because of their being foremost¹³⁶ in their belief in the Messenger of God ﷺ and because of the power of their perceptive faculties, one youth said, “It is as if I was with the people of the garden exchanging visits, and as if I was with the people of the fire clamoring to one another, and as if I saw the throne of my Lord in plain sight.”¹³⁷ What a difference [there is] between one who sees with his own eyes yet doubts, and one who only hears [about something] and yet sees it like an eyewitness because of the power of his belief!

وَإِذْ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ
مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ۗ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

[2:51] *And when We appointed for Moses forty nights, then you took to yourselves the calf after him, and you were evildoers.*

What a difference [there is] between one community and another! When Moses ﷺ withdrew from the community for forty days, they took the calf as their object of worship and were pleased with that. They said, *This is your God and the God of Moses but he has forgotten* [20:88]. [On the other hand], the community of Muḥammad the Chosen ﷺ spent many years with their prophet. If they had heard anyone mention any form of [material] description of what they worshiped, they would not have spared their last breath and would have given their lives [before agreeing to such a comparison].

135 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives Muslim and Ibn Ḥanbal, as well as others, as sources for this *ḥadīth*. Al-Qushayrī also cites the *ḥadīth* in his commentary on Qur’ān 2:1.

136 The translation follows *li-farṭ* in MSS K117, fol. 11b and Y101, fol. 16a.

137 Al-Qushayrī cites a more complete version of this *ḥadīth* in his commentary on Qur’ān 2:4. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān cites a few sources for the *ḥadīth*, including ‘Uqaylī.

It is said that Moses ﴿﴾ entrusted his community to his brother, saying, *Take my place with my people* [7:142]. When he returned he found that they had fallen into temptation (*fitna*). Our Prophet ﴿﴾ relied on God and did not suggest anyone to lead the community. At the end of his life, he said “the highest companions.”¹³⁸ See how the Real attended to the care of [Muḥammad’s] community in preserving their monotheism. By my life, they may forfeit their [territorial] borders but they will not compromise their declaration of God’s unity (*tawḥīd*).

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

[2:52] *Then We pardoned you after that so that you might be thankful.*

The quickness [with which God] pardoned such a grave sin indicates the lesser weight of those who were pardoned. The words of God most high testify to that [in addressing the wives of the Prophet], *Whoever of you commits manifest indecency the chastisement shall be doubled for her* [33:30]. The children of Israel worshiped the calf so God most high said, “*Then We pardoned you after that.*” To the community [of Muḥammad ﴿﴾] He said, “*and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil shall see it*” [99:8].

وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

[2:53] *And when We gave to Moses the scripture and the criterion, so that you might be guided.*

The criterion with which this community is distinguished is a light in their hearts by which they differentiate between the truth and falsehood. The Prophet ﴿﴾ said to Wābiṣa, “Seek a pronouncement (*fatwā*) from your heart.”¹³⁹ And he said, “Fear the inward perception (*firāsa*) of the believer,

138 This is a reference to a *ḥadīth* from ‘Ā’isha, who related that, on his death bed, the Prophet was given the choice between continuing his life in this world and going to God. He answered, “Nay, the highest companions (*rafiq al-‘alā*) in Paradise,” echoing Qur’ān 4:69: *What fine companions they are!* (*wa ḥasuna ulā’ika rafiqan*). The *ḥadīth* and Qur’ānic verse are mentioned in Lane in his comments on the word *rafiq* (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* 1:1126). The *ḥadīth* is understood here as meaning that the Prophet left his community in the hands of his best companions, without selecting a specific leader to succeed him.

139 Basyūnī states in a footnote that the *ḥadīth* is related al-Bukhārī’s *Tārīkh*, and al-Dārimī. He gives another version from al-Nawawī’s *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥin*: “Seek your

for he sees with the light of God.”¹⁴⁰ And God most high said, “If you fear God, He will grant you a criterion” [8:29] and that criterion is a legacy for what they have put forward in beautiful works.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ ۖ يَتَقَوْمِ إِيَّاكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجَلِ

[2:54] *And when Moses said to his people, “My people you have done wrong against yourselves by your taking the [golden] calf;*

That is, “you have not caused harm to anyone but yourselves with the sins you perpetrated.” As for the Real سُبْحَانَهُ, He is exalted in description. None of the wrong of the wrongdoers can be referred back to His exaltedness. The calf of whoever acts in conformity with his whim and follows his objects of desire is whatever he is intent upon and whatever he singles out as his objective.

فَتُوبُوا إِلَىٰ بَارِيكُمْ

[2:54] *now turn to your Creator*

The allusion is to the true sense of repentance in abandoning oneself entirely to (*khurūj ilā*) God.

فَأَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ

[2:54] *and slay one another;*

Repentance by slaying oneself has not been abrogated, but the slaying [done] by the children of Israel was an outward act while this community’s repentance consists of slaying themselves inwardly, for the first step in seeking God is to abandon (*khurūj an*) the lower self.

Verily the people imagined that the repentance of the children of Israel was more difficult but it is not as they imagine, for that was the suffering of slaying one time. As for the elect in this community, there is a slaying

own pronouncement, even if the pronouncers make pronouncements for you.”

¹⁴⁰ Basyūnī states in a footnote that the *ḥadīth* is related in al-Tirmidhī and al-Ṭabarānī.

in every moment. Because of this:

One who has died and found rest
is not really dead.

The only real dead are those
who are dead among the living.¹⁴¹

Slaying the soul in truth is declaring it free of strength and power, or [to be free] of bearing witness to anything from it. It is rejecting its claim, confusing its attempts at self-management, submitting all of its affairs to the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*, stripping it of its free choice and will, and obliterating the vestiges (*āthār*) of the human from it. As for the remaining traces (*rusūm*) and skeletal structures (*hayākil*),¹⁴² there is no danger or concern in them.

ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِنْدَ بَارِيكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ
إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥٥﴾

[2:54] *That will be better for you in your Creator’s sight; He will turn to you [relenting]; truly He is the Relenting, the Merciful.*

His being for you against yourselves is more perfect than your being for yourselves.

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً
فَأَخَذْتَكُمُ الصَّعِقَةَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

[2:55] *And when you said, “O Moses, we will not believe you till we see God openly”; and the thunderbolt took you, while you were beholding.*

Demanding to see the Essence without divine blessing is an open act of sacrilege, which is one of the signs of distance and misery, whereas attesting to the attribute of [divine] governance in the unveilings of might as linked to the kindnesses of nearness is one of the marks of communion

141 Muṣṭafā attributes this verse to Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Quddūs and another individual (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 22). Al-Qushayrī recites the same verse in the section on “The moment” (al-Waqt) (*Riṣāla*, 1:190).

142 These are terms Sufi writers adapted from early Arabic poetry. See Michael Sells’ discussion of this in his *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 56–74 and 338n43.

and the tokens of felicity.

Surely when they spoke from ignorance, without any sense whatsoever of shame, the convulsion and the thunderbolt blast overtook them.

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

[2:56] *Then We raised you up after you were dead, so that you might be thankful.*

He returned them to consciousness after the blows of punishment overwhelmed them in order to fulfill the decree for them, and to implement [God's] way of pardoning sin. One of the aspects of generosity is to lower the veil over the defects of servants.

وَوَضَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّٰ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ كُلُّوا مِنْ ط
طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَٰكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

[2:57] *And We made the cloud overshadow you; and We sent down upon you manna and quails: “Eat of the good things We have provided for you”; And they did not wrong Us, but they wronged themselves.*

When He banished them to the desolate regions of exile, He desired only to shade them (*zallalahum*) and to cover them (*jallahum*) with sufficient clothing. He freed them (*aghnāhum*) from the trouble of having to work for themselves, favoring them by providing them (*tawallāhum*) with what they needed. Their hair and nails did not continue growing, their clothes did not become dirty, and the rays of the sun did not beat down on them. This is His way with someone when He has come between him and his free choice. What He سبحانه chooses for him will be better for him than what he chooses for himself.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ
سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَاكُمْ وَسَازِغِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

[2:58] *And when We said, “Enter this city, and eat freely therein wherever*

you will, and enter it at the gate prostrating, and say, “exoneration,” and We shall forgive you your transgressions and We shall give more to those who are virtuous.”

The children of Israel persisted¹⁴³ in neglecting that which they were commanded to do, to the point that they were entrusted to preserve [their] speech, but they altered it, and they were commanded [to take] a position of prostration upon entering [the city] but they did not.¹⁴⁴ They exposed themselves to the arrows of the unseen and then were not able to withstand the injury of their strikes (*lam yuṭīqū l-iṣābata bi-qar’ihā*). They were exposed to unexpected punishments and could not hold up to the blows of their impact (*fa-lam yathbutū ‘inda ṣadamāt waq’ihā*).

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ
ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

[2:59] Then the evildoers substituted a saying other than that which had been said to them; so We sent down upon the evildoers wrath from the heaven for their wickedness.

They could neither ward off the opening of heaven above them with their stratagems, nor avert the cords of affliction below them by relying on their usual states. They gnashed the teeth of remorse¹⁴⁵ when the fangs of pain¹⁴⁶ bit them. How could this have benefited them when the situation was hopeless?

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانفَجَرَتْ
مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ كَلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِنْ

143 The blank in the Basyūnī text here has been completed with the word “persisted” (*aṣarra*) from MSS K117, fol. 12b and Y101, fol. 16b.

144 As described in the transmitted commentary found in al-Ṭabarī, they were told to say, “Exoneration” (*hiṭṭa*) and to prostrate, but they said something else and entered the city without prostrating (al-Ṭabarī, *Commentary on the Qur’an*, trans. Cooper, 334–337).

145 The translation follows the phrase *qarā’ū sinn al-nadam* as it appears in MSS K117, fol. 12b and Y101, fol. 16b.

146 Lane notes that “dog-teeth” or “fangs” are “metaphorically assigned to evil, or mischief” (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2:2870).

رَزَقَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَعَثُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾

[2:60] *And when Moses sought water for his people, We said, "Strike the rock with your staff," and there exploded from it twelve fountains, and each people came to know their drinking place, "Eat and drink of that which God has provided, and do not be degenerate in the earth, seeking corruption."*

One who is capable of extracting water from solid rock is capable of quenching thirst without water. But He made the trace or effect (*athar*) of the miracle manifest in [Moses] and connected him to the locus (*maḥall*) of calling for help. This, in order for Moses to work with his self (*nafs*) in moving the stone, and give him responsibility in striking it with his staff. Thus, there would be a measure of [human] effort involved in making His decree come to pass when he sought water for his people. Then the Real سُبْحَانَهُ wanted each people to follow a way (*sunna*), stick to their boundary (*ḥadd*), and not dispute with their companions. He singled out for each tribe a marker by which they would know their drinking place, so that they would not go to each others' drinking places. When He had met their needs, He bid them to be grateful, to preserve the command, and to stop choosing sin, and so He said, "*and do not be degenerate in the earth, seeking corruption.*"

The drinking places are different and each comes to their own, so one drinking place is sweet and fresh, another salty and bitter, another clear and pure, and another dried up with only a few drops. The water carrier for each people leads them and the scout of each party drives them on, so the lower selves come to the watering places of desires and cravings, the hearts come to the drinking places of piety and acts of obedience, the spirits come to the watering places of unveiling and witnessing, and the innermost selves come to the watering places of realities. The latter [innermost selves] are snatched from the being and outward markings (*al-kawn wa-l-marsūmāt*) [of humans], then from the sensory awareness and attributes (*al-iḥsās wa-l-ṣifāt*) [of humans], then annihilated in the reality of ecstatic finding and essence (*al-wujūd wa-l-dhāt*).

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا
مِمَّا تُثْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقَتَّابِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا قَالَ
أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ أَهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ
مِمَّا سَأَلْتُمْ^ط وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلِيلَةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ^ط

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّنَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ
 ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

[2:61] *And when you said, “Moses, we will not endure one sort of food; pray to your Lord for us, that He may bring forth for us of what the earth produces—green herbs, cucumbers, garlic, lentils, onions”; He said, “Would you exchange what is better with what is lowlier?” “Go down to a city, you shall have what you demanded”; And abasement and wretchedness were cast upon them, and they incurred God’s wrath; that was because they used to disbelieve the signs of God and slay prophets without right; that was because they disobeyed, and they were transgressors.*

They were not content with the goodness of [God] choosing for them, nor were they patient in His managing what He desired for them in basic food and clothing. In their confusion, they fell back to their customary behavior of eating impure food and finding contentment in a lower state, so He returned them to the suffering of ignominy (*muqāsāt al-hawān*) and bound them to perpetual disappointment (*idāmat al-khidhlān*). They went so far as to shed the blood of prophets and violated the sanctity of [God’s] command with their lack of shame. They did not repent, so He punished them for their ugly acts (*qabīh fi’ālihim*) and returned them to what He had chosen for their souls in their contemptible states (*khasā’is aḥwālihim*). When sincere counsel (*naṣiḥa*) did not succeed with them, retribution and humiliation (*faḍiḥa*) overtook them.

It is said that the children of Israel were divided in their aspirations and scattered in their objectives. They were not content to have just one food for themselves, nor were they satisfied with one object of worship in their religion; [this was true] to the point that they said to Moses ﷺ when they saw people worshiping idols, “O Moses, make for us a god just as they have gods” [7:138]. This is the attribute of the masters of separation (*arbāb al-tafrīqa*). Patience with the One (*al-wāḥid*) is hard. God most high said, “And when you mention the Lord alone (*waḥdahū*) in the Qur’ān, they turn their backs in aversion” [17:46].

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّٰرِيْنَ وَالصَّٰبِغِيْنَ مَن ءَامَنَ بِاللّٰهِ
 وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صٰلِحًا فَلَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ

وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

[2:62] *Surely those who believe, and those of the Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabaeans, whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and performs righteous deeds—their wage is with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.*

The diversity of [religious] paths¹⁴⁷ in spite of the unity of the source does not prevent a goodly acceptance [for all]. For anyone who affirms the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* in His signs and believes in what He has said concerning His truth and attributes, the dissimilarity of [religious] laws and diversity that occurs in [the] name[s] [of religion] is not a problem in terms of who merits [God’s] good pleasure. Because of that He said, “*Surely those who believe and those of the Jews.*” Then He said, “*whoever believes,*” meaning if they fear [God] in [their] different ways of knowing [Him], all of them will have a beautiful place of return and an ample reward. The believer (*muʾmin*) is anyone in the protection (*amān*) of the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*. For anyone who is in His protection, it is fitting that *no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.*

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ
بِقُوَّةٍ وَادْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ
فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

[2:63] *And when We made a covenant for you, and We raised above you the mount, “Take forcefully what We have given you, and remember what is in it so that you might preserve yourselves.”*

[2:64] *Then you turned away thereafter, and but for God’s bounty and His mercy toward you, you would have been among the losers.*

He *سُبْحَانَهُ* made a covenant with all responsible beings,¹⁴⁸ and some responded willingly because He made Himself known to them, and they

147 The translation follows the word “paths” (*turuq*) from MS Y101, fol. 17a, rather than the word “path” (*ṭarīq*) in the Basyūnī edition or the word “opinion” (*ẓann*) in MS K117, fol. 12b.

148 In Islamic law *mukallaḫūn* is a term used to describe those who are adult and sane, and therefore bound to follow the *sharīʿa*.

declared His unity (*fa-waḥḥadūhu*). Other people responded unwillingly because He veiled them, so they did not want to recognize Him (*fa-jaḥadūhu*). There is no proof more powerful than the eyewitnessing of the mount (*ṭūr*) He raised above them, which was a mountain (*jabal*), but they lacked the light of inner sight (*baṣīra*) and so the witnessing of physical vision (*baṣar*) did not benefit them.

Then you turned away thereafter, that is, you returned to disobedience after witnessing the signs with your own eyes. If not for His decree in granting respite and His forbearance through acts of grace, He would punish you without delay and cause a great misfortune to descend upon you, and your deeds would be entirely a loss.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ
فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾

[2:65] *And verily you know that there were those among you who transgressed the Sabbath, and We said to them, “Be apes, despised!”*

The metamorphosis (*maskh*) of this community occurred in their hearts.¹⁴⁹ When [the children of Israel] abandoned [God’s] command and disdained the laws that were imposed on them, the punishments came quickly in their disgrace, metamorphosis, and in the other things which are included in the [Qur’anic text]. Because of their violation of the covenant and rejection of the limit [imposed by God], the community was punished through the metamorphosis of their hearts and the alteration of their states. [God] most high said, “*And We shall confound their hearts and their eyes; just as they did not believe the first time*” [6:110]. The punishments of hearts are far worse than the punishments of the bodily selves. About this they have recited:

O you who ask me,
“How have you been after him?”

I suffered that which tormented me,
while it made him happy.

I kept strutting about
in our togetherness

149 Al-Qushayrī is in agreement here with commentators who prefer an inward understanding of metamorphosis as opposed to those who suggest that the children of Israel were actually transformed into apes.

and felt safe from
the ruses of time.

But the turning away from me
went on until

not a bit of what I had
experienced remained.¹⁵⁰

فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَلًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

[2:66] *And We made it an exemplary punishment for all the former times and for the latter, and an admonition to those who fear.*

Thus the states of those who were tried by abandonment (*muniya bi-l-hijrān*) and branded with disappointment (*wusima bi-l-khidhlān*) became a lesson—to look at what happened to them is to choke on grief. The one who is reduced to misery after having had status becomes an object of scorn before every ignoble person. This is what remains for those who have been brought low after [experiencing] the wrath of kings and [being] shunned by chieftains:

The youths surrounded
and ganged up on me.

From behind,
they called the dogs on me.¹⁵¹

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبُحُوا بَقَرَةً ۗ

[2:67] *And when Moses said to his people, “God commands you to sacrifice a cow.”*

It was obligatory for them to execute the command directly, but they wasted time with external appearances, imagining that they had the leisure to linger in their digression from the obligation of the covenant. So their misery was doubled and the ignominy they had been warned about overtook them.

150 Muṣṭafā notes that these verses appear unattributed in a slightly different version in al-Qushayrī’s *Sharḥ al-asmā’* (Muṣṭafā, no. 53, p. 71).

151 Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to Majnūn in the *Diwān* (Muṣṭafā, no. 3, p. 122).

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا فَارِضٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ ط

When He said: “*She is a cow neither old, nor virgin, middling between the two. . .*” [2:68], it meant she would be neither young nor aged but somewhere between the two. The allusion is to the fact that one who is suited for this path (*ṭarīqa*) is one who is neither attracted by the impetuosity of youth and its drunkenness, nor paralyzed by the weakness and frailty of old age. Rather he is alert; he has regained consciousness from his drunkenness yet retains some of the vigor of his youth.

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ فَاقِعٌ لَوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النَّظِيرِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالُوا
أَدْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشَبَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ
اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

[2:69] “. . . a golden cow, bright in color, gladdening to beholders.”

[2:70] They said, “Pray to your Lord for us, that He make clear to us what she may be; the cows are all alike to us; and if God wills, we shall then be guided.”

Just as her [bright] color would have been perceived by the eyes, the allusion here is to those of the people of the story (*ahl al-qīṣṣa*)¹⁵² whose witnessing¹⁵³ overwhelms the hearts [of others] because of that which is clothed with the garment of invincibility (*jabarūt*) and made to rise from the witness of the unseen. One notices that someone like this is oblivious to human states and is overtaken by the remembrance of the Real. Thus, in the transmitted tradition: The friends of God are those who, when they are seen, God is remembered.¹⁵⁴

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ

152 Basyūnī adds a footnote saying that what is meant here is the Sufis.

153 The translation follows the word “witnessing” (*mushāhada*) in MSS K117, fol. 13a and Y101, fol. 17b rather than the word “witness” (*shāhid*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

154 The translation follows “they are seen” (*ru’ū*) from MSS K117, fol. 13a and Y101, fol. 17b rather than Basyūnī’s “they see” (*ra’aw*). Chittick locates the *ḥadīth* with the passive form of the verb in Ibn Māja, *Zuhd* 4 (William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998], 442). ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives al-Albānī’s *al-Silsila al-Ṣaḥīḥa* as a reference.

مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَا شَيْءَ فِيهَا قَالُوا أَلَسْنَ جِئْتِ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبَّجُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا
يَفْعَلُونَ

[2:71] *He said, "He says she shall be a cow not broken to plow the earth, or to water the tillage, with no blemish on her." They said, "Now you have brought the truth"; and so they sacrificed her, even though they very nearly did not.*

Just as this cow was not to have been broken in for work, nor worn out for the purposes of profits, there was to be no color in her inconsistent with the overall grandeur of her color. The allusion in this is to the people of divine friendship (*walāya*) who do not exert themselves with anyone or anything other [than God], which is to say that they do not seek to obtain anything through secondary causes, and who do not rely in their hearts on external appearances and simulacra. They do not trust in their own choices and contrivance. They are not prey to the claims of desire, nor game in the claws of the present world. Carnal desires do not rule them and no human authority controls them. They do not strive at all to obtain what they desire and are not concerned with attaining what they wish for. There is no mark of others upon them, nor any sign of [their seeking anything through] secondary causes, for they are supported by God, annihilated from all else, nay, effaced as God turns them this way and that. God has conquered their hearts. Just as their object of worship (*ma'būd*) is God, so their only aim (*maqṣūd*) is God. Just as their aim (*maqṣūd*) is God, so what they bear witness to (*mashhūd*) is God and what they have found (*mawjūd*) is God. Nay, they are effaced in God and [only] God remains after them.¹⁵⁵ The one who spoke for them recited:

If you want me to be pleased
and you to be pleased
and to take the reins
of our life together,
then look at the world
through my eyes
and listen with my ears
and speak with my tongue.¹⁵⁶

155 The Basyūnī edition has a blank here: *wa...anhum Allāh*. *Al-khalaf* has been inserted on the basis of MSS K117, fol. 13a and Y101, fol. 18a.

156 Muṣṭafā gives no sources for these verses (Muṣṭafā, no. 9, p. 113).

قَالُوا أَلَّيْنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبْحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

[2:71] *They said, “Now you have brought the truth”; and so they sacrificed her, even though they very nearly did not.*

They sought a stratagem for themselves, but when their stratagems failed, they submitted to the decree and were rid of the difficulties of the demands. If they had done what they were commanded to do [straight away], their misery would not have been doubled.

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادَّارَأْتُمْ فِيهَا^ط وَاللَّهُ مُخْرِجُ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

[2:72] *And when you killed a living soul, and disputed thereon—and God disclosed what you were hiding,*

One who is disloyal is afraid and, out of fear that his secret will become manifest, relies on concealment, deception, denial, and evasion. His fault (*awāruhu*) is inevitably discovered, his secrets (*asrāruhu*) exposed, and the coverings (*astāruhu*) fall because of the shame of his action. God most high said, “and God disclosed what you were hiding.”

فَقُلْنَا أَضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ ۗ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

[2:73] *so We said, “Smite him with part of it”; God brings to life the dead, and He shows you His signs so that you might understand.*

God سُبْحَانَهُ wanted to give life to the dead man so that he could expose his killer through the testimony [of the slain], so He commanded them to kill one of their animals, and made it the cause of bringing the slain man to life.¹⁵⁷ The allusion here is to anyone who desires the life of his heart; he will only attain it by sacrificing his lower self, since the heart of anyone who sacrifices his lower self through struggle (*mujāhadāt*) comes to life by the

157 The *tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī transmits commentary with additional details of this story about a man killed by one of the children of Israel. After God told them to smite the murdered man with part of the sacrificed cow, the man came to life and identified his murderer (al-Ṭabarī, *Commentary on the Qur’an*, trans. Cooper, 391–395).

lights of witnessing (*mushāhadāt*). Likewise, when God wants someone's reputation to live forever,¹⁵⁸ He causes his reputation in this world to pass into obscurity.

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً
وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَقَّقُ
فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ
بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

[2:74] *Then your hearts became hardened thereafter, or even yet harder; for there are stones from which rivers come gushing, and others split so that water issues from them; and others come down in fear of God; And God is not heedless of what you do.*

He explained that even though they witnessed weighty signs and had seen clear proofs, when [divine] solicitude (*ināya*) did not help them and God did not decree guidance (*hidāya*) for them, the many signs only increased their hardness (*qaswa*) and brought misery upon misery (*shaqwa*) for them from the hiding places of the [divine] preordination. He compared their hearts to stones because [stones] do not grow or thrive, and their hearts likewise do not understand and are not aware.¹⁵⁹ Then He explained that [their hearts] are even harder than stones, *for there are stones from which rivers come gushing* and upon which the traces of the fear of God appear.¹⁶⁰ But their hearts are empty of all good. How can it not be so when [their hearts] were made to suffer the turning of the Real from them (*muniyat bi-irāḍi al-ḥaqqi ʿanhā*) and were singled out for the removal of all good from them (*wa-khuṣṣat bi-intizāʿi al-khayrāt minhā*).

﴿ أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلِمًا

158 The translation follows the word “forever” (*al-abad*) from MSS K117, fol. 13 and Y101, fol. 18a. The Basyūnī edition has *al-abdāl*, but Basyūnī adds a footnote suggesting the word is probably *al-abad*.

159 The translation follows the words “are not aware” (*lā taʿī*) found in MSS K117, fol. 13b and Y101, fol. 18a rather than *lā taḡhni* in the Basyūnī edition.

160 Basyūnī suggests in a footnote that there is an allusion to Qurʾān 59:21: *Had We sent down this Qurʾān upon a mountain, you would surely have seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of God.*

اللَّهُ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِن بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

[2:75] *Are you then so eager that they should believe you, seeing there is a party of them that heard God’s word, and then tampered with it, and that, after they had comprehended it knowingly?*

He informed them of [the status] of their belief and related that after hearing the address of God ﷻ, they engaged in tampering [with it] and altering [it]: “Why would they believe you when they already heard by means of the message? How can those who do not remain in a state of faith (*imān*) after eyewitnessing (*‘iyān*) believe by means of demonstrative proof (*burhān*)? That which does not hold true for the Real does not hold true for you. How can those who are not ashamed before the Real be ashamed before you?”

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَا بِعَضُّهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضِ قَالُوا أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُم بِمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَاجُّوكُمْ بِهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ أَوْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

[2:76] *And when they meet those who believe, they say, “We believe”; but when they go in private one to another, they say: “Do you speak to them of what God has disclosed to you, so that they may thereby dispute with you before your Lord? Have you no understanding?”*

[2:77] *Do they not know that God knows what they keep secret and what they proclaim?*

They encouraged one another among themselves to reject the Real and to hide the situation from the Muslims. But they did not know that God was informing His Messenger ﷺ of their secrets, and that a light the Real¹⁶¹ makes manifest cannot be extinguished by the efforts of anyone other than Him. When the tongue agrees but the mind¹⁶² objects, it only increases separation.

وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانِيٍّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

161 The translation follows the word “the Real” (*al-ḥaqq*) found in MS K117, fol. 13b rather than “the unseen” (*al-ghayb*) found in the Basyūnī edition and MS Y101, fol. 18b.

162 The word used here is usually translated as “creed” or “dogmatic conviction” (*‘aqīda*).

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ
 اللَّهِ لَيْشْتَرَوْا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ
 مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

[2:78] *And there are some of them that are illiterate, not knowing the scripture, but only desires and mere conjectures.*

[2:79] *So woe to those who write the scripture with their hands then say, “This is from God” that they may sell it for a small price.*

He related that they differed in the shortcomings of their disbelief. One group is the most contemptible,¹⁶³ while the majority relied on blind following (*taqlīd*) out of ignorance. It was not that doubt seized them but rather that they were misled by conjecture and speculation. They have no share in their scriptures other than to recite them without knowledge of their meanings. Among this group are those who are mostly concerned with what they desire for themselves. There is no possibility of their being helped and no definitive way of finding the truth among their conjectures.

Then He related the bad outcome for them in His words, may His mention be exalted:

فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

[2:79] *So woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for their earnings.*

It means they have lost in the present and in the end. This verse alludes to those who lack sincerity (*ikhhlās*)¹⁶⁴ in companionship (*ṣuḥba*)¹⁶⁵ on the path of the Real. They associate with the friends (*awliyā*) [of God] externally but they possess no true spiritual desire (*irāda*), so they are companions of the heedless with only a partial view of this path (*ṭarīqa*). Whenever the clamor of worldly fortunes call, they rush to respond willingly, but when the demands of the Real سُبْحَانَكَ direct them to some endeavor,

163 Presumably this refers to those who knowingly tampered with their scriptures.

164 For more on this term, see the “Section on sincerity” (Bāb al-ikhhlās) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 2:443–447.

165 For more on this term, see the “Section on companionship” (Bāb al-ṣuḥba) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 2:574–580.

their situation is a bad one since they are not sincere. How intense will be their remorse for what they have hoarded from God! They will not prosper.

وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَةً قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا
فَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ ۗ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

[2:80] *And they say, “the fire shall not touch us, save a number of days.” Say: “Have you taken a covenant with God? God will not fail in His covenant, or say you against God what you do not know?”*

This verse alludes to those whose hearts are filled with false claims. Their conjecture has gotten the better of them, for out of extreme foolishness they judge themselves to be among the people of the story (*ahl al-qisṣa*).¹⁶⁶ Such a person abides (*yakhlud*)¹⁶⁷ with the murmurings of his lower desires. He judges the unseen by what he has himself neglected, having forgotten the ugliness of what he has done, and remembering [only] the errors of his false thinking. He is a servant of his lower self whose good opinion of himself has gotten the better of him. In reality, the results of his neglect and deceit possess him. God most high said, “*And that supposition of yours which you supposed of your Lord has ruined you. So you have become among the losers*” [41:23].

بَلَىٰ مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
النَّارِ ۗ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

[2:81] *Not so; whoever earns evil and is encompassed by his transgression—those are the inhabitants of the fire, therein abiding (khālīdūn).*

In the language of scholars¹⁶⁸ the one who *is encompassed by his transgression* is the disbeliever. But the allusion in it is to one whose heart has

166 Basyūni identifies “the people of the story” as Sufis, as he does in the commentary on Qurʾān 2:69–70.

167 The verb “abides” (*yakhlud*) anticipates the use of the verbal noun “abiding” (*khālīdūn*) in the next Qurʾānic verse [2:81]. Al-Qushayri understands the word “abiding” as a description not only of the enduring nature of the punishment of the fire, but also the enduring and painful state of separation from God in this life.

168 Basyūni adds a footnote saying that this refers to the language of ordinary commentaries, rather than allusive language.

ceased its perpetual calling for help. The possessors of realities are like grain in the frying pan in their moments of wakefulness (*ṣaḥw*).¹⁶⁹ Those [of them] who have become still are thus because of His excessive majesty, not because they are listless.

Whoever relies on obedience seeks favor from it and thinks that he [can] draw near by means of it, but he should keep his distance from this [idea]. Whoever comes to know the truth of God's unity knows that there is no means to Him except through Him.

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ
 هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

[2:82] *And those who believe and perform righteous deeds—those are the inhabitants of paradise, therein abiding.*

In the here and now there are gardens of communion and in the end [there are] gardens of favor. [. . .]¹⁷⁰

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا
 وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
 وَعَاثُوا الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَإِذْ
 أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ
 مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هَٰؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ
 أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِّنْكُمْ مِّن دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ
 بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِن يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسْرَىٰ تَقْدُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحْرَمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

169 For more on how al-Qushayrī uses this term see the section on “Wakefulness and drunkenness” (al-ṣaḥw wa-l-sukr), *Risāla*, 1:217–219.

170 Here a section is missing from Basyūnī's edition; it amounts to about a half of a folio page in the MSS K117, fol. 14a and Y101, fol. 18b and 19a. Because there are problems in this section that could not be resolved, the translation follows the Basyūnī edition until the point that it is complete again in the middle of the commentary on Qurʾān 2:85.

إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفْتَوْمُنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضِ

[2:83] *And when We made a covenant with the children of Israel: “You shall not worship any other than God; and be good to parents, and the near of kin; and to orphans, and to the needy; and speak well to men; and observe the prayer and pay the alms,” then you turned away; all but a few of you, rejecting.*

[2:84] *And when We made a covenant with you: “Shed no blood among you, nor turn out your own people from your homes.” Then you confirmed it, and you bore witness.*

[2:85] *Then there you are killing one another, and expelling a party of you from their habitations, conspiring against them in sin and enmity, and if they come to you as captives, you ransom them; yet their expulsion was forbidden you. What, do you believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in part?*

And if they come to you as captives, you ransom them, that is, “Just as you protect their rights by ransoming them, so must you restrain your hands from them and forswear expelling them from their homelands. When you uphold some of what has been made obligatory for you, what keeps you from doing the rest of what you have been commanded to do? Do you not know that whoever picks and chooses in what he has been commanded, so that he believes in some parts and disbelieves in others has the reward for his deeds nullified because of what he has neglected?”

فَمَا جَزَاءَ مَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

[2:85] *What shall be the requital of those of you who do that, but degradation in the life of this world; and on the Day of Resurrection to be returned to the most terrible of chastisement? And God is not heedless of what you do.*

That is, they thought that what they did would benefit them but in the hereafter it will be disclosed to them that everything that they did, when it was combined with what was damaging and stripped of sincerity and devotion, was not accepted from them.

The captives are of different types. The rescue of the captive drowning in the sea of whim (*hawā*) is to be directed to guidance. The ransom of

the captive who remains in the hands of whisperings (*wasāwis*)¹⁷¹ is to show him the way to certainty by the glimmers of proofs. Through this you will rescue him from doubt and questioning, and take him out of the darkneses of blind imitation (*taqlīd*). The redemption of the captive you find shackled to his random thoughts and enslaved by the clamor of his lower self is to direct him to the witnessing of favors. [This is done] by his absolving himself of acknowledging any power in a created thing or something other [than God]. The redemption of the captive you find tied to his error is to advise him to renounce it and to aid him in restraining himself from it.¹⁷² The redemption of the captive you find shackled to his [human] attributes is to direct him toward the Real in what will release him from the fetter¹⁷³ of all that has come into being (*kawn*). The captives you find in the grip of the Real, let them know that there is no redemption for such captives, no retaliation¹⁷⁴ for their dead, and no deliverance for their bond. [For aspirants on the path] there is no escape from them, no way to them, no stratagem other than them, no comfort with anything but them, and no rejecting their decree.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ
 الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

[2:86] *Those are the ones who have purchased the life of this world at the price of the hereafter—for them the punishment shall not be lightened, neither shall they be helped.*

Those who have preferred anything over [God] have lost in this world and the hereafter. As they have said:

People turned away
 from us

171 See Qurʾān 50:16 and 114:5 for mention of “whisperings” in the lower self (*nafs*) and breasts (*ṣudūr*) of human beings.

172 This sentence does not appear in MS K117, fol. 14b. The translation follows the word “error” (*zalla*) found in MS Y101, fol. 19a rather than the word “essence” or “self” (*dhāt*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

173 The translation follows the word “shackle” (*wathāq*) from MSS K117, fol. 14b and Y101, fol. 19a.

174 The translation follows the word “retaliation” (*qawad*) from MSS K117, fol. 14b and Y101, fol. 19a rather than the word “return” (*ʿawd*) from the Basyūnī edition.

without cause
or sense.

If they have no need
of us,
we have even less need
of them.¹⁷⁵

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَى أَنْفُسُكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

[2:87] *And We gave Moses the scripture, and after him We sent successive messengers, and We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear proofs, and We confirmed him with the holy spirit, and whenever there came to you a messenger, with what your souls did not desire, you became arrogant; and some, you called liars, and some you slay?*

The allusion is that “We [God] delivered the address to them and made one messenger follow after another, all calling to the same thing. But they listened to the call of the callers with the ear of whim (*hawā*); they accepted what their lower selves found pleasurable and rejected what their whims (*ahwā*) found troublesome. They were characterized by this self-serving desire and moreover became servants (*‘abadū*) to it. The [human] attributes of the worshiper (*‘ābid*) became the object of worship (*ma‘būd*).” What a terrible affliction is upon them!

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ۚ بَلْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

[2:88] *And they say: “Our hearts are encased.” Nay, but God has cursed them for their unbelief; and little will they believe.*

If there had been anything in them free of pretension, it would have become easy to find meanings [from God’s signs and scripture]. But when [they

175 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate these verses in any other source. However, he adds lines that do not appear in the Baṣyūnī edition, MS K117, fol. 14b, or MS Y101, fol. 19a (Muṣṭafā, no. 11, p. 24).

must] recognize the truth, the fangs of pretenders are bared. . .¹⁷⁶ It is said:

When tears
flow down cheeks

The one who is crying is distinguished
from the one who is only pretending.¹⁷⁷

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ
يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ
فَلَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

[2:89] *When there came to them a Book from God, confirming what was with them—and they formerly prayed for victory over the disbelievers; but when there came to them what they recognized, they disbelieved in it; and the curse of God is on the disbelievers.*

Here the allusion is to one who resolves upon purity and clarity (*ṣafāʾ*) and promises his complete loyalty (*wafāʾ*). He raises the banners of his vigor to step out to combat, but when the call comes to line up and advance boldly into battle he breaks down at the rallying of the ranks and cuts himself off from the group, afraid of dangerous attacks.¹⁷⁸ God most high said, “*Then, when the matter has been resolved upon, if they are loyal to God, it will be better for them*” [47:21].

بِئْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بَعِيًّا أَنْ
يُنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۗ فَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ عَلَىٰ

176 There is a blank section in Basyūnī’s edition which was not clarified by MSS K117, fol. 14b and Y101, fol. 19b.

177 Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to al-Mutanabbī (Muṣṭafā, no. 7, pp. 90–91). Al-Qushayrī cites this verse again in his commentary on Qurʾān 3:143.

178 There are some problems with this sentence in Basyūnī’s text; these have been resolved here from MSS K117, fol. 14b and Y101, fol. 19b.

غَضَبٌ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿٩٠﴾

[2:90] *Evil is that for which they sell their souls; that they disbelieve in that which God has revealed, grudging that God should reveal of His bounty to whomever He will of His servants; and they were laden with anger upon anger; and for the disbelievers there shall be a humiliating chastisement.*

Envy caused them to descend from the abode of nobility to the lowland of ignominy. When they were not satisfied with what the decree brought, they were reduced to a state of abasement. They invited upon themselves that which brings wrath upon wrath.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا نُوْمِنُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا
وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَهُمْ قُلْ فَلِمَ
تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

[2:91] *And when it was said to them, “Believe in what God has revealed,” they said, “We believe in what was revealed to us,” and they disbelieve in what is beyond that; yet it is the truth, confirming what is with them. Say: “Why then were you slaying the prophets of God formerly, if you were believers?”*

Here the allusion is that when it is said to them, “Recognize the truth of what has been shown to you from the decree of [divine] harmony (*min hukm al-wifāq*) by recognizing the situation and the establishment of proof,” their lower selves permit some of what they find ambiguous insofar as it agrees with their self-serving desires, but then *they disbelieve in what is beyond* their worldly concerns. They¹⁷⁹ are distant from the elite and are not considered to be among the masters who have special claim (*arbāb al-ikhtiṣāṣ*).

﴿وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ﴾

179 There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition in the first part of the sentence, which is completed here based on MSS K117, fol. 14b and Y101, fol. 19b.

وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

[2:92] *And Moses came to you with clear proofs; then you took to yourselves the calf after him, and you were evildoers.*

That is, “he called you to declare [God’s] unity (*tawḥīd*) and separate the [proper] object of worship from any other object of worship (*maʿbūd*) and limited thing (*maḥdūd*). But you were not inclined to worship anything except what was attractive to you—the calf you adopted for yourselves and the idol you desired.” [The calf] was taken from them but its traces remained in their hearts and in the hearts of those who came after them. Because of that most Jews believe in anthropomorphism (*tashbih*).

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ
بِقُوَّةٍ وَأَسْمَعُوا قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَأُشْرِبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ
بِكُفْرِهِمْ قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾

[2:93] *And when We made a covenant with you, and raised over you the mount, “Take forcefully what We have given you, and listen,” they said, “We hear and disobey”; and they were made to drink the calf in their hearts on account of their unbelief. Say: “Evil is that which your belief enjoins on you, if you are believers.”*

He reiterates the tale of their excessive love for the calf, their aversion to accepting the Real, and [. . .],¹⁸⁰ and their being told of the punishment that would overtake them for the evil they did. No counsel was useful to them and no punishment led them to refrain from their disobediences. They paid no mind to censure (*lā bi-l-dhamm fihim ihtafalū*) and did not act according to what the situation required (*wa-lā bi-mūjibi al-amr ʿamilū*).

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ
فَتَمَتُّوا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ

180 The blank in the Basyūnī text could not be clarified through the text in MSS K117, fol. 14b and Y101, fol. 19b.

أَيِّدِيهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾

[2:94] Say: “If the abode of the hereafter with God is purely yours, and not for other people, then long for death—if you speak truly.”

[2:95] But they will never long for it, because of that which their own hands have sent before them. God knows the evildoers.

Among the signs of ardent longing (*ishtiyāq*) is the desire for death while in the best of health and well-being.¹⁸¹ Whoever is absolutely and without any doubt confident that the garden is his ardently longs for it. But they did not long for the garden—and God *سُبْحَانَهُ* said that *they will never long for it*—and this information was a miracle for the Messenger ﷺ, since it was as He had said.

In this is good news for the believers who ardently long for death; there is forgiveness for them. He only bestows the ardent longing on them so that it may be actualized [when] they reach the garden. Of old it was said, “For the negligent, shame will suffice on the Day of the Meeting.”¹⁸² God most high said, “*But they will never long for it, because of that which their own hands have sent before them.*”

وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَوٰةٍ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ
لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُرْحَزٍ بِهِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ
بَصِيرٌۢ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

[2:96] And you shall find them the people most covetous of life, and the idolaters; any one of them would love that he might be given life for a thousand years; yet, his being given life shall not budge him from the chastisement. God sees what they do.

Love of life in this world is the result of heedlessness (*ghafla*) of God. The worst heedlessness is their excessive love to remain in this world. The state of the believer is the opposite of this. Those who are heedless and insolent are eager for life only because they know of their failure to be obedient. The

181 In other words, such a person longs for death even though he is able to enjoy life in this world fully. Al-Qushayrī cites a similar statement attributed to his teacher Abū ‘Alī l-Daqqāq in the “Section on passionate longing” (Bāb al-shawq), *Risāla*, 2:628.

182 Al-Qushayrī gives no indication here of what type of material he is quoting.

runaway slave does not want to be returned to his master. But for believers, the transition [of death] to One from whom only good is expected is better than remaining with those against whose evil they are not secure. The prolonging of life in spite of the certainty of death holds no value for them since [death] comes unexpectedly and life is cut off. What is coming is near. When [one's] life span is completed, there is no averting the assaults of the appointed time from the shoulders of hope (*fa-lā maradda li-hujūmi al-ajal 'alā aktāfi al-amal*).

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا
لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ
وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

[2:97] Say: “Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel—he it was that brought it down upon your heart by the leave of God, confirming what was before it, a guidance, and good tidings for the believers.

[2:98] Whoever is an enemy to God and His angels and His messengers, and Gabriel and Michael—then surely God is an enemy to the disbelievers.”

The Jews claimed that Gabriel did not come with good, that they did not love him, and that if it had been Michael, they would have believed in him. The Real ﷻ showed them to be liars when He said, “Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel, [thinking] he did not bring good, what good is greater than the Qurʾān that descended through him?”

Then He said that whoever is an enemy to Gabriel and Michael, God is his enemy. Surely the messenger of the Beloved to the highly-esteemed beloved [Muḥammad] has a noble status and weighty rank. The enmity of the disbelievers does not harm Gabriel—the Real ﷻ is his protector (*wali*). Whoever is an enemy of Gabriel, God is his enemy. How mighty and glorified is this status! How grand is His exaltedness!

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ أَوْ
كَلَّمَا عَنْهُدُوا عَهْدًا تَبَدَّهُو فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

[2:99] And We have revealed to you clear proofs; and none disbelieves in

them except the wicked.

[2:100] *Why, whenever they make a covenant, does a party of them reject it? Nay, but most of them are disbelievers.*

One disbelieves in His clear signs only when one's eyes are blocked from perceiving and one's fate from God has already been determined as unfortunate. There is no sense in anyone who denies that day is day. Likewise, there is no union for anyone who has not been assisted by lights and insights from the Real.

Why, whenever they made a covenant. . . : their predetermined fate (*sābiq al-taqdir*) confounded them and their subsequent contrivances (*lāhiq al-tadbīr*) broke their covenant. God prevails over His affair.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

[2:101] *When there came to them a messenger from God, confirming what was with them, a party of those who had been given the scripture cast away the scripture of God behind their backs, as though they did not know.*

They denied the messengers of the Real that came to their hearts by means of intuitions (*khawāṭir*) and [they] belied the messengers who came to them outwardly. O ignorance in which there is not a sliver of deeper knowledge (*irfān*)! O deprivation whose companion is disappointment (*khidhlān*)!

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيْطَانُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ ۖ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَفَرُوا يَعْلَمُونَ النَّاسَ السَّحَرَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمَرْوَتَ وَمَا يَعْلَمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ ۚ وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ

خَلَقَ وَلَيْسَ مَا شَرُّوا بِهِ أَنْفُسُهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

[2:102] *And they follow what the devils used to relate during the reign of Solomon: Solomon disbelieved not, but the devils disbelieved, and taught the people sorcery; and that which was revealed to the two angels in Babylon—Hārūt and Mārūt. They taught not any man, without them saying, “We are but a temptation; do not disbelieve.” From them they learned how they might cause division between a man and his wife, yet they did not hurt any man thereby save by the leave of God; and they learned what hurt them, and did not profit them. And surely they knew well that whoever buys it, he shall have no share in the hereafter;*

Whoever is divided by his whims (*ahwāʾ*) falls into one state of heedlessness (*ghafla*) after another, so that every kind of ignorant affair welcomes him. Moreover, those whose absence [from the Beloved] is prolonged become a warning to others and a temptation for whoever follows their path. Whoever emulates them in their transgression joins their community and becomes one of them. This is the case in the description of Hārūt and Mārūt and what happened to them—they became a temptation and a warning for men. One who listens to what they say and does not take into account their ignorance will share in their tribulation (*balāʾuhumā*) and suffer their distress (*ʿanāʾuhumā*) in the hereafter.

The allusion in their story is to the one on this path (*ṭarīqa*) who is inclined to affectation, deception, and pretension. He attracts followers whom he leads to hell by his falsehood and blocks them from the path of right direction by the evil of his darkneses. But those who take heed cross over¹⁸³ to safety on its bridges¹⁸⁴ and the one who is disgraced (*tahattaka*) by his inclinations to falsehoods—his veils (*astāruhu*) are torn (*tahattakat*)¹⁸⁵ and his faults (*ʿawāruhu*) are exposed to anyone with eyes. When Hārūt and Mārūt were deceived by the disobedience to which they had become accustomed, they blamed [their being deceived on] the disobedience of the children of Adam. Because of their tendencies toward carnal desires and the promptings to temptations and harmful things, they plunged forward into disobedience. What happened to them is what the storytellers relate: they are hanging upside down until the Day of the Resurrection and if not

183 Here al-Qushayrī is playing with two verb forms from the same root ʿ-b-r: *ītabara* (“to take heed or learn a lesson”) and *ʿabara* (“to cross over”).

184 These two sentences have been included on the basis of MS K117, fol. 15a and MS Y101, fol. 20a. Basyūnī has a blank in his version with a note saying that the writing was obscure in the script and meaning.

185 Here al-Qushayrī is playing with two meanings of the verb *tahattaka*: “to be torn” and “to be disgraced.”

for [God's] gentleness (*rifq*) toward them and their affair, their punishment would not end then. But God's kindness (*lutf*) with all is abundant.

And when God most high said, “*And they learned what hurt them, and did not profit them,*” people of discernment know that knowledge of things can be undesirable, even though [knowledge itself] is a praiseworthy attribute. The Prophet ﷺ said, “I seek refuge in You from knowledge that has no benefit.”¹⁸⁶

وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِءَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

[2:102] *evil then would have been that they sold themselves for, if they had but known.*

If the one who has been deceived knew what endures (*mādhā abqā*) and what brings trial (*mādhā ablā*), he would be torn apart by sorrows. But on the day when secrets are tested [86:9] he will know the precious gifts that have passed him by.

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ ءَامَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّو كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

[2:103] *Yet if only they had believed, and been fearful, verily, a reward from God would have been better, if they had but known.*

If they had only preferred drawing near (*iqbāl*) to God over being distracted (*ishtighāl*) from Him, they would have obtained the treasure of the two abodes (*dhukhra al-dārayn*) and reached the glory of the two worlds (*‘izza al-kawnayn*). But the blows of subjugation pressed upon them (*kasabathum saṭawātu al-qahr*), and kept them in the lands of abandonment (*fa-athbatathum fī mawāṭini al-hajr*).

يٰۤأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنَا وَقُولُوا انظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوا
وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٤﴾

[2:104] *O you who believe, do not say, “Observe us”; but say, “Regard us,” and listen; and for disbelievers awaits a painful chastisement.*

186 ‘Abd al-Rahmān gives Ṣāhib and al-Zabīdī as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

The objectives of enemies in all their states (*fi jamī'ī aḥwālihim*), including their actions and words (*min a'mālihim wa-aqwālihim*), are malicious,¹⁸⁷ for they remain tied to their ways in what they do and do not do. The way of the friends [of God] is to avoid being like them and to adopt a path which is not their path.

مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ
عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ
ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١٠٥﴾

[2:105] *Those disbelievers of the people of the scripture and the idolaters do not wish that any good should be revealed to you from your Lord, but God singles out for His mercy, whom He will; God's grace is most abundant.*

The antipathy of the enemies toward the unwavering decency of the friends is unceasing and enduring. But the envious [one] shall not prevail (*lākin al-ḥasūda lā yasūd*), nor will he obtain what he seeks (*wa lā yaḥṣul lahu maqṣūd*). The special qualities of mercy are sufficient for the friends, even if the enemies are abased¹⁸⁸ and the flanks and borders of the lands of their rejoicing are destroyed.

﴿ مَا نَنْسَخُ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا ۗ
أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾ ﴿١٠٦﴾

[2:106] *And whatever verse We abrogate or postpone, We bring [in place] a better, or the like of it; do you not know that God has power over all things?*

Abrogation (*naskh*) is the removal of something; that is, [it is] what moves you from one state to that which is above and superior to it, for the branch of your communion is forever flourishing and the star of your nobility is

187 According to commentaries on this verse, some of the Medinan Jews used to use the Arabic expression “observe us” (*ra'inā*) in addressing the Prophet because it resembled a derogatory phrase in their language (see *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and *al-Wāḥidī's Asbāb al-nuzūl* at altafsir.com).

188 The translation follows the words *raghma mina al-'adā' ānāf* from MSS K117, fol. 15b and Y101, fol. 20b rather than the words *zā'ama mina al-'adā' affāk* from the Basyūni edition.

forever shining. “We do not abrogate anything of the traces of worship (‘*ibāda*) without substituting for it something from the lights of servanthood (‘*ubūdiyya*). And We do not abrogate anything from the lights of servanthood without putting something in its place from the moons of servitude (‘*ubūda*).¹⁸⁹ Your innermost self is always rising (*taraqqa*) and your worth increases [when you take on] the beauty of the [divine] friendship (*tawallā*).”

It is said, “We will not raise you from the place of servanthood (‘*ubūdiyya*) without causing you to alight¹⁹⁰ on the plains of freedom (*hurriyya*).¹⁹¹ We have not removed anything of your human attributes (*ṣifāt al-bashariyya*) without elevating you in some divine witnessing (*shawāhid al-ulūhiyya*).”¹⁹²

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ
اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾

[2:107] Do you not know that to God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that you have none, besides God, neither protector, nor helper? His *ṣubḥānahu* way (*sunna*) is to draw His friends from the witnessing of what He possesses (*milk*) to the vision of His kingdom (*mulk*).¹⁹³ Then He takes them from the vision of His kingdom to witnessing His truth (*ḥaqq*), and then [He] takes them from the vision of His signs (*ayāt*) to the vision of His attributes (*ṣifāt*), and from the vision of His attributes to the witnessing of His essence (*dhāt*).

أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْلُوْا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سَلَّ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ

189 See the “Section on servanthood” (Bāb al-‘*ubūdiyya*), where these three terms (‘*ibāda*, ‘*ubūdiyya*, and ‘*ubūda*) are applied to ordinary believers, the elect, and the elect of the elect in rising order (al-Qushayrī, *Risala*, 2:428).

190 Here the translation follows the word *aḥlalnāka* from MSS K117, fol. 15b and Y101, fol. 20b rather than the word *salakaka* from the Basyūnī edition.

191 That is, the only true freedom (*hurriyya*) is that found in perfected servanthood (‘*ubūdiyya*). See the “Section on Freedom” (Bāb al-*hurriyya*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 2:460–463.

192 In these two sentences, the translation follows the first plural verb conjugation forms found in MS K117, fol. 15b.

193 The translation follows the placement of the terms *milk* and *mulk* as found in MSS K117, fol. 15b and Y101, fol. 20b. The terms appear in the opposite order in the Basyūnī edition.

﴿ ١٠٨ ﴾ الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

[2:108] *Or do you desire to question your messenger as Moses was questioned, aforetime? Whoever exchanges belief for unbelief has surely strayed from the even way.*

The children of Israel annoyed Moses ﷺ, and the Muslims were prohibited from following this precedent. They were commanded to be conscious of the bashfulness of the Messenger ﷺ as much as possible, so that in his presence they were silent with awe.¹⁹⁴ [God] most high said, *Support him, and revere him* [48:9].¹⁹⁵ The beauty of refined behavior (*adab*) in outward circumstances is a model for the beauty of refined behavior with God inwardly.

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا
حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا
حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٠٩﴾

[2:109] *Many of the people of the scripture long to make you disbelievers, after you have believed, from the envy of their own souls, after the truth has become clear to them; yet pardon and be forgiving till God brings His command; truly God has power over all things.*

Those among the heedless who have lost understanding wish that not even a star would rise over those who are in peace and safety (*salāma*), and those who are possessed by envy would like the sun to stop shining over those whom they envy. These are the attributes of disbelievers, so God abases¹⁹⁶ and humbles them.¹⁹⁷

The allusion in this is to the state of those who possess spiritual desire (*irāda*) in the beginning, when they embark on their travels. If they do

194 Literally, they were “as if they had birds on their heads.” Lane explains the origin of this expression as arising from the fact that “birds alight only upon a thing that is still and inanimate” (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2:1904).

195 According to *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (trans. Hamza), the pronoun in Qurʾān 48:9 can be understood as referring either to God or Muḥammad. Al-Qushayrī is choosing the latter reading for his commentary here.

196 Literally, “puts their noses in the dirt.”

197 Literally, “throws them down on their faces.”

not find help and success in companionship and they live among people following externals, these people will prevent them from traveling and will not stop giving advice to them. They will frighten them with weakness and threaten them with poverty until they divert them to the way of heedlessness and cut them off from the path of spiritual desire. These are truly the enemies of God, those who have been overtaken by the enmity of the moment. Their punishment is being deprived of smelling any of the fragrances of sincerity (*ṣidq*).

Yet pardon and be forgiving. . . . for the way of the aspirant is to protect his innermost self from anyone or anything other [than God]. He tries to employ his best nature with each individual and spares no effort in kindness, for soon the Real will open the way for him on his path.¹⁹⁸

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

[2:110] *And perform the prayer, and pay the alms; whatever good you shall offer for your own souls, you shall find it with God; assuredly God sees what you do.*

The aspirant is obligated to perform the acts of intimate communication (*muwāṣalāt*) and to continually seek to gain access with different kinds of acts of drawing near (*qurubāt*), trusting that what he offers [by way of] sincere striving (*mujāhadāt*) will bear fruit in the final states (*ḥālāt*).

وَقَالُوا لَن يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَن كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصْرَىٰ ۗ تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ
قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١١١﴾

[2:111] *And they say, “None shall enter paradise except those who are Jews or Christians.” Such are their desires. Say, “Produce your proof if you speak truly.”* Each party (*ḥizb*) smooths things out¹⁹⁹ for itself, thinking salvation belongs

198 The translation follows the words “best nature” (*khuluq*) and “kindness” (*rifq*) from MSS K117, fol. 15b and Y101, fol. 20b. Basyūnī is uncertain about the correctness of his text here. On the term *khuluq*, see the “Section on noble character” (Bāb al-khuluq) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 2:494–501.

199 Here the translation follows *yumahhidu al-amr* from MSS K117, fol. 15b and Y101, fol.

to it, and claiming access [to paradise] as its share. But mere guessing (*ḥusbān*) without the verification of proof (*burhān*) does not produce results (*lā yaʿtī bi-ḥāsil*) nor is it of any use (*wa lā yaḥūz bi-ṭāʾil*).

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا
خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

[2:112] *Nay, but whoever submits his purpose to God, being virtuous, his reward is with his Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve. He submits his purpose (aslama wajhahu) means he remains loyal to the quest for God, devotes his purpose to God alone, and purifies his resolve²⁰⁰ from any faults. Being virtuous [means] possessing knowledge by the truth of what he does and the truth of what he practices. He is virtuous in the end (wa-huwa muhsin fi l-maʿāl) just as he submits in the present (kamā annahu muslim fi l-ḥāl).*

It is said that virtuousness (*iḥsān*) is that you worship God as if you see Him, so that you will be submitting with your outward form and witnessing with your innermost hearts. Outwardly there is effort and physical prostration (*fi l-zāhir jahd wa-sujūd*) and inwardly there is unveiling and ecstatic finding (*fi l-bāṭin kashf wa-wujūd*).

It is said that one *submits his purpose* by persisting in obedient actions, *being virtuous*, maintaining the good manners of service (*ādāb al-khidma*) by the beautiful manners of presence (*bi-ḥusni ādāb al-ḥudūr*). No fear of abandonment will befall them (*khawf al-hajr*), neither will secret deception (*khafiy al-makr*) overcome them. This world will not distract them from witnessing and tomorrow the hereafter will not distract them from the vision.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصْرَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصْرَىٰ لَيْسَتِ
الْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ ۗ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

21a rather than the phrase *yumahhidu al-amal* in the Basyūnī edition.

200 The translation follows the word *ʿaqd* in MSS K117, fol. 16a and Y101, fol. 21a rather than the word “intellect” (*ʿaql*) in the Basyūnī edition.

مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

[2:113] *The Jews say, “The Christians stand on nothing”; and the Christians say, “The Jews stand on nothing”; yet they recite the scripture. Thus, the ignorant say the like of what these say; God shall decide between them on the Day of Resurrection regarding their differences.*

The allusion in this verse is an inversion of its apparent sense. Today the enemies [of God] disclaim one another [as they have done in the past], but the friends [of God] also do something like that. Nonetheless, it is said that the Sufis will remain in a good state²⁰¹ as long as they quarrel and do not accept one other,²⁰² because if they were to accept one another they would say with each other [rather than turning to God].

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن مَّنَعَ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَىٰ فِي خَرَابِهَا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾

[2:114] *And who does greater evil than he who bars God’s places of worship, so that His name be not invoked in them, and strives to ruin them?; such men might never enter them, save in fear; for this world is degradation for them; and in the hereafter a mighty chastisement.*

[Here] the allusion is to the one who does evil, one who ruins the homelands (*awṭān*) of worship with [his] carnal passions (*shahawāt*)—and the homelands of worship are the selves of the worshipers (*nufūs al-‘ābidīn*). He ruins the homelands of knowledge with [his] desires and attachments (*‘alāqāt*)—and the homelands of knowledge are the hearts of those with deep knowledge (*qulūb al-‘ārifīn*). He destroys the homelands of love with [his] worldly concerns and familiar comforts (*musākanāt*)—and [the homelands of love] are the spirits of the ecstatics (*arwāḥ al-wājidīn*). He ruins the homelands of witnessing by paying attention to [his own] attempts

201 The phrase *bi-khabarin* in the Basyūnī edition is a typographical error. It has been replaced with *bi-khayrin* from MSS K117, fol. 15b and Y101, fol. 21a.

202 In the first part of this sentence, al-Qushayrī is quoting from a statement he attributes to Ruwaym in the “Section on Sufism” (Bāb al-ṭaṣawwuf): “The Sufis will remain in a good state so long as they quarrel and do not accept one another. If they were to agree, there would be no good in them” (*Risāla*, 2:554).

to draw near (*qurubāt*) [rather than turning to God Himself] and [the homelands of witnessing] are the innermost selves of those who declare oneness (*asrār al-muwaḥḥidīn*).

For them in this world is degradation; and in the hereafter a mighty chastisement. For the people of allusion the degradation of this world is the ignominy of the veil and the punishment of the hereafter is being held back in degrees.²⁰³

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيُّمَا تُلُؤُوا فَتَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَسِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾

[2:115] *To God belong the East and the West; whithersoever you turn, there is the face of God. Lo! God is Embracing, Knowing.*

Here the allusion is to the eastern and western places of hearts [of the believers]. Hearts have rising lights (*shawāriq*) and night visitors (*ṭawāriq*). The night visitors are the murmurings (*hawājis*) of the lower selves that arrive in the darknesses of desire and carnal passions. The rising lights are the stars of different types of knowledge, the moons of presence and the suns of gnosis.

As long as the lights are rising the *qibla* of the hearts is clear and visible. Then when the realities take over, the authority of the lights becomes hidden like stars at the rising of the sun. Similarly, at the appearance of the Real there is destruction and subjugation, so there is no witnessing of any trace, no remaining sensation or comprehension, no power of intellect or knowledge, no illumination of deeper knowledge. For the experiencing of all these qualities lasts only as long as human nature lasts. When those who have attributes become effaced, how can any attribute of theirs remain?

He said, “*whithersoever you turn, there is the face of God.*” As long as there is a remnant or even a sliver of sensory perception and the ability to differentiate, then the *qibla* should be aimed for, and if it is not known, it should be sought. According to scholars, when the guideposts in every direction are obscure and there is no knowledge of the *qibla*, all directions are equally permissible for prayer since none of them can be preferred for the intention (*niyya*).²⁰⁴

203 The Qurʾān speaks of “degrees” in the hereafter, as in verses 6:132 and 46:19: *All shall have degrees according to what they have done.*

204 Prayer begins with the intention (*niyya*) to perform the prayer.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ ۗ

[2:116] *And they say, “God has taken to Himself a son”; Glory be to Him!*

He deceived them when He did not bring them to naught right away. Instead He made their continued delusion a longer respite. They spoke a grave calumny (‘*azīm al-firyā*) against God and devised an astonishing argument (‘*ajīb al-miryā*) in their description of God and attribution of a son to Him. How can there be a son when He is singular in [His] essence (*dhāt*)? There is no delimitation of His essence and no carnal desire possible in His attributes (*ṣifāt*).

بَلْ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ كُلُّ لَّهُ قَانِتُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

[2:116] *Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; all obey His will.*

That is, nothing—from the traces of things or things themselves²⁰⁵—has come into being (*kawn*) without the traces of the created constitution (*khilqa*) calling out to it and the testimonial witnessings of the original nature (*fiṭra*) speaking clearly from it. Every silent thing is [in fact] speaking and is a proof and a witness to His سُبْحَانَهُ oneness.²⁰⁶

بَدِيعُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿١١٧﴾

[2:117] *Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees a thing, He but says to it “Be,” and it is.*

The Originator (*al-badī*), according to the scholars, is the One who brings the entity (‘*ayn*) into existence without any model (*lā ‘alā mithāl*).²⁰⁷

205 The full Arabic here is “dependent traces” (*āthār muftaqira*) and “independent entities” (*‘ayān mustaqilla*). Entities are “things perceived by the eye,” whereas the term “traces” refers to what is left behind from things, acts or qualities. The Qurʾān uses the word *āthār* to refer to “footprints” [18:64], the “vestiges” that can be seen from people long gone [40:21 and 40:82], and the effects of God’s mercy [30:50].

206 This passage is easier to comprehend when read with al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qurʾān 2:118, 2:164, and 3:18.

207 The translation follows the word “model” (*mithāl*) found in MSS K117, fol. 16b and Y101, fol. 21b rather than the word “like” (*mithl*) in the Basyūnī edition.

According to the people of allusion He is the One, and there is nothing like Him (*laysa lahu shayun mithlihi*),²⁰⁸ since this term alludes to both the negation of any likeness (*mithl*) to His essence and the negation of any model (*mithāl*) for His acts. He is the One (*al-aḥad*) without any quantity comprising Him; the Eternal (*al-ṣamad*), whom no final point in time cuts off; the Real (*al-ḥaqq*), whom no imagination can picture; and the Existent (*al-mawjūd*), of whom no understanding is capable. When He decides on an affair, nothing preordained (*maqḍūr*) can oppose it and nothing created (*maftūr*)²⁰⁹ can separate itself from His decree.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ
 مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَبَهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾

[2:118] *And they, who do not know, say, “Why does God not speak to us?; Why does a sign not come to us?” So, spoke those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are much alike. Yet We have made clear the signs to a people who are certain.*

The speech (*kalām*) of God سُبحانه is connected to all created things in their entities (*aʿyān*) and their traces (*āthār*) by the command to “Be!” (*amr al-takwīn*), [and it is also connected to] those who have been charged [with the law] by the prescriptive command (*amr al-taklīf*).²¹⁰ But whoever lacks the ear of comprehension is deaf to hearing the Real. He سُبحانه addressed some among the people of the Book and they heard His address, but they were not able to bear it and, after they recognized the enormity of the signs, they engaged in distortion and alteration. Included in the signs which He made manifest were that which removes the defect of anything other [than Him] (*al-ʿilla min al-aghyār*) and quenches the thirst from things that are better (*al-ghulla min al-akhyār*). But what proofs, even if they were plain and clear, would suffice those whose due is wretchedness, whose [wretchedness] has already come?

208 The phrase here *laysa lahu shayun mithlihi* is very similar to Qurʾān 42:11: *There is nothing like Him* (*laysa ka-mithlihi shayun*).

209 The translation follows the word “created” (*maftūr*) from MSS K117, fol. 16b and Y101, fol. 21b rather than the word “forbidden thing” (*maḥzūr*) found in the Basyūni edition.

210 The translation of this sentence follows the text in MSS K117, fol. 16b and Y101, fol. 21b.

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَا تُسْأَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١١٩﴾

[2:119] *We have sent you with the truth, a bearer of good tidings, and warner. You shall not be asked about the inhabitants of hellfire.*

“We have singled you out [O Muḥammad] with qualities which We did not make appear in anyone else, so all people are under your banner. Those who are accepted are in conformity with you while those who are rejected oppose you (*al-maḡbūl man wāfaqaka wa-l-mardūd man khālafaka*). You will not be questioned about the states of others and you will not be turned away²¹¹ because of anyone.”

وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٢٠﴾

[2:120] *Never will the Jews be pleased with you, neither the Christians, not until you follow their creed, Say: “God’s guidance is the true guidance.” And if you were to follow their whims, after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have against God neither friend, nor helper.*

“Do not concern yourself with pleasing the enemies after you have received Our good pleasure (*riḏā*), for they will not be pleased with you unless you follow their religions and that is impossible.²¹² So declare yourself free of them, make your difference apparent, and show enmity toward them. Know that their reliance on what they find pleasing is the cause of endless wretchedness. Do not worry yourself. Call your community to free themselves from them and their path and be for Us, through Us, free of anyone other than Us, trusting in Our help, for you are through Us and from²¹³ Us.”

211 The Basyūnī edition has a blank here, which has been completed with “avoidance” (*maḡīd*) from MSS K117, fol. 16b and Y101, fol. 21b.

212 The Basyūnī edition has *wa-dūna dhālika lahum ḥaẓẓ al-qitāl* here but what is probably meant is *wa-dūna dhālika lahum kharṭu al-qatād*. The text in MSS K117, fol. 16b and Y101, fol. 21b could be read this way. It means, “Before that, they would have to strip the tragacanth of its leaves by grasping each branch and drawing his hand down it,” which is very close to a proverb quoted by Lane in his comments on the verb *kharāṭa* (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:723).

213 The translation follows “from Us” (*minnā*) from MSS K117, fol. 16b and Y101, fol. 21b rather than “for Us” (*lanā*) from the Basyūnī edition.

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۗ
 وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ ۗ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾

[2:121] *Those to whom We have given the scripture, and who recite it with true recitation, they believe in it; and whoever disbelieves in it, they shall be the losers.*

“Those whom We have opened the eyes of their hearts²¹⁴ to witnessing Our truth—We have entrusted the ears of their hearts with hearing Our address. We have chosen them by letting the lights²¹⁵ of solicitude shine down on them, and We have supported them by confirming the instruction in their innermost selves (*asrār*). They practice the true recitation and are characterized by the qualities of faith and deep knowledge. They are the people of special designation (*takhṣīṣ*) and those who are not with them are the rejected.”

يٰۤاِبْنَٓ اِسْرٰٓءِيْلَ اذْكُرْ وَا نِعْمَتِي الَّتِي اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَیْكُمْ وَا نِي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ
 عَلٰی الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

[2:122] *O children of Israel, remember My favor wherewith I favored you, and that I have preferred you over all the worlds.*

His *ṣubḥānah* way (*sunna*) in His address to the people of Moses ﷺ is to call them by their proper name, saying, “*O children of Israel, remember. . .*,” that is, “*O children of Jacob.*” But He addresses this community [of Muḥammad] honorifically, saying, “*O you who believe. . .*”²¹⁶

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا

214 The translation of the phrase “the eyes of their hearts” (*abṣār qulūbihim*) is based on MSS K117, fol. 16b and Y101, fol. 21b. The Basyūnī edition has just the word “eyes” (*abṣār*).

215 The translation follows the plural “lights” (*anwār*) from MSS K117, fol. 16b and Y101, fol. 21b rather than the singular “light” (*nūr*) in the Basyūnī edition.

216 As in Qurʾān 2:104 and many others.

تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

[2:123] *And beware of a day when no soul will be requited for another, and no compensation will be accepted from it, nor will any intercession benefit it, neither will they be helped.*

As for the enemies, nothing [that is, no payment or compensation] will be accepted from them. As for the friends, [the Prophet] ﷺ said, “Protect yourself from the fire even if it be by half a date [given in charity].”²¹⁷ The intercession of intercessors will not benefit the disbeliever, for this is a determination made for each community with their prophet.²¹⁸ As for the believers, they will benefit in particular from the Prophet’s ﷺ intercession. Everyone on that day will be saying, “My soul, my soul,” but our Prophet ﷺ will say, “My community, my community.”²¹⁹

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ﴿١٢٤﴾

[2:124] *And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them,*

The trial (*al-balāʿ*) is the verification of friendship (*walāʿ*), and the most sincere in friendship are tested the most. The Real ﷻ tested His friend (*khalīl*) ﷺ by what He imposed on him and prescribed for him, and [Abraham] upheld the necessary conditions and fulfilled the requirements decreed. So He ﷻ praised him, saying, “*And Abraham, who fulfilled (waffā)*” [53:37], [which is] from *tawfiya*,²²⁰ that is, he did not fall short in

217 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān traces this *ḥadīth* to al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and several other sources.

218 Qurʾān 2:225 says, *Who is there, that shall intercede with Him save by His leave?*

219 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān identifies this as a *ḥadīth* and gives Ibn Ḥanbal as one of several sources. In a footnote, Basyūnī does not characterize the saying as a *ḥadīth*, but rather cites al-Qushayrī’s mention of it in words attributed to his teacher Abū ʿAlī l-Daqqāq in the “Section on chivalry” (*Futuwwa*) in his *Risāla*: “Chivalry (*futuwwa*) consists of noble character traits (*khuluq*) that were perfected only in the Messenger of God ﷺ, for on the Day of the Resurrection everyone will be saying, ‘My soul, my soul,’ but he will be saying, ‘my community, my community’” (*Risāla*, 2:472). Although al-Qushayrī accepts the Qurʾānic category of “enemies” (*ʿādāʾ*) of the prophets, the angel Gabriel, and God, it is interesting that in this same section he quotes Sufis who say that the chivalrous individual has no adversary (*khaṣm*) but himself (*Risāla*, 2:473) and does not care whether the person he eats with is a disbeliever (*kāfir*) or a friend (*walī*) of God (*Risāla*, 2:474).

220 The verbal noun corresponding to the verb *waffā*.

any way whatsoever.

It is said that [God] imposed the burdens of prophecy on [Abraham] and sought from him the properties of friendship (*khulla*). The most intense trial for him was upholding the conditions of friendship and being singled out to avoid everyone and everything. He performed what was necessary to fulfill this [obligation], withdrawing from everything other than [God] secretly and publicly. Because of that²²¹ [Abraham] paid no attention to Gabriel ؑ when he appeared to [Abraham] as he was being thrown into the depths of destruction. [Gabriel] said, “Do you need anything?” [Abraham] said, “From you? No.” Gabriel ؑ appeared to him in this state as part of the perfection of his trial. What [attachments] were left in him that would leave a place for any created being, whoever that might be?²²²

This is a subtle allusion to the difference between the state of our Prophet ﷺ and the state of Abraham ؑ because Gabriel appeared to the friend and showed himself to him and [Abraham] said, “From you? No.” But Gabriel was not capable of companionship with the Prophet ﷺ and thus expressed his weakness, saying “If I were to come closer [to you by even] so much as a fingertip, I would be consumed by fire.”²²³ What a difference between the state in which Gabriel ؑ has the power to show himself to the Friend ؑ and the state in which he acknowledges his weakness before the Beloved ﷺ.

قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي
قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

[2:124] *He said, “I make you a leader (imām) for the people.” Said he, “And of my seed?” He said, “My covenant shall not reach the evildoers.”*

The leader (*imām*) is the one to be emulated. This was confirmed with regard to [Abraham], in that [God] told all men up to the Day of the Resurrection to emulate him. He said, “*The creed of your father Abraham [is yours]*” [22:78], that is, they followed the creed of Abraham, meaning

221 The translation follows the phrase *li-dhālīka* from MSS K117, fol. 16b and Y101, fol. 22a rather than the phrase *ka-dhālīka* in the Basyūnī edition.

222 Abraham was “absent from himself in God most high and did not see with God anything other than God, may He be exalted and glorified,” as al-Qushayrī writes in a comment on this story in the “Section on trust” (Bāb al-tawakkul), *Risāla*, 1:371.

223 Basyūnī adds a footnote indicating that this is what Gabriel is said to have said on the night of the Prophet’s ascension, as detailed in al-Qushayrī’s *Kitāb al-mirāj*.

the declaration of God's unity (*tawhīd*). [God's] saying, "Take to yourselves Abraham's station for a place of prayer" [2:125] is verification of this leadership (*imāma*). The station of leadership [means] that one understands from the Real, and then gives that understanding to created beings, so as to be a mediator between the Real (*ḥaqq*) and created beings (*khalq*). In his outward situation he is with created beings, and is not listless in conveying the message. In his inner situation, he witnesses the Real. The clarity of his state does not waver, and he says to mankind what the Real says to him.

"*And of my seed?*": [Abraham] spoke out of compassion for [his people] and he asked for that which would bring them honor, but [God] informed him that worthiness has nothing to do with lineage or relations. Rather these are allotments that [God's] decrees bring about, and He said to him, "*My covenant shall not reach the evildoers.*" This is not like the blessings of this world, which are all encompassing in their provisions, for it is not withheld from anyone, even if he is a disbeliever. Because of that He said, "*And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this land secure and provide its people with fruits; such of them as believe in God. . .'*" [2:126] and "*whoever disbelieves, to him I shall give enjoyment, a little. . .*" [2:126]. This means that the present world is not so important that it should be denied the disbelievers. But "My covenant will only reach those whom I have chosen from the elect of My servants." Food and drink are not kept from anyone (*ammā l-ṭaʿām wa-l-sharāb fa-ghayru mamnūʿin min aḥād*) but Islam and love are not offered to everyone (*ammā l-islām wa-l-maḥābb fa-ghayru mabdhūlin li-kulli aḥād*).

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا

[2:125] *And when We appointed the House to be a place of visitation for the people, and a sanctuary:*

"Mention, O Muḥammad, when *We appointed the House*, meaning the Kaʿba, *to be a place of visitation for people* to come to *and a sanctuary* for them to return to, to make their way to it from every direction. It is a House which I created from stone yet attached to eternity. Whoever looks to the House with the eye of creation is cut off, while those who look with the eye of far-reaching vision arrive and connect.²²⁴ Everyone who seeks refuge

²²⁴ In the "Section on advice for aspirants" (Bāb al-waṣiyya li-l-murīdīn) al-Qushayrī writes, "One must give precedence to knowledge of the Lord of the House *سُبْحَانَكَ* over visiting the House, for if there were no knowledge of the Lord of the House, it would not be necessary to visit it" (*Risāla*, 2:742).

at that House is secure from the punishment of the hereafter, if he seeks refuge to show veneration and respect (*'alā jihati al-i'zām wa-l-ihtirām*), and repent from sins (*wa-l-tawbatī 'an al-āthām*).”

It is said that the House was built of stone but it is a stone that attracts hearts just as a magnet attracts iron.

[What kind of house is it?]

A house. . . Its shade causes whomever comes to it to remain in the courtyard of security (*amn*).

A house. . . Whoever glances upon it receives the good news of forgiveness attained.

A house. . . Subtleties circumambulate the heart of whoever circumambulates it. One circumambulation is by another circumambulation and one circuit is by another circuit. *Is the reward of goodness anything but goodness?* [55:60].

A house. . . Whatever one spends of one's wealth to reach it is not lost.

A house. . . Whatever one withholds from it is without profit. Whoever visits it forgets any other place of visitation and abandons his [own] regions.

A house. . . No distance is reckoned too far to it. Visiting it is not to be neglected for fear of unpleasant occurrences or harmful attacks. This is a house which possesses no harm for the lifeblood of the poor (*fuqarā*).

A house. . . Whoever holds back from visiting it lacks noble-heartedness (*futuwwa*) or is deficient in love (*maḥabba*).

A house. . . The heart of the one who holds back from it is harder than stones.

A house. . . When the rays of its lights fall upon someone, he is made to forget suns and moons.

A house. . . One is not so much amazed by those who stay away from it, but rather by how those who come to it can leave!

وَأَتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى

[2:125] *Take to yourselves Abraham's station for a place of prayer;*

A servant was raised up on his feet for the sake of God ﷻ, and his footprints made a *qibla* for all Muslims to honor him for all time until the resurrection.²²⁵

225 This is a reference to the stone identified as “the station of Abraham”; it is kept in the

وَعَهْدُنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنَّ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ
وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ﴿١٢٥﴾

[2:125] and We made a covenant with Abraham and Ishmael: “Purify My House for those that shall go round it (*tāʿifin*) and those that cleave to it (*ʿākifin*), to those who bow and prostrate themselves.”

In the outward sense the affair concerns the purification of the House, while the allusion in the verse is to the purification of the heart. The purification of the House [refers to] protecting it from different kinds of dirt and filth (*al-adnās wa-l-awḍār*), and the purification of the heart [refers to] guarding it from paying attention to humankind or anything other [than God] (*al-ajnās wa-l-aghyār*).

The circumambulation of the pilgrims around the House is known from the law. The circumambulation of meanings is known to the people of the Real. Meanings go round (*tāʿifa*) in the hearts of those who know (*qulūb al-ʿārifin*). Realities cleave (*ʿākifa*) in the hearts of those who declare [God’s] oneness (*qulūb al-muwaḥḥidīn*). These are the companions of transformation (*aṣḥāb al-talwīn*) and those are the lords of stability (*arbāb al-tamkīn*).²²⁶

The hearts of those who seek their objective (*qulūb al-qāṣidīn*) remain ever standing (*wāqifa*) at the door of generosity; they continually practice humility. The hearts of those who declare [God’s] oneness (*qulūb al-muwaḥḥidīn*) remain ever bowing (*rākīʿa*) on the carpet of the communion [of lovers]. The hearts of the ecstatics (*qulūb al-wājidīn*) remain ever prostrating (*sājida*) on the carpet of nearness.

It is said that the ascendant longings of the seekers are ever standing (*wāqifa*) at the door of magnanimity. The lofty resolutions of the aspirants remain ever circumambulating (*tāʿifa*) the place of witnessing [divine] generosity. The aspirations that come to those who know [remain] ever cleaving (*ʿākifa*) to the presence of majesty.

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا ءَامِنًا وَّارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنِ الثَّمَرَاتِ

sanctuary of the Ka’ba. The impression of two footprints on this stone are said to have been left by Abraham as he built the Ka’ba.

226 Al-Qushayrī discusses the terms “Transformation and stability” (*al-Talwīn wa-l-tamkīn*) in his *Risāla*, 1:232–235.

مَنْ ءَامَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأَمَتَّعُهُ قَلِيلًا
ثُمَّ أَضْطَرَّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٢٦﴾

[2:126] *And when Abraham said, “My Lord, make this land secure and provide its people with fruits; such of them as believe in God and the Last Day,” He said, “And whoever disbelieves, to him I shall give enjoyment, a little, then I shall compel him to the chastisement of the fire—how evil a journey’s end!”*

And when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, make this land secure’: The request was answered because it was not adulterated by the worldly concern of the servant. Abraham’s request was not for his own concern (*ḥaẓẓ*) but rather for the right (*ḥaqq*) of his Lord, may He be exalted and glorified. When Abraham was mindful of the required etiquette in seeking provision for those who believed, they were granted that—but so were those who did not believe. [On the other hand], when he spoke about leadership, saying “*And of my seed?*” [2:125], without [divine] permission, [the request] was denied and it was said to him, “*My covenant shall not reach the evildoers*” [2:125].

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ
أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٢٧﴾

[2:127] *And when Abraham raised up the foundations of the House, and Ishmael with him: “Our Lord! Receive this from us. Truly You are the Hearing, the Knowing.*

The success of the request is in the sincerity of the supplication (*nujḥu al-suʿāl fi ṣidqi al-ibtihāl*). When the two of them humbly sought aid in prayer, He gave them help and fulfilled the request. *Truly You are the Hearing* of our speech, *the Knowing* of our states.

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا
مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٨﴾

[2:128] *Our Lord! And make us submissive to You and, of our seed, a community submissive to You; and show us our holy rites, and relent to us. Surely*

You are the Relenting, the Merciful.

[That is,] “**Submissive (muslimīn)**, yielding to Your decree so that not one vein of ours throbs without Your good pleasure. Make **from our seed** a community submissive to You so that after us they will take our place in upholding Your rights.” What a difference between one who seeks someone to inherit his wealth (*man yaṭlubu wārithan li-mālihi*) and one who seeks a deputy after him to perform acts of obedience to Him in his states (*man yaṭlubu nā’iban. . . fi aḥwālihi*).

[That is,] “**Show us our holy rites** since there is no way to know what conforms [to Your will] except by the path that God granted success and communication.”

[That is,] “**And relent to us** after we carry out all that You have commanded us to do so that we do not look to what we do and do not do,²²⁷ but turn back to You from witnessing our actions, so there is no danger of hidden idolatry (*al-shirk al-khafī*) in imagining anything from us or through us.”

رَبَّنَا وَأَبْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٢٩﴾

[2:129] *Our Lord! And send among them a messenger, one of them, who shall recite to them Your signs, and teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them; You are the Mighty, the Wise.*

Because the obligations were received from messengers rather than being understood by reason alone, [Abraham] asked that they not be left to themselves without a messenger or law. He requested that the messenger be **one of them** so that they would feel more at home with him and it would be easier for them. Its meaning, rightly understood, is that when He *سُبْحَانَهُ* informed [Abraham] of the state of our Prophet ﷺ, [Abraham] asked for the completion of what He had promised by way of the one He commanded.²²⁸

وَمَنْ يَّرْغَبُ عَنِ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَقَدْ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي

227 Literally, our “movements and states of rest” (*ḥarakāt wa sakanāt*).

228 That is, Muḥammad.

الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾

[2:130] *Who therefore shrinks from the religion of Abraham, except he who fools himself? Indeed We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter he shall be among the righteous.*

He related that among created beings, He preferred the Friend (*al-khalīl*) ﴿ and therefore made his religion (*dīn*) the religion. The distinguishing mark [of the religion] is the declaration of [God's] oneness (*tawḥīd*) and its attribute is deep knowledge (*ma'rifa*). For whoever shrinks from [Abraham's] religion or deviates from his way (*fa-man raghiba 'an dīnihi aw ḥāda 'an sunnatihi*), is left with falsehood (*fa-l-bāṭilu maṭraḥu*) and falls into disbelief (*wa-l-kufr mahwāhu*). For the lights in their entirety are only acquired from [Abraham's] light.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ وَأَسْلِمْتُ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾

[2:131] *When his Lord said to him, "Submit," he said, "I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds."*

Islām is sincerity (*ikhhlās*) and submission (*istislām*). Its true meaning is to withdraw entirely from the states of mortal humanity (*bashariyya*) with respect to the struggles over free choice (*ikhhtiyār*) and the oppositional tendencies of the lower self (*mu'aradāt al-nafs*). [Abraham] said, "***I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds***: I have accepted the command (*amr*), hearing and obeying, and I have embraced the decree (*ḥukm*) as much as I am able." He did not hold back any of his wealth, body or progeny. When he was commanded to sacrifice his son, he intended to do it. When [God] said to him, "Release him from his bond," he did what he was commanded to do. There was no free choice in either of the states for him and no contriving (*tadbīr*).

It is said that his saying, "***I have submitted***" (*aslamtu*) was surely not by way of any claim for himself because the true meaning of *islām* is rather to absolve oneself of strength and power. So when he said, "***I have submitted***," it was as if he said, "Raise me up in what you have charged me with and [help me] carry out that to which you have commanded me." He turned the affair over to Him without proclaiming any meaning or warrant from himself.

It is said that He bid him to take on the demands of the divine power

of deliberation (*muṭālabāt al-quḍra*). For what dwells in one who takes up his abode in friendship is most certainly what dwells in the other (*fa-inna man ḥalla fī l-khullati maḥallahu yaḥullu bihi lā maḥālata mā ḥalla bihi*).²²⁹

Here one might ask a question: How could Abraham ؑ have said, “*I have submitted*,” when it was said to our Prophet ﷺ, “*Know*,”²³⁰ but he did not say “I have come to know?” [in the manner that Abraham said, “I have submitted”]. There are several aspects to the answer, one of which is that the Prophet ﷺ said, “I am the most knowledgeable of you about God”²³¹ but since a law did not come after him it used to be said about him that he said, “I have come to know” (*‘alimtu*).

It is said that God ﷻ spoke about the Messenger ﷺ in His saying, “*The Messenger believes*” [2:285], because belief is knowledge of God ﷻ. The words of the Real and the information He gave about [Muḥammad] is more perfect than his ﷺ giving information from himself [as Abraham did].

Another aspect [relates to] Abraham speaking; he said “*I have submitted*,” and he was subjected to the trial, whereas our Prophet ﷺ was wary of anything that could take the form of a claim, and so he was protected and spared.

Another aspect is that Abraham ؑ was commanded to follow a course of action that indicated submission to Him, whereas our Prophet ﷺ was commanded to know. The shares of submission (*islām*) are limited while the subtleties of knowledge are not.²³²

وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يٰبَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمُ الدِّينَ
فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

[2:132] *And Abraham enjoined upon his sons this, and [so did] Jacob, ‘My sons, God has chosen for you the [true] religion, see that you die not save in submission.’*

229 This is a good example of al-Qushayrī’s untranslatable word play.

230 Al-Qushayrī does not indicate which Qur’anic verse he is referring to here. It is possible that it is the address to Muḥammad in 49:17: *Know, then, that there is no god except God, and ask forgiveness for your sin and for the believing men and believing women.*

231 Basyūnī cites versions of this *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

232 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 18a and Y101, fol. 23a, which have a more complete version of the end of this sentence: *li-aqsām al-islāmi ḥaṣrun wa-laysa li-laṭā’ifi al-‘ilm ḥaṣrun*. Basyūnī explains his understanding of this section in a footnote, saying that while submission is a human act, knowledge is not something acquired by the servant through his own efforts, but rather is apportioned to him from the source of generosity.

He related that Abraham ﷺ enjoined his sons, as did Jacob ﷺ, who said, “Do not let death come upon you except in the state of submission (*islām*).” Their laws, even if they differed in details, were of one origin. The spring of unity (*tawhīd*) is not divided into two. The words of God most high, “**God has chosen for you the [true] religion,**” were good news. By [these words] their desire to meet the demands of submission (*islām*) became strong. For when they realized that God ﷻ had chosen them for that [*islām*], they knew with certainty that He would help them and make it easy for them to uphold the rightful due of submission (*islām*).

