

Ayyuha 'l-Walad*
By
Abu Hamad Mohamad ibn Mohammed al-Ghazâlî**

I. In the name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful :

Praise unto Allah the Lord of the worlds and the good issue to the pious, and blessing upon his prophet Mohammed and his family all of them. Know that a certain advanced student attended zealously the service of the shaykh, the Imam, the ornament of religion, the proof of Islam, Abi Hamid Mohammed bin Mohammed al-Ghazali, the mercy of Allah upon him, and labored in the acquisition and reading of science, until he had assembled the minutiae of the sciences and had perfected the virtues of the soul; then on a certain day he considered the condition of his soul and it occurred to him and he said, "Truly I have read varieties of sciences, and have spent my life in learning and assembling them, and now I ought to know which kind will benefit me tomorrow and cheer me in my grave, and which will not benefit me, so that I abandon it, as the Apostle of Allah, Allah bless and give him peace, said, 'O Allah, I seek refuge in thee from knowledge which does not benefit'." And this idea persisted with him until he wrote to the honorable shaykh, the proof of Islam, Mohammed al-Ghazali, the mercy of Allah upon him, seeking a "fetwa"¹ and asked him questions and desired from him advice and a supplication [to read in its appointed times.] And he said, "Even though the writings of the shaykh like *Ihya'* and other works contain the answer to my questions, yet my purpose is that the shaykh should write *my* requirement in a leaflet to remain with me the length of my life, and I will do according to what is in them all my days, if Allah the Exalted wills." So the shaykh, the mercy of Allah the Exalted (upon him), wrote in this epistle:

II. In the name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful: Know, O Youth, beloved and precious,—(Allah) prolong thy days in his obedience, and lead thee in the path of his loved ones—that the open letter of advice is written from the mine of the Message (of the apostle), Allah bless him and give him peace; if there has reached you advice from it, what need have you of my advice? and if not, then tell me what you have attained in these past years.

III. O youth, from all that the Apostle of Allah, blessing and peace upon him, has advised his Congregation, is his saying, Allah bless him and give him peace : "The sign of Allah's withdrawal from His worshipper is his busying himself in what does not concern him; and if a man has passed an hour of his life in other than that for which he was created, it is certainly fitting that his grief should be prolonged [in the day of resurrection], and whoever has reached (the age of) forty, and his good does not surpass his evil, let him prepare for the fire"; and in this advice there is a sufficiency for the people of the world [knowledge].

* Scanned from George Henry Scherer, *Al-Ghazali's Ayyuha 'L-Walad*, A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty in candidacy for the degree of doctor of philosophy, Department of Old Testament Literature and Interpretation, The University of Chicago, Beirut (Syria): The American Press, 1933, pp. 51-77. The dissertation contains the original text, translation and commentary by Scherer with a great many footnotes, a translation of Ghazali's "The Wonders of the Heart" and a bibliography. In what follows I attach only a very limited number of Scherer's footnotes. [Available at UT in the PCL: 061 C4360 V.1]] A more recent bilingual edition is Tobias Mayer, *Al-Ghazali: Letter to a Disciple*, Islamic Texts Society, 2005, 130pp. Another version of the book is on-line at: <http://members.tripod.com/sufism/sufism/ghazali/rightword-8.htm>

** al-Ghazali (450-505AH/1058-1111CE), born and died in Tus, in the Khorasan province of northern Persia.

¹ A "fetwa" is a formal legal opinion given by an official interpreter of the law in answer to a question laid before him.

IV. O youth, the advice is easy, the difficulty is accepting it, since it is bitter in the taste of the follower of passionate desire, because prohibited things are cherished in their hearts; especially whoever is seeking formal knowledge, and is busying himself about excellence of [science and] the improvement of the soul [and jurisprudence] and the praises of the present world, for he accounts that knowledge alone is a means in which will be his safety and his salvation, and that he can get along without work; and this is the belief of the philosophers. Praise the Great God! he does not know this much, that when he acquires knowledge, if he does not work according to it, the indictment against him is certain. As the Apostle of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, said "The person most severely punished in the day of resurrection is the learned one whom Allah the Exalted does not benefit by reason of his knowledge." It is told that Junayd, the mercy of Allah (upon him), appeared in a dream after his death, and it was said to him, "What is the news, O Abu Qâsim ?" He replied, "Perished are the explanations, and vanished are the allusions, nothing benefited us except the prostrations which we made in the middle of the night."

V. O youth, do not be bankrupt of works, nor empty of states; be assured that knowledge alone does not strengthen the hand : a parable of this is, if a man in the wilderness wore ten Indian swords and other weapons, and the man were brave and a warrior, and a terrifying lion attacked him, what do you think ? would the weapons ward off the evil from him without his using them and thrusting with them? it is perfectly obvious that they would not ward (it) off, except by activity. Just so, though a man read a hundred thousand scientific questions and understood them or learned them they do not benefit him except by working. And similarly, if a man had fever and jaundice, his cure is in oxymel and barley broth, and he will not regain his health except in their use.

