Part One   *Islam in Three Dimensions*

As stated in the introduction, two of the three texts translated in this book focus on the contents of Islamic faith, while the third concentrates on the details of practice—that is, the works that Muslims should perform in order to observe the Shariah. Faith is an issue frequently discussed by the proponents of Kalām (dogmatic theology), while the details of practice are the specialty of the jurists. But these are "Sufi" texts, which is to say that they are written from a viewpoint that is neither theological nor juridical. Specialists in Islamic studies are well aware that Islamic thought has different perspectives, but others may be confused by the distinctions. It may be useful here to suggest the nature of these distinctions in order to clarify the role played in Islam by Sufi writings.

WORKS, FAITH, AND PERFECTION

When we talk about "Islam" today, our understanding of the term is shaped by a host of historical and social factors. Not the least of these is the way in which journalists, politicians, and television announcers understand the term. Contemporary opinions and ideologies—themselves based on presuppositions that are far from self-evident—instill in us certain views about what has significance in human life. Given our own assumptions about reality, it is not easy to grasp how Muslim authors of the thirteenth century looked upon their religion. But the translated texts will make it obvious that our author has a very different idea of Islam than that which is met with today, not only in the media but also in the works of specialists.

By twentieth-century lights, we expect an introductory study of Islam to give us information about such things as historical background, events surrounding the foundation of the religion, important personalities, the political and social implications of the establishment of the new community, the significance and role of the important constitutive elements of the religious self-consciousness—such as the Koran, Hadith, common law, local customs, and the heritage from previous civilizations—and the historical development of various sects and belief systems. But none of this is discussed in the present treatises, even though the author is clearly concerned with explaining the nature of the Islamic religion.

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In order to grasp the significance of these texts in their own context, we need a definition of Islam that would make sense to our author and that can also be understood in modern terms. This demands looking beyond many contemporary ideas of what is significant in human history in order to investigate the presuppositions of Muslim thinkers concerning the nature of religion and how it relates with human beings. My goal in Part One of this book is thus to bring out the perspective of our author and others like him on the religion that they follow. What does "Islam" mean, and what does "Sufism" have to do with Islam?

It is self-evident, even in modern terms, that human affairs have different foci. Some are centered in bodily activity, some in the life of the mind, and some in the heart. One possible means of classifying these domains is to speak of three basic dimensions of human existence, such as acting, knowing, and willing, or activity, intellectuality, and spirituality. Such a tripartite division is commonly met in Islamic texts. One of its earliest formulations is found in a famous hadith (a saying of the Prophet) called the "Hadith of Gabriel," in which the Prophet divides "the religion"[1]—that is, Islam—into three basic dimensions that I will call *works, faith,* and *perfection.*[2]

In naming these three dimensions, the Prophet employed words that have played important roles in Islamic intellectual history: *islām* (submission), *īmān* (faith), and *iḥsān* (virtue). In order to understand the religion of Islam as a reality possessing these three dimensions, one must grasp some of the implications of these words in the Koran, the Hadith, and the tradition.

Already, in the Koran, the word *islām* or "submission" has at least four senses, all of which have to do with the relationship between God and His creatures. In the broadest sense, *islām* is used to indicate that every creature, by the fact of being God's handiwork, is controlled by Him. *To Him "submits" everything in the heavens and the earth* (3:83).

In a narrower sense, *islām* means voluntary submission to God's will by following His revealed messages. The Koran mentions among the "Muslims"— that is, those who have freely submitted to God—Abraham (2:131, 3:67), Joseph (12:101), Noah (10:72), Lot and his family (51:36), the apostles of Jesus (5:111), and other pre-Islamic figures. Even Pharoah claims to be a Muslim when he realizes that he is going to be drowned (10:90), and a Sufi such as Ibn al-'Arabī could stir up a controversy by suggesting that Pharoah's Islam was sufficient for salvation.

In a third and still narrower meaning, *islām* designates the religion revealed to Muhammad through the Koran. The most obvious Koranic example of this usage is the verse revealed at the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage. *Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam for you as a religion* (5:3). It is this meaning of the term which I want to clarify here and for which I will be employing the term "Islam" without italics.