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ
مِنْ بَعْدِي ۖ قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ

[2:133] Or, were you witnesses when death came to Jacob? When he said to his sons, “What will you worship after me?” They said, “We will worship your God. All of them ﷺ followed one way in declaring [God’s] oneness (*tawhīd*) and submission (*islām*). They inherited that one after another from their forefathers and [they] were the people of the house of intimacy, deserving of nearness, and purified in truth by God.

وَاللَّهُ آبَائِكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهُهَا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

[2:133] and the God of your fathers Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, One God, to Him we submit.”

[Jacob’s sons] did not say, “Our God,” out of respect for [Jacob’s] special status, inasmuch as they accepted his superiority and saw themselves as attached to his station (*maqām*). [Rather], they said of themselves that they were followers of [Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac]²³³ when they said, “and to Him we submit.”

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مِمَّا كَسَبْتُمْ ۖ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ

233 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 18a and Y101, fol. 23b in the phrase “that they followed them” (*annahum tubba’u lahum*).

عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

[2:134] *That is a community that has passed away; theirs is what they have earned, and yours is what you have earned; you will not be asked about what they did.*

The Real سُجَّاتُهُ sent down to each [community] its place and singled out for each one its status according to His decree (*ḥukm*). There is no news about their outward forms and no trace remaining of what distinguished each group from the others. Each is a king in his own region and each has a celestial sphere revolving in felicity.

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصْرَى تَهْتَدُوا قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

[2:135] *And they say, “Be Jews or Christians, and you will be guided.” Say, “Nay, rather the creed of Abraham, a ḥanīf; and he was not of the idolaters.”*

[That is,] “When the groups contended with you [Muḥammad], they demanded that you agree (*muwāfaqa*) with them. Stand firm in opposing that to which they call you, and turn your attention increasingly to Us. Follow the way of the Friend (*al-khalīl*) in withdrawing from the group, whether it be one’s own father or anyone else who is not in accord (*lā yuwāfiqū*) with his Protector.” Thus he said, “*And I shall shun you and that which you call upon besides God*” [19:48]. The *ḥanīf* is the “one who leans”²³⁴ toward the straight truth on the path, the truth free from any defect of creation. [He is] in agreement (*wāfiq*) with the truth by the Truth.²³⁵

فُولُوا ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِن

234 From the root *h-n-f* “he inclined” (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:658).

235 The Basyūnī edition ends after the citation of Qurʾān 19:48 and the words “for the truth, by the Truth.” The translation follows the more complete version that occurs in MSS K117, fol. 18a and Y101, fol. 23b.

رَبِّهِمْ لَا نَفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

[2:136] Say: “We believe in God, and in that which has been revealed to us, and revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes, and that which was given to Moses, and Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord, we make no division between any of them, and to Him we submit.”

Because our Prophet ﷺ believed in everything that was revealed before him, he was honored with everything that [God] had conferred in honor to [the prophets] before him. When [God] proclaimed the harmony (*muwāfaqa*) of all [the messages of the prophets], He entrusted everything in existence [to fall] under [Muḥammad’s] banner. [Muḥammad] said, “Adam and all others shall be under my banner on the Day of the Resurrection.”²³⁶

When his community believed in everything that God revealed to His messengers and made *no division between any of them*, they drew the highest share in honor and took precedence over all communities.

فَإِنْ ءَامَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا ءَامَنْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ۗ وَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ ۖ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣٧﴾

[2:137] And if they believe in the like of what you believe in, then they are truly guided; but if they turn away, then they are clearly in schism; God will suffice you against them; He is the Hearer, the Knower.

[That is,] “If they travel your path and adopt your way, they will be honored with what you have been honored with and they will attain what you have attained. If they insist on making a distinction [between the prophets], We will insist on their abasement. Surely We stand by those who serve you, O Muḥammad, in unity, and We will inevitably turn away from those who differ with you and oppose you. Whoever opposes you is on the side of the enemies and whoever serves you is on the side of the friends.”

God will suffice you against them. He is the Hearer, the Knower: The sufficiency of God is shown to be true (*kifāyat Allāh mutaḥaqqiqā*) because the solicitude of God is tied to you (*li-anna ināyat Allāh bi-kum muta'alliqā*). Whoever acts adversely toward you, My helping hands will crush [them] (*fa-man nābadhakum qaṣamathu ayādi l-nuṣra*) and whoever opposes

²³⁶ Basyūni adds a footnote with a slightly different version of this *ḥadīth* from al-Tirmidhī. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives al-‘Ajūnī and al-Suyūṭī as sources.

you, matters of fate will subjugate [them] (*wa-man khālafakum qaharathu qaḍāyā l-qisma*). **He is the Hearer** of the ongoing conversation whispered between your innermost selves and Us (*li-munājāti asrārikum ma'nā 'alā waṣfi al-dawām*), [He is] **the Knower** of [the extent to which] you deserve the special favors of kindness and honor from Us (*bi-stihqāqikum minnā khaṣā'isi al-luṭfi wa-l-ikrām*).

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

[2:138] *The mark of God; and who has a better mark than God? And Him we worship.*

Its meaning is “They have been attached to the mark (*ṣibgha*) of God.” [The word “mark”] is in the accusative because of the implied verb.²³⁷

The allusion [in the verse] is that the lesson [about the true religion] is written by the Real, not the servant [such as those who say, “Be Jews or Christians and you shall be guided”]. What humankind pretends will pass away in the end, while what the Real has firmly established is the primordial nature (*al-fiṭra*), [and] His establishment of it is the lesson.

The hearts have a mark, the spirits have a mark, the innermost selves have a mark, and the outward selves have a mark. The mark of corporeal and outward selves is in the traces of [God-granted] success (*ṣibghatu al-ashbāhi wa-l-ẓawāhiri bi-āthāri al-tawfiq*) and the mark of the spirits and innermost secrets is in the lights of realization (*wa-ṣibghatu al-arwāhi wa-l-sarā'iri bi-anwāri al-tahqīq*).

قُلْ أَتُحَاجُّونَنَا فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ وَلَنَا أَعْمَلُنَا وَلَكُمْ
أَعْمَلُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

[2:139] *Say: “Would you then dispute with us concerning God, and He is our Lord and your Lord? Our deeds belong to us, and to you belong your deeds, and to Him we are sincerely devoted.”*

How can dispute with strangers be appropriate when they are covered by

237 According to *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (trans. Hamza), the verbal noun *ṣibgha* is in the accusative because of the implied verbal construction, “that is to say, *ṣabaghanā Llāhu*, ‘God has marked us.’”

absence and shaded by concealment, while the friends are lit by unveiling and the bright noon of witnessing?

When is the state of one who is bankrupt by his absence equal to one whose selection and sincere devotion [and] immersion in acts of drawing near to Him has [already been] decreed? It is preposterous—there is no equality!

أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ كَانُوا
هُودًا أَوْ نَصْرَىٰ ۗ قُلْ ءَأَنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمْ اللَّهُ ۗ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً
عِنْدَهُ ۗ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

[2:140] *Or do you say: “Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the tribes— they were Jews, or they were Christians?” Say: “Have you then greater knowledge, or has God? And who does greater injustice than he who conceals a testimony received from God? And God is not heedless of what you do.”*

Whoever looks from himself to creation forms an image of each thing based on his own character and considers everything to be something like him. When they, by virtue of being outsiders [to the Real], judged the prophets ﷺ according to their own state, the Real ﷻ threw their conjecture back upon them and left them with their own opinion.²³⁸ Are those who have been drawn away from their own testimony like those who are veiled by it? Is the one who is snatched away from all of it equal to the one who is thrown back to what is like him? That is the conjecture of those who disbelieve—what misery is theirs!

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۗ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ
عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤١﴾

[2:141] *That is a community that has passed away; theirs is what they have earned, and yours is what you have earned; you will not be asked about what they did.*

The barriers of fate came between you and them, for they built their structures on separation and heedlessness while you have pitched your tents on

238 The blank in Basyūnī here as been completed from the text in MSS K117, fol. 18b and Y101, fol. 24a.

closeness and connection. The freedman of Our favor (*‘atīq faḍlinā*) is not like the fugitive of Our force (*ṭarīd qahrinā*).

﴿ سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَّيْتَهُمْ عَن قِبَلَتِهِمْ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا ۚ

[2:142] *The fools among the people will say, “What has turned them from the direction they used to face in their prayers?”*

The eyes of the disbelievers were weak so the correct view about all the circumstances of the believers was not apparent to them. They looked with an eye to finding ugliness and let loose their tongues to oppose everything that was and would be from [the believers]. They did not see anything new without bringing forth a new objection to it. That included the change in the matter of the *qibla*, when it was shifted to the Ka’ba.²³⁹ They said that if their *qibla* was correct, what would turn them from it? So [God] said:

﴿ قُلْ لِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٤٢﴾

[2:142] *Say: “To God belong the East and the West. He guides whomever He will to a straight path.”*

The servants worship toward any region and direction they will. Similarly the companions of absence and those who are veiled from witnessing [the way in which] the Real grants free agency to His friends seek only certain aspects of the affair and bring their own states to bear upon them. If they had seen the whole picture with singular vision, they would have been saved from the pain of divisive thinking, the distraction of accursed thoughts, and the claims of fractured conjecture, but God guides whom He wills to His light.

﴿ وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ
الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۗ

[2:143] *Thus, We appointed you a community of the middle way that you might be witnesses to the people; and that the Messenger might be a witness to you,*

239 The verse refers to the shifting of the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to the Ka’ba.

The middle way is the best and He appointed this community the best of communities. He appointed this group (*ṭāʾifa*)²⁴⁰ the best of this community, for they are the best of the best. Just as this community will be witnesses over the communities at the resurrection, so this group are the [foundational] roots (*uṣūl*) around which [the community] turns: they are the pole (*quṭb*) and through them God protects the entire community. Whomever their hearts accept is accepted and whomever their hearts reject is rejected—the judgment (*ḥukm*) is theirs.²⁴¹ Their inward perception (*firāsa*) is sincere and true, their judgment is sound, and their reflective thought (*naẓar*) is correct; [they are] a protection for the entire community from agreeing on error. The protection of this group from error comes from [their] consideration and judgment, [their] acceptance and rejection. Moreover, the building of their affair rests upon the way (*sunna*) of the Messenger ﷺ. Anything which is not an emulation of the Messenger ﷺ is a rejection of him and its follower has nothing.

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ
يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا
كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾

[2:143] *We did not appoint the direction you were facing, except that We might know who followed the Messenger from him who turned on his heels—though it were a grave thing, save for those whom God has guided; but God would never cause your faith to be wasted; truly, God is Gentle with people, Merciful.*

[God] explained that the decree in determining the matter of the *qibla* up to the time of the change, and then at the time of the substitution, was a test for them from the Real, in order to distinguish the sincere (*ṣādiq*) from the one who reneges (*māriq*). To those who viewed the matter with the eye of separation (*ʿayn al-tafrīqa*), the change was intolerable. To those who looked with the eye of reality (*ʿayn al-ḥaqīqa*), the true sense appeared to their inner sight (*baṣīra*). Then He said, “*but God would never cause your faith to be wasted.*” That is, for those who are with God in all [their] states with one heart, the differences in their states are one, whether He causes change or stillness, makes firm or shifts, confirms or changes—they are

240 Basyūnī notes that al-Qushayrī means the “people of realities” (*ahl al-ḥaqāʾiq*) here.

241 In this sentence and the one that follows the translation follows the wording in MSS K117, fol. 18b and Y101, fol. 24a.

through Him for Him in all [their] states. The one who spoke for them said:

However the glass turns
we turn.

The ignorant think
we have become crazed.²⁴²

Whether they face the east or west, whether they turn toward a stone or approach dry earth, the goal of their hearts is one and what belongs to the One, so the decree of everything in it is one.

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ
شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ

[2:144] *We have indeed seen you turning your face about in the heaven; now We will surely turn you to a direction (qibla) that will satisfy you. Turn your face toward the sacred mosque, and wherever you are turn your faces toward it.*

[Muḥammad] ﷺ maintained [his] good manners when he kept his tongue silent from requesting the *qibla* he wished for in his heart. So he looked to the heaven because it is the path of Gabriel ﷺ and God ﷻ revealed, “*We have indeed seen you turning your face about in the heaven,*” that is, “We know the wish you have not expressed in prayer and We have already changed the *qibla* for your sake. This is an extraordinary thing that the Beloved does for the sake of the beloved.”

“*We shall surely turn you to a direction that will satisfy you:* Every servant strives in seeking My pleasure and I am seeking your pleasure, [Muḥammad]. *Turn your face toward the sacred mosque,* but do not attach your heart to the stones and leftover traces (*āthār*): devote your heart to Me. Let the *qibla* be the goal of your [outward] self and [let] the Real [be] the object of your heart’s witnessing. *Wherever you are (O believers) turn your faces toward it,* but dedicate your hearts to Me and let your witnessing be only through Me.”

وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ

242 Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to Mālik b. Asmāʿ and also to Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya (Muṣṭafā, no. 10, p. 113).

عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

[2:144] *Those who have been given the scripture know that it is the truth from their Lord; God is not heedless of what they do.*

“But it is not knowledge that will be a proof for them, nor is there any comfort for them in it or increase from it. God is not heedless of what you do²⁴³ in bringing fear to the enemies and providing hope for the friends (*tahwīlan ‘alā l-aḍā’i wa ta’mīlan ‘alā l-awliyā’i*).”

وَلَيْنِ أَتَيْتَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَا تَبِعُوا قِبْلَتَكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ
بِتَابِعِ قِبْلَتَهُمْ وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعِ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ وَلَيْنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ
مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّكَ إِذَا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

[2:145] *Yet if you should bring to those who have been given the scripture every sign, they will not follow your direction, and you are not a follower of their direction; neither are they followers of one another’s direction. If you were to follow their whims after the knowledge that has come to you, then you will surely be among the evildoers.*

“Devotion to the path of the Real was already yours from the eternal decree, [just as it was decreed] that your enemies would fall to the side. Between the two of you *there is a barrier* (*barzakh*). *They do not overstep* [55:19–20]. They will not follow your *qibla* even if you were to show them evidence that was clearer than suns and moons. And you will not be followers of their *qibla*, even if they bring every stratagem. In that there is a decree from God *سُبْحَانَكَ* from pre-eternity.”

الَّذِينَ ءَاتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا
مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

[2:146] *Those to whom We have given the scripture, they recognize him, as*

243 The Qur’anic verse has *what they do* but the text in this section in Basyūnī, MSS K117, fol. 19a and Y101, fol. 24b clearly shows “what you (plural) do.”

they recognize their sons; even though there is a party of them that conceal the truth, while they know.

Their hidden envy makes them stubborn about the knowledge they cannot deny. Similarly, the one who has been defeated in the darkneses of his lower self throws off the cloak of bashfulness. Reproach (*malām*) is of no use with him; words (*kalām*) will not rein in his abandon.

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾

[2:147] *The truth comes from your Lord; then be not among [those who] doubt.* That is, “after the suns of certainty have appeared to you, pay no attention to mere conjecture.” The address is to [the Prophet] but it is meant for the community.

وَلِكُلِّ وِجْهَةٍ هُوَ مُوَلِّيهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمْ
اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٤٨﴾

[2:148] *Every person has a direction to which he turns, so vie with one another in good works. Wherever you may be, God will bring you all together; surely God has power over all things.*

[Here] “the allusion is to the fact that every group of people is distracted from Us by something that comes between them and Us. So be, O believers, for Us and through Us.” One of them recited:

When preoccupation with their concern
distracted me from you,

I made you my preoccupation and
you made me forget my concern.²⁴⁴

وَمَنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ

244 Muṣṭafā cites what he says is the correct verse, which is attributed to Majnūn Laylā: You distracted me from understanding the tale, except that which was about you, for you are my preoccupation (Muṣṭafā, no. 4, p. 92).

مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٩﴾

[2:149] *From whatever place you issue, turn your face toward the sacred mosque; it is the truth from your Lord. God is not heedless of what you do.*

“Just as you face the *qibla* from wherever you are, whether you are near or far from it, likewise draw near to Us in your hearts whatever your state might be, whether you are in good fortune from Us or afflicted.”

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا
كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۚ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ
إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ

[2:150] *From whatever place you come, turn your face toward the sacred mosque; and wherever you may be, turn your faces toward it, so that there be not any argument from the people against you; except [from] the evildoers among them;*

“If you want there to be no pathway for anyone against you, no shadow to fall upon you from any created thing, and no hand to reach you with evil, then from whatever place you come (*haythumā kunta*), wherever you are (*aynamā kunta*), and whatever state you are in (*kayfamā kunta*), be for Us (*kun lanā*) and be from Us (*wa kun minnā*), for truly whoever occupies themselves exclusively with Us—nothing can reach them.”

فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي

[2:150] *and do not fear them, but fear Me;*

“When [the believers] are effaced from their being (*kawn*) in its outward characteristics (*rusūm*), Our decrees (*aḥkām*) flow over them—so why would there be any fear of [the evildoers]?”

﴿١٥٠﴾ وَلَا أُتِمَّ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

[2:150] *and that I may perfect My grace upon you, and that you may be guided.* The perfection of grace [means you] add unveiling (*kashf*) to kindness (*lutf*). The one whom He suffices through His generosity (*jūd*) is below the one whom He enriches by the truth (*haqq*) of His existence (*wujūd*). Concerning the meaning of this, they have recited:

We are in the most perfect
happiness but
only through you
is the happiness made complete.

The [only] imperfection of what we are in,
O people of my love,
is that you are absent
while we are present.²⁴⁵

﴿١٥١﴾ كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾

[2:151] *As also We have sent among you, of yourselves, a messenger, to recite Our verses to you and to purify you, and to teach you the Book, and wisdom, and to teach you what you knew not.*

The sending of the Messenger was to open the gates of attainment, for it was in His *سُبْحَانَهُ* prior knowledge that the hearts of His friends would be thirsty to meet Him. There is no way for anyone to [reach God] except through the intermediary of the messengers. By sending messengers He charged some people with the burdens [of prescriptive law] (*kulaf*) and by sending messengers to others, He honored them with the arts of drawing near and approaching (*zulaf*). What a difference between one people and another!

245 Muṣṭafā cites sources attributing the verses to the Caliph Maḥdī and Ma'mūn (Muṣṭafā, no. 16, pp. 61–62).

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكَرُكُمْ وَأَشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿١٥٢﴾

[2:152] *So remember Me, I will remember you; and be thankful to Me, and be not ungrateful toward Me.*

Remembrance is the immersion of the one who is remembering in the witnessing (*shuhūd*) of that which is remembered, and then [it is] being consumed in the existence (*wujūd*) of that which is being remembered until no trace (*athar*) remains of the remembering, so that it is said “so and so” once was.

So remember me, I will remember you, that is, “be consumed in Our existence (*wujūd*) and We will remember you after your annihilation from yourself.” God most high said, “*For indeed formerly they had been virtuous*” [51:16]. They were here for a time but they have become perpetually separate (*bānū dāʾiman*):²⁴⁶

The world is
a beautiful [passing] event,
so be a beautiful event
for the one who is aware.²⁴⁷

The path of the people of literal expression (*ibāra*) is *So remember me* by acts of conformity (*muwāfaqāt*) [to the divine command], *I will remember you* with special gifts (*karāmāt*). The path of the people of allusion (*ishāra*) is “*So remember me* in abandoning every worldly concern (*ḥazz*), *I will remember you* by raising you up in My reality (*ḥaqq*) after your annihilation from yourselves.”

“*So remember me* by being content with Me instead of with My gifts and favors (*afdāl*), and *I will remember you* by being pleased with you regardless of your actions (*afʿāl*).”

“*So remember me*—and it is by My remembrance of you that you remember, for without My prior remembrance your remembrance would not occur.”

²⁴⁶ Here Basyūnī refers to comments attributed to Yahyā b. Muʿādh, “The knower (*ʿarif*) exists separately (*kāʾin bāʾin*)” and “The knower was, but became separate (*kāna fa-bāna*).” This is from the “Section on knowledge of God” (Bāb al-maʿrifati bi-Llāh), al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 2:608.

²⁴⁷ Basyūnī says that this version is confused in form and meaning. The verse could not be located in Muṣṭafā. Here the translation follows the version found in MSS K117, fol. 19b and Y101, fol. 25a: *fa-innamā l-dunyā ḥadīthun ḥasanun fa-kun ḥadīthan ḥasanan li-man wāʾa*.

“*So remember me* by cutting off attachments (*‘alā’iq*), and *I will remember you* by the attributes of realities (*ḥaqā’iq*).”

It is said that “*remember Me* belongs to everyone you meet, and *I will remember you* belongs to those whom I address.” Whoever remembers Me in a congregation, I will remember him in a congregation better than theirs.²⁴⁸

It is said that “*and be thankful to Me* for the tremendous blessing to you [refers to when] I said to you, ‘*So remember me, I will remember you.*’”

It is said that gratitude is a kind of remembrance. In His words, *and be not ungrateful*, the prohibition against ingratitude (*kufrān*) is a command to be grateful. Gratitude is a remembrance, so He repeated for you the command to remember. Three is the first term of multiplicity.²⁴⁹ The command to remember much is a command to love, for that is in the tradition, “One who loves something remembers it often,”²⁵⁰ so this is, in truth, a command to love, that is, “Love me, I will love you.” *So remember me, I will remember you*, that is, “Love me, I will love you.”²⁵¹

It is said, “*So remember me* by being humble (*tadhallul*), *I will remember you* with favor (*tafaddul*).”

“*So remember me* by being broken (*inkisār*), *I will remember you* in acts of beneficence (*mabārr*).”

“*So remember me* with the tongue (*lisān*), *I will remember you* with the gardens (*jinān*).”

“*So remember me* with your hearts (*qulūbikum*), *I will remember you* by fulfilling what you seek (*maṭlūbikum*).”

“*So remember me* at the door with respect to service (*khidma*), *I will remember you* by responding on the carpet of nearness, by completing the blessing (*ni‘ma*).”

“*So remember me* with the purification of the innermost self (*bi-tasfiyati al-sirr*), *I will remember you* by giving kindness (*bi-tawfiyati al-birr*).”

“*So remember me* with effort and care (*bi-l-jahdi wa-l-‘inā’*), *I will remember you* with generosity and giving (*bi-l-jūdi wa-l-‘aṭā’*).”

“*So remember me* with the attribute of soundness (*salāma*), *I will*

248 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives references to this *ḥadīth qudsī* from al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Ḥanbal.

249 Al-Qushayrī is saying that the command to remember is repeated three times in this verse: *remember me...be thankful to Me, and be not ungrateful toward Me.*

250 Neither Basyūnī nor ‘Abd al-Raḥmān identify this as a *ḥadīth*.

251 The first time al-Qushayrī says, “Love Me, I will love you” in this section, the “you” is in the singular. The second time it is plural. Qur’ān 3:31 has the plural form: *Say: If you love God, follow me, and God will love you.*

remember you on the Day of the Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāma*), a day on which remorse (*nadāma*) will not benefit.”

“So *remember me* with awe (*rahba*), *I will remember you* by making [your] wish (*raghba*) come true.”

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

[2:153] *O you who believe, seek help through patience and prayer; surely God is with the patient.*

“Seek the help of [God’s] blessing (*ṣalāt*) through patience.”²⁵² That is to say, “your being worthy of your Lord’s blessing (*ṣalāt*) [comes] by your patience at the flow of the decrees of the Real over you.” For that reason God most high said, *yet give good tidings to the patient* [2:155] followed by, *Upon those rest blessings (ṣalawāt) and mercy from their Lord* [2:157].

It is said that the patient are entitled to the ultimate treasures and the highest ranks, inasmuch as they have attained the company (*ma‘iyya*)²⁵³ of God most high, who said “*Surely God is with (ma‘a) the patient.*”

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَن يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ءَمُوتٌ بَلْ ءَحْيَاءٌ وَلَكِن لَّا تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾

[2:154] *And say not of those slain in God’s way: “They are dead”; rather they are living; but you are not aware.*

Life passed away from them in this world, but they have [already] arrived at eternal life in the end. They are, in truth, living, finding all kinds of special gifts (*karāmāt*) from God.

It is said that they are living because God is the One who takes over (*khalaf*) after them and anyone for whom God is the substitute is not dead. The one who spoke for them said about one who was created:

Verily through you ‘Itāb has departed
for the sake of His way,
but he who remains belongs to Him.
Like Khālid, he has not died.²⁵⁴

252 The word *ṣalāt* can mean the prayer of men or the blessing God gives to men.

253 Literally, “withness.”

254 Muṣṭafa says that the verse cited in Basyūnī is incorrect. He gives a version which is

It is said that they are living by God's remembrance of them. By the beauty of His eternal remembrance, one who is the object of the Real's remembrance is not dead.

It is said that verily their corporeal forms (*ashbāh*) are dispersed (*mutafarriqa*), but their spirits (*arwāh*) are proven true (*mutahaqqiqā*) through the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*. If their corporeal forms have been annihilated through God, their spirits have remained through God, for whoever is annihilated through God, his remaining is through God.

It is said that they are living in the testimonial witnessings of exaltation, the cloak of awe upon them. They are in the shade of intimacy, delighted by His beauty in one moment and overwhelmed by His majesty in the next.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ
وَالشَّمْرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِيرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ
وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

[2:155] *Surely We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and diminution of goods and lives and fruits; yet give good tidings to the patient;*

[2:156] *those who, when they are struck by an affliction, say, "Surely we belong to God, and to Him we will return."*

He tried them with blessings in order to make their gratitude manifest and He tried them by tribulation, in order to make their patience manifest. He caused that which was [already] known of their state to enter into existence, marked them with the record that He had decreed, and established them with the attribute He [already] knew. He tried them with fear, which cleared their breasts, and by hunger, which cleansed their bodies, and by diminution of goods, which purified their material blessings.²⁵⁵ Through the afflictions suffered by [their] lower selves, their wages were magnified before God, and through the blight of [their] fruits, their compensation was doubled from God.

almost the same as the one found in MSS K117, fol. 19b and Y101, fol. 25b, which is the text translated here. The verse is attributed to the poet A'shā Hamdān, who is said to have recited it about Khālid b. 'Itāb b. Warqā' (Muṣṭafā, no. 15, p. 48). The name Khālid means "one who lives forever." The version of the verse in Muṣṭafā has the letters *y-k* in the first line, which would seem to be a typographical error for *bika*.

255 The translation follows the word *nī'ma* from MSS K117, fol. 19b and Y101, fol. 25b rather than the word "lower selves" (*nufūs*) in the Basyīnī edition.

Yet give good tidings to the patient, meaning those who do not oppose His decree through what He brings to pass.

It is said He asked them to *fear* in their seeking to avoid His punishment; then to suffer *hunger* in their desire for His nearness and generosity; then the *diminution of goods* through almsgiving, renouncing [the goods] in the hopes of something better, which is obtaining knowledge of Him; *and lives* (anfus) through their submission to worship of Him; *and fruits* in abandoning their hope for abundant material blessings. *Yet give good tidings to those who are patient* in seeking the beautiful in His decree and yielding to the flow of His power.

The demands of the unseen (*muṭālabāt al-ghayb*) will either be through wealth, the self, or near relations. Whoever devotes wealth to God will have salvation (*najāt*). Whoever exerts [him]self for His decree will [be raised in] degrees (*darajāt*). Whoever is patient with the misfortunes of near relations will have recompense and stations of nearness (*qurubāt*). Whoever does not hoard the spirit from Him will have perpetual intimate communications (*muwāṣalāt*).

Those who, when they are struck by an affliction face the matter with patience and even gratitude. Nay, [they are] even exultant, boastful.²⁵⁶

Whoever views things as property belonging to the Real sees himself as a stranger between Him and His decree, for the One who brought forth creation has more right over created beings than they do themselves.

It is said that one who looks to [his] misfortunes testifies that his self belongs to God and [returns] to God. The one who looks to the One who causes the misfortunes knows that what will be is from God, so he is a servant through God. What a difference between one who belongs to God and one who is through God. The one who belongs to God is patient and firm, while the one who exists through God has relinquished free choice (*ikhtiyār*) and decision (*ḥukm*). If [God] strengthens him he is strong and if He effaces him he is effaced. If He causes him to move, he moves and if He causes him to stay still, he is still. He is annihilated from his free choices (*ikhtiyārāt*) and is moved this way and that (*muṣarrāf*) in the grip [of God].

256 Al-Qushayrī is playing on verses elsewhere in the Qurʾān, transforming a negative description of mankind's tendency to be ungrateful into a positive description of those who are patient: *And if We cause man to taste some mercy from Us, and then wrest it from him, lo! he is despairing, ungrateful. / But if We cause him to taste prosperity after some misery that had befallen him, assuredly he will say, "The ills have gone from me"; lo! he is exultant, boastful; / save those who endure [patiently] and perform righteous deeds; theirs will be forgiveness and a great reward [11:9–11].*

أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

[2:157] *Upon those rest blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those—they are the truly guided.*

They attained their patience and their ability to withstand the demands of the divine decree from His prior blessings to them. It was not because of their patience or their endurance that they arrived at His blessings, for if not for His pre-eternal mercy, their obedience would not have arisen through the condition of servitude, for His prior solicitude is what brought pure guidance to them.

They are the truly guided: Because He blessed them in the beginning (*lammā raḥimahum fī l-bidāya*), they were guided in the end (*ihtadaw fī l-nihāya*).

وَإِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِن شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ

[2:158] *Truly Ṣafā and Marwa are among the symbols of God,*

These sites and relics (*tilka al-mashāhidu wa-l-rusūm*), these ruins and remains (*wa-tilka al-aṭlālu wa-l-ruqūm*), are extolled and visited. One sets out for them because they are the ruins of the lovers where the vestiges [still] gleam:

The passions of houses belong
to those who have lived in them.

There is no concern or joy
in the house itself.²⁵⁷

Truly the earth of their path, even the dust of their footprints, has tremendous value for the lovers. Even the smallest bit of dust that falls upon the edges of their path is more precious than the most fragrant musk:

And that is only because
Umayma walked beside it

²⁵⁷ There are several different versions of this poem in MSS K117, fol. 20a, Y101, fol. 26a, and Muṣṭafā, no. 15, p. 28. The translation follows the version in the Basyūni edition.

in a group [of women],
trailing a garment.²⁵⁸

فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا وَمَنْ
تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥٨﴾

[2:158] *so whoever makes the pilgrimage to the House, or the visitation, he would not be at fault, if he circumambulates them; and whoever volunteers good, God is Grateful, Knowing.*

Ṣafā and Marwa were favored by being close to the House. The running between the two became part of the law, just as the circumambulation became part of the law for the House. Just as the circumambulation is one of the main rites of the pilgrimage, so is the running. The neighbor is honored for the sake of the neighbor.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ
لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

[2:159] *Those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We have revealed after We have shown them clearly in the scripture—they shall be cursed by God and by those who curse,*

This verse alludes to those to whom the Real سُبْحَانَهُ has unveiled knowledge of the good manners (*ādāb*) of traveling, but who have become stingy in revealing [this knowledge] to aspirants [who seek] advice and guidance. In that moment they become worthy of wrath. One fears for them, that the blessing will be removed from their knowledge when they fall short in it, just as²⁵⁹ they held back in imparting [that knowledge] to the deserving.

258 The version of this verse which Muṣṭafā cites is not the version found in the Basyūni edition, but matches MSS K117, fol. 20a and Y101, fol. 26a exactly, and is the version used for the translation here: *wa-mā dhāka illā an mashat bi-janābihi Umayma fi sirbin wa-jarrat bihi burdā*. Muṣṭafā gives two references for the verse but without an author. In the second reference, the woman's name is 'Azīza (Muṣṭafā, no. 16, p. 48).

259 The translation follows the particle *ka-mā* from MSS K117, fol. 20a and Y101, fol. 26a.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوْا فَاوْتَيْكَ تُبُوًّا عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦٠﴾

[2:160] *Except those that repent, and make amends, and show clearly—they I shall turn [relenting]; I am the Relenting, the Merciful.*

[Except those who] compensate for their past negligence by graciously turning back, taking on the task of giving advice to the aspirants. They **show clearly** to [the aspirants] the goodness in upholding certain modes of behavior, explaining and demonstrating this to them in a beautiful way. Surely the clearest proof of the clarity of your actions, and the truest testimony of that by which you call people to God, is that your behavior does not contradict what you have alluded to in your speech. God most high said, “*And I do not desire to be inconsistent in what I forbid you*” [11:88].²⁶⁰

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُوْتِيكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

[2:161] *But those who disbelieve, and die disbelieving—upon them shall be the curse of God and the angels, and of people altogether.*

[2:162] *Abiding therein: the chastisement shall not be lightened for them, no respite shall be given them.*

Here the allusion is to those who, after they have traveled the path of spiritual desire (*irāda*), find it fitting to return to the states of the people of habit (*ahl al-āda*).²⁶¹ Then, while they are in the grip of this estrangement [from the path] and in this condition, [they] leave the world. Those are the companions of separation (*aṣḥāb al-furqa*). There is no drawing near for their spirits or setting straight their calamity, no asking for mercy from anyone. They have lost in this world and the hereafter. They are cursed by gnats in the air and stagnation in [their] water (*yal'anuhum al-baqqu fi l-hawā'i wa-l-naq'u 'alā l-mā'i*).

260 This is part of Shu'ayb's response to his people: *He said, "O my people, have you considered that I might be [acting] upon a clear proof from my Lord and that He has provided me with fair sustenance from Him? And I do not desire to be inconsistent in what I forbid you. I desire only to set things right so far as I am able..."* [11:88].

261 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 20a and Y101, fol. 26a, both of which have the phrase *aḥwāl ahl al-āda*. The Basyūnī edition has *aḥwāl al-āda*.

Abiding: that is, they remain forever in their contemptible position, insignificant and [find no] lessening of it or relief, without kindness or favors.

وَاللَّهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦٣﴾

[2:163] *Your God is One God; there is no god except Him, the Compassionate, the Merciful.*

He honored them with the greatest honor in saying, “**Your God.**” The shaykhs of this group²⁶² said that the sign of the one whom He has prepared for the elect of the elect is that He says to him, “My servant”—and this is more perfect than that. His saying, “**Your God,**” connecting His reality²⁶³ to you, is better than His connecting you to Himself. This is because His divinity for you is without defect, while your existence for Him is as a servant, with only your defects and harms to give in exchange. When did He say to you “**Your God**”? Was it at the time of your obedience, your movements, and states of rest, your essence or qualities? Nay, it was before that, in the eternity of eternity, time without time or season, outward marking or event.

The **One** who:

there is nothing similar that comes close to Him,
 there is no resemblance that approaches Him,
 there is no partner who is related to Him,
 there is no companion who is on intimate terms with Him,
 there is no associate who works hand in hand with Him,
 there is no helper who assists Him,
 and there is no combatant who opposes Him.

[It is] the oneness of the Real, the eternalness of the source, the perpetuity of the Abiding, the endlessness of Might and the sempiternity of the Essence.

[He is] **One** in the might of His radiance, singular in the majesty of His splendor, alone in the omnipotence of His grandeur, eternal in the authority of His might, glorious in the beauty of His sovereignty. Whoever tries to speak at length describing Him becomes incapable of expression.²⁶⁴ If it

262 That is, the Sufis.

263 The translation follows the word “reality” (*ḥaqq*) from MSS K117, fol. 20b and Y101, fol. 26a, rather than the word “attribute” (*naʿt*) from the Basyūnī edition.

264 The translation follows the phrase “becomes incapable of expression” (*aṣḥaḥa mansūban ilā l-ʿiyy*) from the MSS K117, fol. 20b and Y101, fol. 26b. The Basyūnī edition has the

were not for the fact that He is the Compassionate, the Merciful, then the servant would be destroyed when exposed to knowledge of Him, at the first glimmer of the appearances of His might.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي
تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ
فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ
وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

[2:164] *Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and day, and the ships that run in the sea with what profits men, and the water God sends down from the heaven with which He revives the earth after it is dead, and He scatters abroad in it all manner of crawling thing; and the disposition of the winds, and the clouds compelled between heaven and the earth—surely there are signs for a people who comprehend.*

He informed the hearts of the seekers among the rational thinkers (*aṣḥāb al-istidlāl*) and those who possess intellects (*arbāb al-ʿuqūl*) of the evidentiary proofs of His deliberative power, the signs of His existence, and the marks of His lordship, which are the various kinds of His acts. He drew their attention to the different aspects²⁶⁵ of wisdom and evidentiary proofs of [divine] oneness (*waḥdāniyya*). Along with these He established demonstrative proofs that are subtle in expression and aspects of the evidentiary proofs that are precise in allusion. For there is no entity arising out of nonexistence, whether a person or ruins, trace or vestige, heaven or space, air or water, sun or moon, drop or rain, sand or stone, star or tree, that is not evidence of oneness (*waḥdāniyya*) and a means of access for those who direct themselves to His existence.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ ۗ

[2:165] *Yet there be people who take to themselves peers besides God, loving them as God is loved;*

same phrase except for the last word, which is “blindness” (*al-ʿamā*) rather than *ʿiyy*.

265 The translation follows the word “aspects” (*wujūh*) MSS K117, fol. 20b and Y101, fol. 26b rather than the word “existence” (*wujūd*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

These are people whom the Real سُبْحَانَهُ did not appoint as the people of love (*ahl al-maḥabba*). He kept them occupied with the love of other things so that they were satisfied with loving everything that their lower selves desired. They were satisfied with worshiping something that was made for them, and satisfied with loving something crafted for them that is other than Him.

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرُونَ الْعَذَابَ
 أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ ﴿١٦٥﴾

[2:165] *but those who believe love God more ardently; If he were to see those who did evil, when they see the chastisement, that the might altogether belongs to God, and that God is terrible in chastisement.*

What is intended here is not to recall the idol worshipers' love for other things, but rather to praise the believers for their love. It is not necessary for you to increase your love so as to surpass the love of disbelievers for their idols; rather the lover wants to remember his beloved as much as he can and finds everything that comes from the beloved beautiful.

It is said that the reason for the superiority of the love of believers for God over the love of the disbelievers for their idols is that the love of the latter is from like to like, and it is expected that like will incline to like. But [the love of believers for God] is a love for One who is not like them, and that is more precious and more worthy.

It is said that [the disbelievers] love what they can see and there is nothing amazing about loving that which has been seen with one's own eyes. But the believers love the One who has come in between them and their seeing,²⁶⁶ a cloak of grandeur on their faces.

It is said that *those who believe love God more ardently* because they do not dissociate themselves from God even if He punishes them. The disbeliever dissociates himself from the idol and the idol from the disbeliever, just as God most high said, "When those who were followed disown their followers" [2:166].

It is said that the love (*maḥabba*) of the believers comes from God's love for them, for that is more perfect. God most high said, *whom He loves and who love Him* [5:54], while their love for idols is a matter of whim (*hawā*).

It is said that the love of the believers is more perfect and more ardent

²⁶⁶ Al-Qushayrī may be indirectly referring to a phrase in 8:24: *God comes in between a man and his heart.*

because it conforms to the command, while the love of the disbelievers conforms to whim (*hawā*) and human nature (*tabʿ*). It is said that when their circumstances were prosperous and their wealth and influence wide, they adopted idols that were better than those they worshiped in their previous state of poverty. They used to adopt idols of silver when they were rich and abandon those of iron—this was how they measured things! For the believers, the intensity of their love for God was because they worshiped One God in good times and bad.

إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ
وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ ﴿١٦٦﴾

[2:166] *When those who were followed disown their followers, and they have seen the chastisement, and the cords are cut away before them.*

When the first parts of the punishment appear to [the disbelievers], it will become clear to them that they have nothing sincere upon which to stand. As for the believers, they will have their lives,²⁶⁷ possessions, spouses, and children taken from them [but their sincerity will remain]. [The disbelievers] will be made to reside in the graves for a few years and then He will try them at the resurrection with lengthy terrors and by questioning [their] actions,²⁶⁸ and then cast them in the fire. [But] He will grant [the believers] long days and lives,²⁶⁹ so their love for Him will continue to increase.²⁷⁰ Because of that, He said, “*those who believe love God more ardently*” [2:165].

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوا مِنَّا كَذَلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَلَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ ﴿١٦٧﴾

[2:167] *And those who followed say, “O, if only we might return again and disown them, as they have disowned us!” So, God shall show them their works,*

267 The word al-Qushayrī uses for “lives” here is *arwāḥ*, which is usually translated as “spirits.” For a similar use of the word, see his commentary on Qurʾān 2:178.

268 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 20b and Y101, fol. 26b and fol. 27a: *bi-ṭuli al-ahwālī wa-suʿālī al-āmal*.

269 The translation follows the word “lives” (*āmar*) found in MSS K117, fol. 20b and Y101, fol. 27a rather than “works” (*āmāl*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

270 “For Him” (*lahu*) has been added from MSS K117, fol. 20b and Y101, fol. 27a.

anguish for them! Never shall they exit from the Fire.

At that time they will know the bitter taste of the companionship of created things, but they will not be able to attain anything but anguish.

يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ كُلُّوْا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ
الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٦٨﴾

[2:168] *O people, eat of what is in the earth, lawful and wholesome; and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you;*

That which is forbidden, even if it is pleasing now, is contaminated in the end. That which is permitted, even if it is hateful now, is wholesome in the end. The pure and permitted [can be understood as] that which is acquired without forgetting the Real.

It is said that that which is permitted is what the gatherer obtains for His sake and acquires while witnessing the Real in every state. Anything that causes you to forget the Real or disobey the Real is from the *steps of Satan*.

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوْءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

[2:169] *he only commands you to evil and indecency, and that you should speak against God what you do not know.*

Because of his audacity toward God, he induces you to speak falsely about God.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا
أَوَّلَوْ كَانِ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

[2:170] *And when it is said to them, “Follow what God has revealed,” they say, “No; but we follow what we found our fathers doing.” What? Even if their fathers do not understand anything, and they were not guided?*

There is no raising their eyes beyond that which is like them in form, class, kind, and ancestry, for they are set on their way. Without a doubt they have

plunged into the fire on their path. Had they known that their ancestors had no intelligence to restrain them, nor guidance to unite them, they would have withdrawn from them, [understanding them to be] hostile, and resisted them, [understanding them to be] oppositional [to God's command]. But the lights of insight were snatched from them and they were deprived of the proofs of certainty.

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً
صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْى فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٧١﴾

[2:171] *The likeness of those who disbelieve is as the likeness of one who shouts to that which hears nothing, save a call and a cry; deaf, dumb, blind—they do not comprehend.*

Without the ears of comprehension and acceptance, their bodily hearing did not benefit them. They descended to the status of animals incapable of actualization (*taḥṣīl*).²⁷¹ Whoever is content to be like an animal (*man radiya an yakūn ka-l-bahīma*) does not have much worth (*lam yaqa'u 'alayhi kathīr al-qīma*).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَأَشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن
كُنْتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٧٢﴾

[2:172] *O you who believe, eat of the good things (ṭayyibāt) wherewith We have provided you, and give thanks to God if it be Him that you worship.*

The permitted (*ḥalāl*) is that for which there is no [bad] consequence. The good thing (*ṭayyib*) is that thing whose blessing is not attributed to any created thing. When the servant finds something that combines these two qualities, it is permitted and good.

The true meaning of thankfulness to Him is that you do not take a breath in anything other than the pleasure of the Real, so long as the energy given to you by that [permitted and good] food remains.

271 The word *taḥṣīl* can mean to produce, perceive or acquire something. It can also mean to discriminate. In this context, al-Qushayrī seems to use the word to describe the actualization of the full potential of human beings.

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالْدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ بِهِ ۖ لِعَیْرِ اللَّهِ
فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٧٣﴾

[2:173] *He has only forbidden you carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, and what has been hallowed to other than God. Yet whoever is constrained, not desiring, nor transgressing, no sin shall be on him. God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

He has forbidden in outward circumstances these specific things which have been hallowed to other than God. He has forbidden to the innermost hearts companionship with other than God, and even witnessing anything other than God. *Yet whoever is constrained*, that is, anyone who has not found a means to annihilation in the realities of the Real should only travel by way of the law. Either he should be effaced in God or stand by means of God, or act for God. Otherwise he is a foolish man of no account.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ۖ ثَمَنًا
قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٤﴾

[2:174] *Those who conceal what God has revealed of the scripture, and sell it for a little price—they shall consume nothing in their bellies but the fire; God shall not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, neither purify them; and theirs is a painful chastisement.*

The scholars (*ulamāʾ*) are asked to spread the evidentiary proofs of knowledge while the friends (*awliyāʾ*) are commanded to preserve the trusts of the secret. If [the scholars] conceal the proofs of the different types of knowledge, they will be bridled with a bridle of fire (*nār*).²⁷² By contrast, if [the friends] divulge even a sliver from the secret, they [will be] immediately distanced from the secrets (*asrār*) and snatched away from the lights (*anwār*) they have been given. To each is a limit (*ḥadd*) and to each a command (*amr*).

272 This would appear to be a reference to a *ḥadīth* transmitted from Abū Hurayra and found in Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī: “He who is asked about knowledge and conceals it will be bridled on the Day of Judgment with a bridle of Fire” (al-Nawawī, *Riyadh as-Salihin*, trans. Muhammad Zafrulla Khan [London: Curzon Press, 1975], 233).

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ
 فَمَا أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ ﴿١٧٥﴾ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ
 وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿١٧٦﴾

[2:175] *They are those who have bought error at the price of guidance, and chastisement at the price of pardon; what makes them so patient for the fire?*

[2:176] *That is because God has revealed the Book with the truth; and those that are at variance regarding the Book are in schism, far removed.*

Truly those that prefer the other (*ghayr*) over the unseen (*ghayb*), the creation (*khalq*) over the Real (*haqq*), the lower self (*nafs*) over intimacy (*uns*) [with God], how hard are their hearts (*ma aqsā qulūbahum*), how shameless what they love and seek (*wa-mā awqaḥa maḥbūbahum wa-maṭlūbahum*), how cheap their worth, and how disgraceful for those who have eyes to see! ***That is because God has revealed the Book in truth***, and made its decree and rule come to pass in sincerity, and brought them to that for which He prepared them, and established them on the way He has fashioned for them.

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ
 مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَعَآتَى الْمَالَ
 عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَأَبْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ
 وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَعَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا
 وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا
 وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

[2:177] *It is not piety, that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. True piety is [that of] the one who believes in God and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and who gives of his substance, however cherished, to kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the traveler and beggars, and for slaves, and who observes prayer and pays the alms, and those who fulfill their covenant when they have engaged in a covenant, those who endure with fortitude misfortune, hardship, and peril are the ones who are truthful, and these are the ones who are fearful.*

The allusion is that external circumstances [such as which way one turns for the *qibla*] are not terribly important, whereas information about God is precious. The copious recitation of litanies, though greatly esteemed [as a devotional activity], is the business of old and weak people. Devotional acts of obedience, even if they are powerful, are what ordinary people do. Spending night and day in an abundance of tasks and exertions has great weight in becoming worthy of the reward, but deep knowledge of the Real is rare and precious.

What is mentioned in this verse about different kinds of goodness (*ihsān*) and aspects of faith (*īmān*)—the giving of wealth, the purification of works, the connection to kin, holding to different types of protective arrangements and obligations, the fulfillment of contracts and observing the limits—is of momentous effect and great significance. These [acts] are beloved (*maḥbūb*) to the Real as a law (*sharʿan*) and what He asks for (*maṭlūb*) as a command (*amran*). But more perfect and higher in meaning is the standing in of the Real for you after your annihilation, being effaced from yourself as a witness (*shāhid*),²⁷³ consumed in the existence of eternity with your outward characteristics (*rusūm*) cut off from the familiar things (*musākanāt*) of your sensory awareness (*ihsās*). [It is more perfect and higher in meaning] because in unity (*tawḥīd*) no impression or trace remains, and no other thing or remnant is left behind.

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ ۗ الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ
وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ ۖ وَالْأُنثَىٰ بِالْأُنثَىٰ ۗ فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتِّبَاعٌ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ۗ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۗ فَمَنْ
أَعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

[2:178] O you who believe, prescribed for you is retaliation, regarding the slain; a free man, for a free man, and a slave for a slave, and a female for a female. But if anything is pardoned anyone in relation to his brother, let the pursuit be honorable. And let the payment to him be with kindness; that is an alleviation given by your Lord, and a mercy; and for him who commits aggression after that—his is a painful chastisement.

The right to retaliate is prescribed in the law but forgiveness is better, so he who inclines to receiving his right in full is one who submits (*muslim*),²⁷⁴

273 See al-Qushayrī's discussion of this term in the section "Witness" (al-Shāhid), *Risāla*, 1:246–247.

274 The translation follows the words *fa-muslim* found in MSS K117, fol. 21b and Y101, fol.

while he who renounces seeking his right is one who acts in a beautiful way (*muḥsin*). The first possesses worship and even servanthood (*ʿubūdiyya*). The second possesses noble-heartedness (*futuwwa*)²⁷⁵ and even freedom (*ḥurriyya*).

According to the people of knowledge (*ahl al-ʿilm*) retaliation entails bloodshed. According to the allusion of the people of the story (*ahl al-qīṣṣa*),²⁷⁶ their blood goes unavenged and their lives²⁷⁷ are good for nothing. He said:

The heart you caused to tremble
gives praise to you,
and the blood you made spill is proud
to have been spilled by you.²⁷⁸

The blood of the lovers shed over the carpet of nearness is the perfume²⁷⁹ of the people of communion. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The color is the color of blood and the smell is the smell of musk.”²⁸⁰

وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَوةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

[2:179] *In retaliation there is life for you, O people of pith, so that you might fear.*

In carrying out the retaliation there is life because when one knows that if he kills, he will himself be killed, he refrains from killing. In this, there is life for the one who kills and the one who is killed.

But according to the allusive explanation, there is greater life in abandoning retaliation because when one has been annihilated in Him *مُجَانَةً*,

27b rather than the words *fa-musallam lahu* found in the Basyūnī edition.

275 For al-Qushayrī’s discussion of this term, see the “Section on nobleheartedness” (Bāb al-futuwwa), *Risāla*, 2:472–479.

276 Basyūnī identifies the *ahl al-qīṣṣa* in a footnote as the masters of states (*arbāb al-aḥwāl*). In his footnotes to al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qurʾān 2:69–70 and 2:80, he identified the *ahl al-qīṣṣa* as Sufis.

277 The word al-Qushayrī uses for lives is *arwāḥ*, usually translated as “spirits.” For a similar use of the word, see his commentary on Qurʾān 2:166.

278 Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to al-Mutanabbī, although here the two lines are reversed (Muṣṭafā, no. 15, p. 61).

279 The word *khalūq*, which is clearly written and vowelled in MSS K117 fol. 21b and Y101, fol. 27b, is preferable here to the word *khulūf* in the Basyūnī edition.

280 This *ḥadīth* refers to the wounds of those who fought in God’s way and the way in which they will appear on the Day of Resurrection. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān gives Ibn Ḥanbal as a source.

He is the successor for him and his life from Him is more perfect for him than his remaining with himself. When God has inherited²⁸¹ from them and succeeded them, the remaining of the Successor is dearer than the life of the one who was annihilated.

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِن تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةَ
لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

[2:180] *Prescribed for you, when any of you is approached by death and leaves behind some good, is to make testament in favor of his parents and kinsmen honorably—an obligation on those that fear.*

The testament regarding one's wealth is recommended for anyone who has wealth to leave behind. But if one leaves nothing behind, what is the use of a testament? The circumstance of the wealthy is such that they bequeath it in thirds at the end of their lives. The friends depart from their living entirely and therefore leave nothing but an aspiration (*himma*), which has become separated from them and detached from anything. Because there is no way for the aspiration to [reach] the Real and [because it no longer has] an attachment to anything, [the aspiration] remains alone, separate and disconnected.²⁸² They have recited:

As long as I am living I will love you
and when I die
my decaying bones
will keep loving you in the ground.²⁸³

This is their testament.²⁸⁴ And it is even as another of them said:

281 For the notion of God as inheritor, see Qur'an 19:40: *Indeed We shall inherit the earth and all who are on it, and to Us they will be returned.*

282 In several other passages of his commentary, al-Qushayrī speaks of aspiration (*himma*) as the “wealth” of the poor. Here he personifies aspiration, portraying it as bereft after having lost its position as a quality possessed by the friends of God who have passed into the hereafter.

283 Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of these lines attributed to al-Shiblī (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 104).

284 There are verses here that Basyūnī omits, saying he was unable to understand or correct them. This was true for the text in MSS K117, fol. 21b and Y101, fol. 27b as well.

The traces²⁸⁵ tell that
they left not long ago.

They returned to their lands
and my tears flowed for them.²⁸⁶

فَمَنْ بَدَّلَهُ وَبَعْدَ مَا سَمِعَهُ وَفَاتَمَّا إِثْمُهُ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُبَدِّلُونَهُ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٨١﴾

[2:181] *Then if anyone changes it after hearing it, the sin shall rest upon those who change it; surely God is Hearing, Knowing.*

Whoever distorts an utterance, the evil and harm of that becomes his. His punishment is that he is denied the smell of the fragrance of sincerity. Whoever aids the religion (*dīn*), God aids him and whoever provides aid against the religion, God forsakes him.

فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مَوْصٍ جَنَفًا أَوْ إِثْمًا فَأَصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٨٢﴾

[2:182] *But if anyone fears injustice or sin from one making a testament, and so makes things right between them, then no sin shall be upon him; surely God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

Here the allusion is to the one who recognizes a weakness in one of the aspirants (*murīdūn*), or sees in one of the novices (*ahl al-bidāya*) a laxity of purpose (*qaṣd*). Or [it may allude to] someone giving counsel, [who] speaks with pure sincerity to someone who does not have the capacity for it. He understands his kindness to the aspirant as a form of indulgence, encouragement, persuasion, and permissiveness toward him. This is not objectionable, for urging people to pure sincerity [on the path] and [encouraging them] in what is not yet firmly established in them has an ample

285 Instead of the word “traces” (*rusūm*) in MSS K117, fol. 21b and Y101, fol. 28a, the Basyūnī edition has *rasūl*, which may just be a typographic error, since Muṣṭafā does not repeat it (Muṣṭafā, no. 31, p. 31).

286 The translation follows “for them” (*lahum*) as found in MSS K117, fol. 21b and Y101, fol. 28a instead of *lahu* in the Basyūnī edition. Muṣṭafā gives a somewhat different version of the first line attributed to Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭālib (Muṣṭafā, no. 31, p. 31).

reward. Showing kindness to novices who are not yet firm in their resolve or sincere in their effort is a crucial element in seeking to make things right.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ
 مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٣﴾

[2:183] *O you who believe, prescribed for you is the fast, just as it was prescribed for those that were before you so that you might guard yourselves.*

Fasting (*ṣawm*) is of two types: the external fast, which is abstention from things that break the fast (*muftarāt*), accompanied by the intention [to fast], and the inner fast, which is to protect (*ṣawn*) the heart from different kinds of harm (*āfāt*), then to protect the spirit from familiar comforts (*musākanāt*), and then to protect the inner self from considerations (*mulāḥazāt*) [of anything but God].

It is said that the requirement of the fasting of worshipers, if it is to be complete, is to protect the tongue from slander (*ghība*), and to protect the glance from viewing [anything] with suspicion (*riḥa*), as it is said in the tradition, “Whoever fasts, let him fast with his ears, his eyes. . . .”²⁸⁷ As for the fast of those with deep knowledge, it is to guard the innermost self from witnessing anything other than Him.

For those who abstain from the things that break the fast, the end of their fast [comes] when night falls. For those who fast from everything other [than Him], the end of their fast [comes when] they witness the Real. [The Prophet] ﷺ said, “Fast to see Him and break your fast to see Him.”²⁸⁸ According to the people of realization (*ahl al-taḥqīq*), [in this *ḥadīth* the letter] *hā* in [the Prophet’s] words *li-ru’yatihi* refers to the Real *مُبَاحَاةٌ*.²⁸⁹ The religious scholars (*‘ulamā*) say its meaning is “Fast when you see the new moon of Ramaḍān and break your fast when you see the new moon of Shawwāl.” As for the elect, their fast is for God because their witnessing is of God, their breaking of the fast is through God, and their approach is to God. The One who prevails over them is God and the One through whom they are effaced is God.

287 Basyūnī gives the full text of the *ḥadīth* and states that it is attributed to Abū Hurayra, and can be found in al-Bukhārī and the other sound collections.

288 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives al-Nasāʾī among other sources for this *ḥadīth*.

289 The pronominal suffix can refer to he or it (in this case, God or the new moon).

أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ

[2:184] *For days numbered; and if any of you be sick, or be on a journey, then a number of other days;*

Whoever is present in the month fasts for God and whoever is present with the Creator of the month fasts through God. The fast for God leads to recompense, while the fast through God leads to nearness. The fast for God is the fulfillment of worship (*taḥqīq al-ibāda*) and the fast through God is the healing of spiritual desire (*taṣḥīḥ al-irāda*). The fast for God is an attribute of every worshiper (*ʿābid*) and the fast by means of God is the quality of every seeker (*qāṣid*). The fast for God is accomplished by the outward (*ẓawāhir*) [selves] and the fast by means of God is accomplished by the innermost (*ḍamāʿir*) selves. The fast for God is abstention according to the clear explanations of the law (*ʿibārāt al-sharīʿa*)²⁹⁰ and the fast by means of God is abstention through the allusions of reality (*ishārāt al-ḥaqīqa*).

Whoever is present in the month [of Ramaḍān] abstains from the things that break the fast, while whoever is present with the Real abstains at all times from witnessing created things.

Whoever fasts with his lower self will drink from the drink of Salsabil and Zanjabil.²⁹¹ Whoever fasts in his heart will drink from the drink of that which causes love (*maḥābb*) through the blessing of [God’s] approval (*ijāb*). Those who fast with their innermost selves are those about whom God has said, “*He will give them a pure drink to drink*” [76:21]. What a drink! [It is] a not a drink that is turned about in the hand but rather one that appears from [God’s] kindness. [It is] a drink of becoming intimate, not a drink from a cup.

God most high said, “*If any of you be sick, or be on a journey, then a number of other days,*” that is, for anyone who breaks the fast for these reasons, [they should] fast a number of other days equaling those in which the fast was broken. The allusion is to one who is losing the vigor of his spiritual desire (*irāda*) so that he returns to other than Him, either through a permissive interpretation (*rukḥṣat taʿwīl*) or because of a lack of strength or endurance, or a weakness in taking on the burdens of the decrees of reality (*aḥkām al-ḥaqīqa*). Then let his load be lightened until his resolve strengthens and his desire intensifies. At that time what was permitted to him in adopting [a permissive] interpretation will be corrected in him. This

290 The translation follows the word “clear explanations” (*ʿibārāt*) found in MSS K117, fol. 22a and Y101, fol. 28a, rather than “acts of worship” (*ʿibādāt*) in the Basyūnī edition.

291 A spring and the flavor of ginger in a drink in paradise, as described in Qurʾān 76:17–18.

is the *sunna* of God ﷻ in easing the way for novices. Their fulfillment of that will be obligatory at a later time.

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ
خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

[2:184] *and for those who are able to do it, a redemption: the feeding of a poor man. For him who volunteers good; that is good for him; but it is better for you that you should fast, if you but knew.*

The allusion here is to those who have some remnant (*baqīya*) of power in themselves to dedicate to the demands of reality (*muṭālabāt al-ḥaqīqa*), but who nonetheless revert to lenience in the *sharī'a* and descend into a permissive interpretation. The amends prescribed for one in this state is to abandon whatever remains (*baqīya*) in fixed wealth and external circumstances so that he is left (*yabqā*) stripped bare before the One.

It is said that since [God] knows that being charged with responsibilities (*taklīf*) necessarily entails difficulty, He lightened that for you in your heart by showing the days of the fast to be few, for He said, “*for days numbered*,” that is, the duration of this fast is but a few days, so hearing about it should not alarm you. This is like the saying of God most high, “*And struggle in the way of God, a struggle worthy of Him*” [22:78], and then saying, “*and He has not laid upon you in your religion any hardship*” [22:78], that is, He does not burden you with too great a difficulty in performing a struggle worthy of Him.

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ
الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ
مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

[2:185] *The month of Ramaḍān, in which the Qur`ān was revealed, a guidance for the people, and as clear proofs of the guidance and the criterion; So let those of you who are present [at his home] at the month, fast it and if any of you be sick, or if he be on a journey, then a number of other days.*

Ramaḍān burns (*yurmiḍu*)²⁹² the sins (*dhunūb*) of some people and burns the outward characteristics (*rusūm*) of other people. What a difference between those whose sins are burned by His mercy and those whose outward characteristics are burned by His reality!

The month of Ramaḍān is the month of the opening of the [divine] speech (*khiṭāb*), the month of the revelation of the Book (*kitāb*), the month of obtaining the reward (*thawāb*), the month of drawing near and [gaining God's] approval (*ijāb*), the month of the lightening of burdens (*takhfif al-kulfa*), the month of achieving intimacy (*tahqīq al-zulfa*), the month of descending mercy (*nuzūl al-raḥma*), the month of granting blessing (*wufūr al-ni'ma*), the month of salvation (*najāt*), and the month of intimate conversation (*munājāt*).

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

[2:185] *God desires ease for you, and desires not hardship for you*

Part of His desiring ease for you is knowing that He desires ease for you.²⁹³ Among the signs that He desires ease for His servant is that He has brought about the search for ease, for if [God] had not desired ease for [His servant] He would not have placed a desire for it in him. The one who spoke for them said:

If You had not wanted me to obtain
that for which I hope and seek
from Your generosity,
You would not have taught me to seek.²⁹⁴

[God] made hope [for ease] appropriate and confirmed the longing [for it]. He enjoined this inasmuch as He said, “*and He desires not hardship for you.*” This was to negate the possibilities of other ways of thinking, leaving the true sense clearly spelled out.

292 The word Ramaḍān and the verb *yurmiḍu* are from the same root *r-m-ḍ*, which refers to the burning of the sun.

293 The translation follows the wording in MSS K117, fol. 22a and Y101, fol. 28b.

294 Muṣṭafā was unable to trace this verse to any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 16, p. 28).

وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ

[2:185] *and that you fulfill the number*

According to the language of scholars (*lisān al-ʿilm*), [it is] *that you fulfill the number* [of days] of the fast. According to the language of allusion (*lisān al-ishāra*), [it is] “that in the happiness of the present moment (*ṣafāʾ al-ḥāl*) you should be aware²⁹⁵ of the fulfillment of the end (*wafāʾ al-māʾāl*).”

وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

[2:185] *and magnify God for having guided you and that you might be thankful* [Thankful] in the final breath and that you might leave the numbered [days] of your life in the security (*salāma*) of your faith. [God’s] granting of success (*tawfiq*) in completing the fast of the month is immensely important, but it is even greater to have your life sealed with felicity.

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۗ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾

[2:186] *And when My servants question you concerning Me, I am near; I answer the call of the caller when he calls to Me; so let them respond to Me, and let them believe in Me that they might go aright.*

The question of each one indicates his state. They did not ask about any decree, created thing, this world²⁹⁶ or what comes next, but rather they asked [Muḥammad] about Him, so God most high said, “*And when My servants question you concerning Me. . .*” [These questioners] were not among the group about whom He said, “*They will question you concerning the mountains*” [20:105], nor among the group about whom He said, “*They will ask you about orphans*” [2:220], nor among the group about whom He

295 The translation follows “that you should be aware” (*li-taʿrifū*) in MSS K117, fol. 22a rather than *li-taqrinū* in the Basyūnī edition.

296 Basyūnī notes that the manuscript he was working from repeats *lāʿan dunyā* twice, so he changed one of these to *lāʿan dīn*. The translation does not include the phrase he adds because it does not occur in MSS K117, fol. 22b or Y101, fol. 28b.

said, “*They will ask you about the monthly period*” [2:222], nor among the group about whom He said, “*And they will question you concerning the spirit*” [17:85], nor among the group about whom He said, “*They ask you about wine, and divinatory arrows*”²⁹⁷ [2:219], or “*They ask you about the sacred month, and fighting in it*” [2:217].

These were a select group of people. “*And when My servants question you concerning Me*,”²⁹⁸ how could you answer them? This answer is not by your tongue, O Muḥammad. Even though you are the ambassador between Us and created beings, I assume responsibility for this answer: *I am near.*” In regard to nearness, He took away the act of mediating from anyone other than Himself. He did not say, “Say to them I am near,” but rather He said, may His affair be exalted, “*I am near.*”

Then He explained what this nearness is. Inasmuch as the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* is too holy for drawing near or moving away in terms of direction, or specification in any spot (*buqʿa*),²⁹⁹ He said, *I answer the call of the caller.* Verily the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* is near, wholly and entirely, by means of knowledge, power, hearing and vision. He is near the believers with respect to caretaking,³⁰⁰ help, and answering supplications, but He is too exalted and holy to be near anyone in essence (*dhāt*) or spot (*buqʿa*), for He is uniquely without direction in any region (*aqṭār*), mighty without being described by substance or measure (*miqdār*).

I answer the call of the caller when he calls to Me; so let them respond to Me, and let them believe in Me that they might go aright: He did not promise to answer the one who might be considered worthy because of asceticism or [to answer] at the time of worship. Instead He said, “*the call of the caller when he calls to Me*,” however he calls to Me (*kayfamā daʿānī*) and wherever He calls to Me (*haythumā daʿānī*). Then He said, “*So let them respond to Me*,” which establishes a responsibility (*taklīf*), while His words, “*I answer the call of the caller*” is a giving of information (*taʿrīf*) and

297 In the time of the Prophet, people used marked arrows in a game in which bets were made.

298 There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition in the middle of the quoted section of the Qurʾānic verse. Although MSS K117, fol. 22b and Y101, fol. 28b have text containing commentary to complete this blank, the meaning is obscure, so the translation follows Basyūnī’s edition in omitting it.

299 The word “spot” (*buqʿa*) is used in one place in the Qurʾān, which describes Moses approaching the fire he saw from a distance: *And when he reached it, a call came from the right bank of the valley at the blessed spot from the tree, [saying] “O Moses! Indeed I am God, the Lord of the worlds”* [28:30].

300 The Basyūnī edition has *tabriyya*, which may be a typographical error for *tarbiyya*. The MSS K117, fol. 22b and Y101, fol. 29a have a word that seems to be *rutba*, which does not seem correct in the context. The translation uses the word *tarbiyya*.

a lightening [of responsibility] (*takhḥif*). He spoke of the lightening before He spoke of the responsibility. So it was as if He said, “When you call to Me, My servant, I will answer you. So answer Me also when I call you. I do not wish to refuse your call, so you should not wish to refuse My call to you. My answering you, My servant, with what is good, prompts you to call on Me. It is not that your call prompts Me to answer you. **So let them respond to Me, and let them believe in Me** and let them trust in Me for **I answer the call of the one who calls to Me.**” The one who spoke for them said:

By the All-Mighty, I swear by the One
whose servant I am and

to whom belongs the pilgrims
and what ʿArafāt encompasses:

I do not want any substitute
for you³⁰¹ as a friend.

Trust in my words,
for noble people are trustworthy.³⁰²

Then He said at the end of the verse, *that they might go aright*, that is, “the only objective to your being charged with responsibilities and supplications is to receive right guidance (*irshād*) for yourself.”

أَحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ
لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَالْعَنَ بَشِرُوهِنَّ وَأَبْتَعُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُوا
وَأَشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ
الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتَمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ

[2:187] Permitted to you, upon the night of the fast, is to go in to your wives; they are a vestment for you, and you are a vestment for them; God knows that you have been betraying yourselves, and so He has turned to you [relenting], and He has pardoned you. So now, lie with them and seek what God

301 This addressee in this sentence is grammatically singular and feminine.

302 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to find these verses in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 37).

has prescribed for you, and eat and drink until the white thread is distinct to you from the black thread at daybreak; then complete the fast to the night; [God] informs us that, in truth, the customs that characterize human beings are not attributable to Him. Whether you are engaged in worship (*ibāda*), which is the right of the Real, or in the customs of companionship with your mate, which is the goal sought by your lower self and worldly concern—both are the same for your state so long as there is refined behavior (*adab*).³⁰³

The verse was revealed regarding the lapse of al-Fārūq.³⁰⁴ [God] made that [lapse] an occasion for a dispensation for all Muslims until the resurrection. Thus are the rulings of the [divine] solicitude.

It is said that [God] knew there is no escaping worldly concerns for the servant, so He divided the night and day in this month between His right (*ḥaqq*) and your worldly portion (*ḥaẓẓ*). He said, “As for My right, *complete the fast to the night*, and as for your worldly portion, *eat and drink until the white thread is distinct to you from the black thread at daybreak*.”

وَلَا تُبَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

[2:187] *and do not lie with them, while you cleave to the mosques in devotion [to God]. Those are God's bounds; do not approach them. So, God makes clear His signs to people so that they might fear.*

[God] states that the place of nearness³⁰⁵ is sanctified from the seeking of worldly concerns. He said, “When you are occupied with your [lower] selves, you are veiled through yourselves in yourselves, but when your business is with Us do not turn back from Us to yourselves.”

It is said that the jealousy (*ghayra*)³⁰⁶ of the Real سُبْحَانَهُ [comes] at the

303 The translation follows the word *adab* from MSS K117, fol. 22b and Y101, fol. 29a rather than the word *idhn* (“permission”) in the Basyūnī edition.

304 An epithet of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. According to the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, in the beginning of Islam sexual intercourse was not permitted on the nights of fasting. ʿUmar and others were unable to abstain and went to the Prophet to apologize. The revelation of this Qurʾānic verse abrogated the earlier prohibition (*Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, trans. Hamza, altafsir.com).

305 The translation follows the phrase “place of nearness” (*maḥall al-qurba*) found in MSS K117, fol. 22b and Y101, fol. 29a rather than the phrase “place of power” (*maḥall al-quḍra*) in the Basyūnī edition.

306 For more on the idea of God's jealousy, see the “Section on jealousy” (bāb al-ghayra)

times when serious business is mixed with fun. ʿĀʿisha ؓ said concerning it, “O Messenger of God, I truly love you and love being near to you.” [Muhammad] replied, “Let me be, daughter of Abū Bakr, I am worshipping my Lord.”³⁰⁷ He ؓ said to her, “I have a time wherein none but my Lord is allowed me.”³⁰⁸

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ
لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾

[2:188] *Consume not your goods between you in deception, and proffer them to the judges, that you may consume a portion of other people's goods in sin while you are aware.*

When you turn to created beings to judge matters, know that God is watching over you and His knowledge encompasses you. So situate yourself with shyness before the Real سُبْحَانَهُ. Created beings know externals (*zawāhir*) but the Real ؓ is the One who governs the innermost secrets of hearts (*sarāʿir*).

﴿ يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلِ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ ۝﴾

[2:189] *They will ask you about the new moons. Say, “They are appointed times for the people and the pilgrimage.”*

The “moons” (*ahilla*)—the plural of a “moon” (*hilāl*)—are **appointed times** for the people for their activities and calculations. For the people of the story (*ahl al-qīṣṣa*),³⁰⁹ they are **appointed times** for their various states (*aḥwāl*). For the ascetics, [they are] **appointed times** for their litanies (*awrād*). For the elect, they are **appointed times** for their moments (*ḥālāt*). The one who spoke for them said:

I count the nights,
one after another.

in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, 2:512–518.

307 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān gives al-Suyūṭī and al-Zabīdī as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

308 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān gives ʿAlī l-Qārī as a source for this *ḥadīth*. Basyūnī states that the content of the *ḥadīth* is sound but the chain of transmission is unknown.

309 Basyūnī identifies the people of the story (*ahl al-qīṣṣa*) as Sufis in his footnotes to the commentary on Qurʾān 2:69–70 and 2:80, and as the “masters of states” in the commentary on 2:178.

In the days of old
I never really counted them.³¹⁰

Another said:

Eight days have passed
without meeting.
I do not have the patience
to wait more than eight.³¹¹

Another said:

Months pass
we have not noticed
their midpoints
nor their ends.³¹²

وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقَى وَأَتُوا
الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٨٩﴾

[2:189] *It is not piety to come to the houses from their backs (zuhūr), but piety is to fear; so come to the houses by their doors, and fear God that you may prosper.*

It means that piety is not guarding external affairs (*al-umūr al-zāhira*) but rather piety is purifying the inner secrets (*taṣfiyat al-sarāʿir*) and cleaning the recesses of hearts (*tanqiyat al-ḍamāʿir*).

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقْتَلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا

310 Muṣṭafā attributes this verse, in a slightly different form, to Majnūn (Muṣṭafā, no. 4, p. 122).

311 Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to al-Buḥṭurī, speaking to Muḥammad b. ʿAlī l-Qumī (Muṣṭafā, no. 11, p. 113).

312 Muṣṭafā attributes this line to Majnūn as well as two other individuals (Muṣṭafā, no. 17, p. 62).

﴿ ١٩٠ ﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

[2:190] *And fight in the way of God with those who fight against you, but do not transgress limits; God loves not the transgressors.*

Let your lower selves be trusts for the Real: when He commands their restraint, restrain and protect them. When He commands [you] to commit them to fighting, do not hold them back from His command. This is the meaning of His words, **but do not transgress limits**—that you stop wherever you are made to stop and do what you have been commanded.

وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ

[2:191] *And slay them wherever you come upon them,*

It means, “It is incumbent on you to show enmity toward My enemies, just as it is incumbent on you to establish friendship (*walāya*) and assistance (*muwālā*) with My friends (*awliyā*). So do not spare them,³¹³ even if there are bonds³¹⁴ of kinship or close relation between you.”

وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُم

[2:191] *and expel them from where they expelled you;*

“First *expel* [your] love and mutual assistance with them from your hearts, and then drive³¹⁵ them from the regions of Islam so that they will be diminished.”

313 The translation follows the words *fa-lā tubqaw ‘alayhim* found in MSS K117, fol. 23a and Y101, fol. 29b.

314 The translation follows the word *awāṣir* found in MSS K117, fol. 23a and Y101, fol. 29b rather than the word *rāṣid* in the Basyūnī edition.

315 The blank here in the Basyūnī text has been completed with the word *az‘ijūhum* found in MSS K117, fol. 23a and Y101, fol. 29a.

وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ

[2:191] *sedition is more grievous than slaying.*

Here the allusion is to the ordeal that comes to hearts (*qulūb*) from the misfortunes of veiling; this is more grievous than that which comes to the bodily selves (*nufūs*) from the exertion of the spirit (*rūḥ*), because the passing away of the life of the heart is more grievous than the passing away of the life of the bodily self. The bodily selves live through what is fitting and familiar to them, but the heart can only live through God.

It is said that *sedition is more grievous than slaying* means that remaining apart from God is much worse than letting go of³¹⁶ your spirit (*ruh*) and your life (*ḥayāt*).

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّىٰ يَقْتُلُوكُمْ فِيهِ
فَإِنْ قَتَلْتُمْهُمْ فَقَاتِلُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴿١٩١﴾

[2:191] *But fight them not by the sacred mosque until they should fight you there; then if they fight you, slay them—such, is the requital of disbelievers.*

The allusion in it: Do not disturb your time (*waqt*)³¹⁷ with God, [do not] let in the attributes that characterize the bodily and lower self, even if these involve supererogatory acts of obedience. If a noisy preoccupation distracts you from God, remove that matter from yourself by every means possible so that no attachment remains to block you from God.

فَإِنْ أَنْتَهُوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٩٢﴾

[2:192] *But if they desist, surely God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

The allusion in it: When the clamor of your thoughts and the enemies of your self (*nafs*) cut you off and they separate you from [God] and jostle

316 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 23a, with the phrases *tabqā ‘an Allāh* and *tabqā min rūḥika wa-ḥayātika*.

317 For a discussion of this term, see the section on “The moment” (al-Waqt) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 1:188–190. The use of the word “time/moment” echoes the Prophet’s “moment” in the *ḥadīth* cited in al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qur’ān 2:187.

you, give up³¹⁸ the chatter of the lower self (*nafs*) and stop its combative motion, for surely those who have been asked to guard the innermost selves (*asrār*) should not have any business with the exertions of the lower selves (*nufūs*) in their various oppositional ways.³¹⁹

وَقَتِّلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةً وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ
فَإِنْ أَنْتَهُوا فَلَا عُذُونَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩٣﴾

[2:193] *Fight them till there is no sedition, and the religion is for God; then if they desist, there shall be no enmity, save against evildoers.*

The allusion in the verse is to combat against the lower selves (*nufūs*), for your worst enemy is your lower self (*nafs*) within you. That is to say, “Hold completely to the precepts of spiritual disciplines (*riyādāt*) until nothing remains of carnal human traces (*āthār bashariyya*). Submit the self (*nafs*) and heart (*qalb*) to God so there will be no opponent or combatant from within you [fighting] to protect [yourself], taking instruction [from the lower self], managing [your own affairs] or exercising free choice in any state. The vicissitudes [of life] will flow over you as He wills them and you will be effaced from making any choices aside from what comes with the decree.” When the self (*nafs*) surrenders there is no enmity except toward the masters of holding back (*arbāb al-taqṣīr*),³²⁰ but those who uphold the right of [God’s] command are far removed from any obligation to compel [others to do so].

الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَتِ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنْ أَعْتَدَى
عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا أَعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

[2:194] *The sacred month for the sacred month; holy things demand retaliation; whoever commits aggression against you, then commit aggression against*

318 The translation follows the phrase *fa-sallim* found in MSS K117, fol. 23a and Y101, fol. 29b rather than the phrase *fa-lum* found in the Basyūnī edition.

319 Al-Qushayrī frequently contrasts acts and attitudes of opposition (*mukhālafa*) to the Real with those in harmony (*muwāfaqa*) with Him.

320 That is, those who are stingy with God.

him in the manner that he committed against you; and fear God, and know that God is with the God-fearing.

[Here] the allusion is to: “When two of the rights of God face off, submit the moment (*waqt*) to the decree of the moment (*hukm al-waqt*), and turn with the allusions of the moment (*ishārāt al-waqt*). Beware of preferring one over the other in what you possess in your worldly portion (*ḥaẓẓ*)—even a little—for you will be veiled from witnessing the Real (*ḥaqq*) and the vision of your heart will be blinded. Everything that is closer to what opposes your whims and further from what attracts and pleases you is in itself more appropriate.”

And know that God is with the God-fearing, those who fear the preference of their own whims over that with which He is pleased. When they act for God in what they do rather than for themselves, God most high is with them, through [His] help: He said, “*If you help God, He will help you*” [47:7].

وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٩٥﴾

[2:195] *And spend in the way of God; and cast not your own hands into destruction; but be virtuous; God loves the virtuous.*

The rich spend from their wealth. The worshipers spend through their lower selves, by not holding back acts of worship and [religious] tasks. Those who have deep knowledge spend with their hearts, by not holding back from His decrees. The lovers spend with their spirits, by not holding back from His love.³²¹

The rich spend from [material] blessings (*nīʿam*) and the poor (*fuqarāʾ*) spend from aspirations (*himam*).

The rich spend by taking money from the purse. The poor (*fuqarāʾ*) spend by taking [concern for] the rich from the heart.³²² Those who declare God’s unity spend by removing [concern for] created things from their innermost selves.

His words, “*and cast not your own hands into destruction*” allude

321 MSS K117, fol. 23b and Y101, fol. 30a have “His decree” (*ḥukmihi*) rather than “His love” (*ḥubbihi*).

322 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 23b and Y101, fol. 30a, with what looks to be *al-aghniyāʾ min al-qalb*. That is to say, the poor let go of any concern for what rich people do or do not do.

to holding back your hands from exertion, for the one who holds back his hands and hoards anything for himself, his hands throw him into destruction.

It is said that it is to prefer your whims over [God's] good pleasure.

It is also said, *and cast not your own hands into destruction* means being heedless of Him by [your own] free choice.

It is also said [it is] imagining that you can live without His kindness and His favor for even a moment.

It is also said [it is] contentment in your state of lassitude and being veiled.

It is also said [it is] holding the tongue back from perpetually seeking help in every breath.

His words, “*But be virtuous, God loves the virtuous (muḥsinūn)*”: Virtuousness (*iḥsān*) is being kind with everyone but yourself. When you are virtuous with regard to your lower self, it looks—to those with poor judgment³²³—like you are harming it. But it is through [your lower self] that you bring about every misery and endure every calamity. Virtuousness is also leaving every last bit of your worldly concerns, and devoting yourself to fulfilling the right of anyone whose affair is connected to you. Virtuousness is to worship Him without becoming inattentive and to worship Him through the quality of witnessing.

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ

[2:196] *Fulfill the pilgrimage and the visitation to God;*

The fulfillment of the pilgrimage, according to the language of scholars, is the performance of its basic elements, its practice, its form, and the shedding of blood,³²⁴ which is required in it, without curtailing any of the conditions. It is mentioned in the *tafsīr* literature that in both [the *ḥajj* and the *ʿumra*], you are forbidden from the dwellings of your family [until you have completed all the requirements].

In the language of allusion, the pilgrimage is the quest (*qaṣd*). The quest is to the House of the Real and the quest to the Real is, first, the pilgrimage of ordinary people and second, the pilgrimage of the elect. Just as the one who makes the pilgrimage through his [outward] self enters the

323 The translation follows the word *aghmār* in MSS K117, fol. 23b and Y101, fol. 30a rather than the word *ʿtimād* in the Basyūnī edition.

324 That is, the sacrifice of an animal which is performed at the end of the *ḥajj*.

consecrated state and stands [at ‘Arafāt], circumambulates the House and runs [between Ṣafā and Marwa], and then shaves [his head], so it is with the one who makes the pilgrimage through his heart. His state of consecration (*iḥrām*)³²⁵ [comes] from [his] sound resolve (‘*aqd ṣaḥīḥ*) to undertake a pure quest (*qaṣd ṣarīḥ*). He removes the clothing of his oppositional tendencies and his carnal passions. He then wraps himself in the two robes of patience and poverty. He abstains from pursuing his worldly fortunes, [that is] the following of whims, and he releases thoughts of desired things, etc. Then [just as] as the [outward] pilgrim becomes increasingly unkempt and dusty, likewise the traces of humility and submission appear upon [the pilgrim of the heart]. Then the *talbiya*³²⁶ of the innermost selves occurs in the response of every part of you.

“The most excellent of the actions of the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) are the sacrificial blood-letting (*thajj*) and the crying out (‘*ajj*).”³²⁷ The *thajj* is the pouring of blood [of the animal sacrificed] and the ‘*ajj* is raising the voice in *talbiya*. Likewise, the shedding of the blood of the lower self [comes] with the knives of opposition [to it], and the raising of the voices of the innermost self [comes] by continuously seeking [God’s] help and with the beauty of responding [to the call]. Then [one] stands at the plains of nearness, seeking perfection in the attributes of awe. The standing place of the [outward] selves is ‘Arafāt, while the standing place of hearts is the names and attributes (*ṣifāt*) belonging to the majesty of the essence (*dhāt*) at the time of intimate communications (*muwāṣalāt*). Then the hearts circumambulate around the sites of majesty. The running of the innermost selves [takes place] between the two hills³²⁸ of the unveiling of the Sublime (*kashf al-jalāl*) and the kindness of the Beauty (*lutf al-jamāl*). Then the completion [of the rites] [comes] through cutting the ties of wishes and free choices, desires and resistances, in every way.

فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ط

[2:196] *but if you are prevented, then [give] such offering as may be feasible,*

325 *Ihrām* refers to the special garment worn by pilgrims, and to the state of abstention from all the things prohibited while on *ḥajj*.

326 The *talbiya* is the prayer pilgrims say as they approach Mecca: “Here I am, O God, here I am...” (*labbayka Llāhumma labbayk...*).

327 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 23b and Y101, fol. 30a; the wording more closely resembles the *ḥadīth* Lane cites in his entry on *thajj*: *afḍal al-ḥajj al-‘ajj wa-l-thajj* (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:332). In the Basyūnī edition, the word is *shajj* instead of *thajj*.

328 Literally, *ṣaffayy* “two rocks,” from the same word as Ṣafā.

[One may] be prevented by one of two causes, either an enemy or illness.

[Here] the allusion is to an enemy overcoming the lower self, so that you find no escape but to dismount in the courtyard of indulgences (*rukhaṣ*) and rational interpretive license (*taʿwīlāt al-ʿilm*). At that moment this is permitted to you because of [your] excuse and necessity, since there is no wrangling with the decree (*ḥukm*). The *offering* is that which one gives at this time, paying the determined amount and giving it to the poor, and waiting for the restriction to pass so that the command [to make the pilgrimage] can resume.

If one’s spiritual desires (*irādāt*)³²⁹ become infirm, the seeking (*quṣūd*) weak, and the affair reverts to [mere] obligation (*taklīf*), let one [in this circumstance] strive not to turn away [altogether], just as in the external pilgrimage one strives not to turn away because of an illness or if one needs clothing or a haircut, etc. [This is allowable] through the provision of expiation [given in this verse]. If he is weak, he should stay where he is for a while, standing and sitting in the prescriptions of the quest (*awṣāf al-qaṣd*) and the precepts of spiritual desire (*aḥkām al-irāda*). If he turns back—may God protect us—he will meet only rejection and obstruction.” It is said:

Our separation from one another
was not from hatred.

Rather it is the passage of time (*dahr*)
that breaks up and draws together.³³⁰

Someone else said:

I am not—even though I love someone
who resides in wide open plains—

the first to hope
for something unattainable.³³¹

329 The translation follows “spiritual desires” (*irādāt*) from MSS K117, fol. 23b and Y101, fol. 30b rather than the word *wāridāt* found in the Basyūnī edition.

330 The text in the Basyūnī edition, MSS K117, fol. 23b and Y101, fol. 30b reads: *Our drawing near (taqarrub) to one another was not from hatred*. Muṣṭafā states that this part of the verse can be found in al-Sulamī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, but reads there as, “The separation (*qaṭr*) between us was not from hatred.” Since this makes more sense, the translation uses the word “separating” rather than “drawing near” (Muṣṭafā, no. 3, p. 77).

331 Muṣṭafā traces the verse to several sources, all of which cite the verse without attribution. He also cites a somewhat similar verse from *Majnūn Laylā* (Muṣṭafā, no. 36, p. 100).

وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحِلَّهُ ۚ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِّن رَّأْسِهِ ۖ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِّن صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ

[2:196] *and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its place. If any of you is sick, or has an ailment of the head, then a redemption by fast, or a voluntary almsgiving, or a ritual sacrifice.*

One makes a sacrifice to the extent that one is able, expending all that one can, with the traces of grief upon one, filled with the sorrows of being veiled.

If any of you is sick or has an ailment of the head, then a redemption by fast, or a voluntary almsgiving, or a ritual sacrifice: the allusion is that one humbles oneself and exerts oneself by circumambulating the friends [of God], serving the poor (*fuqarā'*), and drawing near as one is able, in the various ways³³² of striving and supplicating.

فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَمَن تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامٌ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ ۚ تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن لَّمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۖ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٩٦﴾

[2:196] *When you are secure, then whoever enjoys the visitation, until the pilgrimage; let his offering be such as is feasible, or if he finds none, then a fast of three days in the pilgrimage. And of seven when you return; that is a full ten; that is for him whose family are not present at the sacred mosque. And fear God, and know that God is severe in retribution.*

When the moons of the questing appear from glorious disclosures and the concealing veils are removed from the suns of union, and the light of the approach rises during the days of standing [at 'Arafāt], let [the pilgrim] start anew at that moment (*waqtan*) for the sake of union, and let him spread a carpet (*bisāṭan*) to draw near. Let him renew, by virtue of happiness, the performance [of devotional acts] with good cheer (*nashāṭan*), and let him

332 The translation follows the word *wujūh* from MSS K117, fol. 24a and Y101, fol. 30b rather than “existence” (*wujūd*) in the Basyūnī edition.

say, “Come to joy for the days of hardship are over!” Let him complete the pilgrimage and the visitation and let him continue to perform the precepts of companionship and service.

And know that God is severe in retribution in veiling those who have not been shown the new moons of union and approach.

الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ

[2:197] *The pilgrimage is in months well-known;*

The pilgrimage for the bodily selves (*nufūs*) is in months well-known. The *iḥrām* is only binding in it, and it is not possible to undertake the pilgrimage during the rest of the year rather, [it is] only in a specific time period. One for whom that time has passed, the pilgrimage has passed him. Likewise the pilgrimage of the hearts has times [that are] well-known and [it] is only appropriate during them. These are the days of youth, for one who has no spiritual desire (*irāda*) in his youth has no communion in the state of his old age. Likewise the one for whom the time of his quest (*qaṣd*) and spiritual desire (*irāda*) has passed, only the worship whose outcome is the garden is appropriate, not the spiritual desire (*irāda*) whose outcome is communion.

فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ

[2:197] *whoever undertakes the duty of pilgrimage during them, then no lewdness, nor wickedness, or disputing in the pilgrimage.*

The allusion is also to whoever travels the path of spiritual desire, that he should not stop at anything in the path nor mix his spiritual desire with anything. Whoever argues, opposes, or is rude with him—he yields to them all. He does not dispute with anyone for the sake of this world, nor does he compete with anyone for some worldly fortune for the self or honor. God most high said, “*And when the ignorant address them, they say ‘peace’*” [25:63].

وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ

[2:197] *Whatever good you do, God knows it.*

You should be content with His knowledge and His judgment rather than being seen, judged or known by His creatures.

وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِيَ الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٧﴾

[2:197] *And take provision. But the best provision is piety; and fear Me, O people of pith!*

The piety of ordinary people is the avoidance of errors, while the piety of the elect is the avoidance of anything other [than God] in the inner secrets of their hearts.

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ

[2:198] *You would not be at fault if you should seek bounty from your Lord;*

[Here] the allusion is that whatever you seek from the bounty of God—from what has been determined for you according to His rightful decree—is praiseworthy, if it has a portion for the Muslims or the strength of the religion (*dīn*). Whatever you seek solely for your worldly fortune or for what benefits you is flawed.

فَإِذَا أَقَضْتُمْ مِّنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَأَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ وَاذْكُرُوهُ
كَمَا هَدَيْتُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿١٩٨﴾

[2:198] *but when you press on from Arafāt, then remember God at the sacred waymark; and remember Him as He has guided you, though previously you were astray.*

[Here] the allusion is to when you have gone so far as to perform what He has requested, [you should] remember His favor with you, for if He had not desired you, you would not have desired Him. If He had not chosen

you, you would not have preferred His good pleasure.

ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٩٩﴾

[2:199] *Then press on from where the people press on, and seek God's forgiveness; God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

The allusion [in this part of the verse] is that you should not see yourself as different from others because of some manner of dressing, patched clothing³³³ or some quality that distinguishes you outwardly. Rather, you should [consider yourself only as] one among [all] humanity. When the thought comes to you that you have done something, or that anything [happens] through you, for you or with you, seek God's forgiveness and renew your faith for [this kind of thought] is a hidden idolatry (*shirk*) that infects your heart.

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمْ مَنَسِكَكُمْ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا ﴿٢٠٠﴾

[2:200] *And when you have performed your holy rites, remember God as you remember your fathers, or yet more intensely.*

And when you have performed your holy rites is an allusion to carrying out the rightful due (*ḥaqq*) of servanthood (*'ubūdiyya*). *Remember God as you remember your fathers* is an allusion to carrying out the rightful due (*ḥaqq*) of love (*mahabba*).

The performance of the holy rites is an undertaking through the self (*nafs*). *Remember God as you remember your fathers* is an undertaking for His sake through the heart (*qalb*) continuously in the moment and throughout one's life.

It is said that, "Just as others boast of their fathers and delight in their ancestors, let your boasting and delight be in Us."

It is said that, "If your fathers have a right to raise and educate you, Our right over you is even more binding since Our favors to you are more perfect."

It is said, "Your ancestors may have glorious deeds and virtues, but Our

333 In writings from this time period, patched clothing was frequently associated with Sufis.

worthiness from the attributes of sublimity (*jalāl*) is far beyond anything due to your ancestors from the best of their states.”

It is said that, “If you never grow weary of remembering your father and you rarely forget him, then remember Us continually and do not let weariness, boredom or forgetfulness stop you.”

It is said that, “If someone speaks ill of your lineage, you are not pleased. Similarly, do not listen to the words of those who err and contrive, but rather defend Us.”

It is said that, “The father is remembered with respect and deference. Similarly, remember Us with awe even as you [also] remember the kindness of nearness and the best of caring.” He said, “*Remember God as you remember your fathers*” but did not say “your mothers” because the father is remembered out of respect and the mother is remembered out of compassion for her. God shows mercy—He is not the recipient of it.

Or yet more intensely because the Real (*ḥaqq*) is more deserving (*aḥaqq*). You might be much estranged from your father while the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* is free from any thought coming to those who have knowledge of Him, that they would oppose what has been made obligatory in even the smallest way.

As *you remember your fathers*, the father according to his rightful due, and the Lord according to His rightful due.

فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِن خَلْقٍ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

[2:200] *There are some people who say, “Our Lord, give to us in this world”; such people will have no part in the hereafter.*

If a human being were to speak to you in this way, it would be a complaint.³³⁴ If [God] was complaining *about* you [O Muhammad], just as he complained *to* you, that would be unfortunate. But by His favor, He has caused you to reach a place where He shares his complaint with you, so He said, “There are some people who do not turn their hearts toward Us and are content to be without Us. They do not look to anyone but themselves and their worldly concerns. Faith is not possible for them in their Lord and His Truth.”

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً

334 Basyūnī has *kāna shākiran* which he says was *shākīyan* in the original. The phrase in MSS K117, fol. 24b and Y101, fol. 31a makes more sense: *lā kāna shakwā*.

﴿ فِي الْأَخِرَةِ حَسَنَةٌ وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴾

[2:201] *And there are others who say, “Our Lord, give to us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the chastisement of the Fire.”*

He means in [this verse] **good** (*ḥasana*), the existence of which is consistent with all good things. The **good** by which all good things are obtained in this world is the protection of their faith at the end [of their lives], for whoever leaves this world as a believer will not abide in the fire and the passing of this [world] will be of little consequence. The **good** which is consistent with the good things of the hereafter is forgiveness, for when He forgives, nothing but good follows.

It is said that the **good** in this world is turning away from it and the **good** in the hereafter is being protected from becoming comfortable in it. The guarding is from the fire (*nār*) and the fires of separation (*furqa*); because the [letter] *lām* in His saying *al-nār* is a generic *lām*,³³⁵ so the seeking of refuge applies to both the fires of burning (*nīrān al-ḥurqa*) and the fires of separation (*nīrān al-furqa*).

It is said that the **good** in this world is witnessing (*shuhūd*) through the innermost selves (*bi-l-asrār*) and in the hereafter [it is] seeing (*ruʿya*) through the physical eyes (*bi-l-abṣār*).³³⁶

It is said that the **good** of this world is that He annihilates you from yourself,³³⁷ while the good of the hereafter is that He returns you to yourself.

It is said that the **good** of this world is the success granted [by God] in service (*tawfiq al-khidma*) and the **good** of the hereafter is the actualization of communion (*tahqīq al-wuṣḥa*).

﴿ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ﴾

[2:202] *Those—they shall have a portion from what they have earned;*
If [what they have earned] was good, then a good [portion]. If it was

335 In Arabic the generic is indicated by the particle *alif lām*.

336 A reference to the vision of God in the hereafter, which is confirmed, according to the interpretation of some commentators, by Qurʾān 75:22–23: *Some faces on that day will be radiant, looking upon their Lord.*

337 The translation follows the phrase “He annihilates you from yourself” (*yufnika ʿanka*) found in MSS K117, fol. 24b and Y101, fol. 31b rather than the phrase *yughnika ʿanka* found in the Basyūnī edition.

something else, then something else.

وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٠٢﴾

[2:202] *and God is swift at reckoning*

[The reckoning occurs] for ordinary people at [the Day of Judgment] and for the elect at every breath.

It is said that He mentioned two groups: those who say, “Our Lord, give to us in this world” and those who say “Give to us in this world and the next.” The third group, which is not mentioned, are those who are content with His decree, those who submit to His command, those who forgo every supplication and request.

﴿وَأذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ﴾ ﴿٢٠٣﴾

[2:203] *And remember God, during certain days numbered. If any man hastens on in two days, that is no sin for him; and if he delays, it is not a sin for him; if he fears; and fear God, and know that to Him you shall be gathered.*

This is a description of the last part of the [pilgrimage] ceremonies, the throwing [of stones] in the days at Minā. Because of what they have offered in the pillars of the pilgrimage, He lightens their load by letting them choose the duration of the stay, adding [more time] or hastening to leave.

[Here] the allusion is to one whose lower self has been extinguished while his heart lives on in the perpetual realities of witnessing. In his perpetual engagement in the manners of being present (*ādāb al-ḥudūr*), if something from the branches of devotions falls away, there is a replacement for what has passed away.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ ﴿٢٠٤﴾

[2:204] *And among people there is he whose speech in the life of this world pleases you; and who calls on God to witness what is in his heart; yet he is most stubborn in dispute.*

He relates that the Real ﷻ has given some people skill in speaking outwardly yet [He] has turned away from their hearts, which are bound by the ropes of deprivation and covered by their own ignorance. There is no meaning beyond [their outward selves] and nothing of weight in what they say. One cannot rely on their faithfulness, nor trust in them in any way.

The allusion is to the people of external appearances (*ahl al-zāhir*) who have not been helped by the lights of insight, and are bound to the precepts of the external world. They have no faith in this kind of talk and no insight into this [path] as a whole. It is necessary to keep secrets from them, since they will only receive this discourse with disapproval. Peaceable people among ordinary folk who have respect for this path and faith in the whole of this discourse are far closer to this way than those who count themselves among the elect but are cut off from faith in this affair.

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ
لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾

[2:205] *And when he turns his back, he hastens about the earth to do corruption there and to destroy the tillage and the stock; and God loves not corruption.*

[Here] the allusion is to those who only hasten to seek worldly fortunes. They are not concerned, even though the ties to their religion have become unraveled and their bonds to Islam have been weakened. After that, the ropes [tying them to] the world become stronger and the bonds of their desires become more closely woven with the prohibited things they have gathered and the debris they have acquired. When they retire to their whisperings and ruinous aims, they hasten to corruption, make decisions based on worldly [aims], and employ people to help them in furthering their affairs—people from whose hearts God has removed inner sight.

And God loves not corruption: Outward corruption is whatever brings about the ruin of religious affairs and the proper ordering of worldly matters.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ فَحَسْبُ لَهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَيْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿٢٠٦﴾

[2:206] *And when it is said to him, “Fear God,” he is seized by vainglory in his sin. So Hell shall be enough for him—how evil a cradling!*

Those are the people who have been seized by arrogance and who have lost the ability to humbly accept fair criticism; they turn up their noses at accepting the truth. When you enjoin someone [like this] to decency, he says, “How can you say this to someone like me, when I am such and such?” Then he turns it around and attacks you,³³⁸ saying, “You have more need to be enjoined with decency and forbidden indecency³³⁹ because your condition is such and such. . .” If God had granted success to help him or mercy had reached him, he would have been granted the favor shown to those who have been guided to seeing their errors and observing their bad traits. And he would not have harbored enmity toward the one who gave him the advice, the traces of which remain in the heart for years.

God most high said, “*So hell shall be enough for him,*” meaning, [hell is] the state of his estrangement, the darkneses of the lower self, and the constriction of choice such that he does not hasten in anything except his [lower] desire. At every moment, over and over, he succumbs to [this] chastisement and trial. Then he is transported from this chastisement to the greater chastisement. God most high said, “*And We shall surely make them taste the nearer chastisement before the greater chastisement*” [32:21].³⁴⁰

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٢٠٧﴾

[2:207] *But there are other men who sell themselves, desiring God’s pleasure; and God is gentle with His servants.*

Those who have been touched by the special favors of mercy and raised up by the fate already preordained [for them] prefer the good pleasure of the Real over themselves and submit entirely to their protector (*mawlā*). **God is gentle with His servants** and because of His gentleness they attain these states—they do not deserve His gentleness because of these states.

338 Basyūnī’s edition has a blank in the phrase. The translation follows the text in MSS K117, fol. 25a and Y101, fol. 31b: *thumma yukarru ‘alayka ‘āṭifan*.

339 The reference is to Qur’ān 3:104, 3:110, and 3:114, where believers are urged to enjoin decency and forbid indecency.

340 The full sentence in this Qur’ānic verse is: *And We shall surely make them taste the nearer chastisement before the greater chastisement that perhaps they may return* [32:21].

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اَدْخُلُوا فِي السَّلَامِ كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ
الشَّيْطَانِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢٠٨﴾

[2:208] *O you who believe, come, all of you, into submission; and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you.*

[God] has charged the believer with making peace with everyone except his lower self, for it makes no move except to oppose [the believer's] leader (*sayyid*).³⁴¹ Anyone who makes peace with himself becomes listless in his spiritual exertions (*mujāhadāt*). This is the reason a seeker falls short and an aspirant loses interest.

The steps of Satan are what are whispered to you about your inability to hold to the precepts of moral behavior and [your inability] to abandon unwise inclinations that are best ignored. But it is as God most high said, “If you fear for him, cast him into the waters” [28:7]. Look what He did with [Moses] when [Moses's mother] cast him [into the water] and how He returned him to her after saving him!

فَإِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْكُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٠٩﴾

[2:209] *But if you slip after the clear proofs have come to you, know then that God is Mighty, Wise.*

A single slip after the disclosure of clear proofs is uglier by far than the many slips committed before this disclosure. Those who are known to be treacherous cannot be trusted. When the tribulation for the worst sins descends, they will be completely uprooted.

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْعَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَقُضِيَ
الْأَمْرُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٢١٠﴾

[2:210] *What do they wait for, that God shall come to them in the shadows of clouds, and the angels? The matter is determined, and to God all matters are returned.*

341 That is, God. See al-Qushayrī's commentary on 1:2 where he uses *sayyid* as a synonym for *rabb*.

The people thought that the Hour would be long in coming but the details tell them of the severity of the matter. [What are described] are acts (*af'āl*) [of God] only in the sense of the terrible events (*ahwāl*) [of that Hour].³⁴² God ﷻ divulges them so as to remove their doubt concerning the grandeur of His affair and the implementation of His power in what He wills.

The matter is determined, and to God all matters are returned, that is, the veil of the unseen is removed, exposing the clarity of the [divine] preordination.

The hearts of those who declare His oneness are lit by the lights of insights and [therefore] they have no need to seek interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of this verse and those like it, since [they know] the Real ﷻ is far removed from any change in locality or fading, or specificity in place or time. He is sanctified from every movement and appearing [before human beings].

سَلِّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَمْ آتَيْنَاهُم مِّنْ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَةٍ وَمَنْ يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ
مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٣١١﴾

[2:211] *Ask the children of Israel how many a clear proof did We give them; whoever changes God's grace after it has come to him, God is severe in retribution.*

The benefit of questioning [the children of Israel] was to make them acknowledge the issue of proof. Questioning them was not for the purposes of resolving any doubt on the part of the Messenger ﷺ concerning what had been plainly established by proof.³⁴³

Whoever changes God's grace after it has come to him, God is severe in retribution in taking this grace away. At that moment they will recognize its worth and then they will mourn it since they will never attain it. The one who spoke for them said:

You will leave
and abandon me.

342 The translation follows the word “terrors” (*ahwāl*) found in MSS K117, fol. 25a and Y101, fol. 32a rather than the word “states” (*ahwāl*) found in the Basyūni edition. Al-Qushayrī's intent here is to avoid a literal reading of the verse, as can be seen in the commentary that follows.

343 The translation follows the text “what has been established by proof” (*maḥajja*) found in MSS K117, fol. 25a and Y101, fol. 32a rather than the word “love” (*maḥabba*) from the Basyūni edition.

Then you will look for me
but you will not find me.³⁴⁴

زَيْنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ
اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢١٢﴾

[2:212] *Decked out fair to the disbelievers is the life of this world; and they deride the believers; but those who fear shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection; and God sustains whomever He will without reckoning.*

They were deceived without realizing it. The increasing darkness of their vision caused them to slander and to deride the friends [of God] سُبْحَانَهُ. When people bear witness [on the Day of Resurrection]³⁴⁵ and when the error of ignorance is dispelled from their hearts, they will know those who are in a state of loss and those who have gone far astray.

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ
مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا
اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ
فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ وَاللَّهُ
يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢١٣﴾

[2:213] *People were one community; then God sent forth the prophets as bearers of good tidings and warners; and He revealed with them the scripture with the truth that He might decide between people regarding their differences; and only those who had been given it differed about it after the clear proofs had come to them out of insolence, one to another; then God guided those who believed to the truth, regarding which they were at variance, by His leave; and God guides whomever He will to a straight path.*

It means that they were united by what they did not know of the truth.

344 Muṣṭafā cites the verse but gives no sources for it (Muṣṭafā, no. 17, p. 48).

345 The Basyūnī edition has a blank here, which has been completed with the phrase *inda shuhūd al-nās* from MS Y101, fol. 32b.

Then when He sent the messengers, they were distinguished by what they were given or deprived of from the lights of insight. It is said that they were as they had been previously in the pre-eternal choosing, and [they only] became the Jewish people and the Christian people with the coming of the messengers. In the end, each one will be returned to what was preordained for him. Verily all mankind was gathered together in His *سُبْحَانَهُ* knowledge, and then separated by His decree (*ḥukm*). Some people He guided (*hadāhum*) and some He led astray (*aghwāhum*). Some people He veiled (*ḥajabahum*) and some He attracted (*jadhabahum*). Some people He bound to disappointment (*khidhlān*) and some He opened to beneficence (*iḥsān*). It is not a matter of acquisition for those who are accepted, nor is there a cause for the rejection of those rejected. Rather it is a decree (*ḥukm*) that has been completed and a [divine] determination (*qaḍāʾ*) that has been settled.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ
 قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ
 ءَامَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصُرَ اللَّهُ أَأَلَّا إِنَّ نَصَرَ اللَّهُ قَرِيبٌ ﴿٢١٤﴾

[2:214] *Or did you suppose that you should enter paradise without there having come upon you the like of those who passed away before you? They were afflicted by misery and hardship and were so convulsed that the Messenger and those who believed with him said, “When will God’s help come?” Ah, but surely God’s help is nigh.*

God created paradise and surrounded it with difficulties (*maṣāʾib*). He created the fire and surrounded it with carnal desires and cravings (*raghāʾib*). Anyone who is too shy to ride the terrors (*ahwāl*) will be kept from realizing [his] hopes (*āmāl*). Verily the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* tested the ancients through their endurance of all kinds of hardships. He causes anyone who follows [in the footsteps] of the friends to be included in their path and share in their adversities. Anyone who thinks otherwise thinks a mirage is water. A dream³⁴⁶ does not transpire the way one thinks it should. The way (*sunna*) of God *سُبْحَانَهُ* has come to pass with the friends such that they only came to rest in the courtyard of victory after commanding the open spaces of desperation. Although their anticipation is prolonged, kindness will come to them all of a sudden and what they strove for will be realized unexpectedly.

346 The translation follows the word “dream” (*ḥulm*) from MSS K117, fol. 25b and Y101, fol. 32b rather than the word “decree” (*ḥukm*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

God most high said, “*Ah, but surely God’s help is nigh.*”

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ
وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ
خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١٥﴾

[2:215] *They will ask you about what they should expend. Say, “Whatever you expend of good it is for parents and kinsmen, orphans, the needy, and the traveler; and whatever good you may do, God has knowledge of it.”*

They know that the servant does not act alone in what he does, for surely the servant cannot do anything without the leave of his Protector. So expend in the manner elaborated [in this verse], for servanthood means standing wherever the command would have you stand.

It is said that they do not expend according to the suggestions of whim. Rather, they study the details of the affair and the suggestions of the law. The [word] “and” (*wa*) in this verse in His saying, “*and kinsmen and orphans,*” indicates a kind of sequence: first [spend on] your parents according to what is honorable, then your kinsmen, then those who follow in the stated sequence.

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهُ لَكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا
وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢١٦﴾

[2:216] *Prescribed for you is fighting, though it be hateful to you. Yet it may happen that you hate a thing which is good for you; and it may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you; God knows, and you know not.*

The engagement with fighting is difficult for the lower selves. [God] explained that the comforts of the lower selves are deferred (*mu’ajjala*) because they follow the ordinance of discipline (*taḍīb*). It is the opposite for the comforts of the hearts, which are immediate (*mu’ajjala*) since they follow the property of drawing near (*taqrīb*). Happiness lies in opposing

(*mukhālafā*) the lower selves,³⁴⁷ for anyone who conforms (*wāfaqa*) to them has abandoned the exemplary path (*al-mahajjat al-muthlā*).³⁴⁸ Likewise happiness lies in conforming (*muwāfaqa*) to the hearts, for anyone who opposes (*khālafā*) them deviates from the highest way (*al-sunnat al-ʿulā*).

It is better to accept the good news of the Real's guarantee of ease than the anxious thoughts of the lower selves that warn of impending difficulty and harm.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ وَصَدٌّ عَن
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَكُفْرٌ بِهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِخْرَاجُ أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ

[2:217] *They ask you about the sacred month, and fighting in it. Say, "Fighting in it is a grave thing; but to bar from God's way, and disbelief in Him, and the sacred mosque, and to expel its people from it—that is graver in God's sight; and sedition is graver than slaying."*

Among the acts of disobedience, some are worse than others and more intractable. Bad manners at the door do not have the same consequences as they do on the [more intimate] carpet. When the error occurs through the lower self, the effect upon [the lower self] is through the deferred punishment which is burning (*iḥtirāq*) [in the hereafter]. When the heart errs, the punishment is immediate, through separation (*firāq*). The effect of heedlessness on hearts is more serious than the harm caused to the lower selves by error, for surely the lower self is kept from good fortune (*ḥazz*), but the heart is kept from the Real (*ḥaqq*).

وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يَقْتُلُونَكُمْ حَتَّى يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَن دِينِكُمْ إِنِ اسْتَظَعُوا وَمَنْ
يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ

347 For more on this practice see the "Section on opposing the lower self and remembering its defects" (*Mukhālafat al-nafs wa-dhikr ʿuyūbihi*) in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, 1:349–354.

348 The translation follows the word "path" (*mahajja*) in MSS K117, fol. 25b and Y101, fol. 32b rather than the word "love" (*mahabba*) in the Basyūni edition.

فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢١٧﴾

[2:217] They will not cease to fight against you until they turn you from your religion if they are able; and whoever of you turns from his religion, and dies disbelieving—their works have failed in this world and the hereafter. Those are the inhabitants of the fire, abiding therein.

The allusion in this is to the people of heedlessness, when they seek to lure you away and want to turn you toward their heedlessness. They will only be content when you break the pact of your spiritual desire (*irāda*) by returning to your previous state. Anyone who breaks (*fasakha*) his pledge to God deforms (*masakha*) his heart.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ
يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢١٨﴾

[2:218] Verily the believers, and those who emigrate, and struggle in God's way—those have hope of God's compassion; and God is Forgiving, Merciful. Verily those who are sincere in their seeking and faithful to their pledge will not let [their] spiritual desire flag. These are the ones who live in the gentle wind of hope; they [hope] that they will reach the perfection of subsisting [in God] (*baqā'*) and the abode of meeting (*liqā'*).

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ
وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا

[2:219] They ask you about wine (*khamr*), and divinatory arrows. Say: "In both is great sin and profit for men; but the sin in them is greater than the usefulness."

Khamr is whatever intoxicates the mind. Just as *khamr* is specifically prohibited, so also drunkenness (*sukr*) is prohibited by the words of the Prophet ﷺ, "Khamr itself is prohibited and drunkenness from any drink."³⁴⁹ From the point of view of the allusions [in the verse], anyone who is drunk from

349 'Abd al-Raḥmān cites Abū Ḥanīfa as a source for this ḥadīth.

the drink of heedlessness deserves the same as the one who drinks *khamr*. Just as the one who is drunk is prohibited from praying, so the one who is possessed by the drunkenness of heedlessness is veiled from intimate communications (*muwāṣalāt*) and the clearest testimonial evidence of ecstatic finding (*wujūd*). Anyone who does not think this is true should test it.

The notion of gambling can be found in most of the transactions of the people of heedlessness when they follow the way of stratagem and deception, and lie in what they say. Wholehearted commitment to truthfulness and equitable dealings is rare and precious.

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢١٩﴾ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

[2:219] *And they will ask you what they should expend. Say: “Comfortably”* (al-*afw*). *So, God makes clear His signs to you that you might reflect,*

[2:220] *on this world and the hereafter.*

It is said that *al-afw* is what is in excess of your needs. This is for the elect who take from the surplus of their wealth according to their capacities. As for the elect of the elect, their way is “preference” (*ithār*), which is to prefer others over themselves even if they are in need of what they give,³⁵⁰ and even though the One they prefer is unseen.

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَىٰ قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ وَإِنْ تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ

[2:220] *They will ask you about orphans. Say: “To set their affairs aright; and if you intermix with them, they are your brothers;*

Setting their state aright in teaching them discipline and manners (*taʿdīb*) is more perfect than setting aright their wealth. Patience in bearing with them by giving counsel and abandoning one’s weariness³⁵¹ in guiding them is better than being permissive to the point that it could be said that one did not uphold one’s obligation toward them.

350 This passage recalls Qurʾān 59:9, which describes the Medinan Muslims who helped the Emigrants from Mecca: *they prefer [others] to themselves, though they be in poverty.*

351 The translation follows the word “weariness” (*malāl*) from MSS K117, fol. 26a and Y101, fol. 33a rather than the word “wealth” (*māl*) in the Basyūnī edition.

وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَعْنَتَكُمْ إِنْ أَلَّه
عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٠﴾

[2:220] *God knows well him who works corruption from him who sets aright; and had He willed He would have harassed you. Surely God is Mighty, Wise.*”

He deals with everyone according to the intentions (*quṣūd*) that dwell in a person’s heart, not according to the external things one acquires in various ways.

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَةَ حَتَّىٰ تُؤْمِنَ ۚ وَلَا مَٔةً مُّؤْمِنَةً خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ
وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا ۚ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ
خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ ۗ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو
إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ ۗ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٢١﴾

[2:221] *Do not marry idolatresses until they believe; a believing slave girl is better than an idolatress, though you may admire her. And do not marry idolaters, until they believe. A believing slave is better than an idolater, though you may admire him. Those call to the fire; and God calls to paradise and pardon by His leave; and He makes clear His signs to the people so that they might remember.*

It is better to hold to the rope of religion and cling to the protection of Muslims than to be satisfied with someone [outside the faith] on a path that leads to disbelief. A concession in the law exists for this action, but the deeper suggestion is to refrain and waive the right to choose it. This concerns the women of the Book with whom it is permissible to have marital relations. As for polytheists, it is absolutely prohibited to have marital relations with them. It is obligatory to cut off relations with those in this category³⁵²—this is an irreversible decree.

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ ۗ قُلْ هُوَ أَذَىٰ فَأَعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ

352 The translation follows the word “obligatory” (*wājib*) from MSS K117, fol. 26a and Y101, fol. 33a rather than the word “aspects” (*awjuh*) from the Basyūni edition.

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهُرْنَ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ

[2:222] *They will ask you about the monthly period. Say: “It is an ailment; so part with women in the monthly period, and do not approach them until they are pure; when they have cleansed themselves, then come to them, as God has commanded you.”*

Not everything which is a cause for embarrassment and aversion is something the servant freely chooses, for it might be among the imperfections which are not attributed to the servant but rather stem from a decree of the Real. Among these is what God has ordained for the daughters of Adam in [relation to] this condition. Moreover, they were commanded to withdraw from the prayer carpet during the times of this condition since the prayer carpet is a place of intimate conversation with one’s Lord. So setting a time in which the place of conversation is to be avoided is a decree from God, not [because of any] sin of theirs. In this is an allusion, for it is said that even if they cannot pray, which [requires] being present through the body, they are not prevented from perpetual remembrance (*dhikr*) in the heart and tongue. That [*dhikr*] is an address on the carpet of nearness. The Prophet ﷺ said, relating from God most high, “I sit among those who remember Me.”³⁵³

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ ﴿٢٢٢﴾

[2:222] *Truly, God loves those who repent, and He loves those who cleanse themselves.*

It is said that He loves *those who repent* from sins (*dhunūb*) and *those who cleanse themselves* from defects (*‘uyūb*).

It is said that [it refers to] *those who repent* from error and *those who cleanse themselves* from imagining that their salvation is through repentance.

It is said that [it refers to] *those who repent* from doing forbidden things and *those who cleanse themselves* from familiar things and considerations [of anything but God].

It is said that [it refers to] *those who repent* by seeking the water of forgiveness and *those who cleanse themselves* by pouring the water of shame [upon themselves] through the [human] attribute of brokenness.

353 ‘Abd al-Rahmān gives al-‘Ajlūnī, al-Zabidī, and al-Suyūṭī as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

It is said that [it refers to] *those who repent* from error and *those who cleanse themselves* from heedlessness.

It is said that [it refers to] *those who repent* from witnessing the repentance and *those who cleanse themselves* from imagining that anything is by error rather than by the decree that originates from God most high.

نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَأَتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُلَاقُوهُ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٢٣﴾

[2:223] *Your women are a tillage for you; so come to your tillage as you wish; and offer for your souls; and fear God; and know that you shall meet Him; and give good tidings to the believers.*

Because the bodily and lower selves are defined by absence from reality (*ḥaqīqa*), they find rest with their mates [and this] is allowable where it has been permitted. But when hearts are in the place of presence (*maḥall al-ḥudūr*), it is forbidden for them to be with created beings and anything other [than God].

And offer for your souls those righteous deeds that will benefit you on the day of your insolvency,³⁵⁴ and because of this He said, “*and know that you shall meet Him.*” So look to yourselves and offer what can be found that will ease your way before your Lord.

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِأَيْمَانِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ
النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

[2:224] *Do not make God a hindrance in your oaths to be pious and God-fearing; and to put things right between people; surely God is All-Hearing, Knower.*

Keep the mention of your Lord free of the banality of any worldly concerns.

It is said, “Do not make the mention of God into a net to catch the debris of this world.”

354 In other words, there is nothing to send forward to the hereafter but one's good deeds.

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا
كَسَبَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٥﴾

[2:225] *God will not take you to task for a slip in your oaths; but He will take you to task for what your hearts have earned; and God is Forgiving, Forbearing.*

What the tongue says inadvertently does not have much importance, either for good or bad, but what is hidden in the recesses of the heart (*ḍamāʿir*) and contained in its inner secrets (*sarāʿir*) in [terms of] genuine intentions and strong resolutions—that will be taken into account. If it is good, there will be a beautiful recompense (*jazāʿun jamīl*) and if it is bad, there will be prolonged distress (*ʿanāʿun ṭawīl*).

لِلَّذِينَ يُؤُولُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ تَرَبُّصًا أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ فَإِنْ فَآءُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٦﴾

[2:226] *For those who forswear their women, a wait of four months; if they revert, God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

Though the right of companionship with one's mate is upheld for you—unless you relinquish it—you are nonetheless held to His rule, for the right of the Real has even more right (*ḥaqqu al-ḥaqqi aḥaqqu*) to be observed.

If they revert, that is, they turn back to revive what they have let die and rectify what they have squandered, *God is Forgiving, Forbearing*. Because the wife has a lesser voice because she is captive (*asīr*) in the hands of her spouse, God *سُبْحَانَهُ* takes charge of the affair and preserves her right and commands the husband to return to her or release her.

وَإِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٧﴾

[2:227] *But if they resolve upon divorce; surely God is Hearing, Knowing.*

If he no longer wants the right of companionship and has confirmed his resolve to separate from her, *surely God is Hearing, Knowing*,³⁵⁵ aware of

355 The repetition of the phrase *surely God is Hearing, Knowing* has been added on the basis of MSS K117, fol. 26b and Y101, fol. 33b. It does not appear in the Basyūni edition.

his state and his secret. If any remorse comes to him, he should not cover it up by denying³⁵⁶ the divorce, for God سُبْحَانَهُ knows that he has divorced her.

When separation is difficult, [God] provides solace for the woman, saying [He is] *Hearing*, that is, “We hear the one who is desolated by [the words of her husband] and this is a comfort for her from the Real سُبْحَانَهُ.”

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ ۚ

[2:228] *Divorced women shall wait by themselves for three periods.*

He commanded divorced women to wait, out of respect for spousal relations. This means, “If the relationship has been cut off between the two of you, observe the condition of fulfilling [the waiting period] for the sake of what occurred in the past in the relationship. Do not put others quickly in place of [the former spouse].³⁵⁷ Be patient until the allotted period has passed.” Do you not see that the bride whose marriage was not consummated is not commanded to undergo a waiting period, since there were no spousal relations between the two of them?

وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ
يُؤْمِنَنَّ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ

[2:228] *And it is not lawful for them to hide what God has created in their wombs if they believe in God and the Last Day.*

This means that, even if the tie between the two of you has been severed, do not sever what God has established in the parental relationship.

وَبُعُولَتُهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ

[2:228] *Their mates have a better right to restore them*

356 The translation follows the word “denying” (*inkār*) found in MSS K117, fol. 26b and Y101, fol. 33b rather than the word *arkān* found in the Basyūnī edition.

357 Although the three-month waiting period is commanded for women alone, al-Qushayrī uses the masculine plural in this and the following sentence, and the masculine singular in the last sentence.

This means that the one with the prior relationship [the husband who initiated the divorce] has a better right to restore the breach in the marriage [before the wife's marrying again].

فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا

[2:228] *in such time if they desire to set things right;*

This means that the [husband's] intention to return should be to set things right in the estrangement that has occurred, not to prolong the waiting period for her if he has decided to divorce her after he has taken her back.

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

[2:228] *women shall have rights similar to those due from them, with justice;*

This means if he has a right over her for what he has expended in wealth, she has a right in the situation for [her] past service.

وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٨﴾

[2:228] *but their men have a degree above them; God is Mighty, Wise.*

[The man has the degree] in merit (*faḍīla*), but she has an advantage (*mazīya*) in weakness and human vulnerability.

الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَانِ

[2:229] *Divorce is twice;*

[God] calls for the divorce formula to be separate, so that you will not rush to complete the separation. Regarding its meaning it is said;

If I discover that
you have resolved on slaying me

then leave me.

Little by little, I am becoming weaker.³⁵⁸

فَامْسَاكُ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ ۗ

[2:229] *then honorable retention; or setting free kindly.*

That is, [there should] either be a gracious relationship or a gracious separation. A bad marital life and the loss of pleasantries because of blameworthy character traits are not acceptable on the path (*ṭarīqa*), nor are they considered praiseworthy in the law (*sharī'a*).

وَلَا يَجِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا

[2:229] *It is not lawful for you to take of what you have given them*

For surely the report is, “Anyone who asks for his gift back is like someone asking for his own vomit,”³⁵⁹ and to return what you have ruined is contemptible.

إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ ۗ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ
فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ ۗ

[2:229] *unless the couple fear that they may not maintain God's bounds. If you fear they may not maintain God's bounds, neither of them would be at fault if she were to ransom herself.*

This means that if the woman wants to free herself from her husband, she is not at fault for giving wealth [in exchange], for truly the self is worth everything to its owner.³⁶⁰ If the man, when he loses the companionship of the woman, could receive something from her, then at least he would

358 The poem is addressed to a woman. Muṣṭafā was unable to trace this verse (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 92).

359 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān gives a large number of sources for this *ḥadīth*, including al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʿī, and Ibn Māja.

360 Al-Qushayrī is saying that a woman's freedom might be worth more to her than her dowry.

receive some wealth for the loss of comfort in the situation.

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٢٩﴾

[2:229] *Those are God's bounds; do not transgress them. Whoever transgresses God's bounds—those are the evildoers.*

These are the good manners (*ādāb*) that God has taught you and made as a way (*sunna*) for you, so be mindful of his bounds (*ḥudūd*) and persist in recognizing His just claims (*ḥuqūq*).

فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتَّىٰ تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ ۖ فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا
فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا

[2:230] *If he divorces her, she shall not be lawful to him after that, until she marries another husband. If he divorces her, then neither of them would be at fault [if they] return to each other,*

A man finds it unbearable for his wife to marry another, so [God] prevents him from choosing separation with the intention of keeping her from remarrying. He explains that once he has separated from her she will not be lawful for him until she does what he would find unbearable, and that is a second marriage. So [this will make him] cautious, as much as he is able, in [initiating] divorce. Then He said, “*If he divorces her*,” meaning the spouse, “*then neither of them would be at fault [if they] return to each other*,” meaning if she remarries the first husband.

Here the allusion is that love’s hold on the heart makes what would otherwise be hard to endure easy, for if after separating the spouses regret their lost union, and then feel the greatest remorse, there is no fault in their returning to each other. But the woman in this circumstance is protected³⁶¹ from her husband by the threat of another husband, for the husband would himself be making that possible [if he were to divorce her three times].

361 Basyūnī has a blank in his text here, saying that the word in the manuscript he was working from was *al-mayshūr*, which also looks to be the word in Y101, fol. 34a. Basyūnī suggests the correct word might be *mabtūr*. The translation follows the text in MS K117, fol. 26b, which could be read as *mastūr*.

إِنْ ظَنَّا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣٠﴾

[2:230] *if they think that they will maintain God's bounds. Those are God's bounds, which He makes clear to a people who have knowledge.*

This means that after they know how much they need each other as companions, they will not separate again. The one who spoke for them said:

I swore that if I were to meet you
one more time,

I would never separate
from you a second time.³⁶²

إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِيَتَعْتَدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوعًا وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣١﴾

[2:231] *When you divorce women, and they have reached their term, then retain them honorably, or set them free honorably; do not retain them in order to hurt [them]; whoever does that has wronged his soul; take not God's verses in mockery, and remember God's grace upon you, and the Book, and the wisdom He has revealed to you, to exhort you therewith; and fear God, and know that God has knowledge of all things.*

The verse contains the command to goodly marital relations, which means abandoning anger and stubborn bickering with the wife. So either release [her] without being rough (*min ghayri jafā*) or practice true companionship as it should be carried out (*alā sharṭi al-wafā*).

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكِحْنَ

362 This verse was not located in Muṣṭafā.

أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضُوا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَن كَانَ
 مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ
 يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٣٢﴾

[2:232] *When you divorce women, and they have reached their term, do not debar them from marrying their [former] husbands when they have agreed together honorably. That is an admonition for whoever of you believe in God and the Last Day; that is purer for you, and cleaner. God knows, and you know not.*

The verse contains a prohibition for guardians against hurting [the women under their protection], abandoning the fierceness of the time of ignorance (*jāhiliyya*), and yielding to the decree of God to allow [divorced] women to marry if they wish it, without indignation or rage.³⁶³ Rather, [the message is] “since you were sufficiently pleased to betroth her to a mate, it is prohibited to [then] oppress her.” Letting go of the [baser] human instincts by subjugating the lower self is a more difficult struggle [than the fierce ways of the time of ignorance] and a more sincere way of behaving for the sake of God.

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ ۗ

[2:233] *Mothers suckle their children for two full years for such as desire to fulfill the suckling.*

The ultimate metaphor for mercy is the mercy of mothers. God *سُبْحَانَهُ* commanded mothers to fulfill mercy by suckling their children for two complete years. Cutting off the suckling before two years [for those who so desire] is an allusion to the fact that the mercy of God toward his servant is more perfect than the mercy of mothers.

363 This verse is said to have been revealed concerning a man who angrily refused to allow his sister to remarry the man who had divorced her. The incident is mentioned in many Qur’an commentaries, including *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (trans. Hamza).

وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ

[2:233] *It is for the father to provide them and clothe them honorably.*

This means that the father must provide for nursing women and clothe them honorably. When they are performing an act for you, their right is your obligation. Surely the [child] who is entirely yours is entirely your responsibility.

لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ

[2:233] *No soul is charged save to its capacity;*

The holding back of one with ability is miserliness—to stop in a moment of weakness is a [poor] excuse.

لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا

[2:233] *a mother shall not be harmed by her child*

in the suckling and what is necessary for it

وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَالِدَيْهِ ۚ

[2:233] *neither a father by his child. The heir has a similar duty.*

This means that the father [shall not be harmed] by his child, that is, with regard to the support and tenderness that are obligatory for [the child]. Just as the right of the child is incumbent on the parents, the right of the parents is incumbent on the child.

وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ ۖ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوهُمَا أُولَدِكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا آتَيْتُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ

اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

[2:233] *But if the two desire by mutual consent and consultation to wean [the child], then they would not be at fault. And if you desire to seek [others to] nurse your children, you would not be at fault, provided you hand over what you have given honorably, and fear God, and know that God sees what you do.*

This refers to weaning before two years—if it is done with the right intention, there is no fault. The verse includes [that which] smooths the path of companionship and teaches the best moral qualities in the precepts of marital life. Surely those who are not merciful will not themselves be treated with mercy (*wa-inna man lā yarḥamu lā yurḥamu*). The Prophet ﷺ said to someone who mentioned that his children did not kiss him, “Surely God does not take away mercy except from a miserable heart.”³⁶⁴

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

[2:234] *And those of you who pass away, leaving wives, they shall wait by themselves for four months and ten. When they have reached their term, then you would not be at fault regarding what they may do with themselves, honorably; God is aware of what you do.*

Because the right of the dead is more important, since his separation is not by choice, the period [for the widow] to complete used to be longer. In the beginning of Islam, the waiting period after death was one year. However, it reverted to four months and ten days, [the time necessary] to verify that no sperm of the husband is present in the womb. When the waiting period comes to an end, [the widow] is permitted to marry another man. No one’s fidelity lasts to the end of life, as it is said:

Just as faces
decay in the ground

364 ^٤Abd al-Raḥmān gives Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Ḥanbal as sources for this ḥadīth.

so does the grief
of [women].³⁶⁵

﴿٢٣٥﴾ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ النِّسَاءِ أَوْ أَكْنَنْتُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَلِيمَ اللَّهِ أَنْتُمْ سَتَدْكُرُونَهُنَّ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُوَاعِدُوهُنَّ سِرًّا إِلَّا أَنْ تَقُولُوا قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا

[2:235] *You would not be at fault regarding the proposal you present or hide in your hearts to women. God knows that you will be mindful of them; but do not make arrangements with them secretly, unless you speak honorable words.*

This permits seeking affection and laying the foundation for [marital] union. It forbids doing prohibited sinful acts or preparing for such acts.

﴿٢٣٥﴾ وَلَا تَعْزِمُوا عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابُ أَجَلَهُ، وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُ، وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣٥﴾

[2:235] *And do not resolve on the knot of marriage until that which is written has reached its term; and know that God knows what is in your souls; so be fearful of Him; and know that God is Forgiving, Forbearing.*

That is, the waiting period for the first [marriage] is required to avoid any disrespect for the deceased.

﴿٢٣٦﴾ لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَقْتُمْ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ أَوْ تَفْرِضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً، وَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ عَلَى الْمَوْسِعِ قَدَرَهُ، وَعَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدَرَهُ، مَتَّعَا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٢٣٦﴾

[2:236] *You would not be at fault if you divorce women whom you have not touched, nor appointed any obligation for them; yet make provision of comforts for them honorably, the one of ample means, according to his means,*

365 Muṣṭafā attributes this verse to Abū l-ʿAtāhiya (Muṣṭafā, no. 12, p. 113).

and the needy man, according to his means—an obligation on the virtuous.

If you have initiated³⁶⁶ the union with your mates, but then change your mind [before the consummation], there is no fault on you if you choose separation, for there is only One from whom it is not permissible to choose to separate. The companionship of human beings with one another is not obligatory but rather is described at most as permissible. But³⁶⁷ because your name and reputation are now part of theirs, half of the determined amount [of the dowry] must belong to them, since separation—however it comes about—is difficult. So [God] has established the required compensation for [the woman] who is made to drink from the cup of separation. If there was no determined amount, the contract still requires the gift (*muta*), because her being made to drink from the cup of separation without [some compensatory] comfort is a terrible thing for her to suffer.

وَإِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً
فَنِصْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوا الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ عَقْدَةُ الزَّكَاجِ
وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ

[2:237] *And if you divorce them before you have touched them, but you have already settled a dower on them, then one half of what you have appointed, unless it be that they make remission, or he makes remission, the one in whose hand is the knot of marriage; yet that you should remit is nearer to piety.*

Then [God] mentions that remission is more perfect and more commendable, either on the part of the woman in the half due to her or from the husband in the half returned to him.

وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٧﴾

[2:237] *Forget not kindness between you; surely God sees what you do.*

It is said that whoever lacks kindness (*faḍl*)³⁶⁸ and is content with the

366 The translation follows the phrase “to initiate union” (*ibtada'tum bi-l-wuṣla*) found in MSS K117, fol. 27a and Y101, fol. 34b rather than the phrase *ibtilā'an tamma bi-l-waṣila* found in the Basyūnī edition.

367 The word “but” (*lākin*) is added on the basis of MSS K117, fol. 27a and Y101, fol. 34b.

368 The translation follows the phrase *akhalla bi-l-faḍl* in MSS K117, fol. 27b and Y101, fol.

obligatory will soon neglect the obligatory [as well].

It is said that to forget kindness is to become ever more niggardly. Part of the way of noble people (*sunnat al-kirām*) is that, even when there are no obvious occasions for acting with nobility, they nonetheless sharpen the eyes of generosity and look for more subtle opportunities to act with kindness—and they are given many such opportunities.

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ ﴿٢٣٨﴾

[2:238] *Maintain (ḥāfiẓū) the prayers and the middle prayer, and stand submissive to God.*

Maintaining (*muhāfaẓa*)³⁶⁹ the prayers means coming to them with awe and leaving with reverence, and seeking a state of perpetual witnessing in the proper manner. The middle prayer is mentioned without being clearly defined so that you will observe each of them, thinking it is the one [mentioned] and will not neglect any [of them].

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَأَدْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣٩﴾

[2:239] *And if you are in fear, then standing, or mounted. But when you are secure, then remember God, as He taught you what you knew not.*

That is, “Do not abandon intimate conversations with Me at their [designated] times in the way I have made possible for you, for truly I am the One who gives power over you to the enemies you fear. But when you withdraw in your hearts through Me their hands will be unable to reach you, since I have appointed victory for you over them. Then when the fear is gone from you and *you are secure*, return to what you have established [in prayers], and exert your utmost in the times of your devotion in My presence, in private or in public.”

34b rather than the phrase *akhadha bi-l-faḍl* in the Basyūnī edition. The word *faḍl*, translated here as “kindness,” means to act in a liberal and gracious way with others. God is described as “bounteous” (*dhū faḍl*) to people in Qur’ān 2:243.

369 The verb *ḥāfiẓa* and its verbal noun *muhāfaẓa* also convey the sense of being mindful of something.

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا وَصِيَّةً لِأَزْوَاجِهِمْ مَتَّعًا إِلَى
 الْحَوْلِ غَيْرِ إِخْرَاجٍ فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي
 أَنْفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ مَّعْرُوفٍ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٤٠﴾

[2:240] *And those of you who die, leaving wives, make testament for their wives, provision for a year; but if they go forth, you would not be at fault regarding what they may do with themselves honorably; God is Mighty, Wise.*

The waiting period after the death of the husband in the beginning of Islam was an uninterrupted year, according to the words and actions of the Arabs. With respect to that, the one who spoke for them said:

Until the end of the year
 then “peace be upon both of you.”

Whoever weeps for an entire year
 has absolved themselves of any guilt.³⁷⁰

Then this was abrogated [and made] four months and ten days, since the mourning period inevitably ends. The one who spoke for them said:

He said, “If you die,
 I cannot live.”

I said, “You are being hypocritical
 so be silent.

What living thing
 do you see,
 that dies from love
 for something which is dead?”³⁷¹

370 Muṣṭafā traces this verse to Labid b. Rabī'a (d. 40/660–661) as recorded in several texts (Muṣṭafā, no. 18, p. 62). The translation follows the version of the poem given by Muṣṭafā which corresponds to MSS K117, fol. 27b and Y101, fol. 35a.

371 Muṣṭafā states that he could not locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 37).

وَلِلْمُطَلَّقَاتِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢٤١﴾

[2:241] *There shall be provision for divorced women, honorably—an obligation on those who fear.*

The allusion is that you [men]should not combine separation with deprivation, thereby doubling the difficulty for them [women].

كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٤٢﴾

[2:242] *So, God makes clear His signs for you, so that you might understand.* “[These are] guideposts (*dalāʾil*), so learn refined behavior through what has been pointed out to you—you will prosper by that which you come to understand from the allusions (*ishārāt*) of My decree.”

﴿ أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٤٣﴾

[2:243] *Have you not seen those thousands who went forth from their habitations fearful of death? God said to them, “Die!” Then He gave them life. Truly God is bounteous [dhū faḍl] to people, but most people are not thankful.*

When [the children of Israel] deemed God’s power to restore [them] unlikely, He showed [His power] to them directly in their own selves.³⁷²

The outward disclosure of that, however, did not benefit those who had not sharpened their insight regarding divine unity (*tawhīd*). Anyone whose insight has been strengthened will not be harmed by a lack of these direct forms of evidence, for they have already realized through their faith in the unseen the truth of what they have been told.

372 Among the stories narrated by commentators in explanation of this verse, one tells of a group from among the children of Israel who fled a region afflicted by the plague. God said to them “Die!” and they did. But their Prophet Ezekiel (Ḥizqīl) prayed for them and God brought them back to life (*Tafsir al-Jalālayn*, trans. Hamza). See also Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and Its Interpreters*, 1:232–236.

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٤٤﴾

[2:244] *So fight in God's way, and know that God is Hearing, Knowing.*

This means, “If pain touches you and a cry rises up from you, know that God hears your cry, knows your states, and sees your affairs.” The verse brings about an easing of the pain they endure. They said:

While most people want
ease and comfort,

I wish to complain to you
for then you will hear.³⁷³

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضْعِفُهُ لَهُ وَأُضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً

[2:245] *Who is he that will lend God a loan that is good, and He will multiply it for him manifold?*

The loan is called *qard* because one “cuts off” (*yaqtā'u*)³⁷⁴ something from one's wealth in order to give it to a borrower. When the almsgiver “cuts” alms (*ṣadaqa*) from his wealth, his gift is called a *qard*. The *qard*, then, is the amount cut off. But here the term is being used in a way that preserves the hearts of the lovers inasmuch as [God] uses it to speak directly to you on the subject of almsgiving.

It is said that the verse suggests the importance of the wealthy, since He questioned them about the loan, but the rank of the poor is even more important in this [verse] because He asked about the loan on their behalf. [God] might ask for the loan from anyone but He did not ask it for the sake of just anyone. In the tradition: “The Messenger of God ﷺ died while his coat of mail had been pawned with Abū Shaḥma the Jew for barley, which he had taken to feed his family.”³⁷⁵ Look from whom he borrowed and for the sake of whom he borrowed!

373 Muṣṭafā traces the first part of the verse to Majnūn in his *Dīwān* and quotes the entire verse there as “While most men want ease and comfort / I want to meet you at night alone.” He traces the second part of the verse to al-ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf in his *Dīwān* and quotes the entire line as “Men want what they love / I only want to complain to you and then you will hear” (Muṣṭafā, no. 4, p. 77).

374 *Qarāda* and *qaṭa'a* are synonyms.

375 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān gives al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Māja, among other sources for this *ḥadīth*.

It is said that the good loan is one for which you do not look for a reward and do not seek recompense.

It is said that the good loan is not given in a heedless way, but rather from witnessing [what is needed].

It is said that the good loan, according to religious scholars, is given only when one has the means. [But] according to the most respected (*al-akābir*), [the good loan] is the condition of preferring others [to one's self] in giving without any hesitation.

It is said that the good loan, according to the religious scholars, is 2.5 percent.³⁷⁶ According to the folk,³⁷⁷ it is giving everything generously, including one's spirit.

وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٤٥﴾

[2:245] *God straitens (yaqbiḍ) and enlarges (yabsuṭ); and to Him you shall be returned.*

[God] takes hold (*yaqbiḍ*)³⁷⁸ of the alms from the rich with the grasp (*qabḍ*) of His acceptance, and opens (*yabsuṭ*) for them the largesse (*baṣṭ*) of His compensation.

It is said that He straitens (*yaqbiḍ*) the provision, that is, “He restricts” (*yudayyiqu*); and He enlarges the provision, that is, “He expands” (*yuwassi'u*). He straitens the [circumstances of the] poor in order to test them in patience and enlarges [the circumstances of] the rich so as to lay claim to their gratitude.

It is said that He consoles the poor in His grasp so that they will not look to any others,³⁷⁹ and then opens [His grasp] so that they will not have to become accustomed to the favor of the rich.

It is said that He said to the rich, “When I have straitened the provision for the poor, do not abandon them, and when I enlarge it for you, do not view that as due to your own merit.”

It is said that He constricts (*qabaḍa*) hearts by turning away and expands

376 The obligatory alms (*zakāt*) amount.

377 That is, the Sufis.

378 The verb and noun forms from the roots *qabaḍa* and *baṣaṭa* have nuances in meaning that are reflected in the different English words used for the translation of al-Qushayrī's commentary for this Qur'ānic verse.

379 The translation follows the word “others” (*aghayār*) from MSS K117, fol. 28a and Y101, fol. 35b rather than the word “rich” (*aghnā'*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

(*basāṭa*) them by drawing near.

It is said that the constriction (*qabḍ*) is because of the fear that comes over hearts and the expansion (*baṣṭ*) is because of the hope that comes over them.

It is said that constriction [takes place] because of His vanquishing (*qahr*) and expansion [takes place] because of His beneficence (*birr*).

It is said that constriction [takes place] because of His secret (*sirr*) and expansion [takes place] because of His unveiling (*kashf*).

It is said that the constriction is for those who seek (*murīdūn*) and the expansion is for those who are sought (*murādūn*).³⁸⁰

It is said that the constriction is for those who vie with one another [in good works]³⁸¹ and the expansion is for those with deeper knowledge (‘*ārifūn*).

It is said that He seizes you (*yaqbiḍ*) from yourself and then expands (*yabsuṭ*) you through Himself.

It is said that the constriction is His right (*ḥaqq*) and the expansion is your fortune (*ḥazz*).

It is said that the constriction is for the one who assumes guardianship (*tawallā*)³⁸² from the Real and the expansion is for the one to whom the Real discloses (*tajallā*) Himself.

It is said that He constricts (*yaqbiḍ*) you when He calls you to witness your actions and He expands (*yabsuṭ*) you when He calls you to witness His grace.

It is said that He constricts [you] by the mention of chastisement (‘*adhāb*) and expands [you] by the mention of approval (*ijāb*).

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَأِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّ

380 For a discussion of the difference between those who seek and those who are sought, see the “Section on spiritual desire” (Bāb al-irāda) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 2:433–439, especially the last two pages.

381 Basyūnī notes that the word *mutasābiqūn* echoes the word *sābiqūn* as found in Qur’ān 23:61, 57:21, and others.

382 The word *tawallā* means to assume responsibility for others. According to al-Qushayrī, it is used in an active and passive way to describe the relationship of human beings and the divine. Friendship (*walāya*) with God means that God is one’s guardian (*walī*) but also that one guards the right of God. God protects the friend and the friend protects the right of God. See the “Section on friendship” (Bāb al-walāya) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 2:519–525, especially the first two pages.

لَهُمْ أَبَعَثَ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَائِنَا فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٤٦﴾

[2:246] *Have you not seen the council of the children of Israel after Moses, when they said to a prophet of theirs, "Send for us a king, and we will fight in God's way." He said, "Might it be that if fighting is prescribed for you, you will not fight?" They said, "Why should we not fight in God's way, when we have been expelled from our habitations and our children?" Yet when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned their backs, except a few of them; and God has knowledge of the evildoers.*

They approached the matter as one of free choice (*ikhtiyār*), demanding that their prophet ask permission for them to fight. When they were granted that for which they were themselves responsible, they stopped short out of laziness (*takāsul*) and changed their course toward the homelands of desertion (*takhādhul*)³⁸³ and indifference (*taghāful*). It is said that outwardly they spoke with toughness and seriousness about fighting to defend their possessions and their dwellings, when *they said*, "*Why should we not fight in God's way, when we have been expelled from our habitations and our children?*" But they did not achieve their objective because their resolve was not purely for the right of God. If they had said, "Why should we not fight in the way of God, for He has commanded us, and made [this] an obligation on us? He is our Chief and Protector, and His command is binding on us," then perhaps they would have fully achieved what they had set out to do.

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٤٧﴾

383 The translation follows the word *takhādhul* found in the MSS K117, fol. 28a and Y101, fol. 35a rather than the word "to quarrel" (*tajādul*) in the Basūni edition.

[2:247] *Then their prophet said to them, “Verily God has raised up Saul for you as king.” They said, “How can he be king over us when we have better right than he to kingship, seeing he has not been given amplitude of wealth?” He said, “God has chosen him over you and has increased him broadly in knowledge and body (jism). God gives the kingship to whom He will; and God is Embracing, Knowing.*

They forgot [God’s] right of free choice (*ikhtiyār*), and viewed the situation instead with the eye of the external world. They deemed it unlikely that Saul could be a king because he was poor and without property. [God] explained to them that merit is by the choice of the Real and that if [Saul] lacked wealth, “God has increased him in knowledge and has favored him over you by his knowledge and body (*jism*).” It is said that He meant that [Saul] was praiseworthy in the qualities of the self (*nafs*), not large in [his] physical frame (*binya*), for as it is said in the adage, “So and so is a name without a body (*fulān ism bi-lā jism*),” that is, a man without substance.

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ
مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ آءَالُ مُوسَىٰ وَعَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٤٨﴾

[2:248] *And their prophet said to them, “The sign of his kingship is that there will come to you the ark. Therein is a spirit of peace from your Lord, and a remnant of what the folk of Moses and the folk of Aaron left behind, the angels bearing it. Surely in that shall be a sign for you if you are believers.”*

Verily when God *سُجِّلَتْ* makes a light appear, He increases [that light] with the aid He provides directly from Himself. When Saul was made king over them, the doubt about his qualification was eliminated by the appearance of [God’s] signs that proved the veracity of the words of their prophet³⁸⁴ [declaring God’s choice of Saul]. He returned the ark which contained the spirit of peace (*sakīna*) to them. Thus the sign of his kingship became clear to them with the fact that their prophet ﴿﴾ had spoken truly to them in what he told them.

384 The *tafsīr* literature gives several names for the possible identity of the prophet mentioned here, including Samuel, Simon, and Joshua (Ayoub, citing al-Ṭabarī in *The Qurʾān and Its Interpreters*, 1:237).

It is said that God most high placed the spirit of peace (*sakīna*) of the children of Israel in the ark that contained the shards³⁸⁵ of the tablets and the rod of Moses ﷺ, and [other] relics of their prophets. He placed the spirit of peace of [Muḥammad’s] community in their hearts: *He it is who sent down the spirit of peace into the hearts of the believers* [48:4]. Moreover, the ark circulated in the hands of enemies and others. One time it was buried, another time it was seized and carried away, another time it was returned, and another time [and so on. . .]. But as for the hearts of the believers—[God] comes between the possessors [of these hearts] and [the spirit of peace].³⁸⁶ He did not entrust it to a king or a prophet, or to the heavens or air, or to a place or person. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The heart of the believer is between the two fingers of the Merciful,”³⁸⁷ meaning in the grasp of the Real ﷻ, and under His domination (*taghlīb*) and disposal (*taṣrif*). This means it is the divine power of deliberation (*qudra*). What a difference between a community whose spirit of peace is in what enemies can control and a community whose spirit of peace is in that over which no created being has any control!

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ

[2:249] *And when Saul went forth with the hosts, he said, “God will try you with a river; whoever drinks of it, is not of me, and whoever tastes it not, he is of me, except for him who scoops up with his hand.*

The allusion in this verse is that God ﷻ tests human beings in their association with others, with this world, and with the lower self. There are some whose association with these things is limited to that which is required for [them to earn a] basic livelihood and what is necessary for their salvation and security. There are others who go beyond the limit of what is required, and extend their association with things of the world, self, and creation for the sake of carnal desire³⁸⁸ and their own preference.

385 The translation follows the phrase *fīhi raṣrāṣu al-alwāḥ* found in MSS K117, fol. 28a and Y101, fol. 35b rather than the phrase *raḍūʿan al-alwāḥ* found in the Basyūnī edition.

386 Here al-Qushayrī indirectly references part of Qurʾān 8:24: *and know that God comes in between a man and his heart.*

387 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān gives Ibn ʿAdī, al-Bayhaqī, and al-Ṭabari among other sources for this *ḥadīth*. Slightly different versions can be found in Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Majā, and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.

388 The translation follows the word “carnal desire” (*shahwa*) from MSS K117, fol. 28b and

There is nothing from God in that which involves doing a prohibited thing. There is nothing from this path (*ṭarīqa*) in that which involves holding on to more than what is needed.

فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ

[2:249] *But they drank of it, except a few of them;*

Likewise the elect in every moment are few in their number but sublime in their worth.

فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ
بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ

[2:249] *and when he crossed it, with those who believed, they said, “We have no power today against Goliath and his troops.”*

They viewed the situation with the eye of the external world and were overcome with mortal fright. God fortified their hearts, telling them that the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* helps His friends, if He wills it.

قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلِقُوا اللَّهَ كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ
فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٢٤٩﴾

[2:249] *Those who thought they would meet God, said, “How often a small company has overcome a numerous one, by God’s leave; and God is with the patient.”*

[The victory is] not by them, but by the permission of God through what He has willed, and through His aid and His help. God is with the patient through help, support, and strength.

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ

أَقْدَامَنَا وَأَنْصَرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٥٠﴾

[2:250] So, when they went forth against Goliath and his troops, they said, “Our Lord, pour out upon us patience, and make firm our feet, and grant us victory over the disbelieving folk!”

So, when they went forth against Goliath and his troops, [the hosts of Saul] exonerated themselves of all power and strength and turned to God, seeking His succor, asking for His aid, and trusting in His help. *They said, “Our Lord, pour out upon us patience, and make firm our feet.* First, they sought firmness and patience for the sake of the sufferings they had previously endured, and then they said, “*and grant us victory over the disbelieving folk!*”³⁸⁹ The most important of their concerns was patience and standing up to the enemy, and only after that [were they concerned for] help for themselves. Patience [in enduring sufferings] is the right of the Real (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) while help is their portion. They stepped forward to assert His right *سُبْحَانَهُ* and to succeed for His sake,³⁹⁰ and then to find their worldly portion from [His] help. Moreover [the hosts of Saul] indicated that they were seeking help against [the enemy], not out of revenge for what had been taken from them, but because they [the enemy] were disbelievers, enemies of God. The [hosts of Saul] stood in every way for God through God. Because of that they were helped and found victory.

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَعَاتَهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ ﴿٢٥١﴾

[2:251] And they routed them, by the leave of God, and David slew Goliath; and God gave him the kingship and wisdom, and He taught him such as He willed.

God frightened the enemies with Saul, whom He had given such a large body. But at the time of the fighting He brought the victory about through the hands of David. As the story goes, [David] was of middling stature, not large in body, a compact person. He had no weapon with him but a

389 The first part of this paragraph has been added on the basis of MSS K117, fol. 28b and Y101, fol. 36a. The Basyūni edition begins with “The most important of their concerns...”

390 The translation follows the phrase “for His sake” (*lahu*) found in MSS K117, fol. 28b and Y101, fol. 36a rather than the phrase “for their sake” (*lahum*) found in the Basyūni edition.

slingshot; the victory was his because the help of God *سُبْحَانَهُ* was with him.

And they routed them, by the leave of God, so that nothing, not even a trace remained of them. David killed Goliath. Because of Goliath's bulk and size, David's victory over him was unimaginable, but as the one who spoke for them said:

He met me
with his sword drawn
and said to me,
One of us is gone.³⁹¹

وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ
اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٥١﴾

[2:251] *Had God not repelled people some by means of others, the earth would have surely been corrupted; but God is bounteous to all worlds.*

If mankind were to make common cause and agree with one another altogether, the weak would be destroyed by the victory of the strong. But He keeps some occupied by others so as to deflect their evil from other people.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٢٥٢﴾

[2:252] *These are the verses of God We recite to you in truth, and assuredly you are one of the Messengers [of God].*

“You did not have knowledge [O Muḥammad], regarding these long ago beings from the past, nor was this something you devised. Rather, you came to know of them through information given by God *سُبْحَانَهُ*.”

﴿ تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ
دَرَجَاتٍ ۗ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ ۗ ﴾

391 Basyūnī has the word *ma'dhūl* but says maybe it is *makhdhūl*. The word in MSS K117, fol. 28b and Y101, fol. 36a is clearly *ma'zūl*. The verse was not found in Muṣṭafā.

[2:253] *Those messengers some We have preferred above others; there are some to whom God spoke, and some He raised in rank. And We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear proofs, and confirmed him with the Holy Spirit.*

In the message they were united but they differed in the specific details. Each one has lights and their lights have places where they are cast. Among them is one who is the most sublime in terms of light and most perfect in rank and intensity. Their virtues are not entitlements based on their actions and states, but rather are a goodly decree that came to them (*ḥukmun bi-l-ḥusnā adrakahum*) and a beautiful succession that reached them in turns (*wa-ʿāqibatun bi-l-jamīli tadārakahum*).

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَقْتَتَلْنَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ
وَلَكِنْ ائْتَلَفُوا فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ ءَامَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَفَرَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا
أَقْتَتَلُوا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ ﴿٢٥٣﴾

[2:253] *And had God willed, those who came after them would not have fought against one another after the clear proofs had come to them; but they fell into variance, and some of them believed, and some disbelieved, and had God willed they would not have fought against one another, but God does whatever He desires.*

They are made to turn about by the eternal will and have been stripped of free choice; [instead there is the divine choice] around which everything circles (*madār*) and by which is the crossing over (*ʿtibār*).³⁹² Servanthood is the tightening of the belt of service (*khidma*) and the witnessing of prior fate (*qisma*).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا
بِئَعٍ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا شَفِيعَةٌ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٥٤﴾

[2:254] *O you who believe, expend of what We have provided you with before there comes a day in which there shall be neither commerce, nor friendship,*

392 In his commentary on verse 2:26, al-Qushayri uses the term “crossing over” or “taking heed” (*ʿtibār*) to describe the interpretation of similitudes. Here he uses it as he does in his commentary on Qurʾān 3:121, where the participation of Muḥammad in a battle is used to describe the “crossing over” between what God makes manifest in the world and the “hidden things” of God’s “secret.”

nor intercession. And the disbelievers—they are the evildoers.

This means [one should] take advantage of the help [one is] granted—the ability to act virtuously—before [one’s] strength flags and one’s allotted time³⁹³ passes.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

[2:255] *God, there is no god, except Him, the Living, the Eternal Sustainer.*

Allāh is a name (*ism*) which only the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* possesses, and no one can be His namesake (*samī*)—God most high said, “Do you know [of] anyone who could be His namesake?” [19:65], that is, “Do you know anyone other than Him that could be called *Allāh*?” Anyone who regards this as a derived term is like someone lost in his own contradictions. This is a term that denotes worthiness of the attributes of majesty, not derivation from [other] words. There are no parallels for what has no parallel in words.

His words, *there is no god, except Him*, is a statement that negates anything equivalent or similar to that of which He is worthy in [terms of] sanctity (*taqdīs*) and incomparability (*tanzīh*). Anyone who realizes the truth of this statement will not see so much as a speck to affirm in anything other than Him or from anything other than Him,³⁹⁴ so he will not bring up his need before any other, nor bear witness to a speck of anything other than Him. His concentration on Him will be steady and his singular devotion to finding Him will be perpetual. So he does not hear except from God and through God, and he does not witness anything except through God, and he does not approach anything but God, and he does not occupy himself with anything except through God. He is effaced from what is other than God and therefore he has no complaints or requests. Not a drop of blood flows in him for anything other than [God]. When the Real gives to a servant in full measure, there is absolutely no room left in him for any worldly concerns. Surely, then, the truth of this statement [*there is no god, except Him*] must be acknowledged and all other ways of describing things [must] cease. The truth to be realized is that no creature has access to the existence of the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*; [there is] no union or parting, no nearness or distance, for truly those are all accidents which are not worthy of the timeless eternal.

393 The translation follows the word *amad* from MSS K117, fol. 28b and Y101, fol. 36b rather than the word “hope” (*amal*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

394 In other words, they will see that nothing is real except the Real, and that everything originates from and returns to Him.

The Living (ḥayy), the Eternal Sustainer (qayyūm): The One who takes charge (*mutawallī*) of the affairs of His servants, the One who concerns Himself with every movement and stillness,³⁹⁵ the One who sets in motion³⁹⁶ every entity (*ʿayn*) and effect (*athar*).

لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ

[2:255] *Slumber does not seize Him, neither sleep;*

Because He is One who does not succumb to heedlessness (*ghafla*). He is self-sufficient and sought by all, untouched by any defect (*ʿilla*). He is all-mighty, far from anything small (*qilla*). He is all-compelling, without being isolated (*ʿuzla*). He is unique without a body (*juththa*). He is singular without aspect (*jiha*). He is eternal, untouched by any accident (*āfa*). He is tremendous without distance (*masāfa*).

His majesty is sanctified from His beauty and His majesty is His beauty. His brilliance is His splendor and His splendor is His brilliance. His eternity without beginning (*azal*) is His eternity without end (*abad*). His eternity without end is His eternity without beginning or end (*sarmad*). His eternity without beginning or end is His timeless eternity (*qidam*), and His timeless eternity is His existence (*wujūd*).

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ

[2:255] *to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth;*

By way of possession, origination, creation and invention.

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

[2:255] *who is there, that shall intercede with Him save by His leave?*

Who is there who can take a breath without His bringing it about? Or [who]

395 The word “stillness” (*sukūn*) is added on the basis of MSS K117, fol. 29a and Y101, fol. 36b.

396 Basyūnī is unsure of the word in his edition, but the word in MSS K117, fol. 29a and Y101, fol. 36b is clearly *mujrī*.

can seek access to Him without His leave and initiation? Whoever thinks that he can seek access to Him by any entitlement, action, obsequiousness, hope, nearness, relation, reason or cause—conjecturing is his homeland and ignorance his abode. Error is his destination and remoteness his end.

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ^ط

[2:255] *He knows what lies before them, and what is after them;*

Because nothing which can be known is left out of His knowledge and no existent or non-existent thing is obscure to Him.

وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ^ج

[2:255] *and they encompass nothing of His knowledge, save such as He wills.*

This means from the things that are known to Him. In other words, the different types of [human] knowledge fall short of encompassing what is known to Him, save by His permission. What hope is there in these for encompassing His Essence and Reality? How could it be possible to encompass it when there is no point at which His might is cut off and no limit applies to Him?

وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ^ط

[2:255] *His throne subsumes the heavens and the earth;*

[This is] an address for [people to understand] according to their capacity for comprehension, and yet, what importance could things that exist have in comparison with His attributes? His worth is too exalted in might for a throne or a chair. Being embellished [with things] is for jinns or human beings.

وَلَا يُؤْدُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ ^ج

[2:255] *the preserving of them wearies Him not; He is the Sublime, the Tremendous.*

How could created things tire the One to whom the creation of the atom and the entire cosmos are the same? Nothing small is too easy for him (*tayassur*) and nothing large is too difficult (*taʿassur*).

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۗ

[2:256] *There is no compulsion in religion.*

The arguments are clear and the proofs plain and evident.

قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ

[2:256] *Rectitude has become clear from error;*

The night is distinguished by its darkness from the day and its light. The eternal truths (*ḥuqūq*) [of the Real] are given facts while the basic limits (*ḥudūd*) [of created things] are subject to other causes. [The truths of the Real] are [known] through the property of timeless eternity (*naʿt al-qidam*) while [the limits of created things] are [known] through the attribute of privation (*wasf al-ʿadam*).³⁹⁷

فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ

[2:256] *so whoever disbelieves in the false deity,*

The false deity is anything that distracts one from his Lord.

وَيُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ

[2:256] *and believes in God,*

Belief is the life of the heart (*ḥayāt al-qalb*) through God.

397 Al-Qushayrī can perhaps be best understood here by referring back to his commentary on *to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth* in Qurʾān 2:255. If God is the only possessor, creator, originator and inventor, everything but God is in a condition of limitation and need. Any other view of reality is error.

فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ

[2:256] *has laid hold of the most firm handle,*

Laying hold of the most firm handle is holding to the command and prohibition (*al-amr wa-l-nahy*), which is traveling the path of al-Muṣṭafā ﴿﴾.³⁹⁸

لَا أَنْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥٦﴾

[2:256] *unbreaking; God is Hearing, Knowing.*

Anyone who realizes the truth of it inwardly and holds to it outwardly will win in the two abodes and will be happy in both worlds.

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

[2:257] *God is the Protector (walī) of the believers;*

[He is] the Protector (*walī*) in the sense of the One who takes charge of their affairs (*mutawallī*) and the One who is unique in settling their concerns. The *fa'il* pattern of the word *walī* can [also] be understood in the passive (*maf'ūl*)³⁹⁹—the believers are charged (*yatawallawna*) with obeying Him. Both [usages of the word] are correct. The first [way of understanding the word *walī*] is a gathering⁴⁰⁰ and the second is a separation.⁴⁰¹ Not every gathering will be limited by a separation and not every separation will be supported by a gathering. That is an error and the one who makes it is wrong. The verse bears both of the meanings.⁴⁰²

398 Muḥammad is sometimes referred to as “the chosen one” (*al-muṣṭafā*).

399 The word *walī* is an adjective in the *fa'il* pattern, which can have an intensive active or a passive meaning. It is a semantic distinction that al-Qushayrī also discusses in the “Section on friendship” (*Bāb al-walāya*), *Risāla*, 2:519–520.

400 Because God takes charge of the well-being of His servant.

401 Because the servant himself must take charge of upholding God’s rights.

402 Here al-Qushayrī uses the semantic possibilities of the adjective *walī* to demonstrate his ideas about gathering (*jam'*) and separation (*farq*). When man experiences what is from himself, he is in a state of separation. When he experiences what is from God, he is in a state of union. For more on these concepts, see the sections on “Gathering and separation” (*al-Jam' wa-l-farq*) and “Gathering of the gathering” (*Jam' al-jam'*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 1:207–210.

يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ط

[2:257] *He brings them forth from the shadows into the light.*

This means that, by His beginningless decree, He protected them from the shadows, which are errors and [blameworthy] innovation, for they were never in the shadows in His prior knowledge.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَآؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ

[2:257] *And the disbelievers—their protectors are false deities*

[False deities] that entice them with calls to disbelief.

يُخْرِجُونَهُمْ مِنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ ط أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ
فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٥٧﴾

[2:257] *that bring them forth from the light into the shadows; those are the inhabitants of the fire, therein they shall abide.*

Through the doubt that overwhelmed their hearts they denied the lordship. They are those who remain forever apart from the Real.

It is said *He brings them forth from the shadows* of their self-direction (*tadbīr*) to the spaciousness of witnessing His determination (*taqdīr*) of events.

It is said that *He brings them forth from the shadows* of their thinking that they have any independent means or access to Him in anything they do or do not do.⁴⁰³

It is said that *He brings them forth from the shadows* by lifting the shade of their lower selves from them and bringing them into the shade of His solicitude.

It is said that He delivers them from paying any heed to their own salvation.

It is said that He comes between them and their reliance on their actions and dependence on their states.

403 Literally, their movements (*ḥarakāt*) and states of rest (*sakanāt*).

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ قَالَ
 إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ ۗ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ
 اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي
 كَفَرَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٥٨﴾

[2:258] *Have you not seen him who disputed with Abraham concerning his Lord, that God had given him the kingship? When Abraham said, “My Lord is He who gives life, and makes to die,” he said, “I give life and make to die.” Abraham said: “God brings the sun from the east; so bring it from the west.” Then the disbeliever was confused; and God guides not the folk who do evil.*

The Real سُبْحَانَهُ hastened the punishment of separation (*furqa*) for His enemies before He punished them with burning (*hurqa*). This punishment [of separation] was in actuality more powerful in its effect, if they had had the eye of insight [to see this]. The Real سُبْحَانَهُ relates that Abraham عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ moved from one sound proof with the accursed enemy to another which was clearer, not because there was anything wrong with the [first] proof, but because of the shortcomings in the understanding of the disbeliever. The touchstone of one whose sight is blocked from recognizing the truth is the wasting of time without any useful benefit. It is not about the quality of the proof for a matter about which there is no question.

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَنَّى يُحْيِي هَذِهِ
 اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ ۗ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتُ قَالَ
 لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۗ قَالَ بَلْ لَبِثْتَ مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانظُرْ إِلَى طَعَامِكَ
 وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ ۗ وَانظُرْ إِلَى حِمَارِكَ وَلِتَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ ۗ وَانظُرْ
 إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ ۗ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ
 أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٥٩﴾

[2:259] *Or such as he who passed by a city that was all in ruins to its roofs, he said, “How shall God give life to this now that it is dead?” So God made him die for a hundred years, then he raised him up; He said, “How long have*

you tarried?”; he said, “I have tarried a day, or part of a day”; He said, “Nay, you have tarried a hundred years. Look at your food and drink, it has not spoiled; and look at your donkey so that We would make you a sign for the people. And look at the bones, how We shall set them up, and then clothe them with flesh.” So, when it was made clear to him, he said, “I know that God has power over all things.”

This was not a question of denial, a matter of ignorance, or an indication of doubt in divine power, for this report is about Ezra (ʿUzayr) the prophet ﷺ and it is not possible for the prophets ﷺ to doubt or be ignorant. Rather, it was a question of wondering about something extraordinary. In this conversation [Ezra] wanted to be more certain, so God showed him that within his [own body], by making him die and then bringing him to life, and then reviving his donkey while he watched, and he became more and more certain. Asking for certainty from God and using the tactic of posing difficulties are practices of those who are curious to know. Because of that God excused⁴⁰⁴ Ezra in this conversation and the increased certainty he sought was made possible for him. Then he said, “*I know that God has power over all things*” in giving life and causing death, that is, “My knowledge has been increased by what I saw.”⁴⁰⁵ He showed me weighty signs which increased my certainty.” His food and drink did not change in this long period, even as his donkey died and his bones decayed.⁴⁰⁶

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنُ قَالَ بَلَىٰ
وَلَكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ
أَجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ
اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾

[2:260] *And when Abraham said, “My Lord show me how You give life to the dead.” He said, “Why, do you not believe?” “Yes,” he said, “but so that my heart may be re-assured.” Said He, “Take four birds, and twist them to you,*⁴⁰⁷

404 There is a blank in Basyūnī here, which has been completed with the word “excused” (adhara) from MSS K117, fol. 29b and Y101, fol. 37b.

405 The phrase “by what I saw” is added on the basis of MSS K117, fol. 29b and Y101, fol. 37b.

406 In the *tafsīr* literature the story is told that Ezra saw the decayed bones of his donkey before God brought the donkey to life again. See *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (trans. Hamza).

407 The Arabic verb here means to turn or twist something, especially by the neck. Some

then set a part of them on every hill, then summon them, and they will come to you in haste. And know that God is Mighty, Wise.”

It is said that he was looking for increased certainty and wanted to compare the truth of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) with what he had already obtained from the eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*).⁴⁰⁸

It is said that what [Abraham] said here was meant to elicit His words *سُبْحَانَكَ*, *Why, do you not believe?* [Abraham] said, “Yes, I believe but I longed to have You say to me, ‘*Why, do you not believe?*’ and Your saying this to me is a reassurance to my heart.” The lover is forever striving to find a way to address his beloved in any way that he can.

It is said that [Abraham] was seeking a vision of the Real *سُبْحَانَكَ*, by hint or allusion, for he was held back by the allusion in His words, “*And know that God is Mighty, Wise.*” When Moses ﴿﴾ asked for the vision directly, saying “*My Lord! Show me that I may behold You!*” [7:143], [God] replied directly and clearly, and it was said to him, “*You shall not see Me!*” [7:143].

It is said that he only sought the life of his heart and this was shown to him by the sacrifice of these birds. Among the four birds there was a peacock and the allusion in its sacrifice relates to the ornament and beauty of the present world. There was also a crow because of his greed, a rooster because of his [strutting] walk, and a duck because of his seeking provision.

When Abraham ﴿﴾ said, “*Show me how You give life to the dead,*” it was said to him, “*Will you show Me how you sacrifice life?*” which meant Ishmael—one demand [was made] for another. When [Abraham] fulfilled what was asked of him, the Real fulfilled what he had requested.

It is said that part of the promise from the Real *سُبْحَانَكَ* was that He took [Abraham] as a friend (*khalīl*), and the sign of that was [God’s] reviving the dead through his hand. Then what came to pass came to pass.

[God] made a connection between the story of al-Khalīl ﴿﴾ and what He showed him and made manifest through his hand in reviving the dead,

classical commentators interpreted this as Abraham’s training the birds to obey him, but most understood it as cutting the birds into pieces, since the verse is speaking about bringing the dead to life. Al-Qushayrī follows the second interpretation.

408 In the section on “Knowledge of certainty, eye of certainty and the truth of certainty” (*‘ilm al-yaqīn wa-‘ayn al-yaqīn wa-ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), al-Qushayrī writes that “knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*), according to [Sufi] terminology, is conditional on demonstrative proof (*burhān*). The eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*) [comes] from the determination of clear evidence (*bayān*). The truth of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) [comes] from the attribute of direct witnessing (*‘iyān*). Knowledge of certainty belongs to the masters of intellects (*arbāb al-‘uqūl*). The eye of certainty belongs to the masters of different types of knowledge (*aṣḥāb al-‘ulūm*). The truth of certainty belongs to the masters of deeper knowledge (*aṣḥāb al-ma‘ārif*)” (al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 1:244).

and Ezra, when He showed him [what He showed him] in himself, because al-Khalil was given preference over Ezra in his questioning and in his state. Abraham ﷺ did not try to refute [God] in any way, but rather was subtle in his request. Ezra spoke to Him with words resembling someone who deems a thing far-fetched. The Real wanted to reveal the most powerful miracle and the most perfect corroboration to [Abraham] inasmuch as He made the revival of the dead appear by his hand. When Abraham's ﷺ words, “*My Lord is He who gives life and makes to die*” [2:258] seemed doubtful to Nimrod,⁴⁰⁹ [Nimrod] said, “*I give life and cause death*” [2:258]. Abraham wanted God ﷻ to show him the revival of the dead so that he would know he should not make undue claims.

In these two verses is permission for one who seeks increased certainty from God ﷻ in the state of reflective thought (*nazar*).

It is said that Abraham wanted to bring life to the heart by the light of communion in accordance with perfection. It was said to him, “*Why, do you not believe?*” which means, “Do you not remember the state of your seeking Us when you were saying to everything you saw, “*This is my lord?*” [6:76–78]. You were not yet aware of how We would cause you to reach the utmost point [in understanding Our Lordship]. In this case as well, We will bring you to that to which you aspire.”

This alludes to the life of the heart, that it can only [happen with] the sacrifice of these things,⁴¹⁰ meaning the lower self. The heart of one who does not sacrifice his lower self through struggle will not be given life by God.

There is also an allusion in His saying, “Cut these birds with your hands and separate their parts.”⁴¹¹ *Then summon them and they will come to you in haste.*” What was sacrificed by the hand of the one who possesses friendship [Abraham], and [what was] cut and dismembered by his hand—every separate part answered him when he called it. Similarly, when the Real calls the one whom He has separated and scattered, he answers:

Even if I was covered with dirt
and You called me,
the bones decayed,
I would answer your voice.⁴¹²

409 The disbeliever mentioned in Qurʾān 2:258 is most commonly identified as Nimrod in the *tafsir* literature (Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and Its Interpreters*, 1:257).

410 That is, the birds.

411 Al-Qushayrī is rewording the verse according to the way in which it was most often interpreted in classical commentaries.

412 This verse could not be located in Muṣṭafā.

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ
فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦١﴾

[2:261] *The likeness of those who expend their wealth in the way of God is as the likeness of a grain of corn that sprouts seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains; so God multiplies for whom He will; God is Embracing, Knowing.*

The compensation for [those who expend their wealth in the way of God] is the garden. The compensation of those who expend their spirits in the way of God is the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*. What a difference between the compensation for one who expends his wealth and finds his reward and the [compensation for] one who expends his state and finds nearness! Expending wealth in His way [happens] by [giving] alms (*ṣadaqa*) and expending [one's] states in His way [happens] through constant sincerity (*ṣidq*)⁴¹³ and by negating every worldly concern or portion so that you are pleased with the flowing of His decree over you without any frowning of the heart. The one who spoke for them said:

I want to be with him
but he wants me to depart.
So I leave what I want
for what he wants.⁴¹⁴

There are two types of expenditure: the expending of worshipers (*‘ābidūn*) and the expending of ecstasies (*wājidūn*). When worshipers give grain, it multiplies for them seventy times to what is beyond reckoning. As for the ecstasies, it is as it is said:

There is nothing good we can bring
that they will accept,
and if we do harm, for them
there is no erasure.⁴¹⁵

413 The words *ṣadaqa* and *ṣidq* come from the same Arabic root, *ṣ-d-q*.

414 Muṣṭafā says the verse is attributed to Ibn al-Munajjim al-Wā’iz ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Marwān (Muṣṭafā, no. 18, p. 48).

415 Al-Qushayrī uses poetic verses referring to human anger here to illustrate the ecstasies’ lack of concern for such matters—it does not matter to them whether one tries to benefit or harm them. The Arabic in the Basyūnī edition, MSS K117, fol. 30a and Y101, fol. 38a is the same here, but Muṣṭafā changes “they” to “you” and gives a slightly different version attributed to ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh b. al-‘Abbās: “There is nothing good we can bring that you will accept and if we do any harm, there

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَتًّا وَلَا
 أَذَى لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣١٦﴾

[2:262] *Those who expend their wealth in the way of God then do not follow up their expenditure with a reminder of their generosity and injury, their wage is with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.*

The *reminder of generosity* is proclaiming what you did. The *injury* is pointing out your beneficence to the one who receives it.

It is said that they expend what they expend, but they most assuredly do not say anything about their actions or works.

It is said, “How can you give something while seeking to maintain your control⁴¹⁶ and rights over it?”

It is said that they do not remind others of what they have done for them, but rather bear witness to the favor of God, [who] grants them success in that [act of generosity].

﴿ قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتْبَعُهَا أَذَى وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٣١٦﴾

[2:263] *Honorable words and forgiveness are better than voluntary almsgiving followed by injury; and God is Independent, Forbearing.*

This means that words spoken to the one who is poor and deprived—responding to his overture without showing censure—are better and more perfect than the alms of one who is proud of what he does and then imposes an obligation for it.

It is said that an acknowledgment from you to God of your weakness and sin and God’s forgiveness for you in response to these words is better than alms adulterated with reproach and accompanied by injury.

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي

is no forgiveness from you.” Muṣṭafā says this was said to Hārūn al-Rashīd when he was angry with ‘Abd al-Malik (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 121).

416 Here the translation follows *tastaqdirūnahu* from MSS K117, fol. 30a and Y101, fol. 38a rather than “seeking an excuse” (*tastā’dhirūnahu*) from the Basyūnī edition.

يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ
صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ ثَرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى
شَيْءٍ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٦٤﴾

[2:264] O you who believe, annul not your voluntary almsgivings with reproach and injury, as one who expends of his substance to show off to men and believes not in God and the Last Day. The likeness of him is as the likeness of a smooth rock on which is soil, and a torrent smites it, and leaves it barren. They have no power over anything that they have earned. God guides not the disbelieving folk.

That is, the beauty of the gift comes from the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*. There is no gift from created beings that can be attributed to anyone other than Him. Indeed, gifts that come from created beings are the greatest test (*mihna*), while witnessing the gift from God is the greatest blessing (*ni'ma*). The one who spoke for them said:

There is no humility
in your honoring important people.

On the contrary,
humility is that you honor the lowly.⁴¹⁷

It is said that the poorest of creatures is the one who considers himself lucky [because of his wealth and life of comfort], for his bankruptcy will become clear to him. Likewise, the least of creatures in value is the one who thinks that he has something, for that with which he did not reckon will appear to him from God.

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيْتًا مِّنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ
كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا
وَابِلٌ فَظَلَّ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٦٥﴾ أَيُّودٌ أَحَدَكُمُ أَن تَكُونَ
لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ
الثَّمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَةٌ ضِعْفَاءُ فَاصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ

417 This verse could not be located in Muṣṭafā.

فَأَحْتَرَقَتْ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٦٦﴾

[2:265] *But the likeness of those who expend their wealth, seeking God's good pleasure, and to confirm themselves is as the likeness of a garden upon a hill; a torrent smites it and it yields its produce twofold; if no torrent smites it, then soft rain [falls upon it], and God sees what you do.*

[2:266] *Would any of you wish to have a garden of date palms and vines, with rivers flowing beneath it, for him there is in it all manner of fruit, then old age smites him, and he has seed, but they are weak; then a whirlwind with fire smites it, and it is consumed. So, God makes clear the signs to you, so that you might reflect.*

These are numerous signs that God mentions by way of striking similitudes for the sincere one and the hypocrite—while the one spends in the way of God, the other spends his wealth in vain. While [the sincere] will obtain honor and compensation (*khalaf*) for themselves, [the hypocrites] will receive only rejection in the present and nothing but ruin (*talaf*) in the end. While the effort of these remains worthy of thanks (*maskūr*), those leave behind destruction (*thubūr*) and come to a blazing flame. The works of these thrive, their wealth grows, their states rise high before God, and their end will be the communion [of lovers]. The works of those will come to nothing. Their states will be of loss, their hopes sealed by misfortune, and their curse doubled for them.