Though thou measure two thousand rattles of wine,
Unless thou drink, no thrill is thine.

Knowledge is the tree, and working is its fruit; and though you studied a hundred years and collected a thousand books, you would not be prepared for the mercy of Allah the Exalted, except by working, as Allah the Exalted said,

"And verily nothing (shall be reckoned) to man but that for which he made effort."

And "whoever hopes to meet his Lord let him work a righteous work," "a recompense according to what they have done" "a recompense according to what they have earned."

"As for those who believed and do right things, there was for them the gardens of Paradise as an abode."

["but others have come after them, they have neglected prayer and have followed lusts; and they shall find evil,] except whoever turns and believes and does a good work; [these shall enter the garden and be wronged in nothing".]

And what do you say as to this tradition : Islam is built upon five (pillars) : the witness that there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the Apostle of Allah; and the instituting of prayers; and the giving of alms; and the fast of Ramadan; and the pilgrimage to Mecca for everyone who is able to make the journey. And faith is confession with the tongue and belief with the heart and working with the members of the body; and the value of works is greater than can be reckoned; and if the worshipper attains the Garden by the favor of Allah the Exalted and his grace, yet that is after he prepares by his obedience and his worship;

"for the mercy of Allah is near to the doer of good deeds."

And if it should be said also he attains it by faith alone, we reply, Yes, but when does he attain? how many a difficult activity meets him before he arrives! the first of these activities is the activity of faith: will he be escape plunder (of his faith) or not? and when he arrives he will be a bankrupt {sinner} . As Hasan said: Allah the Exalted says to his worshippers on the day of resurrection, "[Oh my worshippers,] enter into the Garden by my mercy and partake of it by [the measure of] your works."

VI. O youth, so long as you do not work, you do not find [a reward]. It is told that a man of the children of Israel worshipped Allah the Exalted seventy years; and Allah the Exalted desired to display him to the angels, so Allah sent an angel to him to inform him that with that worship, he was not worthy through it of the Garden; and when he informed him, the worshipper replied, "We are created for worship, and we can but worship him." And when the angel returned he said, "O my God, thou knowest best what he said." And Allah the Exalted said, "Since he did not withdraw {[from worshipping us]} so we with grace will not withdraw from him. Bear witness, oh my angels, that I have forgiven him." The Apostle of Allah said, Allah bless him and grant him peace, "Reckon before you are reckoned with, and weigh before you are weighed." And 'Ali, the pleasure of Allah the Exalted upon him, said, "Whoever thinks that without exertion he shall reach the garden he is a (vain) desirer; and whoever thinks that by great exertion he shall arrive, he is an acquirer." And Hasan said, the mercy of Allah upon him, "Seeking the garden without working is a serious fault." He also said, "The sign of the real thing is in giving up regard for the work, not in giving up the work." And the Prophet said, upon him be blessing and peace, "The shrewd man is whoever judges himself, and works for what is after death, and the stupid man is the one whose soul follows its passionate desires, and (vainly) longs for Allah the Exalted."

VII. O youth, how many nights you have remained awake repeating science and poring over books and have denied yourself sleep ! I do not know what the purpose of it was. If it was attaining worldly ends and securing its vanities and acquiring its dignities and surpassing your con-temporaries, and such like,² woe to you, and again woe; but if your purpose in it was the vitalizing of the Law of the Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the training of your character, and breaking the soul commanding to evil, then blessed are you and again blessed. and so he spoke truly who said:

Wakefulness of eyes for other than thine own face is no gain
And weeping of eyes for other than thine own loss is all vain.

VIII. O youth, live as you will, you are mortal! and love what you will, you will leave it! and do what you will, you will be rewarded accordingly!

IX. O youth, so what have you gained from the acquisition of the science of dogmatic theology and from disputation and medicine and "diwans" and poetry and astronomy and prosody and syntax and morphology except squandering life? By the splendor of the Possessor of splendor, assuredly I saw in the gospel of 'Isa, upon our prophet and upon him be peace, (that) he said : "From the moment in which the dead is placed on the bier until he is placed on the edge of the tomb Allah the Exalted in His majesty will ask him forty questions; the first is, he will say : 'O my servant, you have purified (yourself in) the sight of mankind for years and not for one hour have you purified (yourself in) my

² Abu Hurairah says, "The second (person to receive sentence on the day of the resurrection), a man who shall have obtained knowledge and instructed other, and read the Koran. He will be brought into the presence of God, be sensible of and confess: and God will say, "What didst thou do in gratitude therefore?" He will reply, 'I learned knowledge and taught others and I read the Koran to please thee.' Then God will say, 'Thou liest, but thou studieth that people might call thee learned, and thou didst read the Koran for the name of the thing.' Then God will order him to be dragged upon his face, and precipitated into hell." Quoted in Mishcat, v. I, p.56. . . .

sight, while every day I look in your heart; so I say, as for what you do for another, while you are encompassed by my good gifts, are you not deaf, unheeding ?"