In the fourth and narrowest sense, *islām* refers to the outward works of the religion as distinguished from an inner something that makes the religion genuine and sincere. One verse is especially significant, since it differentiates between *islām* and *īmān*, submission and faith. *The Bedouins say, "We have faith." Say [O Muhammad!]: "You do not have faith; rather, say, 'We have submitted;' for faith has not yet entered your hearts"* (49:14). In this fourth sense, *islām* corresponds to one of the three dimensions of Islam, and hence its meaning needs to be clarified if we are to understand the meaning of *islām* in the third sense.

The Hadith of Gabriel differentiates even more clearly than this Koranic verse between *islām* in this fourth sense and *īmān*. (It is true that some Koranic verses and hadiths use the two terms as synonyms, but this does not prevent the texts from drawing distinctions in other contexts.) According to this hadith, *islām* consists of the "Five Pillars": saying the double Shahadah or testimony (bearing witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His messenger), performing the ritual prayer, fasting during the month of Ramadan, paying the alms-tax, and making the hajj if one has the means to do so.

Once the Islamic community moves beyond the earliest period and becomes differentiated into a variety of schools and approaches, *islām* in the fourth sense refers to the domain in which the science of jurisprudence exercises its authority. The jurists are those of the ulama who are experts in the five pillars and the other activities prescribed by the Shariah. If people want to know how to make an ablution or draw up a will or a marriage contract, they ask a jurist.

A jurist as jurist can have nothing to say about faith or perfection, since these belong to other dimensions of the religion. As Ghazālī puts it, "The jurist speaks about what is correct and corrupt in *islām* and about its preconditions, but in this he pays no attention to anything but the tongue. As for the heart, that is outside the jurist's authority [*wilāyat al-faqīh*]."[3] If the jurist also happens to be a theologian, then, as theologian, he can speak about faith, since faith is one of theology's concerns. One might object that the Shahadah—the gist of Islam's theology—is one of the five pillars and is therefore part of the first dimension. However, this is Shahadah as work, not as theory. *Islām* in the sense of submitting to the five pillars demands simply that a Muslim voice the Shahadah in order to bear witness to submission. Whether or not a person believes in or understands the Shahadah—and more importantly, *how* a person understands the Shahadah—are different issues, dealt with in theology and other parallel sciences, not in jurisprudence.

The second dimension of Islam is *īmān* (faith). The Koran frequently employs the term and various derived words, especially the plural of the active participle, *mu'minūn* (those who have faith, the faithful). Although translators normally render *īmān* as "faith" or "belief," such translations leave out an important connotation, because the word derives from a root that means to be secure, safe, and tranquil. Hence, the literal sense of *īmān* is to render secure, safe, calm, and free from fear. The implication is that, through faith in God, one becomes

secure from error and rooted in the truth. Faith has a cognitive dimension that is a step in the direction of certainty.

In a number of verses the Koran provides a list of the objects of faith. For example, *True piety is this: To have faith in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets* (2:177). In the Hadith of Gabriel, the Prophet gives a formulaic expression to these objects by defining faith as "having faith in God, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, the Last Day, and the measuring out [*qadar*] of good and evil."[4] Notice that the Prophet repeats the word faith in the definition itself, which indicates that here—in contrast to certain other hadiths— the *meaning* of faith is not at issue, but rather the *objects* of faith. These objects later become systematized into the three principles of the religion already mentioned in the introduction of this book—*tawḥīd* (the assertion of God's unity), Prophecy (*nubuwwa*), and the Return to God, (*ma'ād*, commonly translated as "eschatology"). All the objects mentioned in the hadith are studied in the Islamic sciences. Muslim scholars did not approach them as articles of belief, in the modern sense of this term. They did not suppose that these objects may or may not be true and real. On the contrary, they accepted them as objective realities to be found in the nature of things.

If the first dimension of Islam becomes the specialty of the jurists, the second dimension becomes the object of study of three main groups of scholars—the proponents of Kalām, Sufis who were concerned with theoretical issues such as theology and cosmology, and philosophers. These three broad schools of thought—each having several branches—can be distinguished in many ways. Elsewhere, I have suggested that one way in which to understand their differing approaches is to notice the stress that they place upon various forms of knowledge.[5] By and large, philosophers claim that reason (*'aql*) is a sufficient means to understand the nature of things. No prophetic intervention is necessary—at least not for philosophers. The proponents of Kalām stress the primacy of revelation, although they interpret it in rational terms and hence, on the question of reason's role, can be placed rather close to the philosophers. In contrast to both philosophers and Kalām authorities, the Sufis maintain that reason has clearly defined limits. They agree with the Kalām specialists that revelation has a primary role to play, but they hold that interpretation of the revealed texts by the sole means of reason prevents a full understanding. Reason must be supplemented by direct knowledge given by God. This knowledge is called by many names, including "unveiling" (*kashf*), "tasting" (*dhawq*), "witnessing" (*shuhūd*), and "insight" (*baṣīra*).