It is said that the similitude of these is like the one who planted seed; his property thrived, and his surplus grew. His branches grew high and his benefit multiplied. The similitude of those is like the one whose bargaining failed; his commodity [was] stolen, and his stratagem came to naught in old age. His tribulations continued one after the other, in every way and in every time. How can these two be equal as examples? Do they have any resemblance to one another?

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِآخِذِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُغْمِضُوا فِيهِ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿٢٦٧﴾

[2:267] *O you who believe, expend of the good things you have earned, and of*

what We have produced for you from the earth, and seek not the corrupt of it for your expending; for you would never take it yourselves without closing your eyes to it; and know that God is Independent, Laudable.

Let everyone consider what he expends on his own account and what is produced by the command of his Lord. That which is brought out against you is from your account book (*dīwān*): That which has been designated for your worldly portion are the precious things you possess and that which has been designated for your Lord are the things of little value⁴¹⁸ from your assets. That which is [given by you] for God's sake is but a morsel, while that which is [given by God] for your sake is of the utmost value and [is] the most perfect in blessing. Then see how He forgives you, and even accepts it from you. Nay, look how He compensates you. Nay, look how He praises you for it,⁴¹⁹ look how he ascribes it to you. Everything from Him is a favor but He ascribes it to you as an act. Therefore His gift is entrusted to you and the gift is called a reward. He expands you by giving you success from [His] kindness. Then [your expansion] spreads out into the world by [His] beneficence.

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً
مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلًا وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٨﴾

[2:268] *Satan promises you poverty and enjoins you to indecency, but God promises you His pardon, and His bounty; and God is Embracing, Knowing.* Satan promises poverty because of his poverty. God promises forgiveness because of His generosity.

Satan promises you poverty and counsels you to hold on to what is known. It is said that [Satan] counsels you [to yield], and in yielding to him, [you yield] to greed and there is no poverty worse than this.

He promises you poverty by handing you over to your [own] direction (*tadbīr*) and your [own] preferences (*ikhtiyār*).

He promises you poverty to forget what you have become accustomed to from [God's] bounty.

It is said that he promises you poverty, in that he does not let your

418 The translation follows the word *khasā'is* found in MSS K117, fol. 30b and Y101, fol. 38b rather than the word *khaṣā'is* found in the Baṣyūnī edition.

419 The translation follows the phrase *kayfa yamdaḥuka bihi* found in MSS K117, fol. 30b and Y101, fol. 38b.

complaints cease.⁴²⁰

It is said that he promises you poverty by attaching your heart to what it does not need.

It is said that [he promises you poverty] by deceiving you from seeing that [God] suffices.

He enjoins you to indecency, that is, desire for the present world.

It is said that [*He enjoins you to indecency*] through the bonds that strengthen greed.

It is said that [*He enjoins you to indecency*] by multiplying [your] expectations and [urging you to] abandon contentment.

It is said that [*He enjoins you to indecency*] by [urging you to] follow carnal desires and prefer worldly fortunes.

It is said that [*He enjoins you to indecency*] by [urging you to] look to something other than Him and allow anything to enter [your] mind except Him.

It is said that [*He enjoins you to indecency*] by going backward to the familiar territories of permissiveness and interpretive license after the truth has been made clear.

It is said that [*He enjoins you to indecency*] by returning [you] to what you had renounced for God.

But God promises you His pardon, and His bounty: The bounty promised in the here and now is contentment. In the future it is the reward, the garden, the vision, the good pleasure, pardon,⁴²¹ and forgiveness.

It is said that it is victory in the here and now over the lower self.

It is said that it is the opening of the door of deeper knowledge, the spreading of the carpet of forgiveness, and receiving the unveilings of intimacy.

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا
وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٣٦٩﴾

[2:269] *He gives wisdom to whomever He will, and he who is given wisdom, has been given much good; yet none remembers, but the people of pith.*

420 The translation follows the verb *lā yuzīlu* from MSS K117, fol. 30b and Y101, fol. 38b rather than *lā yazīdu* from the Basyūnī edition.

421 The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been completed with the word “pardon” (*afw*) from MSS K117, fol. 30b and Y101, fol. 38b.

Wisdom (**ḥikma**) is the thought (*khāṭir*) of the Real⁴²² ruling (*yaḥkum*)⁴²³ you, not the caller of the lower self. The overpowering forces (*qawāhir*) of the Real rule you, not the drivers (*zawājir*)⁴²⁴ of Satan.

It is said that **wisdom** is rightness in affairs (*ṣawāb al-‘umūr*).

It is said that [**wisdom**] is [not allowing] the frivolities of human nature to rule you. One who has no control (*ḥukm*) over his lower self has no control over anyone else.⁴²⁵

It is said that **wisdom** is being in conformity (*muwāfaqa*) with the command of God most high and foolishness is opposing (*mukhālafa*) His command.

It is said that **wisdom** is bearing witness to the Real and foolishness is bearing witness to anything other than Him.

وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّفَقَةٍ أَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّذْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُهُ
وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿٢٧٠﴾

[2:270] *And whatever expenditure you expend, and whatever vow you make, surely God knows it. For the evildoers, they have no helpers.*

He has promised His punishment to some people, His reward to others, and His knowledge to others. [Those promised punishment or reward] are ordinary people and [those promised knowledge] are the elect. God most high said, “*And submit patiently to the judgment of your Lord, for surely you fare before Our eyes*” [52:48]. There is nothing that causes the servant to fall from the eyes of God like opposing the covenants with Him in the heart.⁴²⁶ So let the aspirant be very wary of letting his soul err in that.

422 In his *Risāla* al-Qushayrī explains what is meant by the term *khāṭir* (pl. *khawāṭir*), which can be translated as “thought,” “feeling,” “inclination” or “intuition.” *Khawāṭir* may come to one from the lower self, angels, Satan or God (*Risāla*, 1:242).

423 The noun “wisdom” (*ḥikma*) and the verb “to rule” (*ḥakama*, *yaḥkum*) come from the same Arabic root *ḥ-k-m*, which means “to rule or have authority over something” or “to judge.”

424 See the footnote for the commentary on Qurʾān 2:23–24 for al-Qushayrī’s use of the words *zajr* and *zawājir*, and for a similar comparison of God’s subjugation of the heart versus (allowing it to) succumb to the driving calls of other forces.

425 Basyūnī suggests in a footnote that perhaps this line belongs after the reference to Satan, and is an error of the copyist. But MSS K117, fol. 30b and Y101, fol. 38b also have the line in this place.

426 For what al-Qushayrī might mean here by “covenants” (*‘uhūd*) with God in the heart,” see his commentary on Qurʾān 2:40.

إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهِيَ خَيْرٌ
لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٧١﴾

[2:271] *If you proclaim your voluntary almsgivings, it is a fine thing; but if you conceal them, and give them to the poor, that is even better for you; and it will absolve you of your evil deeds. God is aware of what you do.*

“If you reveal your companionship (*ṣuḥba*) with Us, and make it public, you have behaved generously and well. But if you protect Our secret from the intrusion of intermediaries between us, you have kept the conditions of love (*widād*) and have raised up the lofty edifice of communion (*wuṣla*).”

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ
خَيْرٍ فَلِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ
خَيْرٍ يُؤَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٧٢﴾

[2:272] *You are not responsible for guiding them; but God guides whomever He will. And whatever good you expend is for yourselves; for then you are expending, desiring only God's face, and whatever good you expend, shall be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged.*

“[O Muḥammad], yours is the praiseworthy station (*al-maqām al-maḥmūd*), the firmly tied banner (*al-liwā' al-ma'qūd*), the noble degrees (*al-rutab al-sharīfa*), the high waystations (*al-manāzil al-aliyya*), and the pleasing practices (*al-sunan al-marḍiyya*). You are the leader of those who come first and those who come last. No one comes close to you, and certainly [no one] equals you. But you are not responsible for their guidance. Guidance is among the special characteristics of Our right and not a sliver of it is given to another. O Muḥammad, you call them, but We guide them.”

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَحْصَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ
يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ
النَّاسَ الْخَافًا وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٧٣﴾

[2:273] *For the poor (fuqarāʾ), who are constrained in the way of God; and are unable to journey in the land; the ignorant man supposes them rich because of their abstinence; but you shall know them by their mark; they do not beg of men importunately. And whatever good you expend, surely God has knowledge of it.*

The authority of reality (*sultān al-ḥaqīqa*) has obstructed every way for them; there is no way for them to travel to the east and no place to camp to the west. Whichever way they look, they see the large tents of God's unity (*tawḥīd*) surrounding them:

It is as if the wide road of the earth,
with all its vastness,
became narrow for me,
but it neither increased in length nor width.⁴²⁷

They do not take a single breath with what is created. How could they, when nothing [truly] exists [except God]? Thus, any affirmation [of what does not truly exist] is a way of ascribing partners to the One God.⁴²⁸

The sincere poor man (*faqīr*)⁴²⁹ stands with God through God. Outsiders cannot behold him and created beings have no way to him. [God] makes [the poor (*fuqarāʾ*)] appear in the eyes of others in clothes like theirs.⁴³⁰ God most high said, “*the ignorant man supposes them rich because of their abstinence.*” But for those who possess insight, there is no ambiguity in anything in their states. “*You shall know them, O Muḥammad, by their mark.*” This mark is not one that appears to the physical eye but is a mark that the inner sight perceives. There is no beholding them except by the light of oneness.

It is said that *you will know them by their mark*, [which is] the rejoicing of their hearts at the breaking of their lower selves, and the crying out of their innermost selves to the throne as their outward aspect withers beyond recovery.

It is said that the brokenness of the outward form comes with the brokenness of the inward—indeed [with these poor], *they do not beg of men*

427 The translation follows the pronoun “me” from MSS K117, fol. 31a and Y101, fol. 39a rather than the pronoun “them” found in the Basyūnī edition. Muṣṭafā gives two slightly different versions of the verse from *Majnūn Laylā* and Abū I-Shīṣ (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 75).

428 In the section on “Breath” (Nafas), al-Qushayrī states that the best of all acts of worship is to count one’s breaths with God (*Risāla*, 1:241).

429 For more on how al-Qushayrī understands the relationship between poverty and friendship with God, see the “Section on poverty” (Bāb al-faqr) which begins with this Qur’ānic verse (*Risāla*, 2:536–549).

430 The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 31a and Y101, fol. 39a.

importunately. If they do beg from created beings without being importune, as the [Qurʾānic] address suggests, that is a protection for them and for the secret of their story because creatures will not view them as begging. In their innermost selves, there is not a speck of affirmation for anything other [than God].⁴³¹

It is said [regarding those] *who are constrained in the way of God* that they hold to the decree of God and constrain their lower selves in obedience to Him (*aḥṣarū nufūṣahum ʿalā ṭāʿatihi*), their hearts in knowing Him (*wa-qulūbahum ʿalā maʿrifatihi*), their spirits in loving Him (*wa-arwāḥahum ʿalā maḥabbatihi*), and their innermost selves in seeing Him (*wa-asrārahum ʿalā ruʿyatihī*).

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٧٤﴾

[2:274] *Those who expend their wealth night and day, secretly and openly, their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.*

As long as they have wealth they do not become listless for even an hour in expending it night and day. When the wealth is depleted they do not become listless in bearing witness to Him at every moment, night and day.

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ
مِنَ الْمَسِّ ذَلِكِ بَأْتُهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ
الرِّبَا فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ فَانْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى
اللَّهِ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٧٥﴾

[2:275] *Those who devour usury shall not rise again, except as one whom Satan has made prostrate from touch; that is because they say, “Trade is like*

431 Basyūni adds a footnote saying that here al-Qushayrī shows the influence of the teachings of the people of blame (*malāmatiyya*) in Nishapur. For more on their doctrine and practices, see Honerkamp’s translation of two works written by a teacher of al-Qushayrī, Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (*Three Early Sufi Texts*, 83–172).

usury”: God has permitted trade, and forbidden usury. Whoever receives an admonition from his Lord and desists, he shall have his past gains, and his affair is committed to God; but whoever reverts—those are the inhabitants of the fire, abiding therein.

Those who turn away from the command, giving themselves license from their own interpretation (*ta`wīl*), have neither secure independence in the present moment (*lā istiqlālun lahum fī l-hāl*) nor recovery in the end (*wa-lā intī`āshun fī l-ma`āl*). They lose in their current life (*khasirū fī `ājilihim*) and have no profit in their future (*wa-lam yarbaḥū fī ājilihim*). Those who heed the calls of admonition, curb the bridle of their whims, and do not give free rein to persist [in prohibited actions] are granted respite for the present. However, if they return to these blameworthy states, let them wait for the swiftest uprooting and sudden chastisement.

﴿٢٧٦﴾ يَمْحَقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُرْبِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿٢٧٦﴾

[2:276] God effaces usury, but He augments voluntary almsgivings with interest. God loves not any guilty ingrate.

The behaviors He has permitted are connected to good things (*fa-maqrūnun bi-l-khayrāt*) and are accompanied by blessings (*wa-maṣḥūbun bi-l-barakāt*), while [behaviors] that arise from [personal] whims come to naught—loss is the end of the affair of one [who follows his own whims].

﴿٢٧٧﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَعَاتَوْا الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٧٧﴾

[2:277] Those who believe and perform righteous deeds, and establish the prayer, and pay the alms—their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.

That is, “verily for those who have found what is from Us sufficient—indeed We do not leave the reward of those of good deeds to go to waste” [18:30].

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا

إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧٨﴾

[2:278] *O you who believe, fear God, and give up the usury that is outstanding, if you are believers.*

Being content with what is promised (*maw'ūd*) by the Lord is better for the one who submits than attaching one's heart to what the lower self seeks (*maqṣūd*). What you seek (*maqṣūd*) is from the deceptions of the lower self, while what you are promised (*maw'ūd*) is guaranteed by the Real.

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ وَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ
أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٧٩﴾

[2:279] *But if you do not, then be warned of war from God, and His Messenger. Yet if you repent, you shall have your principal sums, not being unjust, and no injustice being done to you.*

Those who willfully persist have no weight or measure (*miqdār*) before Us, no standing or degree of dignity (*akhtār*).

وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ ۚ
وَأَنْ تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨٠﴾

[2:280] *And if any man should be in difficulty, then [let there be] respite, till things are easier; but that you should give a voluntary almsgiving is better for you, did you but know.*

When the insolvency of a detained man is determined before the judge, it is not permissible to continue his detention. If the proof of the man's insolvency is demonstrated, that [proof] is taken in security for what is due his adversary. But he is in a period of respite and delay. In that, the Lord does not judge us, but with His knowledge of our difficulties and weakness, and the sincerity of our need for Him and our dedication to Him, He is merciful with us.

His words, “*till things are easier*,” [relate to] the poor insolvent man [who] has no way to obtain anything for himself except through what

God *سُبْحَانَهُ* appoints for him as the portion of debtors. Income accrues to those who have the goods and the contract. What does the insolvent [person] have to do with it? What does the insolvent [person] have to do with profit in trade from the transformation of capital and what is done with it?

What is left for the insolvent [person]? The jurists say he must seek work if he is healthy.⁴³² If he is weak, then this [statement that he must seek work] applies only if he has enough physical strength. As for those who are bankrupt in vigor, just as one is bankrupt in wealth, what way remains for him except what his Protector appoints for him?

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ
ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨١﴾

[2:281] *And fear a day wherein you shall be returned to God, and every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned; and they shall not be wronged.*

There are two kinds of return: [a return] for the bodily and lower selves in the future at the time of death, and [a return] for the innermost selves and hearts at every breath. [The latter is] a reckoning—a payment in ready cash versus a promise [regarding the future]. The payment in ready cash for His claim [at every breath] is more fitting⁴³³ than what will come at the resurrection by His promise.

He said to ordinary people, “*And fear a day*” and He said to the elect, “*and fear Me*” [2:41].

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدِينٍ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ
وَلْيَكْتُبَ بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ وَلَا يَأْبَ كَاتِبٌ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ
اللَّهُ فَلْيَكْتُبْ وَلْيَمْلِكِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا يَبْخَسْ
مِنْهُ شَيْئًا فَإِنْ كَانَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا أَوْ ضَعِيفًا أَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ
يُمْلََّ هُوَ فَلْيَمْلِكِ وَلِيَّهُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ فَإِنْ

432 There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition which has been completed with the phrase *annahu yustas'ā hab annahu ṣaḥīḥ* found in MSS K117, fol. 31b and Y101, fol. 39b.

433 The translation follows the word “more fitting” (*aḥaqqu*) from the Basyūnī edition. MSS K117, fol. 31b and Y101, fol. 39b have “more exacting” (*adaqqu*).

لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَأَمْرَاتَانِ مِمَّن تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ أَنْ تَضِلَّ
إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَىٰ وَلَا يَأْتِبَ الشُّهَدَاءُ إِذَا مَا دُعُوا وَلَا
تَسْمُوا أَنْ تَكْتُبُوهُ صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلِهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
وَأَقْوَمٌ لِلشَّهَدَةِ وَأَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَرْتَابُوا إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيرُونَهَا
بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَلَّا تَكْتُبُوهَا وَأَشْهَدُوا إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ
وَلَا يُضَارَّ كَاتِبٌ وَلَا شَهِيدٌ وَإِنْ تَفَعَّلُوا فَإِنَّهُ فَسُوقٌ بِكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٨٢﴾ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ
تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا فَرِهَلَن مُّقْبوضَةً فَإِنْ مِنْ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا فليؤدِّ الَّذِي أُوتِئَ
أَمْنَتَهُ وَلِيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ عَانِمٌ
قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٨٣﴾

[2:282] O you who believe, when you contract a debt, one upon another for a stated term, write it down; and let a writer write it down between you justly; and let not any writer refuse to write it down, as God has taught him; so let him write, and let the debtor dictate; and let him fear God his Lord, and not diminish anything of it. And if the debtor be a fool, or weak, or unable to dictate himself, then let his guardian dictate justly. And summon to bear witness, two witnesses, men; or if the two be not men, then one man and two women, such witnesses as you approve of, so that if one of the two women errs; the other will remind her; and let the witnesses not refuse, whenever they are summoned; and be not disdainful to write it down, small or great, with its term; that is more equitable in God's sight, more upright for testimony, and nearer, that you will not be in doubt, unless it be trade carried out there and then that you give and take between you, then you will not be at fault if you do not write it down. And take witnesses when you are trading with one another. And let not either writer or witness be pressed; and if you do, that is sinfulfulness in you. And fear God. God teaches you and God knows all things.

[2:283] And if you are upon a journey, and you do not find a writer, then a pledge in hand. But if one of you trusts another, let him who is trusted, deliver his trust, and let him fear God his Lord. And do not conceal the testimony; whoever conceals it, his heart is sinful; and God knows what you do.

God ﷻ commands created beings to act with sincerity (*ṣidq*). He teaches them the particulars of their transactions with one another, and teaches them to adopt caution and bear witness [as explained in this verse] so that no injury will occur between them. That is in accordance with His mercy toward them and follows from His kindness to them, so that they will not be adversaries. He commands that rights be strengthened by writing and taking witnesses, and commands [this] witnessing from the outset and through the execution [of the transaction]. Those who make clear today that which will prevent future arguments should have no quarrel among themselves. There is a transmitted tradition: “Give generously to one another, for I have generously given My wealth to you. Surely, the one who is noble-hearted, when he is able, forgives.”⁴³⁴

Compassion for those in need is included in legal injunctions concerning debt because the state of need is a distressing one and compels one to do whatever one can. [The needy person] experiences anguish and yet tries to maintain seemly behavior by avoiding begging and petitioning. God permits [such a one] to incur debt to help him in the present moment and to give him hope of His favor in the end. He has promised a bountiful reward for the lending of money; this is from His kindness.

لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنْ تُبْدُوا مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ
أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ يُحَاسِبِكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٨٤﴾

[2:284] *To God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Whether you disclose what is in your hearts or hide it, God shall take you to account (yuḥāsibkum) for it. Then He will forgive whom He wishes, and chastise whom He wishes. And God has power over all things.*

[That is,] *whether you disclose what is in your hearts* in deep intuitions (*maʿānī*) or pretensions (*daʿāwā*).

It is said that *whether you disclose what is in your hearts* [refers to] intentions and wishes (*al-quṣūd wa-l-raqhāʾib*), and various needs and requests (*funūn al-ḥawāʾiḥ wa-l-maṭālib*).

It is said that what *you disclose* is worship (*ʿibāda*) and what *you hide* is desire (*irāda*).

434 Neither Basyūnī nor ʿAbd al-Raḥmān give any sources for this ḥadīth.

It is said that what *you hide* are thoughts (*khaṭarāt*) and what *you disclose* are your states of rest and movement (*sakanāt wa-l-ḥarakāt*).⁴³⁵

It is said that the allusion is to perpetual observation (*istidāmat al-murāqaba*) and holding fast to the accounting (*muḥāsaba*)⁴³⁶ so that you will not be heedless for a moment, not even for a breath.

ءَامَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۚ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلُّ ءَامِنٌ
بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ ۚ وَكُتُبِهِ ۚ وَرُسُلِهِ ۚ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُّسُلِهِ ۚ
وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۗ غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٢٨٥﴾

[2:285] *The Messenger believes in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and the believers; each one believes in God and His angels, and in His Books, and His messengers, “we make no distinction between any of His messengers.” And they say, “We hear and obey; Your forgiveness, our Lord; to You is the homecoming.”*

This is the testimony of faith (*shahāda*) of the Real ﷻ on behalf of His Prophet ﷺ and that is more perfect for him than his speaking for himself.

It is said that all created beings believe through demonstrative proof (*burhān*) while the Messenger ﷺ believes through eyewitnessing (*ʿiyān*).

It is said that created beings believe through intermediaries while Muḥammad ﷺ believes without any intermediary.

It is said that this was the address of the Real with him on the night of the ascension (*mīrāj*) and indicates respect for [his] rank: He said, “The Messenger believes,” not “You [Muḥammad] believe,” just as one says to an important person, “the Shaykh said. . .” rather than “you said. . .”⁴³⁷

It is said that both the Messenger and the believers believe in God, His angels, His books, and His messengers, but what a difference between one faith and another! All [believers] believe by being shown the way, but you,

435 That is, what you do and do not do. The translation follows MSS K117, fol. 31b and Y101, fol. 40a because it better fits the context. The Basyūnī edition reads, “It is said that what *you hide* are thoughts and what *you disclose* are outward expressions (*ibārāt*). It is said that what *you hide* are [your states of] rest and movements.” For the previous use of these terms, see 42n38; 142n226; and 242n396.

436 The concept of “accounting” (*muḥāsaba*) refers back to God’s taking man to account, as mentioned in the verse *God shall take you to account (yuḥāsibkum) for it*. But al-Qushayrī is also referring to the Sufi practice of critical self-reflection.

437 That is, the third person form of address shows respect.

O Muḥammad, believe through arrival.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا^ج

[2:286] *God charges no soul save to its capacity;*

Because of the perfection of His mercy to [human beings], He takes them to the limit of their capacity, and indeed far less than that. All of that is compassion and favor from Him.

لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ

[2:286] *for it is what it is has merited,*

in good deeds

وَعَلَيْهَا مَا أَكْتَسَبَتْ^ط

[2:286] *and against it is what it has earned.*

[That is], what it acquires in repentance saves the one who acquires it.⁴³⁸

رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إَصْرًا
كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ، عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحْمِلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ^ط

[2:286] *Our Lord, take us not to task if we forget, or err; our Lord, burden us not with a load, such as You did lay upon those before us. Our Lord, do*

438 Other commentaries on this verse understand this phrase as referring to the soul's accountability for its bad deeds. Here al-Qushayrī suggests that it refers to the repentance that the soul acquires. In response to the Qur'ānic statement that *God desires... to turn [in forgiveness] to you* [4:26], al-Qushayrī comments that God "accepts your repentance after having created it, and then repays you according to what He has created for you in your repentance." This is consistent with the Ash'arī notion that God is the creator of His servants' actions, including their repentance. The servant then "acquires" these actions and the consequences for them.

not burden us beyond what we have the power to bear;

When a need arose [the community of Moses] spoke through an intermediary, saying, “O Moses. . . pray to your lord for us” [2:61].⁴³⁹ But [God] said to the community [of Muḥammad], “Call on Me and I will respond to you” [40:60]. When earlier communities sinned, time passed before their repentance was accepted, while the Prophet ﷺ said about this community [of Muslims], “Remorse is repentance.”⁴⁴⁰ Among the earlier communities there were those who said, “make for us a god, just as they have gods” [7:138], while this community was selected through the illumination of the lights of their declaration of oneness. Their qualities are beyond explanation.

وَأَعْفُ عَنَّا

[2:286] *and pardon us*
in the present (*fi l-hāl*).

وَأَغْفِرْ لَنَا

[2:286] *and forgive us*
in the end (*fi l-maʿāl*)

439 This request to Moses is also mentioned in Qurʾān 2:68, 2:69, 2:70, and 7:134.

440 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān gives Ibn Māja and Ibn Ḥanbal among many other sources for this *ḥadīth*.

وَأَرْحَمَنَّا أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٨٦﴾

[2:286] *and have mercy on us; You are our Patron; so grant us assistance against the disbelieving folk.*

[That is,] “in all circumstances, for we have no one other than You. You are our Patron so give us assistance against anything that distracts us from You.”

When they said “*burden us not with a load, such as You did lay upon those before us*”: God caused their sins to disappear, in contrast to those who came before, whose disappearance He caused. He transformed their sins into good deeds in contrast to the metamorphosis (*maskh*) [of an earlier community],⁴⁴¹ and He rained mercy down on them, in contrast to the stones He rained down on those who came before.

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.



441 For the metamorphosis of the earlier community, see Qurʾān 2:65.

سُورَةُ آلِ عِمْرَانَ

Surāt Āl-ʿImrān

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Experts (*ahl al-taḥqīq*) have disagreed regarding the name *Allāh*. Is it derived in meaning [from some other word] or not? Many of them have said it is not derived in meaning and it belongs to Him *سُبْحَانَهُ* by way of exclusive possession, coined in the same manner as proper names describing others. When the utterance of this [word] reaches the ears¹ of the people of deeper knowledge (*ahl al-māʾrifā*), their different understandings and types of knowledge do not lead to any meaning other than His existence (*wujūd*) and His reality (*ḥaqq*). The rightful due (*ḥaqq*) of this word² is that is related to the witnessing (*shuhūd*) of the heart. Whether one says *Allāh* with the tongue or hears it with the ears, one is witnessing *Allāh* in the heart.

Just as this word does not indicate any meaning other than *Allāh*, what the speaker witnesses cannot be anything but *Allāh*. So he says *Allāh* with his tongue, knows *Allāh* with his heart (*fuʾād*), recognizes *Allāh* with his heart's core (*qalb*),³ loves *Allāh* with his spirit (*rūḥ*), and witnesses *Allāh* with his innermost self (*sirr*). He submits with his outward self (*ẓāhir*) before *Allāh*, verifies the reality of *Allāh* in his innermost self (*sirr*), and devotes his states (*aḥwāl*) to *Allāh* and for *Allāh*. There is no part of him

1 The translation follows the word “ears” (*asmāʿ*) from MS K117, fol. 32a rather than the word “names” (*asmāʿ*) from the Basyūni edition.

2 The word *ḥaqq* can be translated as “reality,” “truth” or “right.” When al-Qushayrī speaks of the *ḥaqq* of the name *Allāh* he is speaking both of its reality and what is due to it as its right.

3 According to Lane, the distinction between *fuʾād* and *qalb*, which are both usually translated as “heart,” is that the former refers to the pericardium, or more generally to the liver, lungs, and heart, while the latter refers only to the heart (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2:2323–2324).

that is for anything other than *Allāh*. When he is on the verge of becoming effaced in *Allāh*, for *Allāh*, by *Allāh*, the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* overtakes him in His mercy. Then He discloses the words *the Compassionate, the Merciful* to them, sparing the very lifeblood that would [otherwise] pass away and desiring that their hearts be pure. The kindness of His *سُنَّةَ* way (*sunna*) is such that His friends (*awliyā'*) are not completely annihilated.



[3:1] *Alif Lām Mīm*

His saying, “*Alif*,” alludes to His being sufficient for you in all of your states.⁴ You are captive to heedlessness, and have not found the way to right action and thinking. He is the One who sets in motion what restores you, and is solely sufficient for you in what helps you. Without your asking—and even without you knowing your own state—He suffices for you even if you do not perceive it. He gives to you without your seeking. The *Lām* alludes to His kindness (*lutf*) to you at the most subtle and hidden level, so much so that the locus of favor by which He strengthens you is not apparent to you. The *Mīm* alludes to the harmony (*muwāfaqa*) of the stream of the [divine] determination of events (*taqdīr*) with the circumstances requested by the friends. Nothing in the world moves, no particle appears unless it is an occasion of good pleasure with respect to them. It would not be going too far to say that in His words, “*Every day He is upon some matter*” [55:29], the “matter” is an actualization of what the friends desire.

It is said that by listening to these disconnected letters [*Alif Lām Mīm*], which are contrary to the ordinary customs of human discourse, every concept disappears from the hearts, whether it be a known, written, customary or imagined thing, and whether it arises from necessity (*darūra*),⁵ sensory perception (*ḥiss*) or independent reasoning (*ijtihād*). When the hearts are emptied of imagined and known concepts, and the innermost selves are purified of customary and familiar things, the name *Allāh* comes to a heart sanctified from everything other [than Him] and to an innermost

4 In connecting the letter *alif* to God’s sufficiency (a divine attribute mentioned in many Qur’anic verses), al-Qushayrī is referring to its independent form in writing (that is, the fact that in the Arabic script the *alif* does not connect to letters that come after it). See his commentary on Qur’ān 2:1.

5 Al-Qushayrī is distinguishing between three different modes of acquiring knowledge. Knowledge can come from “necessity” (*darūra*), that is, *a priori* or self-evident knowledge; from sense perception; and from the exercise of reason.

self purified of every mode [of inquiry] (*kayf*).⁶

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ﴿٢﴾

[3:2] *God! There is no god except Him, the Living, the Eternal.*

He is the One who is not diverted so as to be too busy for you, nor is He inattentive so that you are left without Him. He is the attentive observer (*raqīb*)⁷ over all of the states of your innermost self. If you are alone, He is watchful over you. If you are in the midst of human beings, He is watchful over you. In sum, however your states circle around you, He is your Beloved (*ḥabīb*).

نَزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ

[3:3] *He has revealed to you the Book, by the truth*

“You did not know, O Muḥammad, what the Book was, nor the story of the lovers. But a matter of pre-eternal choosing came suddenly upon you, and cast you into an amazing affair, its proof sublime, its place of descent and occurrence precious.”

مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ

[3:3] *confirming what was before it*

that is, verifying His promise to you in the books⁸ that came through the prophets ﷺ.

وَأَنْزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ ﴿٣﴾ مِنْ قَبْلُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَأَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ ﴿٤﴾

[3:3] *and He revealed the Torah and the Gospel*

6 Literally, “howness.”

7 God is described as watchful (*raqīb*) in Qurʾān 4:1, 5:117, 11:93, and 33:52.

8 The translation follows the plural form “books” (*kutub*) found in MS K117, fol. 32a rather than the singular “book” (*kitāb*) from the Basyūnī edition.

[3:4] *before as guidance to people, and He revealed the criterion.*

That is to say, “Even though We revealed Our books to the messengers before you, We did not omit the remembrance (*dhikr*) of you from any book.” The one who spoke for them said:

With me from our absent beloveds
are pages.

The remembrance of you
is their title page.⁹

“Just as We have extended the lights of the prophets through you, We have adorned all that We have revealed in remembrances with your remembrance.”

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ

[3:4] *As for those who disbelieve in God’s signs, for them awaits a terrible chastisement.*

[The chastisement] is the ignominy of the veil but they do not perceive [this].

وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انتِقَامٍ ﴿٤﴾

[3:4] *God is Precious* (‘*azīz*)¹⁰ to His friends, *Lord of Retribution* to His enemies. Everyone seeks what is precious but most do not find it.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٥﴾

[3:5] *Nothing whatever is hidden in heaven and earth from God.*

A servant does not breathe a single breath without God ﴿٥﴾ counting it

9 Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Bustī: *When people forget their brothers and are disloyal to love’s friends / with me from our absent companions are pages. / The remembrance of you / is their title page* (Muṣṭafā, no. 30, p. 119).

10 The word ‘*azīz*, which is usually translated as “Mighty” in this Qur’anic verse, also means “precious, cherished or valuable.”

(*muḥṣīhi*). Not a particle exists in the heaven and earth unless He is its originator and creator (*mubdi'hi*). No one has any quality or attribute except He is its governor (*mutawallihi*). This is the view of ordinary people (*'umūm*). As for the elect (*khuṣūṣ*), no one presents a need to Him except He satisfies it (*qāḍihā*) and no one has any resource in a calamity except He suffices for it (*kāfihā*).

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ

[3:6] *He it is who forms you in the wombs as He will.*

[What has been formed] remains as it was created. It is He who determined your states in eternity as He willed—this remains as it was and is from the divine decree and destiny.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦﴾

[3:6] *There is no god except Him, the Mighty (al-ʿazīz), the Wise (al-ḥakīm).* His decision is not followed by any reversal (*fa-lā yuʿaqqabu hukmuhu*¹¹ *bi-l-naqḍ*), nor can His ordaining be avoided by neglect or rejection (*aw yuʿarāḍu taqḍiruhu bi-l-ihmāli wa-l-rafd*).

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَبَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ءَأَمَّنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٧﴾

[3:7] *He it is who revealed to you the Book, wherein are verses [that are] clear, forming the Mother Book, and others [that are] allegorical. As for those in whose hearts is deviation, they follow the allegorical part, desiring sedition,*

11 The word “decision” (*hukm*) is from the same root (*ḥ-k-m*) as the word “wise” (*ḥakīm*).

and desiring its interpretation, and none knows its interpretation save God. And those firmly rooted in knowledge (al-rāsikhūn fī l-ʿilm) say, “We believe in it; all is from our Lord”; yet none remembers, but people of pith.

He classified the [divine] speech for them: In its exoteric sense its revelation is clear (*fa-min zāhirin wāḍiḥu tanzīlihi*) and in its obscure sense its interpretation is difficult (*wa-min ghāmiḍin mushkilu taʿwīlihi*). The first portion is for explaining the law and to guide the people of the exoteric sense. The second portion is to protect the disclosure of secrets from the view of outsiders.

The way of the scholars (ʿulamāʾ) is firmly rooted (*rusūkh*) in seeking its meaning in conformity with the basic foundations (*uṣūl*) [of the religion], and what is attained by [this type of] inquiry is accepted. They leave that which cannot be known by mental examination (*fikr*) to the world of the unseen.

The way of the people of allusion (*ishāra*) and understanding (*fahm*) is to listen with the presence of the heart (*ḥudūr al-qalb*). The glimmers of information that come to their understanding are based on the allusions of unveiling (*ishārāt al-kashf*). If they have been asked to maintain the veil and conceal the secret, they feign dumbness. If they have been commanded to reveal and disseminate, they give voice to the explanation of the Real and speak of the information of the unseen. Those who have been supported by the lights of insights are illuminated by the rays of the suns of understanding. Those who are clothed in the covering of doubt have been denied the subtleties of realization. Their states are fractured, conjectures assail them, and they are swept away in torrents of doubt and deception. Their ignorance only increases their denial¹² and their estrangement only increases their uncertainty.

And none knows its interpretation save God: The faith of those who find their knowledge from God will not suffer from meandering thoughts that permit [questionable interpretation]. Rather [their faith will be based] upon clear statements of plain meaning and sincere articulations of certainty. Those with clear intellects (*aṣḥāb al-ʿuqūl al-ṣāḥiyya*)¹³ are among those who remember (*ṣuḥbat al-tadhakkur*)¹⁴ because of the appearance

12 The translation follows the word “denial” (*jaḥd*) from MS K117, fol. 32b rather than the repetition of the word “ignorance” (*jahl*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

13 Al-Qushayrī seems to be referring to religious scholars rather than those who have deeper knowledge. See his comments on Qurʾān 3:18.

14 Remembrance (*tadhakkur*) is the verbal noun from the verb *tadhakkara* found in this verse and many others in the Qurʾān, in phrases such as *yet none remembers but people of pith* [2:269, 3:7, 13:19, 14:52, 38:29, 39:9] and *will you not remember?* [6:80, 10:3, 11:24, 11:30, 16:17, 23:85, 32:4, 37:155, 45:23, 56:62].

of demonstrative proofs and the careful examination¹⁵ of the principles of obtaining [knowledge].

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً
إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴿٨﴾

[3:8] *Our Lord, do not cause our hearts to deviate after You have guided us; and give us mercy from You; You are the Bestower.*

They do not increase in nearness unless they increase in refined behavior (*adab*). To take refuge in maintaining distance¹⁶ is the most powerful means for respecting proper behavior (*adab*).

It is said that when they sincerely call for help in a beautiful manner, they are assisted by the lights of [divine] sufficiency.

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿٩﴾

[3:9] *Our Lord, You shall gather mankind for a day of which there is no doubt; verily God will not fail the tryst.*

Today is the gathering of the lovers on the carpet of approach (*iqtirāb*), and tomorrow will be the gathering of all in the place of reward (*thawāb*) and punishment (*iqāb*). Today is the gathering of innermost selves (*asrār*) for the unveiling of [divine] Majesty (*jalāl*) and Beauty (*jamāl*), and tomorrow will be the gathering of human beings (*abshār*) to witness the terrors (*ahwāl*)¹⁷ and endure what has been told of these states (*aḥwāl*).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ
شَيْئًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ وَقُودُ النَّارِ ﴿١٠﴾

15 The blank here in the Basyūnī edition has been completed with the word *sabr* found in MS K117, fol. 32b, which means “testing, probing or endeavoring to learn.”

16 To maintain distance means to remain conscious of servanthood, even after experiencing states of intimacy.

17 The translation follows the word “terrors” (*ahwāl*) from MS K117, fol. 32b rather than the word “states” (*aḥwāl*) from the Basyūnī edition.

[3:10] *As for the disbelievers, neither their riches nor their children will avail them against God; those—they shall be fuel for the fire.*

No ransom will benefit them (*fa-lā fidā³ yanfa⁴uhum*), no riches defend them (*wa-lā ghanā³ yadfa⁴uhum*). No wealth will be accepted from them, no veil will be raised from them, no statements heard regarding them. With them will blaze hellfire (*al-jaḥīm*), and for them is a painful banishment (*al-ṭard al-alīm*) and distance [from God] and boiling water (*wa-l-bu⁴d wa-l-ḥamīm*).¹⁸

كَدَّابِ ۚ ءَالِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَآخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ
بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١١﴾

[3:11] *As the way of Pharaoh's folk, and the people before them who denied Our signs; God seized them for their sins; God is severe in retribution.*

“They persisted in insolence according to their way (*sunna*) and We brought them retribution according to Our way (*sunna*).”¹⁹ They would not stop their persistent [insolence] (*fa-lā ʿan al-iṣrār aqlā⁴ū*) and did not strive to do anything good (*wa-lā fi l-mabārri ṭami⁴ū*). By my life they are those who suffered regret and distress at what they put forward, but by that time they found the door blocked (*wajadū l-bāba masdūdan*) and their repentance rejected (*wa-l-nadama ʿalayhim mardūdan*).

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَتُغْلَبُونَ وَتُحْشَرُونَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٢﴾

[3:12] *Say to the disbelievers: “You shall be vanquished and mustered to hell—an evil resting place!*

He informed them that the speech of the Real will elude them in the future (*ājil*),²⁰ and they will have no delight in living in the present (*ʿājil*). In the hereafter what they will encounter will be from the severity of the

18 The boiling water of hell is mentioned in quite a few verses in the Qurʾān, for example verses 6:70 and 10:4: *for them shall be a drink of boiling water and a painful chastisement because they disbelieved.*

19 The translation follows the word *sunna* found in MS K117, fol. 32b rather than the word *sanān* found in the Basyūnī edition.

20 Basyūnī adds a footnote stating that al-Qushayrī is referring to the Qurʾānic verse *God shall not speak to them, nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them and theirs will be a painful chastisement* [3:77].

punishment by burning (*hurqa*). What [already] afflicts them in this world is absence and separation (*furqa*) from God, but their faculties of insight have become weak and they do not perceive the pain of [that] punishment.

قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فِي فِئَتَيْنِ الْتَقَتَا فِئَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأُخْرَى
كَافِرَةٌ يَرَوْنَهُمْ مِثْلَيْهِمْ رَأَى الْعَيْنِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصْرِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ إِنَّ
فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿١٣﴾

[3:13] *There has already been a sign for you in two hosts that met; one company fighting in the way of God; and another unbelieving; they saw them, twice the like of them; for God confirms with His help whom He will. Surely in that is a lesson for people of vision.*

When God wants an affair to be accomplished, He makes many appear to be few in the eyes of one people and few to appear as many in the eyes of another people. If He covers the inner sight (*baṣīra*) of a people, the sharpness of their physical eyes (*abṣār*) will not benefit them. When He opens the innermost selves of others, the obstruction of their faculties of insight (*baṣāʿir*) will not harm them.²¹

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ
مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ذَلِكَ مَتَعُ
الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَبِإِ ﴿١٤﴾

[3:14] *Beautified for mankind is love of lusts—of women, children, stored-up heaps of gold and silver, horses of high mark, cattle, and tillage. That is the comfort of the life of this world; but God—with Him is the more excellent abode.*

He mentions a few examples of lusts without distinguishing between them; included in the category is whatever veils you from witnessing (*shuhūd*). The most difficult of obstacles on this path is hidden lust. According to

21 In a footnote Basyūni points out the progression from physical eyes (*abṣār*) to the faculties of insight (*baṣāʿir*) to the opening of the innermost selves (*fath al-asrār*).

them,²² seeking pleasure by performing acts of obedience is counted in the category of hidden lust. Reliance on what comes to you from the various kinds of drawing near is among the problematic places of separation [on the path]. It is like the circumstance of someone confiding in you and flattering you. He describes and praises you with every pleasantry but beneath it there is a hidden deception. Felicity comes to you in the unveiling He grants to you through the witnessing (*shuhūd*) of His majesty and beauty. It does not come from His affirmation of [your] subtle states or what He chooses to grant [to you] in favors or drawing near.

﴿قُلْ أُوْتِبْتُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذَٰلِكُمْ ۖ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ﴾^{١٥}

[3:15] Say: ‘shall I tell you of something better than that? For those that are fearful with their Lord are gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein, and spouses purified, and beatitude from God; and God is Seer of His servants.

He explained the superiority of the people who have fear of God (*taqwā*) over the masters of the present world (*dunyā*). He said, “For these people are the following of desires (*munā*) and conforming to whims (*hawā*), and for those people are degrees of elevation (*‘ulā*), and God is Seer of His servants.” He has caused each people to alight in their rightful place and delivered each to what He has made most suitable for them.

﴿الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا ءَامِنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ﴾^{١٦}

[3:16] Those who say: “O, Our Lord, we believe; so forgive us our sins, and guard us from the chastisement of the fire,”

that is, “they occupy themselves with Us entirely (*bi-l-kullīya*) and plead for help before Us at the mention of severe trials and afflictions (*al-raziyya*). Those obtain nearness and intimate friendship (*al-qurba wa-l-khuṣūṣiyya*) with Us, high degrees (*wa-l-darajāt al-‘ulīyya*) and pleasing fates (*wa-l-qisam al-murḍiyya*).”

22 That is, the Sufis.

الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ ﴿١٧﴾

[3:17] *the patient, sincere, obedient, expenders, imploring God's pardon at daybreak.*

Patience is restraint of the lower self (*nafs*) and consists of three levels: patience with what the servant has been commanded to do, patience with what has been prohibited him, and patience standing under the flow of [God's] decree (*ḥukm*) according to what He desires, either in the loss of what you love or in onslaughts (*hujūm*)²³ outside your control. When you rise beyond this quality and your being is unaffected by any difficulty [faced] or comfort received, it is through contentment (*riḍā*), not patience (*ṣabr*).²⁴

It is said that *the patient* [refers to those patient] with the command of God, *sincere* in what they have promised God, *obedient* with their selves in pursuing the straight way in the love of God, *imploring God's pardon* from all they have done because they see how much they have fallen short with God.

It is said that *the patient* [refers to those patient] in their hearts, *sincere* in their spirits, *obedient* in their lower selves, and *imploring God's pardon* by their tongues.

It is said that *the patient* [refers to those patient] with the sincerity of seeking (*quṣūd*), *sincere* in contracts (*ʿuhūd*), *obedient* in protecting the limits (*ḥudūd*), and *imploring God's pardon* for their acts and states when the authority of [divine] unity (*sultān al-tawḥīd*) takes over.

It is said *the patient* are those who are patient in seeking (*ṭalab*) and have no desire to flee (*harab*). They are not ashamed to face toil (*taʿab*) and renounce every comfort and intense emotion (*ṭarab*).²⁵ They are patient in tribulation (*wa-ṣabarū ʿalā l-balwā*) and refuse to complain (*wa-rafaḍū l-shakwā*) until they come to the protector (*ḥattā waṣalū ilā l-mawlā*). Nothing deters them in this world and the world to come (*al-dunyā wa-l-uqbā*).

The sincere are those who are firm and bold (*ṣadaqū*)²⁶ in seeking. They

23 In a footnote Basyūnī refers the reader to the section on “Unexpected raids and onslaughts” (al-Bawādih wa-l-hujūm) in al-Qushayrī’s *Riṣāla*, 1:231.

24 For the distinctions al-Qushayrī makes between patience (*ṣabr*) and contentment (*riḍā*), see the sections on each in his *Riṣāla*, 1:397–404 and 2:421–428.

25 The translation follows the word *ṭarab* from MS K117, fol. 33a rather than the repetition of the word “seeking” (*ṭalab*) in the Basyūnī edition. *Ṭarab* is intense emotion, either joy or grief (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2:1836).

26 The verb *ṣadaqa* means “to act sincerely” but also “to act with firmness and boldness.”

proceed with purpose (*qaṣadū*) and with firmness and boldness (*ṣadaqū*) until they arrive (*waradū*), then they are firm and bold until they witness (*shahidū*), then they are firm and bold until they find (*wajadū*), then they are firm and bold until they are destitute (*faqadū*). Their sequence is seeking (*quṣūd*), then arriving (*wurūd*), then witnessing (*shuhūd*), then finding (*wujūd*), then extinction (*khumūd*).

The obedient are those who stay at the door (*bāb*); [they] persevere in swallowing unhappiness (*iktirāb*). They abandon things which they love (*maḥābb*) and refuse companions (*aṣḥāb*) in order to realize the truth by drawing near (*iqtirāb*).

The spenders are those who give generously of themselves in their works (*ʿmāl*), then they give generously of their wealth (*amwāl*), then they give generously of their hearts in the sincerity of states (*aḥwāl*), then they give generously by abandoning every portion belonging to them in the present and the future (*fi l-ʿājil wa-l-ājil*). They are utterly consumed at the moment of drawing near and the communion (*wiṣāl*) [of lovers] through their experience of eradication (*iṣṭilām*) and extirpation (*istiṣāl*).²⁷

Imploring God's pardon from all of that, [that is, the intoxicating experience of communion], when they return to sobriety and wakefulness at *daybreak* (*aṣḥār*),²⁸ which is the appearance of white dawn (*isfār*). This is the first light (*fajr*) of hearts, not a first light appearing in earthly regions (*aqṭar*).

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ

[3:18] *God bears witness that there is no god, except Him,*

that is, God knows, God informs, and God rules *that there is no god, except Him*. It is the bearing witness (*shahāda*) of the Real to the Real that He is the Real. The first one to bear witness that He is God is God and He bears witness in all His eternity without beginning (*āzāl*) by His words,

27 To explain the words “eradication” (*iṣṭilām*) and “extirpation” (*istiṣāl*), Basyūnī refers the reader to a passage in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* that compares the experience of the annihilation of the self in witnessing to intoxication from a potent drink: “A cup that eradicates, annihilates, and snatches them away so that nothing remains of them. A cup which *neither spares nor leaves behind* [75:28] but effaces them completely, leaving not even a sliver of carnal human traces.” This passage appears in the section on “Presence, unveiling, and witnessing” (al-Muḥādara wa-l-mukāshafa wa-l-mushāhada), *Risāla*, 1:227.

28 In other words, after experiencing intimacy, they return to servanthood.

His speaking, and His eternal address. He has given information about His singular existence, His unwavering being, His everlasting unseen,²⁹ His continuous essence, His infinite majesty, and His endless beauty.

Then He said, *God bears witness* throughout all His eternity without end (*ābād*). *God bears witness*, that is, God makes things clear by what He demonstrates in proofs (*barāhīn*), establishes in indicators of certainty (*dalāʾil al-yaqīn*), makes manifest with signs (*āyāt*), and discloses with indisputable evidence (*bayyināt*). In all that He has created and brought forth, and made manifest from [what was previously] concealed³⁰ in [the realm of] non-existence, and produced according to what He wills, from independent things that are perceived (*aʿyān*) and the vanishing traces [left by things, actions or attributes] (*āthār*), from the essential qualities of things (*dhawāt*) in their potentiality and the attributes (*ṣifāt*) which come to be in specific places—each part [of this whole] is a clear expression of His existence and a plain elucidation of His Lordship, a witness (*shāhid*) to His Eternity, and a notifier to the intellects that He is One (*wāḥid*), Mighty, and Glorious (*mājid*).³¹ He سُبْحَانَكَ bore witness to the majesty (*jalāl*) of His Measure and the perfection (*kamāl*) of His Might at the time when there was no denial, no ignorance,³² no knowledge of any created thing, no intellect, no conformity, no disbelief, no events, no other, no deviation, no idolatry, no understanding, no falsehood,³³ no heaven, no space, no darkness, no light, no principles of what should be rejected (*wa-lā uṣūl li-l-mardūdāt*)³⁴ and no judgments on differences in the affairs of time (*wa-lā fuṣūl bi-ikhtilāfi al-awqāt*).³⁵

وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ

[3:18] *and the angels,*

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- 29 The translation follows the word “unseen” (*ghayb*) in MS K117, fol. 33a rather than the word “succor” (*awn*) found in the Basyūnī edition.
- 30 In the Basyūnī edition the word is “concealment” (*katm*) and in MS K117, fol. 33a it looks to be “treasure” (*kanz*).
- 31 Al-Qushayrī expresses something similar to this passage in his commentary on Qurʾān 2:116.
- 32 The translation follows the word “ignorance” (*jahl*) from MS K117, fol. 33a rather than the word “effort” (*juhd*) found in the Basyūnī edition.
- 33 The translation follows the word “falsehood” (*ifk*) from MS K117, fol. 33a rather than the word “reflection” (*fikr*) from the Basyūnī edition.
- 34 The translation follows the phrase found in MS K117, fol. 33b rather than the phrase found in Basyūnī: *wa-lā wuṣūl li-l-mazdūjāt*.
- 35 The translation follows the phrase found in MS K117, fol. 33b rather than the phrase found in Basyūnī: *wa-lā fuḍūl bi-ikhtilāfi al-āfāt*.

He did not confirm His own bearing witness to His oneness (*waḥdāniyya*) by the bearing witness of the angels.³⁶ Rather, He gladdened and strengthened them when He directed them to the right course of bearing witness to Him, and when He guided them to knowledge of His oneness.

﴿۱۸﴾ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

[3:18] *and those of knowledge; upholding justice; there is no god except Him, the Mighty, the Wise.*

They are the friends (*awliyāʾ*) from among the children of Adam because they know the majesty of His Power and they recognize the attribute of His Might. He honored them when He associated His bearing witness to their bearing witness. They bear witness from witnessing and discernment (*shuhūdīn wa-taʿyīnīn*), not from conjecture and guessing (*ẓannīn wa-takhmīnīn*). If they do not have knowledge of something at a given time by necessity³⁷ or by sensory perception (*ḍarūratan wa-ḥissan*), they do not believe it by conjecture and surmise (*ẓannan wa-ḥadsan*). He makes Himself known to them so they come to know Him. He calls them to bear witness and because of that they bear witness. If He did not tell them who He is, they would not know. The religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) bear witness by the clarity of their intellects (*ʿuqūl*) while those who have experienced God's unity (*muwaḥḥidūn*) bear witness after their extinction (*khumūd*). They are as it is said:

Consumed by the force of the Real,
they have been extinguished.

After their being annihilated,
they are made to speak of God's unity.³⁸

The One who brings about what appears from them is other than them. The One who stands in for them in what they face is not them. They were, but became separate (*kānū lakinnahum bānū*).³⁹ The one who spoke for them said:

36 That is, the Real had no need for the angels to bear witness to His singularity.

37 That is, self-evident knowledge.

38 This verse could not be located in Muṣṭafā.

39 Here al-Qushayrī echoes the words of Yaḥyā b. Muʿādh, who defines “the knower” (*ʿārif*) as a man who was, but became separate (*kāna fa-bāna*). “Section on knowledge of God” (Bāb al-maʿrifati bi-Llāh), *Risāla*, 2:608. The same quote is referenced in al-Qushayrī's comments on Qurʾān 2:152.

My book to you
was after my death by a night.

I did not know
I would write after my death.⁴⁰

Those of knowledge are on different levels: the knower whose quality is conformity [to God’s command and decree] and religious disciplines (*rahbāniyya*) and the knower whose attribute is annihilation because of⁴¹ divine lordliness (*rabbāniyya*). [There is] the knower who recognizes the rulings of His permitted and prohibited things; the knower who knows His reports (*akhbār*), practices (*sunan*), and traditions (*āthār*);⁴² the knower who knows His book and is aware of its exegesis (*tafsīr*) and interpretation (*taʾwīl*), its clear verses and revelation; the knower who knows His attributes and His qualities, and studies⁴³ His proofs and unity;⁴⁴ and the knower whom He treats with kindness until He brings him [into His presence], then He unveils Himself to him and overwhelms him so that the name (*ism*)⁴⁵ remains while the perceived entity (ʿ*ayn*) is effaced, and the decree (*ḥukm*) arrives while the servant fades away. The one who spoke for them said:

The sons of the *ḥaqq*
are nourished solely by the Real (*al-ḥaqq*),
so the attribute of the Real (*al-ḥaqq*)
is adopted within them.⁴⁶

This only alludes to their annihilation from their sensory perceptions (*iḥsās*) and from⁴⁷ the different types of knowledge⁴⁸ [acquired] through their

40 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 17, p. 28).

41 The translation follows the particle *li* from MS K117, fol. 33b rather than *wa* from the Basyūni edition.

42 In other words, someone who knows the *aḥādīth*.

43 The translation follows the word “studies” (*yastaqriʿ*) from MS K117, fol. 33b rather than the word *yastaqwi* in the Basyūni edition.

44 The Basyūni edition has *bi-ḥadīth yakhrujuhu* followed by a blank. The translation follows MS K117, fol. 33b, which goes directly from “His unity” (*tawḥīdihī*) to the next category of knowers.

45 Here perhaps al-Qushayrī means that only the divine attributes remain as the perception of individual entities fades.

46 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 19, p. 62). The translation follows MS K117, fol. 33b: *banū ḥaqqin ghadhū bi-l-ḥaqqi širfān fa-nāʿt al-ḥaqqi fihim mustāʿrun*.

47 The translation follows the word ʿ*an* from MS K117, fol. 33b rather than ʿ*inda* from the Basyūni edition.

48 The translation follows the word ʿ*ulūm* from MS K117, fol. 33b rather than ʿ*ilm* from the Basyūni edition.

lower selves. As for their entities (*a'yān*), they are created, and the states that will come to pass⁴⁹ through their essential natures (*dhawāt*) are pre-determined. The essence of the Real is not characterized by any possible contingency, and the attributes of His essence cannot be connected to anything other [than Him], nor can they be separated from the essence. The Real is sanctified from every opposite and equal, union and division, gathering and separation, anything other⁵⁰ and creation, dominion and celestial body, mark and trace (*athar*), servant and human being (*bashar*), sun and moon (*qamar*), individual person and dust (*ghabar*).⁵¹

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۗ

[3:19] *Lo, the religion (dīn) with God is submission (islām) [to the One God]. Religion (dīn):* The [religion] that He is pleased with, and the one whose follower He has determined to reward, elevate, and favor, is **submission (islām)**. **Submission (islām)** is sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*) and the surrender of oneself (*istislām*). Anything else is rejected (*mardūd*) and the path to salvation for its follower is blocked (*masdūd*).

وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًّا
بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٩﴾

[3:19] *Those who were given the scripture differed only after the knowledge came to them through transgression among themselves. And whoever disbelieves in God's signs, God is swift in reckoning.*

Knowledge ('ilm) came to them which was a proof (*hujja*) incumbent upon them—not [the deeper] knowledge (*ma'rifa*), which would be clear evidence (*bayān*) and a path (*maḥajja*) for them.⁵² They persisted in denial (*juhūd*) because they were veiled from the place of witnessing (*shuhūd*).

49 The translation follows the word *yaqūmu* from MS K117, fol. 33b rather than the word *yafamu* from the Basyūnī edition.

50 The translation follows the word “other” (*ghayr*) found in MS K117, fol. 33b instead of “entity” (*ʿayn*) in the Basyūnī edition.

51 The word “dust” sounds a little odd in the translation, but follows al-Qushayrī's rhyming pattern in the Arabic.

52 The translation follows *lahum* from MS K117, fol. 33b rather than *lahā* in the Basyūnī edition.

فَإِنْ حَاجُّوكَ فَقُلْ أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا
 الْكِتَابَ وَالْأُمِّيِّينَ ءَأَسْلَمْتُمْ فَإِنْ أَسْلَمُوا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا
 عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَّغُ وَاللَّهُ بِصِيرٍ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٣١﴾

[3:20] *So if they dispute with you, say: “I have surrendered my countenance to God and whoever follows me”: and say to those who have been given the scripture, and to the uninstructed: “Have you submitted?” And so if they have submitted, they have been guided, but if they turn their backs, your duty is only to deliver; and God sees His servants.*

“Look at them through the eye of [God’s] free disposal (*taṣrīf*)⁵³ so that your state does not become unsettled at the differences and the disparity of their stages.⁵⁴ One who looks at created beings through the eye of [God’s] deliberative power (*qudra*) knows that the One who determines for all, based on what He has chosen for each, is One. Call them publicly when in public and bear witness privately to Our free disposal (*taṣrīf*) with regard to them when in private.” Occupy your tongue by counseling them but empty your heart of their talk and separate your innermost self from witnessing them, for We have not charged you with their affairs, [but only] with deliver[ing] [the message]. The One who brings about affairs and originates is Us.”

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّنَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَيَقْتُلُونَ
 الَّذِينَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْقِسْطِ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣١﴾

[3:21] *Those who disbelieve in the signs of God and slay the prophets without right, and slay those who enjoin to equity. So give them good tidings of a painful chastisement.*

“Those whom We have bound to disappointment (*khidhlān*) and branded with the state of deprivation (*hirmān*)—tell them that Our turning away from them is perpetual and that We have already determined their

53 *Taṣrīf* is a verbal noun of *ṣarafa*. These words are used in the Qurʾān to describe the “turning about” of the winds [2:164 and 45:5] and the “turning about” of God’s signs in the world and in the Qurʾān (for example, 17:41 and 6:46). In a more general way, the word refers to God’s absolute freedom to act in manifold and flexible ways.

54 Perhaps al-Qushayrī is referring to Qurʾān 71:14: *when verily He created you in stages (atwār).*

transference from one abode of disgrace (*hawān*)⁵⁵ to another, from disappointment (*khidhlān*) and deprivation (*hirmān*) to punishment and fires (*nīrān*).”

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَلُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

[3:22] *Those are the ones whose works have failed in this world and the hereafter; they have no helpers.*

Those are the ones for whom no success is granted in their works (*tawfiq bi-ā-māl*) today, nor realization of their hopes (*taḥqīq li-āmāl*) tomorrow. That is only because they have lost Our help in both abodes and did not bear witness to Our might and power.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى كِتَابِ اللَّهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّى فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

[3:23] *Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Book, being called to the Book of God, that it might decide between them, and then a party of them turned away (yatawallā), opposed?*

[This means] “We have tested you with calling those whom We already know will not answer. So be patient with what you have been commanded regarding them. Know the misfortune of their states. They are the people who turn away (*ahl al-tawallī*) from answering (*ijāba*) because they have been deprived of the beauty of divine self-disclosure (*ḥusn al-tajallī*)⁵⁶ by Our prior will (*irāda*).”

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَنْ نَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ وَغَرَّهُمْ فِي دِينِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

55 The translation follows the word “disgrace” (*hawān*) from MS K117, fol. 33b rather than the word “gardens” (*jinān*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

56 For a discussion of the term “self-disclosure of God” (*tajallī*) see the section on “Veiling and disclosure” (*al-Sitr wa-l-tajallī*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 1:224–225.

[3:24] *That, because they said, “the fire shall not touch us, except for a number of days”; and the lies they used to invent have deluded them in their religion.*

We have punished them in this world, drawing them on by degrees (*bi-l-istidrāj*)⁵⁷ until they [presume to] determine salvation and the lessening of punishment for themselves, but they will come to know the doubling of affliction upon them. They think they understand something but they tell a lie. Those in error think that [what they have said] is a determination (*ḥukm*).

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جَمَعْنَاهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ
وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

[3:25] *But how will it be when We gather them for a day of which there is no doubt, and every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned, and they shall not be wronged?*

This address is remarkable because by it He gives information about the imposing grandeur and intensity of the [Day of Gathering], at which point the intellects [of those who turned away] will be perplexed, their innermost selves astonished, their pretensions cut off, their hearts torn from their hidden places, and [their souls] will rise to their collar bones. Then there will be what will meet them from the reckoning and censure (*al-ḥisāb wa-l-ʿitāb*), the torment and punishment (*al-ʿadhāb wa-l-ʿiqāb*), and the lack of honoring and approval (*ʿadam al-ikrām wa-l-ijāb*), etc.

The resurrection of the disbelievers will take place on the Day of Gathering, while the resurrection of the lovers takes place in the present moment; to explain this fully would take a long time.

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمَلِكِ

[3:26] *Say: “O God (Allāhumma), Master of the kingdom,*

Allāhumma: Its meaning is “O God (*yā Allāh*).” The letter *mīm* at the end (of the word) is a substitute for the vocative particle *yā*. This is a teaching of the Real on how to praise the Real, that is, “describe Me as I should be

57 This echoes the wording in Qurʾān 7:182 and 68:44: *We will draw them on by degrees (sa-nastadrijuhum), whence they do not know.*

described in exalted measure,⁵⁸ by saying: “O *Master of the kingdom*, there is no associate to You, no assistant, no helper, no companion, no partner to You in essence, no sharer in the kingdom, no competitor in creating.”

تُوْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ

[3:26] *you give the kingdom to whom You will, and seize the kingdom from whom You will;*

“... so that we will know that You are the King.”⁵⁹ Among created beings the king is he before whom one is humbled, and the kingdom that is seized is the kingdom of those who are haughty toward him. [In a similar manner] created beings are beautified (*tajammul*) by abasing themselves (*tadhallul*)⁶⁰ before the Real. Their honor and might (*‘izz*)⁶¹ is in their effacement (*maḥw*) in Him and their remaining (*baqā’*) is in their annihilation (*fanā’*) in Him.

وَتُعَزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ

[3:26] *You exalt* (tu‘izzu) *whom You will,*
by the might (*‘izz*) of Your essence.

وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ^ص

[3:26] *and You abase* (tudhillu) *whom You will;* by Your forsaking.

You exalt whom you will, guiding him to witness You and declare Your oneness, and *You abase whom You will* such that he denies You and is deprived of You. *You exalt whom you will* with the good fortune of Your drawing near and *You abase whom You will* by the estrangement of Your turning away. *You exalt whom You will* by bringing him to intimacy with You and *You abase whom You will* by estranging him from You. *You exalt*

58 As opposed to those who have *measured not God with His true measure* (Qur’ān 6:91, 22:74, 39:67)

59 The translation follows the wording (*ḥattā na’lama annaka al-malik*) found in MS K117, fol. 34a rather than the phrase “the kingdom is Yours” (*al-mulku laka*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

60 The verbal noun *tadhallul* is from the same root as the verb *tudhillu* found in this verse.

61 The noun *‘izz* is derived from the same root as the verb *tu‘izzu* found in this verse.

whom You will by occupying him with You and *You abase whom You will* by distracting him from You. *You exalt whom You will* by eliminating the controlling elements of his lower self, and *You abase whom You will* by giving the upper hand to its clamor. *You exalt whom You will* by the gleams of the rising (*ṭawālī*)⁶² of his intimacy [with You] and *You abase whom You will* by the night visitors (*ṭawāriq*)⁶³ of his lower self. *You exalt whom You will* by expanding (*baṣṭ*) him through You and *You abase whom You will* by constricting (*qabḍ*) him from You.

You give the kingdom to whom You will by tightening the belt of [his] service to You, and *seize the kingdom from whom You will* by excluding him from the carpet of worship to You. *You give the kingdom to whom You will* by causing his innermost self to be singularly devoted to You, and *You seize the kingdom from whom You will* by binding his heart to some created thing. *You exalt whom you will* by raising him up in spiritual desire (*irāda*) and *You abase whom You will* by sending him back to what the people of habit (*ahl al-ʿāda*) do.

بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ

[3:26] *in Your hand is good.*

He did not mention evil, protecting the good manners (*ādāb*) of speech, auspiciously mentioning the beautiful, and avoiding the inauspicious mention of evil.

إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

[3:26] *You are able to do all things.*

[You do all things by] veiling and attracting, helping⁶⁴ and forsaking, accepting and rejecting, separating and gathering, constricting and expanding.

62 Al-Qushayrī discusses the “gleams of the rising” (*ṭawālī*) in the section on “Glimmers, gleams of the rising, and flashes” (al-Lawāʾiḥ wa-l-ṭawālī wa-l-lawāmiʿ), *Risāla* 1:228–230.

63 Al-Qushayrī uses a similar comparison of rising lights (*shawāriq*) and night visitors (*ṭawāriq*) in his commentary on Qurʾān 2:115.

64 Baṣyūnī adds “helping” (*nuṣra*) to contrast with the word “forsaking” (*khidhlān*). The manuscript he was working from had only the latter word. Neither word appears in MS K117, fol. 34a.

تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ
وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

[3:27] *You make the night pass into the day and You make the day to pass into the night; You bring forth the living from the dead, and You bring forth the dead from the living, You provide whom You will without reckoning.*

You make the night pass into the day such that the authority of the light of unity (*tawhīd*) prevails and nothing remains of the traces of the lower self and its darknesses. *You make the day pass into the night* so that it is as if the suns of the hearts were eclipsed, or as if the night continued and the morning never came.

You bring forth the living from the dead such that it is as if listlessness was no more and the pledge of union returned as a youth, and the promises of hearts became young and fresh. *You bring forth the dead from the living* such that it is as if the tree of discontent sprouted and blossomed thorns, and as if the hopeless found nothing good and could not smell [the fragrance], and *their hearts and eyes were confounded, just as they did not believe in it the first time* [6:110].

You provide whom You will without reckoning such that there is no labor (*kadd*),⁶⁵ no exertion (*jahd*),⁶⁶ no sweat on the brow (*jabīn*), and no toil of the right hand (*yamīn*). His night is refreshment and repose (*rāḥa*), and His day is joy and delight (*bahja*). His hours are special gifts (*karāmāt*) and His moments are ways of drawing near (*qurubāt*). The different kinds of acts of His favoring cannot be enumerated by the tongue (*lisān*) and the inquiry into their full depth cannot be given expression or explanation (*bayān*). But in the glimmers we have given here, there is some indication of how to speak of this.

It is said that when He said, “*and seize the kingdom from whom You will*” [3:26], anyone who thinks that he is a king [experiences] a rude awakening from [his] drunken intoxication because he now sees [that] his kingdom is vulnerable to extinction and [he] knows that abasing himself to [God] in preserving His kingdom is worthier than vainglorious delusion and pomposity.

65 The translation follows the word “labor” (*kadd*) found in MS K117, fol. 34a, rather than the word *kadar* found in Basyūnī. Basyūnī himself points out in a footnote that *kadd* would be preferable here.

66 The Basyūnī edition has *juhd* but al-Qushayrī probably had *jahd* in mind to rhyme with *kadd*.

It is said that the king—in the true sense of the word—is someone who is not distracted by anything from witnessing the One who is the real King.

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ^ط

[3:28] *Let not the believers take the disbelievers as patrons (awliyāʾ), rather than the believers—*

Among the realities of faith is friendship (*muwālāt*) with God and enmity (*muʿādāt*) on behalf of God. From among the disbelievers, it would be best for you to renounce and turn away from your lower self. Its nature is Magian in that it says, “Mine, from me, and through me.”⁶⁷ God most high said, *O you who believe, fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you* [yalūnakum]⁶⁸ [9:123].

Verily faith in this path (*ṭarīqa*) is rare and precious. Even if ordinary people (who have no faith in this path) were to wear themselves out with extreme asceticism and effort, they would not be among those people [who are] Your friends. It is more fitting that like be with like.

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقْلَةً^ط
وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ^ط وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٢٨﴾

[3:28] *for whoever does that, does not belong to God in any way—unless you protect yourselves against them, as a safeguard. God warns you of His Self: and to God is the journey’s end.*

Companionship (*ṣuḥba*) with the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* and nearness to Him can by no means be combined with the companionship of adversaries and being close to them.

God warns you of His Self: This is an address to the elect among the people of deeper knowledge (*ahl al-maʿrifa*). As for those whose degree

67 Here al-Qushayrī attributes a way of thinking to the Magians; this speaks more generally to those who have not yet comprehended the reality of divine unity (*tawḥīd*). Basyūnī adds a footnote referring the reader to a similar passage in the “Section on Unity” (Bāb al-tawḥīd): “It is said that divine unity is the dropping of personal pronouns so that you do not say, ‘Mine, through me, from me or to me’” (al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 2:587). See also al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qurʾān 4:78.

68 The verb *yalūna* is from the same root as *awliyāʾ* and *muwālāt*.

is less than that, He said to them, “*And fear the fire that...*” [3:131] and He said, “*And fear a day wherein you shall be returned. . .*” [2:281], and so on in other verses.

It is said that *God warns you of His Self* [means that while] you may be of the opinion that you have arrived, surely the imperceptible affairs of the divine deception (*makr*) can happen to the most respected. The one who spoke for them said:

I felt safe from him
but the safe place granted to me was a ruse.

Such it is for those
who feel safe from lovers.⁶⁹

It is said that *God warns you of His Self* because anyone who imagines that a created being can reach Him or that the feet of human aspiration can touch the carpet of might—Glory and Might be to the absolute oneness! And anyone who thinks that [God] has brought them near, in reality [God] has made them distant from Him.

قُلْ إِنْ تُخْفُوا مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ أَوْ تُبْدُوهُ يُعْلَمَهُ اللَّهُ وَيَعْلَمَ مَا فِي
السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

[3:29] Say: “*Whether you hide what is in your breasts, or disclose it, God knows it and knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth; and God is Able to do all things.*”

There is nothing that escapes His knowledge, so do not be grieved by any calamity that afflicts you. Soon He will bring you succor and response, and soon the affliction and trial will disappear. He will hasten [His] assistance and protection.

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ
تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا ﴿٢٩﴾

69 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 13, p. 28).

[3:30] *The day every soul shall find present before it what it has done of good, and what it has done of evil, it will wish that between it and that there were a great distance.*

The people [of acts] of obedience (*ahl al-tā'āt*) will wish that they had sought more of them. The people [of acts] of opposition (*ahl al-mukhālafāt*) will wish that they had curbed in their reins from galloping in the open fields. The one who spoke for them said:

Even if I had been given the object of my desire
in my time here on earth,

not everyone who is granted the object of his desire
is pointed in the right direction.

Then I would have said to the days gone by:
Will you not return?

And I would have said to the days to come:
Will you not keep your distance?⁷⁰

وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَاللَّهُ رَعُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٣٠﴾

[3:30] *God warns you of His self, and God is kind to His servants.*

The allusion from His words, *God warns you of His Self*, is for those with deeper knowledge (*ʿarīfūn*) and the allusion from His words, *and God is kind to His servants*, is for novices. [The first] follow rigor and submit humbly and [the latter] follow [the way of] lightened burdens and ease.

And it is said that when He said, “*God warns you of His Self*,” those hearing the address are understandably frightened,⁷¹ so He said in combination with it, *and God is kind to His servants* in order to give them reason to hope. Thus His way (*sunna*) is to evoke desire and fear in them at the same time.

It is said that He annihilates you in His saying “*God warns you of His Self*” then brings you back to life and causes you to remain by His saying “*and God is kind to His servants*.”

70 Muṣṭafā gives sources attributing these verses to Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī and others (Muṣṭafā, no. 19, pp. 48–49).

71 The translation follows the word *tahwīl* found in MS K117, fol. 34b rather than the word *tahwīl* found in the Basyūnī edition.

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ
 ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾

[3:31] Say: “If you love God, follow me, and God will love you, and forgive you your sins; God is Forgiving, Merciful.

You love God is a separation (*farq*) and *God loves you* is a gathering (*jam*).⁷²

You love God [with a love] mixed with cause (*‘illa*)⁷³ but *God loves you* without cause; rather, He is the reality of communion. The love of the servant for God is a state of subtle kindness (*latīfa*) that he finds within himself and this state brings him into conformity (*muwāfaqa*) with [God’s] command out of [his own] pleasure (*riḍā*),⁷⁴ without any feeling of aversion. This state necessarily involves his preferring [God] *سُبْحَانَهُ* over everything and everyone.

The precondition of love is that there is no worldly concern (*ḥazz*) in any state. One who has not been entirely annihilated from his worldly concerns possesses not even a sliver of love.

The love of the Real for the servant is in His desire (*irāda*), His beneficence (*iḥsān*) and His kindness (*lutf*) to him. It is a desire (*irāda*) to bestow favor, which may be [seen] in [the servant’s] praise and commendation of Him *سُبْحَانَهُ*, or it may be [seen] in [God’s] favoring [the servant], which would be [understood as] coming from the attributes of His acts.⁷⁵

It is said that the precondition of love is your entire effacement from yourself because you are consumed in your beloved. The one who spoke for them said:

72 For more information on how al-Qushayrī understands these terms, see the section on “Gathering and separation” (al-Jam’ wa-l-farq), *Risāla*, 1:207–208.

73 The word ‘*illa*’ means both “cause” and “infirmity”; al-Qushayrī may have both senses of the word in mind here.

74 For more on what al-Qushayrī means by this term, see the “Section on Satisfaction” (*Riḍā*), *Risāla*, 2:421–427.

75 Al-Qushayrī explains this in more detail in the “Section on love” (Bāb al-maḥabbā) in his *Risāla*. In this section he explains that, according to one teaching, God’s love for human beings arises from the attributes of His essence (that is, the divine attributes that exist with God). In this view, God’s love for His servant is in the servant’s praise of Him because the servant’s speech is attributable to God’s eternal attribute of speech. According to another teaching, God’s love belongs to the attributes of His actions (that is, the attributes He produces with regard to His creation), and is seen in the favors He grants his servants. God’s “desire” or “will” (*irāda*) is one attribute (*ṣifa*) but is called by different names (that is, “wrath,” “mercy,” and “love”), depending on its object (*Risāla*, 2:611–612).

What is love
 until the eye is exhausted by weeping
 and you lose your ability to talk
 so that you cannot answer one who calls you.⁷⁶

There is a difference between the beloved (*al-ḥabīb*)⁷⁷ and the friend (*al-khalīl*).⁷⁸ The friend [Abraham] said, “*so whoever follows me, verily belongs with me*” (*minnī*) [14:36], and the beloved [Muḥammad] said, “*follow me and God will love you.*” The follower of the friend belongs with him (*minhu*) in the favor conferred [on both of them by God], while the follower of the beloved is loved by the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*—this suffices as a station of nearness and state.

It is said that for those who submit themselves, He cuts off their longing for anything other than their model and leader of the first and the last—Muḥammad ﷺ.

It is said that this verse alludes to the fact that love is not an effect (*maʿlūl*) and is not brought about by obedient acts or the avoidance of bad things, because He said, “*God will love you, and forgive you your sins.*” He explained that it is possible that a servant may have many sins,⁷⁹ but nonetheless he loves God and God loves him.

It is said that first He said, “*God will love you,*” and then He said, “*and forgive your sins.*” The [conjunction] “*and*” (*wa*) determines the order, such that it will be known that love is prior to forgiveness. First *He loves them and they love Him* [5:54], then He forgives them and they seek His forgiveness. Love leads to forgiveness; pardon does not lead to love.⁸⁰

[The word] “love” (*maḥabba*) indicates the purest or most choice (*ṣafāʾ*) of states: the expression “shining teeth” (*ḥabab al-asnān*), which is their being bright and clear (*ṣafāʾ*), is derived from the same root.⁸¹

Love demands the complete devotion of the innermost self near the presence of the beloved.

It is said that the camel *aḥabba* when he kneels down and will not move

76 In a somewhat different version Muṣṭafā traces the verse to Majnūn (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 123).

77 That is, Muḥammad.

78 That is, Abraham.

79 The translation follows the word “sins” (*dhunūb*) from MS K117, fol. 35a, rather than the word *funūn* found in the Basyūnī edition.

80 The negative follows MS K117, fol. 35a. Instead of *lā*, the Basyūnī edition has *li-anna*.

81 In a similar passage in the “Section on love” (Bāb al-maḥabba) al-Qushayrī writes that some say that “love” (*ḥubb*) means “the purest states of affection” (*ṣafāʾ al-mawadda*) because the Arabs use the phrase *ḥabab al-asnān* to describe symmetrical teeth that are white and healthy (*Risāla*, 2:613).

even if he is struck.⁸²

Love (*ḥubb*) consists of two letters, *ḥā* and *bā*. The *ḥā* alludes to the spirit (*rūḥ*) and the *bā* [alludes] to the body (*badan*). The lover does not hold back in either his heart or his body from his beloved.

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

[3:32] Say: “Obey God, and the Messenger.” But if they turn their backs, God loves not the disbelievers.

He commanded them to obedience, and then He said, “*But if they turn their backs*,” that is, fall short in obedience by opposing [God’s command], then *God loves not the disbelievers*. He did not say “the disobedient” (*‘āṣūn*) but rather “the disbelievers” (*kāfirūn*), so the address indicates that He loves the believers even if they are disobedient.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَعَٰلَ ٓإِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَعَٰلَ عِمْرٰنَ عَلَى ٱلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِن بَعْضٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

[3:33] Lo! God preferred Adam and Noah and the house of Abraham and the house of ‘Imrān above the worlds,

[3:34] the seed of one another; God is Hearer, Knower.

Adam and his seed are made of the same substance, but the characteristic of being chosen (*iṣṭifā*) is something that comes from [God], not through lineage or relation.

إِذْ قَالَتْ أُمْرَأْتُ عِمْرٰنَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحْرَرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي ۗ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ ۗ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنْثَىٰ ۗ وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ

82 This is another etymological comment. Al-Qushayrī states that the word *aḥabba*, a verb that means “to love,” also occurs in the expression *aḥabba al-bā’ir*, which refers to “a camel that kneels and will not stand up. Likewise the lover refuses to move from the remembrance of the beloved in his heart” (*Risāla*, 2:613).

وَأِنِّي أُعِيدُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ﴿٣٦﴾

[3:35] *When the wife of ʿImrān said, “Lord, I have vowed to You what is within my womb as a consecration (muḥarraran). Accept this from me. Lo! It is You who are the Hearer, Knower.*

[3:36] *And when she gave birth to her, she said, “Lord, I have given birth to a female”—and God knew very well what she had given birth to—the male is not as the female. “And I have named her Mary, and commend her to You with her seed to protect them from the accursed Satan.”*

The one who is consecrated (*muḥarrar*)⁸³ is someone who is not in bondage to any created being. The Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*, in His prior decree, has emancipated such a person from the bondage of preoccupation [with anything other than the Real] in all aspects and states. When the mother of Mary made this vow and gave birth to a *female*, she was ashamed.⁸⁴ When she saw her she said, “*Lord, I have given birth to a female* who cannot be consecrated.” God most high said, “*and God knew very well what she had given birth to.*” By my life, the male is not like the female outwardly, but when the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* accepted her every miracle appeared from her.

When she said, “*I have vowed to You what is within my womb as a consecration,*” she added, “*Accept this from me.*” He granted her request, and the effects of the acceptance appeared in [Mary] and her son. One set of beings was saved by their story, and another was destroyed and experienced a trial (*fitna*) because of the two of them.⁸⁵ She said, “*And I have named her Mary, and commend her to You with her seed to protect them from the accursed Satan.*” She sought protection from God from anything in her words that [might] belong to Satan.⁸⁶

83 The word *muḥarrar* literally means “one who is emancipated” but also refers to the contemporary practice of consecrating male children to service in a temple.

84 Because she thought her vow was in vain.

85 The translation follows the wording and pronouns found in MS K117, fol. 35a rather than the Basyūni edition.

86 In MS K117, fol. 35a the sentence ends here. The sentence in Basyūni continues with a phrase which appears to have been mistakenly inserted into the text. This same text occurs in al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qurʾān 3:94: “what is easiest in order to perfect what comes to them from the decrees of the hearts.”

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا^ط

[3:37] *Her Lord accepted the child with gracious acceptance, and made her grow excellently, and Zachariah took charge of her.*

He caused [Mary] to attain more than what her mother had wished for. It is said that [God] *accepted her with a gracious acceptance* (qabūl ḥasan) by making her unique in obedience to Him, and entrusting her with that which He entrusts His friends (awliyāʾ)—so much so that every person of her time was astonished by the excellence (ḥusn) of that which He had entrusted to her even though she was a girl.

It is said that the *gracious acceptance* was the excellence (ḥusn) of [God's] care for her in spite of His سُبْحَانَهُ knowing what would be said about Him because of her, for He is not concerned with the shamefulfulness of the words of enemies.

I find blame in passion
for you sweet.

Out of love of hearing you mentioned,
let them blame me.⁸⁷

Just as it is said:

Let anyone
who wishes
say what he wishes.
I do not care!⁸⁸

It is also said that the *gracious acceptance* was His causing her to grow preserved [from sin and error] (ʿiṣma) until she said: *Lo! I seek refuge in the Compassionate One from you! If you fear God* [19:18].

And made her grow excellently until she stood straight in obedience and preferred His سُبْحَانَهُ good pleasure in every moment, and until the fruit from her was such a person as Jesus ﷺ. This was the excellent growth. Zachariah took charge of her and it was part of [God's] gracious acceptance and [His

87 Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to Abū l-Shīṣ, and gives numerous books in which it is cited. He also attributes it to ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh al-Jaʿfari b. Abū Ṭālib (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 103). al-Qushayrī cites the same verse in the introduction to his commentary on *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* above.

88 Muṣṭafā cites a somewhat different version of this verse attributed to Mūsā ʿAbdallāh b. Ismāʿil (Muṣṭafā, no. 6, pp. 92–93).

granting her] excellent growth that He made one such as Zachariah ﷺ among the prophets her guardian, and the caretaker and protector of her affairs. God revealed to David ﷺ, “If you see someone seeking me, become a servant to him (*in ra'ayta lī ṭāliban fa-kun lahu khādiman*).”⁸⁹

كَلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ يَمْرَأُيْمُ أُنَى لَكَ هَذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

[3:37] *Whenever Zachariah went into the sanctuary where she was he found her with provisions. “O Mary,” he said, “Whence comes this to you?” She said, “From God. Truly God provides for whomever He will without reckoning.”*

Among the signs of [God’s] gracious acceptance was that she could never be found anywhere except in the sanctuary (*miḥrāb*). Whoever dwells and stays where He is worshiped, where the sanctuary is—that is a rare and precious servant.

It is also said that [God’s] gracious acceptance was that all of her affairs and concerns were not subject to Zachariah ﷺ, so that when he came to her to bring her food, he found her [already] with provision. This was [done] so that those who labor might know that God ﷻ does not burden others with the concerns of His friends (*awliyā*), and anyone who serves one of His friends is included in the kind companionship (*rifq*) of the friend—it should not be seen as an imposition. This alludes to the fact that one who serves the poor (*fuqarā*) should [also] know that he has been included in [God’s] kind companionship of the poor.⁹⁰

Then Zachariah ﷺ used to say, “*Whence comes this to you?*” because he did not believe that she was worthy of this rank and he was afraid that someone other than him was taking the opportunity of caring for her and supplanting him in performing these duties. So he asked, “*Whence comes this to you? Who gave it to you?*” Mary said, “[It is] *from God*, not from

89 Neither Basyūnī nor ‘Abd al-Rahmān give the source for this saying. al-Qushayrī repeats it in his commentary on verse 4:93.

90 Al-Qushayrī uses the word the “poor” (*fuqarā*) to mean both the indigent and those who have attained the spiritual station of poverty. See his commentary on Qur’ān 2:273 and the “Section on poverty” (Bāb al-faqr), *Risāla*, 2:536–549. In his commentary on this verse, al-Qushayrī talks about the proper attitude (*adab*) in serving the friends of God and the *fuqarā*: one should understand that one is being included in the compassion and kindness of those who are one’s superiors in spiritual rank. This compassion and kindness is part of their *adab*. Al-Qushayrī also tells a brief anecdote that questions whether we can know who has the higher status. See the “Section on companionship” (Bāb al-suḥba), *Risāla*, 2:574.

any created being.” In this there were two things to comfort Zachariah. One was the witnessing of her station and her special gift (*karāma*) with God most high, and the second was [his knowing] that no one had supplanted him in serving her. In His words “*Whenever (kullamā) Zachariah went into the sanctuary, where she was, he found her with provisions,*” the word *kullamā* means “repeatedly,” and alludes to the fact that Zachariah ﷺ did not cease caring for her, even though he found her with provision. Rather, every day and at every moment he studied her state because the special gifts (*karāmāt*) of the friends do not necessarily persist. God may make something appear in them indefinitely or He may not, so Zachariah ﷺ did not rely on that and neglect to study her state. He questioned her again, saying, “*O Mary, whence comes this to you?*” because of the possibility that that which exists today may not be as it was yesterday—it is not something incumbent on God *سُبْحَانَهُ* [to continue this provision].

His words “*Truly God provides for whomever He will without reckoning*” is a clarification of the reality of divine unity (*‘ayn al-tawḥīd*). His provision and beneficence toward the servants is according to His will (*mashī’a*), and does not result from their obedience and is not brought about by means of their acts of worship.

هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ ۖ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً
إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ ﴿٣٨﴾

[3:38] *Then Zachariah prayed to his Lord, saying, “Lord, bestow upon me from You a goodly offspring, verily You are the Hearer of supplication.”*

That is, when he saw the special gift (*karāma*) of God *سُبْحَانَهُ* with her, he grew increasingly certain, and ever more hopeful, so he asked for a son in spite of his advanced age. The granting of his request was a rupture of ordinary reality (*naqḍ al-‘āda*).

It is said that Zachariah ﷺ asked for a son to help him in obedience, and an heir from his progeny in prophethood, so that he might uphold the right of God (*ḥaqq Allāh*). So it was a request which deserved to be granted. When a request is for the right of the Real (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) and not for the worldly concerns of the lower self (*ḥazz al-nafs*) He will not refuse it.

Zachariah ﷺ saw Mary with summer fruits in the winter and winter fruits in the summer, so he asked for a son in his old age so that it might be a sign (*āya*) and a miracle (*mu‘jiza*).

فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي فِي الْمِحْرَابِ

[3:39] *And the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary at worship*

When the petitioner asks and remains at the door, the request is granted to him. This alludes to the fact that anyone who needs something from kings should remain at the door until the request is granted.

It is said that the ruling of God سُبْحَانَهُ is such that He only responds to the request of those who embrace service (*khidma*) to Him, and He casts those who turn away from obedience into the lowliness of estrangement.

أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيحْيَىٰ مُصَدِّقًا بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَسَيِّدًا وَحَصُورًا
وَنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

[3:39] *that “God gives you good tidings of John, who shall confirm a word from God; a lord, and one chaste, and a prophet of the righteous.”*

It is said that he named him John (Yaḥyā) because of the life (*ḥayāt*) of his heart through God. Exegetical writings tell us that the barrenness of his mother was brought to life (*ḥayy*) through him.