X. O youth, knowledge without work is insanity and work without knowledge is vanity (lit., cannot be). Know that any science which does not remove you today far from apostasy, and does not carry you to obedience, will not remove you tomorrow from the fire of Hell, and if you do not work today and do not amend the past days, you will say tomorrow in the day of resurrection, "Send us back, we will do good work other than what we were accustomed to do"; and it will be said to you, O thou stupid one, thence thou comest!

XI. O youth, let energy be in the spirit, defeat in the soul and, death in the body; for your abode is the grave and the people of the graves are awaiting you at every moment; take care, beware lest you arrive without provision for the journey. And Au Bakr the Veracious said, the pleasure of Allah upon him, "these bodies are a cage for birds {or} a stable for animals, so consider for yourself of which you are; if you are of the lofty birds, then when you hear the roll [of the drum], return, fly, climbing upward until you sit in the highest towers of the Garden. As said the Apostle of Allah, upon him blessing and peace, "the throne of the Compassionate shook at the death of Said bin Mu'adh, the pleasure of Allah upon him." And seek refuge in Allah if you are of the beasts, as Allah the Exalted said, "These are like the cattle, but they go more astray." So do not consider yourself safe from removal from a corner of the court (of Paradise) to the depths of the fire.

It is told that Hasan el-Basri, Allah the Exalted have mercy {upon him}, was given a drink of cold water, and when he took the cup he swooned and the cup fell from his hand; and when he recovered he was asked, "What happened, O Abu Sa'id ?" He replied, "I thought of the longing of the people of the fire when they say to the people of the Garden, Pour upon us from the water [{or from what Allah has bestowed upon you ;} they replied that Allah had forbidden these for the infidels]."

XII. O youth, if knowledge alone were sufficient for you and you did not need work besides, then would his summons—Is there any who asks? and, is there any who seeks forgiveness? and, is there any who repents?—be lost without profit. It is related that a group of the Companions, the pleasure of Allah the Exalted upon them all, mentioned 'Abdallah bin 'Umar, the pleasure of Allah upon him, before the Apostle of Allah, upon whom be blessing and peace. He said, "An excellent man he, if only he would pray at night." And he said, upon him blessing and peace, to a man from his Companions, "Oh N. N., do not increase sleep at night, for much sleep leaves its owner poor in the day of resurrection."

XIII. O youth; "and awake at night to pray; as a supererogatory service] for you"—a command; "and at dawn they were seeking pardon" —a praise; "and they who seek pardon at daybreak"—a remembrance. The Prophet, Allah the Exalted bless him and give him peace, said, "Three voices Allah the Exalted loves: the voice of the cocks and the voice of one who reads the Qur'an, and the voice of those seeking forgiveness in the early morning." And Sufyân al-Thowri said : "Allah the Exalted created a breeze which blows at the time of the dawn, which carries the invocations and the petitions for forgiveness to the Supreme King." And he also said, "When it is the beginning of night the herald cried from below the throne, Up! let the worshippers arise! and they arise and pray what Allah the Exalted wills; then the herald cries at midnight, Up! let the fully devoted arise! and they arise and pray till dawn; and when it is dawn, the herald cries, Up! let those asking forgiveness arise! and they arise and seek forgiveness; and when the day breaks, the herald cries, Up! let the heedless arise! and they arise from their beds as the dead are resuscitated from their graves."

XIV. O youth, it is told in the testaments of Lugmân the Wise to his son that he said, O my son, let not the cock be more clever than you—he cries at the time of dawn while you are sleeping! " Assuredly he did well who said :

The pigeon cooed in the darkness of night
 On a branch, in weakness, while I was asleep.
 I lied; for I swear that were I (His) loved
 Not the pigeons alone, but I too would weep;
 I think I am lovesick, excessively lovelorn
 For my Lord—but I weep not, though animals weep!

XV. O youth, the substance of knowledge is to learn what are obedience and worship. Know that obedience and worship are conforming to the law in commands and prohibitions in word and deed—that is, whatever you say and do and omit in word and deed must be in emulation of the law-giver. Thus, if you fast on the feast day and the days of "tashriq" you are rebellious; or (if you) pray in a garment taken by violence, though it has the form of worship, yet you sin.

XVI. O youth, so it is essential that your word and deed be in agreement with the law, since knowledge and work without emulation of the law-giver is a delusion. And it is essential that you be not deceived by the ecstatic utterances and vehement cries of the Sufis, because walking this road is by struggle and cutting off the lusts of the soul and killing its desires with the sword of discipline, not by vehement cries and idle words. And know that the loosened tongue and the veiled heart filled with negligence and lust, is the sign of misery, so that if you do not kill the fleshly soul with sincere struggle, you will not quicken your heart by the lights of knowledge.