In the dimension of faith, divergence of opinion is much more pronounced than in the first dimension, and naturally so. The jurists are concerned with outward works, which can be seen with the eye and analyzed in concrete detail. But the specialists in faith are concerned mainly with invisible realities that require the full application of human intelligence, if not direct divine aid, in order to be grasped to any extent. Differences of opinion abound, even though there is a surprising unanimity on certain fundamental issues.

The third dimension of Islam is perfection or virtue. The Prophet employed the word *iḥsān*, which is the most difficult of the three terms to translate. It is an active form from the root *ḥ.s.n.*, which means beautiful and good. Hence, the word *iḥsān* means to accomplish what is beautiful and good, to do something well, to do something perfectly, to gain perfect and virtuous qualities. The standard by which the good, the beautiful, and the virtuous are judged cannot be an individual's opinion, because at issue here is what the religion teaches. In the Hadith of Gabriel, the Prophet defines *iḥsān* as ''serving [or worshiping] God as if you see Him, because if you do not see Him, He nonetheless sees you.'' In other words, this third dimension of Islam is concerned with depth, or the inner attitudes that accompany activity and thought. One must be aware of God's presence in everything one does—which is to say that one must have a state of soul in conformity with works and faith.

If people fail to deepen the first two dimensions of the religion, they are left with meaningless activity and verbal definitions. But everyone knows that the worth of activity is intimately bound up with the intention that animates it, while verbal definitions are useless without understanding. All those who take religion seriously must ask how to go below the surface and enter into the depths. Naturally, there are degrees. Most Muslim thinkers hold that human beings will ultimately be differentiated in accordance with the extent to which they live up to the standard of perfection in works and faith.[6] This is one of the meanings of the traditional teaching that both paradise and hell embrace many levels.

Just as the first two dimensions of Islam have their specialists, so also the third dimension has scholars and sages who dedicate their lives to explicating its nature. Most of these have been called ''Sufis,'' although many of the ulama known as philosophers or theologians also investigated this dimension of the religion. And just as the dimension of faith leads to more debate and disagreement than does the dimension of works, so also, for analogous reasons, the dimension of perfection is more controversial than that of faith.

In short, Islam, as defined by the Prophet in the Hadith of Gabriel, consists of works, faith, and perfection. One can classify many of the scholarly disciplines that become established in Islam on the basis of the respective emphasis placed on one or more of these dimensions. What is of immediate relevance here is that the translated treatises focus on all three dimensions, even though the author does not refer to this hadith, nor does he clearly separate the dimension of perfection from the other two. However, there is no need to make a clear differentiation. This tripartite division serves simply to provide an overview, not a hard and fast rule. Moreover, when Islam's dimensions are embodied in the actuality of being human, they become different aspects of a single whole. The more harmoniously the three dimensions are integrated, the closer the person approaches to a perfected human personality and to the nature of the Real itself, which is utter harmony and pure oneness.

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

In Islamic texts, faith is discussed from two basic points of view: its subjective impact and its objective content. The first type of discussion deals with the definition of the word and its implications for the person who possesses it.[7] The second type addresses the objects of faith—God, the angels, and so on.

The locus of faith is the heart (*qalb*), which is the center or essence of the human being.[8] The heart is the place of intelligence, understanding, and every positive human quality. The heart's deviation and illness lead to ignorance, unbelief, and negative character traits. Its faith is inseparable from knowledge and noble character traits. Many Koranic verses and hadiths mention the good qualities of the faithful or the bad qualities that cannot dwell in the same heart with faith.

Specialists in Kalām were especially interested in the cognitive dimension of faith and its implications for putting the Shariah into practice. Sufi theoreticians were more interested in the moral and spiritual dimension of faith, and their explanations of the nature of faith in the heart coalesce with explanations of *iḥsān* and its near-synonym, *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity).