It is said that [the name means] the quickening of life in the heart of one who believes in Him.

His saying *who shall confirm a word from God* (Allāh) means his confirmation of the word *Allāh*, by which he worshiped Him, or that he was brought into being by the word of God.

His saying *a lord*: The lord is one who is not in bondage to any created thing. He has been freed (*taḥarrara*) from captivity to whims and from [captivity to] any created thing. It is said that the lord is someone who has actualized his servanthood (*‘ubūdiyya*)⁹¹ to [God] سُبْحَانَهُ. It is said that the lord is the one who is superior to the people of his age, and John was such.

It is said *lord* because he did not seek any station for himself, nor did he view himself as having any worth. When he dedicated himself in humility to God in every way, [God] caused him to rise above the group and made him a lord to all.

91 The translation follows the word *‘ubūdiyya* found MS K117, fol. 35b rather than the word “sublimity” (*‘ulwiyya*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

His saying *and one chaste*, that is, liberated from passions and spared from carnal human properties despite being human. It is said that [it means] being protected from the demands of his lower self, restrained from that through [his] engagement in exaltation [of God] and seeking to draw near [to Him]. It is said his restraint came from being uprooted by the intuitions of realities coming to him, such that he no longer had any preference for worldly things.

And a prophet of the righteous, that is, he was worthy of attaining their rank.

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَقَدْ بَلَغَنِي الْكِبَرُ وَامْرَأَتِي عَاقِرٌ قَالَ
كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ ﴿٤٠﴾

[3:40] *He said, “My Lord! How shall I have a boy when old age has overtaken me, and my wife is barren?” He said, ‘so it will be.’ “God does what He will.”* It is said that there was a long time between his petition and the reply, and because of that he said, “*How shall I have a boy?*”⁹²

It may mean that he said, “By what right would I receive a response [to my prayer], if not by Your favor?”⁹³

It may mean that he said, “How shall this be: by adoption or sexual procreation?”

It may mean that [he questioned] whether this was to be from a woman other than his wife since she was [also] of advanced age, [that is,] from taking a slave as a concubine. So it was said to him, “No, not through these means, for both (you and your wife) have suffered loneliness together, so the good news of the son is for both of you.”

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً قَالَ ءآيَتِكَ إِلَّا نُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ إِلَّا رَمَزًا ﴿٤١﴾

[3:41] *He said, “My Lord! Appoint for me a sign.” He said, “Your sign is that*

92 According to some transmitted exegetical material related in al-Qurtūbī’s *tafsīr*, forty years were said to have elapsed between Zachariah’s prayer and the news of John’s impending birth. (Cited in Ayoub, *The Qur’an and Its Interpreters*, 2:113).

93 The explanations al-Qushayrī cites in this passage reflect the concern of commentators that Zachariah’s question not be understood as reflecting his doubt in the power of God to do whatever He wills. (See Ayoub, *The Qur’an and Its Interpreters*, 2:112–115).

you shall not speak to men, save by tokens for three days.

He sought the sign so that he might know when [his prayer] would be answered, not because of any doubt regarding the source of this response. [God] made the sign of His proof⁹⁴ that [Zachariah's] tongue was held [silenced] with created beings even as he was left free to glorify God. That is to say [God said], “do not refrain from speaking with Me for I do not deprive My friends of My intimate conversations (*munājāt*).”

وَأَذْكُر رَبَّكَ كَثِيرًا

[3:41] *and remember your Lord often*

...in your heart and your tongue in every moment.

وَسَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَرِ ﴿٤١﴾

[3:41] *and glorify [Him] at evening and dawn”*

...in persistent prayer (*ṣalāt*).

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَأَصْطَفَاكِ
عَلَىٰ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

[3:42] *And when the angels said, “O Mary, God has preferred you, and made you pure; He has preferred you above all women of the worlds.”*

It is possible that this was the beginning of a message from the angels to Mary elevating her state. It is possible that she may have heard their words and seen them, or that she did not see them but heard them as a voice calling out to her: “*God has preferred you* by your being favored and singled out from among your kind and peers, *and made you pure* from what is indecent and sinful, with a beautiful immunity and [pure] from having physical contact with men. *He has preferred you above all women of the*

94 Basyūnī notes that the word here is *dalāla*, which he says is acceptable in meaning, but he nonetheless changes it to *walāya*. The translation adheres to *dalāla*, since that is the word also found in MS K117, fol. 35b.

worlds in your time.”

The point of repeating the mention of her being preferred is first, “He has chosen you through special gifts, position, and an exalted state”; and second, “He has chosen you to bear Jesus ﷺ without a father, and no woman can ever be compared to you until the Day of Resurrection.” Because of that He said, “*above all women of the worlds.*”

﴿٤٣﴾ يَمْرِيْمُ أَقْنَتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَأَسْجُدِي وَأَرْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاَكِعِيْنَ

[3:43] “O Mary, be obedient to your Lord, prostrating and bowing with those who bow.”

“Persevere on the carpet of worship and practice obedience continually. Do not fall short from continuous service (*khidma*). The Real has singled you out by your station, so be without equal in your time in your worship of Him.”

ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ يُلْقَوْنَ
اَقْلَمَهُمْ اَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

[3:44] *That is of the tidings of the unseen. We reveal it to you for you were not with them, when they were casting quills, which of them should have charge of Mary; nor were you with them, when they were disputing.*

That is, “We have told you [Muḥammad] of these stories and have spoken with you about their meanings. Although We have related these stories to you, Our speech is rare and precious—it is more valuable and more perfect than if you yourself had been a witness to [these events].”

اِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَمْرِيْمُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ اَسْمُهُ
الْمَسِيْحُ عِيسٰى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيْهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ
﴿٤٥﴾ وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾

[3:45] *When the angels said, “O Mary, God gives you good tidings of a word*

from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, honored shall he be in this world, and the hereafter, and of those brought close.

[3:46] *He shall speak to mankind in the cradle, and in his manhood, and he is of the righteous.*”

She was not given good tidings about her portion in this world, or her fortunes in the hereafter. Rather, she was given good tidings verifying that [she was receiving a] tremendous sign in [the birth of Jesus] and [that] he was a prophet of God—it was a confirmation of the miracle.

It is said that He informed her that whoever succumbs to the overwhelming force of the divine power (*qudra*) and ends up before His ruling (*ḥukm*) will encounter miracles of that power the likes of which no one has experienced. Mary had surely lived for a long time with an excellent reputation and was well-known as a chaste [woman], but then [God] caused confusion about her situation [when she] appeared in a state deemed blame-worthy by people. In actuality it was not as the foolish thought. Their eyes were blocked from seeing the flow of the divine decree (*jaryān al-taqdīr*).

It is said that He informed her of what would happen to [her son]⁹⁵ step by step and in detail. He told her that he would live in such a way that *he shall speak to mankind* as a young child *and in his manhood*, and that the deception of [his] enemies would not affect him.

It is said *in manhood* [means] after his descent from the heavens.⁹⁶

It is said that He fortified her heart by informing her that, while she herself would hold her tongue regarding her innocence [after the birth], God would cause Jesus ﷺ to speak [as a child] as proof of her sincerity and exalted honor.

قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَلَّفَهُ
يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ

[3:47] *She said, “Lord, how shall I have a child when no mortal has touched me?” He said, “It is such. God creates what He will.*

Just as you witnessed the appearance of things contrary to ordinary reality in the provision We gave [to you], likewise We will break with ordinary

95 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 36a.

96 Some Qurʾān commentators understood Jesus’s speaking to mankind *in his manhood* (*kahl*) as referring to the time after his return to this world (Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and Its Interpreters*, 2:136).

reality by creating a son without a man having touched [you].

إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا

[3:47] *When He decrees a thing,*

that is, He desires a ruling (*ḥukm*) to come to pass

﴿٤٧﴾ فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ

[3:47] *He says to it only: ‘Be’, and it is.”*

Producing [things] from the beginning and bringing [them] forth are not difficult for Him.

When they began to blame her, God caused Jesus ﷺ to speak when he was [only] one day old; [he] said, “*I have come to you with a sign from your Lord*” [3:49].

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدْخُرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

[3:48] *And He will teach him the Book, wisdom, and the Torah, and the Gospel.*

[3:49] *To be a messenger to the children of Israel, “I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, I will create for you out of clay [something] like the shape of a bird then I will breathe into it, and it will be a bird by the leave of God. I will also heal the blind and the leper; and I bring the dead to life, by the leave of God. I will inform you too of what things you eat, and what you treasure up in your houses. Surely in that is a sign for you, if you are believers.”*

These were His outward signs and dazzling, overpowering proofs: bringing life to the dead, healing the blind and the leper, telling [them] what they did secretly, and other miracles. [God] stated that [Jesus] confirmed what came before him in laws, but was chosen to abrogate part of what came before and to establish another part for them according to the details articulated in the Qurʾān.

وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَإِلَّا لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي حُرِّمَ
عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ۗ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَأَعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾ ۖ فَلَمَّا أَحْسَسَ
عِيسَىٰ مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ
أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

[3:50] *Likewise, confirming that which was before me of the Torah, and to make lawful for you some of that which was forbidden to you. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: so fear God, and obey me.*

[3:51] *Surely God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. This is a straight path.”*

[3:52] *And when Jesus sensed their disbelief, he said, “Who will be my helpers [in the cause of] God?” The disciples said, “We will be helpers of God; we believe in God; witness that we have submitted.*

When the message reached them and they differed—some of them believed him and some of them called him a liar, and they were the majority—he came to know that prophecy does not spare one from affliction and the oppression of enemies. So [Jesus] separated his heart from them and held to his goal (*qaṣd*). He said to his people, “*Who will be my helpers [in the cause of] God* so that they may help me in my exclusive devotion to His true reality and sincere dedication to His goal?”⁹⁷ Then those who were touched by the effects of [God’s] providence (*āthār al-ʿināya*) and chosen through the effects of [divine] selection (*āthār al-takḥṣīṣ*) said, “*We will be helpers of God; we believe in God; bear witness to us in truth and let nothing come from us that would cast doubt on you.*”

97 That is to say the goal (*qaṣd*) God sets for humans. Qurʾān 16:9 says, *Upon God it rests to show the right direction of the way* (wa ʿalā Allāhi qaṣdu al-sabīli) (translation from Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2:2531).

رَبَّنَا ءَامَنَّا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

[3:53] *Lord, we believe in what You have revealed, and we follow the Messenger; write us down therefore with those who bear witness.*

As for the remainder, they worked to create dissension and intensified their enmity. They plotted and schemed against him, but God made them taste the evil of their scheming. They imagined that they had crucified and killed Jesus ﷺ, but that was from their ignorance and confusion. God ﷻ raised Jesus ﷺ as His prophet (*nabī*) and His friend (*walī*). Banishment and cursing was the rightful due of his enemies—this was [God’s] scheming with them.

وَمَكْرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَكْرِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾ إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يٰعِيسَىٰ إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا

[3:54] *And they schemed; and God schemed; and God is the best of schemers.*⁹⁸

[3:55] *When God said, “O Jesus, I am gathering you and raising you to Me, and I am cleansing you of those who disbelieved,*

The allusion in it: “*I am gathering you* from yourself, seizing you from yourself, raising you above the mortal human attributes, and purifying you from your own desire (*irāda*) completely so that you will act as Our agent (*muṣarrif*) through Us and for Us. You will have no free choice (*ikhtiyār*) in anything. In its place divine governorship (*tawallī*) will descend upon you and stand in for you.” By this quality, the dead were brought to life through the hands [of Jesus]. These were occurrences that could only happen by the divine deliberative power, may it be exalted.

It is said that He purified his heart from looking to others (*aghyār*), and from seeing simulacra and traces (*al-amthāl wa-l-āthār*) in all states and phases (*al-aḥwāl wa-l-aṭwār*).

98 For a discussion of how classical commentators addressed the question of attributing the negative trait of scheming to God, see Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and Its Interpreters*, 2:165–169.

وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ

[3:55] *and I am setting those who follow you above those who disbelieved until the Day of Resurrection*

In help (*nuṣra*), force (*qahr*), and proof (*ḥujja*).

His followers—those who have not changed his religion (*dīn*) and those who follow his creed (*ʿaqīda*) in the declaration of oneness (*tawḥīd*)—are believers (*muʿminūn*). They are in the right until the Day of Resurrection, and they will be helped [by God] until the Day of Resurrection. Then God سُبْحَانَهُ will judge between them and their enemies on that day. The disbelievers will be in hellfire (*ammā l-kuffār fa-fi l-jahīm*) and the believers will be in felicity (*wa-ammā l-muʿminūn fa-fi l-naʿīm*).

ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ مَرْجِعِكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾
 فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَأَعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا
 لَهُمْ مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ
 أُجُورَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ ذَلِكَ نَتْلُوهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ
 وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿٥٨﴾

[3:55] *Then to Me shall be your return, and I will decide between you, as to what you were at variance about.*

[3:56] *As for the disbelievers, I will chastise them with a terrible chastisement in this world and the hereafter; they shall have no helpers.*

[3:57] *But as for the believers, who do deeds of righteousness, He will pay them in full their wages. God loves not the evildoers.*

[3:58] *This We recite to you of verses and wise remembrance.*

“*This We recite to you, O Muḥammad, to inform you of the meanings of what We have revealed to you. [These meanings do not reach you] through your exertion to attain knowledge, nor by your learning from parables, nor by your deduction by any sort of reasoning.*”

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ ۖ خَلَقَهُ مِن تَرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ
 كُن فَيَكُونُ ﴿٥٩﴾

[3:59] *Truly the likeness of Jesus in God's sight, is as Adam's likeness.*

He chose to purify the spirit (*rūḥ*) in them from the act of passing from one body to another (*tanāsukh*) in the loins,⁹⁹ but He singled out Adam as the first [of men], while He singled out Jesus ﴿﴾ for the special distinction of breathing the spirit into him¹⁰⁰ in the most exalted way. But even though these two were weighty beings, the imperfection of being in time and being mortal was nonetheless unavoidable for them: He created him of dust, then He said to him, “Be,” and he was [3:59].

الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾

[3:60] *The truth is from your Lord; be not of those who waver.*

[That is,] “*The truth (al-ḥaqq) is from your Lord, O Muḥammad. Have no doubt that there is no one who resembles Him ﷺ in causing existence and no created being has any power over the establishment of His way.*”¹⁰¹ The existence (*wujūd*) of existents (*mawjūdāt*) has been conferred¹⁰² from the concealment of nonexistence (*katm al-ʿadam*)—their beginning is from God and to Him is their return.”

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ
 أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ۗ ثُمَّ

99 In other words, neither Adam nor Jesus had fathers, so the spirit (*rūḥ*) was “breathed into” them (see Qurʾān 15:29, 21:91, 32:9, 38:72, and 66:12).

100 Qurʾān commentators note the different pronouns used in verses 21:91 (. . . *We breathed into her of Our spirit*) and 66:12 (. . . *We breathed into it/him of Our spirit*). The feminine pronoun is commonly understood to refer to Mary, and the masculine pronoun to either an opening in Mary’s shirt or Jesus in the womb. (See, for example, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb/al-tafsīr al-kabīr* at atfafsir.com, in the commentary on Qurʾān 66:12).

101 The translation follows “His way” (*sunnatihī*) from MS K117, fol. 36b. Several Qurʾānic verses speak of God’s way or precedent (*sunna*): 33:38, 33:62, 35:43, 40:85, and 48:23.

102 The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been completed with the word *khuṣṣat* found in MS K117, fol. 36b.

نَبْتَهُلْ فَجَعَلْ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكٰذِبِينَ ﴿٦١﴾

[3:61] *And whoever disputes with you concerning him after the knowledge that has come to you, say: "Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our wives and your wives, our selves and your selves, then let us humbly pray and invoke God's curse upon those who lie."*

*And whoever disputes with you concerning him*¹⁰³ means that "After you have sincerely proclaimed what you were told, and have come to know the truth of the knowledge We imparted to you in your heart, do not be reticent in challenging them to mutual cursing. Trust that you have the force (*qahr*) and help (*nusra*), and that We are protecting you and have sheltered you in the wing of Our nearness." If they had sought this mutual cursing, the valley would have rained fire down upon them, but God سُبْحٰنَهُ gave them respite because He knew of the believers [yet to come] of their progeny.

This verse alludes to those whose states are no longer those of the sincere (*ṣiddiqūn*). When the lights [of the sincere] appear, what remains in [the others] fades away completely.

إِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصْصُ الْحَقُّ وَمَا مِنْ إِلٰهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ
الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦٢﴾

[3:62] *This is the true story. There is no god but God, and assuredly God is Mighty, Wise.*

This is the true story: The dust of confusion has no authority over the witnessings of divine unity. No delusion of any created being reaches the secret of His ruling (*ḥukm*). Nothing that is known in existence can come close to it, and nothing that is imagined can conceive of the divine decree (*taqdīr*).

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾

[3:63] *And if they turn their backs, God knows the agents of corruption.*

103 This verse is said to refer to a delegation of Christians from Najran who disputed with the Prophet concerning Jesus. For a discussion of the commentary on this verse see Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*, 2:188–202.

“And if they turn their backs, O Muḥammad, the confusion of those who talk falsely cannot withstand the rays of your light.”

God knows the agents of corruption: either He will sweep them away or He will forbear until their conjectures have become firmly established. Then He will seize them suddenly, and [then] they cannot be helped.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ

[3:64] “O people of the scripture! Come now to a word (kalima) agreed upon between us and you,

The word (kalima) testifies to the divine unity (tawḥīd) and the singularity (ifrād) of the Real سُبْحَانَهُ in bringing forth everything.

أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ

[3:64] that we worship none but God

Do not look in your innermost self to any created thing. There should be no object of worship for you other than Him. You should have no aim (maqṣūd) or object of witnessing (mashhūd) other than Him. This is the [best] protection against associating partners [with God] (shirk). You yourself are foremost among the “others” that should not be witnessed.

وَلَا نُشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ

[3:64] and that we do not associate anything with Him, and do not take each other for lords, beside God”;

The truth of this appears in abandoning praise and blame of them, removing any complaint or doubt about them, and cleansing the innermost self from taking into account even so much as a speck of effacement (maḥw) or affirmation (ithbāt) as coming from them.¹⁰⁴ [The Prophet] ﷺ said: The truest verse the Arabs sung was from Labīd:

104 In other words, one witnesses that only God effaces and affirms. In his use of the terms “effacement” (maḥw) and “affirmation” (ithbāt), al-Qushayrī has in mind Qur’ān 13:39: God effaces whatever He will and He affirms [whatever He will], and with Him is the Mother of the Book. See also the section on “Effacement and affirmation” (al-Maḥwa-l-ithbāt), *Risāla*, 1:222–223.

Is not everything
other than God unreal?

Every blessing
is inevitably fleeting.¹⁰⁵

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ
تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّوْرَةُ وَالْإِنْجِيلُ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَفَلَا
تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

[3:64] *and if they turn their backs, say, “Bear witness that we have submitted.”*

[3:65] *“O people of the scripture, Why do you argue about Abraham? when the Torah was not revealed, neither the Gospel, but, after him. What, do you not comprehend?”*

He put a cloak (*niqāb*) of possessiveness and a veil (*ḥijāb*) of jealousy over His friend ﷺ, and severed his connection to all of them after their accusation about him and [thus he] decisively contradicted their confused arguments. How could Abraham ﷺ belong to the religion of those who came after him? This makes no sense.

هَآأَنْتُمْ هَآؤُلَآءِ حَآجَجْتُمْ فِيمَا لَكُمْ بِهِ ءِ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَآجُّونَ فِيمَا
لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ ءِ عِلْمٌ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

[3:66] *Lo! You are those who dispute about what you know; why do you then dispute concerning that of which you have no knowledge?; and God knows, and you know not.*

That is, “Your scripture includes clear evidence (*bayān*) that should be

105 Labid (d. 40/660–661) was a well-respected poet from the pre-Islamic period who converted during the lifetime of the Prophet. Muṣṭafā gives several sources for this verse (Muṣṭafā, no. 7, p. 93). Abd al-Raḥmān gives several sources for the *ḥadīth* and the poetry, such as al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Māja, and Ibn Ḥanbal. There is a passage in the Basyūnī edition after the verse from Labid that does not appear in MS117, fol. 37a. Because this same passage appears in the commentary on Qurʾān 3:94 and makes more sense in that context, it has been omitted here under the assumption that it is an error of the copyist or the edition.

a proof (*burhān*) for you. Regarding that [evidence or proof], you have chosen¹⁰⁶ either truly or falsely. As for that for which you have no definitive evidence (*dalīl*), or any way of knowing (*maʿrifa*), how can you begin to judge it or make claims to have comprehended it?”

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا

[3:67] *No; Abraham in truth was not a Jew, neither a Christian, but he was a Muslim and a ḥanīf,*

The *ḥanīf* is one who stands straight (*mustaqīm*) in truth, while the *aḥnaf* stands straight (*mustaqīm*) with curved legs—one who leans on a [twisted] foot is called *mustaqīm* optimistically.¹⁰⁷ Abraham ؑ was a *ḥanīf*, not bending from the truth, not swerving from the law, and not stumbling this way and that with every promise of personal gain. He surrendered his wealth, his self, his son—everything altogether—to the decree of God and [stood in] a state of readiness for His command.

وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ
وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

[3:67] *and he was never of the idolators.*

[3:68] *Surely the people with the best claim, Abraham, are those who followed him, and this Prophet, and those who believe; and God is the Protector of the believers.*

Whereas whims (*ahwāʿ*) and blameworthy innovations (*bidaʿ*) break up [a group] so that each faction ends up in error, the people of truth (*ahl al-ḥaqq*) in every era, and every time and moment, hold to the best proof and will be a single party. They will be those with the **best claim** [to Abraham] over others. Abraham was a companion of truth (*ṣāḥib al-ḥaqq*). Whoever

¹⁰⁶ The translation follows MS K117, fol. 37a.

¹⁰⁷ The words *aḥnaf* and *ḥanīf* are from the root *ḥ-n-f*, which means “to incline.” Here al-Qushayrī explains that these words can also be understood in what seems to be the opposite meaning. The person who walks with an altered gait is called *aḥnaf* because he leans to one side physically, but also because one hopes he will be able to incline toward a straighter position. The *ḥanīf* is someone who inclines away from a false religion and becomes upright in the truth. (See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:658).

professes his religion (*dīn*)—as in the example of our Messenger ﷺ and his community—belongs to the religion of Abraham ؑ, which is the declaration of the unity (*tawḥīd*) of God ﷻ.

And God is the Protector (walī) of the believers because they have been entrusted¹⁰⁸ with His religion (*dīn*) and they act in harmony with the declaration of His unity (*tawḥīd*). The protecting friendship (*walāya*) of God comes with aid (ʿawn), help (*nusra*), selection (*takḥīṣ*), and nearness (*qurba*).

وَدَّتْ طَّائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يُضِلُّوكُمْ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ
وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

[3:69] *There is a party of the people of the scripture who yearn to make you go astray; yet they cause none to stray, except themselves; but they are not aware.* Those who had succumbed to discord, who had been afflicted by tribulation and seduced by temptation, wished for all people what had befallen them. Although [this party of] the people of the scripture wanted the believers to turn from the truth, God refused to do other than perfect His light¹⁰⁹ and sent back upon them the evil consequences of their actions.

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

[3:70] *O people of the scripture! Why do you disbelieve in God's verses, when you yourselves bear witness?*

“[You bore witness] before his mission ﷺ to the authenticity of his prophecy.¹¹⁰ What is it that brings you to error so that you disavow what you know?”

108 The verb *tawallā* (“to be entrusted or charged with”) comes from the same root as *walī*. See al-Qushayrī’s comments on Qurʾān 2:257 for his understanding of the reciprocal relationship of *walāya*.

109 This is a reference to Qurʾān 9:32: *They desire to extinguish God’s light with their tongues; but God refuses to do other than perfect His light, even though the disbelievers be averse.*

110 This refers to the understanding that Muḥammad’s arrival as a prophet was foretold in the previous scripture.

يَأْهَلِ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ
وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

[3:71] *O people of the scripture! Why do you confound truth with falsehood, and conceal the truth while you know?*

“*You conceal the truth* regarding the affair of Muḥammad ﷺ *while you know* that he is the Prophet who speaks truly.” Can this be anything other than the divine ruling to forsake (*ḥukm al-khidhlān*) and the decision to deprive (*qadiyyat al-ḥirmān*) [those who confound and conceal the truth]? Then He informed them that among them there were some hypocrites. They wanted to forestall any trouble with the Muslims while also avoiding conflict with their brothers among the disbelievers. Thus they conspired to pretend to agree publicly with the Messenger ﷺ and the Muslims, while secretly to remain true, among themselves, to their corrupt beliefs.

وَقَالَتْ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ءَامِنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
وَجَهَ النَّهَارِ وَآكْفُرُوا ءَاخِرَهُ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

[3:72] *A party of the people of scripture say, “Believe in what has been revealed to those who believe at the beginning of the day, and disbelieve at the end of it, so that they might then turn back.*

[By this verse] God ﷻ showed that their hypocrisy was exposed to the Muslims and that it had not benefited them, either in this world, because God informed His Prophet ﷺ and the believers of it, or in the hereafter, because [their hypocrisy] deprived them of sincere devotion [toward God].

وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا لِمَنْ تَبِعَ دِينَكُمْ

[3:73] *And do not believe except in one who follows your religion. . .*

This may refer to the beginning of a command from God ﷻ to the Muslims.¹¹¹ The allusion in it is that you should not associate on intimate terms with opponents, nor divulge your secrets to outsiders.

¹¹¹ Or it may be a continuation of the speech of a party of the people of scripture from the previous verse. According to Ayoub, commentators have cited numerous readings

قُلْ إِنَّ الْهُدَىٰ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُؤْتَىٰ أَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَا أُوتِيتُمْ أَوْ يُحَاجُّوكُمْ
عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ

[3:73] Say: “True guidance is God’s guidance—that anyone should be given the like of what you have been given, or that they should dispute with you before your Lord.” Say: “surely bounty is in God’s hand;

He is the One who singles out whom He will for the lights of instruction and singles out whom He will for abandonment and deprivation.

يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ
ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٤﴾

[3:73] He gives it to whomever He will; God is Embracing, Knowing.

[3:74] He singles out for His mercy whom He will; God is of bounty abounding.”

He singles out whom He will for different blessings. According to this [way of reading the verse] mercy is a means (*sabab*) for the singling out of blessing to those He wills to receive it.¹¹² But the wording is such that it is also possible that it means that He singles out mercy for whom He will—in this case it would mean mercy [itself], not mercy functioning as a means [to something else]. According to this interpretation, [His mercy] means prophecy (*nubuwwa*) and friendship (*walāya*).¹¹³

Included in His saying “**He singles out for His mercy whom He will**,” that is, [included] for His blessing, is preservation from error and sin (*iṣma*), and all of the allotted good deeds that He singles out for any particular

and interpretations for this verse, which reads, in its entirety: *And do not believe except in one who follows your religion. Say: “True guidance is God’s guidance—that anyone should be given the like of what you have been given, or that they should dispute with you before your Lord.” Say: “surely bounty is in God’s hand; He gives it to whomever He will; God is Embracing, Knowing.* (Ayoub, *The Qur’an and Its Interpreters*, 2:219–225).

112 In *al-Fuṣūl fī l-uṣūl*, al-Qushayrī writes that “The fundamental sense of ‘mercy’ is the act of willing the benefit” (translation by Frank, “Two Short Dogmatic Works,” ch. XV, 83). In the first interpretation of the meaning of this Qur’ānic verse, al-Qushayrī is speaking of “mercy” not as the blessings themselves, but as the divine “will or desire” (*irāda*) to give blessings.

113 In this interpretation, the “mercy” in this verse refers to the blessing of prophecy or friendship with God, not the divine will to give blessings.

servant. He singles out some people for the blessing of moral qualities (*akhlāq*), some for the blessing of riches (*arzāq*), some for the blessing of devotional service (*‘ibāda*), others for the blessing of spiritual desire (*irāda*), others for success in external things, others with the gift of an easier life (*bi-‘aṭā’i al-aysār*),¹¹⁴ and others for encountering secrets (*bi-liqā’i al-asrār*). He said, “*And if you were to count God’s blessing, you could never reckon it*” [14:34, 16:18].

It is said that when they heard, *He singles out for His mercy whom He will*, they knew that [His mercy] is not related to any means of attainment.¹¹⁵ Rather, the command comes by divine origination (*ibtidā’*) and divine will (*mashī’a*).

It is said that *He singles out for His mercy whom He will* in [that person’s] comprehension of the secrets [God] reveals to him and the different types of information [God] gives to him.

﴿ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنَهُ بِقِنطَارٍ يُؤَدِّهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنَهُ بِدِينَارٍ لَا يُؤَدِّهِ إِلَيْكَ إِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَائِمًا ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الْأُمِّيْنَ سَبِيلٌ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

[3:75] *And of the people of the scriptures is he who, if you trust him with a hundredweight, he will return it to you; and of them is he who, if you trust him with one dinar, will not return it to you; unless you keep standing over him. That is because they say, “We have no duty toward the Gentiles. They speak falsehood against God, while they are aware.*

He relates that [the people of the scripture], notwithstanding their error and disbelief, vary in their moral qualities. All of them have broken the trust (*amāna*) of the religion (*dīn*), but among them are those who have regard for proper [human] interactions. Even though they interact with sincerity, it will not benefit them in receiving reward, but it will benefit them in lessening [their] punishment since disbelievers are held accountable in the details of the laws. If, in their disbelief they sinned less, they will suffer less punishment than those who have lost the most, even though their punishment will also be in perpetuity.

Then He explained that the judgment is not theirs, so that when *they*

114 The translation follows the word “easier life” (*aysār*) from MS K117, fol. 37b rather than the word *abshār* found in the Basyūnī edition.

115 The translation follows the wording in MS K117, fol. 37b: *al-wasā’il laysa bi-hā shay’*.

say, “*We have no duty toward the Gentiles,*” the situation is not as they would have it, nor will these words benefit them. Rather, the judgment belongs to God سُبْحَانَهُ.

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ وَاتَّقَىٰ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

[3:76] *Nay, but whoever fulfils his covenant, and has fear, for truly God loves the God-fearing.*

Those who hold to the covenant are deserving of being united in friendship, honor, and the garden. Those who are in error are deserving of aversion, ignominy, and shame.¹¹⁶

﴿٧٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَأَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ لَا خَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾

[3:77] *Those that sell God’s covenant and their own oaths for a small price, there shall be no share for them in the hereafter; and God shall not speak to them, nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them and theirs will be a painful chastisement.*

Those who prefer their caprice (*hawāhum*) over their final outcome (*‘uqbāhum*) and have given priority to their desires (*munāhum*) over harmonious agreement with their Protector (*mawlāhum*), will have no share in the hereafter. Because they have chosen to seek pleasure in the present, they have lost in the two abodes and they remain apart from the Real. The pleasure they sought in worldly things (*ḥazz*) has brought upon them all kinds of tribulations, but they are not aware of what has happened to them: *God shall not speak to them, nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them.* Moreover, He will cause them to remain in the punishment beyond the count of time.

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلُودُونَ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ

¹¹⁶ The Basyūnī edition does not have any commentary on Qur’ān 3:76. This paragraph has been added from MS K117, fol. 37b.

وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ
 وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

[3:78] *And there is a group of them who twist their tongues with the Book, so that you may suppose it as part of the Book; yet it is not part of the Book; and they say, "It is from God," yet it is not from God, and they speak falsehood against God, while they know.*

This verse alludes to those who are false in their claims on this path (*ṭarīqa*). They embellish what they say and let loose their tongues concerning what their hearts have no information or verification about. In this they deceive the foolish, ordinary people, and novices. They imagine that they have attained realization of what they say. In describing them, God most high said, *so that you might suppose it is as part of the Book; yet it is not part of the Book.*

In a similar manner, the lords of deception and fraud direct their talk to the weak so that the secrets of the people of realities (*ahl al-ḥaqā'iq*) are exposed before them. God most high said, *and they speak falsehood against God, while they know*, that is, they know that they are speaking falsely. Thus the people of falsehood and deception on this way (*ṭarīqa*) speak from hearts (*qulūb*) that are ruined and innermost selves (*asrār*) that are veiled. We seek refuge in God from deserving wrath.

مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنَّبُوءَةَ ثُمَّ يَقُولَ
 لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِي مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ كُونُوا رَبَّيْنَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
 تُعَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

[3:79] *It belongs not to any mortal that God should give him the Book, the judgment, prophethood, then that he should say to men, "Be servants to me instead of God." Rather, "Be masters, by virtue of what you know of the Book and in what you study."*

That is, "It is not a quality of anyone whom We have chosen for prophethood or selected for friendship (*walāya*) to call created beings to himself or to teach anything affirming himself or his worldly situation, because His *سُبْحَانَهُ* choosing them for prophethood includes protecting them from what is not permissible. To allow that as an attribute of theirs would be

incompatible with their state. Rather, the messengers and the friends have called created beings to God ﷻ and this is the meaning of God most high's words, *Rather, "Be masters,"* which is to say that He directs them only to be masters (*rabbāniyyūn*) to created beings. [The word] (*rabbānī*) is related to [the word] "lord" or "master" (*rabb*) just as it is said, "so and so is bull-necked" (*raqabānī*)¹¹⁷ or "full of life" (*ḥayyānī*) and the like.¹¹⁸ They are those who have knowledge of God, who are forbearing for the sake of God and stand firm through God¹¹⁹ in their annihilation from anything other than God. With their worldly concerns withering away, they become immersed in the realities of His existence rather than their sensory perception of their own states. They speak, hear, and see by means of God, and so they are effaced from what is other than God.

It is said that the master (*rabbānī*) is one who has had the shadow of his lower self (*nafs*) lifted from him and he subsists in the shelter of God's سُبْحَانَهُ shadow.

It is said the master is one who does not affirm anything other than his Lord as one; he does not acknowledge, even in the slightest way, any effacement or affirmation [in creation] as belonging to anything other than Him or coming from anything other than Him.¹²⁰

It is said that the master is he who is obliterated (*maḥq*) in His سُبْحَانَهُ existence and effaced (*maḥw*) in witnessing Him, so the One who stands in for him is other than him and the One who acts on his account is other than him.

It is said that the master is he who is not affected by the vicissitudes of fortune in all their different forms.

It is said that the master is he who is not disturbed by tribulation (*miḥna*) or excited by blessing (*nīma*).¹²¹ His condition is the same irrespective of what comes.

It is said that the master is he who is not affected by the appearance (*wurūd*) of any incoming (*wārid*) to him.¹²² Anyone who is swayed by a

117 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 38a with the word "bull-necked" (*raqabānī*) rather than what looks to be a typo in Basyūnī.

118 Al-Qushayrī is referring to the fact that the adjectival ending *-ānī* is an intensifier.

119 *Bi-llāh* is added here on the basis of MS K117, fol. 38a.

120 In the "Section of Effacement and affirmation" (al-Maḥw wa-l-ithbāt), al-Qushayrī writes, "The reality of effacement and affirmation is that they originate in the divine deliberative power. Effacement is what the Real conceals and negates, and affirmation is what the Real makes manifest and apparent. Effacement and affirmation are limited to the divine will (*mashīʾa*). God most high said, *God effaces whatever He will and He affirms [whatever He will]* [13:39] (*Risāla*, 1:222).

121 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 38a: *lā yastafizzuhu miḥna wa lā yahuzzuhu nīma*.

122 In the section "The incoming" (al-Wārid), al-Qushayrī explains that this can be

tender heart, influenced by the attacks [of life], or finds imperfection in the dangers or risks of something that might happen¹²³ is not a master.

It is said that the master is he who is unconcerned in his heart and innermost self with anything that happens, and who does not neglect anything in the law in what he does.

By virtue of what you know of the book and in what you study “from My continuous beneficence to you and the doubling of My blessing for you.”

وَلَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ أَرْبَابًا أَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْكَفْرِ
بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨﴾

[3:80] *He would never order you to take the angels and the prophets as lords. Would He order you to disbelieve, after you have submitted?*

That is, “do not attribute to them so much as an atom in the establishment of good and evil (*ithbāt al-khayr wa-l-sharr*).”

It is said that He is informing you of the boundary of human nature (*ḥadd al-bashariyya*) and the truth of lordship (*ḥaqq al-rubūbiyya*).

It is said that He orders you to respect (*tawqīr*) them with regard to the command and the law (*sharīʿa*) but to disdain (*taḥqīr*) the worth of created things in comparison to lordship (*rubūbiyya*). **Would He order you to disbelieve, after you have submitted?** “Would He order you to affirm (*ithbāt*) created things after bearing witness (*shuhūd*) to the Real?”

It is said: “Would He order you to look to outward appearances (*ashkāl*) and to attribute events to simulacra (*amthāl*) after the lights of unity (*tawḥīd*) have appeared in your innermost selves and after the suns of singular devotion (*tafrīd*) have arisen in your hearts?”

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ
جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِءَ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ قَالَ
أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِي قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا

something verbal or nonverbal that comes to one from God or from knowledge (*Risāla*, 1:245).

123 Al-Qushayrī may be indirectly referencing Qurʾān 67:3: *You will not see in the Compassionate One’s creation any imperfection.*

مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

[3:81] *And when God made a covenant with the prophets: “What I have given you of the Book and wisdom; then there shall come to you a messenger confirming what is with you—you shall believe in him and you shall help him.” He said to them, “do you affirm? And do you take My load on you on that condition?” They said, “We affirm.” He said, “Then bear witness, and I shall be with you among the witnesses.”*

God made a covenant regarding Muḥammad ﷺ, [that was] binding on all the [other] prophets ﷺ, just as He made a covenant with them to agree to His سُبْحَانَهُ lordship. This is the utmost honoring of the Messenger ﷺ since He connected [Muḥammad’s] name with His own, and affirmed his worth just as He affirmed His own. So [Muḥammad] is singular in rank among all people and [God] has eased the way for all to know His majesty through the miracle¹²⁴ that appeared to [Muḥammad].

فَمَنْ تَوَلَّى بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

[3:82] *Then whoever turns his back after that, they are the wicked.*

This alludes to whoever abandons [the Prophet’s] way (*sunna*) or wanders [away] from following his path (*ṭarīqa*) after the appearance of [the Prophet’s] evidence and the clarity of his miracle. They are those whose condition has become corrupted. They have become deserving of wrath because of their denial and the breaking of their attachment to the divine solicitude.

أَفَعَيِّرَ دِينَ اللَّهِ يَبْغُونَ وَلَهُ أَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

[3:83] *What! Do they desire other than God’s religion, when to Him has submitted whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willing, or unwillingly, and to Him they shall be returned?*

124 The translation follows the singular “miracle” (*mu’jiza*) found in MS K117, fol. 38a rather than the plural “miracles” in the Basyūnī edition. This corresponds with the singular form of the word in al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qur’ān 3:82 that follows. Used in the singular, Muḥammad’s miracle refers to the Qur’ān.

Anyone who pays attention to what is not real (*ghayr al-ḥaqīqa*) or looks to what is other than Him in imagining divinity (*ilāhiyya*)¹²⁵ is like one who sees a mirage he thinks is water (*māʾ*) but when he comes to it, he finds only dust (*ḥabāʾ*). The errors of mere suppositions cut one off and confuse; those who descend into them have entered a desolate wadi.

To Him has submitted whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly because of the lights of divine self-disclosure coming down continually to their innermost selves¹²⁶ *or unwillingly* because of the flow of the divine decree overpowering them.

قُلْ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ
وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ
رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

[3:84] Say: “We believe in God, and that which has been revealed to us, and that which has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac and Jacob, and the tribes; and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord; we make no division between any of them; and to Him we submit.”

We believe in God, not our lower selves, nor our strength or our power. We believe through God in *that which has been revealed to us* and through God *سُبْحَانَهُ* we make no division between any of them—not through our own strength, choice, effort or acquisition. If He had not taught us who He is, we would never have known—for otherwise, how could we have learned this?

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ
وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

[3:85] *Whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him and in the hereafter he shall be among the losers.*

125 The translation follows the word “divinity” (*ilāhiyya*) from MS K117, fol. 38a rather than the word *ahliyya* from the Basyūnī edition.

126 The words *li-isbāli anwāri al-tajalli ʿalā asrārihim* appear in MS K117, fol. 38b but not in the Basyūnī edition.

Those who make their way without being extinguished under the flow of His decree—their feet will slip in the bottomless ravine of errors.

It is said that whoever seeks to gain favor with Him without clinging to [Islam], his loss will be greater than his gain.

It is said that whoever is not annihilated from witnessing everything will not reach the One through whom everything is.

It is said that whoever does not walk under the banner of Muṣṭafā ﷺ,¹²⁷ the one who is exalted in his rank, sublime in his attributes—nothing, not even so much as an atom, will be accepted from him.

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَشَهِدُوا أَنَّ الرَّسُولَ حَقٌّ
وَجَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

[3:86] *How shall God guide a people who have disbelieved after their belief, and bore witness that the Messenger is true, and after the clear signs had come to them? God guides not the evildoing folk.*

Those whom He made unsuitable for the communion [of lovers] in His prior decree—how shall He draw them near to Him on the carpet of service through His favor¹²⁸ now?

It is said [with regard to] those whom He made far removed in the pre-eternal decree—when would He bring them nearer to sincerity in [their] actions? God prevails over His affair.¹²⁹

أُولَئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ أَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةَ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

[3:87] *Those—their requital is that there shall rest on them the curse of God and of the angels and of men altogether.*

Those—their state in the end is the same as it was from His decree in the beginning of their affair. The beginning for them is fate's rejection (*radd al-qisma*) [of them], their middle part is being turned away from service

127 Muṣṭafā is an epithet for Muḥammad and means “the chosen one.”

128 The translation follows “favor” (*faḍl*) from MS K117, fol. 38b rather than the word “act” (*fiʿl*) found in the Baṣyūnī edition.

129 In other words, why would God decree one thing in pre-eternity and then change His decree later?

(*al-ṣaddu ʿan al-khidma*), and then finally [their] outcome is banishment and abasement (*al-ṭard wa-l-madhalla*).

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

[3:88] *Abiding therein, the chastisement shall not be lightened for them and they shall not be reprieved.*

Abiding in that abasement, [their] punishment will not abate for even a moment (*lā yaftur ʿanhum al-ʿadhāb laḥẓatan*), nor will the separation be lightened for them for even an hour (*lā yukhaffafu dūnihim al-firāq sāʿatan*).

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾

[3:89] *But those who repent thereafter, and make amends, then truly God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

[Those who repent] are those whom mercy reaches. They were not among the group [distanced by the prior decree] although people imagined them to be part of it.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ أَزْدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَنْ تُقْبَلَ تَوْبَتُهُمْ
وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الضَّالُّونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

[3:90] *Surely those who disbelieve after they have believed, and then increase in unbelief, their repentance shall not be accepted; those are the ones who go astray.*

This alludes to those who return to the states of the people of habit (*ahl al-āda*) after having traveled the path of spiritual desire (*ṭariq al-irāda*). They prefer this world and to submit to their whims over seeking the Real ﴿﴾. Then they renounce the people of the path (*ahl al-ṭarīqa*) and become ever more alone in their [inner] darkneses. ***Their repentance shall not be accepted; those are the ones who go astray*** from the path of the Real, for trust (*amāna*) cannot be regained once treachery (*khiyāna*) has been displayed. As the days pass, their punishment is the increasing estrangement of [their] hearts from the path, and they are not distressed by the

felicitous state that has slipped away from them. If they had persevered, their repentance would have been accepted, but the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* follows His way (*sunna*) with those who are listless on this path when they revert to habitual states (*aḥwāl al-ʿāda*)¹³⁰ and do not feel regret for the moments that have passed away from them. God most high said, “*And We shall confound their hearts and eyes; just as they did not believe in it the first time*” [6:110]. The apostate from Islam is a more powerful enemy to Muslims than the original disbeliever. Likewise, the one who reverts from this path is more powerful in rejecting it and more oppositional to its people than those who were always alien to it.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِلَّةٌ الْأَرْضِ
 ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ أُفْتَدِيَ بِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَّاصِرِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

[3:91] *Surely those who disbelieve, and die disbelieving, the whole earth full of gold shall not be accepted from any one of them if he would ransom himself thereby; for them awaits a painful chastisement, and they shall have no helpers.*

This alludes to the one who dies after becoming listless. Even if he had a beautiful beginning, he will not be gathered in the hereafter with the people of this story (*ahl hādhi al-qiṣṣa*), even if a thousand of those with deeper knowledge were to intercede for him. Indeed, the perfection of the ruse with him is that his image will be cast onto someone else in the hereafter, so that his acquaintances among the people of deeper knowledge (*ahl al-marīfa*) will think that it is him, but it will not occur to anyone that he should intercede for him.

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ
 وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٢﴾

[3:92] *You will not attain piety (birr) until you expend of what (mimmā = min mā) you love; and whatever thing you expend, God knows of it.*

When the object of seeking is piety and goodness (*birr*),¹³¹ [the preposition]

130 The translation follows the word *aḥwāl* from MS K117, fol. 38b rather than the word *uṣūl* found in the Basyūnī edition.

131 The noun *birr* refers to dutiful but generous and ample acts of goodness and kindness.

min is used, which is [the particle of speech] for dividing something into portions. He said, “*of what (mimmā = min mā) you love.*” Whoever desires piety and goodness (*birr*) should expend some portion of what he loves, while whoever desires the One who is All-Goodness (*al-bārr*) should expend everything he loves. Whoever expends what he loves in this world will find what he seeks from the Real, most high. Whoever is attached to the fortunes of the lower self (*man kāna marbūtan bi-ḥuzūzi nafsihi*) will not find fortune in nearness to his Lord (*lam yaḥazzu bi-qurbi rabbihi*).

It is said that if you can only attain piety and goodness (*birr*) by expending what you love, how will you ever reach the One who is All-Goodness (*al-bārr*) so long as you prefer your worldly fortunes to Him?

And whatever thing you expend, God knows of it. There are those who expend looking for reward and compensation, those who expend looking to defend themselves from affliction and tribulations,¹³² and those who expend content with His knowing. One of them said:

He wishes to walk in a weak way
so that she might,

when she hears of his suffering,
send a message to him.

He trembles because of what has become known
in seeking the sublime,

that his qualities might be mentioned
one day before Salmā.¹³³

كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حِلاَّ لِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَى
نَفْسِهِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تُنزَلَ التَّوْرَةُ قُلْ فَأَتُوا بِالتَّوْرَةِ فَأَتَلُوهَا إِنْ
كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَمِنْ أَفْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ

132 The translation follows “tribulation” (*miḥan*) from MS K117, fol. 39a over *ḥazan* in the Basyūnī edition.

133 The translation includes an additional line found in Muṣṭafā: *yawaddu bi-an yamshī saqīman la'allahā idhā sam'at minhu bi-shakwā turāsiluhu*. This line is not included in the Basyūnī edition or in MS K117, fol. 39a, but helps make sense of the second part cited in both. Muṣṭafā states that the verses are attributed in somewhat different versions to ʿAlī b. Bilāl and others (Muṣṭafā, no. 37, pp. 100–101).

فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

[3:93] *All food was lawful to the children of Israel save what Israel forbade for himself before the Torah was revealed. Say: “Bring the Torah now, and recite it, if you are truthful.”*

[3:94] *Whoever invents falsehood against God after that, those are the evildoers.*

[God] does not declare things permissible or prohibited in their original state; in [this state] there is no divine ordinance (*ḥadd*) regarding them. That is a liberality and kindness from the Real سُبْحَانَهُ [and this state exists] until such a [time] as a command or a law comes regarding it. God سُبْحَانَهُ has eased the precepts of religious obligation (*aḥkām al-taklīf*) for advanced disciples (*ahl al-nihāya*). Their way is to adopt what is easiest in order to perfect what comes to them from the precepts of the hearts (*aḥkām al-qulūb*)—surely the difficulties made incumbent on their hearts are harder for them. As for novices (*ahl al-bidāya*), the affair is made difficult for them with tasks and litanies—their way is to adopt what is more onerous and difficult [in these areas] so as to empty their hearts of thoughts.¹³⁴ Whoever thinks otherwise is in error.

This verse also alludes, in His saying, “*Whoever invents falsehood against God*,” to the states of the people of false claims and errors. They absolve themselves and attribute to God سُبْحَانَهُ their false notions (*hawājīs*) but God is free of these. It is a rare servant who can distinguish between [true] incoming thoughts (*khawāṭir*) and false notions (*hawājīs*).

قُلْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ فَاتَّبِعُوا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾

[3:95] *Say: “God has spoken the truth, therefore follow the creed of Abraham, a ḥanīf, and he was not an idolater.”*

The creed (*milla*) of Abraham was complete abandonment to God

¹³⁴ Basyūnī identifies the *ahl al-nihāya* as ordinary people (*‘awāmm*) and the *ahl al-bidāya* as the elect (*khawāṣṣ*) but it seems more likely that al-Qushayrī is referring to advanced disciples versus novices (see his commentary on Qurʾān 2:182, 2:184, and 3:78, where the term *ahl al-bidāya* is used quite clearly to indicate novices). The more advanced individuals on the path take on difficulties at a deeper level than supererogatory litanies and the like. On the other hand, these practices are helpful for novices. It is unlikely that al-Qushayrī is referring to core obligations such as the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*), since he stresses the importance of these obligations even for those who experience the highest states. See, for example, his commentary on Qurʾān 2:45.

(*al-khurūju ilā Allāh bi-l-kulliyya*) and surrender to His decree without holding back in any way (*wa-l-taslīmu li-ḥukmihi min ghayri an tabqā baqiyya*). In truth, to affirm (*ithbāt*) anything [other than God] in accounting for what comes into being is idolatry (*shirk*).

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾ فِيهِ
 ءَايَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۖ وَمَن دَخَلَهُ ۖ كَانَ ءَامِنًا ۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ
 حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ ۚ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا ۚ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ أَلَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ
 الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾

[3:96] *The first house established for the people was that at Bakka, a blessed place, and a guidance to all the worlds.*

[3:97] *Therein are clear signs, the station of Abraham; and whoever enters it is secure. It is the duty of people toward God to make the pilgrimage to the House, if he is able to make his way there. As for the one who disbelieves, God is independent of all the worlds.*

The House is a bit of stone (*ḥajara*) and the servant is a bit of mud (*madara*).¹³⁵ The bit of mud is bonded to the bit of stone (*rabāṭa al-madara bi-l-ḥajara*), so that mud (*madar*) is with stone (*ḥajar*) and the One who has always been is magnified and sanctified.

It is said that the House is the object of the circumambulation of bodily selves (*nufūs*) while the Real *سُبْحَانَكَ* is the object of the quest of hearts (*qulūb*).

The House consists of the remains and traces [of the past]. These are but relics and stones yet

These traces of ours
 point to us.

So after we [are gone]
 look to the traces.¹³⁶

It is said that the House is stone but not all stone is alike. [It is] stone

135 The words *madar* (the generic collective form of the noun) and *madara* (the form indicating a specimen of the collective) refer to the mud or clay that is used between layers of stone to create solid stone structures (See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2:2698–2699).

136 Muṣṭafā states that this verse appears, but is not attributed, in *Amāli l-Yazīdī* (Muṣṭafā, no. 20, p. 62).

but it causes the hearts of the lovers to awaken (*muzʿij*) and the souls¹³⁷ of the poor (*fuqarāʾ*) to leap (*munfij*). Indeed for the hearts of some it is cooling and pleasant (*muthlij wa-mubhij*) and for the hearts of others [it is] stimulating and arousing (*munfij wa-muzʿij*).

[What people see in the House depends on the] different types [of people]:

A House that is a place you go to seek out your loved ones and visit them (*mazār*), [or] where you hear news (*akhbār*) of them, and see the traces (*āthār*) [of their having been there].

A House—whoever looks to it with the eye of separation,¹³⁸ returns with an innermost self laid waste (*kharāb*). Whoever observes it with the eye of connection¹³⁹ wins every approach and approval (*ijāb*). As it is said:

Truly houses,
even when they are silent,
have a pact with Our lovers
since they stop at them.¹⁴⁰

A House—whoever visits it with his bodily self finds His kindnesses, and whoever visits it with his heart finds His unveilings.

It is said that He said, “*and purify My House*” [2:125 and 22:26], attributing it to Himself. But here He said, “*the first house established for the people*,” and this is part of the allusion to the source of gathering together (*ʿayn al-jamʿ*) [in this verse].

It was named “Bakka” because of its being crowded with people.¹⁴¹ Everyone vies with one another in rushing to it and they are crowded together in circumambulating it, and they exert their utmost in the path to reach it.

The House has not addressed anyone out of desire from the time that it was built, nor has it welcomed anyone as a favorite, nor sent anyone a line in a letter. If the House that He created from stone can be described with

137 The Arabic is *akbād*, which literally means “livers” or “innards” but symbolically refers to the seat of emotions and passions. It is in this sense that the English word “souls” is used.

138 In other words, he looks to the House without seeking God.

139 In other words, he looks to the House through His connection with God and not through his lower self.

140 This verse does not appear in Muṣṭafā.

141 One of the possible derivations of the word “Bakka” is said to be a verb meaning “to crowd around” (*bakka*), as reported in al-Ṭabarī’s *tafsir* on this verse (*Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, altafsir.com).

such majesty,¹⁴² what then do you think of the One to whom the House belongs? [The Prophet] ﷺ said, reporting from Him سُبْحَانَهُ, “Grandeur is My cloak and Majesty is My covering.”¹⁴³

It is said that reaching the House ascribed to Him involves the crossing of [difficult] deserts and desolate regions (*matāhāt*). How, then, can you hope to reach the Lord of the House easily, without bearing hardships (*mashaqqāt*) and leaving comforts (*rāhāt*) behind?

It is said, “Do not attach your heart to the *first house* (*awwal bayt*) established for you, but rather devote your innermost self to the first Beloved (*awwal ḥabīb*) who chose you.”

It is said, “What a difference between a servant who remains in retreat (*ītakafa*) at the *first house* (*awwal bayt*) established for him and a servant who remains in the presence of the first Mighty One (*awwal ʿazīz*) to whom it belongs!”

It is said that the crowding of the poor (*fuqarāʾ*) by means of their aspirations (*himam*) around the House is not less than the crowding of those circumambulating on foot. The rich visit the House and circumambulate by foot while the poor are held back from it¹⁴⁴ yet circumambulate it with their aspirations.

It is said that the Kaʿba is the House of the Real سُبْحَانَهُ in stone and the heart is the House of the Real سُبْحَانَهُ in the innermost self. Their speaker said:

I am not
among the group of lovers if
I do not make the heart
His house and station.
And my circumambulation
is the circling of the innermost self in it.
It is my nook [of the black stone]
when I desire to touch it.¹⁴⁵

The subtleties (*laṭāʿif*) circumambulate the hearts of those who have

142 In other words, the House has no human characteristics and yet it is much more than stone.

143 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān cites the works of Ibn Ḥanbal and others as sources for this *ḥadīth qudsī*.

144 That is, their poverty prevents them from making the pilgrimage.

145 The final word in this line is *istislām*, which can mean to touch or reach the Black Stone of the Kaʿba, or to surrender or succumb to something. Muṣṭafā states that these verses are attributed to al-Shibli, but with the word “journey” (*sayr*) instead of *sirr* in the second verse (Muṣṭafā, no. 6, pp. 104–105).

deeper knowledge (ʿarīfūn). The realities (ḥaqāʾiq) are in retreat in the hearts of those who declare His unity (*muwahḥidūn*). The Kaʿba is what the servant seeks in pilgrimage and the heart is what the Real seeks when He singles [the heart] out for the proclamation of unity (*tawḥīd*) and ecstasy (*wajd*).¹⁴⁶

A blessed place, and a guidance to all the worlds: Its blessings are the contact made with kindnesses and unveilings there.¹⁴⁷ Whoever seeks it through his aspiration (*himma*) and makes it his quest (*qaṣd*)—[God] guides such a person to the path of right direction (*rushd*).

Therein are clear signs, but these signs are not perceived with the physical eyes (*abṣār*) of the head but rather with the insights (*baṣāʾir*) of the heart.

The station of Abraham, in the outward sense [of the phrase], is the place where his feet left an imprint,¹⁴⁸ but the allusion here is to where the Friend ﷺ¹⁴⁹ stood with his aspirations (*himam*).

It is said that the nobility (*sharaf*) of the station of Abraham [refers to the way] it shows the trace (*athar*) of [the footprints of] Abraham and because the trace of the Friend ﷺ possesses a weighty significance.

Whoever enters it is secure (*kāna āminan*): It is said that *whoever enters* the station of Abraham *becomes and feels safe* (*kāna āminan*),¹⁵⁰ and the station of Abraham is surrender (*taslīm*). Whoever submits his affairs to God—no free choice (*ikhtiyār*) remains for him and *he becomes and feels safe* (*kāna āminan*). The opposite of feeling safe (*āmin*) is fear (*khawf*) and fear exists only when you do not get what you want (*murād*). When the servant has no desire (*irāda*) or choice (*ikhtiyār*), how can he be described as having fear?

It is said that the third person pronoun in His saying, *enters it*, refers to the House: *whoever enters* [God’s] House—in truth—*is secure*. Therefore his entry should be characterized by good manners (*adab*). Without a doubt the good manners for entering the House are to surrender one’s affairs to the Lord of the House. Those who do not surrender put themselves in an

146 For more on what al-Qushayrī means by *wajd*, see the section on “Feigned ecstasy, ecstasy and ecstatic finding” (al-Tawājūd wa-l-wajd wa-l-wujūd), *Risāla*, 1:201–206.

147 “There” (*hunāka*) has been added on the basis of MS K117, fol. 39b.

148 That is, the stone block next to the Kaʿba containing what is said to be the impressions left by the footprints of Abraham.

149 That is, Abraham.

150 This is an alternative translation of the phrase “is secure” (*kāna āminan*). Lane gives the original meaning of the verb *amina* as meaning “he was, or became, quiet, or tranquil, in heart, or mind” (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:100). Asad translates this phrase as “finds inner peace” (*The Message of the Qurʾān*, 82). The verb *āmina* (“to be faithful, to believe”) comes from the same Arabic root.

adversarial position in relation to the [divine] decree (*taqdīr*). Good manners for entering the House can only be through surrendering without resistance and strife; this refers back to the aforementioned meaning [of entering the station of Abraham].

If you take the allusion of the House to be the heart, then [it means that when] the authority of reality (*sultān al-ḥaqīqa*) enters someone's heart, that person is secure (*amina*) from the divisive inclinations of human nature and the anxious clamor of the lower self. Surely there is no danger for those who take refuge in the shade of the King.

It is said that entering the House, in truth, can only [take place] by abandoning yourself, for when you have left yourself behind, you will enter the House on a sound footing. When you abandon yourself, you will find security (*aminta*).

It is said that entering His House will not be on a sound footing so long as you remain in your familiar territories and haunts, for a person cannot be in two places at the same time. *Whoever enters the House* of His Lord should abandon the familiar haunts of his lower self.

It is the duty of people toward God to make the pilgrimage to the House, if he is able to make his way there: The stipulation for the rich person is that he not hold back any of his wealth from the House. The stipulation for the poor person (*faqīr*) is that he not hold back even a breath of his spirit in reaching His House.

It is said that “being able” is of different types: [The first type] is one who *is able* by means of his own self and his wealth—he is healthy and unimpaired. [The second type] is one who *is able* [only] through others—he is chronically ill and hungry. The third [type] is one to whom most pay no heed. He *is able* through his Lord—this is the quality of every sincere (*mukhlāṣ*) and true person (*mutaḥaqqaq*),¹⁵¹ for his burdens¹⁵² can only be born by [God's] mounts.

It is said that the pilgrimage to the House is a [conditional] obligation for those who have the [necessary] wealth, while the pilgrimage¹⁵³ to the

151 The translation follows the word *mutaḥaqqaq* from MS K117, fol. 39b rather than the word “deserving one” (*mustaḥiqq*), as found in the Basyūnī edition. “One who has been proven true” (*mutaḥaqqaq*) is a better word to pair with *mukhlāṣ*. In the section on “Sincerity,” al-Qushayrī quotes Abū Bakr al-Daqqāq as saying that when God wants to purify someone's sincerity (*fa-idhā Allāh ta'ālā an yukhlīṣa ikhlāṣahu*), he stops him from seeing his own sincerity so that he will be *mukhlāṣ* [through God], not *mukhlīṣ* [seemingly by his own efforts or virtue] (*Risāla*, 2:445).

152 Literally “afflictions” (*balāyā*).

153 The word “pilgrimage” (*ḥajj*) does not occur in the Basyūnī edition, but has been filled in here from MS K117, fol. 39b.

Lord of the House is an unqualified obligation for the poor (*fuqurāʾ*). This is because the path to the House might be blocked, but the path to the Lord of the House is never blocked: the poor person (*faqīr*) cannot be deprived of Him.

It is said that the pilgrimage is the quest (*qaṣd*) to the One who is magnified, but there are those who seek to visit the House by means of their bodily selves and those who seek to witness the Lord of the House by means of their hearts. What a difference between one pilgrimage and another! Some remove their *iḥrām*¹⁵⁴ at the completion of the sacrifice and the performance of the acts fulfilling their obligation, while others remove their *iḥrām* at the witnessing of their Lord. Some pursue the quest through their bodily selves, entering into the consecrated state and leaving all that is designated as prohibited while in *iḥrām*, while others pursue the quest through their hearts, entering into the consecrated state of leaving behind familiar things and the witnessing of anything or anyone other [than God].

As for the one who disbelieves, God is independent of all the worlds: He has branded those who omit the pilgrimage to the House as disbelievers. Because of these words, the hearts of the scholars have fallen into the turmoil of rational interpretation (*taʿwīl*).¹⁵⁵ Then He said, “*God is independent of all the worlds.*” This is the intensification of a threat (*ziyādāt tahdīd*)¹⁵⁶ that indicates the intensification of a selection (*ziyādāt takhṣīṣ*).¹⁵⁷

It is said that the way of the pilgrim to the House lies in the good manners (*ādāb*) of the pilgrimage: When someone knots the *iḥrām* in his heart, he must let go of every knot blocking him from this path (*hātha al-ṭariq*) and undo every resolve that keeps him from this task of realization (*hātha al-tahqīq*). When he performs the ablution, he purifies himself from every bit of dirt from the traces of anything other [than God] with the water of embarrassment, then the water of shame (*ḥayāʾ*), then the water of fidelity (*wafāʾ*), and then the water of pure clarity (*ṣafāʾ*). When he takes off his

154 *Iḥrām* is the consecrated state pilgrims enter into during the pilgrimage; it involves wearing special garments and abstaining from the things that are prohibited until the last obligatory rites of the pilgrimage have been completed.

155 In his commentary on this Qurʾānic verse, al-Ṭabarī records a number of opinions regarding whether or not the phrase *one who disbelieves* refers to disbelievers in general, or specifically to those who neglect to perform the *ḥajj* or reject the obligation of the *ḥajj* (*Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, *altafsir.com*).

156 The translation follows “threat” (*tahdīd*) from MS K117, fol. 39b rather than the word *tahdīd* found in the Basyūnī edition.

157 Al-Qushayrī understands this verse as referring to those in Muḥammad’s community who neglect the obligation of the *ḥajj*, and seems to suggest that the phrase *God is independent of all the worlds* is an additional warning to this community that they will be held to a higher standard than other communities. See his commentary on Qurʾān 2:52.

robe, he takes off the clothing of his blameworthy characteristics. When he calls out *labbayka*,¹⁵⁸ not one hair on his body should remain that has not already responded to God.

When he reaches the place of standing, he stands with his heart and his innermost self without choice or opposition to wherever the Real would have him stand. When he stands at ʿArafāt, he recognizes (ʿ*arafa*) the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) and recognizes the right (*ḥaqq*) that belongs to Him most high over himself. He makes himself known (*yataʿarrafa*)¹⁵⁹ to God most high by absolving himself of any strength and power (*bi-tabarrīhi ʿan munnatihi wa-ḥawlihi*), and the Real سُبْحَانَهُ makes Himself known (*yataʿarrafa*) to him with His grace and might (*bi-minnatihi wa-tawlihi*). When he reaches the sacred waymark (*al-mashʿar al-ḥarām*)¹⁶⁰ he remembers his Protector by forgetting himself—his remembrance of his Lord is not sound if at the same time he is remembering himself. When he reaches Minā he removes every request and desire, every passion and fancy, from his heart. When he throws the pebbles, he throws every attachment in this world and the next from his heart. When he sacrifices, he sacrifices his own whims entirely, and seeks approach to the Real سُبْحَانَهُ with [the sacrifice].¹⁶¹

When he enters the *ḥaram*¹⁶² he resolves to distance himself from every prohibited thing (*muḥarram*) according to the language of the law (*lisān al-sharīʿa*) and allusion of true reality (*ishārat al-ḥaqīqa*).¹⁶³ When his glance falls on the House, he witnesses the Lord of the House in his heart, and when he circumambulates the House, his innermost secret circles the dominion (*malakūt*). When he runs between Ṣafā and Marwa, he purifies (*ṣaffā*)¹⁶⁴ every bit of the turbidity of [his] mortal nature (*bashariyya*) and corruption of human nature (*insāniyya*). When he shaves his head, he cuts every attachment that remains to him. When he removes the *iḥrām* from himself and his journey to the House of his Lord, he renews [it with] a new *iḥrām* in his heart. Then, just as he leaves the house of himself for the House of his Lord, he leaves the House of his lord for his Lord most high.

158 “Here I am, O God, here I am. . .” (*labbayka Lllāhum mā labbayk. . .*).

159 Al-Qushayrī is playing with different words from the root ʿ*a-r-f*: ʿ*arāfat*, ʿ*arafa*, *taʿarrafa*.

160 A phrase referring to Muzdalifa, a place between ʿArafāt and Minā. It is mentioned in Qurʾān 2:198: *You would not be at fault if you should seek bounty from your Lord; but when you press on from ʿArafāt, then remember God at the sacred waymark; and remember Him as He has guided you, though previously you were astray.*

161 The verb “to seek approach or nearness” (*taqarraba*) comes from the same root as the noun “sacrifice” (*qurbān*), which is an offering made to seek nearness to God.

162 The *ḥaram* refers to the area around the Kaʿba. The last stage of the pilgrimage is the return to this area and another circumambulation around the Kaʿba.

163 Al-Qushayrī explains the relationship between “The law and the true reality” (*al-Sharīʿa wa-l-ḥaqīqa*) in his *Risāla*, 1:240.

164 Ṣafā and *ṣaffā* are derived from the same root: ṣ-*f*-*y*.

Whoever completes his sacrifice acts only for the sake of his own soul. Whoever is lazy, *God is independent of all the worlds*. [The Prophet] ﷺ said, “The pilgrim has matted hair and is dusty”¹⁶⁵—those who have not actualized the perfection of humility and vanishing from oneself do not have matted hair and are not dusty.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلَىٰ
مَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾

[3:98] Say: “O people of the scripture, why do you disbelieve in God’s verses, when God is witness of what you do?”

The divine address in this verse is meant to confirm the obligation of the pilgrimage [for the people of the scripture]. With respect to the law, the pilgrimage is obligatory for them¹⁶⁶ but with respect to the true state of affairs (*ḥaqīqa*) and [divine] subjugation (*qahr*), the pilgrimage is barred to them. They are called by the law and command (*hum mad‘uwūna shar‘an wa-amran*), but banished by the decree and the subjugation (*maṭrūdūna hukman wa-qahrān*).

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنِ ءَامَنَ تَبْغُونَهَا
عِوَجًا وَأَنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءُ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفْلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

[3:99] Say: “O people of the scripture, why do you bar believers from God’s way, desiring to make it crooked, while you yourselves are witnesses. God is not heedless of what you do.”

How can one who is barred himself bar another? Surely in this is a secret belonging to the [divine] Lordship.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن تَطِيعُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ يَرُدُّوكُمْ
بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ كَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

165 ‘Abd al-Rahmān does not give sources for this *ḥadīth*.

166 This is added on the basis of MS K117, fol. 40a.

[3:100] *O you who believe, if you obey a party of those who have been given the scripture, they will turn you, after you have believed, into disbelievers.*

Estrangement is not restricted to just the estranged, but also extends to anyone who becomes part of their circle. Whoever follows the enemy of God into this ruinous companionship will be cast down to the same level.

وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ وَفِيكُمْ رَسُولُهُ
وَمَنْ يَعْتَصِم بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

[3:101] *How can you disbelieve while you have God’s verses recited to you, and His Messenger is in your midst? Whoever holds fast to God, he is guided to a straight path.*

It is not right that the shade of disbelief should pass over one whose heart [has seen] the rising suns of deeper knowledge (*irfān*). For surely, when day comes, night slips away.

Whoever holds fast to God: The one who *holds fast to God* has [in truth] only found the holding fast from God. How could those who have not been guided by God hold fast to God? The guidance from Him in the beginning (*bidāya*) causes you [to] hold fast in the end (*niḥāya*). Your holding fast does not cause the guidance (*hidāya*). The true state of affairs of holding fast is sincerity, taking oneself to Him, persevering in the flight to Him, and continuing to appeal for His help. Whoever has the covering of separation removed from his innermost self realizes that there is not an atom that belongs to, or comes from, anything other than God. The people who hold fast to Him are those who are held fast by Him. The leader of those who come first and those who come last ﷺ¹⁶⁷ said, “I seek refuge in You from You.”¹⁶⁸

Whoever holds fast to Him through himself¹⁶⁹—without being effaced from his own strength and power in his holding—his homeland is idolatry (*shirk*), but he is unaware.

167 That is, Muḥammad.

168 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān does not give any sources for this *ḥadīth*.

169 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 40a: *man iṭṭaṣama bihi bi-naḥsihi*.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ

[3:102] *O you who believe, fear God as He should be feared* (ḥaqqa tuqātihi)

The proper manner (ḥaqq) of fearing God (taqwā) is to conform with the command, neither more nor less of one's own accord. This is something that has been confirmed by teachings. His command (amr) has two aspects, one of obligation and one of recommendation. Likewise, what is said regarding prohibition (nahy) has two parts, a forbidding and an abstaining from what is blameworthy. Included in this is the proper manner of fearing Him: [it] is first to avoid error, then to avoid negligence, then to beware of any omission, then to cleanse every defect. When you fear looking to your fear of God (taqwā), after you have become characterized by it, then you will truly fear God as you should fear Him.

The proper manner of fearing God is to abandon disobedience (ʿiṣyān) and to remove forgetfulness (nisyān); to uphold contracts (ʿuhūd) and preserve the limits (ḥudūd); to bear witness to the divinity (al-ilāhiyya) and abandon the precepts of human nature (al-bashariyya); to be extinguished under the flow of the decree (ḥukm) after avoiding every sin and injustice; to feel disdain for seeking to gain access to Him based on anything related to your obedience rather than His pure generosity; and to realize that He does not accept or reject anyone for cause (ʿilla).

وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

[3:102] *and do not die, except as Muslims.*

Do not let death (wafāt) overtake you, unless you are in a condition of good faith (wafāʾ).¹⁷⁰

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ

170 Wafāʾ and wafāt are from the same Arabic root, w-f-y. Wafā means to be faithful by fulfilling one's agreement, promise, or vow. Wafāt is the fulfillment or completion of one's life, that is, death.

ءَايَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٧١﴾

[3:103] *And hold fast to God's bond, together, and do not scatter; remember God's grace upon you when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together so that by His grace you became brothers; and you were upon the brink of a pit of fire; but He delivered you from it. So God makes clear to you His signs that you might be guided.*

Holding fast to His bond *سُبْحَانَهُ* is clinging to the traces of the intermediary (*āthār al-wāsiṭa*)—the noble one (*‘azīz*) ﴿﴾.¹⁷¹ This [comes] from confirming what is true and right (*taḥaqquq*) and remaining devoted (*ta‘alluq*) to the Book and the *sunna*.

It is rightly said that [the words] *and hold fast to God's bond* are spoken to the elite (*khawāṣṣ*), while [the words] *and hold fast to God* [4:146 and 22:78] are spoken to the elect of the elect (*khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*). Whoever turns from His auspicious occurrences (*sawāniḥ*) back to his own choosing and devising (*iḥtiyāl*), his own thinking and reasoning (*istidlāl*), his own ways of knowing and behaving (*ashkāl*); and takes refuge in the shade of his own planning (*tadbīr*), seeking illumination by the light of his own intellect and speculation (*tafkīr*)—such a person is denied the shade of divine solicitude and is left with his unfortunate state.

And do not scatter: Scattering or separation (*tafriqa*) is the most intense punishment. It is the companion to associating others with God (*shirk*).

And remember God's grace upon you when you were enemies: They were enemies when they remained with their worldly concerns, turning toward the narrowness of human nature, and competing with one another as befits the stinginess of [their] lower selves.

And He brought your hearts together through deliverance from the captivity of created things.¹⁷² He drove away afflictions from their innermost selves. Then what they sought together became one thing. If a thousand people were to be brought together in one pursuit, they would, in truth, be one.

So that by His grace you became brothers: *His grace* is His safeguarding (*‘iṣma*) of you as brothers united in aim and aspiration, annihilated from the worldly concerns of the lower self and the furtive impulses of stinginess and avarice.

And you were upon the brink of a pit of fire by your being held captive

171 That is, Muḥammad.

172 The more literal meaning of *mukawwanāt* is “things brought into existence.”

to the objects of your desire (*munākum*) and [being] bound by the shackles of your worldly concerns and whims (*hawākum*).

But He delivered you from it by the light of contentment (*riḍāʾ*) and by your being extinguished with the flow of the decree (*qaḍāʾ*), and this is, in truth, the greatest position (*al-makānat al-ʿuẓmā*) and the weightiest rank (*al-darajat al-kubrā*). Included in this is abandoning reliance on that which is from your own virtue and piety (*tuqā*), intellect and discernment (*ḥijā*), learning and understanding (*nuhā*); and fleeing to God, may He be glorified and exalted above everything other (*siwā*).

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

[3:104] *Let there be one community of you calling to good, and enjoining decency, and forbidding indecency; those are the successful.*

This is an allusion to groups of people who have remained with God, for God. No blame of any blamer reaches them, and no reliance on any cause (*ʿilla*) cuts them off from God. All of them have sought awareness of the indicators (*dalālāt*) of His command, have restrained their lower selves,¹⁷³ and have devoted their lives to seeking His good pleasure. They have worked for God, have been sincere and faithful to the religion (*dīn*) of God, and have called the created beings of God to God. So their trade is profitable and their dealings produce no loss.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ
وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾

[3:105] *Be not as those who scattered and disputed after the clear proofs came to them, those will have a mighty chastisement.*

He showed these groups of people the marks of seeking in the beginning (*ibtidāʿ*) but then branded them with the burning of separation in the end (*intihāʿ*). They passed the night with the party of lovers and then awoke with the group of outsiders.

173 The translation follows the word *anfus* from MS K117, fol. 40b rather than *anfās* from the Basyūni edition.

يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌُ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌُ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ أُسْوِدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَكْفَرْتُمْ
 بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ
 أَبْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَبِئْسَ اللَّهُمَّ فِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

[3:106] *The day when some faces are blackened, and some faces whitened. As for those whose faces are blackened, “did you disbelieve after you had believed? Then taste the chastisement for what you disbelieved!”*

[3:107] *But for those whose faces are whitened, they shall be in God’s mercy, abiding therein.*

The faces of the lords of pretensions (*da‘awā*) will be blackened while the faces of the companions of meanings (*ma‘ānī*) will be whitened. The faces of the people of unveilings (*kushūfāt*) will be whitened through illumination. The faces of the companions of the veil (*hijāb*) will be blackened with shame,¹⁷⁴ covered with dust (*ta‘lūhā ghabara*), and overcast with gloom (*wa-tarhaquhā qatarā*).¹⁷⁵

It is said that whoever’s heart is white today, his face will be white in the future, and the one who is the opposite, his situation will be the reverse.

It is said that whoever turns away from created beings before His auspicious occurrences (*sawānīh*), his face will become white with the spirit of having committed his affairs [to God] (*rūh al-tafwīd*). Whoever’s heart is attached to what is other [than God] with wants and needs (*hawā’ij*), his heart will become black, [and] his face [will be] in the dust of covetousness. As for those whose faces have become white, they will be in intimacy and ease (*rawḥ*). As for those whose faces have become blackened, they will [experience] tribulations and lamentation (*nawḥ*).

تِلْكَ ءَايَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾
 وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَاِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُورُ ﴿١٠٩﴾

[3:108] *Those are the verses of God which We recite to you in truth, and God*

174 The translation follows the word “shame” (*khajla*) from MS K117, fol. 40b rather than *hijba* or *hajba* from the Basyūnī edition.

175 Al-Qushayrī is rephrasing Qur’ān 80:40–41: *And some faces on that day will be covered with dust* (‘alayhā ghabara), *overcast with gloom* (tarhaquhā qatarā).

desires not any injustice for the worlds.

[3:109] *To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth, and to Him all matters are returned.*

We make our address to you continuous in all times, in all things small and large, a cultivation of the way of love (*widād*).

And God desires not any injustice for the worlds: How could it be possible to ascribe injustice to Him in the determining of events (*taqdir*) and existence (*wujūd*), when all created beings are His creation and what has been determined for them is His wise determination (*ḥukm*)?

To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth by way of possession (*milk*) **and to Him all matters are returned** by way of determination (*ḥukm*).

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ
الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

[3:110] *You are the best community (khayra ummatin) brought forth to men, enjoining decency, and forbidding indecency, and believing in God.*

Because Muṣṭafā ﷺ¹⁷⁶ is the most honored of the prophets, his community is the best of communities. Because they are the best of communities, they are the most desiring (*ashwāq*) of communities.¹⁷⁷ Because they are the most desiring of communities, their lives are the shortest of lives.¹⁷⁸ He created them as the last of created beings so that their stay beneath the earth would not be long [before the resurrection]. Their goodness (*khayriyya*) has been obtained not by the abundance of their prayers and devotional acts, but by the intensity with which He has drawn them near and selected them. Surely the standing of the earlier ones at the door has been long, but when the permission comes to enter, the later ones will go first.

How many reach out
to connect to us

176 Muṣṭafā is an epithet for Muḥammad and means “the chosen one.”

177 Because of repetition that appears to be in error, the text in Basyūnī’s edition has been modified, with reference to MS K117, fol. 41a.

178 Presumably, al-Qushayrī means that Muḥammad’s community is the most desirous of the hereafter. See his commentary on Qur’an 2:94–2:96.

[yet] their palms receive
no share.¹⁷⁹

Enjoining decency, and forbidding indecency:

Decency is service to the Real and indecency is keeping company with the lower self.

Decency is to prefer what is due to the Real (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) and indecency is to choose the worldly concerns of the lower self (*ḥazz al-nafs*).

Decency is what brings you close to Him and indecency is what veils you from Him.

In the command to decency you are bound to be characterized by decency and in forbidding indecency you are required to turn away from it.

وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِّنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ
الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

[3:110] *Had the people of the scripture believed, it would have been better for them; some of them are believers; but most of them are wicked.*

If everyone had been included under Our command, they would have attained true glory in this world and the hereafter, but they were kept away from acceptance in the choice already made—most of them were branded with associating partners with God (*shirk*).

لَنْ يَضُرُّوكُمْ إِلَّا أَذًى ط وَإِنْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ يُؤَلُّوكُمُ الْأَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يُنصُرُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

[3:111] *They will not harm you, except a little hurt; and if they fight against you, they will turn their backs to you, then they will not be helped.*

The Real ﷻ does not give His enemies¹⁸⁰ power over His friends, except as much as will prove the sincerity of the flight [of the friends] to God, for the reality of their flight (*firār*) is nobler before Him than their staying firm (*qarār*). If [the enemies] imagine themselves to be superior to the friends, in truth, they suffer lowliness and degradation.

179 Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to al-ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf and to Ibn al-Muʿtazz (Muṣṭafā, no. 18, pp. 28–29).

180 “His enemies” (*adāʾuhu*) has been added on the basis of MS K117, fol. 41a.

ضَرَبْتَ عَلَيْهِمُ الدَّلِيلَ أَيْنَ مَا تُقِفُوا إِلَّا بِحَبْلِ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلِ مِّنَ النَّاسِ
وَبَأْسٍ وَبِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَضَرَبْتَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةَ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا
يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا
وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

[3:112] *Abasement shall be cast upon them, wherever they are found, save a rope of God, and a rope of the people; they have incurred anger from God, and poverty shall be cast upon them; that because they disbelieved in God's signs, and slew the prophets without right; that because they disobeyed and used to transgress.*

The sign of being exiled cannot be hidden, the mark of distance cannot be concealed, and the evidence of being cut off cannot be veiled. They are in the lowly state of having been banished and abased by rejection. Those who have eyes (*ulū l-abṣar*) learn from them, while those among the disbelievers and the profligates (*al-kuffār al-fujjār*) who are of their kind are deceived by them.

﴿ لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ آنَاءَ
الَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَأُولَئِكَ
مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾

[3:113] *Yet they are not all alike; some of the people of the scripture are a community upright, who recite God's verses in the watches of the night, pros- trating themselves.*

[3:114] *They believe in God and in the Last Day, enjoining decency and for- bidding indecency, vying with one another in good works; those are of the righteous.*

Just as the difference between light and darkness is one of contradiction, it has likewise been established that the states of the friends and the states of the enemies are mutually exclusive. How can illumination and darkness (*zulma*), certainty and suspicion (*tuhma*), communion and separation

(*furqa*), distance and intimacy (*ulfa*), devotion on the carpet and turning from the door, being characterized by friendship (*walāʿ*) and departing from fidelity (*wafāʿ*) be considered equal? How can the two possibly come together? How can they be compatible or equal?

وَمَا يَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَنْ يُكْفَرُوهُ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾

[3:115] *And whatever good they do, they shall not be denied it, and God knows the God-fearing.*

One who is intent shall not be debarred from His door; one who does business shall not suffer loss on His account; one who desires companionship shall not be lonely with Him; and one who seeks shall not be contemptible before Him.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا
وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

[3:116] *As for the disbelievers, their riches shall not avail them, neither their children, against God; those are the inhabitants of the fire, abiding therein.*

There is no alternate for them in the situation, no substitute for them in the final outcome. They are in a state of loss in the here and now and in the future will be in separation and exile, affliction and hurt, punishment and rejection:

She changed and we changed.

Alas to anyone who

has sought but did not find a

replacement to let him forget.¹⁸¹

مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ فِيهَا صِرٌّ

181 There is an error in the Basyūnī edition which Muṣṭafā corrects to *yaslū*. The MS K117, fol. 41a has *yasli* here. He notes a similar verse attributed to al-Mustazhir bi-Llāh: *tabaddalū wa-tabaddalnā wa-akhsarnā man ibtaghā badalan minnā fa-lam yajid* (Muṣṭafā, no. 14, p. 47). Al-Qushayrī cites the same verse in his commentary on Qurʾān 2:10.

أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتَهُ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ
وَلَكِنِ أَنفُسُهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾

[3:117] *The likeness of what they expend in the life of this world is as the likeness of a wind wherein is a blast that smote the tillage of a people who have wronged themselves and destroyed it. God did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves.*

They found no inheritance for what they spent for other than God except continuous affliction. They obtained nothing from their calculations except one tribulation after another. That is the recompense of those who reject and turn their backs.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا بِطَانَةَ مِّن دُونِكُمْ لَا يَأْلُونَكُمْ خَبَالًا
وَدُّوا مَا عَنِتُّمْ قَدْ بَدَتِ الْبَغْضَاءُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَمَا تُخْفِي صُدُورُهُمْ
أَكْبَرُ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾

[3:118] *O you who believe, do not take as intimates anyone apart from yourselves; such men spare nothing to ruin you; they would love for you to suffer. Hatred is revealed by their mouths; and what their breasts conceal is yet greater. Now We have made clear to you the signs; if you understand.*

To trust the adversary, after difficulties have become apparent, is to further facilitate the deception of the enemy. The Real ﷻ advised the Muslims to be wary of the opposition, to declare themselves free of anyone other [than Him], and to continually persist in their devotion to the Real ﷻ in the heart and innermost self. He stated that, from the beginning, it was not unexpected that [there would be] opponents of the Messenger ﷺ among the people. How could it not be so when [Muḥammad] ﷺ [was] drawn near and they [were] turned away? How can night be combined with day?

هَآأَنْتُمْ أَوْلَاءُ يُحِبُّونَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّونَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ كُلِّهِ وَإِذَا
لَقَوْكُمْ قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا عَضُّوا عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَنَامِلَ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ

[3:119] *Lo, there you are, you love them, but they love you not; you believe in the Book, all of it, and when they meet you they say, “We believe,” but when they are alone, they bite their fingertips at you in rage.*

“Your hearts, in the matter of your magnanimity, are clear of impurities so sympathy predominates in you for them. But they, in their ferocious recalcitrance and antagonism, deceive you in what they are capable of doing. Because of their savageness you will not receive a drop of anything from them but their rage, so free your heart of them, O Muḥammad.”

قُلْ مُوتُوا بِغَيْظِكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١١٩﴾

[3:119] *Say: “Perish in your rage. God knows what is in the breasts.”*

“Leave them alone in suffering the rage that is mixed up inside them,¹⁸² and find peace in your hearts [in relation] to what has happened to them, for God is nearer to His servants; He bestows what He will on whom He will.”

إِنْ تَمَسَّسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُوهُمْ وَإِنْ تُصِيبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرَّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾

[3:120] *If good fortune befalls you, it is evil for them; but if evil befalls you, they rejoice thereat. Yet if you endure and fear [God], their guile will not hurt you at all; God encompasses what they do.*

This verse alludes to those who abandon the path of spiritual desire (*irāda*), and return to the states of the people of habit (*ahl al-āda*). They are not happy to see an aspirant (*murīd*) have a breakthrough (*naḥādh*); rather they are glad when they see listlessness in a seeker (*qāṣid*). God in His favor and grace perfects His light for the people of His solicitude and He lets the evildoers stray from His path and their distance is punishment. He is not concerned with what comes to them.

وَإِذْ عَدَوْتَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ تُبَوِّئُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَقْعِدَ لِلْقِتَالِ ﴿١٢٠﴾

182 The translation follows the verb *mā yatadākhluhum* from MS K117, fol. 41a here rather than *mā nudākhluhum* from the Basyūnī edition.

وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢١﴾

[3:121] *And when you went forth at dawn from your family to assign the believers their places for battle, and God hears, knows.*

He put [the Prophet] ﷺ in charge of assigning the places for battle, delegating His command to him. Then He made manifest in this matter the hidden things of His secret. The axis revolves around His determination and decree (*fa-l-madār 'alā qaḍā'ihi wa-qaḍarihi*), and the crossing over is by means of what He brings about and chooses (*wa-l-i'tibār bi-ijrā'ihi wa-ikhtiyārihi*).¹⁸³

إِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّائِفَتَانِ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ تَفْشَلَا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيَهُمَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

[3:122] *When two parties of you were about to lose heart; and God was their protector, and let the believers rely on God.*

He brings forth everyone in the vest of free choice (*ikhtiyār*), as if their negation and affirmation, their acts and abstention from acting were at their [own] command. In truth, they are only turned about by the agency of (His) grasp (*taṣrif al-qabda*) and the turning of (His) deliberative power (*taqlīb al-qudra*).

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنْتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

[3:123] *God already gave you victory at Badr, when you were contemptible. So fear God, in order that you might be thankful.*

The reminder of favors granted in the past is an opening to the door of supplication to ask for similar things in the future.

183 “Crossing over” (*i'tibār*) is a term used by al-Qushayrī to describe the way in which occurrences in this world can be understood as references to hidden realities. It also can be translated as “taking heed,” as in Qur'an 59:2, *so take heed* (*i'tabirū*), *O you who have eyes!* Some can see these correspondences and some cannot. See also al-Qushayrī's use of this term in his commentary on Qur'an 2:26 and 2:253.

إِذْ تَقُولُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَلَنْ يَكْفِيَكُمْ أَنْ يُمَدِّدَ كُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلَاثَةِ ءَأَلْفٍ
مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُنَزَّلِينَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ بَلَىٰ إِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَأْتُوكُم مِّن فَوْرِهِمْ
هَذَا يُمَدِّدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ ءَأَلْفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

[3:124] *When you were saying to the believers, “Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord should reinforce you with three thousand angels sent down?*

[3:125] *Yea, if you are patient and fear, and they come against you instantly, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand angels accoutred.”*

The tranquility sent by the Real سُبْحَانَهُ to the heart of Muṣṭafā ﷺ was from God سُبْحَانَهُ, without intermediary, while the strengthening of the hearts of the believers was through the intermediary of the Messenger ﷺ. If not for [the doubt that] remained in them, he would not have replied to them, telling [them] of the help [that would] be sent in the angel (*malak*). Why tell of the angel when the affair is entirely in the hand of the King (*malik*)?