And know that certain of your questions which you asked me cannot be answered in writing and in speech; if you attain that state you will know what they are; and if not, knowing them is impossible; for they are known by experience, and whatever is known by experience cannot be described in words, as the sweetness of the sweet or the bitterness of the bitter cannot be known except by experience. As it is said that an impotent man wrote to a friend. "Tell me about the delight of sexual intercourse, how it is." And he wrote in answer, "Oh N. N., I have accounted you only impotent, but now I know that you are both impotent and foolish; assuredly this delight is known by experience; if you attain it you will know it, and if not, it cannot be described in writing or speech."

XVII. O youth, certain of your questions are of this sort; but the portion which can be answered we have mentioned in *The Vitalizing of the Sciences of Religion* and elsewhere [in what we have written, with its explanation, so seek it there]; and we will mention here a portion of them and point them out. And we say : [for the traveler in the way of truth seven things are necessary] the *first* is, a true conviction that has in it no heresy; and the *second*, a sincere repentance, after which you do not return to sin; and *third*, the satisfaction of adversaries, so that there shall remain to no one a claim against you; and the *fourth*, the attainment of a knowledge of the laws, sufficient that by it you may perform the commands of Allah the Exalted; then of the sciences of future things, what is essential for salvation [and more than this is not obligatory; and this saying will be understood by a story . It is told that Shibli, the mercy of Allah, upon him, said : "I served four hundred professors and read four thousand traditions; then I selected from them a single tradition by which I worked, and left off the others; for I meditated and found my salvation and safety in it, and all the knowledge of the ancients and the moderns was included in it, and I was content with it; and that was, that the Apostle, Allah bless him and give him peace, said to one of his Companions, "Work for your world according to your position in it, and work for your other world according to the length of your

remaining in it, and work for Allah the Exalted according to your need of Him, and work for the fire according to your endurance it."

XVIII. O youth, if you know {[work by]} this tradition there is no need of further knowledge; and think upon another story, namely, that Haim al-Asamm was among the friends of Shaqiq al-Balkhi, the mercy of Allah upon them both. [It occurred to him] and he (Shaqiq) asked him one day, and said: "These thirty years you have associated with me—what have you gained in them?" He replied, "I have gained eight benefits from science and they suffice me with it, because I hope for my salvation and safety in them." And Shaqiq said, "What are they?" And Hatim replied :

"The *first benefit* is that I observed mankind and saw that everyone had a loved one and one passionately desired whom he loved and longed for; and certain of those loved accompanied him to the illness of death and others to the border of the tomb, then each returned and left him alone and lonely, and there did not enter with him into the tomb and comfort him in it {[one of them; so I considered and said, the most excellent beloved of man is what enters into the tomb and comforts him in it]}; and I found it to be nothing else than good works, so I took this as my beloved, to be] a light for me in my grave, and to comfort me in it and not leave me alone.

"The *second benefit* is that I saw that mankind were following their lusts and hastening towards the desires of their souls, and I meditated on the saying of the Exalted—"But as for whoever has feared the majesty of his Lord, and has refrained his soul from lust, truly the Garden shall be his dwelling place." And I was convinced that the Qur'an was sincere truth and so I hastened to deny my soul and hurried to combat it and refuse it its passionate desires so that it become trained to obedience to Allah the Exalted, and it became tractable.

"And the *third benefit* is that I saw that everyone of the people struggled to collect the vanities of the world, then he seized them, closing his hand upon them. So I reflected upon the saying of the Exalted, "What is with you vanishes, but what is with Allah abides." So I gave freely my worldly possessions for the face of Allah the Exalted and distributed them among the poor to be a treasure for me with Allah the Exalted.

"The *fourth benefit* is that I saw that certain of mankind thought their honor and their glory to be in the multitude of their family and their kinsfolk and they were beguiled by them, while others considered this to be in their wealth of riches and the multitude of children [and property] and they boasted [of this]; and a portion reckoned glory [and honor] to consist in seizing the riches of people by violence and oppressing them and shedding their blood; and a section believed that it lay in squandering riches and in dissipating them and in prodigality. And I meditated upon the saying of the Exalted, "The most worthy of you in the sight of Allah is he who fears him most." So I chose reverent fear and was convinced that the Qur'an is sincere truth and their thoughts and reckonings were empty and fleeting.

"The *fifth benefit* is that I saw that certain of the people censured one another and slandered one another and I saw that this arose from envy in the matter of riches and rank and knowledge, and I meditated upon the saying of the Exalted: "It is we who divide their substance among them in this world's life." And I knew that the division was from Allah the Exalted [in eternity, so I did not envy anyone and I was satisfied with the distribution of Allah the Exalted].