If both the Koran and the hadith literature make clear that faith is intimately related to positive character traits, they also bring out the cognitive dimension implicit in the word itself. Some hadiths connect faith with knowledge in a way that fits into the concerns of the Kalām specialists. For example, the Prophet said, "Faith is a knowledge [*ma'rifa*] in the heart, a voicing with the tongue, and an activity with the limbs."[9] Abū Ḥanīfa followed up on this approach by defining faith as "confessing with the tongue, recognizing the truth [of something, *taṣdīq*] with the mind, and knowing with the heart."[10] Ghazālī expresses the basic position of the Ash'arite theologians when he defines faith as "recognizing the truth [of something] in the heart, voicing [that truth] with the tongue, and acting [on its basis] with the limbs."[11]

Notice that Ghazālī's definition—like the just-cited hadith—includes activity and works (that is, *islām*) as part of *īmān*. For most authorities, faith includes works, but works do not necessarily imply faith. One cannot judge from a person's observance of the Shariah that faith is the motive. No suggestion is made that the domains of the Shariah and faith are equal, and a clear distinction is drawn between the two. Faith transcends works and includes them, whereas works without faith have no value.[12] One can have the first dimension of Islam without the second, works without faith, but one cannot have faith without works.

The cognitive and moral dimensions of faith are affirmed by its opposite, *kufr*, a word that is normally translated as "unbelief" or "infidelity." However, the root meaning of the term is "to cover over, to conceal." By extension, it means to cover over something that one knows. In the Koranic sense, it means to cover over the truth that God has revealed through the prophets and to conceal the blessings that God has given to His creatures. The Koran frequently uses the

term *kufr* as the opposite of *shukr* (gratitude). Hence, the *kuffār* (plural of *kāfir*) are at once those who are ungrateful and those who cover over the truth that they know.

As Muhammad Asad has pointed out, the term *kāfir* "cannot be simply equated, as many Muslim theologians of post-classical times and practically all Western translators of the Qur'ān have done, with 'unbeliever' or 'infidel' in the specific, restricted sense of one who rejects the system of doctrine and law promulgated in the Qur'ān and amplified by the teachings of the Prophet,"[13] since the term is already present in the earliest verses of the Koran to be revealed. The truth that people cover over is the self-evident reality of God. They conceal it while knowing in their hearts that it is true. Wilfred Cantwell Smith has brought out clearly the stubborn willfulness implied by the Koranic term *kufr*.[14] In order to keep this cognitive implication of *īmān* and *kufr* in the forefront, I will be translating the term *kufr* as "concealing the truth" or "truth-concealing."

To come back to the word *īmān* itself, one of the most common terms employed in Kalām to define it is *taṣdīq*, which means to recognize or affirm the truth of something. The essence of faith is to know that something is true and to acknowledge its truth in word and deed. As Smith has remarked, to say that faith is *taṣdīq* means that "Faith is the ability to trust, and to act in terms of, what one knows to be true."[15] What one knows to be true is the objects of faith—God, the angels, the scriptures, and so on.

In English, "faith" is normally understood as volitional rather than cognitive. People think of faith as related to supposition and opinion rather than to knowledge and certainty. In contrast, faith in Islam pertains primarily to knowledge and the commitments that people make on the basis of knowledge. It stands above knowledge, not below it. It adds to knowledge a dimension of personal commitment, an engagement with the truth that one knows. As Smith puts it, "The object of faith being thought of as pellucid and incontrovertible, the issue is, what does one do about what one knows?"[16]

Most authors who discuss the objects of faith do not discuss the subjective side of faith, any more than contemporary biologists or astronomers analyze the assumption that they are dealing with real things. Muslim scholars were interested in the objects of faith because they knew them to be components of the real configuration of existence. They often do not even bother reminding us, because it is self-evident, that discussion of God, the angels, or eschatology pertains to one of the three principles of faith—principles which, as suggested above, simply classify the objects of faith into convenient categories.

As already mentioned, there are three basic approaches to understanding the objects of faith: philosophy, Kalām, and theoretical Sufism. Accepting the articles of faith on the basis of imitation or following authority (*taqlīd*) was the business of the common people or the beginners—those who have no real grasp of the creed. In contrast, the theological, philosophical, and Sufi sciences brought out what could be known—with various degrees of certainty—about faith's objects.