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ لَكُمْ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُكُمْ بِهِ ۗ وَمَا النَّصْرُ
إِلَّا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿١٢٦﴾

[3:126] *What God ordained was only as a good tiding to you and that your hearts might be at peace. Victory comes only from God, the Mighty, the Wise.*

God سُبْحَانَهُ follows His practice (*sunna*) with His friends in such a way that, when their intentions (*niyyāt*) become weak, their spiritual desire (*irāda*) low, or their hearts are on the verge of listlessness (*fatra*), He shows them kindnesses (*altāf*) and special gifts (*karāmāt*). By these the ties of their deeper knowledge (*irfān*) are strengthened and the realities of their certainty (*yaqīn*) are confirmed. He sent down this address according to this practice (*sunna*). Then He severed their hearts and innermost selves from anything other than Him entirely, saying, *Victory comes only from God.*

لِيَقْطَعَ طَرَفًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْ يَكْبِتَهُمْ فَيَنْقَلِبُوا خَائِبِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

[3:127] *And that He might cut off a party of the disbelievers, or suppress them,*

so that they fall back, frustrated.

God does not let enemies gloat over the misfortunes of His friends. Even if the believer is struck by a catastrophic defeat (*nakba*), there is no doubt that God will cause His enemy to suffer trial and punishment.

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾
 وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن
 يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٩﴾

[3:128] *It is no concern at all of yours, whether He relents to them or chastises them; for they are indeed evildoers.*

[3:129] *To God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; He forgives whom He wills and chastises whom He wills. And God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

The deity is the One to whom belongs the command and the prohibition. Because there is no counterpart to Him in divinity, [the Prophet] ﷺ has nothing to do with the command and the prohibition.

It is said that in what He taught him and told him, He divested [the Prophet] of everything else and every share or claim inasmuch as He stated that the command was in no way his. If no part of the command is permitted for the leader of the first and the last, how can there be any part of the command for the one whose rank is lower in station?

It is said that He takes for Himself alone the secret¹⁸⁴ of His servants in His decree (*ḥukm*), saying, “I am the One who relents to whom I will among My servants and I punish whom I will. What happens in the end is hidden from you, O Muḥammad, and you are not aware of My secret regarding them.”

It is said that He raised [the Prophet] up at one time to a station in which He said, “*and you threw not when you threw, but God threw*” [8:17]. [The Prophet] threw a handful of earth and hit all the faces [of the enemy]. But in another time He said to him, “*No part of the command is yours*” [3:128], and then added in explanation, “*To God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth*” [3:129]. Therefore the right to possess is His right to possess (*mulk*), the command is His command (*amr*), and the decree is His decree (*ḥukm*). He punishes whom He will (*fa-man shā'a adhdhabahu*) and brings closer [to Him] whom He will (*wa-man shā'a qarrabahu*). He

184 The word “secret” (*sirr*) is taken from MS K117, fol. 41b.

guides whom He will (*wa-man shā'a hadāhu*) and leads astray whom He will (*wa-man shā'a aghwāhu*).

﴿١٢٩﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا مُّضَاعَفَةً وَاتَّقُوا
 اللَّهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾

[3:130] O you who believe, do not exact usury, doubled and redoubled. And fear God, so that you may prosper.

[3:131] And fear the fire that has been prepared for the disbelievers.

[God] has prohibited usury for His servants; this includes loaning one amount and asking twice as much in return. But He has asked you for a loan which He will repay seven hundredfold, even up to an infinite repayment.¹⁸⁵ This alludes to the magnanimity (*karam*) that is not inherent in humans but rather is an attribute of the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*.

And fear the fire that has been prepared for the disbelievers: These words indicate that the believer will not be chastised by [the fire]. If he is chastised by it for a time, he will not abide in it.

﴿١٣٢﴾ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

[3:132] And obey God and the Messenger, so that you may find mercy.

[God] tied obedience to the Messenger ﴿﴾ to obedience to Himself. This was to elevate [the Prophet's] rank, and to make things easier for the community by handing them over to the company of an individual who was one of them. It is more reassuring to be with one's own kind.

﴿١٣٤﴾ وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ
 أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ
 الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

185 Al-Qushayrī is referencing Qur'an 2:245, 57:11, and 64:17: *Who is he that will lend God a loan that is good, and He will multiply it manifold?* [2:245].

[3:133] *And vie with one another, hastening to forgiveness from your Lord, and to a garden as wide as the heavens and the earth that has been prepared for those who fear.*

[3:134] *Who expend in prosperity and adversity, and restrain their rage, and pardon their fellow men; and God loves those who are virtuous.*

The meaning here is **vie with one another, hastening** to act in ways that will bring about **forgiveness** for you. The hearts [of the believers] were overwhelmed, imagining that this was a difficult matter, so [the Prophet] ﷺ said, “Remorse is repentance” (*al-nadmu tawba*).¹⁸⁶ Nothing but repentance brings about forgiveness because the one who disobeys is the one who is in need of it.

The people who vie with one another are of several types. Those who are worshipers (*ʿābidūn*) vie with one another by their feet in acts of obedience (*bi-qadamihim fi l-ṭāʿāt*). Those who have deeper knowledge (*ʿārifūn*) vie with one another with their aspirations, in acts of drawing near (*bi-himamihim fi l-qurubāt*). Those who are disobedient (*ʿāṣūn*) vie with one another with their remorse, by swallowing their grief (*bi-nadamihim bi-tajarruʿi al-ḥasarāt*). Whoever vies with others by his feet finds [God’s] recompense (*wajada mathwabatahu*). Whoever vies with others with his aspirations finds [God’s] nearness (*wajada qurbatahu*). Whoever vies with others with his remorse finds [God’s] mercy (*wajada raḥmatahu*).

When He mentioned the garden, He described it by the vastness of its width, and in that there is information about its height because the height is comparable to the width. But when He mentioned forgiveness, he did not mention height or width, so some people have said that forgiveness is from the [divine] attributes of the essence (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) and is part of the meaning of mercy (*raḥma*). According to this (way of thinking), His forgiveness is His decree (*ḥukm*) in overlooking [the misdeeds of] the servant¹⁸⁷ and His speech (*kalām*). The quality of the essence is too holy for size and width. [On the other hand], those who say His forgiveness belongs with the [divine] attributes of actions (*ṣifāt al-fiʿl*) say that because of the abundance of sins, He did not describe forgiveness as having any end, thus indicating that it encompasses all sins.

Who expend in prosperity and adversity: They do not hoard anything from God and prefer Him over everything. They expend their bodies in acts of obedience and in various litanies and efforts. [They expend] their wealth in spreading good works and striving to draw near [to God] by various kinds of almsgiving. [They expend] their hearts in seeking and then

186 Neither Basyūnī nor ʿAbd al-Raḥmān give the sources for this *ḥadīth*.

187 The phrase *We overlook their misdeeds* occurs in Qurʾān 47:16.

continual observation. [They expend their spirits] in the purity of what they love and the fullness of their states. [They expend] their innermost selves in witnessing in all moments, waiting for the allusions to what has been sought, exerting their utmost to take advantage of the subtlety of what appears.

And restrain their rage: They overlook [the faults] of people because they regard them with the eye of kinship. Some people are forbearing with the sins of others, but they view them with an eye of superiority. Others restrain their rage in recognition that the Real سُبْحَانَهُ knows what they suffer and so bearing the burden becomes easy for them. Others have passed away from human properties (*aḥkām al-bashariyya*), and find the purest comforts¹⁸⁸ in abasement because their lower selves have fallen away and have been annihilated. Others see not even an atom of anything other [than God] in bringing forth and executing [what appears on earth and in human interactions], since they know that the One who brings forth is God. Therefore their disputes and quarrels with anything other than God have disappeared, for when they have singled Him out as the sole cause of origination, they yield to His decree and they see no way other than submission to it. The Real سُبْحَانَهُ has conferred upon them the coolness of contentment (*riḍāʿ*) and they uphold for Him the condition of harmony (*muwāfaqa*).

And pardon their fellow men: They see it as an obligation on themselves, not a favor from them to their fellow men. Their speaker said:

Many have thrown stones of harm
meant for me.

I have not found any escape
except compassion for them.¹⁸⁹

God loves those who are virtuous: Virtuousness (*iḥsān*) is that you worship God as if you see Him, and this is the right conduct with the Real. As for right conduct with people, virtuousness is that you give up your right entirely, no matter what it is worth and to whomever; [you] receive his acceptance¹⁹⁰ gladly, and [do] not hold any favor against him.

188 The translation follows the word “comforts” (*rāḥāt*) from MS K117, fol. 42a rather than the word “degrees” (*darajāt*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

189 Muṣṭafā adds another verse: “It may be that God will show me the most oppressive of people and then draw me near to Him.” He states that the verses have been attributed to Bahlūl b. ʿAmr (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 120).

190 There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition that has been completed from MS K117, fol. 42a: *taqbalu bi-qubūlihi minhu*.

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا
 لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ
 يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن
 تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

[3:135] *And who when they commit an indecency or wrong themselves, remember God, and pray forgiveness for their sins—and who shall forgive sins but God?—and who do not persist in what they did, knowing.*

[3:136] *Those—their requital is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein; excellent is the wage of those workers!*

God most high revealed to Moses ﷺ, “say to those who do wrong, ‘Until such time as they do not remember Me, I have obliged Myself to remember those who remember Me and My remembrance of those who do wrong is the curse.’” But He said to those who do wrong in this community, [*when*] *they wrong themselves, remember God*, and then says in the last part of the verse: *and who shall forgive sins but God?*¹⁹¹

It is said that one’s indecency (*fāḥisha*) is according to one’s state (*ḥāl*) and station (*maqām*), as is true of one’s wrongdoing (*ẓulm*). The transgressions (*mukhālafāt*) that occur in the minds of the most respected people are like the actions of others. Their speaker said:

You are my eye.
 Is it not right for my eye
 to lower its eyelids
 against the dust in the air?¹⁹²

The crime on the carpet is not like the sin at the door.

191 One of the occasions of revelation for this verse, cited by Abū l-Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī in his *Asbāb nuzūl al-Qurʾān*, describes a concern the Companions brought to the Prophet. They wondered if the children of Israel were more favored by God than them, because they were given specific and individual instructions on how to expiate their sins. When this verse was revealed, Muḥammad asked them whether they had not been given something better (*al-Wāḥidī’s Asbāb al-nuzūl*, trans. Guezzou; Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and Its Interpreters*, 2:322).

192 Both Basyūnī and Muṣṭafā identify this verse as that of Ibn al-Rūmī (Muṣṭafā, no. 3, pp. 22–23).

It is said that they commit an indecency by relying on their [own] actions, or they wrong themselves by regarding their [own] states, so they seek forgiveness for their sins by declaring themselves free from what they do and do not do, knowing that there are no means to Him except through Him. He has purified them of the wrongdoings of their bodily and lower selves. Looking to states and actions when realities appear is wrongdoing. One whom God has purified by the light of solicitude is protected from entanglement in the delusions of people.

Those—their requital is forgiveness from their Lord in returning them to witnessing the Lordship and the best possible outcome and fate that was already theirs.

And gardens beneath which rivers flow in the future in paradise and in the here and now in the happiness of whispered conversations¹⁹³ and the fullness of intimacy.

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ
عَقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

[3:137] *Ways of life have passed away before you; so travel in the land and behold how was the end of those who denied.*

[3:138] *This is an exposition for mankind, and a guidance, and an admonition for such as are God-fearing.*

It means “Take heed from those who came before. Consider how We acted with those who showed friendship, and how We took revenge on those who showed enmity.”

This is an exposition for mankind: an exposition to some people through rational proofs (*adillat al-‘uqūl*), to others through unveilings of hearts (*mukāshafāt al-qulūb*), and to others through the self-disclosure of the Real in the innermost selves (*tajalli l-ḥaqq fi l-asrār*).

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ إِنْ

193 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 42b in “whispered conversations” (*munājāt*) rather than “permitted things” (*mubāḥāt*) from the Basyūnī edition.

يَمَسُّكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِثْلُهُ وَتِلْكَ

[3:139] *Faint not, neither grieve, for you shall prevail if you are believers.*

[This] means when you support or launch an attack by means of [the help of] God, you should not be afraid of anything other than God. Nor should you faint or become weak, for surely help is from God and the One who prevails is God. Nothing is equal to God. Not even an atom or a particle [originates] from them.

His words *if you are believers*, that is, it is not right that the believer should be overshadowed by fear of anything other than God.

الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَيَتَّخِذَ مِنْكُمْ
شُهَدَاءَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

[3:140] *If a wound touches you, a like wound already has touched the other people. Such days We deal out in turn among mankind, and that God may know those who believe; and that He may take witnesses from among you, and God loves not the evildoers.*

“If a difficulty has come to you for Our sake, they have faced something similar before you. They have been given something like what you have been given.” Those who are patient among them will be victorious (*fa-man ṣabara minhum zaḥira*), while those who suffer what comes with annoyance and anger will lose (*wa man ḍajira min ḥamli ma laqiya khasira*). Days come in turns (*al-ayām nuwabun*) and circumstances change (*wa-l-ḥālāt duwalun*), and nothing is hidden from the Real.

وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَيَمْحَقَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾

[3:141] *And that God may prove the believers, and efface the disbelievers.*

The tests of the unseen are a kind of smelting¹⁹⁴ for the servant. Through

194 The translation follows Basyūnī's suggestion that the word “smelting” (*sabk*) must be the intended word, even though the manuscripts he was working from and the manuscript used for this translation (MS K117, fol. 42b) have the word “entangling” (*shabk*). *Sabk* refers to the process of melting, refining, and shaping metal and is used metaphorically

various stages, He purifies him from faults so that he becomes like pure gold without any dross. In this way, one becomes clear of defects and purified for God.

*And efface the disbelievers in the wadis of dispersion (tafriqa). As for the scum, it passes away as dross [13:17].*¹⁹⁵

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ
الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٤٢﴾

[3:142] *Or did you suppose that you should enter paradise without God knowing who among you have struggled and who are patient.*

The wish of those who think they can arrive at a greatly esteemed place without enduring hardships casts them into the abyss of destruction. On the other hand, those who recognize the value of [the place] that is sought¹⁹⁶ will have the exertion of their pains made easy for them:

Time is not generous
with its pleasures
for those who are reluctant
to throw off restraints.¹⁹⁷

Their speaker said:

When youth is on the lookout
for the lightning of meanings (*al-maʿānī*),
the least valuable use of time
is the pleasantry of sleep.¹⁹⁸

to speak of the testing and refining of human character.

195 Basyūnī suggests that this verse may have been placed here in error and belongs in the previous paragraph to explain the word “dross” (*khathath*). However, it occurs in this order as well in the MS K117, fol. 42b and has been left here in the translation.

196 That is, paradise.

197 Basyūnī attributes the verse to Abū Nuwās and says it refers to his dispute with Muslim b. al-Walīd. The verse does not appear in Muṣṭafā.

198 Muṣṭafā gives two references for this verse, one attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and one to Abū l-Qāsim al-Saʿdī (Muṣṭafā, no. 20, p. 49).

وَلَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ تَمَنَّوْنَ الْمَوْتَ مِن قَبْلِ أَن تَلْقَوْهُ
فَقَدْ رَأَيْتُمُوهُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

[3:143] *You were longing for death before you met it. Now you have seen it, looking on.*

The pangs of longing come after being patient in enduring difficulties, yet

When tears
flow down cheeks

The one who is crying is distinguished
from the one who is only pretending.¹⁹⁹

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِن مَّاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ
أَنْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَن يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا
وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

[3:144] *Muḥammad is only a messenger: messengers have passed away before him. Why, if he should die or is slain, will you turn back on your heels. If any man should turn back on his heels, he will not harm God in any way, and God will requite those that are thankful.*

The messengers were stationed wherever they were made to stand, and they spoke of what they had been told so far as they knew. When they were aided by the lights of insights, they came to know the hidden things of the innermost self to the degree that they were given illumination through the subtleties of allusion.²⁰⁰

Why, if he should die or is slain, will you turn back on your heels: When Muṣṭafā ﷺ²⁰¹ passed away, the eyes of discernment of all became weak, except those of [Abū Bakr] al-Ṣiddiq ﷺ. God aided him with the power of the spirit of peace (*sakīna*) and inspired him with the power of governorship (*al-tawallī*). [Abū Bakr] said, “Whoever worships Muḥammad,

199 Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to Mutanabbī (Muṣṭafā, no. 7, pp. 90–91). Al-Qushayrī cites the same verse in his commentary on Qurʾān 2:88.

200 The translation of this sentence follows MS K117, fol. 42b.

201 That is, Muḥammad.

Muḥammad has died.”²⁰² Everyone was subdued by the authority of his words because the light of his state spread to them, just as the sun, by its rising, incorporates the light of the stars in its rays. The less intense rays of the stars are concealed by [the sun’s rays].

He said *Why, if he should die or is slain* because [the Prophet] ﷺ was slain. [The Prophet] said, “The meal of Khaybar comes to me yet again, but this time it has cut my aorta.”²⁰³

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كَتَبْنَا مُوَجَلًّا وَمَنْ
يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْآخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا
وَسَنَجْزِي الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

[3:145] *It is not for any soul to die, save by the leave of God, a prescribed term. And whoever desires the reward of this world, We will give him of it; and whoever desires the reward of the hereafter, We will give him of it; and We will requite the thankful.*

The breaths have a set duration for which there is no increase or decrease.

And whoever desires the reward of this world, We will give him of it: The righteous have what comes in the end (*‘āqiba*) and the others have heedlessness (*ghafla*).

And whoever desires the reward of the hereafter, We will give him of it: The reward of the hereafter is first of all forgiveness (*ghufrān*), then the gardens (*jinān*), then beatitude (*riḍwān*).

And We will requite the thankful: The requital for thankfulness is thankfulness.

وَكَايِن مِّن نَّبِيٍّ قَاتَلَ مَعَهُ رِضِيُونَ كَثِيرٌ فَمَا وَهَنُوا لِمَا أَصَابَهُمْ فِي

202 ‘Abd al-Rahmān states that this *ḥadīth* can be found in al-Bukhārī, Ibn Māja, and Ibn Ḥanbal.

203 The translation for this paragraph follows MS K117, fol. 42b. Al-Qushayrī explains the use of the word “slain” in the Qur’ānic verse as referring to the assertion the Prophet Muḥammad reportedly made on his death bed, that his illness was caused by poisoned food he had been given to eat some years previously. Basyūnī gives a version of this *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī.

سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُوا وَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

[3:146] *How many a prophet has been killed and with him thousands manifold [fought], but they fainted not in the face of what afflicted them in God's way; they neither weakened, nor did they humble themselves. And God loves the patient.*

Those who proceeded in good faith (*wafāʿ*), who upheld what is appropriate for purity (*ṣafāʿ*), who did not withdraw from the path (*ṭarīq*), who applied themselves to realization (*taḥqīq*), and who restrained themselves through straitening (*taḍyīq*)²⁰⁴ and subtle examination (*tadqīq*) [of themselves]—they found the love (*maḥabba*) of the Real سُبْحَانَهُ as a legacy for their patience. The Real was the compensation for them at the end of their affair, since they did not swerve from the required effort (*jahd*), or from the protection of the pact (*ʿahd*). They submitted themselves utterly (*sallamū taslīman*), abandoning the present world. Every one of them was constant and abiding (*muqīman mustadīman*) in holding to the pact, straight and true (*mustaqīman*) in holding to the condition of service and love.

وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا
وَتَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾

[3:147] *All that they said was, “Our Lord, forgive us our sins and our excesses in our affairs and make firm our feet and help us against the unbelieving folk.”*

They realized the true realities of meaning (*maʿnā*) and held their tongues from making any claims (*daʿwā*). Then they spoke words seeking forgiveness and expressing shame, just as it has been said:

He avoided misdeeds
and then even became afraid of them.

Instead it was as if his good deeds
were misdeeds.²⁰⁵

204 What al-Qushayrī means by “straitening” (*taḍyīq*) is probably best understood through the concept of “poverty,” which he explains in the chapter on “Poverty” (Bāb al-faqr), *Risāla*, 2:536–539.

205 Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to Abū Tammām, who recited it in praise of al-Maʿmūn (Muṣṭafā, no. 7, p. 105).

فَاتَهُمُ اللَّهُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا

[3:148] *And God gave them the reward of this world,*

The least of that is contentment [with little] (*qanā'a*), then satisfaction [with whatever God wishes] (*riḍā'*),²⁰⁶ then living one's life with Him (*al-ʿaysh maʿahu*), then intimacy in sitting before Him, then the perfection of joy in meeting Him, then the independence of the innermost self [from all else] (*istiqlāl al-sirr*) through His existence.

وَحَسَنَ ثَوَابِ الْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

[3:148] *and the fairest reward of the hereafter, and God loves the virtuous.*

[This refers to] their entering (*dukhūl*) the garden. [But] they are emancipated from it, not entering (*ghayru dākhilīna*) into captivity to it. It is said that the reward of this world and the hereafter is absence (*ghayba*) from the two abodes, looking only to the Creator of them both.²⁰⁷

When He said, “*the reward of this world*,” He said regarding the hereafter, “*and the fairest reward of the hereafter*.” It must be, then, that the reward of the hereafter is superior to the reward of this world since He gave it the description *the fairest*. This superiority is [the hereafter's] permanence, perfection and fruits; and [the reality] that it cannot be ruined by anything that is incompatible with it, nor can any harm occur within it.

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن تَطِيعُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُرَدُّوكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ فَتَنقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ بَلِ اللَّهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ النَّاصِرِينَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

[3:149] *O you who believe, if you obey the disbelievers, they will make you turn back on your heels, and you will revert as losers.*

[3:150] *Nay, but God is your protector, and He is the best of helpers.*

206 For a comparison of the terms “contentment” (*qanā'a*) and “satisfaction” (*riḍā'*), see the sections on each in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, 1:362–366 and 2:421–427.

207 See al-Qushayrī's section on “Absence and presence” (*al-Ghayba wa-l-ḥuḍūr*), where he explains that absence from created things corresponds to presence with the Real (*Risāla*, 1:214–216).

[This] means that if you obey the adversaries, they will pull you into their states and cast you into their darkneses. Nay, God is your protector, your helper, the One who aids you, Your Master, and the One who sets your affairs aright. *And He is the best of helpers* because He aids you against your lower selves, and protects you from their evil. Anyone other than Him adds to your afflictions when they help you because they aid your lower selves against you. *And He is the best of helpers* because anyone other than Him holds a favor over you in helping you, while He rewards you for your asking for His help.

It is said that when you ask someone for help, you need to give him something of value, and then he may or may not help you. But when you ask [God] سُبْحَانَكَ for help, He gives you every kindness, and takes no pleasure in not helping you.

سَنُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ بِمَا أَشْرَكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَمَأْوَهُمُ النَّارُ وَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾

[3:151] *We will cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers; for that they have associated with God that for which He sent down no authority; their abode shall be the fire; evil is the abode of the evildoers.*

God سُبْحَانَكَ designated our Prophet ﷺ to cast terror (*ru'b*) from Him into the hearts of His enemies. [The Prophet] ﷺ said: "I was helped by terror (*ru'b*)."²⁰⁸ He also follows this way (*sunna*) with His friends. He puts fear (*hayba*) of them into hearts. Fear (*hayba*) and force (*qahr*) would hardly be right in hearts were it not from Him and used with those who follow falsehood, make false claims, and misrepresent [the truth].

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ إِذْ تَحُسُّونَهُم بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَزَّعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا أَرَاكُمْ مَا تُحِبُّونَ

[3:152] *God has been true to His promise, when you slew them by His leave, until you lost heart, and quarreled over the command; and you disobeyed after he had shown you what you longed for.*²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Abd al-Rahmān gives al-Nasā'ī and Ibn Ḥanbal among other sources for this *ḥadīth*.

²⁰⁹ In the Basyūni edition, this part of Qur'an 3:152 is followed by a repetition of the

This verse alludes to the fact that the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) raises His friends up (*aqāma*)²¹⁰ in the right of His right (*bi-ḥaqqi ḥaqqihi*) and holds them back²¹¹ from attaining their worldly fortunes (*ḥuḏūz*). He *سُبْحَانَكَ* stands (*qāma*) as sufficient for them in every way. Whoever persists in the path of uprightness (*istiqāma*)²¹² will not deviate from His boundary, and [God] will not deviate from His pact, for *God has been true to His promise* to them with beautiful and continuous sufficiency. But whoever falls away from uprightness (*istiqāma*)²¹³—even if only a step—stumbles in his walking, and his state and ability is destabilized to the extent of his offense. Whoever has found increase has been increased from Him, and whoever suffers decrease has suffered decrease from Him.

مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُم عَنْهُمْ
لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

[3:152] *Some of you desired this world, and some of you desired the hereafter. Then He turned you away from them, so that He might try you; yet now He has pardoned you, and God is bounteous to the believers.*

The value of each person is his desire (*irāda*). Whoever's aspiration (*himma*) is for this world, his value is base and paltry like this world. Whoever's aspiration is for the hereafter, his rank is a noble one. Whoever's aspiration is knowledge of divine lordship (*rabbāniyya*), he is the leader (*sayyid*) of his time.

It is said that whoever is purified of his [lower] desire reaches Him, and whoever reaches Him is drawn near to Him by His kindness, and is brought close to the place of intimate friendship (*khuṣūṣiyya*) in His presence.

Then He turned you away from them: This alludes to [the way] He has

paragraph above (in the commentary on 3:150) that begins “It is said that when you ask someone for help. . .” The repetition here appears to be an error and does not occur in MS K117, fol. 43a.

210 Literally, “causes them to stand up.”

211 Literally, “causes them to sit down.”

212 Note the occurrence of several words from the root *q-w-m* in this passage and the way in which al-Qushayrī makes use of their literal meanings.

213 In the “Section on uprightness” (Bāb al-istiqāma), al-Qushayrī quotes Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Fūrak as saying that the letter *sin* in the verb *istiqāma* is the *sin* of seeking (a reference to one of the possible meanings of the tenth form of Arabic verbs). Read in this way, *istiqāma* means to ask God to make one upright (*Risāla*, 2:442). The passage here, then, might be understood as referring to stumbling from this request, rather than stumbling in any particular task.

turned some people away from Him and distracted them from Himself by what is other than Him. Others He turned from any other thing, singling them out for Himself. He turned the ascetics (*zāhidūn*) away from this world (*dunyā*), the worshipers (*ʿābidūn*) from following whims (*hawā*), the aspirants (*murīdūn*) from lower desires (*munā*), and those who declare God's oneness (*muwahhidūn*) from everything other [than Him] (*siwā*).

وَإِذْ تَصْعَدُونَ وَلَا تَلْوُونَ عَلَىٰ أَحَدٍ وَالرَّسُولُ يَدْعُوكُمْ فِي أُخْرَبِكُمْ فَأَتْبَبَكُمْ غَمًّا بِغَمٍّ لِّكَيْلًا تَحْزِنُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا مَا أَصَابَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّن بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمْنَةً نُّعَاسًا يَغْشَىٰ طَآئِفَةً مِّنكُمْ وَطَآئِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَقُولُونَ هَل لَّنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِن شَيْءٍ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنفُسِهِم مَّا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَّا قُتِلْنَا هَاهُنَا قُل لَّو كُنْتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَىٰ مَضَاجِعِهِمْ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحَّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٥٤﴾

[3:153] *When you were ascending, not turning around for anyone and the Messenger was calling you from your rear, so he rewarded you with grief for grief so that you might not grieve for what escaped you, neither for what befell you; and God is aware of what you do.*

[3:154] *Then He sent down upon you, after grief, security—a slumber overcoming a party of you, and a party whose own souls distressed them, thinking wrongly of God, thoughts of the age of ignorance, saying, “Have we any part whatever in the affair?” Say: “The affair belongs entirely to God.” They conceal within their hearts what they do not disclose to you, saying, “Had we had any part in the affair, we would not have been slain here.” Say: “Even if you had been in your houses, those for whom it had been appointed that they be slain would have sallied forth to the places where they were to lie” that God might try what was in your breasts and that He might prove what was in your hearts; and God knows what is in the breasts.*

The verse alludes to people for whom a period of slackening (*fatra*) occurs.

The calls of the Real **سُبْحَانَكَ** come from within and without,²¹⁴ so that it is as if the rocks in the streets and the bricks in the walls were crying out to such a one, “do not do it, O servant of God!” But he is resolved upon his crooked way (*layy*) and settled in his error (*ghayy*); [he] refuses to acknowledge what he knows would be more fitting and appropriate for his state. If he were to stay with his [original] aim and follow through with his aspiration, by all means he would rein himself in and hold himself back from galloping ahead. [But] he gets nothing but gasping breaths (*anfās mutaṣāʿida*) and continuous sorrows (*ḥasarāt mutawātira*)—the Real **سُبْحَانَكَ** has bequeathed him one lonely estrangement after another. Eventually, after he has been in this place of distress for a long time, the Real **سُبْحَانَكَ** will relieve him with His beautiful kindness and draw him near with His gracious affection. He will deliver him from the narrowness of his captivity to the spaciousness of His pardon and favor. Many of these [people] will reach the place of the most respected and thereupon become still by God for God when they have been negated from station and honor,²¹⁵ and they will stand by God for God without waiting to be brought near and without looking to be welcomed.

He sent down upon you, after grief, security—a slumber overcoming a party of you, and a party whose own souls distressed them, thinking wrongly of God, thoughts of the age of ignorance: After the periods of their slackening (*fatarāt*), the people of realization and [those who] declare [God’s] unity (*ahl al-taḥqīq wa-l-tawḥīd*) reach the point where they declare [that they have] abandoned their lower selves. They wash their hands clean of them and raise their hearts from them, so they might live by God for God without regard for any craving or want, following instead the creed of despair (*ʿaqīda al-yaʿs*) from everything. They strengthen their pact with Him in exchange for their worldly concerns,²¹⁶ leaving every share and fortune behind. This is the quality of those to whom He sent down security.

As for the party *whose own souls distressed them*, they remain in the lonely estrangement of their lower selves. One way in which they are punished in this life is that they come to have evil convictions about the path, after having believed in it. God most high said, “*And We shall confound their hearts and their eyes; just as they did not believe in it the first time*” [6:110].

The allusion in God most high’s words, “*Have we any part whatever in the affair?*” is to those who are confused in their affair, neither drawing nearer in truth to what is right for them, nor turning away entirely. Their slackening (*fatra*) turns into bad choices even as they would give their best,

214 Literally, “from their selves and from all sides.”

215 The Basyūnī edition is blank after “by God for God.” The sentence has been completed from MS K117, fol. 43b, with the words *ḥīna ʿadimū l-maqām wa-l-ikrām*.

216 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 43b: *wa-baddalū bihi al-ḥazz*.

if their hearts were in it, to their effort. They forget their Lord in both states and so do not see the way the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* determines events. God most high said, say: “*The affair belongs entirely to God.*” Anyone who knows that the originator is God has cast off his own choice and states, like the removal of hair from dough,²¹⁷ and has submitted his affairs to God entirely. The sign of the one who has actualized this is that he finds rest from the pains of his own planning (*tadbīr*) and lives in the spaciousness of witnessing His decree (*taqdīr*).

They conceal within themselves what they do not disclose to you: They have not been loyal to their convictions (*ʿaqāʾid*). They have hidden that which contradicts what they show outwardly, while publicizing something other than that which they keep secret. They assign existing things to causes which they have only imagined.

Say: “Even if you had been in your houses, those for whom it had been appointed that they be slain would have sallied forth to the places where they were to lie”: He has informed us that the decree cannot be pushed away (*lā yuzāḥamu*), and fate cannot be resisted (*lā yukābaru*). The things which exist have been determined and God prevails over His affair.

That God might try what was in your breasts: As for the people of realities (*ahl al-ḥaqāʾiq*), God most high removes every harm and hindrance from their hearts, and takes their innermost selves for Himself and draws [them] near, to intimacy [with Him]. So their hearts become pure of defects and clear of attachments, [they are] singled out for the Real, detached from created things, freed from worldly concerns and the lower self; the effects of drawing near appears to them, the beauty of divine governorship (*tawallī*) prevails over them, and the lights of disclosure (*tajallī*) become visible in them.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا مِنْكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ
بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوا وَلَقَدْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥٥﴾

[3:155] Truly, those of you who turned away the day the two hosts encountered each other—truly, Satan made them slip through some of what they had earned; but God pardoned them; God is Forgiving, Forbearing.

This verse alludes to the states of those whose spiritual desire (*irāda*) has become meager and their intentions (*niyyāt*) weak. Their whims (*hawā*)

217 The metaphor here comes from an Arabic expression referring to something that is easily done.

control them and listlessness (*fatra*) rules them. Face to face with the counsel of others, the call of desires, and the whispers of satans, they put their trust in false speech. They have preferred their whims over piety, and stayed back. But they do not find happiness in what they have chosen.

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ إِذَا
ضَرَبُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ كَانُوا غُزًى لَوْ كَانُوا عِنْدَنَا مَا مَاتُوا وَمَا قُتِلُوا
لِيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكْ حَسْرَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحْيِي ۖ وَيُمِيتُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾

[3:156] *O you who believe, be not as the disbelievers, who say of their brothers, when they travel in the land, or are on raiding campaigns, “Had they been with us, they would not have died and would not have been slain”—so that God may make that anguish in their hearts. For God gives life, and He gives death and God sees what you do.*

Whoever makes a habit of worrying about what is past and trying to control what will happen in his future and each new moment—the least of his punishment will be the constriction of his heart through disconcerting worries, and the waning of the quality of life within it because of his inattention and his saying “if only such and such” or “maybe such and such.” The result of this kind of thinking is estrangement and grief, the constriction of the heart and separation.

وَلَيْنِ قُتِلْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ مُتْتُمْ لِمَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةٍ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا
يَجْمَعُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ وَلَيْنِ مُتْتُمْ أَوْ قُتِلْتُمْ لِيَلِيَ اللَّهُ تُحْشِرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

[3:157] *And if you are slain in God’s way, or die, forgiveness from God and mercy are better than what they amass.*

[3:158] *And if you die or are slain, it is to God you shall be mustered.*

To sacrifice the spirit (*rūh*) in God is better than life with anything other than God. Returning to God is better for one who knows God than staying behind with anything other than God. Whatever the servant prefers over God is not something that is blessed. If you want, there is this world and if you want, there is the final outcome.

And if you die or are slain, it is to God you shall be mustered: When the destination is to God, the journey is pleasant—surely when a journey to Him comes to an end, its hardships seem sweeter than honey!

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانفَضُّوا
مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا
عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

[3:159] *It was by the mercy of God that you were lenient with them; had you been harsh and fierce of heart, they would have dispersed from about you. So pardon them, and ask forgiveness for them, and consult them in the matter. And when you are resolved, rely on God; for God loves those who rely [on Him].*

[God] stripped [the Prophet] of his human attributes (*awṣāf al-bashariyya*), and singled him out to be clothed from the attribute of lordship (*naʿt al-rubūbiyya*). [God] said that what shone upon him was from the lights of divine governorship (*tawallī*), not from the traces of [human states of] agreement and confrontation (*tabarrī*). If not for the fact that He had selected him for what He clothed him in, how could he have that quality?!

It is said that among the particular properties of [God's] *سُبْحَانَهُ* mercy to [the Prophet] was that He gave him strength to keep company with them and patience to convey the message to them in spite of what he had to endure from them in their arguing. He was utterly engaged at every moment with an authority from the Real that overwhelmed him—[even while] they were arguing with this authority. If not for the divine strength the Real chose for him alone, how could he have been able to keep company with them? When Moses ﷺ had just returned from hearing [God's] word, was he not unable to remain patient in speaking with his brother? He grabbed his head, pulling [Aaron] toward him.

It is said that if it were not for the fact that [the Prophet] ﷺ saw them effaced in what came to them from the decrees of [God's] disposition (*aḥkām al-taṣrīf*) and his realization that the originator of these [decrees] was God, he would not have been able to keep company with them.

Had you been harsh and fierce of heart, they would have dispersed from about you: “If you had given them the pure drink of the declaration of unity (*tawḥīd*), undiluted with their worldly concerns, they would have separated from you, and wandered about, unable to stand still for even a moment. *So pardon them* for neglecting the right and respect due to you, and the

negligence you have seen in them in serving Us and obeying Us—rise up [instead] as an intercessor (*shafi'*) to Us on their behalf.”

It is said, **so pardon them**—you pardon them, since your decree (*ḥukm*) is Our decree and you do not forgive except when We have forgiven. Then [God] brought [the Prophet] back from this attribute [of lordship] with that which settled him in the station of servanthood (*'ubūdiyya*) and shifted him to the state of separation (*tafriqa*), saying, “Then stop in the place of humility, praying humbly to Us in seeking forgiveness for them.” Such is His way (*sunna*) with His prophets ﷺ and friends; [He] returns them from gathering (*jam'*) to separation (*farq*) and from separation to gathering. His words, **so pardon them**, are a gathering and His words, **and ask forgiveness for them**, are a separation.²¹⁸

It is said, **so pardon them** and pay no attention to what they owe you. [Furthermore], do not be content with this—seek forgiveness for them to complete the act of generosity.” It was because of this that [the Prophet] used to say, “O God, guide my people since they do not know.”²¹⁹

It is said: “What they neglected in your right is connected to two rights: your right and My right. So when you pardoned them, this was not sufficient. Rather, if I do not give up My right from them, they deserve punishment.” The condition of anyone whom He is content to have as His enemy will not be restored until God forgives him for neglecting His command.

And ask forgiveness for them, and consult them in the matter: that is, “Establish a place for them,” since the one who has been pardoned feels shame in his breast and does not see his position as a noble one. When you consult with them, their dejection will be removed from them and you will have put their hearts at ease.

It is said that there is a relationship between their states, for the one whose right has been neglected is commanded to pardon the other, and the one who has been the victim of another’s sins is commanded to seek forgiveness for him, and the one who himself obeys without fail is commanded to consult with him.

And when you are resolved, rely on God: that is, “do not rely on the opinion of any created being but trust your affairs to Me. I will release you from turning about in the grip of changing circumstances (*taṣrīf al-qabḍati bi-ḥālin*).” The real meaning of reliance (*tawakkul*) is witnessing the [divine]

218 Al-Qushayrī distinguishes between the state in which God acts through His servant and the state in which the servant experiences his separateness from God and then makes supplication to Him. See the section on “Gathering and separation” (al-Jam‘ wa-l-farq), *Risāla*, 1:207–208.

219 ‘Abd al-Rahmān does not give any sources for this *ḥadīth*.

preordination (*taqdīr*) and the relief of hearts from the turbulence of self-direction (*tadbīr*).

For God loves those who rely [on Him]: He causes them to taste the coolness of [His] sufficiency in order to remove from them every fatigue²²⁰ and hardship. He repays everyone with what they deserve, so He enriches some people for relying [only on God] by His gift (*bi-ʿaṭāʾihi*). Others He suffices for relying [only on God] by the encounter with Him (*bi-liqāʾihi*). Some people He makes content with the totality of their states so that they are satisfied that He alone remains (*bi-baqāʾihi*). They position themselves with Him, through Him, and for Him according to the shifting hues²²¹ of His preordination and decree (*ʿalā talwīnāti qadarihi wa-qaḍāʾihi*).

إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمْ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ يَخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي
يَنْصُرْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

[3:160] *If God helps you, then none can overcome you; but if He forsakes you, then who is there who can help you after Him? Therefore on God let the believers rely.*

He helps the believers by granting success to the bodily forms (*bi-l-tawfiqi lil-ashbāh*), and then by granting [spiritual] realization to the spirits (*thuma bi-l-tahqīqi lil-arwāh*).

It is said that God helps you by supporting you in your outward circumstances (*bi-taʿyīdi al-zawāhir*) and by guiding the innermost selves (*wa-tasdīdi al-sarāʾir*).

It is said that while [He will] help [you] against the enemy, the worst enemy you have is the lower self within you. [His] help against [your] lower self comes when its claims of strength are routed by the guardians of His mercy and the armies of cravings (*junūd al-shahawāt*) scatter upon the attacks of the arriving hosts (*wufūd al-munāzilāt*). The protective friendship (*walāya*) of God will remain, purified from the confused clamoring of human qualities, and the cravings and desires of the lower selves which are the remaining effects of [what] veils and hinders [people] from nearness.

If He forsakes you: The forsaking is the abandonment of those who are disobedient. Those whom He helps He holds back from pursuing what is objectionable and those to whom He gives free rein and leaves to

220 “Fatigue” (*taʿab*) follows MS K117, fol. 44a.

221 Instead of the word “shifting hues” or “variegations” (*talwīnāt*) found in the Basyūni edition, MS K117, fol. 44a has “formations” (*takwīnāt*).

their own bad choices He forsakes. The state [of someone He forsakes] becomes unsettled in the torrents of cravings, so he sometimes wanders to the east without shame (*fa-marratan yusharriqu ghayra muḥtashimin*) and sometimes to the west without respect (*wa-tāratan yugharribu ghayra mutaḥrimin*). Surely, when the Real lets someone go and does not take him by the hand, leaving him to himself, there is no protector for him.

Therefore on God let believers rely in finding security through sincere supplication, and laying the robe of pardon over the defects of sin. [This is done] by devoutly seeking refuge and by rejecting any strength or power [other than God].

It is said that when the matter was that of [His] help, He said, “*then none can overcome you.*” In the matter of being forsaken, He did not say “then there is no helper for you,” but rather said more indirectly,²²² “*then who is there who can help you after Him?*” Here there is a subtlety regarding the finer properties of the [divine] address.

وَمَا كَانَ لِتَيْبِي أَنْ يَعْلَلَّ وَمَنْ يَعْلَلْ يَأْتِ بِمَا غَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى
كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾

[3:161] *It is not for a prophet to be fraudulent; whoever defrauds [others] shall bring what he has defrauded on the Day of Resurrection; then every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned, and they shall not be wronged.*

He has made the states of the prophets free of the stain of treacherous actions. “Those to whom We gave the message to bear to Our servants convey it to those who should receive it. They are not concerned with any affair of a close intimate without Our command, and they do not hold back, harboring malice, in passing on anyone’s share when We have commanded it.” Do you not see how [the Prophet] said of Abū Ṭālib, “Go and bury him” when the Commander of the Believers ‘Alī ؑ said to him, “Your erring uncle has died”?²²³ Do you not see how [Muḥammad] accepted al-Waḥshī, the killer of Ḥamza, when he became a Muslim?²²⁴

222 The word “reply” (*radd*) from MS K117, fol. 44b makes more sense than the word “symbol” (*ramz*) from the Basyūnī edition.

223 Abū Ṭālib (d. ca. 620) was the uncle of Muḥammad and the father of ‘Alī. For a study of the accounts of his religious state upon his death, see Fred McGraw Donner, “The Death of Abū Ṭālib,” in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East*, ed. John H. Marks and Robert M. Good (Guilford, CT: Four Quarters, 1987), 237–245. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives sources for the quote from ‘Alī from the works of al-Nasā’ī, Ibn Ḥanbal, and others.

224 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān states that al-Waḥshī fought against the Muslims at the Battle of Uḥud, and killed the Prophet’s uncle Ḥamza there. Al-Waḥshī later became a Muslim.

It is said, “It was not for any prophet ﷺ to give Our secrets to any but the people to whom they were meant. Rather, to each was revealed what they were meant to hear.” Thus, in the tradition, “We were commanded to reveal (*yunzil*) to the people [what is suitable, according to] their stations (*manāzil*).”²²⁵

أَفَمَن اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ كَمَن بَاءَ بِسَخَطٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ
وَيُبئسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٦٢﴾ هُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

[3:162] *Is he who follows God's beatitude like him who is laden with God's anger, whose abode is hell? An evil journey's end!*

[3:163] *They are of degrees before God; and God sees what they do.*

The one with whom He is well pleased²²⁶ throughout eternity (*fi azālihi*) is not equal to the one with whom He is displeased and has abandoned in his states (*fi aḥwālihi*) and left him to rely on his own actions (*‘alā a‘mālihi*), oblivious to the witnessing of His favors (*li-shuhūdi afḍālihi*). To seek God's beatitude [one must] separate oneself (*mufāraqa*) from what has been prohibited and embrace (*mu‘ānaqa*) what has been commanded. One who divests himself from the prohibited (*mazjūr*) and takes heart in embracing what has been commanded (*ma‘mūr*) has followed God's beatitude (*riḍwān*) and has become deserving of the gardens (*jinān*).

They are of degrees before God: that is, they possess degrees in the decree (*ḥukm*) of God—happy are those who have been brought close and wretched are those who have been kept at a distance.

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوا
عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ ۖ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن
قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٦٤﴾

[3:164] *Truly God was gracious to the believers when He sent to them a messenger from among their own to recite to them His verses, and to purify them, and to teach them the Book, wisdom, though before they were in clear error.*

225 Neither Basyūnī nor ‘Abd al-Raḥmān give any sources for this *ḥadīth*.

226 The Arabic here is *raḍiya ‘anhu*, a verb from the same root as “beatitude” (*riḍwān*).

[God] gave goodness to them in abundance and favored them with generous blessings, for He sent someone like Muṣṭafā, the leader of mankind ﷺ to them. [The Prophet] taught them their religion and made their proofs clear to them. He belonged to them in every way but they were not grateful for his blessings, did not respect his right, and were not able to see what he guided them to, nor refrain from straying in error—this is a description of his enemies who denied and were arrogant. As for the believers, they were adorned with grace in the [divine] choice (*ikhtiyār*). They received the command to hear and obey to the utmost of their capacity (*iqtidār*), so they were happy in this world and the hereafter (*uqbā*) and became deserving of generosity and nearness (*zulfa*) from God.

أَوْلَمَّا أَصَبْتَكُمْ مُمْصِبَةً قَدْ أَصَبْتُمْ مِثْلَهَا قُلْتُمْ أِنَّا هَذَا قُلْ هُوَ مِنْ
عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

[3:165] *And why, when distress befell you, and you had afflicted twice the like of it, did you say, “How is this?” Say: “It is from yourselves. Surely God has power over everything.”*

Human beings usually forget their own error and disobedience (*iṣyān*), and turn instead to accuse God of what comes to them in trials, loss (*khusrān*), and all kinds of unpleasant and difficult things (*iftitān*). It would be better for those who pursue various crimes (*ṣunūf al-ijrām*)²²⁷ not to forget the requital to come (*ḥulūl al-intiqām*).

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ يَوْمَ التَّقِي الْجَمْعَانِ فَيَاذَنِ اللَّهُ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾
وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا قَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ ادْفَعُوا
قَالُوا لَوْ نَعْلَمُ قِتَالًا لَاتَّبَعْنَاكُمْ هُمْ لِلْكَفْرِ يَوْمِيذٍ أَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ
يَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ مَا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُونَ ﴿١٦٧﴾

[3:166] *And what afflicted you, the day the two hosts encountered, was by God’s leave, and that He might know the believers.*

[3:167] *And that He might also know the hypocrites when it was said to them,*

227 The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been filled in with *ṣunūf* from MS K117, fol. 44b.

“Come now, fight in the way of God or defend [yourselves],” they said, “If we knew how to fight we would follow you.” That day they were nearer to unbelief than to belief, saying with their mouths that which was not in their hearts. And God knows best what they hide.

He lightened the grave calamity met by the believers and possessors of insight on the Day of Uḥud by saying that the encounter was *by God’s leave*. Surely a trial that afflicts [one] by God’s leave is sweeter than honey and more desirable than any blessing.

Then He spoke of those who were not sincere comrades, how they offered excuses and were lazy.

Similarly, when the one who is tired
wants to break things off,

he becomes weary of being together
and says, “That was that.”²²⁸

Saying with their mouths that which was not in their hearts: Verily they gave honey to drink [to their enemies] but He plotted to put poison in it for them.²²⁹ *And they schemed; and God schemed; and God is the best of schemers [3:54].*

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا قُلْ فَادْرَأُوا عَنْ
أَنْفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٦٨﴾

[3:168] *Those who said to their brothers, while they themselves stayed put, “Had they obeyed us, they would not have been slain.” Say: “Then avert death from yourselves, if you speak the truth.”*

Those who relied upon their lower selves—having been seduced by them to prefer their own whims—and then opposed those who gave themselves over to the decrees of divine fate, said, “If only they had heeded the warning about going out to the battle, they would have been safe.” These thoughts are blameworthy and these hearts have retreated from witnessing the true nature of things. Say to them, O Muḥammad, “[Then] extend the life of

228 This poem is also cited in the commentary on Qurʾān 2:19, but with a preceding line: “Truly when the noble one gives you his love / he veils the ugly and brings the beautiful to light.” Muṣṭafā found these lines in *Muḥāḍarāt al-ʿudabāʾ* but without attribution (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 112).

229 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 45a with the phrase “He plotted to put poison in it for them” (*dassa lahum fihi al-ḥanzāl*).

your souls (*istadīmū lil-anfusikum al-hayāt*) and defend them from the attacks of death (*wa-idfāʿū ʿanhā hujūma al-wafāt*).” How would they be able to do that? How preposterous!

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ
يُرْزُقُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ
لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِّنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

[3:169] *Count not those who were slain in God’s way, as dead, but rather, living with their Lord, provided for [by Him].*

[3:170] *Rejoicing in what God has given them of His bounty, and rejoicing, for the sake of those who have not joined them but are left behind, that no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.*

Life in remembrance of the Real—after the lower selves have been annihilated in the good pleasure of the Real—is more perfect than remaining with the blessings of created beings and being veiled from the Real.

It is said that the one whose heir²³⁰ is the Living is one who does not disappear and cannot die, even if he is killed:

Surely bodies
have been brought into existence for death,
so the slaying of a human being in God,
without doubt, is best.²³¹

And rejoicing, for the sake of those who have not joined them but are left behind: Those who know that their loved ones are waiting for them while they are in comfort and ease [in the garden] would not take pleasure in living without being with them.

230 God is described as heir to His creation in Qurʾān 15:23: *Indeed it is We who give life and death, and We are the heirs.*

231 The translation follows the word “bodies” (*abdān*) found in MS K117, fol. 45a rather than the word “worshippers” (*ʿubdān*) found in the Basyūnī edition. This is also the word found in the verse Muṣṭafā locates, which is attributed to al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī in one source and to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in another: “Surely bodies have been brought into existence for death / so the slaying of a human being by the sword in God is best” (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p. 93).

﴿يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

[3:171] *Joyful in grace and bounty from God, and [joyful in knowing] that God does not let the wage of believers go to waste.*

The cause and reason for their being joyful is a *bounty and grace from God*. That is to say, how would they be joyful if not for His *grace and bounty* to them? Their being joyful *in grace* is only because they are His servants and He is their protector. If not for His grace and favor to them, they would not be in this state.

الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَوْا أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٢﴾

[3:172] *[For] those who responded to God and the Messenger after the wounds had afflicted them, those who did good among them and feared, shall be a great wage.*

[The meaning of the tenth form verb] “to respond” (*istijāba*) has an element of merit and superiority over [the meaning of the fourth form verb] “to answer” (*ijāba*). This is an allusive distinction rather than [a distinction] required [linguistically] by the Arabic. It [means] that they respond willingly, not under compulsion. They respond to God without [their response] entailing the bearing of a difficulty. Rather, [they respond] by the directive of the heart’s core (*ishārat al-qalb*) and the love of the heart (*fu’ād*) and the choice of the spirit (*rūḥ*), and find delight in bearing [God’s] decree (*ḥukm*). So the response to the Real [comes] from recognizing the reality of His existence (*bi-l-taḥaqquq bi-wujūdihi*) and the response to the Messenger ﴿﴾ [comes] from taking on character traits as prescribed by [God’s] limits (*bi-takhalluq bi-ḥudūdihi*). The response of the Real [comes] from the quintessence of the truth of lordship (*bi-l-ṣafā’ fi ḥaqqi al-rubūbiyya*) and the response of the Messenger ﴿﴾ [comes] from fidelity in upholding ser-vanthood (*bi-l-wafā’ fi iqāmati al-‘ubūdiyya*).²³²

After the wounds had afflicted them: [This refers to] the beginning of their transactions before the appearance of the lights of disclosure to their

232 The translation in the last two sentences of this paragraph partly follows the Basyūni edition and partly MS K117, fol. 45a in order to keep to the rhyming patterns al-Qushayri seems to have had in mind.

hearts and the smiling of the realities in their innermost selves.

Those who did good among them: “Doing good is that you worship God as if you see Him”²³³—and this is witnessing (*mushāhada*) and fear of God (*taqwā*)—“for if you do not see Him, He sees you”—and this is awareness [of God watching you] (*murāqaba*) in the state of spiritual struggle (*mujāhada*).

A *great wage* for novices later (*li-ahli al-bidāyati mu’ajjalan*) and for adepts now (*wa-li-ahli al-nihāyati mu’ajjalan*).

الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدِ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَآخَشَوْهُمْ فَرَّادَهُمْ
إِيْمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ ﴿١٧٣﴾

[3:173] *Those to whom people said, “The people have gathered against you, therefore fear them”; but that increased them in faith, and they said, “God is sufficient for us, an excellent Guardian is He.”*

[Whenever] events in the present world confused them outwardly, the gleams from unveilings (*ṭawālī min al-kushūfāt*)²³⁴ opened up for them in their innermost selves (*asrār*), and they increased in one level of certainty after another. Among the signs of certainty is the reliance of hearts in God alone, with the severing of any hope of imagined aid and support from created beings.

فَانْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمَسَّسَهُمْ سُوءٌ وَاتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ
وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٧٤﴾

[3:174] *So they returned with grace and bounty from God, and no evil touched them, and they followed the beatitude of God; and God is of bounty abounding.*

Such is the way (*sunna*) of the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* with those who are sincere in taking refuge with Him, in that He prepares a resting place in the shadow of His sufficiency. No affliction touches them, no pains distress them, and no hardships overcome them.

233 ‘Abd al-Rahmān gives references for this *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī, Ibn Kathīr, and others.

234 Al-Qushayrī discusses the “gleams of the rising” (*ṭawālī*) in the section on “Glimmers, gleams of the rising and flashes” (al-Lawā’ih wa-l-ṭawālī wa-l-lawāmi’), *Risāla*, 1:228–230.

إِنَّمَا ذَلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَاءَهُ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ
وَخَافُونَ إِن كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧٥﴾

[3:175] *That is only Satan making fear his friends, therefore do not fear them; but fear Me, if you are believers.*

The allusion in [God's] granting power to the calls of Satan in the hearts of [His] friends is [to the test] that confirms their flight to God. This is like a child who has been frightened by one of those things that frighten children, and when he is afraid, he goes only to his mother. When he comes to her, she takes him to herself, hugs him and presses her cheek to his. Likewise, when the servant is sincere in beseeching God, and returns to Him from his oppositional tendencies, He takes him under the wing of His closeness and overtakes him with His beautiful kindness.

وَلَا يَحْزَنكَ الَّذِينَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَن يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا يُرِيدُ
اللَّهُ أَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾

[3:176] *Let them not grieve you those that vie with one another in unbelief; they will not hurt God at all. God desires not to assign them any portion in the hereafter, and theirs is a mighty chastisement.*

He strengthened [Muḥammad's] heart by renewing the firmness of the pact, in that He would not allow any enemy to gloat over his misfortune,²³⁵ nor allow any evil from them to reach him.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ لَن يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٧﴾

[3:177] *Those who purchase unbelief at the price of faith, they will not hurt God at all, and there awaits them a painful chastisement.*

If they cause harm (aḍarrū), it is only to themselves. If they persist (aṣarrū),

235 This echoes the prayer of Moses in Qurʾān 7:150: *Do not make my enemies gloat over my misfortunes.*

they persist only to their own loss.

We did not suffer from
the distance to their abodes,
nor did longings
drive us toward them.²³⁶

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُؤْمِلُ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّأَنفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُؤْمِلُ
لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

[3:178] *And let not the disbelievers suppose that what We indulge them in is better for their souls. We grant them indulgence only that they may increase in sinfulness, and theirs is a humbling chastisement.*

“Part of the perfection of the ruse against them and the intensification in their punishment is that We are punishing them even as they do not perceive it: *We will draw them on by degrees, whence they do not know* [7:182]. *We indulge them* and they think that it is an act of favor (*in‘ām*); [they do] not consider that it might be an act of revenge (*intiqām*).” When the underlying forces of the divine preordination are made clear to them [in] their hiding places, they will know that they have lost (*khusrān*). It is already clear to anyone possessing insight that that which brings about disobedience (*‘iṣyān*) or causes forgetfulness (*nisyān*) cannot be counted among the acts of favor (*in‘ām*).

مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىٰ يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ
مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظِلَّعَكُمْ عَلَىٰ الْعَيْبِ ۗ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْتَبِي
مِن رُّسُلِهِ ۗ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ فَأَمِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۗ وَإِنْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَلَكُمْ
أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٩﴾

[3:179] *It is not God’s purpose to leave the believers in the state in which you are till He shall distinguish the evil one from the good. And it is not God’s*

236 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 77).

purpose to apprise you of the unseen, but God chooses of His messengers whom He will. So believe in God and His messengers; and if you believe and guard [against evil], then yours shall be a great wage.

He has gathered [humankind] together in the here and now with respect to bodies and forms (*mabānī*) but has separated them in the deeper realities and meanings (*ma'ānī*). Some of them are *good* (*ṭayyib*) in their natural disposition and some are *evil* (*khabīth*).²³⁷ Even if their constitutions are mixed, they are differentiated in the inner sight of the elect.

And it is not God's purpose to apprise you of the unseen: Surely the secrets of the unseen do not appear to those who are sullied by the pollutions of mortal human nature (*bashariyya*). Only the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* possesses knowledge of that which is great and small and He selects whomever He will among His prophets for knowledge of some of His secrets.

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا
لَهُمْ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَهُمْ سَيُطَوَّفُونَ مَا بَخَلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٨٠﴾

[3:180] *But as for those who are niggardly with what God has given them of His bounty, let them not suppose that it is better for them; nay, it is worse for them; what they were niggardly with, they shall have hung around their necks on the Day of Resurrection; and to God belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth. And God is aware of what you do.*

Whoever prefers something to God, He will not bless him in that. No enjoyment (*istimtā'*) in that will last for him in this world and there will be no defense (*difā'*) from the punishment for it in the hereafter.

In the language of the scholars (*ulamā'*), "niggardliness" is the withholding of what is obligatory. According to the [people of] allusion (*ishāra*), it is holding back anything, even if only a particle of wealth or a breath from states.

لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَقِيرٌ وَنَحْنُ أَغْنِيَاءُ سَنَكْتُبُ

237 The translation follows the word "bad" (*khabīth*) from MS K117, fol. 45b rather than the word *khabī'a* found in the Basyūnī edition.

مَا قَالُوا وَقَتْلَهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَنَقُولُ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ﴿١٨١﴾
 ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ ﴿١٨٢﴾

[3:181] *Verily God has heard the saying of those who said, “Indeed God is poor, and we are rich.” We shall write down what they have said and their slaying the prophets without right, and We shall say, “Taste the chastisement of the burning.*

[3:182] *That is for what your hands have sent before; for God is never unjust toward His servants.”*

If this address were between created beings, it would be a complaint and the complaint to friends about enemies is the way of lovers (*sunnat al-aḥbāb*).

It is said that He knew that there were those among the believers who were slandering people and this was an ugly way to speak, but He exposed a greater ugliness. This was to show that the ugly speech of the believers was paltry in comparison to the ugliness of the speech of the disbelievers. It is as if He said, “Their speech has been ugly in its defamation but the speech of the disbelievers is even uglier since they have described Us in a way that is not appropriate for Us.”

[This verse] also alludes to the call to humankind and the [divine] forbearance with those who quarrel [with that call], for surely God سُبْحَانَهُ did not deprive them of what He had given them [in this world] in spite of their disregard for His rights.

We shall write down what they have said: These words are cause for embarrassment for the neglectful through the most delicate allusion. It means that even if they have forgotten their states and words, “We will resurrect for them what We have written against them.” Their speaker said:

I have pages
 in which blame is buried.

One day they will be published
 and the blame will linger.

I will be patient
 until God brings us together

and if we meet one day
 I will speak.²³⁸

238 Muṣṭafā finds a slightly different version of the second verse in al-ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf’s *Diwān*: “I will be silent unless God brings us together / but if we meet one day I will speak.

That is for what your hands have sent before: for God is never unjust toward His servants: If this were from one created being to another, it would be like absolving oneself of blame for what one has done. It is as if He سُبْحَانَهُ is saying, “My servant, the punishment that will come to you on that day is because of your sin. If you had not done it, We would not punish you.”

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عٰهَدَ اِلَيْنَا اَلَّا نُوْمِنَ لِرِسُوْلٍ حَتّٰى يٰتِيْنَا بِقُرْبٰنٍ
تَاْكُلُهٗ النَّارُ فَلَ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِى بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَبِالَّذِى قُلْتُمْ
فَلِمَ قَتَلْتُمُوهُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٨٣﴾

[3:183] [They are the] same who said, “God has already made a covenant with us that we should not believe in any messenger until he brings us an offering to be devoured by fire.” Say: “Messengers have come to you before me with clear proofs, and with that which you said. Why did you slay them, then, if you are truthful?”

They fabricated lies about God سُبْحَانَهُ to excuse their lack of faith, saying, “Verily we have been commanded not to believe anyone if we do not see him with our own eyes bringing us an offering. He will offer it to the sky and then a fire will come down to take it.” God most high said, “say to them that those who have come before me among the prophets ﷺ have brought you what you have demanded of me in offering, but you did not believe. If I were to accede to you in this, you would once again not believe.” Whoever has been kept at a distance by what has already been decreed—if the sun were to speak to him with a clear tongue or the mountains prostrate before him, and he were to see all this in a moment of truth, deeper knowledge (*irfān*) would still not enter his heart and he would only increase in doubt after doubt.

فَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ جَاؤُوْا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالزُّبُرِ
وَالْكِتٰبِ الْمُنِيْرِ ﴿١٨٤﴾

[3:184] *But if they deny you, so were denied messengers before you who came*

He states that the first verse is attributed to Yazid b. Salma b. al-Ṭathriyya (Muṣṭafā, no. 9, p. 93).

bearing clear proofs, and the scriptures, and the illuminating Book.

That is, the habitual practice of disbelievers is to deny the messengers. This is what their ancestors used to do (*‘alā hadhā l-nahwi daraja salafuhum*) and their descendants follow their way (*wa-bi-hadyihi iqtadā khalafuhum*).

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ أَجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَمَنْ زُحْزِحَ
عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ ﴿١٨٥﴾

[3:185] *Every soul shall taste of death; you shall surely be paid in full your wages on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is moved away from the fire and admitted to paradise, will have triumphed, the life of this world is but the comfort of delusion.*

That is, “The cup of death is placed in the palm of every living being. Whoever’s soul (*nafs*) finds it sweet and agreeable—I bequeath to him the intoxication of ecstatic finding (*wajid*). Whoever swallows it with a frowning face falls into the abyss of rejection (*radd*) and is branded by the burning of obstruction (*ṣadd*). Then [there is the Day] of the Resurrection. Whoever is protected from the fire reaches the greatest repose (*waṣala ilā l-rāḥati al-kubrā*) and whoever is made to burn in the blazing fire falls into the greatest tribulation (*waqa‘a fi l-miḥnati al-kubrā*).”

The life of this world is but the comfort of delusion because what is coming is nigh.

لَتُجْلِبُونَ فِي أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَلَتَسْمَعَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ
مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَذًى كَثِيرًا وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ
ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ ﴿١٨٦﴾

[3:186] *You shall surely be tried in your property; and in your selves, and you shall bear from those who were given the scripture before you, and from those who are idolaters, much hurt, but if you are patient, and fear—surely that is true resolve.*

[God] spared [the believers] from what would have been even greater occasions of harm by alerting them before the attacks. He taught them two of the best precepts: to prefer patience and to choose to remain still under

the streams of the decrees.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ
فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَأَشْرَوْا بِهِ تَمَنَّا قَلِيلًا فَبِئْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُونَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

[3:187] *And when God made a covenant with those who had been given the scripture, “You shall expound it to people, and not conceal it.” But they rejected it behind their backs, and bought it with a small price; how evil is what they have bought!*

[God] said that they had vowed to uphold their agreements, but broke the ties of the covenant in turning to disbelief. Then it became clear that what they took as cheap substitutes²³⁹ for leaving religion would have no blessings for them.

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا آتَوْا وَيُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يُحْمَدُوا بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلُوا
فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّهُمْ بِمَفَازَةٍ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٨٨﴾

[3:188] *Do not reckon that those who rejoice in what they have brought, and who love to be praised for what they have not done—do not reckon them secure from the chastisement; there shall be a painful chastisement for them.* Surely those whose hearts look only to created beings and whose innermost secrets regard only [created beings]—do not think that their punishment will be delayed to the Day of Resurrection. No, they are not secure from the punishment in the here and now. What punishment is more intense than being thrown back to created beings (*khalq*) and veiled from the Real (*ḥaqq*)?

وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٨٩﴾

[3:189] *To God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and God has power over all things.*

239 The translation follows the word *a'wāq* found in MS K117, fol. 46a rather than the word *a'rād* in the Basyūnī edition.

This verse alludes to [God's] lack of need for anyone²⁴⁰ in existence. How could He have any need of them? But they [on the other hand] will find no one to stand in for Him, and no substitute for Him.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي
الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقَعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ

[3:190] Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for people of pith.

[3:191] Those who remember God, standing and sitting and on their sides,

The signs which the Real سُبْحَانَهُ presents to ordinary people are from the lessons²⁴¹ and the vestiges [of people gone by]²⁴² in the regions [of the heavens and the earth]. The signs which He presents to the elect are within their souls. [God] سُبْحَانَهُ said, “We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in their own souls” [41:53]. The outer signs lead to the knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*) while the inner signs lead to the eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*).²⁴³

The *alternation (ikhtilāf) of night and day* alludes to the different responses (*ikhtilāf*)²⁴⁴ to the night among the servants. The nights of the people of communion are short and the nights of the people of separation are long. [Someone] said:

Months pass—
we have not noticed

240 The translation follows the word *man* found in MS K117, fol. 46a rather than the word *mā* in the Basyūnī edition.

241 As described, for example, in Qurʾān 16:66–67: *And truly for you there is in the cattle a lesson. We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies, from between the refuse and the blood, pure milk palatable to drinkers. / And of the fruits of date palms and vines from which you draw an intoxicant and goodly provision. Surely in that there is a sign for a people who understand.*

242 *Have they not traveled across the land to see the nature of the consequence for those before them? They were more powerful than them in might and in [their] vestiges on earth* [Qurʾān 40:21 and 40:82].

243 For more information on what al-Qushayrī means by the knowledge of certainty and the eye of certainty, see the section on “Knowledge of certainty, eye of certainty, and the truth of certainty” (*‘Ilm al-yaqīn wa-l-‘ayn al-yaqīn wa-ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), *Risāla*, 1:244. See also his commentary on Qurʾān 2:260.

244 The word *ikhtilāf* can mean “alternation” or “the state of being dissimilar or diverse” (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:795).

their midpoints
nor their ends.²⁴⁵

And he said:

For you, morning is drunkenness
and the night a hangover.

You slept even as
the days of happiness were short.²⁴⁶

A second [poet] said:

After they departed, the nights
were long in so many ways—
[once short], the night of the lovers
is [now] long.²⁴⁷

A third [poet] had nothing to say about the length or brevity of the night, for he said, because of what had overwhelmed him:

How should I know
whether the night was long or not?
How can one
who is on fire know that?
If I had paid attention
to the length of the night,
I would have been deprived
of watching the stars.²⁴⁸

For people of pith: The people of pith (*ulū l-albāb*) are those whose intellects have been kept sound from the drunkenness of forgetfulness and inattention. The sign of one like this is that his gaze will be through the Real. When he gazes from the Real to the Real, his gaze is in the right

245 Muṣṭafā states that this verse is attributed to Majnūn Laylā and also to al-Ṣimma b. ʿAbdallāh al-Qushayrī (Muṣṭafā, no. 17, p. 62).

246 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to find this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 21, pp. 62–63).

247 Muṣṭafā corrects the verse as found in the Basyūnī edition, and identifies it as one of al-Mutanabbī's (Muṣṭafā, no. 10, p. 94). The translation follows the version found in MS K117, fol. 46a, which matches the al-Mutanabbī version in Muṣṭafā' in all but one word.

248 The translation follows the version in MS K117, fol. 46a, which matches the verses Muṣṭafā finds attributed to Abū Nuwās in two sources. He also gives sources that attribute the verses to Khālid al-Kātib and Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (Muṣṭafā, no. 10, p. 24).

direction. But when he gazes from created beings and things to the Real, his thoughts are thrown into upheaval, which causes a state of confusion.

Those who remember God, standing and sitting: Remembrance (*dhikr*) permeates their every moment. If they stand, it is in remembrance of Him. If they sit or sleep or prostrate—all of their states are consumed with the rightful due and realities of remembrance (*ḥaqqāʾiq al-dhikr*). They stand in the proper manner (*ḥaqq*) of remembering Him and they refrain from [literally, “sit from”] opposing His command. They stand by means of the purest and choicest of states but refrain from paying too much attention to them or claiming anything concerning them.²⁴⁹ They remember God standing on the carpet of service, and then they sit on the carpet of nearness. Those who are not secure from negligence in their standing in the beginning will not be sound and secure in their sitting in the quality of presence (*ḥuḍūr*) in the end.²⁵⁰

Remembrance is the path (*ṭarīq*) of the Real *سُبْحَانَكَ*. The aspirants (*murīdūn*) cannot travel a path that is more sound or clear than the path of remembrance. If there were only His words, “I sit among those who remember Me,”²⁵¹ concerning it, that would be sufficient.

Those who remember are of several types and this is because of the difference in their states. There is a remembrance which causes the contraction (*qabḍ*) of one who, by remembering [God], remembers his own prior failings, or something ugly that came from him. His embarrassment holds him back from remembering himself [in a positive way]; this is a remembrance of contraction (*qabḍ*). There is a remembrance that causes the expansion (*baṣṭ*) of the one who remembers; this is because of what he finds in the pleasures of remembrance and even more so [when] the Real draws him near in the most beautiful way. There is the one who remembers and is effaced in the witnessing of what is being remembered. The remembrance that flows from his tongue is a constant habit and, in what has appeared to it, his heart has become completely cut off [from anything else]. There is the one who remembers and who is in a place of the most intense veneration [of God]: he abstains from remembering Him and considers his praise of

249 In the “Section on Remembrance” (Bāb al-dhikr), al-Qushayrī attributes these comments on the phrase *those who remember God standing and sitting* to Abū Bakr b. Fūrak: *standing* in the proper manner of remembering Him and *sitting* (or “refraining”) from claiming anything about it (*Risāla*, 2:467).

250 In the section on “Absence and presence” (al-Ghayba wa-l-ḥuḍūr), al-Qushayrī writes, “When it is said that someone is present, it means that he is present in his heart before his Lord, not neglectful or forgetful of Him, constantly engaged in remembering Him” (*Risāla*, 1:216).

251 In his footnote to the commentary on Qurʾān 2:222, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān gives al-ʿAjlūnī, al-Zabīdī, and al-Suyūṭī as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

Him unclean. It is as if he finds himself too insignificant for [the remembrance of God], so he wants nothing to do in this world and the hereafter with praising, remaining, existing, and glory.²⁵² Their speaker said:

I cannot remember you—
not even once—

without my heart, my spirit, and my innermost self
cursing me.

It is as if a lookout from you
called out to me,

“Watch out!” “Woe unto you!”
“Beware of this remembrance!”²⁵³

Remembrance is the sign of friendship (*walāya*), the clear evidence of the communion [of lovers], the actualization of spiritual desire (*irāda*), the mark of the soundness of the beginning (*bidāya*), and the signifier of the purity of the end (*nihāya*). There is nothing beyond remembrance. All of the praiseworthy qualities return to remembrance and arise from it.

وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا

[3:191] *and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: “Our Lord, You have not created this in vain.*

Reflection (*tafakkur*) is the attribute²⁵⁴ of every seeker and its fruit is union, provided there is knowledge. When reflection²⁵⁵ becomes free of defects, its possessor will arrive at the watering places of realization (*taḥqīq*). When he achieves witnessing (*shuhūd*) and presence (*ḥudūr*), he will rise from reflection to the boundaries of remembrance (*ḥudūd al-dhikr*) and remembrance

252 In the “Section on remembrance” (Bāb al-dhikr), al-Qushayrī relates a saying from al-Kattānī: “If it were not an obligation, I would not remember You because of the intense veneration due to You. How can someone like me remember [God] without washing one’s mouth out a thousand times in repentance for mentioning Him!” (*Risāla*, 2:468).

253 Muṣṭafā notes that these verses can be found in a slightly different version in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (2:468) where they are attributed to Abū ‘Alī l-Daqqāq. He also states that they are recited by Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ja‘far al-Kattānī in the *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā’* (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 89).

254 The translation follows the word “attribute” (*nāʿt*) from MS K117, fol. 46b rather than the word “blessing” (*nīma*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

255 The word “reflection” (*fikr*) from MS K117, fol. 46b makes more sense here than “remembrance” (*dhikr*) in the Basyūnī edition.

is without beginning or end. The ascetics (*zāhidūn*), then, reflect on the ephemerality of the present world and the insignificance of its promise to those who seek it, and by that reflection they increase in their asceticism toward it. The worshipers (*ʿābidūn*) reflect on the beautiful reward, and they increase in their eagerness and longing for it. Those with the deepest knowledge (*ʿārifūn*) reflect on blessings and kindnesses, and they increase in their love for the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ*.

﴿١٩١﴾ سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

[3:191] *Glory be to You! So guard us against the chastisement of the fire.*

The glorification (*tasbīh*) alludes to the swimming (*sabḥ*)²⁵⁶ of the innermost selves in the sea of grandeur.

﴿١٩٢﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ مَن تَدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ

[3:192] *Our Lord, whomever You admit into the fire, You will have abased, and the evildoers shall have no helpers.*

“Whomever You put to the test in the future by burning (*ḥurqa*), You will have abased him. And whomever you put to the test by separation (*furqa*) in the present, you will have made him miserable. Whomever you have entrusted with the good fortune of communion (*wuṣla*), You will have sheltered him and brought him close.”

﴿١٩٣﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ ءَامِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَقَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ

[3:193] *“Our Lord, we have heard a caller calling to belief, saying, ‘Believe in your Lord!’ And we believed. So, our Lord, forgive us our sins and absolve us of our evil deeds, and take us [in death] with the pious.*

It means “We have answered the caller (*dāʿī*) but You are the guide (*hādī*),

²⁵⁶ The word “to glorify God” (*tasbīh*) comes from the same root (*s-b-ḥ*) as the word “to swim” (*sabḥ*).

so do not leave us to ourselves and do not raise the shadow of your care from us.” Faith (*īmān*) is entering into that which brings security (*amān*) and one only has faith in the Real from the Real granting him security. The security of the Real for the servant, which is His granting him protection, brings about the faith of the servant in the Real, which is his affirmation (*taṣdīq*) of Him and his deep recognition (*maʿrifa*) of Him.

And take us [in death] with the pious: They are those chosen for the proper ways of declaring oneness (*ḥaqāʾiq al-tawḥīd*), those who stand for God [according] to the conditions of utter devotion (*sharāʾiṭ al-tafrīd*), and stay with God by the special characteristics of disengaging [from anything other than Him] (*khaṣāʾiṣ al-tajrīd*).

رَبَّنَا وَعَاثِنَا مَا وَعَدْتَنَا عَلَىٰ رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّكَ لَا
تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

[3:194] “Our Lord, grant us what You have promised us through Your messengers, and abase us not on the Day of Resurrection. You will not fail the trust.” “Verify for us what You have promised us through the words of your intermediaries in the perfection of blessed happiness (*nuʿmā*) and the absolution of [our] evil [deeds] (*sūʾā*),²⁵⁷ and forgiveness for pursuing our own whims (*hawā*) in the past.”

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَمَلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ
أُنْثَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا
فِي سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُوا وَقُتِلُوا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ
تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ

[3:195] *And their Lord answers them, “I do not let the labor of any laborer among you go to waste, be you male or female—the one of you is as the other: and those who emigrated, and were expelled from their habitations, those who suffered hurt in My way, and fought, and were slain—they I*

257 The blank in Basyūni has been completed with the phrase *takfir al-sūʾā* from MS K117, fol. 46b. God’s absolution of evil deeds is mentioned in Qurʾān 3:193 and 3:195.

shall surely absolve of their evil deeds, and I shall admit them to gardens underneath which rivers flow.” A reward from God! And God—with Him is the fairest reward.

How would He not respond to them when He is the One who urges them to supplicate and He is the One who makes Himself responsible for answering them? The beautiful reward He has promised them exceeds what they pray for in their supplications.

Those who emigrated [refers] to those [who forsake their] habitations and places of visitation (*mazār*), and all others (*aghyār*), whether they be in opposition or harmony.

And were expelled from their habitations: they were forced²⁵⁸ to leave their familiar places and things.

Those who suffered hurt in My way: they were condemned to poverty and blame (*malām*) and subjected to all kinds of trials and pains (*ālām*).

And fought, and were slain: they tasted different stages, the sweet and the bitter.

Them I shall surely absolve of their evil deeds means “We will give them more than what they hoped for and more than what their acts and states merit.”

لَا يَغُرَّتْكَ تَقَلُّبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي الْبَلَدِ ﴿١٩٦﴾ مَتَّعُ قَلِيلٌ ثُمَّ مَأْوَهُمْ
جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٩٧﴾

[3:196] *Let it not delude you, that the disbelievers go to and fro in the land,*

[3:197] *a little enjoyment; then their abode is hell—an evil cradling!*

“Do not let any doubt seize you, thinking that they have any value or worth with Us. Rather, the days are few and breaths limited. Afterward there will be grief upon grief (*ḥasarāt mutarādifa*) and sorrow upon sorrow (*aḥzān mutadā'ifa*).”

لَكِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ

258 “They were forced” (*aḥwajū*) has been added on the basis of MS K117, fol. 46b.

فِيهَا نُزُلًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٩٨﴾

[3:198] *But those who fear their Lord—for them shall be gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein; a hospitality from God Himself. That which is with God is better for the pious.*

“The state of those whom we have branded with the ignominy of separation is wretched while the state and intimacy of those whom We have raised in degrees for Our sake is blessed.” They attain the lasting reward (*waṣalū ilā l-thawābi al-muqīm*) and remain in communion and felicity (*wa-baḳū fi l-wuṣṣṣati wa-l-naʿīm*). What God has stored away for them is better than what they had hoped for by their own choosing.

وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ خَشِعِينَ لِلَّهِ لَا يَشْتَرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٩٩﴾

[3:199] *Verily, there are some among the people of the scripture who believe in God, and what has been revealed to you, and what has been revealed to them, humble before God, not purchasing with the verses of God a small price. Those—their wage is with their Lord. God is swift at reckoning.*

He means those who have been favored by a beautiful destiny—they are with the friends of God in being blessed (*fa-hum maʿa awliyāʾ Allāh niʿmatan*) just as they are with them in their destiny (*kamā kānū maʿahum qiṣmatan*).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا
وَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

[3:200] *O you who believe, be patient and vie in patience, be steadfast; fear God so that you will prosper.*

Patience (*ṣabr*) relates to the servant alone. Vying in patience (*muṣābara*) is with the enemy. Being steadfast (*ribāt*) is a type of patience with a particular

objective.²⁵⁹

It is said that the beginning of patience is acting as if one were patient (*taṣabbur*). Then it is being patient (*ṣabr*), then vying in patience (*muṣābara*), then [achieving] the utmost patience (*iṣṭibār*).²⁶⁰

It is said, “**Be patient** by [performing] acts of obedience (*tāʿāt*) and refraining from disobedient acts (*mukhālafāt*); **vie in patience** by leaving whims and desires (*shahawāt*) and cutting off desire and attachments (*ʿalāqāt*); and **be steadfast**, by holding to the path of companionship in all times (*awqāt*) and states (*ḥālāt*).”

It is said, “**Be patient** with your lower selves, **vie in patience** with your hearts, and **be steadfast** with your innermost selves.”²⁶¹

It is said, “**Be patient** looking to the reward, **vie in patience** by desiring nearness, and **be steadfast** in the place of proximity and nearness upon the witnessing of the [divine] beauty and might.”

The taste of patience is bitter when the servant gulps it in [the state of] absence. Its taste is pleasant when it is drunk in witnessing and vision.

Fear God so you will prosper: Prosperity is the conquering of desire. Their aspiration today is to gain victory over their lower selves, for in that their deliverance will be complete. When they have defeated their lower selves, they sacrifice them by the swords of [spiritual] effort (*mujāhada*) and crucify them on the trunks of toil (*mukābada*). After their annihilation (*fanāʿ*) from their lower selves, they will attain their subsistence (*baqāʿ*) through God.



259 According to some commentators on this verse, *ribāt* refers to the defense of the borders of the Muslim community or being assiduous in performing ablutions and prayers (see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:1013–1014 and Ayoub, *The Qurʾan and Its Interpreters*, 2:415–418).

260 Here al-Qushayrī is comparing the different verb forms from the root *ṣ-b-r*. He defines the eighth form, *iṣṭabara*, as the most intensive form. See also his commentary on Qurʾān 19:65 and 20:132, where he says, “*al-iṣṭibār ghāyati al-ṣabr*” and “*li-l-iṣṭibār maziyyatun ʿalā l-ṣabr*.”

261 In the “Section on Patience” (Bāb al-ṣabr), al-Qushayrī writes, “It is said, *Be patient* with your lower selves in obeying God Most High, *vie in patience* with your hearts in bearing affliction for the sake of God, and *be steadfast* in your innermost selves in longing for God” (*Risāla*, 1:400).

سُورَةُ النَّسَاءِ

Sūrat al-Nisāʾ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name [ism] of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

There is disagreement about the derivation of the [word] “name” (*ism*). Some say it is derived from *sumūw*,¹ which means “elevation” (*ʿulūw*), while others say it is derived from *sima*,² which means “branding” (*kayya*). Both of these [appear] in the allusion (*ishāra*) [of this verse]. For those who say it is derived from “elevation” (*sumūw*), it is a name (*ism*)—and the one who mentions it is elevated in rank (*man dhakarahu samat rutbatuhu*), the one who comes to know it is elevated in [his] state (*waman ʿarafahu samat ḥālatuhu*), and the one who becomes its companion is elevated in [his] aspiration (*waman ṣaḥibahu samat himmatuhu*). The elevation (*sumūw*) of rank entails an abundance of rewards and favors (*mabārr*). The elevation of state entails the appearance of lights in the innermost selves (*asrār*). The elevation of aspiration entails freedom³ from the bondage of others (*aghyār*).

For those who say its root is from “branding” (*sima*), it is a name—the one who seeks it is branded by the mark of worship (*wusima bi-simati al-ʿibāda*). The one who becomes its companion is branded by the mark of spiritual desire (*wusima bi-simati al-irāda*). The one who loves it is branded by the mark of the elect (*wusima bi-simati al-khawāṣṣ*). The one who comes to know it is branded by the mark of special distinction (*wusima bi-simati al-ikhtiṣāṣ*). The mark of worship entails fear of the fire that throws sparks at its inhabitants.⁴ The mark of spiritual desire entails bashfulness toward paradise, which, in spite of its noble dignity, is eager

1 From the root *s-m-w*.

2 From the root *w-s-m*.

3 The Basyūnī edition has “protection” (*taḥarruz*) here, which is probably a typographic error. The translation follows the word “freedom” (*taḥarrur*) from MS K117, fol. 47a.

4 This is a reference to Qurʾān 77:32: *Indeed it throws up sparks, [huge] like palace edifices.*

to captivate its inhabitants. The mark of the elect entails the loss of any conceit about the [human, who is an] aggregate of water and clay, being worthy of nearness. The mark of special distinction entails the erasure of [human] determining (*imtiḥā' al-ḥukm*) before the overwhelming authority of reality (*istilā' sultān al-ḥaqīqa*).

It is said that [God's] measure is far above (*samā*) anything that one who approaches the name (*ism*) can imagine. The heart of the one who separates himself from it is branded (*wusima*) with the mark of separation.

His name indicates all of this.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾

[4:1] *O people, fear your Lord, who created you of a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered many men and women; and fear God by whom you claim [your rights] from one another and kinship ties. Surely God has been watchful over you.*

“People” (*al-nās*) is a generic noun whose etymology is uncertain. It is said that man (*al-ins*) is called *ins* because of his becoming visible (*zuhūr*).⁵ Following this [etymology], the allusion (*ishāra*) is: “O you whom I have made appear from the concealment of nonexistence⁶ by the decree of My prescriptive command (*taklīfī*), I have chosen whom I will from among you for My honoring (*tashrifī*), and deprived whom I will from among you of My guidance and giving of knowledge (*taʿrifī*). I have brought you to whatever I will and have joined you to it by the decree of My free agency (*taṣrifī*).”

It is said: “I did not cause anything else like you to appear from non-existence and [I] did not make appear to anyone else what I have made appear to you in your states.”

[Following another etymology of the word “people” (*al-nās*)], it is said: “I named you “humankind” (*insān*) because of your forgetfulness (*nisyān*).⁷ If you forget Me, there is nothing of lesser value than you. But if you forget

5 One of the meanings of the verb *anisa* (from the root *a-n-s*) is to perceive or see something.

6 Instead of nonexistence (*ʿadam*), the word found in MS K117, fol. 47a here is “forgetfulness” (*ghafla*).

7 The root of the word *nisyān* is *n-s-y*.

all that is other than me,⁸ there is none who sees more clearly⁹ than you.”

It is said that for the one who forgets the Real, there is no limit to his tribulation (*man nasiya al-ḥaqqā fa-lā ghāyata li-miḥnatihī*), while for the one who forgets creation, there is no end to the sublimity of his state (*waman nasiya al-khalqa fa-lā nihāyata li-ʿulūwi ḥālatihī*).

It is said: He says to the sinners, “O you who have forgotten¹⁰ My covenant (*ʿahdī*), who have rejected My love (*waddī*) and ignored My limit (*ḥaddī*), now it is time for you to return to My door (*bābī*) so that you may lay claim to My kindness and approval (*ijābī*).” He said to those with deeper knowledge, “O you who, in Us, have forgotten your worldly portion (*ḥazzaka*), and have kept your glance and expression (*lahẓaka wa lafẓaka*) from any other—your rightful due (*ḥaqquka*) is magnified through Us. Helping you is made worthy with Us (*wajaba ladaynā naṣruka*), and your measure is exalted before Us (*wa-jalla ʿindanā qadruka*).”

It is said, “O you who have been gladdened (*anista*)¹¹ by the breeze of My nearness, who have found rest in the witnessing of My face, and who have been overcome by the majesty of My measure—you are to Me the most sublime of My servants.”

Fear your Lord: Fear of God (*taqwā*) is the sum of all the acts of obedience. The first part of it is to abandon [the act of] associating others with God (*shirk*) and the last part of it is to be wary (*ittiqā*) of everything other [than Him]. The foremost of those things which are other [than Him] for you is your lower self (*nafs*). Those who are wary of themselves stand with God without any station (*maqām*) and without looking to any state (*ḥāl*). [They stand] for the sake of God, not for any self-interest in this life or the final outcome.¹²

Who created you of a single soul (nafs), who is Adam ﷺ. Since we were created from him and he was created by the hand [of God], we are also thus. Because the merit of Adam ﷺ became manifest through him to all created beings and things, so are we to be described. God most high said, *they are the best of creatures* [98:7]. The term “soul” (*nafs*) is [a term] of generality

8 The translation follows *dhikr ghayrī* from MS K117, fol. 47a rather than *dhikrī* from the Basyūni text.

9 The translation follows *aḥṣar* from MS K117, fol. 47a rather than *aḥaṭṭu* from the Basyūni text.

10 The translation follows *nasīta* from MS K117, fol. 47a rather than *unsīta* from the Basyūni text.

11 This returns to the possible derivation of “people” (*al-nās*) from the root *a-n-s*. In addition to meaning “to perceive something” (as in the beginning of the commentary on this verse), the verb *anisa* can also mean “to be sociable” or “to become gladdened by someone’s company.”