"The *sixth benefit* is that I saw the people treat one another with enmity for a motive or purpose; and so I meditated upon the saying of the Exalted: "Truly Satan is your enemy; for an enemy then hold him." And so I knew that enmity was not permissible to any other than Satan.

"The *seventh benefit* is that I saw that everyone struggled energetically and endeavored excessively to seek provisions and a means of living, from which he fell into doubt and forbidden things and debased himself and diminished his worth. And I meditated upon the saying of the Exalted: "There is no moving thing on earth whose nourishment dependeth not upon Allah." And so I knew that my provision depended on Allah and he had guaranteed it, so I busied myself in worshipping him, and cut off my covetousness of all else than He.

"The *eighth benefit* is that I saw that everyone relied on some created thing, some on the dinar and dirhem³, some on {[wealth and]} property, some on trade and craft, and some on a similar created thing. And I meditated upon the saying of the Exalted: "Truly whosoever putteth his trust in Allah, He will be sufficient. Truly Allah will attain his purpose. He has made for everything a fixed period." So I relied upon Allah and he is my sufficiency and an excellent guardian.

And Shaiq said, "Allah grant you success: [O Hatim verily I have considered the Taurah and the Evangel and the Psalms and the Qur'an and I have found that the four books turn upon these eight benefits, and whoever works according to them is working according to these four books.]"

XIX. O youth, you have perceived from these two words that you are not in need of multiplying knowledge, and now I will show you what is obligatory for the traveler in the path of truth. Know that it is indispensable for the traveler to have a shaykh as guide and tutor, to expel from him the evil qualities by his training and to replace them with an excellent character; and the meaning of training resembles {[the act of]} the plowman who digs out the thorns and removes the wild plants [from among the sown] to stimulate its growth and make it thrive perfectly, [for Allah the Exalted sent to his worshipper his Apostle for guidance to his path and when he, upon him peace, departed from the world he left behind him the Caliphs in his place, in order that they should guide mankind to Allah, because of this function]. And it is necessary for the traveler to have a shaykh to train him. and guide him to the path of Allah. And the sign of the shaykh who is fitted to be the substitute for the Prophet, upon him be blessing and peace, is that he be learned—not that every learned one is fitted for it; and I will show you certain indications in a general way so that not every one shall pretend he is a learned guide. And we say, one who removes himself far from love of the world and love of rank, and has succeeded a discerning person who traces his successship to the Lord of the apostles, and has excelled in disciplining himself in scarcity of food and sleep and speech and in abundance of prayer and alms and fasting, and who, in following the discerning shaykh, is making the good qualities of character his way of life, such as endurance and thanksgiving and trustfulness and conviction and generosity and contentment and tranquility of soul and moderation and humility and knowledge and veracity and modesty and trustworthiness and gravity and quietness and staidness and similar traits; and then he is light from the lights of the Prophet, upon him be blessing and' peace, and he is worthy to be imitated; but the presence of such as he is rare, more precious than red sulphur. And whomever fortune aids to find a shaykh such as we have mentioned, and the shaykh accepts him, he must honor him outwardly and inwardly.

Now outward honor is that he should not dispute with him and not labor in argumentation with him [in every question even if he knows his (the shaykh's) mistake, and should not put down his prayer carpet before him except at the time of the instituting of prayer, and when he finishes should lift it up]} and should not multiply the supererogatory prayers in

³ The dinar was the standard gold coin and the dirham the standard silver coin of the Arabs, whose value varied from time to time. The use of the two together is roughly the equivalent of the modern American expression "the Almighty Dollar", or the more classical expression "gold and silver."

his presence, and should do what the shaykh commands him according to his capacity and his ability,

But inner honor is that all he hears and accepts from him outwardly he should not deny inwardly, neither in deed nor in word, lest he be branded with hypocrisy; and if this be not possible, that he should desert his companionship until his inner life agrees with his outer; and he should guard against association with the evil man so that he may curtail the province of the Satans of the "jinn" and mankind from the court of his heart, and may be purified from the stain of Satanic filth; and at all events he will prefer poverty more than wealth.

Then know that becoming a Sufi has two characteristics: uprightness with Allah the Exalted, and quietness with mankind; and whoever is upright, and improves his character among the people, and treats them with forbearance, he is a Sufi. And uprightness is that he offer the pleasures of his soul as a ransom for the sake of his soul; and goodness of conduct among men is that you do not burden people according to your own desire, but burden yourself according to their desire so long as they do not violate the sacred law.

Then you asked me about devotion; it comprises three things; first, the careful observance of the command of the sacred law; second, satisfaction with decree and fate and the lot of Allah the Exalted; and third, forsaking pleasing yourself in order to seek the pleasure of Allah the Exalted.

And you asked me about trust: it is that you seek to fortify your belief in Allah the Exalted as to what he has promised; that is, that you believe that what he has fated for you will come to you without fail, although anyone in the world endeavors to prevent it; and what is not written for you, you shall not attain, though all the world help you.

And you asked me about sincerity: it is that all your works be done for Allah the Exalted, your heart not resting content with the praise of people nor despairing with their censure. Know that hypocrisy is born from exalting mankind and the cure is that you see them forced to labor under the decree (of Allah)⁴ and reckon them like inanimate objects in their inability to attain contentment and misery, in order to escape from hypocrisy in their sight; and as long as you reckon them as possessing power and free will, hypocrisy will not be far from you.

XX. O youth, the remainder of your questions—a portion are covered in my writings, so seek them there; and setting down others in writing is forbidden: work by what you know, there will be revealed to you what you do not know.⁵

XXI. O youth, after today ask me what is obscure for you (only) by the tongue of the heart. The saying of the Exalted, "and had they waited patiently until you came forth to them, it had been better for them." And accept the admonition of Khidr, upon our Prophet and upon him be blessing and peace, "And do not ask me about anything until I mention it unto you." And do not be in a hurry to reach the time, when it shall be revealed to you. And have you seen, "I will show you my signs so do not be in a hurry." So do not ask me before the time. And be certain that you will not reach (that time) except by traveling. "Have they not traveled through the earth, and seen?"

⁴ Two interpretations are possible here, either, see them forced to labor under the decree of Allah; or, see them laughing-stocks under the decree of Allah. . . .

⁵ When Dawud Ta'I had acquired learning and become a famous authority, he went to Abu Hanifah and said to him: "What shall I do now?" Abu Hanifah replied: "Practice what you have learned, for theory without practice is like a body without a spirit." Hujwiri's *Kashf al-Mahjûb*, p. 95.

XXII. O youth, by Allah, if you travel, you shall see the wonders in every station. Give your spirit unsparingly, for the core of this matter is in applying your spirit abundantly; as said Dhu 'l-Nun al Musri, the mercy of Allah, to one of the students, "If you are able to give your spirit without reserve, come; and if not, then do not busy yourself with the idle practices of Mysticism."

XXIII. O youth, verily I admonish you in eight things; receive them from me lest your knowledge become your adversary in the day of resurrection. Perform four of them and avoid four of them. *These you are to avoid* are, *first*, do not argue with any one in any matter, as far as you are able, for in this is great mischief, and its evil is greater than its benefit, since it is the source of every blameworthy quality: such as hypocrisy and envy and pride and malice and enmity and boasting and other such. Of course, if there arises a question between you and an individual or group and it is your purpose in it that the truth should appear and not be lost, discussion is permissible. But there are two signs of such a desire, first that it makes no difference whether the truth is revealed by your tongue or the tongue of another; and second, that discussion in private is preferred by you rather than in public.

And listen, for here I call your attention to a helpful point: know that the question about obscure points is the presenting of the disease of the heart to a physician, and its answer is the attempt to cure his disease. And know that the ignorant are diseased in their hearts and the learned are the doctors, and the partially learned cannot perfect the treatment; and the perfectly learned does not treat every sick person, but every one who will, he hopes, accept the treatment and the cure. And if the weakness is chronic or fatal, (and) incurable, then he will not labor to give medicine, for this is a waste of time.

Then know that the *sickness of ignorance is of four sorts*, one curable and the others incurable. Of these which cannot be cured, [the *first*] is one whose question or objection arises from envy and hate, [and envy cannot be cured for it is a chronic weakness] and every time you answer him with the best or clearest or plainest answer, that only increases his rage and envy. And the way is not to attempt an answer.

One hopes for the removal of every enmity
Except enmity arising from envy.

So you must depart from him and leave him with his disease. Allah the Exalted said, "Withdraw from whoever turns away from our warning and desires nothing except the present life." And the envious, both in all he says and in all he does, kindles [a fire] in the sowing of his deed: as the Prophet said, Allah bless him and grant him peace, "Envy eats up excellences as fire eats up wood."

The *second*, whose weakness arises from stupidity, and he also is incurable. As 'Isa⁶ said, upon him be peace, "Indeed I did not fail in bringing the dead to life, but I failed in curing the stupid." And he is the man who has busied himself in seeking knowledge a short time and has learned something of the sciences of the intellect and of the sacred law, and so he asks questions and raises objections in his stupidity before the very learned one who has spent his life in the sciences of the intellect and the sacred law, and so this very stupid fellow does not know, And thinks that what is obscure to him is also obscure to the highly learned; and since he does not think this much, his question arises from stupidity, and you must not attempt to answer him.

⁶ The Moslem world knows Jesus under the name of 'Isa. In the Qur'an he is called 'Isa, 'Isa son of Miriam, and the Messiah. He is also described as the Word of God (4:169), a Spirit of God (4:170; 19:31), Prophet (19:31), Illustrious in this World and the Next (3:40), and One of those who have near access to God (3:40).