12 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 47a: *li-Llāh lā li-ḥaẓẓin fī l-dunyā wa-l-ʿuqbā*.

(*umūm*), which necessarily entails comprehensiveness.¹³

And from it created its mate: The Real سُبْحَانَهُ decreed the cohabiting of humans, one with another, in order to perpetuate offspring, and to return like to like. He connected the form of the one to the other.

And from the pair of them scattered many men and women: By illuminating demonstrative proofs of divine lordship and evidentiary proofs of wisdom, He informed rational beings of the perfection of the divine deliberative power inasmuch as the creation of all humankind is from the progeny of a single person—this in spite of all the differences in their outward appearances, the variety of their forms, and the disparity in their characters. Surely no two [humans] are alike. Each [human] has a particular face in form and character, and in aspiration and state. Glory be to the One who is unlimited in what He decrees and infinite in what He makes known.

And fear God (ittaqū): the repetition of the command to fear God (*taqwā*) indicates the confirmation of, and emphasis on, His wise determination (*ḥukm*).

You claim [your rights] from one another and kinship ties: that is, “be wary (*ittaqū*) of cutting off kinship ties,” for whoever cuts off kin is himself cut off and whoever connects with them is connected.

Surely God has been watchful over you, observing, witnessing. He follows your breaths and sees what you perceive. He attends to your steps and brings forth your states of movement and rest. It is fitting, then, that those who know that [God] is a watcher over them should be shy before Him.

وَعَاثُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَيْرَ بِالْظَلِيمِ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا
أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَمْوَالِكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

[4:2] Give the orphans their property and do not exchange the evil for the good, and absorb not their property into your property; surely that is a great crime:

Whoever has been given charge over others and then acts unjustly¹⁴ toward those under his charge, his adversary is his Lord, for He سُبْحَانَهُ avenges His servants what He will not avenge for His own sake. If the protector of the orphan acts with justice and beneficence, then his right is protected by God,

13 In other words, the term signifies a category that is both all-inclusive and comprehensive. The *nafs* of all human beings come from a single *nafs*.

14 The translation follows the word “to oppress” (*jāra*) from MS K117, fol. 47b rather than the word *jā'a* from the Basyūni edition.

and if he behaves badly and aggressively, God is his adversary.

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ
النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبْعًا فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ
أَيْمَانُكُمْ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا ﴿٣﴾ وَعَاثُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً

[4:3] *If you fear that you will not act justly toward the orphans, marry such women as seem good to you, two or three or four, but if you fear you will not be equitable, then only one, or what your right hands own; thus, it is likelier that you will not be unjust.*

[4:4] *And give women their dowries as a free gift;*

God granted free men the right to marry four women at the same time. He mandated justice between [these wives], so the servant must respect what is obligatory. If he knows that he can uphold this obligation in a proper manner, the choice is a permitted one. But if he knows that he will fall short in meeting this obligation, he should not do it for he is accountable for what is obligatory.

فَإِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَّرِيًّا ﴿٤﴾

[4:4] *but if they are pleased to offer you any of it of their own accord, consume it with wholesome appetite.*

This suggests that the food of the chivalrous (*fityān*)¹⁵ and generous (*askhiyā*)¹⁶ is wholesome because they only feed others from good-heartedness. The food of the miserly is rotten because they look only to themselves and feed others out of obligation, not good-heartedness. [The Prophet] ﷺ said, “The food of the generous is a remedy while the food of the miser is a disease.”¹⁷

15 In the “Chapter on chivalry” (Bāb al-futuwwa), al-Qushayrī defines the chivalrous as those who are always striving to help others (*Risāla*, 2:472). See also the footnote to Qur’ān 2:123.

16 For more on the topic of generosity, see the “Chapter on liberality and generosity” (Bāb al-jūd wa-l-sakhā) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 2:502–511.

17 ‘Abd al-Rahmān gives al-Zubaydī and al-Suyūfī l-Ḥalabī as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِي جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَلِمًا وَارْزُقُوهُمْ فِيهَا وَاكْسُوهُمْ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ﴿٦﴾

[4:5] *But do not give to the foolish your property, which God has assigned to you as maintenance; provide for them thereof, and clothe them, and speak to them decent words.*

The foolish are those who keep you from the Real and distract you from the Lord. The foolish are those dependents and children who prefer their worldly portions over the rights of God most high.

Which God has assigned to you as maintenance: To keep to pleasing actions in the situation is better for you than exposing yourself to disgrace, petitioning, begging, and contriving. For the liberation of the heart it is better to be generous than withholding, and [better] to rely on patience. But as for forming the intention to beg or making yourself and your dependents a burden on other people, it is more appropriate to hold on to a sufficient amount from what God has assigned to you. Then you can be generous with what is in excess of your needs.

Provide for them thereof, and clothe them, and speak to them decent words: If you have more than enough to help them today, do not withhold that which you know they need, out of fear of future poverty. If your hand is constrained from providing support, do not let your tongue loose in speaking ill.

It is said that when your lower self calls you to spend in a useless way, you are the most foolish of the foolish, so do not yield to it.

وَابْتَلُوا الَّتِي تَمَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنْ آنَسْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ رُّشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبِدَارًا أَنْ يَكْبَرُوا وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهَدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا ﴿٦﴾

[4:6] *Try well the orphans until they reach the age of marrying; then, if you perceive in them maturity (rushd), deliver their property to them; consume it not wastefully and in haste, lest they should grow up. If any man is rich,*

let him be abstinent; if he is poor, let him consume honorably. And when you deliver to them their property, take witnesses over them. God suffices as a reckoner.

To perceive maturity means [to perceive] decency and integrity. It is generosity and the preservation of honor, keeping company with elders, and striving to look to the good and to perform acts of devotion as decreed by the command.

It is said that the one who is mature (*rashīd*) is the one who is guided to his Lord. When a need arises in him, he does not rely on his own power or strength, his own planning or choosing.

لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا
تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا ﴿٧﴾

[4:7] *To the men belongs a share of what parents and kinsmen leave, and to the women belongs a share of what parents and kinsmen leave, whether it be little or much—an obligatory share.*

The determining of inheritance does not vary according to virtue or good qualities, nor is it different due to fault, defect or sin. If a man dies leaving two sons, their rights are equivalent even if one of them is pious and God-fearing and the other wicked and disobedient. The God-fearing one does not get more because of his fear of God and the wicked one does not get less because of his wickedness. The deeper meaning in this is that inheritance is a gift from God that comes before [any action or virtue], so it is shared equally by the pious and the wicked. Likewise, the determining of faith is a gift that comes before [any action or virtue] for Muslims. God most high said, “*Then We bequeathed the Book to those of Our servants whom We chose* [35:32]. Then He said, *Yet some of them are those who wrong themselves, and some of them are moderate, and some are those who take the lead in [performing] good works by the leave of God. That is the greatest favor!*” [35:32].

وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُولُو الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينُ فَأَرْزُقُوهُمْ مِنْهُ

﴿٨﴾ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا

[4:8] *And when the division is attended by kinsmen, and orphans, and the poor, grant them out of it; and speak to them honorable words.*

When the division of the inheritance is attended by those who are [to be] the possessors of its shares and are the legal heirs, and others [also] attend who have no [legal] portion and who are poor, do not deprive them of that. If the legal heir is a minor, make to [the poor] a goodly promise, saying to them, “When the child grows up, we will tell him to give you something.” This is the meaning of His words, *and speak to them honorable words*. In this is a subtle allusion to those who have sinned. When they are present at His court in the future and the Real سُبْحَانَكَ pardons those who were obedient and gives them the rewards for their deeds, He will not deprive the poor Muslims¹⁸ among you of the pardon, if God wills, after their having been among the family of faith (*ahl al-īmān*). Similarly, you were not present on the day of the division¹⁹—you have no prior entitlement. In what you know of [God], He has made you deserving (*ahhala*)²⁰ by His favor in spite of His knowledge of the lapses that will occur in your states.

وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكَوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعَفًا خَافُوا عَلَيْهِمْ
﴿٩﴾ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

[4:9] *And let them fear those who, if they leave behind them weak offspring would be afraid for them; let them fear God and speak pertinent words.*

He explained in this verse that what the Muslim should accumulate for his dependents is not wealth, but fear of God (*taqwā*) and righteousness (*ṣalāh*), for He did not say, “so let them gather their wealth, let them multiply real estate for them, and let them leave behind household goods.” Rather, He said, *let them fear God*, for He looks after the righteous.

18 That is, the sinning Muslims.

19 That is, the day on which the fates of human beings were determined.

20 Here al-Qushayrī is playing with the word for community or family (*ahl*) and the second form verb *ahhala* from the same root *a-h-l*, which means to be made worthy or deserving of a right or claim.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ
نَارًا وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيرًا ﴿١٠﴾

[4:10] *Those who consume the property of orphans unjustly, are only consuming fire in their bellies and they shall be exposed to a blaze.*

The Real سُبْحَانَهُ becomes the advocate for the orphan because there is no one other than Him for the orphan. Whoever hands his affair over to [God], and absolves himself of his own strength and power, the Real سُبْحَانَهُ avenges him what He does not avenge for His own sake.

يُوصِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلَّذِ كَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ فَإِن كُنَّ
نِسَاءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ وَإِن كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ
وَلِأَبَوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ إِن كَانَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ فَإِن لَّمْ
يَكُن لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَوَرِثَتُهُ أَبَوَاهُ فَلِأُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ فَإِن كَانَ لَهُ إِخْوَةٌ فَلِأُمِّهِ
السُّدُسُ مِّنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّتِهِ يُوصَىٰ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنًا ﴿١١﴾

[4:11] *God charges you concerning your children, to the male the equivalent of the portion of two females; and if they be women more than two, then for them two-thirds of what he leaves; but if she be one then to her a half; and to his parents, to each one of the two the sixth of what he leaves, if he has a child; but if he has no child, and his heirs are his parents, then to his mother a third; or, if he has siblings, to his mother a sixth after any bequest that he may bequeath, or any debt.*

The word “charge” (*waṣiyya*) here means “command” (*amr*).²¹ He سُبْحَانَهُ established two principles for what is owed to inheritors from the inheritance—the obligatory portions (*farḍ*) and the inheritance by the group of relatives (*taʿṣīb*). The inheritance by the group of relatives is stronger than the apportionment because it might include all of the wealth [of the estate], whereas the greater part of the portions cannot exceed two-thirds [of it]. The division [of the estate] begins with those who have claim to the ordained portions—those who have the weaker entitlement. Then [the division proceeds to] the group of relatives (*ʿaṣaba*) who have the stronger

21 The word *waṣiyya* can have the less directive meaning of recommending or advising.

right.²² [The Prophet] ﷺ said, “Whatever remains of the portions goes to the nearest male relative.”²³ Thus is His way (*sunna*) forever. Likewise, in the words of [God] most high, “Then We bequeathed the Book to those of Our servants whom We chose” [35:32], He gave them the Book as the inheritance. Then He showed preference for the wrongdoer²⁴ over those who take the lead [by beginning with them]. [The wrongdoer] has a weaker claim to put forth for generosity because he is broken-hearted and unable to withstand the prolonged deferral.²⁵

To the male the equivalent of the portion of two females: If the matter were to be [determined] by analogy (*qiyās*) [with the previous examples where the weak are given preference], it would be more appropriate to favor the female because of her weakness and her inability to move about freely. But His determination *سُبْحَانَ* does not require justification (*ghayr al-mu'allal*).

ءَابَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ لَا تَدْرُونَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفَعًا فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ
 اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١١﴾

[4:11] *Your parents and children—you know not which of them is nearer in benefit to you, a prescription from God; surely God is ever Knowing, Wise.*

Children benefit you with their service (*khidma*) and parents with their compassion (*rahma*)—parents in the state of your weakness at the beginning of your life and children in your weakness at the end of your life.

﴿وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِن لَّمْ يَكُن لَّهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَإِن كَانَ لَهُنَّ
 وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمْ الرُّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَكَنَّ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوَصِّينَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ وَلَهُنَّ

22 Because they will receive at least one-third of the estate and maybe more.

23 The group of relatives (*ʿaṣaba*) is determined by male lineage and leadership. For a summary of how the practices of inheritance changed from pre-Islamic times, see the article “Mirāth” by A. Layish in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition. Basyūnī quotes the full version of this *ḥadīth* as found in al-Bukhārī.

24 *Yet some of them are those who wrong themselves, and some of them are moderate, and some are those who take the lead in [performing] good works by the leave of God. That is the greatest favor!* [Qurʾān 35:32].

25 In other words, just as those with a weaker claim to the inheritance receive their portions first, so will those with a weaker claim to God’s generosity go first in the final judgment, but will receive less than those who took the lead in good works.

الرُّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُمْ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ
 الثُّمْنُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوصُونَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ وَإِنْ كَانَ رَجُلٌ
 يُورَثُ كَلَلَةً أَوْ امْرَأَةً وَلَهُ أَخٌ أَوْ أُخْتٌ فَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ
 فَإِنْ كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ فِي الثُّلُثِ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصَى
 بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ غَيْرِ مُضَارٍّ وَصِيَّةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

[4:12] *And for you a half of what your wives leave, if they have no children; but if they have children, then for you a fourth of what they leave, after any bequest they may bequeath, or any debt: a fourth of what you leave, if you have no children; but if you have children, then for them an eighth of what you leave, after any bequest you may bequeath, or any debt. If it be a man leaving an inheritance and not having a direct heir, or it be a woman, but it be that such has a brother or a sister, then to each of the two a sixth; but if they be more than that, then they share a third after any bequest to be bequeathed or any debt without prejudice; a charge from God. God is Knowing, Forbearing.*

The subtle indication behind establishing inheritance for relatives by blood and marriage relates to the fact that the relative bears his grief when the individual dies. God compensates the heir for what he endures and soothes the ache in his heart with the inherited wealth. It is His way *سُبْحَانَهُ* to compensate for the suffering of the injured, a generosity from Him—not an obligation on Him, as some people imagine. All who were closest by blood or strongest by marital tie to the deceased are the most entitled to his inheritance. With regard to this meaning, they have recited:

No one remains possessed
 with cheerful largesse
 after the novelty is gone—
 except a youth still besotted.²⁶

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ

²⁶ The translation follows the version of this verse found in MS K117, fol. 48a. Muṣṭafā gives the same version as well as a variant attributed to al-Buḥturī (Muṣṭafā, no. 14, p. 106).

تَحْتَهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٣﴾

[4:13] *Those are God's bounds. Whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will admit him to gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein; that is the great triumph.*

His bounds (*hudūd*) are His commands and prohibitions, and that by which His servants (*‘ibād*) show their devotion (*ta‘abbada bihi*). The root of servanthood (*‘ubūdiyya*) is preserving the bounds (*hudūd*) and maintaining the promises (*‘uhūd*). Whoever preserves His limit, nothing bad or harmful will reach him. The root of every affliction is going beyond the bounds.

وَمَنْ يَعِصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ نَارًا خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَلَهُ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ﴿١٤﴾

[4:14] *But whoever disobeys God, and His Messenger; and transgresses His bounds, him He will admit to a fire, abiding therein, and for him there shall be a humbling chastisement.*

There are indeed two punishments, one immediate and one postponed, and ignominy unites the two of them. If created beings were to attempt to debase those who are disobedient with the like of the debasement that has already come to them through their disobedience, they would not be able to do it. Because of this, their speaker said, “Whoever spends the night committing a sin wakes up with his degradation (*wa-‘alayhi madhallatuhu*). But one says of one who wakes up and passes the day performing pious acts that he has his dignity (*wa-‘alayhi mahābatuhu*).”

وَالَّتِي يَأْتِينَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهِدُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنْكُمْ فَإِنْ شَهِدُوا فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ فِي الْبُيُوتِ حَتَّىٰ يَتَوَفَّاهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٥﴾

[4:15] *As for those of your women who commit lewdness, call four of you to witness against them; and if they witness, then detain them in their houses until death take them or God appoints for them a way.*

So as to lower the veil of generosity over the sins of servants, [God] made allowances through an excessive number of witnesses [required] to establish proof of *lewdness*, which is fornication. To follow the witnessing procedure in the law makes establishing proof of the circumstances nearly impossible. When Mā'iz [ibn Mālik] told [the Prophet] ﷺ, “O Messenger of God, may the blessings of God be upon you, I have committed fornication,” he said, “Maybe you [only] kissed?”²⁷ On another occasion [the Prophet] said, “smell his breath.”²⁸ In this, there is the strongest proof of what I have mentioned of the lowering of the veil over ugly acts.

وَالَّذَانِ يَأْتِيَنِهَا مِنْكُمْ فَأَذُوهُمَا فَإِن تَابَا وَأَصْلَحَا فَأَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُمَا
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿١٦﴾

[4:16] *And when two of you commit it, punish them both; but if they repent and make amends, then leave them be. God ever turns [relenting] and is Merciful.*

The command to various modes of punishment for those who do this act is the strongest way to kindly²⁹ communicate [the advice] to prevent and stay away from it, so that the servant might be on his guard and not become deserving of the greater punishment.

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهْلَةٍ ثُمَّ يُتُوبُونَ مِنْ قَرِيبٍ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٧﴾

[4:17] *The repentance that God accepts is only of those who do evil in ignorance; then repent shortly thereafter; God will relent to those. And God is ever Knowing, Wise.*

There is no asking for forgiveness while one persists [in doing evil], for

27 Basyūnī gives a fuller version of this *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī, related from Ibn ‘Abbās: When Mā’iz b. Malik came to the Prophet ﷺ, [the Prophet] said to him, “Perhaps you [only] kissed or winked or looked?”

28 Basyūnī adds a footnote explaining that this means that the Prophet wanted to determine if the man was drunk. Neither he nor ‘Abd al-Raḥmān give a source for this excerpt from a *ḥadīth*.

29 The translation follows “kindly” (*bi-l-rifq*) from MS K117, fol. 48b rather than *bi-l-raf* as found in the Basyūnī edition.

surely repentance without desisting is the sign of a liar.

Evil in ignorance means doing what the ignorant do.

The sin of each person is in accordance with his state. The sins of the elite are their thoughts that they are entitled to a certain place (*maḥall*) or special gift (*karāma*) because of their acts of obedience. This is a feeble stance to take since there is no way to Him except through Him.

Then repent shortly thereafter: According to what the scholars say, this means before death. In terms of moral behavior (*lisān al-mu‘āmalā*), it means before your lower self becomes habituated to that [sin] so that it becomes a habit. Their speaker said:

I said to the lower self,
“If you want to return,
return before
the way is blocked.”³⁰

وَلَيْسَتْ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ
قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْكُفْرَ وَلَا الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا
لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٨﴾

[4:18] *Repentance is not for those who do evil deeds until, when death approaches one of them, he says, “Indeed now I repent”; neither for those who die disbelieving. Those—We have prepared for them a painful chastisement.*

This means that when the covering has been removed and the different kinds of knowledge are self-evident (*ḍarūriyya*), the door to repentance is closed. A condition of the prescriptive command (*taklīf*) is that faith be placed in what is unseen. Moreover, once one has confessed to being disloyal on this path, there is no smelling the truth of sincerity after that. When God most high asked David ؑ as his crying was subsiding, “Why are you crying David? I have already forgiven you. I have placated your opponent and have accepted your repentance.” He said, “My God, give me back the moment which was mine.” [God] said, “O David, what an idea! That [moment] has passed.” About its meaning, they have recited:

30 Muṣṭafā states that this verse appears without attribution in Muḥammad Bahā’ al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī’s *Kitāb al-Kashkūl* (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 85).

Let the eyes
after you weep
for there is no return
to the days of joy.³¹

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرِهًا وَلَا
تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوا بِبَعْضِ مَا ءَاتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَحِشَةٍ
مُبِينَةٍ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا
شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾

[4:19] O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will; neither debar them, so that you may go off with part of what you have given them, except when they commit flagrant lewdness. Consort with them in kindness; for if you hate them, it may happen that you hate a thing wherein God has set much good.

To deceive those who are vulnerable (*al-talbīs ʿalā l-mustaḍʿafīn*) and to cheat innocent and peaceable Muslims (*wa-l-tadlīs ʿalā ahli al-salāmāti wa-l-widāʿati min al-muslimīn*) is not praiseworthy before God, who will take revenge on those who engage in this. He will not bless them in what they have taken for themselves through deception and trickery from other people's wealth. Whoever deems the other party insignificant before God—the very least punishment God will enact on him will be to hold him back from reaching what he hopes for and loves.

Consort with them in kindness: that is, according to the teachings of the religion, behaving in the best manner (*taʿaddub*) with the noble traits (*akhlāq*) of those who submit, and keeping good company in spite of any dislikes of the lower self. It [means] that you tolerate any offense on their part, that you do not burden them with serving you, and that you shut your eyes to the occasions of their embarrassment.

For if you hate them, it may happen that you hate a thing. . . : That which is most difficult for the lower self [in the beginning] brings the most joy and is the most pleasant in the end.

Know that the Real سُبْحَانَكَ has not shown anyone what is unseen. Humankind

31 Muṣṭafā gives a slightly different version of this verse from al-Qushayrī's *Sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā* (Muṣṭafā, no. 6, p. 77).

[does not understand] that most of what they feel an aversion to has more good than not in it. God *سُبْحَانَهُ* has decreed that opposition to the lower self will bring its master to a higher station, while the reverse will be the case for those who align themselves with [their lower selves]. Opposition to the heart [that is, the higher self]³² leads to the blindness of the faculty of insight, while the reverse will be the case for those who align themselves with [the heart].

وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَعَاطَيْتُمْ إِحْدَهُنَّ قِنطَارًا فَلَا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا أَتَأْخُذُونََهُ بِؤْهْتِنَا وَإِنَّمَا مِيبِنَا ﴿٢٠﴾

[4:20] *And if you desire to exchange a wife in place of another, and you have given to one a hundredweight, take of it nothing. Would you take it by way of calumny and manifest sin?*

He taught them how to best keep to the promise and noble behavior in the conjugal relationship, saying do not combine the act of separation with the demand for the return of your wealth, for surely that is ignoble. If you have given a woman a great deal of wealth and then treat her harshly by separating from her, what you have given her is insignificant next to what you have made her experience.

وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونََهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿٢١﴾

[4:21] *How shall you take it, when each of you has been privily with the other, and they have taken from you a solemn covenant.*

It means that the prior companionship has a firm inviolability, so, out of respect to its due, stop and keep to what the *covenant* requires.

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ آبَاؤُكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ إِنَّهُ

32 The Basyūnī edition uses the plural “hearts” (*qulūb*), but the translation follows the singular found in MS K117, fol. 48b since it agrees with the singular “lower self” (*nafs*) in the previous sentence.

﴿ كَانَتْ فَحِشَةً وَمَقْتًا وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴾

[4:22] *And do not marry women whom your fathers married, unless it be a thing of the past; surely that is obscene and abominable, an evil way.*

This verse alludes to the protection of honor and staying within the limits of respect. If it is natural for a man to hate that another should bed his wife, then sons should be forbidden from disregarding the rights of their fathers in seeking to bed their [fathers'] wives.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ وَعَمَّاتُكُمْ
وَخَالَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخِ وَبَنَاتُ الْأُخْتِ وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمُ اللَّاتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ
وَأَخَوَاتُكُم مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَأُمَّهَاتُ نِسَائِكُمْ وَرَبِّبَاتُكُمُ اللَّاتِي فِي
حُجُورِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَائِكُمُ اللَّاتِي دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَإِن لَّمْ تَكُونُوا دَخَلْتُمْ
بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَحَلَائِلُ أَبْنَائِكُمُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ وَأَن
تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٢٢﴾

[4:23] *Forbidden to you are your mothers, and daughters, your sisters, your paternal aunts, and maternal aunts, your brother's daughters, your sister's daughters, your foster mothers who have given you milk, your foster sisters, your mothers-in-law, your step-daughters, who are in your care being born of your wives you have been in to—but if you have not yet been in to them you are not at fault—and the spouses of your sons who are of your loins, and that you should take to you two sisters together unless it be a thing of the past. God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.*

The attempt to find the meanings behind the prohibitions is an impossible matter because the law does not need to be justified (*ghayr al-mu'allal*). Rather, the Real سُبْحَانَهُ prohibits what He will for whom He will, and likewise gives permission. There is no underlying cause (*'illa*) for the laws at all: if the prohibited women were to be the permissible ones or the permissible women were to be the prohibited ones, then that would be allowed.

﴿ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۖ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ

عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَا وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ مُحْصِنِينَ
 غَيْرَ مُسْلِفِينَ فَمَا أَسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً
 وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا تَرَاضَيْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيضَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
 كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٤﴾

[4:24] *And wedded women, save what your right hands own, this is what God has prescribed for you. Lawful for you beyond all that is that you seek using your wealth, in wedlock and not illicitly. Such wives as you enjoy thereby, give them their wages as an obligation; you are not at fault in agreeing together, after the obligation. God is ever Knowing, Wise.*

When you stay mindful of the limits (*hudūd*), respect agreements (*‘uhūd*) and obtain mutual consent with women³³ according to the law, there will be no enmity in it for people and no punishment to follow from it from the Real *شَبَّاحُهُ*, for that is lawful and without further restriction.

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا أَنْ يَنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ فَمِنْ
 مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ فَتَيَاتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِكُمْ
 بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ فَاذْكُرُوهُنَّ بِأَذْنِ أَهْلِهِنَّ وَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ
 بِالْمَعْرُوفِ مُحْصَنَاتٍ غَيْرَ مُسْلِفَاتٍ وَلَا مُتَّخِذَاتِ أَخْدَانٍ فَإِذَا
 أَحْصِنْتُمْ فَإِنَّهُنَّ بِفَحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنَاتِ مِنَ
 الْعَذَابِ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ وَأَنْ تَصْبِرُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ
 وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾

[4:25] *And whoever has not the means wherewith to be able to marry believing women in wedlock, let him take believing maids whom your right hands own. God knows very well your faith; the one of you is as the other. So marry them, with the permission of their folk, and give them their wages, honorably, as women in wedlock, not illicitly, or taking lovers. But when they are given in*

33 The MS K117, fol. 49a has “people” (*nās*) here rather than “women” (*nisā*).

wedlock, if they commit lewdness, they shall be liable to half the chastisement of married women. That is for those of you who fear the distress of sin, yet it is better for you to be patient. God is Forgiving, Merciful.

Concessions have been granted for the weak. As for the strong, He bids them to serious endeavor, and the adoption of what is most comprehensive and restrictive (in the law), since there is no work for them except to uphold the right of the Real (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*). When an external matter distracts them from their attention to the heart so that they adopt what is easier and less, this takes them farther away from their attention to the innermost self, for it is an abandonment of the most important and sublime matters. Whoever descends in degree from adopting that which is strongest and most comprehensive—[this decline] to what is permissible for him [is actually] a decline into the state of indulgence.³⁴

Then He said at the end of the verse, *yet it is better for you to be patient*. This means [patient] in enduring what is difficult in [your situation]. This is a soothing way [of speaking] to the servant since He did not say, “Be patient,” but rather *yet it is better for you to be patient*.

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنْنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوبَ
عَلَيْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾

[4:26] *God desires to make clear to you and to guide you in the ways of those before you, and to turn [in forgiveness] toward you; God is Knowing, Wise.*

When He told the Prophet ﷺ and his community the stories of those from past communities and what they did and how they were dealt with, they looked to what would be done with them since there were among them those who also did the impermissible. So they said, “If only we knew in what way [God] will deal with us. Will it be abasement, metamorphosis,³⁵ punishment or what?” So God most high said, *and to guide you in the ways of those before you*, We will inform you of that which we did with them, *and to turn [in forgiveness] toward you*. As for you, I turn [in forgiveness] to you and as for those who came before you, I have already destroyed

34 Basyūnī adds a footnote referring to a passage from al-Qushayrī, in the “Section on advice for aspirants” (Bāb al-waṣīyya li-l-murīdīn) which stresses the importance for aspirants of maintaining the highest standards of behavior (*Risāla*, 2:735).

35 For more on the concept of metamorphosis, see al-Qushayrī’s commentary on 2:65: *And verily you know that there were those among you who transgressed the Sabbath, and We said to them, “Be apes despised!”*

them utterly.³⁶

It is said that *God desires to make clear to you* by unveiling His secrets to you so that what was hidden from others will be made manifest to you.

It is said that *God desires to make clear to you* His singularity in bringing things into existence and originating new things—no one else has any part in this.

And to guide you in the ways of those before you: the path of the prophets and the friends. This [guidance] is entrusting [everything to God], being content, and surrendering completely to the [divine] decree and judgment.

It is said: *And to turn [in forgiveness] toward you*, that is, He accepts your repentance after having created it, and then repays you according to what He has created for you in your repentance.

وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوَاتِ
 أَنْ تَمِيلُوا مَيْلًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٢٧﴾ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ
 وَخَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ ضَعِيفًا ﴿٢٨﴾

[4:27] *And God desires to turn [forgivingly] toward you, but those who follow their passions, desire that you deviate with a terrible deviation.*

[4:28] *God desires to lighten things for you; for man was created weak.*

He separates here the story of the former from the story of the latter.

Whenever God desires to turn toward someone, He will not let an enemy gloat over him and He will not give him anything bad in the two abodes.

But those who follow their passions (shahawāt) desire. . . : Their desire (*irāda*) becomes weak, enfeebled, and held back before the desire (*irāda*) of the Real سُبحَانَهُ.

God desires to lighten things for you. This means [the lightening of] the weight of litanies³⁷ through intermittent incomings (*wāridāt*)³⁸ to your hearts. It is said that God desires to lighten what you endure in struggles

36 As described in Qurʾān 7:137, 25:36, 26:172, 27:51, 37:136, 46:25, and 47:10.

37 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 49a with the word “litanies” (*awrād*) rather than the word “burdens” (*awzār*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

38 The translation follows the word “incomings” (*wāridāt*) from MS K117, fol. 49a rather than the word “litanies” (*awrād*) in the Basyūnī edition. In the section on “The incoming” (al-Wārid) al-Qushayrī describes “incomings” (*wāridāt*) as positive verbal or nonverbal messages that come to the heart (*Risāla*, 1:45).

(*mujāhadāt*) with the lights of witnessings (*mushāhadāt*) that enter deeply into your hearts.

It is said that God desires to lighten the burdens of service for you with the sweetness of acts of obedience.

It is said that He lightens the difficulties of the trust (*amāna*) for you by carrying its burden for you.³⁹

It is said that He lightens the hardships of seeking with the refreshment of arriving.

For man was created weak: He describes by this their need and affliction (*ḍurr*) but does not accept⁴⁰ by this their excuse (*udhr*).

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ
تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ
بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا ﴿٢٩﴾ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ عَدُوًّا وَظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصَلِّيهِ نَارًا
وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

[4:29] O you who believe, consume not your goods between you wrongly, except it be trading through mutual agreement. And kill not yourselves. Surely God is ever Merciful to you.

[4:30] And whoever does that through aggression and injustice, him We shall certainly expose to a fire; and that for God is an easy matter.

Every thing spent for something other than God is capital spent for nothing.

It is said that [this refers] to withholding in a heedless way and expending from a place other than that of bearing witness to the true reality (*ḥaqīqa*). All of that comes to nothing.

And kill not yourselves, that is, by committing sins. It is said that it is an indirect reference to those things that would incur His wrath ^{سُبْحَانَهُ}.⁴¹

It is said [**kill not yourselves**] by looking to and paying mind to [your lower selves].

39 The reference here is to Qurʾān 33:72: *Indeed We offered the Trust (amāna) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and were apprehensive of it; but man undertook it. Truly he is a wrongdoer, ignorant.*

40 The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been filled in with *lam yabsuṭ* from MS K117, fol. 49a.

41 In other words, “Do not destroy yourselves through behavior that will bring God’s wrath upon you.”

It is said [*kill not yourselves*] by being pleased with [your lower selves] or giving preference to them over the good pleasure of the Real.

And whoever does that through aggression and injustice, We will not spare him from a fierce punishment. We will entrust [the fire] with its rightful inhabitant (*nakilahā ilā ṣāhibihā*) and give it free rein (*wa-nalqā ḥablahā ‘alā ghāribihā*).

إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ
وَنُدْخِلَكُمْ مُدْخَلًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٣١﴾

[4:31] *If you avoid the grave sins that are forbidden you, We will absolve you of your evil deeds and admit you by an honorable gate.*

The grave sins here, according to scholars, are those of associating partners with God (*shirk*). According to the explanation by allusion (*bayān al-ishāra*), they [also] include acts of hidden idolatry. Included within this is paying heed to creatures, seeking the pleasure of their acceptance, courting their affection, and shutting one’s eyes to the right and reality (*ḥaqq*) of God because of them.

It is said that once one commits to the covenant, one is safe from being charged with disbelief because of transgressions.⁴²

It is said that the worst of the grave sins is for you to affirm your lower self (*nafs*). When you have experienced its negation you will be delivered from the captivity of tribulations. *We will admit you* in your affairs and states⁴³ *by an honorable gate*, [that is,] a beautiful admission. You will no longer see your comings and goings as being from yourselves but rather you will see the One who has free disposal (*muṣarrif*) over your affairs.

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ
مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ^ط وَسَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ^ع
إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٣١﴾

42 In other words, as long as one holds to the covenant of declaring God’s oneness, lesser transgressions do not make one a disbeliever.

43 “And states” (*wa-aḥwālikum*) has been added on the basis of MS K117, fol. 49b.

[4:32] *Do not covet that in which God has preferred some of you above others. To men a share from what they have earned and to women a share from what they have earned. And ask God of His bounty; God is ever Knower of all things.*

In terms of one's moral behavior (*lisān al-mu'ālama*), the command is to toil, not covet. In terms of declaring God's unity (*lisān al-tawhīd*), the command is to the [divine] decree and judgment, not [human] desire and wants. It is said, "Travel the road of those who precede you in upholding the right of God but do not demand to obtain what they have been selected for from the favor of God. Concern yourselves with the right of your Protector (*mawlākum*), not with following your personal whims (*hawākum*) and preferring what you desire (*munākum*)."

It is said, "do not covet the station of [spiritual] masters without traveling their paths, cleaving to their course, and doing what they do, for this way of thinking [that is, coveting] is an outrageous deviation from what is right."

It is said, "Be a seeker of [God's] rights, not a seeker of your portion or your rights.⁴⁴ For if you seek the portion you wish for yourself in this world or the next, you have unconsciously added partners to your profession of God's unity."

It is said, "do not covet stations of men, for each has a station appropriate before God." There are only so many [men with stations] and until someone has died, his place will not be inherited by another. God most high said, "*He has made you successors*" [6:165, 35:39] and the successor is the one who succeeds the one who came before him. If you covet the station of one of the friends [of God], it is as if you are seeking to hasten his passing in all or in part of what you covet, and this is not a harmless attitude.

It is said that your extinction beneath the streams of His decree according to what has already been established by His choice is more fortunate for you than [your] seeking to obtain your desires since your ruin may lie in the object of your desire.

It is said that if one's outward nature has not been refined through the different kinds of moral behavior (*mu'āmalāt*), one's inward nature has [likewise] not been refined by the different aspects of the mutual waystations (*munāzalāt*).⁴⁵ How, then, could one hope to obtain intimate

44 The translation in this sentence and the next follows the wording in MS K117, fol. 49b.
45 It may be that al-Qushayrī intends to make a distinction between the more common Sufi term "waystations" (*manāzil*) and the term "mutual waystations" (*munāzalāt*) used here, but it is just as likely that he wants to use a word that rhymes with *mu'ālamāt* and *muwāṣalāt*. For a discussion of the distinction Ibn al-ʿArabī makes between these two terms, see William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 278–279 and Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 112–120.

communications (*muwāṣalāt*)—that would be preposterous!

And ask God of His bounty: The distinction between coveting and asking for His bounty has several aspects: Coveting something is accompanied by heedlessness of your Lord, so you covet in your heart the existence of that thing without anticipating it [as coming] from God. But when you ask God, it is impossible for you not to remember Him. Another [sense of the verse] is [the notion that] the questioner does not consider himself entitled to anything. Rather, what causes him to implore and beseech is purely spiritual desire (*ṣidq al-irāda*)—the one who covets is not included in this group. Another [sense of the verse] is [the idea] that God prohibits coveting the favor He has granted to someone other than you, for this would mean that He would take what He has given your companion and give it to you. But He does allow you to ask of His bounty in giving you the like of what He has given your companion.

It is said, “do not covet the gift but ask God to give you from His bounty contentment with not receiving the gift. That is more perfect than the gift, for surely emancipation from the bondage of things is better than owning them.”

وَلِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مَوَالِي مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ عَقَدَتْ
 أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَأَوْهَهُمْ نَصِيْبَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا ﴿٣٣﴾

[4:33] *To each We have appointed heirs of that which parents and kinsmen leave and to those to whom your right hands were pledged. So give them their share. God is ever Witness over everything.*

In the beginning of Islam, He made relationships by mutual commitment the equal of relationships of kin in determining inheritance. While this ruling was later abrogated,⁴⁶ the rule to respect [one another] remained. If this is the manner of relationships by mutual commitment (*mu‘āqada*) between men, what do you think of the mutual covenant (*mu‘āhada*) with God? God most high said, “*men who are true to the covenant they made with God*” [33:23]. They have recited:

46 After the Muslims emigrated to Medina, the ties with their kin in Mecca were replaced by their ties with the Helpers of Medina (see Qur‘ān 8:72–75). At first it was determined that they should inherit from one another but this ruling was later abrogated by the Qur‘ānic verses on inheritance in this *sūra*.

Verily those who have died
to the religion of whims
find the decree of death
a sweet watering place.⁴⁷

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا
أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَلِيلَاتٌ حَفِظَتْ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ
اللَّهُ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَأَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ
وَأَضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ
عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤٨﴾

[4:34] *Men are in charge of women because of that with which God has preferred the one over the other, and because of what they expend of their property. Therefore righteous women are obedient, guarding in the unseen because of what God has guarded. And those you fear may be rebellious, admonish them, and share not beds with them, and strike them. If they then obey you, do not seek a way against them. God is ever High, Great.*

He distinguished men by their strength and then increased their burden, for the burden is in accordance with [one's] strength. The lesson is to be taken through hearts and aspirations, not through the lower selves and bodies.⁴⁸

And those you fear may be rebellious, admonish them, and share not beds with them, and strike them: that is, increase your correction⁴⁹ of them gradually and with kindness, for if the matter can be reconciled with admonition there is no need to use the rod to strike. The verse contains the good manners (*ādāb*) of spousal companionship.

Then He said, “*If they then obey you, do not seek a way against them.*” [This] means if she stops acting in a way that is injurious to the relationship and returns to obedience, do not seek revenge on her for what has happened in the past. Do not withhold your acceptance of her excuse and

47 Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to ‘Amr b. Qinān(?) (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 92).

48 Al-Qushayrī seems to suggest that this Qurʾānic verse is directed toward the finer sensibilities of being human rather than the outward aspects of patriarchal control.

49 *Tahdhīb* is the verbal noun of *hadhdhaba*, which means to purify, correct, refine or instruct [in good manners and behavior].

do not be unyielding toward her.

It is said, **do not seek a way against them** in going beyond the measure of what you deem necessary out of spite.

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا
إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾

[4:35] *And if you fear a breach between the two, send forth an arbiter from his folk, and an arbiter from her folk, if they desire to set things right, God will grant them success. Surely God is ever Knower, Aware.*

It is said that you have the right to her obedience in terms of the body but as for love and inclination toward you in the heart, that is up to God. So do not burden her with what God has not provided for you from her. Hearts are in the power of God and He causes love within them toward whom He will and makes them hate whom He will.

It is said that *if they then obey you, do not seek a way against them*, that is, do not forget her loyalty in the past because of a single incident of antipathy in the present, for perhaps the situation will become amicable again.

﴿﴾ وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ
بِالْجُنُبِ وَأَيْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ
مُخْتَلًا فَخُورًا ﴿٣٦﴾ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ
مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ﴿٣٧﴾

[4:36] *And worship God, and associate nothing with Him. Be kind to parents, and near kindred, and to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbor who is near, and to the neighbor who is a stranger, and to the friend at your side, and to the wayfarer, and to what your right hands own. Surely God loves not the conceited, and the boastful.*

[4:37] *Those who are niggardly, and bid other people to be niggardly, and conceal what God has bestowed upon them of His bounty. And We have*

prepared for those that disbelieve a humbling chastisement.

And worship God: Servanthood is attaching yourself closely to the command (*al-ʿubūdiyyatu muʿānaqatu al-amr*) and separating yourself from the rebuke (*wa-mufāraqatu al-zajr*).

And associate nothing with Him: The outward form of associating another with God (*shirk*) is to believe in objects of worship other than Him (*ʿitiqādu maʿbūdin siwāhi*), while its hidden form is looking to any existing thing other than Him (*mulāḥazatu mawjūdin siwāhi*). Declaring His unity is to recognize that all contingent things are brought into being by God and subsist through Him. He is the One who causes things to happen, brings things forth, and causes them to remain. There is not an atom, a splinter, a particle or the slightest trace that belongs to anyone [other than Him that has the capacity to] bring things into existence or originate new things.

The subtle forms of showing off, the hidden acts of guile, the secret places of pride, acting to be seen by created beings, seeking the pleasure of their praise and wilting at their rejection and censure—all that is hidden idolatry (*shirk khafī*).

Be kind to parents: Acting kindly (*iḥsān*) follows degrees of association,⁵⁰ for you have been commanded to observe [your parents'] rights first because they are your kin, and you were raised by them, and reached your full maturity and knowledge through them. When your association and companionship have become sound and good with your *near kindred*, the poor, *the needy*, *the orphans* and those of their class, you will be raised up from that to become worthy of His companionship سُبْحَانَهُ.

And to the neighbor who is near, and to the neighbor who is a stranger, and to the friend at your side: Among your neighbors are your two angels,⁵¹ so do not annoy them with your disobedience (*bi-ʿiṣyānika*) and observe their right in what you give them to record in your acts of kindness (*min iḥsānika*).⁵²

If the neighbor next to your home is entitled to your kindness and the observation of his right, then the neighbor next to your self (*nafs*), which is your heart (*qalb*), deserves even more that you do not neglect or disregard it, and that you do not enable vile thoughts to come to it. And if this

50 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 50a: *al-iḥsān ʿalā wajhi al-tadrij ilā ṣuḥba*.

51 There is a blank in the Baṣyūnī edition which has been completed with “your two angels” (*malakāka*) from MS 117, fol. 50a. The word *tūlī* has been replaced with *tumli* from the latter.

52 Qurʾān 50:17–18 are understood by many commentators as referring to two angels that record the good and bad deeds of each human being: *When the two receivers receive, seated on the right and on the left, he does not utter a word but that there is beside him a watcher, [who is] ready.*

applies to the neighbor of your self, then the neighbor of your heart, which is your spirit (*rūh*), is even more deserving that you protect its right and do not enable that which is in discord with it from the familiar comforts and things close [to the lower self]. The neighbor of your spirit, which is your innermost self (*sirr*), is even more deserving that you watch over its right and do not enable its absence from the homesteads of witnessing (*awṭān al-shuhūd*) at all times. The allusion in His words, “*And He is with you wherever you are*” [57:4] is unambiguous to the hearts of those who possess realization.

Those who are niggardly. . . In scholarly terms, niggardliness is holding back from what is obligatory. According to the explanation by allusion (*bayān al-ishāra*), [niggardliness] is not showing a preference for others (*īthār*)⁵³ in times of need.

To bid *others to niggardliness* is to shield them from the sacred demands (*muṭālabāt al-ḥaqāʾiq*) by showing sympathy for them with regard to the law. For example, a spiritual traveler⁵⁴ might have stripped himself of all attachments and cut himself off from all that is not necessary, but then someone advises him, saying, “Maybe you are not strong enough for this and, with your circumstances, it would be permissible and more appropriate for you to become a beggar. Maybe you should go out and ask from others. That would not be a burden on other Muslims.” And [this person] relates reports, traditions, and the like on this topic. If it were not for the niggardliness residing in his heart, he would assist [the traveler] in the aspiration that has come to his heart instead of holding him back with his counsel. Whoever is like this quickly becomes despicable inasmuch as he has extinguished the sparks of the spiritual desire of this weak soul through what he thinks is good advice and sympathy with respect to the law.

And conceal what God has bestowed upon them of His bounty, that is, if God has freed them from seeking bounty by what He has granted and given them, they conceal that, coveting more without warrant.

It is said *they conceal what God has bestowed upon them of His bounty* when an aspirant comes before them and asks for something that would

53 In the “Chapter on liberality and generosity” (Bāb al-jūd wa-l-sakhāʾ) al-Qushayrī speaks of preferring others (*īthār*) as the highest form of generosity (*Risāla*, 2:502). Qurʾān 59:9 describes the Helpers in Medina who possessed this trait: *And those who had settled in the hometown, and [had abided] in faith before them, love those who have emigrated to them, and do not find in their breasts any need of that which those [others] have been given, but prefer [others] to themselves (yuʿthirūna ʿalā anfusihim), though they be in poverty. And whoever is saved from the avarice of his own soul, those—they are the successful.*

54 The translation follows “for a traveler” (*li-sālik*) from MS 117, fol. 50a rather than *bi-lisānik* from the Basyūnī edition.

save him, and they are stingy with him in giving him guidance (*irshād*).

It is said that the niggardliness of the rich is holding back wealth (*niʿma*) and the niggardliness of the poor is holding back aspiration (*himma*).

وَالَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَكُنِ الشَّيْطَانُ لَهُ وَ قَرِينًا فَسَاءَ قَرِينًا ﴿٣٨﴾

[4:38] *And those who expend of their substance to show off to people, and believe not in God and the Last Day. Whoever has Satan for a comrade, then an evil comrade has he.*

These are also included in His words, “surely God loves not the conceited, and the boastful (*fakhūr*)” [4:36]. Their immediate punishment is that they are not in the group of those whom He loves. That is tribulation enough.

The conceited are those who look to themselves while those who show off look to others like them. Both of them are branded by hidden idolatry (*shirk khafī*) and God does not love those who associate others with Him. Among camels, the *fakhūr* is a she-camel in the flock whose teats are blocked so that a large amount of milk collects in the udder. The buyer thinks that that is normal for her but it is not so.⁵⁵ Likewise, anyone who looks only to himself and his standing in the present moment is making false claims—he is *fakhūr* and God does not love him. This is also the case for the one who expends his substance *to show off to people*.

وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِهِمْ عَلِيمًا ﴿٣٩﴾

[4:39] *And what burden is on them if they were to believe in God and the Last Day, and expend of what God has provided them? God is ever Aware of them.*

There is no difficulty for them in putting their faith and trust in God. Indeed, if they were to have faith, they would attain glorious honor in this world and the hereafter. Nothing prompts them to turn away from [God] but their lack of commitment and respect.

55 In other words, the she-camel looks as if she will give a lot of milk, but actually is able to give very little.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ وَإِن تَكَ حَسَنَةً يُّضْعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِنْ
لَّدُنْهُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾

[4:40] *Surely God shall not wrong so much as the weight of an atom; and if it be a good deed, He will double it and give from Himself a great wage.*

He does not deprive them of anything in their reward, but rather is first with his bounty for them, without their having deserved [it], and He doubles the wages for their works. It is impossible to describe what [God] has decreed as wrongdoing because the creation is His creation and the kingdom is His kingdom. The wrongdoer is one who transgresses a limit which has been ordained for him—it is impossible to describe the glory of [God's] sublime measure in this way.

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا
﴿٤١﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَعَصُوا الرَّسُولَ لَوْ تُسَوَّى بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ
وَلَا يَكْتُمُونَ اللَّهَ حَدِيثًا ﴿٤٢﴾

[4:41] *So how shall it be when We bring forward from every community a witness; and We bring you as witness against these?*

[4:42] *Upon that day, the disbelievers, those who have disobeyed the Messenger, will wish that the earth might be leveled with them. And they will not hide from God any talk.*

Since the Messenger ﴿﴾ will be the witness against his community as well as their intercessor, he will only bear witness to that which can be the object of [his] intercession.

Upon that day, the disbelievers. . . They will become remorseful but it will not benefit them. They will bite their fingertips but their anguish will not subside. They will be wrapped in the veil of ignominy and transferred to the homesteads of tribulation and adversity.

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقْرُبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَرَىٰ حَتَّى تَعْلَمُوا مَا
تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّى تَغْتَسِلُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ

أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ
تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا ﴿٤٣﴾

[4:43] *O you who believe, draw not near to prayer, whilst you are inebriated, until you know what you are saying, nor whilst you are defiled, unless you are traversing a way, until you have washed yourselves. But if you are sick, or on a journey, or if any of you comes from the privy, or you have touched women; and you can find no water, wholesome soil, and wipe your faces and your hands. God is ever Pardoning, Forgiving.*

The prohibition against drinks which cause intoxication is not [a prohibition] against prayer. Rather, it is to say that you should not come to prayer when you are inebriated, so you should avoid drinking that which will intoxicate you. Moreover, when you come to prayer in that condition, the prayer will not be accepted from you.

Intoxication is the loss of mental functioning and awareness, and with [this loss] intimate conversation with the Real is not appropriate. The one who is praying speaks intimately with his Lord, so by way of allusion anything which causes the heart to be unmindful of God is included in this and thereby becomes part of this category. Intoxication is of several types: there is intoxication from wine and intoxication from heedlessness because of a preoccupying love for the present world. The most difficult intoxication is your intoxication with your lower self, and it is that which throws you into a state of separation from Him. If someone is intoxicated from wine, the end of his affair is burning (*hurqa*) if he is not forgiven. If someone is intoxicated with himself, his state is separation (*furqa*) in the present moment from reality. As for the [praiseworthy form of] intoxication which the folk⁵⁶ allude to, its possessor has a time in which he is protected from it so that he may pray with ease. Then when he finishes the prayer, [the intoxication] overwhelms him and seizes him [again]. [The intoxication of] those who are not protected in the precepts of the law is [an intoxication] mixed with worldly concern.⁵⁷

56 That is, the Sufis.

57 Basyūni writes in a footnote that he added the words “mixed with worldly concerns” (*fa-mashūbu bi-hazz*) to clarify the meaning here, based on a similar passage in the “Section on wakefulness and drunkenness” (*al-Ṣaḥw wa-l-sukr*) from al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, where he states that “Wakefulness corresponds to drunkenness, so that one who is truly drunk is [also] truly awake. [On the other hand], if one’s drunkenness is

Nor whilst you are defiled, unless you are traversing a way: He gives permission to those who are compelled to take liberties when crossing through the place of prayer in the state of ritual impurity, but if one deviates more than is necessary, then one deserves reproof for there is no excuse. This is similar to exceptions granted regarding the time in which obligations are to be performed—the [usual] requirement is lifted for those who are in need of that.

By His grace, He *سُبْحَانَهُ* made the ablution with clean sand or earth a substitute for water when there is a lack of it. Similarly, the descent to the plains of separation after reaching the summit of gathering—to the extent that this occurs from weakness—is a substitute for the people of realities (*ahl al-ḥaqāʾiq*). Clean earth, as a substitute for water, is generally easier to find and use. But whoever has drawn closer will find the demands made of him more difficult.

In the outward sense [of the verse], we are commanded to make use of earth and in the inward sense [we are commanded] to experience the humility of the [earthly] body and the inevitability of its withering. He reduced the dry ablution to a minimum, sparing the head and feet from the earth,⁵⁸ for surely the glory in the believer—and His Protector in the majesty that is His due—is better than the ignominy of his bankrupt state. The bankruptcy of man's works requires his being humble (*tadhallul*) while his knowledge of the majesty of his Chief leads to his being glorified and adorned (*tajammul*).

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يَشْتَرُونَ الضَّلَالََةَ وَيُرِيدُونَ
 أَن تَضِلُّوا السَّبِيلَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِأَعْدَائِكُمْ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَكَفَى
 بِاللَّهِ نَصِيرًا ﴿٤٤﴾ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ
 سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَأَسْمَعُ غَيْرَ مُسْمِعٍ وَرَاعِنَا لَيًّا بِأَلْسِنَتِهِمْ وَطَعْنَا فِي
 الدِّينِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَأَسْمَعُ وَأَنْظُرْنَا لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ

mixed with worldly concerns, one's wakefulness will [also] be accompanied by worldly concerns. One whose state is true is protected in his drunkenness" (*Risāla*, 1:218).

58 In the dry ablution, sand or earth is rubbed over the face and hands only.

وَأَقْوَمَ وَلَكِن لَّعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٤٦﴾

[4:44] *Have you not seen those who were given a share of the Book, purchasing error and desiring that you should err from the way?*

[4:45] *God has better knowledge of your enemies. God suffices as a Protector, God suffices as a Helper.*

[4:46] *Some from among the Jews distort the words from their contexts and they say, “We have heard, and we disobey, and hear as one who does not hear” and, “Mind us,” twisting with their tongues and slandering religion. If they had said, “We have heard and obey,” and “Hear,” and “Consider us,” it would have been better for them and more upright, but God has cursed them for their unbelief, so they believe not except a few.*

They practiced a deception but did not realize the way in which He deceived them in that they were given the book and then were deprived of the blessing of understanding so that they distorted [the words] and persisted [in their unbelief].

Some from among the Jews distort the words. . . They acted shamelessly toward the Messenger ﷺ and refused to show him respect so they were punished with doubt concerning his affair. Those who acted shamelessly devised a barrier between themselves and the blessing of [the Prophet’s] companionship and the bounties of serving him. If they had hastened [instead] to reject the envy they felt and had accepted his state with veneration and honored [him], they would have found blessing in following him and happiness in both abodes. But how could they be otherwise, when what had already been determined distanced them? They were kept back by fate (*qisma*) from the carpet of service (*khidma*). There is no maneuvering that can help those held back by the [divine] decrees.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ ءَامِنُوا بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ
مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَطْمِسَ وُجُوهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهَا أَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَّا
أَصْحَابَ السَّبْتِ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا ﴿٤٧﴾

[4:47] *O you who have been given the scripture, believe in what We have revealed, confirming what is with you before We obliterate faces, and turn them inside out or curse them as We cursed those of the Sabbath, and God’s*

command is done.

In *We obliterate faces, and turn them inside out* the allusion is to⁵⁹ the turning away of hearts from spiritual desire (*irāda*) to the states of the people of habit (*ahl al-āda*), so that despite the abundance of His calls to reject the present world, they no longer pay any attention to them.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ ۖ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَمَنْ
يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٨﴾

[4:48] *God forgives not that anything should be associated with Him. But He forgives other than that to whomever He wills. Whoever associates anything with God, then he has indeed invented a tremendous sin.*

Ordinary people have been asked to abandon the outward association of anything [with God] (*shirk jalī*), while the elect have been asked to abandon hidden association (*shirk khafī*). Those who seek access to Him with their actions, thinking that it is from them, or imagining that His decrees ^{سُبْحَانَهُ} are caused by what they do and do not do, or pay heed to a created thing or look to themselves, then their homeland is *shirk* according to the people of realities (*ahl al-ḥaqā'iq*).

God forgives not that anything should be associated with Him. Also included among [those who associate partners with God] is anyone who imagines that his opposition has occurred in some way other than [God's] preordination (*taqdīr*).

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يُزَكُّونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۗ بَلِ اللَّهُ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ
فَتِيلًا ﴿٤٩﴾ أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِهِ إِثْمًا مُّبِينًا ﴿٥٠﴾

[4:49] *Have you not seen those who praise themselves for purity? Nay, God purifies whom He will, and they shall not be wronged, a single date-thread.*

[4:50] *Consider how they invent falsehood against God, and that suffices for a clear sin.*

Whoever relies on what people say about his purity, or seeks the satisfaction of the elite over that of ordinary people, is someone who praises himself

59 The first part of this sentence is added on the basis of MS K117, fol. 51a.

for purity. Looking to the self is the greatest veil. Whoever imagines that he is purifying himself with litanies or efforts he undertakes, by what he does or does not do, is veiled by his own ignorance.

Consider how they invent. . . alludes to those who let loose their tongues and claim what they have not actualized. The one who invents in this way does not say anything, but that ears reject him and hearts are driven away. Then when he becomes silent, he returns to a heart laid waste.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوتِ
وَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَؤُلَاءِ أَهْدَىٰ مِنَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا سَبِيلًا ﴿٥١﴾
أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمَن يَلْعَنِ اللَّهُ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُ نَصِيرًا ﴿٥٢﴾

[4:51] *Have you not seen those who were given a share of the Book, how they believe in al-Jibt and al-Ṭāghūt, and say to the disbelievers, “These are more rightly guided than the believers”?*

[4:52] *Those are the ones whom God has cursed; and he whom God has cursed, you will never find for him any helper.*

The ṭāghūt of each person is his lower self and his whim—the idol he seeks⁶⁰ among that which is other than [God]. When someone pays heed to a person, or looks to a reason, or turns to a cause, or obeys a whim, that thing is his jibt and his ṭāghūt.⁶¹ The companions of al-Jibt and al-Ṭāghūt deserve the curse, which is being expelled from the carpet of service (‘ubūdiyya) and veiled from witnessing lordship (rubūbiyya).

أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ فَإِذَا لَا يُؤْتُونَ النَّاسَ نَقِيرًا ﴿٥٣﴾ أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ
النَّاسَ عَلَىٰ مَا ءَاتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ ۗ فَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُم مَّلَكًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٥٤﴾ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ ءَامَنَ بِهِ ۗ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ
صَدَّ عَنْهُ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيرًا ﴿٥٥﴾

60 There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition here. The translation follows MS K117, fol. 51a: *wa ṣanamuhu maqṣūduhu*.

61 According to *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, al-Ṭāghūt and al-Jibt were idols belonging to the Quraysh tribe (*Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, trans. Hamza).

[4:53] *Or have they a share in the kingdom?, then they would not give the people a single date spot (naqīr).*⁶²

[4:54] *Or, are they jealous of people for the bounty that God has bestowed upon them. For We gave the House of Abraham the Book and wisdom, and We gave them a mighty kingdom.*

[4:55] *And there are some of them who believe in him and some of them who bar [others] from him. Hell suffices for a blaze.*

When those prone to avarice receive abundance, it only increases their distress at the comfort others receive. It is as if such a person drinks water sparingly, drop by drop, yet gulps down and even drains the very water of his life.

Or, are they jealous of people. . . Indeed, out of jealousy, they reject the choice of the Real سُبْحَانَكَ, [who has chosen] whom He will for His friends and they do not approach them with reverence. The way (*sunna*) of God سُبْحَانَكَ with His friends entails [His] elevation and protection of their honor. The custom of disbelievers is to question and doubt the [divine] power of deliberation, so there are some who believe and accept⁶³ [the friends of God] and some who reject and deny. The punishment of God is sufficient as an avenger to them.

And We gave them a mighty kingdom: The *mighty kingdom* (*mulk*) is true knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of the King.

It is said that it is dominion (*mulk*) over the lower self.

It is said that it is standing above the secrets of the realm (*mamlaka*) so that nothing is hidden.

It is said that it is the viewing of the secrets of creation from on high.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصَلِّيهِمْ نَارًا كَلَّمًا تَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ
بَدَلْنَاهُمْ جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾

[4:56] *Surely those who disbelieve in Our signs—We shall expose them to a fire; as often as their skins are consumed, We shall replace them with other skins, that they may taste the chastisement. Surely God is ever Mighty, Wise.* This alludes to those who deny the signs of the friends. He causes them to remain in a state of insignificance (*yuqīmuhum bi-waṣfi al-ṣighār*) and leaves them to the estrangement of denial (*wa-yabqiyahum fī waḥshati*

62 A date spot is a speck or groove on a date stone.

63 "Accept" (*qabila*) has been added from MS K117, fol. 51a.

al-inkār). Whenever something appears to their hearts from this story,⁶⁴ their rejection leads them to abandon faith in it and to dismiss its people with contempt, so they are punished over and over again.

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا ظِلٌّ كَثِيرٌ ﴿٥٧﴾

[4:57] *And those that believe, and perform righteous deeds, We shall admit them to gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide: they shall have therein spouses purified, and We shall admit them to plenteous shade.*

Today they are in the shade of [God's] care (*ri'āya*) and tomorrow in the shade of [His] protection (*himāya*) and sufficiency (*kifāya*). Indeed, they are in the shade of solicitude (*ināya*) in this world and the next.

People in this group⁶⁵ are of different types: There are those who are in the shade of His mercy, those who are in the shade of His care, those who are in the shade of His special generosity, those who are in the shade of His solicitude, and those who are in the shade of His nearness.

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ
النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ
سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٥٨﴾

[4:58] *Verily, God commands you to restore trusts. And when you judge between people, that you judge with justice. Excellent is the admonition God gives you. God is ever Hearer, Seer.*

To return trusts is to surrender intact the states⁶⁶ of created beings to them after having watched over them so that you do not act in a corrupt manner with [people].

64 Basyūnī adds a footnote that what is intended by “the story” is Sufism and its followers.

65 The translation follows the word “group” (*jumla*) from MS 117, fol. 51a rather than “present world” (*dunyā*) from the Basyūnī edition.

66 Basyūnī changes “states” (*ahwāl*) to “property” (*amwāl*) since he says states cannot be held as deposits for people. However the word “states” is also found in MS K117, fol. 51b, so I have kept it in this translation.

It is said of God ﷻ that He has deposited trusts with you, so to return the trust (*amāna*) to its rightful owner is to surrender it intact to God سُبْحَانَكَ, secure from any breach of faith (*khiyāna*) on your part regarding it. To breach faith in the trust of the heart is to make claims with regard to it, and to breach faith in the trust of your innermost self is to look to it [rather than to God].

To judge *between people with justice* is to treat [those] near and distant equally in giving and expending, and [also] not to allow pervasive resentment to lead you to take revenge on any soul.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ
فَإِنْ تَنَزَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٥٩﴾

[4:59] O you who believe, obey God, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. If you should quarrel about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you believe in God and the Last Day; that is better and more excellent in interpretation.

He compares obedience to Him with obedience to the Messenger ﷺ, honoring his affair and elevating his status.

Those in authority (ulū l-amr): In scholarly terms, this means the [worldly] ruler (*sultān*). According to the explanation of deeper knowledge (*maʿrifā*), the one who has deeper knowledge (ʿārif) has authority (*dhū l-amr*) over the one who is just starting out. The shaykh has authority over the aspirant (*murīd*). The leader (*imām*) of each group has authority over [the members of the group].

It is said that the friend and guardian (*walī*) of the aspirant is better (*awlā*) for the aspirant than the aspirant [himself].⁶⁷

If you should quarrel about anything, refer it to God: In scholarly language, this means the Book and the *sunna*. [But] according to the explanation of God’s unity (*bayān al-tawhīd*), it is to commit and entrust knowledge of [the matter] to God سُبْحَانَكَ. When two conflicting inclinations arise in the

67 The word *awlā* is a comparative adjective from the same root as *walī* (*w-l-y*), and means “closer” or “more deserving” of something. Here it means that the authority of the *walī* is such that he is closer and more deserving to watch over the affairs of the aspirant than the aspirant himself. The statement echoes the first part of Qurʾān 33:6: *The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves.*

heart of a believer, and [the believer] has [access to] the reasoning provided by religious scholars, he can contemplate what he understands from their understanding. A master of the heart [on the other hand] entrusts [the matter] to the Real سُبْحَانَهُ and pays heed to what is said to him in his innermost self and what has been cast into his heart without any intermediary.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ ءَامَنُوا بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ
قَبْلِكَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَحَاكَمُوا إِلَى الطَّاغُوتِ وَقَدْ أُمِرُوا أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا
بِهِ ۗ وَيُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُمْ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿٦٠﴾

[4:60] *Have you not seen those who claim that they believe in what has been revealed to you, and what was revealed before you, desiring to take their disputes to a false deity when they have been commanded to renounce him? But Satan desires to mislead them, far astray.*

Outwardly they proclaimed sincerity while acting hypocritically in secret. He سُبْحَانَهُ exposed them through the tongue of Gabriel ﷺ, saying, “*desiring to take their disputes to a false deity when they have been commanded to renounce him* (yakfurū bihi),” that is, reject him. Whoever abandons his path and returns to anyone other than his master (*ustādh*) becomes deserving of exclusion and condemnation.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَىٰ الرَّسُولِ رَأَيْتَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ
يَصُدُّونَ عَنْكَ صُدُودًا ﴿٦١﴾

[4:61] *And when it is said to them, “Come to what God has revealed and the Messenger,” you see the hypocrites turn away from you vehemently.*

Everything other than the word of the Real is easy for hypocrites [to hear]. [On the other hand], the declaration of God’s unity is heard only by those who are sincere. Those who are listless and those who are hostile do not hear that which is true since it is difficult for those who are not sincere to oppose personal whims. Just as the eye of the bat⁶⁸ is incapable of facing the sun, the hypocrites were unable to stand firm before [the Prophet] ﷺ

68 The translation follows the word “bat” (*khuffāsh*) from MS K117, fol. 51b rather than “created beings” (*khalq*) from the Basyūnī edition.

and that was the cause of their vehemently turning away.

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ جَاءُوكَ يَجْلِفُونَ
بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ أَرْدَنَّا إِلَّا إِحْسَنًا وَتَوْفِيقًا ﴿٦٢﴾

[4:62] *How would it be when an affliction befalls them for what their own hands have sent before them! They then come to you, swearing by God that, “We sought only virtue and harmony.”*

The beseeching of the insincere at the attacks of misfortune is without foundation. It deserves no consideration because it only lasts until the tribulation has passed. The greater affliction is being indifferent to the affliction [brought on by *what their own hands have sent before them*].⁶⁹

It is said that part of the affliction is being deprived [of the blessing] in the present moment by that which is of no use to you.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُلْ
لَهُمْ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا ﴿٦٣﴾

[4:63] *Those—God knows what is in their hearts; so turn away from them, and admonish them, and say to them regarding their souls penetrating words.*

“Be generous with them in admonition as sympathy dictates, but hold your heart back from being overly concerned for them or putting your trust in them. Know that you will not be able to help those whom We do not support in any way.”

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ

69 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 51b. Basyūnī writes in a footnote that his text was obscure, so he adds text based on a passage from al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* in the section on “The moment” (al-Waqt): “The greater affliction is being indifferent to one’s shortcomings” (*Risāla*, 1:189).

جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٦٤﴾

[4:64] *We never sent any messenger, but that he should be obeyed by the leave of God. If, when they had wronged themselves, they had come to you, and asked forgiveness from God, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found God Relenting, Merciful.*

“We only commanded the messengers to call created beings to Us.”

If, when they had wronged themselves, they had come to you: “If they had made you their means of access they would have reached Us.”

It is said, “If they had practiced being humble and poor (*iftiqār*), and had jumped on the horse of asking forgiveness (*istighfār*), they would have come to rest in the courtyard of kindnesses (*mabārr*).”

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

[4:65] *But no, by your Lord! They will not believe until they make you judge over what has broken out between them and find in themselves no inhibition regarding what you decide, but submit in full submission.*

He has blocked the path to Himself for everyone unless there is faith in Muḥammad ﷺ. Those who do not walk under his banner have nothing to speak of before God. Moreover, He has made one of the conditions of faith the complete removal of oppositional tendencies in your heart.

And find in themselves no inhibition. . . There is no escape for you but to face⁷⁰ even perilous situations laughing, just as someone said:

If a beloved is unfair to me
I am fair to him.

I gulp down for him the most bitter
and give him what is sweet to drink.

If he says to me,
“It is over,”

70 The blank in Basyūnī has been completed with *talqā* from MS K117, fol. 51b.

I choose equanimity,
without making difficulties.⁷¹

وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْ اقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَوْ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ مَا
فَعَلُوهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ
وَإَشَدَّ تَثْبِيتًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَإِذَا لَا تَتَيْنَهُمْ مِّن لَّدُنَّا أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَلَهَدَيْنَهُمْ
صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا ﴿٦٨﴾

[4:66] *And had We prescribed for them: “slay yourselves” or “Leave your habitations,” they would not have done it, save a few of them; yet if they had done what they were admonished to do, it would have been better for them, and a firmer position.*

[4:67] *And then, We would have surely given them from Us a great wage.*

[4:68] *And We would have guided them to a straight path.*

[God] exposed the weakness of their sincerity (*akhbara* ^{an suqmi ikhlāṣihim}) and the extent of their bankruptcy (*wa-quwwati iflāsihim*), and informed [the Prophet and the believers] of their failings by His knowledge. Although [God] let [the hypocrites] go their own way in many of the tests, He said, “If they had been inclined to serve and had put on the belt of obedience, *it would have been better for them* than their persisting in their disbelief and pride. If they had done that, We would have given them a great reward (*thawāb* ^{ʿazīm}) from Us, and would have guided them on a straight path (*ṣirāṭ mustaqīm*), and rendered to them an enduring gift (*ʿatā* ^{muqīm}).

In the explanation by allusion (*bayān al-ishāra*), this matter refers to opposing personal whims and sacrificing the lower selves by holding them back from familiar and comfortable things. It is leaving [your] habitations and parting from the familiar territories of desire for the present world.

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ
النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا ﴿٦٩﴾

71 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate these verses in any other source (no. 3, pp. 80–81).

ذَلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ عَظِيمًا ﴿٧٠﴾

[4:69] *Whoever obeys God and the Messenger, they are with those whom God has blessed of the prophets and the truthful, and the martyrs, and the righteous. What fine companions they are!*

[4:70] *That is bounty from God. God suffices as Knower.*

He made obedience to the Chosen One (*al-Muṣṭafā*) ﴿72﴾ the key to attaining the stations of the prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs in a manner that is suitable for the community and appropriate for the high rank of [the Prophet] ﴿71﴾.

That is bounty from God: He detached their situation from every cause, merit, and reason, for surely what comes to them and what happens to them is the disbursement of His bounty and originates from His generosity.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا خُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانفِرُوا ثُبَاتٍ أَوْ انفِرُوا جَمِيعًا
 ﴿٧١﴾ وَإِنَّ مِنْكُمْ لَمَنْ لَيُبَطِّئَنَّ فَإِنْ أَصَابَتْكُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالَ قَدْ أَنْعَمَ
 اللَّهُ عَلَيَّ إِذْ لَمْ أَكُنْ مَعَهُمْ شَهِيدًا ﴿٧٢﴾ وَلَئِنْ أَصَابَكُمْ فَضْلٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ
 لَيَقُولَنَّ كَأَنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُ مَوَدَّةٌ يَلَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ مَعَهُمْ
 فَأَفُوزَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧٣﴾

[4:71] *O you who believe, take your precautions, then move forward in companies, or move forward all together.*

[4:72] *Verily, there are some of you who tarry; then, if an affliction befalls you, he says, “God has been gracious to me, for I was not a witness with them.”*

[4:73] *But if a bounty from God befalls you, he will surely cry as if there had never been any affection between you and him: “Oh, would that I had been with them, so that I might have won a great triumph!”*

Fleeing toward (*firār ilā*) God is among the attributes of those who seek (*qāṣidūn*). Fleeing with (*firār maʿa*) God is among the attributes of those who arrive (*wāṣilūn*). Rest (*qarār*) with God cannot be found except by those who are sincere in fleeing to God. Fleeing from everything other

72 “The Chosen One” (*al-Muṣṭafā*) is an epithet of Muḥammad.

[than God] is the concern of anyone who declares His unity.

Verily, there are some of you who tarry. . . . that is, their beliefs are not firmly established in one state. They are tied to worldly concerns, so when they see something unpleasant approaching the Muslims, they are grateful and say, “Praise be to God who has protected us from following them and afflicting us with what He has afflicted them.” But if you have a blessing or something good, they incline toward you and wish that they had been with you. They have lost in the present world and the hereafter. They are not completely⁷³ disbelievers, nor are they loyal believers.

As if there had never been any affection between you and him: It means they had already dropped the commitment to protect and defend your lives, property, and honor.

﴿ فَلْيُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يَشْرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ وَمَنْ يُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيُقْتَلْ أَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴾ ﴿٧٤﴾

[4:74] *So let them fight in the way of God those who sell the life of this world for the hereafter; and whoever fights in the way of God and is slain or conquers, We shall give him a great wage.*

The struggle (*jihād*) of someone who has not slain the lower self in himself is not sound. The removal of the fear of death from the heart comes first, and then the surrender of the lower self to it.

We shall give him a great wage means, “Our remaining after him is better for him than his life through his lower self.” Their speaker said:

Are you not my compensation for myself?
That is honor enough.

Besides you I have no goal,
nor anything to request.⁷⁴

﴿ وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ

73 The translation follows *quḥḥ* from MS K117, fol. 52a rather than *qabiḥ* from the Basyūni edition.

74 Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (no. 19, p. 29).

أَهْلُهَا وَأَجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَأَجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾

[4:75] *What is wrong with you, that you do not fight in the way of God, and for the oppressed men, women, and children who say, "Our Lord, bring us forth from this town whose people are evildoers and appoint for us a protector from You, and appoint for us a helper from You."*

“What is it that prevents you from fighting in the way of God? What holds you back from desiring to give your lifeblood for God? How would it be to your disadvantage to offer up your spirits in God and for God? Are you afraid that you will give less than what is due to God? Or do you not know that you will be gathered to God? Why is it not enough that He remains after you have been annihilated in God?”

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ
الطَّاغُوتِ فَقاتِلُوا أَوْلِيَاءَ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا ﴿٧٦﴾

[4:76] *Those who believe fight in the way of God, and those who disbelieve fight in the way of a false deity. Fight therefore against the friends of Satan; surely the plotting of Satan is ever feeble.*

Those who are sincerely devoted to God do not prefer anything to God and they do not hold anything back from God. They are ever against their lower selves for the sake of God. The states of those who disbelieve are the reverse of [those of] the believers. Therefore He strengthened and encouraged [the believers], saying, ***Fight therefore against the friends of Satan***, that is, “do not feel any fear toward them, for I am taking care of your affairs and will suffice for you against your enemies.”

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتُوا الزَّكَاةَ
فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشِيَةِ
اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشِيَةً وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنَا

إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ

[4:77] *Have you not seen those to whom it was said, “Restrain your hands, and establish the prayer, and pay the alms”? Then, as soon as fighting was prescribed for them, lo, a party of them fear people as they would fear God, or with more fear and they said, “Our Lord, why have You prescribed fighting for us? Why not defer us to a near term?”*

[**Restrain your hands:**] “Remove your hands from your affairs (*akhrijū aydiyakum ‘an umūrikum*) and entrust them to the One whom you worship (*wa-kilūhā ilā ma‘būdikum*).”

It is said: “Keep [your hands] from taking hold of what is prohibited and acting freely with it.”

It is said that [it means], “Refrain from carnal desires.”

It is said, “**Restrain your hands** except in raising them up to God to petition in humble supplication.”

Then, as soon as fighting was prescribed for them, they found His command burdensome and wanted to hasten His kindness. But servanthood entails the abandonment of finding things burdensome and repudiating the wish to hasten [what one finds pleasing]. [Servanthood can be found] in distancing oneself from annoyance and finding things burdensome.

قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾

[4:77] Say, “*The enjoyment of this world is trifling; and the hereafter is better for him who fears; and you shall not be wronged, a single date thread.*”⁷⁵

He gave you power over this world but then said, “*The enjoyment of this world is trifling,*” so it is of no account for you. If you were to give alms from it so much as half a date, you would be saved from the fire and reach the garden.⁷⁶ This is the most extraordinary generosity.

Caring little about what comes to you—because of your beloved—is the strongest indicator of your relationship.

It is said that when He wants you to forsake the present world, He makes it seem meager in your eyes so that abandoning it will be easy for you.

75 A date thread is the thin membrane in the groove of a date stone.

76 Al-Qushayrī is referring to an oft-repeated *ḥadīth* found in the book of *Zakāt* in al-Bukhārī: “Protect yourself from the fire, even with half a date.”

It is said: Say, “*The enjoyment of this world*—the sum total of it—is *trifling*. Since your portion is less than [this] trifling [amount], why would He quarrel with you over the details of what is permitted (*tahlīl*)⁷⁷ so long as your pact remains secure from alteration (*tabdīl*)?”

If the value of this world is trifling, then the cheapest of the cheap are those who are content with the cheap (*khasīs*) in lieu of the precious (*naḥīs*).

The believer is torn from the worlds of being (*kawn*) in degrees. First He said, “say, ‘*The enjoyment of this world is trifling; and the hereafter is better*’”—He seizes them⁷⁸ from the present world by what comes next. Then He robs them of both worlds, saying, *But what is with God is better and more lasting* [42:36].

أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشِيدَةٍ وَإِنْ
تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا
هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ فَمَالِ هَؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا
يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا ﴿٧٨﴾

[4:78] *Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, though you should be in raised-up towers.*” And if a good thing befalls them, they say, “*This is from God*”; but if an evil thing befalls them, they say, “*This is from you*.” Say, “*Everything is from God.*” What is wrong with this people that they do not understand?

Death is joy to the believer and the news of its drawing near is good news to him because it is a means of reaching the Real. Whoever loves to meet God, God loves to meet him.

It is said that since death is inevitable, submitting to His decree willingly is better than tolerating it unwillingly.

Moreover, He told them that, because of the weakness of their faculties of insight and the infirmity of their beliefs, they are joyful and show gratitude when a good thing befalls them. But if an evil thing befalls them,

77 The translation follows MS K117, fol. 52 with the word “permitted” (*tahlīl*). The Basyūnī edition has the word *takhlīl*, but Basyūnī writes in a footnote that he thinks it should be *tahlīl*.

78 The translation follows “He seizes them” (*ikhtaḥaḥum*) from MS K117, fol. 52. The Basyūnī edition has *ahḥaḥum* but Basyūnī writes in a footnote that he thinks it should be *ikhtaḥaḥum*.

they are not guided to God. The Magian disposition flows in them so that they attribute (*adāfū*) [the evil thing] to something that is created.⁷⁹ [God] replied to them, saying, “say to them, O Muḥammad, ‘Everything is from God through [the acts of] creating and originating, producing and inventing, decreeing and facilitating.’”

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ
وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ﴿٧٩﴾

[4:79] *Whatever good befalls you it is from God; whatever evil befalls you is from yourself. We have sent you to people as a messenger and God suffices as Witness.*

Whatever good befalls you is a bounty from God and *whatever evil befalls you is from yourself* through acquisition (*kasb*).⁸⁰ Both of them are created by God شُجَاعَةٌ.

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ
حَفِيظًا ﴿٨٠﴾

[4:80] *Whoever obeys the Messenger, verily obeys God; and whoever turns his back, We have not sent you as a watcher over them.*

This verse alludes to the gathering (*jamʿ*) of the state of the Messenger ﷺ,⁸¹

79 As in his commentary on Qurʾān 3:28, al-Qushayrī attributes a way of thinking to Magians that is contrary to his understanding of divine unity (*tawḥīd*).

80 Al-Qushayrī is distinguishing between man’s acquisition (*kasb*) of acts and the creation and the origination of those acts. In the notes to his translation of al-Qushayrī’s *Lumʿa fī l-ī-tiqād*, Richard M. Frank comments on the meaning of the word *kasb*. He suggests that while “acquisition” is a secondary meaning intended by al-Qushayrī and other Ashʿarī theologians, the English word “performance” better captures what is primarily meant in these discussions. He writes, “a performance is the acting out of the work of another and its interpretation and so is distinct from the work or act (*fiʿl*) as that of which it is the performance; the work is the created entity. . .” (Richard Frank, “Two Short Dogmatic Works of Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī: First Part: Edition and Translation of ‘Lumʿa fī l-ī-tiqād,’” in *Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism in Medieval Islam*, vol. 1: *Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalām*, ed. Dmitri Gutas, ch. XIV, pp. 53–74 [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005], 73n11).

81 For more on what al-Qushayrī means by the state of “gathering,” see his commentary on

for He سُبْحَانَهُ said, “Obedience to him is obedience to Us. Whoever draws near to him draws near to Us. Whoever is accepted by him is accepted by Us (*maqbuluhu maqbūlunā*), and whoever is rejected by him is rejected by Us (*wa-mardūduhu mardūdunā*).”

وَيَقُولُونَ طَاعَةٌ فَإِذَا بَرَزُوا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ بَيَّتَ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِي تَقُولُ وَاللَّهُ يَكْتُبُ مَا يُبَيِّنُونَ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿٨١﴾

[4:81] *They say, obedience; but when they sally forth from you, a party of them harbor other than what they say. God writes down what they harbor [in themselves]. So turn away from them, rely on God, and God suffices as a Guardian.*

This means that, “when they come to you [Muḥammad], they surrender to your witnessing (*mushāhada*), but when they leave, the light of your approach (*iqbāl*) is cut off and they return to darknesses,” just as they say:

Whenever he repents
he returns to his ignorance,
just as the one who is feeble
suffers a relapse.⁸²

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْفُرْعَانَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لَوْجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا
كَثِيرًا ﴿٨٢﴾ وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَدَّعَوْا بِهِ ۗ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ
إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَالْإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْلَا
فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٣﴾

Qur’ān 3:159 and the section on “Gathering and separation” (al-Jam‘ wa-l-farq), *Risāla*, 1:207–208.

82 Muṣṭafā traces the verse to Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Quddūs and adds another line: “The shaykh does not abandon his morals until he is hidden in the earth of his tomb” (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p. 73). The verse cited here is also cited by al-Qushayrī in his commentary on Qur’ān 2:20.

[4:82] *What, do they not ponder (yatadabbarūna) the Qurʾān? If it had been from other than God surely they would have found therein much inconsistency.*

[4:83] *And when there comes to them an issue, be it of security, or of fear, they broadcast it. If they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those among them who are able to think it out (yastanbiṭūnahu) would have known it from them. And but for the bounty of God to you and His mercy, you would surely have followed Satan, except a few [of you].*

“Pondering” (*tadabbur*) is an allusion to meanings acquired through immersing [oneself] deeply in contemplation. The mining of the jewels of meanings is through precise “extraction” (*istinbāṭ*).⁸³

And when there comes to them an issue. . . . Because they are heedless of the Real, they have no one to whom they can transmit their secrets, so they reveal the secret to each other. As for the believers, the Knower of their secrets is their Friend and Protector. They speak with Him about what comes to them and have no need to broadcast the secret to any created being. The Hearer of their whispered confidence is God and the Knower of their hidden affairs⁸⁴ is God.

If they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them. . . . that is, if they had brought their secrets to those who are respected⁸⁵ and those among the people of the story,⁸⁶ it would have dispelled their doubts and helped them, through the light of guidance and spiritual instruction.

And but for the bounty of God with His friends, they would wander in every wadi of separation of the moment just as those outwardly like them do.

فَقَتِّلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ إِلَّا نَفْسَكَ وَحَرِّضَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَسَى
 اللَّهُ أَنْ يَكْفِفَ بَأْسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَاللَّهُ أَشَدُّ بَأْسًا وَأَشَدُّ تَنْكِيلًا

83 *Tadabbur* and *istinbāṭ* are the verbal nouns corresponding to the verbs used in these Qurʾānic verses.

84 The translation follows the word “hidden affairs” (*khafāyā*) from MS K117, fol. 52b rather than *khiṭāb* from the Basyūnī edition.

85 There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition which has been filled in with the word *maḥram* from MS K117, fol. 52b.

86 MS K117, fol. 52b has what could be the word “story” (*qiṣṣa*) here, which seems preferable to the word “seeking” (*qaṣd*) from the Basyūnī edition since *ahl al-qiṣṣa* is a phrase al-Qushayrī uses elsewhere to refer to the Sufīs (see, for example, his commentary on 2:69–70, 2:80, 2:178, and 2:189).

[4:84] *So fight in the way of God; you are charged only with yourself. And urge on the believers; maybe God will restrain the might of the disbelievers; God is mightier and more severe in castigation.*

“Rise up [Muḥammad] with Us in surrendering everything from you to Our command. Just as there is no one to compare to you in your rank because of your elevated status over all, We likewise do not charge anyone but you with the like of what you have been charged and We do not burden anyone but you with what you have been burdened. This is because of your singular worth⁸⁷ among those otherwise like you in outward form.”

مَنْ يَشْفَعْ شَفَعَةً حَسَنَةً يَكُنْ لَهُ نَصِيبٌ مِّنْهَا وَمَنْ يَشْفَعْ شَفَعَةً
سَيِّئَةً يَكُنْ لَهُ كِفْلٌ مِّنْهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقِيتًا ﴿٨٥﴾

[4:85] *Whoever intercedes with a good intercession shall receive a share of it; and whoever intercedes with an evil intercession shall receive the like from it. God conserves all things.*

“The intercessor liberates the state of the one for whom he intercedes. The intercessor becomes worthy of a weighty rank from God سُجَّانَهُ by virtue of his intercession, while the one who hastens to do corruption⁸⁸ with regard to Our command bears the responsibility and carries the weight of the sin.”

وَإِذَا حُيِّتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا ﴿٨٦﴾

[4:86] *And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with better than it, or return it. Surely God keeps count of all things.*

[This is] an instruction for them in amicable relations and the good manners of companionship. When someone presses some kindness on you, it becomes a loan you owe him. Whether you do more than his act or not, at least do not do less than what he has done.

87 The translation follows the word *qadr* from MS K117, fol. 52b rather than *qudra* from the Basyūnī edition.

88 The language al-Qushayrī uses echoes Qurʾān 2:205, 5:33, and 5:64 referring to those who *hasten about the earth to do corruption*.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لِيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا ﴿٨٧﴾

[4:87] *God—there is no god except Him, He will surely gather you on the Day of Resurrection whereof there is no doubt. And who is truer in statement than God?*

This address contains both a negation and an affirmation. The negation concerns what is other than God—what is negated is impossible for them. The affirmation belongs to Him through [His] divinity. It is not possible to deny what He has affirmed for Himself.

﴿فَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِئَتَيْنِ وَاللَّهُ أَرْكَسَهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا أَتُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَهْدُوا مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا﴾ ﴿٨٨﴾

[4:88] *What is wrong with you that you have become two parties, regarding the hypocrites, when God has overthrown them for what they earned? What, do you desire to guide him whom God has sent astray? And he whom God sends astray, you will never find for him a way.*

“Hold to⁸⁹ the covenant regarding them for they are My enemies (*aḍḍārī*). Neither in this world or the next will they receive My good pleasure (*riḍāʾī*). Your concern for them will not save them from what has been determined by My decree (*qismatī*). The decrees do not revolve around [human] anxieties.”⁹⁰

وَدُّوا لَوْ تَكْفُرُونَ كَمَا كَفَرُوا فَتَكُونُونَ سَوَاءً فَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْهُمْ
أَوْلِيَاءَ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ
وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْهُمْ وُلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿٨٨﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ
إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ أَوْ جَاءُوكُمْ حَصِرَتْ صُدُورُهُمْ أَن
يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ أَوْ يُقَاتِلُوا قَوْمَهُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَسَلَّطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقَاتَلُوكُمْ

89 The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been filled in with the word *afriḍū* from MS K117, fol. 52b.

90 The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been filled in with *himam* from MS K117, fol. 52b.

فَإِنْ أَعْتَزَلُوكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ وَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ
لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٠﴾

[4:89] *They long that you should disbelieve as they disbelieve, so then you would be equal; therefore do not take friends from among them until they emigrate in the way of God; then, if they turn away, take them and slay them wherever you find them; and do not take any of them as a patron, or as a helper.*

[4:90] *Except those who attach themselves to a people between whom and you there is a covenant, or come to you with their breasts constricted about the prospect of fighting you, or fighting their people. Had God willed, He would have given them sway over you, so that assuredly they would have fought you. And so if they stay away from you and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then God does not allow you any way against them.*

[This] alludes to those in confused and sickly states—they wish that the sincere would be like them.⁹¹ How absurd that their desire should come true! Until your antagonists stop trying to thwart you, separate yourselves from them, oppose them, and do not change your state to suit them. Do not associate with them, **and do not take any of them as a patron or as a helper**. Someone who is in harmony with your goal is better for you than forced association with someone who opposes you.

Except those who attach themselves to a people. . . This verse is an allusion to [the fact] that He gives leave with these exceptions to associate outwardly in a kindly manner with those who are in a weak and oppressed condition.

And so if they stay away from you. . . this alludes to [the case] when someone who is not one of the people of the story⁹² associates with you. If they are intent on remaining in their familiar areas of worldly concerns, do not call them to your path but leave them be in peace. If [God] gives you the opportunity to look to them with mercy, follow your good intentions with them. But if not, leave them be in peace.