And the *third* is one who is seeking guidance and whatever he does not understand of the speech of the great ones, he lays to the defects of his own understanding and his question is in order to seek benefit; but he is dull and cannot arrive at the truth of things. You must not attempt to answer him also, as the Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, said, "We, the company of the prophets have been commanded that we speak to the people according to their understanding."

But the sickness which is curable is that of the intelligent and understanding seeker of guidance, who is not overcome with envy and anger and the love of worldly vanities and wealth and honor, but is seeking the straight road; and his questions and objections do not arise from envy and a desire to cause trouble and to make trial. And he is curable, and it is permitted to attempt to answer him—nay, it is necessary.

And the *second thing to avoid* is to guard against and shun becoming a preacher and warner, since its mischief is much unless you practice what you preach first and then preach it to the people; and consider what was said to 'Isa, upon him be peace, "O Son of Miriam, preach to yourself, and when you have preached to yourself, then preach to others; and otherwise, be ashamed before your Lord." And if you are impelled to try this work, then guard against two conditions: the first is affectation in speech in explanations and allusions and vehement cries and versification and poetry because Allah the Exalted hates pretention, and the person pretentious beyond bounds gives evidence of inner confusion and a heedless heart. And the significance of warning is that the worshipper remember the fire of the future (world) so that he confine himself to the service of the Creator, and that he consider his past life which he dissipated in what did not concern him, and that he consider what is before him of obstacles to the security of faith at the end (of life) and what will be, his condition in the grasp of the angel of death and will he be able to reply to Munkar and Nak'ir and that he be concerned with his condition in the resurrection and its stations, and will he pass across the bridge safely or fall into the pit; and {the memory of} these things will remain in his heart and disturb his tranquility; and stirring up these fires and lamenting over these afflictions is called "warning"; and giving notice to mankind and calling their attention to these things and warning them about shortcomings and omissions and causing them to see the defects of their souls, so that the heat of these fires touch the people of the assembly, and these afflictions make them impatient to rectify the past years according to their ability, and they feel regret over the days passed in other than obedience to Allah the Exalted—all this carried out in this way is called "preaching".

It is as though you saw that a torrent was rushing suddenly upon the house of someone and he and his family were in it and you cried, "Danger, danger, flee from the flood"—And would your heart in such circumstances crave to give your message to the master of the house with pretentious explanations and witticisms and allusions? Certainly not at all. And so is the condition of the preacher and he must avoid such things.

And the *second condition (to avoid)* is that your concern in preaching be not that mankind become wrought up in your assembly and show excitement and tear their clothes, so that it be said "What an assembly this was": for all this is an inclination to the things of the world, [and is born from heedlessness; but your purpose and concern must be to call the people from this world] } to the future world and from apostasy to obedience, and from cupidity to abstinence, and from stinginess to generosity, and from vanities to the fear of God, and to cause them to love the future life and to hate the world, and to teach them knowledge of worship and asceticism; because the predominating tendency in their nature is deviation from the plain road of the law and exertion in that in which Allah the Exalted does not take pleasure, and busying themselves with their evil characteristics. Cast fear into their hearts and frighten them and warn them about what they will meet of terrifying things; if perchance the qualities of their inner lives shall be changed and the deeds of their outer lives shall be transformed and there appear a craving

and desire for obedience and a return from apostasy. And this is the method of preaching and of admonition, and all preaching which is not of this sort is a pest for both him who speaks and him who hears; nay, it is even said to be a ghul⁷ and a satan, which carries off mankind on the road, and destroys them; and they must flee from it, because what this speaker corrupts of their religion, Satan himself is not able to do; and whoever has power and authority must bring him down from the pulpits of the Muslims and forbid him from what he has proclaimed,—on account of the word "enjoining fairness and forbidding evil."

And the *third thing to avoid* is not to mix with the princes and Sultans and not to see them; for seeing them and sitting with them and mixing with them is great mischief; and if you are impelled to do this, avoid praising them and commending them, for Allah the Exalted is angered when an oppressor and an impious man is praised and whoever has called for the lengthening of their lives has delighted that Allah be disobeyed in his land.

And the *fourth thing to avoid* is not to accept anything of the gifts and presents of princes,⁸ though you know it is permissible, because coveting things from them corrupts religion, since there is born from it flattery and "kotowing" to them and approving of their oppression, and all this is corruption of religion; and the least of its evils is that if you accept their gifts and benefit from their world, you become fond of them; and whoever loves one necessarily loves the prolonging of his life and presence, and in loving the continuance of the life of the oppressor there is a willingness for the oppression of the worshippers of Allah the Exalted and a willingness for the ruination of the learned man. And what is more injurious than this to religion, and the future life? Have a care—lest the fascination of the Satan prove deceptive. Or some one will say to you that it is better and preferable to take the gold and silver from them and distribute it among the poor and needy; for they are disbursing it in profligacy and apostacy, and your spending it upon the weak among the people is better than their spending it; and verily the Cursed One has cut off the necks of many people by this evil whispering; and its mischief is excessive. We have mentioned this in the Vitalizing of the Sciences of Religion, so seek it there.

Now *the four things you must do* are *first*: that you make your dealings with Allah the Exalted such that, if your servant acted thus with you, you would be pleased with him and you would not withdraw your good will from him nor become angry; and what you are not pleased with for yourself in your paid servant, Allah the Exalted is not pleased with in you, and He is your true Lord; *second*, in all your dealings with people, treat them as you would be pleased to be treated by them, because the faith of a worshipper is not complete until he loves for other people what he loves for himself; *third*, if you read or study science, it must be a science which corrects your heart and purifies your soul; as if you knew that your life would not be prolonged more than a week, necessarily you would not busy yourself in it in the science of jurisprudence and argumentation and rudimentary principles and scholastic theology and such like, because you know these sciences would not enrich you, but you would busy yourself in guarding your heart and in apprehending the attribute of the soul, and removal from the entanglements of the world, and the purification of your soul from the blameworthy moral qualities, and you would busy yourself in the love of Allah the Exalted and his worship, and in being distinguished with

⁷ Ghûl - one of the inferior order of evil jinn, that eats men; described by some as an enchanter who assumes various forms - animals, human beings, monstrous shapes; haunts burial grounds; kills and devours any human creature who falls in its way; appears to travelers at night in lonely places in the guise of a fellow-traveller. . . . Properly speaking, it is applied only to a female demon; the male is called qutrub.

⁸ 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbas d.68/687, one of the Companions of the Prophet, relates that the Prophet said, "Verily some of the people of my sect learn the knowledge of religion and read the Qur'an; and say, we will go to the great, and take something of the world from them, and retire from them with our own religion. But such things cannot be; like as the tree of thorns from which nothing can be gathered by thorns, in such manner nothing can be gathered from the society of the great but sin and vice." *Mishcât ul-Masâbîh*, vol. I, p. 66. . . .

good qualities; and not a single day or night passes upon the worshipper but that it is possible his death may occur in it.

XXIV. O youth, hear from me another word and consider it, that you may find salvation. If you were informed that within a week the Sultan would come to visit you, I know that in that time you would busy yourself only in the rectification of what you knew the sight of the Sultan would fall upon, in the matter of the clothing and the body and the house and the furnishings and other things. And now consider to what I refer, for you have understanding and a single word suffices the clever. The Apostle of Allah, Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "Verily Allah the Exalted does not look upon your form nor upon your deeds, but he looks upon your hearts and your intentions." And if you desire knowledge of the states of the heart, look in the Vitalizing of the Sciences of Religion and other of my writings. This knowledge is required of all, and other knowledge is required of some, except what fulfills the ordinances of Allah the Exalted; Allah grant you success that you attain it.

And *the fourth (thing to do)* is that you do not gather from the world more than the sufficiency of a year, as the Apostle of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, prepared for certain of his rooms, and he said: "O Allah, make the provision of the family of Mohammed sufficient." And he did not prepare that for every room, but he would prepare it for her in whose heart he knew there was weakness (of faith), but for her who was a steadfast companion, he would not prepare for her {except} the necessities of a day and a half.

XXV. O youth, truly I have written in this treatise what you have requested, and you must do what is in it; and do not forget to mention me in your righteous petitions; but the supplication you asked from me seek in the supplications of the perfect. And recite this supplication in its times, especially at the conclusion of your prayers:

O Allah, truly I seek from thee of grace the most perfect, and of protection the most abiding, and of mercy the most encompassing, and of forgiveness its attainment, and of living the most comforting, and of life the happiest, and of beneficence the most perfect, and of blessing the most general, and of favor the sweetest, and of kindness the most beneficial. O Allah, be for us and be not against us. O Allah, seal with happiness our appointed time and confirm in excess our hopes, and unite in forgiveness our mornings and our evenings, and bring to thy mercy our final state and what is for us, and pour out the gift of thy pardon upon our transgressions, and bestow upon us the correction of our blemishes, and make piety our provision for the journey; in thy religion is our endeavor, and upon thee is our trust and our confidence. Fix us firmly upon the path of uprightness and protect us in this world from acts necessitating regrets on the day of judgment and lighten on us the burden of the sins and bestow upon us the life of the righteous, and avert and dispel from us the evils and set free our necks and the necks of our fathers and our mothers from the fire in thy mercy, O thou Illustrious One, thou Coverer of sins, thou Gracious One, thou Forgiving One, thou Benevolent One, thou Mighty One, O Allah, O Allah, thou Most Compassionate of the Compassionate, and in Him we trust.