سَتَجِدُونَ ءَاخِرِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَأْمَنُوكُمْ وَيَأْمَنُوا قَوْمَهُمْ كُلَّ مَا رُدُّوْا

91 The translation follows *mithlahum* from MS K117, fol. 52b rather than *minhum* from the Basyūni edition.

92 That is, the Sufis.

إِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ أُرْكِسُوا فِيهَا فَإِن لَّمْ يَعْتَزِلُوكُمْ وَيُلْقُوا إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ
وَيَكْفُوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَاخْذُوهُمْ وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ وَأُولَئِكُمْ
جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا مُّبِينًا ﴿٩١﴾

[4:91] *You will find others desiring to have security from you and security from their own people; yet whenever they are returned to sedition, they are overwhelmed by it. So, if they do not stay away from you, and offer you peace, and restrain their hands, then take them and slay them wherever you come upon them; against them We have given you clear warrant.*

The effort of anyone who desires to combine two opposing things is ruined and his resolve does not grow. Just as an individual cannot be both a hypocrite and one who wholeheartedly submits (*muslim*), no individual can be desirous of the Real and remain with the precepts of the people of habit. Spiritual desire (*irāda*) and habit (*‘āda*) are opposites. It is necessary to abandon contradictory stances and to distance yourself from that which has no relation to you.

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَنْ يَقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا خَطَأً وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَأً
فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَدِيَةٌ مُسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَصَدَّقُوا فَإِن
كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَّكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَإِن كَانَ
مِنْ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ مُسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ وَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ
مُؤْمِنَةٍ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ
عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٩٢﴾

[4:92] *It is not for a believer to slay a believer, except by mistake. He who slays a believer by mistake, then let him set free a believing slave, and blood-money is to be submitted to his family, unless they remit it as a charity. If he belongs to a people at war with you and is a believer, then the setting free of a believing slave. If he belongs to a people between whom and you there is a covenant, then the blood-money must be paid to his family, and the setting free of a believing slave. But if he has not the wherewithal, then the fasting of*

two successive months, a relenting from God. And God is ever Knowing, Wise. [God] mitigated the matter of someone who mistakenly [slays a believer] by giving the burden of restitution to the larger group responsible for the blood-money (ʿāqila).⁹³ The elite are responsible for the blood-money for the weak and oppressed (*mustaḍʿafūn*) in the community. The people of deeper knowledge (*ahl al-maʿrifa*) are responsible for the blood-money for the aspirants (*murīdūn*). The shaykhs are responsible for the blood-money for the poor (*fuqarāʾ*). Their way is to bear the burdens that afflict the weak and oppressed.

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَعَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعْنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٩٣﴾

[4:93] *And whoever slays a believer deliberately, his requital is hell, abiding therein, and God’s wrath is with him and has cursed him, and has prepared for him a mighty chastisement.*

Just as the slaying of another [human being] has been prohibited to you, so is slaying yourself: whoever follows his whims sets out to shed his own blood. Whoever does not give good counsel and admonition to an aspirant, and does not assist him in his resolve, is endeavoring to shed [the aspirant’s] blood. Such a person is held captive to his own state—it is fitting⁹⁴ that the consequence to him should be an unpleasant one for he should not enjoy [the states] from which he has held aspirants back. [God] *سُبْحَانَهُ* said, “O David, when you see someone seeking me, become a servant to him.”

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ أَلْقَى إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنَدَ اللَّهِ مَغَانِمٌ كَثِيرَةٌ كَذَلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَمَنْ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوا

93 For an explanation of the concept of collective responsibility in paying blood-money for a killing, see the article “Āqila” by Rudolph Peters in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, third edition.

94 The translation follows the word *ḥaqīq* found in MS K117, fol. 53a rather than *khaliq* in the Basyūni edition.

﴿٩٤﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

[4:94] *O you who believe, when you are going forth in the way of God, be discriminating and do not say to him who offers you peace: You are not a believer, desiring the transient goods of the life of this world. With God are plenteous spoils. So you were formerly, but God has been gracious to you. So be discriminating. Surely God is ever Aware of what you do.*

Associate with people according to what they show outwardly in their states. Do not falsely pretend to have insight into what is inside them, for God is the one who is entrusted with secrets. This [pretension] is a corrupt inclination that arises in you from the controlling elements of the lower self. But as for he whose vision [comes] through God, nothing is veiled from him, so let him protect the secret of God in what was disclosed to him and let him not reveal to his companion what God has shown him⁹⁵ regarding it.

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرِّ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً وَكُلًّا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَفَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٩٥﴾ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْهُ وَمَغْفِرَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٩٦﴾

[4:95] *The believers who sit at home, other than those who have an injury, are not the equals of those who struggle in the way of God with their possessions and their lives. God has preferred those who struggle with their possessions and their lives over the ones who sit at home by a degree; yet to each God has promised the goodly reward, and God has preferred those who struggle over the ones who sit at home with a great reward,*

[4:96] *degrees from Him, and forgiveness and mercy. Surely God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.*

The Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* has gathered together all of His friends in His favors but He distinguishes between them in degrees. Whether one is rich or a servant,

95 The translation follows *arāhu* from MS K117, fol. 53a rather than *arāda* from the Basyūni edition.

there is one richer than him. With one who is great, there is one greater than him. The stars glisten, but the moon is above them, and when the sun appears it outshines all by its light.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّيْتَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا
مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضَ اللَّهِ وَسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا
فِيهَا فَأُولَئِكَ مَا لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿٩٧﴾

[4:97] *And those whom the angels take [in death], while they are wronging their souls, the angels will say, “What was your predicament?” They will say, “We were oppressed in the land.” The angels will say, “But was not God’s earth spacious that you might have emigrated therein?” As for such, their abode shall be hell—an evil journey’s end!*

This alludes to one whose time comes while he is still trapped in his lower self and enslaved to his desires—there is no excuse for him since he did not emigrate to the protection of His nearness so that he could be saved from the contemptible nature⁹⁶ of his lower self. There is no veil between you and this talk except your whims.

إِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حِيلَةً
وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٨﴾ فَأُولَئِكَ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ وَكَانَ
اللَّهُ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا ﴿٩٩﴾

[4:98] *Except the oppressed among the men, women, and children who are unable to devise a plan and are not guided to a way.*

[4:99] *As for such, perhaps God will pardon them, for God is ever Pardoning, Forgiving.*

This alludes to those who are overwhelmed and annihilated by meanings (*maʿānī*), and then continue on as those who act on His behalf.⁹⁷ They do

96 The translation follows the word *hawān* from MS K117, fol. 53a rather than “whims” (*hawā*) from the Basyūnī edition.

97 That is, after the annihilation (*fanāʾ*) of their lower selves, they continue on in the state of subsistence (*baqāʾ*) in God and for God. For more on what al-Qushayrī means by

not have power or strength [of their own], and what appears to them are [the decrees] He *سُبْحَانَهُ* causes to flow over them. After the return of their selves through the reality of the Real (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*), they are effaced from themselves and *are not guided to* anything other than Him as *a way* and do not take so much as a breath for anything other than Him.

In accordance with the outward aspect of the verse, it is said that perhaps the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* will grant His pardon to those whose excuses held them back from choosing [to emigrate].

﴿ وَمَنْ يُهَاجِرْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُرَاعِمًا كَثِيرًا وَسَعَةً وَمَنْ يَخْرُجْ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكُهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٠٠﴾

[4:100] *Whoever emigrates in the way of God will find in the earth many refuges and abundance; whoever goes forth from his house as an emigrant to God and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his wage is then incumbent upon God; surely God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.*

Whoever emigrates in [the way of] God from what is other than God, and sets aright his direction to God, finds ample space in the courtyard of generosity, a resting place in the shelter of welcome, and a spacious life under the wing of nearness. The emigrant, in the truest sense, is whoever emigrates from his lower self and personal whim. This can only be accomplished through the abandonment of everything he desires. Whoever directs himself to [God] but does not reach Him before his time comes—he cannot but end up on the plains of communion with Him. There will be no resting place for his spirit other than the homelands of nearness to Him.

﴿ وَإِذَا صَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ الْكٰفِرِينَ كَانُوا أَلَكُمُ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٠١﴾

[4:101] *And when you are going forth in the land you would not be at fault if you shorten the prayer if you fear that you may be afflicted by those who*

these terms see the section on “Annihilation and subsistence” (Fanā’ wa-l-baqā’), *Risāla*, 1:211–213.

do not believe; the disbelievers are a manifest foe to you.

The shortening of prayers is the recommended practice (*sunna*) in travel. Although first legislated in a time of fear, it remained even without the fear, [as] a kindness to [God's] servants. When the obligatory prayers were permitted to be shortened because of travel, they were given leave to substitute supererogatory devotion on their camel mounts. [This could be done] without seeking the *qibla*, in whichever way [the mount] turned, and likewise with a person on foot. This was so that it would be known that permission to engage in talk with God is ongoing, at any time. If you wish to take part in it, you may do so whenever you wish. If you wish the allowance to refrain, you may do as you wish. This is the most extraordinary kindness. It is a protection of the practice (*sunna*) of the fulfillment [of God's commands] (*wafāʾ*) and the consummation of the true meaning of friendship (*walāʾ*).

وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ مَعَكَ
وَلْيَأْخُذُوا أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ۗ فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِن وَرَائِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ
طَآئِفَةٌ أُخْرَىٰ لَمْ يُصَلُّوا فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ۗ
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوِ تَغْفُلُونَ عَنْ أَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتِعَتِكُمْ فَيَمِيلُونَ
عَلَيْكُمْ مَّيْلَةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِن كَانَ بِكُمْ أَذَىٰ مِّن
مَّطَرٍ أَوْ كُنْتُمْ مَّرْضَىٰ أَن تَضَعُوا أَسْلِحَتَكُمْ وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
أَعَدَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ﴿١٠٢﴾

[4:102] *When you are among them, and you stand to lead them in prayer, let a party of them stand with you, and let them take their weapons. Then when they have performed their prostrations, let them be behind you, and let another party who have not prayed come and pray with you, taking their precautions and their weapons. The disbelievers wish that you should be heedless of your weapons and your baggage that they may descend upon you all at once. You are not at fault, if rain bothers you, or if you are sick, to lay aside your weapons. But take your precautions; God has prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating chastisement.*

This verse indicates that [the obligation of] prayer is not lifted from the servant so long as there is a breath remaining in him to choose. Not in fear

or in security, not when you are in a state of separation where the precepts of the law predominate, or when overwhelmed by the authority of reality (*sultān al-haqīqa*) when you are at the source of gathering together (*‘ayn al-jam‘*).

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ فَإِذَا
أَطْمَأْنَنْتُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا ﴿١٠٣﴾

[4:103] *When you have performed the prayer, remember God, standing and sitting and on your sides. Then, when you are reassured, observe the prayer, surely the prayer is for believers a prescription at specific times.*

The external duties are at specific times, while the presence of the heart in remembrance is continuous without stopping. In terms of the outward markers [of religion], it is one time and not another. But in terms of hearts, beware of being absent from reality for even a moment, no matter what state you are in. Remembrance is for however you are, just as you are. Prayer is for *when you are reassured*.

وَلَا تَهِنُوا فِي ابْتِغَاءِ الْقَوْمِ إِن تَكُونُوا تَأْلُمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلُمُونَ كَمَا
تَأْلُمُونَ وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

[4:104] *Be not faint in seeking the enemy; if you are suffering, they are also suffering as you are suffering; and you hope from God that for which they cannot hope. God is ever Knower, Wise.*

Stand up for God and let your trust be in God in your struggle (*jihād*).

If you are suffering, they are also suffering: The enemy shares with you the experience of suffering but they are different from you in the witnessing of the heart, for you witness what they do not witness and you find in your hearts what they do not find. So it is unseemly for you to lag behind them in effort and struggle.

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَدْنَا
اللَّهُ ۗ وَلَا تَكُن لِّلْخَائِبِينَ خَصِيمًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَأَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ

﴿ ١٠٦ ﴾ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا

[4:105] *Surely We have revealed to you the Book with the truth so that you may judge between people by that which God has shown you. And do not be a disputant for traitors.*

[4:106] *And pray for forgiveness from God; surely God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.*

“We did not command you to judge between them blindly, but rather *by that which God has shown you*, that is, by that which He unveiled to you from the lights of insight until you understood it by Our teaching you and Our directing you. This is also the case with those from your community who judge with the truth.”

And do not be a disputant for traitors: that is, do not defend the masters of worldly concerns (*arbāb al-ḥuzūz*), but rather be with the children of [God’s] rights (*abnāʾ al-ḥuqūq*).⁹⁸ Whoever turns to their whim is a traitor to the fear of God (*taqwā*)⁹⁹ entrusted to his soul. Whoever trusts the inclinations of lower desires is a traitor to the shame (*ḥayāʾ*)¹⁰⁰ required of him before the eyes of the Protector.

“*And pray for forgiveness from God* for your community, for surely We suffice for you in Our saying, ‘*that God may forgive you what is past of your sin*’” [48:2].

وَلَا تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ خَوَّانًا
 أَثِيمًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ يَسْتَحْفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ
 يُبَيِّنُونَ مَا لَا يَرْضَى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

[4:107] *And do not dispute on behalf of those who betray themselves; surely*

98 The occasion of revelation for Qurʾān 4:105–113 is said to be a man named Tuʿma b. Ubayriq, who stole a coat of mail and hid it with an innocent and unsuspecting Jewish man. When the theft was discovered, Tuʿma claimed that the Jew had stolen it. His clan then asked the Prophet to support Tuʿma, but he defended the rights of the innocent Jewish man (see *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, trans. Hamza).

99 For more on al-Qushayrī’s understanding of *taqwā*, see his commentary on Qurʾān 4:1 and “The Section on fear of God” (Bāb al-taqwā), *Risāla*, 1:277–283.

100 For more on al-Qushayrī’s understanding of *ḥayāʾ*, see the “Section on shame” (Bāb al-ḥayāʾ), *Risāla*, 2:454–459.

God loves not one who is treacherous and sinful.

[4:108] *They hide themselves from people, but they do not hide themselves from God; for He is with them while they plot at night with discourse displeasing to Him. God is ever Encompassing of what they do.*

Those who prefer their worldly concerns (*huzūz*) over His rights (*huqūq*) and are content to remain in the familiar territories of their whim without moving to the waystations of the [ultimate] contentment (*riḍā*)¹⁰¹—God does not love those who are treacherous. He will humble them and most assuredly will not honor them.

They hide themselves from people: Their hearts are dominated by what created beings can see [or not see]. Those who have been branded with the mark of separation have no awareness that the Real views their hearts from on high.

هَآأَنُتُمْ هَآؤَلَاءِ جَدَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَيَوةِ الدُّنْيَا فَمَنْ يُجَدِلِ اللّٰهَ
عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ أَمْ مَنْ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلاً ﴿١٠٩﴾

[4:109] *Ah! There you are—you have contested on their behalf in the life of this world; but who will contest against God on their behalf on the Day of Resurrection, or who will be a guardian for them.*

That is, “We defend them out of respect for you (Muḥammad) because you are among them, but what will their state be on the Day of Resurrection when your blessing, O believers, will be withdrawn from them?”¹⁰²

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ
يَجِدِ اللّٰهَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿١١٠﴾

[4:110] *Whoever does evil, or wrongs himself, and then prays for God’s forgiveness, he shall find God Forgiving, Merciful.*

“Then” is a particle indicating extended time. That is to say they pass their

101 For more on al-Qushayrī’s understanding of *riḍā*, see the “Section on contentment” (*Bāb al-riḍā*), *Risāla*, 2:421–427.

102 In other words, individuals who act as Tu‘ma and his clan did will no longer be counted among the believers if they do not repent.

lives engaged in useless activities and oppositional behaviors and then at the end of their lives pray for God's forgiveness.

He shall find God: Finding (*wujūd*) is the ultimate event. The disobedient seek only forgiveness, but God سبحانه brings one to the utmost by His grace, if He wills.¹⁰³ His way (*sunna*) is to bring about more than what one hopes for.

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ إِثْمًا فَإِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهُ وَعَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

[4:111] *And whoever commits a sin commits it against himself only; and God is ever Knower, Wise.*

The Real has no need for the obedience of those who are obedient, or the error of the disobedient. So the one who obeys acquires his good fortune (*fa-ḥazzuhu ḥaṣṣala*) and the one who disobeys has abandoned it (*fa-ḥazzuhu akhalla*).¹⁰⁴

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ خَطِيئَةً أَوْ إِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهِ بَرِيئًا
فَقَدْ أَحْتَمَلَ بُهْتَنَا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا

[4:112] *And whoever commits a mistake or a sin, and then casts it upon the innocent, he has thereby burdened himself with calumny and a manifest sin.*

Whoever attributes his own disgraceful acts to an innocent person—God turns the tables on him by clothing the innocent one with the robe of the good deeds of his accuser and by pulling the garment of pardon over his

103 In his footnote to this passage, Basyūnī refers to al-Qushayrī's comments in his *Risāla* on finding (*wujūd*) God. The Arabic root *w-j-d* encompasses meanings related to finding, existing, and experiencing intense emotions. In a section discussing three Sufi terms derived from this root, "Feigned ecstasy, ecstasy, and ecstatic finding" (*al-Tawājūd wa-l-wajd wa-l-wujūd*), al-Qushayrī writes: "Feigning ecstasy is the beginning (*al-tawājūdu bidāya*) and ecstatic finding is the end (*wa-l-wujūdu nihāya*). Ecstasy (*wajd*) is an intermediary between the two. I heard the master Abū 'Alī l-Daqqāq say, 'Feigning ecstasy takes hold of the servant. Ecstasy claims him completely. Ecstatic finding consumes him utterly. It is like someone who witnesses the ocean, then sails upon it, and then drowns in it.'" (*Risāla*, 1:201–206).

104 The translation follows *akhalla* from MS K117 fol. 53b rather than *akhadha* in the Basyūnī edition.

bad deeds. And He reverses the situation for the aggressor by exposing his behaviors to his peers.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَهَمَّتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ أَنْ يُضِلُّوكَ
وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۗ وَمَا يَضُرُّونَكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُن تَعْلَمُ ۚ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ
عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا ﴿١١٣﴾

[4:113] *Were it not for God's bounty to you and His mercy, a party of them would have intended to lead you astray; but they lead only themselves astray; they will not hurt you at all. God has revealed to you the Book and wisdom, and He has taught you what you did not know; and God's bounty to you is ever great.*

Bounty (*faḍl*) is beneficence (*iḥsān*) beyond what is due.¹⁰⁵ “Bounty” alludes to [God's] protection (*'iṣma*) of [Muḥammad], for the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* protected him with a distinctive protection singled out for him. Just as [God] protected [Muḥammad] from abandoning His right (*ḥaqq*), He protected him in averting the deception of His creatures (*khalq*) from him, saying, “*Were it not for God's bounty to you and His mercy a party of them would have intended to lead you astray.* There is no way that anyone can lead you astray for you are in the grip of the (divine) power and *they lead only themselves astray and they will not hurt you at all*, for what is guarded (*maḥfūz*) by Us is secure (*mahrūs*) from everything else. Verily God *سُبْحَانَهُ* conferred distinction upon you with the revelation of the Book and made you a special intimate in the ways He preferred and approved of you.”

And He has taught you what you did not know. There is nothing like the knowledge He granted to [Muḥammad] alone.¹⁰⁶ It is possible that what He means by this is [Muḥammad's] ﴿﴾ knowledge of God and His majesty, and his knowledge of his own servanthood and the worth of his state in strength and beauty.

It is said that “*He has taught you what you did not know* of the proprieties of service (*ādāb al-khidma*) even as a deep knowledge of reality was unambiguous to you.”

105 In other words, bounty (*faḍl*) is not recompense but a gift. The Arabic here is *ghayru mustaḥaqq*.

106 The translation follows the pronouns and wording in MS K117, fol. 54a.

It is said that “He made you free of the instruction of any others so that none would have a light except what is borrowed from your light. Those who do not walk under your banner will not reach the entirety of Our beneficence, nor will they receive the good fortune of nearness and communion with Us.”

“*And God’s bounty to you is ever great* in all eternity without end (*ābād*).” You were recognized by Us in the most exalted degree and honorable rank¹⁰⁷ in all eternity without beginning (*āzāl*). It is said that “*He has taught you what you did not know* concerning the sublimity of your rank over all others.”

It is said that “*He taught you what you did not know*: that one can only value Our measure to the degree¹⁰⁸ that one conforms to Our command.”

لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّن نَّجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ
إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ
نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

[4:114] *There is no good in much of their secret conversations, except for he who enjoins to voluntary almsgiving, or kindness, or setting things right between people. And whoever does that, desiring God’s good pleasure, We shall surely give him a great wage.*

The best of deeds is the one whose blessing extends beyond the doer to others—the excellence of almsgiving (*ṣadaqa*) is because its benefit extends to the one who receives your gift. Chivalry (*futuwwa*) is to exert yourself for others.¹⁰⁹ In the tradition [the Prophet said], “The worst of mankind are those who eat by themselves.”¹¹⁰ The term “almsgiving” (*ṣadaqa*) can be applied to every kind of good action (*ihsān*). Regarding the shortening of prayers in travel, [the Prophet] ﷺ said, “This is an almsgiving which God has given you, so accept His almsgiving.”¹¹¹

Almsgiving is of several types: your almsgiving to your self (*nafs*) and

107 The translation follows the word “rank” (*rutba*) from MS K117, fol. 54a rather than “lordship” (*rubūbiyya*) from the Basyūnī edition.

108 Al-Qushayrī plays with three words from the same root (*q-d-r*): *lā yuqaddiru qadranā ilā bi-miqdāri muwāfaqatihi li-amrinā*.

109 See the “Section on chivalry” (Bāb al-futuwwa) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 2:472–479.

110 Neither Basyūnī nor ‘Abd al-Rahmān give the source for this *ḥadīth*.

111 According to Basyūnī this *ḥadīth* can be found in Muslim.

your almsgiving to others. Your almsgiving to your self is to prompt it to perform the rights of God most high, to restrain it from opposing His command, to hold back its hand from harming created things, and to defend its thoughts and beliefs from evil. Your almsgiving to others is the almsgiving through wealth, the heart, and the body. The almsgiving of wealth is the expenditure of riches (*niʿma*), the almsgiving of the body is through performing service (*khidma*), and the almsgiving of the heart is through good intention and strong aspiration (*himma*).

Almsgiving to the poor is an external act about which there are no doubts. Almsgiving to the rich would be that you are generous in your concern for them, not expecting anything from them and not harboring covetous feelings regarding them.

As for *kindness* (*maʿrūf*), every good thing in the law is a kindness in which there is help for Muslims, the granting of felicity for them in nearness to God and intimacy with Him, and their elevation in encouraging one another to willing obedience. Whoever gives the alms of obeying his Lord with his lower self, and gives alms of contentment with His decree with his heart, seeks no revenge for himself and encourages people to that which will save them and guide [them] to their Lord. By the sincerity of such a person's state, he sets things right between people. His action is a more eloquent admonition than his words. He is the sincere and truthful one (*ṣiddīq*)¹¹² of his time. One who does not refine his own manners and behaviors will have no effect on the refinement of the manners and behaviors of other people. Likewise, one who does not polish his own state will have no effect on the polishing of others.

And whoever does that, desiring God's good pleasure, not asking for wealth by it, or looking to achieve some state by it, will soon attain the rank of leadership (*imāma*) in the path of God. This is the wage promised in this verse.

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ
 الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصَلِّهِ ۗ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿١١٥﴾

[4:115] *But whoever makes a breach with the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him, and follows other than the way of the believers, We shall turn him over to what he has turned to, and We shall expose him in hell—an*

112 The word *ṣiddīq* comes from the same root (ṣ-d-q) as “almsgiving” (*ṣadaqa*).

evil journey's end.

Thoughts (*khawāṭir*) that come from the Real¹¹³ are His emissaries to the servant. Whoever opposes the subtle directives (*ishārāt*) that are demanded by the inner path brings upon himself the punishments of hearts. Included among these is the blinding of his eyes to the perception of what is right (*rushd*). Just as someone who resists consensus (*ijmā'*) in the [outer] religion leaves the fold, so someone who resists what he recognizes as the truth *after* the path *has become clear to him* falls away.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١١٦﴾ إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا إِنثًا وَإِنْ يَدْعُونَ إِلَّا شَيْطَانًا مَرِيدًا ﴿١١٧﴾ لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَقَالَ لَأَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا ﴿١١٨﴾ وَلَا ضُلَّتْهُمْ وَلَا مُنِنْتَهُمْ وَلَا مُرْتَهُمْ فَلْيُبَيِّنْ لَنَا آذَانَ الْأَنْعَامِ وَلَا مُرْتَهُمْ فَلْيَغَيِّرْ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلِيًّا مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١١٩﴾

[4:116] God does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him; He forgives all except that, to whomever He will. Whoever associates anything with God, verily he has strayed far away.

[4:117] What they pray to instead of Him are but females, and they only pray to a rebellious satan.

[4:118] God has cursed him. And he said, “Assuredly I will take to myself an appointed portion of Your servants.

[4:119] And I will surely lead them astray, and surely I will fill them with desires; and surely I will command them and they will cut up the cattle's ears. And surely I will command them and they will change God's creation.” And whoever takes Satan for a patron, instead of God, has surely suffered a manifest loss.

God does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him: The acknowledgment of anything other than Him, imagining even an atom

113 For more on “thoughts that come from the Real” (*khawāṭir al-ḥaqq*) as distinguished from thoughts that come from other sources, see the section on “Thoughts” (al-Khawāṭir) in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, 1:242–243.

to be a cause of origination, is the very essence of associating others with God (*shirk*). There is no possibility of pardon for it, while there is a possibility for pardon for other things. Those who seek access to [God] *سُبْحَانَهُ* by means of what they imagine are associating others with Him without realizing it. No, He is God, the One.

What they pray to instead of Him are but females: They set up inanimate things with names¹¹⁴ and plunged forward in their delusion. They relied on the errors of conjecture and therefore strayed far from the truth.

And they only pray to a rebellious satan. God has cursed him: that is, what they pray to is none other than Iblīs whom the Real has distanced from His mercy and sent away by His distancing. But Iblīs himself is one who is turned about in the grip [of God] according to what the Creator desires. If there was even an atom of [self-sufficiency] that one could affirm in him, [that would mean that] there is an associate to divinity in him. Instead it is only the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* who brings about in created beings their states and circumstances (*aḥwālan*) and who creates that which follows [satanic] whisperings in being led astray (*ḍalālan*). For He *سُبْحَانَهُ* is the Guide and the One who leads astray, and the One who has free disposal over all. [God] most high¹¹⁵ creates the power of expectations (*āmālan*) in [human] hearts after [satanic] whisperings and He makes their ugly actions (*aʿmālan*) seem beautiful in their eyes. But then He does not allow their desires any realization (*taḥqīqan*), nor does He follow up what they had hoped for with any confirmation (*taṣdīqan*). [God] most high is the One who brings these effects into existence altogether (*jumlatan*), but He attributes them to Satan at one time (*marratan*) and to the disbeliever at another time (*marratan*). This is the [true] meaning of His saying, [*And Satan said*] . . . *And I will surely lead them astray, and surely I will fill them with desires*. . .¹¹⁶ and the [true] meaning of His saying, *He promises them, and fills them with desires* [4:120].

يَعِدُّهُمْ وَيَمْنِيهِمْ^ط وَمَا يَعِدُّهُمْ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿١٢٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ مَاؤُهُمْ

114 That is, *What they pray to instead of Him are but* “idols with feminine names, such as al-Lāt, al-ʿUzza, and Manāt” worshiped by the Meccans (*Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, trans. Hamza).

115 The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been completed with *taʿālā* from MS K117, fol. 54b.

116 In other words, although the act of leading [people] astray is attributed to Satan, it is in fact only the Real who leads human beings astray and fills them with desires.

﴿ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ عَنْهَا مَحِيصًا ﴾

[4:120] *He promises them, and fills them with desires; but what Satan promises them is only delusion.*

[4:121] *For such—their abode shall be hell, and they shall find no refuge from it.*

For those whose allotment is being led astray in the present (*ḥāl*), He has decreed punishment in the end (*maʿāl*). He makes appear what appears by His deliberative power—how could even a sliver of being astray or being guided belong to anyone? To fully grasp the truth of [God’s] oneness (*tawḥīd*) is a rare and precious thing—those who have mastered this are few.

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ حَقًّا وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا ﴾

[4:122] *But those who believe and perform righteous deeds, We shall admit them to gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein for ever; God’s promise in truth; and who is truer in utterance than God?*

“Those whom We have made fortunate by [Our] decree and speech (*asʿadnāhum ḥukman wa-qawlan*) were helped at the time We brought them into existence by [Our] generosity and power (*awjadnāhum karaman wa-tawlan*). Then surely We brought about what had been promised in reward (*nuḥaqqiqu la-hum al-mawʿūda min al-thawāb*) through what We gave them in a place of good return (*bi-mā nukrimuhum bihi min ḥusni al-maʿāb*).”

﴿ لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِي أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَ بِهِ وَلَا
يَجِدْ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴾ ﴿ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ
ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنْتَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظَلَّمُونَ نَقِيرًا ﴾

[4:123] *It is not your desires nor the desires of the people of the scripture. Whoever does evil shall be requited for it; and he will not find besides God any friend or helper.*

[4:124] *And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, and is a believer—such shall be admitted into paradise, and not be wronged the dint in a date-stone.*

Whoever plants colocynth¹¹⁷ will not harvest roses and jasmine.¹¹⁸ Whoever drinks deadly poison will not find the taste of honey. Likewise, whoever squanders the duty of service will not become firmly established on the carpet of nearness. Whoever is branded with misfortune (*wa-man wusima bi-l-shiqwati*) will not be provided with the best of the best (*lam yurzaq al-safwati*). Whomever the divine decree rejects (*wa-man nafathu al-qaḍiyyati*), there is no helper for him in creation (*fa-lā nāšira lahu min al-bariyyati*).

And whoever does righteous deeds. . . “Whoever labors in Our service (*khidma*) will not be kept from attaining Our blessing (*nīma*). Indeed, whomever We have made rich in seeking Us, We honor him in finding Us. Whomever We have made to drink from the cup of longing for Us, We bring him to the intimacy of meeting Us.”

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
حَنِيفًا ۗ وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطًا ﴿١٢٦﴾

[4:125] *And who is fairer in religion than he who submits his purpose to God and is virtuous, and who follows the creed of Abraham as a ḥanīf? And God took Abraham as a close friend.*

[4:126] *To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; and God is ever the Encompasser of all things.*

There is no one *fairer in religion than he who submits his purpose to God*. It means one who has made seeking God his sole objective and has purified his compact with God from what is other than God. For that reason he submits himself in all of his states to God through God and does not hold back anything from God from his wealth, his body, his spirit, his strength, his family, and his children. This was the state of Abraham ﷺ.

And is virtuous (muḥsin): Being virtuous (*iḥsān*), as attested to in the

117 A bitter plant.

118 The Arabic word is ‘abhar, which Basyūnī identifies as meaning “jasmine” or “narcissus” from the dictionary *Lisān al-‘Arab*.

sacred law, is to worship God as if you see Him. It is necessary that a remnant from the reality of separation (*‘ayn al-farq*) remain for the servant so that the performance of [God’s] rights سُبْحَانَهُ will be sound, for if he were to be completely taken over by the [ultimate] reality, his submission and virtue would not be sound. This is following Abraham ﷺ the *ḥanīf*.¹¹⁹ Nothing remained of him which could be described as permanent.

And God took Abraham as a close friend (khalīl): He separated the event from any effort, labor, seeking, and striving when He said this, so that it would be known that friendship (*khulla*) is an act of being clothed by the Real, not an attribute which the servant acquires.

It is said that the friend (*al-khalīl*) is entirely in need of the Real at every breath. In every one of his breaths and states, there is nothing for him that is not through God and for God. [The word *khalīl*] is derived from *khalla*,¹²⁰ which means poverty (*khaṣāṣa*) and need (*hāja*).

It is [also] said to come from [the word] *khulla*, which means love (*maḥabba*). Friendship (*khulla*) is love (*maḥabba*) that reaches every part of someone. It permeates (*takhallala*)¹²¹ one’s innermost self until there is no entry to it for anyone else.

When God سُبْحَانَهُ had purified and emptied [Abraham] ﷺ of [any other], He raised him up in upholding His right after [Abraham’s] erasure from everything that is not God سُبْحَانَهُ. Then He said, “*And announce among the people the [season for] pilgrimage*” [22:27]: The pilgrim does not say *labayyka*¹²² except to God and this is an allusion to the gathering of the gathering (*jam‘ al-jam‘*).¹²³

وَيَسْتَفْتُونَكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ وَمَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي
الْكِتَابِ فِي يَتْلَىٰ النِّسَاءِ الَّتِي لَا تُوْتُونَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُونَ أَن
تَنكِحُوهُنَّ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الْوُلْدَانِ وَأَن تَقُومُوا لِلْيَتَامَىٰ بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ

119 On the word *ḥanīf*, see al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qur’an 3:67.

120 Basyūnī has voweled this as *khulla*, but Lane gives *khalla* as the correct vowel for the word meaning poverty (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:780).

121 The fifth form verb from the same root (*kh-l-l*).

122 Part of the rite of pilgrimage to Mecca is repeating a prayer that begins with “Here I am O God, at your service” (*labayyka*).

123 For more on this term, see the section on the “Gathering of the gathering” (*Jam‘ al-jam‘*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, 1:209–210.

وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِهِ عَلِيمًا ﴿١٢٧﴾

[4:127] *They will ask you for a pronouncement concerning women. Say: “God pronounces to you concerning them, and what is recited to you in the Book concerning the orphan women to whom you do not give what is prescribed for them for you desire to marry them, and the oppressed children and that you deal justly with orphans. Whatever good you do, God is ever Knower of it.”*

He prohibited [men] from coveting that which would lead them to do harm or wrong to oppressed women and orphans. He explained that God is their avenger and that whoever is heedful of God regarding them will not lose anything on account of God but rather will find a beautiful recompense (*jamīl al-jazā*). But whoever abuses them will suffer because of that a painful tribulation (*alīm al-balā*).

وَإِنْ أَمْرَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا ذُشُورًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿١٢٨﴾

[4:128] *And if a woman fears from her husband ill-treatment or rejection (īrād), they are not at fault if they are reconciled through some agreement; reconciliation is better. But greed has been made present in the souls. If you are virtuous and fear, surely God is ever aware of what you do.*

When the companionship of created beings becomes disconnected from the discourse of the Real,¹²⁴ [there is] a risk of alienation and blame (*al-waḥsha wa-l-malāma*), and [it] becoming mixed with aversion and disgust (*al-nafra wa-l-saʿāma*). Whoever rejects (‘*arada*)¹²⁵ God in his heart—created beings [will] reject consideration for his right. They all come out against him, find his affair pathetic (*bi-istiṣghāri amrihi*), and regard his worth as contemptible (*wa-ishtiḥqāri qadrihi*). But whoever returns to God in his heart, his affair will be restored to balance as a whole and in its particulars. His chest will expand with the capacity to bear the bad traits he finds in

124 The divine discourse is described in 39:23: *God has revealed the best of discourses, a Book, consimilar in coupled phrases—whereat quiver the skins of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts soften to the remembrance of God.*

125 The verb “reject” or “turn away” (‘*arada*) corresponds to the verbal noun *īrād* found in the verse.

others, and he will draw the cloak of pardon over the defects of all of them, and prefer reconciliation (*ṣulḥ*) by abandoning his own portion in favor of theirs. God most high said, “*Reconciliation is better.*”

To ignore your aversion to those who quarrel with you is more appropriate and more advantageous for you than being arrogant with your foe and wanting revenge and the acknowledgment of your privileges. Most people¹²⁶ are in the fetters of this tribulation.

But greed has been made present in the souls: The greed of the lower self is the concern of the servant for his worldly portion. Whoever is veiled from witnessing the Real is inevitably brought back to witnessing the lower self.

If you are virtuous: [This] means that would be better for you. Being virtuous (*iḥsān*) is that you worship God as if you see him.

And fear: [This] means [fear] to look at your own status and worth. Rather look to your Lord and in seeing Him be annihilated from any vision of your own worth.

Surely God is ever aware of what you do: [This] means that once you have been annihilated from yourselves and your acts, *God suffices as Knower* [4:70] after your annihilation and He suffices as the Giver of existence following your effacement.

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا
كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ وَإِنْ تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ
عَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٢٩﴾

[4:129] *You will never be able to be just to your wives, even if you are eager; yet do not turn altogether away, so that you leave her like one suspended. If you set things right, and fear, surely God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.*

[This] means when your concern is for yourself¹²⁷ in your affairs, the state of your union together is overturned, and what was sound becomes ruined. But when you have made God your concern in your affairs, the balance of your life together will be restored and at that time will be cleared of turmoil.

126 The translation follows “people” (*nās*) from MS K117, fol. 55a rather than the word “hypocrites” (*munāfiqūn*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

127 There is a blank in Basyūnī’s text, which could not be clarified through MS K117, fol. 55a. The translation follows Basyūnī’s suggestion to add “when your concern is for yourself” to parallel the phrase, “when you have made God your concern.”

It is said that if God has decreed deficiency in intellect as someone's state,¹²⁸ it will not be possible for you to set that deficiency right by your competence.

Yet do not turn altogether away: [This] means do not deviate from the clear path of the command. Stop where you have been told to stop and do what you have been commanded to do.

So that you leave her like one suspended: [This] means that when you prevent them from being with someone other than you, even as you cut them off from any share of you, you harm [them] in two ways, for there is nothing to be had from you and there [is] no way for them to be with someone else. This harm is very grave.

The allusion in this [verse] is that when the path to your share in worldly things is blocked, He **سُبْحَانَهُ** enables you to witness His reality to you and find His kindness. Surely whoever's annihilation is in God (*fa-inna man kāna fī Allāh talafuhu*), the Real is his substitute (*fa-l-ḥaqq subḥānahu khalafuhu*). **If you set things right** between you and other created beings (*wa-in tuṣliḥū mā baynakum wa-bayna al-khalq*), and put your trust in what is between you and the Real (*wa-tathiqū fīmā baynakum wa-bayna al-ḥaqq*), surely God is **ever forgiving** of your failings (*fa-inna Allāha ghafūrun li-uyūbikum*), **merciful** in pardoning your sins (*rahīmun bi-l-afwi'an dhunūbikum*).

وَإِنْ يَتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللَّهُ كُلًّا مِّن سَعَتِهِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٣٠﴾

[4:130] *But if they separate, God will compensate each of them out of His plenty. God is ever Embracing, Wise.*

The essential companionship is the companionship of the heart in perpetual need of God, since there is no separating oneself from the Real. As for everything other than the Real, [human beings] have no need for one another except in the external sense—this is the thinking of those in a state of separation (*aṣḥāb al-tafriqa*). As for the people of realization (*ahl al-taḥqīq*), they have no doubt that the need of created beings is entirely for God **سُبْحَانَهُ**.

128 Basyūnī inserts a footnote saying that, by those deficient in intellect, al-Qushayrī means women. A *ḥadīth* found in al-Bukhārī (in the Book of Menstruation and the Book of Almsgiving) describes women as deficient in intellect and religion. Another *ḥadīth*, found in al-Bukhārī and Muslim (in the Book of Marriage), urges men to treat women well, saying that they were created from a rib [from Adam], and if you try to straighten it you will break it.

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَنِيًّا حَمِيدًا ﴿١٣١﴾

[4:131] *To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth. We have charged those who were given the scripture before you, and you [to] “Fear God.” “If you disbelieve, then to God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth”; God is ever Independent, Praised.*

[God] obligated everyone to return to Him and to avoid everything other than Him, and to hold to His command, but one party has been given success and another abandoned. Then He taught the people of realization that He is independent of the obedience of every friend (*ghaniyyun ‘an tāʿati kulli waliyyin*) and innocent of the error of every one who strays (*wa-barī‘un ‘an zallati kulli ghawīyin*).

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٣٢﴾

[4:132] *To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; God suffices as a Guardian.*

[God] cuts off the innermost selves from attachment to anything but Him by informing them that He alone possesses what is in the heavens and the earth. Then He evokes desire in them for His superior guardianship and His attending to their needs with beautiful kindness and superior capability by His saying, “*God suffices as a Guardian.* He sets things right by taking hold of your state without taking anything that is yours.”

إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَيَأْتِ بِآخَرِينَ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ قَدِيرًا ﴿١٣٣﴾

[4:133] *If He will, He can remove you, O people, and bring others, surely God is ever able to do that.*

One who is able to do without others in all eternity without beginning (*man*

istaghna [‘]*anhu fi āzālihi*) has no need for them in all eternity without end (*fa-lā ḥājatīn lahu ilayhi fi ābādīhi*). It is said that He has no need for anyone, while the servant is unable to do without Him for even a single breath.

It is said that there is no limit to the things which are decreed, so that if it were not [‘]Amr, then it would be Zayd. If it were not a servant, it would be servants. The only one for whom there is no substitute or replacement is the One, the Unique.

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ
سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٣٤﴾

[4:134] *Whoever desires the reward of this world, then God has the reward of this world and of the hereafter; God is ever Hearing, Seeing.*

When they attached their hearts to what is transitory in this world, He reminded them of what happens in the hereafter, saying, “*then God has the reward of this world and of the hereafter.*” This was to inform them that the blessing of the hereafter is far above what they aspire to in this paltry place. When the object of their search was elevated to the hereafter, He cut them off from any external or created thing, [saying], “*And God is better and more enduring*” [20:73].

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ
أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ
بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا وَإِنْ تَلَوُّوا أَوْ تَعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ
بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿١٣٥﴾

[4:135] *O you who believe, be upright in justice; witnesses for God, even though it be against yourselves; or parents and kinsmen, whether the person be rich or poor; God is closer to the two. So do not follow any whim, lest you swerve, for if you twist, or refrain, surely God is ever aware of what you do.*

“Justice” (*qist*) is being fair and equitable ([‘]*adl*). “To be upright” for God in being fair and equitable is to uphold His rights against yourself and to seek the same from everyone over whom you have authority. This can

be accomplished either through an exhortation to act kindly or a rebuke concerning something despicable, admonitions, direction to a legal issue or guidance to something that is the right thing to do (*ḥaqq*). The deepest realization of what is right and true (*tahqīq*)¹²⁹ will not touch the innermost self of one who holds back what is rightly due (*ḥaqq*) to God. The foundation of religion is to prefer the right of the Real (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) over the right of created beings (*ḥaqq al-khalq*). Whoever prefers anyone—a father, mother, child, kinsman, or relation—to God, or holds back any portion due to Him, is not upright in justice.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ءَامِنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ؕ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلٰى
رَسُولِهِ ؕ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي اُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ
وَكُتُبِهِ ؕ وَرُسُلِهِ ؕ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٣٦﴾

[4:136] *O you who believe, believe in God and His Messenger and the Book which has been revealed to His Messenger; and the Book which was revealed before. And whoever disbelieves in God and His angels and His Books, and His messengers, and the Last Day, verily he has strayed far away.*

“*O you who believe* from the point of view of demonstrative proof (*burhān*), believe from the point of view of clear evidence (*bayān*) until you believe from the point of view of unveiling (*kashf*) and eyewitnessing (*ʿiyān*).”

It is said: “*O you who believe* through affirmation (*taṣḍīq*), believe by recognizing the truth (*tahqīq*) that your salvation comes through His favor, not through your belief.”

It is said: “*O you who believe* in the present (*ḥāl*), believe with unwavering belief up to the end (*maʿāl*).”

It is said: “*O you who believe*, believe that He is¹³⁰ beyond every union and separation (*waṣl wa-faṣl*), finding and losing (*wajd wa-faqd*).”

It is said “*O you who believe* through the use of the proofs of intellects (*adillat al-ʿuqūl*): When you alight in the courtyard of arriving and the bewilderment of sudden intuition and the forces of perplexity take possession of you, and you then awaken from this state of absence [from

129 The word *tahqīq* comes from the same root as *ḥaqq* (*h-q-q*). The Basyūnī edition adds *li-Llāh* (meaning, then, “the realization of God”) but this does not occur in MS K117, fol. 55b and has been omitted from the translation here.

130 “That He is” (*annahu*) has been added from MS K117, fol. 55b.

creation],¹³¹ believe that that which overwhelmed you was the witness of the Real (*kāna shāhida al-ḥaqq*), not the reality Itself (*lā ḥaḥiqata al-dhāt*), for the Eternal is too sanctified and holy for any nearness and distance, union and separation.”

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ ءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ ءَزَادُوا كُفْرًا
لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيُغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيُهْدِيَهُمْ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٣٧﴾ بَشِيرِ الْمُنْفِقِينَ بِأَنَّ
لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٣٨﴾

[4:137] *Verily, those who believed, and then disbelieved, and then believed, and then disbelieved, and then increased in disbelief—it was not for God to forgive them, nor to guide them to a way.*

[4:138] *Give tidings to the hypocrites that for them there is a painful chastisement.*

Those whose states have alternated so that they rise and fall, then rise up again and then stumble¹³²—He has sealed their states in their unseemliness. The arrows of divine power have struck them by decree and the misery of fate has caught up with them as their final state. The Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* will not guide them to a purpose, nor lead them to good sense. “*Give tidings* to them of separation without end (*fa-bashshirhum bi-l-furqati al-abadiyya*) and tell them of punishment uninterrupted (*wa-akhbirhum bi-l-‘uqūbati al-sarmadiyya*).”

الَّذِينَ يَتَّخِذُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَيْبَتُونَ عِنْدَهُمْ
الْعِزَّةَ فَإِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٣٩﴾ وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا
سَمِعْتُمْ ءَايَاتِ اللَّهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا مَعَهُمْ حَتَّى
يُخَوِّضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ءِ إِنَّكُمْ إِذَا مَثَلْتُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَامِعُ الْمُنْفِقِينَ

131 For more on what al-Qushayrī means by the term “absence” see the section on “Absence and presence” (al-Ghayba wa-l-ḥuḍūr), *Risāla*, 1:214–216.

132 “And stumble” (*wa-‘atharū*) has been added from MS K117, fol. 55b.

وَالْكَافِرِينَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٤٠﴾

[4:139] *Those who take disbelievers for friends instead of believers—do they desire power with them? Truly, power belongs altogether to God.*

[4:140] *It has been revealed to you in the Book that: “When you hear God’s signs being disbelieved and mocked, do not sit with them until they engage in some other talk, for otherwise you would surely be like them.” God will gather the hypocrites and disbelievers, all together, into hell.*

Whoever clings to a created being has sought refuge with someone other than the One who protects. He relies on a place that will provide no shelter. He has fallen into the abyss of error, whose depth is bottomless and ruse calamitous. *Do they desire power* with those who have themselves been humbled by [the command] to “Be”?¹³³ How can they have any power to determine the truth? How can those who have no power extend power to anyone else?

It is said that “We do not know what is more shameless in their condition: seeking power while they are themselves humbled by the [divine] subjugation and held in the [divine] grasp, or their thinking and imagining that [power] can be from anything other than God.”

It is said that whoever seeks something from any direction other than Him—failure is the ultimate end of his effort (*fa-l-ikhfāqu ghāyatu jahdihi*). Whoever desires wealth in regions of indigence—being reduced to poverty is the outcome of his toil (*fa-l-implāqu quṣārā kaddihi*).

It is said that if they had been rightly guided to finding [the true source of] power, their seeking would not have been diverted to those who possess no authority.

Truly, power belongs altogether to God: The power is of two kinds: an eternal power, which is an attribute of God, and a contingent power which He سبحانه apporions to whomever He will. [Power] belongs to God most high as something that is His and is [also] a gift from Him [to human beings].

It has been revealed to you in the Book. . . . Do not make neighbors of those alienated in feeling and affection, for the darknesses of their souls extend to your hearts as you seek to inhale the fragrances they refuse to take in. One becomes partner to the state of those with whom one sits. The sitting companion of those in a state of intimacy becomes an intimate himself

133 God’s engendering command (*amr al-takwīn*) is mentioned in such Qur’ānic verses as, *When He decrees a thing, He but says to it, “Be” and it is* [2:117, 3:47, 19:35, 40:68] and *His command, when He wills it, is just to say, “Be,” and it is* [36:82].

while the sitting companion of those in darkness is himself estranged.

It is said that emigrating from the enemies of the Real is a duty. Opposition to and separation from adversaries is an obligation. To trust in those who are heedless is to knock on the door of separation.

For otherwise you would surely be like them: The clearest evidence of a man's¹³⁴ secret being can be found in the company he keeps and the relationships he cultivates. Like is tied to like and the branch extends outward from the trunk.

الَّذِينَ يَتَرَبَّصُونَ بِكُمْ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَكُنْ
مَعَكُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نَصِيبٌ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَسْتَحِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَنَمْنَعَكُم مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَنْ
يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤١﴾

[4:141] *Those who wait in watch for you, and, if a victory comes to you from God, say, “Were we not with you?”; but if the disbelievers have some luck, they say, “did we not gain mastery over you, and did we not defend you against the believers?” God will judge between you on the Day of Resurrection, and God will never grant the disbelievers a way over the believers.*

Because they lacked sincerity (*ikhhlās*) in the truest sense and had not tasted true conviction (*‘aqīda*), they showed themselves to be of a different character from those who, in the [divine] decree, submitted. [Those who submitted] and the disbelievers are not the same. It is necessary for the people of the Real to be wary of [the disbelievers] and to stay aloof from them. Then He *سُبْحَانَهُ* included a beautiful expression of His sufficiency for them by His saying, “*God will never grant the disbelievers a way over the believers,*” which is an all-encompassing statement. Surely the evil of their deception is diverted back to them (*fa-inna wabāla kaydihim ilayhim maṣrūfun*) and the requital for their plotting is reserved for them (*wa-jazā’a makrihim ‘alayhim mawqūfun*). The right and true reality—its people are aided from the power of the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* (*wa-l-ḥaqqu min qibali al-ḥaqqi subḥānihi maṣṣūrūn ahluhu*). The false—its foundation is uprooted through the help of the Real *سُبْحَانَهُ* (*wa-l-bāṭilu bi-naṣri al-ḥaqqi subḥānihi mujtaththun aṣluhu*).

134 There is a blank in the Basyūni edition that has been completed with the word “man” (*rajul*) from MS K117, fol. 56a.

إِنَّ الْمُنْفِقِينَ يُخَدِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَدِعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ
 قَامُوا كَسَالَى يُرَاءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٤٢﴾ مُذَبِّبِينَ
 بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ
 لَهُ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤٣﴾

[4:142] *The hypocrites seek to trick God, but He is tricking them. When they stand up to pray, they stand up lazily and to be seen by people, and they do not remember God save a little.*

[4:143] *Wavering, all the time—not to these, neither to those; and he whom God sends astray, you will never find for him a way.*

The trickery of the hypocrites is the outward display of conformity on the path (*izhāru al-wifāqi fi l-ṭarīqa*) while inwardly [they] cling to association [of others with God] in [their] creed (*wa-istish'āru al-shirki fi l-ʿaqīda*).

The trickery of the Real toward them is what they imagine regarding salvation, [after they] decided they have a special entitlement to it. But when the covering is lifted, they will know for certain that what they thought was drink (*sharāb*) was a mirage (*sarāb*). God most high said, “*And there will appear to them from God that which they had never reckoned*” [39:47].

When they stand up to pray. . . The sign of hypocrisy is finding energy when one can be seen by others but then losing resolve when the opportunity to be seen passes.

Wavering, all the time. . . Those who are worth the least among created beings are those who remove the vest of servanthood (*akhassu al-khalqi man yada'u šidāra al-ʿubūdiyya*) and have not found a way to true freedom (*wa-lam yajid sabīlan ilā ḥaqīqati al-ḥurriyya*).¹³⁵ They do not have even a sliver of precious nobility (*fa-lā lahu min al-ʿizzi shazīyya*) nor an agreeable way of living in their heedlessness (*wa-lā fi l-ghaflati ʿishatu hanīyya*).

﴿١٤٢﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكٰفِرِينَ اءُولِيَآءَ مِنْ دُونِ
 اءَلْمُؤْمِنِينَ اءَأْتْرِيءُونَ اءَن تَجْعَلُوا لِلّٰهٖ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٤٤﴾

[4:144] *O you who believe, take not the disbelievers as friends instead of the*

135 The MS K117, fol. 56a has “service” (*khidma*) here instead of “freedom” (*ḥurriyya*).

believers: do you desire to give God over you a clear warrant?

He repeated the admonition to them¹³⁶ and confirmed the command to separate themselves from enemies. This was to emphasize the warning, strengthen the prohibition, and end the argument by putting a stop to¹³⁷ any possible excuses.

Do you desire to give God over you a clear warrant? He warned them about their friendship with the disbelievers over and above other oppositional acts because it involves a preference for something other than the [appropriate] object of adoration (*maʿbūd*). Preferring another to the beloved (*maḥbūb*) is the gravest of sins in the precepts of love (*aḥkām al-widād*). When one’s heart becomes engaged with others in the place reserved for believers, this necessarily brings about a bad outcome. How should one’s heart be engaged with others in the place reserved for the Real?

The punishment He promised them was to leave them to their own devices and to what they had chosen [when they] sided with the disbelievers. What a wretched substitution! It is the same with those who remain apart from the Real (*ḥaqq*)—He leaves them with created beings (*khalq*). He doubles their affliction by their remaining apart from the Real (*lil-baqāʾi ʿan al-ḥaqq*) and remaining with created beings (*wa-l-baqāʾi maʿa al-khalq*). Both of these are severe punishments.

إِنَّ الْمُنْفِقِينَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا ﴿١٤٥﴾

[4:145] *Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest level of the fire; and you will never find a helper for them.*

This verse indicates that the hypocrite is not one who is sincerely seeking the protective trust (*mustaʿmin*), for being true to the trust (*īmān*) is what brings protection (*amān*). The one who holds true to the trust (*muʿmin*) [or “the believer”] is saved by his faith (*īmān*) from the fire—that which causes one’s falling to the lowest level of the fire cannot be called faith (*īmān*). It is said that this is verified by His words, *God is the best of schemers* [3:54 and 8:30], which is to say His scheming (*makr*) is superior to all other scheming.¹³⁸ When the hypocrites’ scheming with the believers was exposed, their punishment was more severe than the punishment of those who declared their disbelief openly.

136 The first admonition occurs in Qurʾān 4:139.

137 The Basyūnī edition has a blank here, which has been filled in with *bi-ḥasm* from MS K117, fol. 56a.

138 In other words, saying they had belief was of no benefit to the hypocrites.

Because of what is in the tradition, “One meets God in whatever state one is in,”¹³⁹ it is said that He transfers them from their present state to one like it¹⁴⁰ in the future. Just as today the hypocrites are in the lowest level of being cut off [from the communion of lovers],¹⁴¹ so will they be transferred to the lowest level of the fire. The lowest level of their being cut off in the present is that they bear the name of “faith” (*īmān*), while in fact they do not have even a sliver from God. This is the greatest of afflictions.

It is said that they deserve the lowest level of the fire because they kept company here with the greatest name of God without respect (*hurma*).

It is said that they deserve [the lowest level of the fire] because they were present but lacked any sense of propriety (*adab*) in what they said. By this they were driven far away.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَخْلَصُوا دِينَهُمْ لِلَّهِ
فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِي اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٤٦﴾

[4:146] *Save those who repent, and make amends, and hold fast to God and make their religion purely God's; those are with the believers; and God will certainly give the believers a great wage.*

Although not all of these conditions are ordinarily required to repent of one's sin, they are necessary for hypocrites to renounce their hypocrisy because of the recalcitrant nature of their disbelief. For those who meet these conditions, He said, “*those are with (ma'a) the believers.*” He did not say “of” (*min*)¹⁴² the believers. In this there is another allusion to the imperfection in their rank, even though they have sincerely made amends for the evil they did in the past. Regarding its meaning they have recited:

Apologies are easy.
What a difference

139 Neither Basyūnī nor ʿAbd al-Raḥmān give a source for this tradition.

140 The translation follows “like” (*mithl*) from MS K117, fol. 56a rather than “more intense” (*ashadd*).

141 Basyūnī's edition has *hajr* and he adds a footnote saying he thinks *hajr* is preferable. *Hajr* is the word that appears in MS K117, fol. 56a.

142 When used to describe the relationship between people, the preposition *min* indicates that one is part of a group of people who share the same beliefs and sentiments. (See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2:3024).

between apologies
and thankfulness!¹⁴³

[Others] say that the preposition “with” (*ma‘a*) indicates accompaniment, so that when they were included with the believers, they became deserving in the same way as the group of the believers.

Here repentance (*tawba*) means that they renounce their hypocrisy *and make amends* in the sincerity (*ṣidq*) of their faith, *and hold fast to God* in absolving themselves of their own power and strength, and bearing witness to the blessing of God toward them in guiding them and delivering them from their hypocrisy, *and make their religion purely God’s*. They regard¹⁴⁴ their deliverance as being by the grace of God, not by their newfound faith, nor by the renouncement of their past hypocrisy.

It is said that *they make their religion purely God’s* means [that they] perpetually seek God’s help in strengthening them in faith and protecting them from reverting to their past hypocrisy.

It is said that they *repent* from hypocrisy, *and make amends* through the purification of belief, *and hold fast to God* by asking for His favor, *and make their religion purely God’s* in that their deliverance is by the grace and kindness of God, not by their having done anything to make it happen.

مَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ إِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَعَامَنْتُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا ﴿١٤٧﴾

[4:147] *Why would God chastise you if you are thankful and believe? God is ever Thankful, Knowing.*

This verse is among the verses which evoke beautiful hope and powerful optimism because He has appointed two things as tokens of protection from punishment. These are thankfulness (*shukr*) and belief (*īmān*), which are simple and light-hearted qualities. Thankfulness (or praise) is an assertion (*qāla*), and belief (or faith) is a state (*ḥāla*). When¹⁴⁵ He is pleased with a servant’s words and state, He makes the way easy for him. Thankfulness or praise (*shukr*) is only sound when heard from one who is faithful rather than one who is not, because it is an act of willing obedience (*tā‘a*). The obedience of those who have no faith is not genuine.¹⁴⁶

143 This verse does not appear in Muṣṭafā.

144 The word *rā‘ū* has been added from MS K117, fol. 56b.

145 The translation follows the word “when” (*hīna*) from MS K117, fol. 56b rather than “from” (*min*) from the Basyūnī edition.

146 In other words, their attitude is not one of willing obedience (*tā‘a*) but rather reluctance

And believe, that is, [believe, or come to believe] in the end. It is as if He is explaining that salvation will only be for those who, at the end of the day, believe. The meaning of the verse, then, is that God will not chastise you with the chastisement of abiding [in hell] if you are thankful in your present state and believe in the end.

It is said that when *you are thankful and believe*, you attest to the fact that your salvation [comes] through God, not through your thankfulness or your belief.

It is said that thankfulness is witnessing the blessing from God and belief is seeing God in the blessing. It is as if He said, “If you understand the blessing as coming from God, then let not the witnessing of this blessing cut you off from witnessing the One who gives the blessing.”

Wa kāna Allāh shākiran ʿalīman means *God is ever Thankful, Knowing (Allāh shākīrun ʿalīmun)*.¹⁴⁷ The meaning of His being “thankful” is that He is the One who commends the servant and the One who bears witness to him in what he does. This is because the true sense and definition of thankfulness is praise for the one who acts in a beautiful way (*muḥsin*) by mentioning the beautiful action he does (*iḥsān*). “The servant gives thanks to God” means he praises Him for His beautiful action (*iḥsān*) toward him, which is His blessing to him. “The Lord gives thanks to the servant” means that He praises [the servant] for his beautiful action (*iḥsān*), which is his willing obedience (*tāʿa*) to Him. God praises him for what he does in willing obedience even though He knows his many sins.

It is said that [God] is thankful to (or praises) [the servant] even though He knows that he will return again to his unseemly actions.

It is said that [God] is thankful to [the servant] because He knows his weakness. It is [also] said that He is thankful to him because He knows that [the servant] is not refusing to obey and that his aim is not to oppose His Lord. Rather, he sins because of the overwhelming desires that are part of being human.

It is said that [the servant] is thankful to [God] because the servant knows in his sinful condition that he has a Lord who pardons him.

لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوِّءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلِمَ

and aversion (*karh*), which is a sign of their infidelity and lack of gratitude (*kufṛ*). Qurʾān 3:83 contrasts these attitudes, saying *And to God prostrate whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly (ṭawʿan) or unwillingly (karhan)*. See also verses 9:53 and 41:11.

¹⁴⁷ Al-Qushayrī rephrases the verse here to show that the verb *kāna*, which sometimes refers to the past, can also refer to an ongoing state.

وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا ﴿١٤٨﴾

[4:148] *God does not like the utterance of evil words out loud, unless a person has been wronged. God is ever Hearer, Knower.*

What a person who has been wronged says about the one who has wronged him is not evil in the true sense of the word, by the permission of God, but it is nonetheless a good thing to let the matter drop. God most high has said, “*For the requital of an evil is an evil deed like it*” [42:40], so requital is not an evil deed. [But whoever pardons and reconciles, his reward will be with God. Truly He does not like wrongdoers] [42:40].

It is said that anyone who knows that his Protector hears is ashamed to give free voice to the urgings of his lower self.

It is said that *evil words out loud* are what you hear within yourself [when] you think ill thoughts about others. The elect take responsibility in their inward thoughts for that which, if heard [out loud] from ordinary people, might¹⁴⁸ be held against them.

Unless (illā) a person has been wronged: Some say [this means] “not even (*wa-lā*) the one who has been wronged.” Others say its meaning is this: “But (*wa-lakinna*) a person who has been wronged” has the right to mention the one who has intentionally wronged him.

It is said that those who do not prefer praise of the Real (*madḥ al-ḥaqq*) over defaming one’s fellow creatures (*qadḥ al-khalq*) have been cheated of the present moment.

It is said that those who look to created beings with the eye of connecting to the Real, [see] that they are servants of God, [and] will speak no ill of them. A man says to his companion, “Out of respect for you, I will bear the lowliest¹⁴⁹ service to you, even beyond that which I would bear for my son.” When there is commitment like this between human beings, how much more worthy is the servant’s regard for refined behavior (*adab*) between him and His Protector!

It is said that *God does not like the utterance of evil words out loud* among ordinary people, nor does He like that in the inward thoughts of the elect.

It is said that *the utterance of evil words out loud* among ordinary people

148 There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition which has been completed with the word *lā’alla* from MS K117, fol. 56b.

149 There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition, which has been completed with the word *adwan* from MS K117, fol. 57a.

is their description of God in ways [for which they] have no permission or divine sanction.

The utterance of evil words out loud is describing your fellow creatures in ways that the law does not permit. [It is] describing the Real as He cannot be described, so that you will be lying regarding Him. [It is also] describing any deficiencies of the elect, even if you are being sincere.

God is ever Hearer, Knower: Hearer of what you say, Knower of your defects. It means “do not say of others that which you know is the same in you.”

It is said [this means] *Hearer* of what you say, *Knower* of the blamelessness of the one you defame. There is a threat in [the verse] to the defamer on behalf of the one who is innocent of what he has been accused.

It is said that *Hearer*, [is addressed to] “O you who wrongs,” [and] *Knower* [is addressed to] “O you who has been wronged.” This is a threat to these and good news for those.

﴿ ١٤٩ ﴾ إِنَّ تُبَدُّوْا خَيْرًا أَوْ تُخَفُّوْهُ أَوْ تَعْفُوْا عَن سُوْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيْرًا

[4:149] *If you show good, or conceal it, or pardon evil, then surely God is ever Pardoning, Powerful.*

If you show good, taking on the good manners found in the law (*takhaluqan bi-ādābi al-sharīʿa*) or *conceal*, recognizing the truth in the precepts of the deeper reality (*tahaqquqan bi-aḥkāmi al-ḥaqīqa*), or *pardon evil*, adopting from God what He has entrusted you with in the most beautiful ways of behaving, *then surely God is ever Pardoning* of your defects (*li-ʿuyūbikum*), *Powerful* in causing you to attain what you love (*ʿalā taḥsili maḥbūbikum*) and causing you to recognize the true nature of what you seek (*wa-tahqīqi matlūbikum*).

It is said that *if you show good* you will be an example for humankind in what you practice and in what you propose to others who might be guided from the way of your practice. *If you conceal it*, content with only His knowing it, and safeguard yourselves from the evils of affectation, and trust that those of you who act for Him will be seen and known by Him, or *pardon evil*, that is, you abandon¹⁵⁰ what your lower selves call you to—then God will grant you His pardon for what you do. He [also] has the power to

150 The verb “to pardon” (*ʿafā*) can also be translated as “to efface” or “to eliminate.” al-Qushayrī seems to have this meaning in mind when he suggests that if you work to efface the promptings of the lower self, God will efface (that is, pardon) your sins.

afflict you with that which the oppressor is afflicted with. This, then, is a warning to them about being heedless in witnessing the favor (*minna*) and a way of alerting them to the fact that they should seek refuge from being deprived of protection (*ʿiṣma*) and seek refuge from being abandoned so that they fall into discord (*fitna*) and trial (*miḥna*).

It is said [the verse means] *if you show good*, acting well toward people, *or conceal it*, praying for them in secret, *or pardon evil*, even if you have been wronged [then surely God is ever Pardoning, Powerful].

It is said concerning those who act well toward you, show them good outwardly. Those who spare you from their evil, be loyal in friendship and pray for them inwardly. Those who act badly toward you, pardon them with generosity and graciousness. You will find pardon from God according to what you yourself do, for surely your sins are more numerous. He has the power to give you in favor and blessings that which you cannot attain by taking vengeance or revenge.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۖ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ
 اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۖ وَيَقُولُونَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ
 أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٥٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا
 وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ﴿١٥١﴾

[4:150] *Those who disbelieve in God and His messengers and seek to divide between God and His messengers, and say, “We believe in some, and disbelieve in some,” and seek to adopt a way between them.*

[4:151] *Those are the disbelievers truly; and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating chastisement.*

[God] relates that they have added the blameworthy actions enumerated here to the shamefulfulness of their disbelief. He explains that He has doubled their chastisement as requital for their sin so that you will know that He is *ever on the watch* [89:14] over those who act in corrupt and harmful ways.

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۖ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ سَوْفَ

يُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٥٢﴾

[4:152] *And those who believe in God and His messengers and do not seek to divide between any of them, those—We shall surely give them their wages. God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.*

When they believed in all of the messengers and confirmed everything to which they were commanded, they deserved acceptance and the beautiful recompense. To let go of one's faith in some individuals is to let go of one's faith in [the messages sent in other] time periods. Just as [God] will not accept the faith of a person whose faith does not include all the messages that have come before him,¹⁵¹ likewise He will not accept the faith of a person whose faith does not include all that faith demands of him, since [God] made that a condition for its actualization (*taḥqīq*) and perfection (*kamāl*).

This alludes to the fact that anyone who does not wholeheartedly enter into the covenant will not have so much as a sliver of the reality of communion [of lovers]. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The pilgrimage is [the day of] ‘Arafā.”¹⁵² Anyone who traverses the distance, even if he comes from a deep ravine,¹⁵³ but then holds back even a little from ‘Arafāt, has not experienced the pilgrimage. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The servant who has contracted with his master to be freed is still a servant to the last dirham.”¹⁵⁴

يَسْأَلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ تُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فَقَدْ سَأَلُوا
مُوسَىٰ أَكْبَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَقَالُوا أَرِنَا اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّعِقَةُ
بِظُلْمِهِمْ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَنِ
ذَلِكَ وَعَاتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٥٣﴾

[4:153] *The people of the scripture will ask of you to cause a Book to be*

151 The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been completed with *azminatihi* from MS K117, fol. 57a.

152 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives several references for this *ḥadīth*, including Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.

153 A reference to Qurʾān 22:27: *They shall come from every deep ravine.*

154 This saying occurs in al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qurʾān 2:14–15 but is not attributed to the Prophet there. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives several references for the *ḥadīth*, including Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.

revealed to them from the heaven. They asked Moses for something greater than that, for they said, “show us God openly”; so the thunderbolt seized them for their evildoing. They then took to themselves the [golden] calf after clear proofs had come to them; yet We pardoned that; and We bestowed upon Moses clear authority.

The verse includes two kinds of unseemly acts. The first was their asking to be shown [God] and the second was their worshiping the calf after clear signs had been made manifest to them. Their asking to be shown [God] was blameworthy because they impudently demanded it, and there was no excuse for this after miracles had come to them. Therefore they were not seeking the vision for instruction, nor as a means to confirm their faith, nor were they brought to that [point] by intense longing. This shows a lack of manners (*sū' adab*).

There is an allusion [in the reference] to those who are content to have the calf as their object of worship. While submitting themselves to it, how can they bear witness to the Real?

It is said that the innermost selves of the people were untouched by deeper knowledge and they therefore clung with their intellects to a limited thing (*maḥdūd*), allowing that to be their object of worship (*ma'būd*).

And we bestowed upon Moses clear authority: a manifest proof—indeed a light¹⁵⁵ that preserved him from declaring any likeness [to God] (*tamthīl*) or stripping [Him] of His attributes (*ta'ṭīl*).

The *clear authority* is actualization (*taḥṣīl*)¹⁵⁶ and declaring God incomparable (*tanzīh*), neither stripping God of His attributes (*ta'ṭīl*) nor comparing Him to His creation (*tashbih*).

It is said that the *clear authority* is the power to hear the [divine] speech (*al-khiṭāb*) without intermediary.

It is said that the *clear authority* belongs to this community in the future, and it is their abiding in the state of meeting [God]. In the tradition of the vision, [the Prophet] ﷺ said, “You will not be gathered together [in one group] in seeing Him.”¹⁵⁷

155 The translation follows the word “light” (*nūr*) found in MS K117, fol. 57a rather than *tafarrud* from the Basyūnī edition.

156 In his use of the word *taḥṣīl* here, al-Qushayrī seems to have in mind the acquisition of deeper knowledge of God through the spiritual faculties and not just the intellect. See also his use of this word in his commentary on Qurʾān 2:171.

157 The translation follows the Basyūnī edition, where the *ḥadīth* is written as *lā tuḍāmmūna* (or *taḍāmmūna*) *fi ru'yatihi*. MS K117, fol. 57b has a different version of the *ḥadīth*: *lā tuḍārrūna* (or *taḍārrūna*) *fi ru'yatihi* which can be translated as “You will not dispute with one another about seeing Him.” For a brief discussion of the variations and their possible meanings, see Lane’s entry on *d-r-r* (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2:1775–1776).

وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّورَ بِمِيثَاقِهِمْ وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوا فِي السَّبْتِ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿١٥٤﴾

[4:154] *And We raised above them the mount, by the covenant with them, and We said to them, “Enter the gate, bowing”; and We said to them, “Transgress not the Sabbath, and We took from them a firm covenant.*

The more signs were given to them outwardly, the more denial and rejection there was in their hearts. Receiving more communications did not benefit them, since the eyes of their hearts were not open to witnessing [these communications]. God most high said, “*But signs and warners do not avail a folk who will not believe*” [10:101].

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفْرِهِمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بَغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٥٥﴾

[4:155] *So, for their breaking their covenant and disbelieving in the signs of God, and slaying the prophets wrongfully, and for their saying, “Our hearts are covered up”—nay, but God sealed them for their disbelief; so they do not believe, except for a few.*

Its meaning is: Because they committed these prohibited acts (*li-irtikābihim hādhihi al-manāhī*) and because they were marked by acts that deserve punishment (*wa-li-itṭiṣāfihim bi-hādhihi al-majāzī*), We caused them to alight at the dwellings of disgrace (*aḥlalnāhum manāzila al-hawān*) and sent down upon them punishments of all kinds (*wa-anzalnā bihim min al-ʿuqūbati funūna al-alwān*).

It is said that the misfortune of their oppositional acts affected them cumulatively. One of the consequences of acting disobediently is being left to commit even more prohibited acts. By violating the covenant and not repenting, they were pulled toward disbelief in [God’s] signs. Then, because of the misfortune of this disbelief, they were left to themselves

Basyūnī adds a reference to yet another *ḥadīth* that occurs in al-Bukhārī and Muslim: “...you will see your Lord just as you see this moon.” ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives numerous sources for the *ḥadīth* including al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and al-Tirmidhī.

until they slew the prophets ﷺ wrongfully. Then, because of the misfortune of [these ever more shameful acts], they had the audacity to claim a keen ability to comprehend, saying “Our hearts are the vessels for all kinds of knowledge.”¹⁵⁸ God replied to them, “*but God sealed them for their disbelief.*” He hid the place of deeper knowledge (‘*irfān*) from them and they wandered about in their errors.

وَبِكْفَرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَنًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٥٦﴾

[4:156] *And for their disbelief, and their uttering against Mary a tremendous calumny.*

To transgress the limit is error, just as it is error to diminish or subtract from the truth. Some people slandered Mary and accused her of fornication. Others transgressed the limit in a terrible calumny, saying her son was the son of God. Both of these groups fell into error.

It is said that Mary ﷺ was a friend (*waliyya*) of God through whom two groups become miserable: those who exceed all bounds (*ahl al-ifrāt*) and those who fall short (*ahl al-tafrīt*).¹⁵⁹ This is also how it is with His friends—those who reject [the friends] suffer from their lack of respect for them and those who believe things about [the friends] that cannot be said of them suffer from their excessive adulation of them. This is something that most of the great ones have had to endure.

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَىٰ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَٰكِن شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا ﴿١٥٧﴾ بَل رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٥٨﴾

[4:157] *And for their saying, “We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the*

158 The phrase in this Qur’anic verse, *Our hearts are covered up* (*qulūbunā ghulf*), is explained in commentaries such as *Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās* as meaning “our hearts can absorb any kind of knowledge” (trans. Guezzou).

159 Al-Qushayrī is making a play on words by using two verbal nouns from the same Arabic root *f-r-t*.

Messenger of God.” And yet they did not slay him nor did they crucify him, but he was given the resemblance. And those who disagree concerning him are surely in doubt regarding him. They do not have any knowledge of him, only the pursuit of conjecture; and they did not slay him for certain.

[4:158] *Nay, God raised him up to Him. God is ever Mighty, Wise.*

It is said that God caused the one who slandered [Jesus] to resemble him, and he was killed and crucified in his place. There is a saying that one who digs a grave for his brother falls into it.

It is [also] said that Jesus ﷺ said, “Whoever agrees to have my resemblance cast upon him, so that he is killed in place of me will have the garden,” and one of his companions agreed. It is said that because [this companion] patiently bore the injury (*talaf*), he was not deprived of the recompense (*khalaf*) from God. God most high said, “Indeed We do not leave the reward of those of good deeds to go to waste” [18:30].

It is said that because this man, who was a companion of Jesus ﷺ, was without any imperfection in his lower self (*nafs*), he became [Jesus’s] friend in spirit (*rūh*). When Jesus ﷺ was raised up to the place of intimacy (*maḥall al-zulfa*), the spirit of this one who ransomed [Jesus] with his lower self was raised up to the place of nearness (*maḥall al-qurba*).

وَإِنَّ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ ۚ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ ۗ^ط
وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا ﴿١٥٩﴾

[4:159] *And there is not one of the people of the scripture but will assuredly believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them.*

Because He determined that there will be no protection (*amān*) granted to them at the time of despair, their faith (*īmān*) at that time will not benefit them. This tells us that what is taken into consideration [comes from] the protection (*āmān*) granted by the Real, not from the faith (*īmān*) of the servant.

فَيُظْلَمُ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبَاتٍ أُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ وَبِصَدِّهِمْ
عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَأَخَذَهُمُ الرَّبُّوْا وَقَدْ نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَأَكْلِهِمْ

﴿١٦٠﴾ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْبَطْلِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٦١﴾

[4:160] *And because of the evildoing of some of those of the Jews, We have forbidden them certain good things that were lawful for them, and because of their barring from God's way, many.*

[4:161] *And because of their taking usury when they had been forbidden it, and their consuming people's wealth through falsehood, and We have prepared for the disbelievers among them a painful chastisement.*

It is said that committing prohibited acts leads to the forbidding of what had been permitted. Whoever commits a prohibited act with his outward self is forbidden that which he used to find in his permitted states and the subtle kindnesses received in his innermost self.

لَكِنِ الرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَالْمُقِيمِينَ الصَّلَاةَ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ أُولَئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٦٢﴾

[4:162] *But those of them who are firmly rooted in knowledge, and the believers, believing in what has been revealed to you, and what was revealed before you, and those who observe the prayer; and pay the alms, and those who believe in God and the Last Day—to them We shall surely give a great wage.*

The one who is *firmly rooted in knowledge* (*‘ilm*) is not a blind follower in matters of proof (*dalīl*), just as he is not a blind follower in matters of judgment (*ḥukm*). Rather, he replaces [blind following] with reflective thought (*nazar*) to the point that there is no possibility of doubt in his intellectual understanding (*‘aql*).

It is said that the one who is *firmly rooted in knowledge* ascends from the limit of the study of demonstrative proof (*burhān*) and reaches the realities of clear evidence (*bayān*).

It is said that the one who is *firmly rooted in knowledge* is one whose knowledge is practiced to the degree that he benefits from knowledge that is hidden from others, as in the tradition, “Whoever practices what he knows—God grants knowledge of what he does not know.”¹⁶⁰

160 Neither Basyūnī or ‘Abd al-Rahmān give any references for this tradition.

[The phrase] *those who observe prayer* is in the accusative to indicate the laudative.¹⁶¹ Prayer is given distinction among the other acts of worship because it follows [the mention of] faith in most passages in the Qur'ān, and because God ﷻ gave the command for prayer directly to the Messenger ﷺ on the night of the *mi'rāj* without the intermediary of Gabriel ﷺ, and because of other reasons.

A great wage: The great wage is that which is over and above what the work deserves.

﴿ إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَى وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا ﴿١٦٣﴾

[4:163] *We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah, and the prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron, and Solomon, and We gave to David the inscribed Book.*

The singularity of the Prophet ﷺ among the prophets is in [the call to] believe in the singularity of [all of them] in distinction and merit. [God] singled out Noah based on what he deserved in station and singled out Our Messenger ﷺ based on what he deserved. They shared in being singled out because each illustrated [his] merit according to [his] station. One was without parallel among his kind in ten¹⁶² virtues, and the other was without parallel among his class in a thousand virtues. Both were singled out [by God] but one has ten virtues while the other has a thousand virtues.¹⁶³

﴿ وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا ﴿١٦٤﴾

[4:164] *And messengers We have told you of before, and messengers We have*

161 In other words, the grammatical form in this verse is used to emphasize the praiseworthy quality of prayer.

162 The translation follows the word *ashr* from MS K117, fol. 58a rather than the word *ghayr* found in the Basyūnī edition.

163 The last sentence in this paragraph has been added on the basis of MS K117, fol. 58a.

not told you of; and God spoke directly to Moses.

God's way (*sunna*) regarding his friends (*awliyā*) is to veil some and to make others known. This is also His way with the prophets ﷺ. He proclaims the names of some and refers to others in a general way. Belief is obligatory in all the prophets as a whole and individually, just as respect is obligatory for all of the friends as a whole and individually. Likewise, He veils some of the states of the servants and makes others apparent. He asks for purity and sincerity with regard to what He makes apparent to them. With regard to what He veils from them, He jealously protects their hearts from viewing these states as an entitlement that gives them special claim to the meanings of the realities He has singled out for them.

[His words] *and God spoke directly to Moses* tell of His selecting [Moses] to hear His speech without intermediary.

رُسُلًا مُّبَيِّنِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِيَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ
الرُّسُلِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٦٥﴾

[4:165] *messengers bearing good tidings and warning so that people might have no argument against God after the messengers. God is ever Mighty, Wise.* He informed created beings of the measure of [the messengers'] worth. He explained that He sent the messengers to them and that they should look to them alone for the gathering of their reward and to avoid what would make them deserving of punishment. [He explained] that created beings have no [other] way to the comfort they seek or the hurt they wish to avoid in the present or in the end.

So that people might have no argument against God after the messengers. God is ever Mighty, Wise: How could one who has need (*ḥāja*) of God, have an argument (*ḥujja*) against God? But God addressed them¹⁶⁴ in accordance with their understandings.

لَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَشْهَدُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ ۚ أَنْزَلَهُ وَبِعِلْمِهِ ۚ وَالْمَلَكُ يَشْهَدُونَ ۚ

164 The Basyūnī edition has a typographical error here. It should read *khātabahum*, as it does in MS K117, fol. 58a.

وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ﴿١٦٦﴾

[4:166] *But God bears witness with what He has revealed to you; He has revealed it through His knowledge; and the angels also bear witness; and God suffices as a Witness.*

In mentioning His knowledge of [the Prophet's] sincerity, God consoled him for the lies that created beings told about him. For this reason He said, "God suffices as a Witness."

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا ضَلًّا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٦٧﴾ إِنَّ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَظَلَمُوا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقًا
إِلَّا طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿١٦٨﴾

[4:167-169] *Surely those who disbelieve and bar [people] from the way of God, they have indeed gone far astray. Surely those who disbelieve and who have done wrong, it is not for God to forgive them, neither to guide them to any path, except for the path of hell, abiding, therein, forever; and for God that is an easy matter.*

He made their barring believers from following the truth the equivalent of their disbelief in God. [In equating these two] God most high treats the rights of His friends as seriously as He treats His own right. Then He said, *surely those who disbelieve and who have done wrong*. He made their wrongdoing (*zulm*) the same¹⁶⁵ as their disbelief (*kufr*) and attached to both of these the justly deserved abiding punishment. Even if wrongdoing is not like disbelief in deserving the threat of endless duration, the misfortune of it is that God may abandon those who do it until they succumb to disbelief.

يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمُ الرَّسُولُ بِالْحَقِّ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَمِنُوا
خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ وَإِن تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٧٠﴾

¹⁶⁵ The translation follows the word *shibh* from MS K117, fol. 58a rather than "way" (*sabil*) from the Basyūnī edition.

[4:170] *O people, the Messenger has now come to you with the truth from your Lord; so believe, it is better for you. And if you disbelieve, then surely to God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; and God is ever Knowing, Wise.*

He states that He *سُبْحَانَهُ* is not in need of them.¹⁶⁶ If they believe, they will have acquired good fortune for themselves (*fa-huḏūzu anfusihim iktasabūhā*). If they disbelieve, they will have drawn their afflictions upon themselves (*fa-balāyāhum li-anfusihim ijtalabūhā*). The Real *هُوَ* is beyond being described by the adornment¹⁶⁷ of anyone's consent (*li-wifāqi aḥadin*) or the deficiency of anyone's opposition (*li-khilāfi aḥadin*).

And if you disbelieve, then surely to God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth means that they may abandon the practice of servanthood in their actions, but they cannot abandon the reality of their being His servants as created beings. God most high said, “*There is none in the heavens and the earth but he comes to the Compassionate One as a servant*” [19:93].

يَأْهَلِ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ
 إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ
 وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةً أَنْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ
 إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٧١﴾

[4:171] *O people of the scripture, do not go to extremes, in your religion and do not say about God except the truth: the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His word which He cast to Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and do not say, “Three.” Refrain, it is better for you. Verily, God is but One God. Glory be to Him, that He should have a son! To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth. God suffices as a Guardian.*

Their going to extremes in their religion [refers to] their following their

166 The Basyūnī edition begins this passage with, “O people of the scripture,” but this does not appear in MS K117, fol. 58a. It has been omitted from the translation since the phrase occurs in the next verse rather than this one.

167 The word “ignorance” (*jahl*) occurring in Basyūnī’s edition is clearly a manuscript error. Basyūnī suggests “perfection” (*kamāl*) as the correct word. The translation follows MS K117, fol. 58a, which has the word *tajammul*.

own opinion, since they described what they worshiped in the likeness of created beings. [This] was also contradictory, since they said one is three and three is one. To persevere in what is false only increases the falseness.

لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ
 وَمَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٧٢﴾
 فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ
 مِّن فَضْلِهِ ﴿١٧٣﴾

[4:172] *The Messiah would never disdain to be a servant of God, neither would the angels who are nigh. Whoever disdains to worship Him, and waxes proud, He will assuredly muster them to Him, all of them.*

[4:173] *As for those who believed, who did righteous deeds, He will pay them their wages in full, and He will give them more of His bounty;*

How can they disdain the worship of Him when one's honor and dignity (*sharaf*) [comes] through worship? How can they be too proud to humble themselves when one's ruin (*talaf*) [comes] from being too proud? Because of this matter, the first words the Messiah spoke were, *Lo! I am God's servant* [19:30]. Servants become beautiful in their humility toward [their] masters. This is something well known and without doubt.

[The phrase] *neither would the angels who are nigh* does not imply that [the angels] are superior to the Messiah. Rather, [God] was addressing them in accordance with their beliefs—they believed in the superiority of the angels over human beings.¹⁶⁸

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْتَنْكَفُوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَلَا يَجِدُونَ
 لَهُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٧٣﴾

[4:173] *and as for those who disdain and are too proud, He will chastise them with a painful chastisement, and they shall not find for themselves, besides God, any friend or helper.*

168 As stated in *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, they claimed that the angels are gods or daughters of God (trans. Hamza).

The *painful chastisement* is that they will never attain to the communion [of lovers] after they have come to know His majesty. When what they know becomes indisputable, they will know that they have been left behind. Their sorrow on that day for what has slipped away from them will be their most intense punishment.

يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ

[4:174] *O people, a proof has now come to you from your Lord,*

The proof (*burhān*) is that which appeared in their innermost selves from the testimonial witnessings (*shawāhid*) of the Real.

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٧٤﴾

[4:174] *and We have revealed to you a manifest light.*

It is His speech (*khiṭāb*)—they obtain insight (*istibṣār*) through the pondering of its meanings.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَعْتَصَمُوا بِهِ
فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِي رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ

[4:175] *As for those who believe in God, and hold fast to Him, He will surely admit them to mercy from Him, and bounty, and He will guide them to Him by a straight path.*

He will surely admit them (sayudkhilluhum) to mercy from Him: the particle indicating the future (the letter *sīn*) indicates that He will preserve their faith for them at the time of their deaths, just as He has honored them with deeper knowledge and faith in the here and now.

وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمًا ﴿١٧٥﴾

[4:175] *and He will guide them to Him by a straight path.*

This guidance is His honoring them [as they] came to know that this

guidance is a bounty from God for them, not because they deserve it, and not because of their seeking, effort, toil or pains.

يَسْتَفْتُونَكَ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِي الْكَلِيلَةِ إِنِ امْرُؤٌ هَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَهُ أُخْتٌ فَلَهَا نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ وَهُوَ يَرِثُهَا إِنْ لَمْ يَكُن لَهَا وَلَدٌ فَإِنْ كَانَتَا أُثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُمَا الشُّلْثَانِ مِمَّا تَرَكَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا إِخْوَةً رَجَالًا وَنِسَاءً فَلِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثِيَيْنِ ۗ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَضِلُّوا
وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾

[4:176] *They will ask you for a pronouncement. Say: "God pronounces to you concerning indirect heirs. If a man perishes, having no children, but he has a sister, hers is half of what he leaves, and he is her heir, if she has no children. If there be two sisters, theirs are two-thirds of what he leaves; if there be siblings, men and women, then the male shall receive the equivalent of the portion of two females. God makes clear to you, lest you go astray; and God has knowledge of all things."*

He cut short their disputes regarding the apportioning of inheritance by proclaiming the formula determined for them, for truly wealth is an object of desire for humankind, and the lower selves (*nufūs*) are prone to greed. If the appropriate amounts were not decisively determined, doubts would arise from the use of independent judgment (*ijtihad*), and this would lead to contention and mutual attacks. This summation [of the portions of inheritance] definitively establishes the inheritance amounts for the disputants. His designation of inheritance rights for women—even when their closest relatives do not defend them—shows consideration for their weaker position. [On the other hand], the preference given to males over them is because of the burdens [they have been given] in providing and seeking income, and in supporting [women].

[To be continued *In sha' Allāh*]

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Qurʾān Index

Al-Qushayrī comments on nearly every Qurʾānic verse in his *Latāʾif al-Ishārāt*. The Qurʾān index includes only the verses he cites out of sequence and the verses cited in the Translator's Introduction.

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Note that in most cases there are several English words to define each Arabic word, and in the majority of cases, readers will find additional references under the English words. For example, under kh-dh-l / *khidhlān* (disappointment; forsaking; abandonment), readers will find additional entries under each of the English words: disappointment; forsaking/forsakenness; and abandonment.

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Kashf al-asrār, by Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī
Subtle Allusions (Latāʿif al-ishārāt), by Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī

COLOPHON



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