In short, discussion of the three principles and their ramifications fills up most texts on philosophy and Kalām, and many texts on Sufism.

That the discussion of the contents of faith occupies the philosophers may be less obvious than in the case of Kalām. Indeed, many contemporary scholars, having applauded the philosophers' open-mindedness, might object to the use of the word "faith." But this is to fall into the trap of understanding faith in our terms, in which it has little cognitive content. In Islamic terms, the contents of faith are objects of real knowledge, and the philosophers analyze the same objects as do the theologians and Sufis. After all, the object of philosophical study is *wujūd* (existence or being), and *wujūd* is the underlying stuff of reality. For most philosophers, it is ultimately the Real itself—God—while it is also present in some mode through the things of experience. In effect, by studying *wujūd*, the philosophers investigate the first of the three principles of faith: *tawḥīd*, or the relationship of the many (which they like to call "the possible things," *mumkināt*) to the One (the "Necessary Being," *wājib al-wujūd*). Most philosophers also discuss prophecy and eschatology.

No one is claiming that the philosophers always come to the same conclusions as do the Sufis and Kalām authorities. Far from it. But they study the same realities, and they have faith in them, which is to say that they know them to be objectively true and live their lives accordingly.

Sufis join the theoretical discussions of the three principles of faith at a relatively late date in Islamic history. There were detailed books on philosophy and Kalām long before the Sufis began systematic discussions of the theoretical— rather than the practical and applied—dimensions of their science. Almost all early Sufis deal primarily with the deepening of faith and works and the nature of the various human qualities that can be achieved through imitating the Prophet. To the extent that the early Sufis address the contents of faith, they prefer enigmatic or gnomic sayings.

In all sophisticated studies of faith's principles, epistemology is a central issue. How do we know what we know? What can we know for certain? In what sense can we know God? In what sense can we know anything other than God? Such questions—with tremendous variety and nuance amplified by the different perspectives of diverse schools of thought—fill up countless volumes.

The authorities in all these sciences differentiate between the common people (*'āmma*) and the elect (*khāṣṣa*). The first imitate the faith of others and follow authority (*taqlīd*), while the second verify the truth of what they know (*taḥqīq*). In the context of Sufism, these terms refer to the Sufis as opposed to the general run of Muslims who are not Sufis. The implication is that what Sufis understand is beyond the understanding of the common people. This "elitism" of Sufism has sometimes been criticized, but the perspective is far from being exclusive to Sufism or to the various schools that deal with faith. The Koran itself supplies the principle in the verse, *Above everyone who has knowledge is one who knows*

(12:76). No one objects when Muslim grammarians or mathematicians talk about the elect and the common people, meaning thereby those who know their science and those who do not. Ghazālī points out that all scholars consider their own domain as God's chosen realm (and this seems to be no less true today). He says that each of more than twenty schools of thought claims that its own science is what the Prophet meant when he said that the search for knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim.[17]

The fact that the Sufis—like other possessors of knowledge in Islam—consider themselves to be an elect helps explain the often encountered description of Sufism as "Islamic esoterism." One cannot object to this expression, so long as it is kept within bounds. It does not mean that the Sufis jealously guarded certain teachings and practices from the majority. Rather, Sufi knowledge and practice remained relatively hidden because the majority were either uninterested or incapable of understanding. In this respect, grammar and mathematics are also esoteric. What stands out in Sufi esoterism is that it relates to the domain of Islam's faith and works, and it is contrasted with an exoterism that relates to the same domain. But here again, the first thing one should understand from this distinction is that the majority of people—the "common people" as opposed to the "elect"— had no interest in Sufism, or considered it to be suspect and dangerous if not heretical. Most people are satisfied to remain with works and faith as defined in simple terms. They do not want subtleties and complications, nor do they like to be told that they are not good people and that they should try to change themselves.

This is not to say that Sufism has no connection with esoterism in the sense of knowledge of the mysteries, the unseen things, the occult, the mysterious, the mystical. All this is implied in the attention which the Sufis pay to unveiling as a valid source of knowledge, a topic that will come up again in several places within this book.

IḤSĀN, IKHLĀṢ, AND *TAQWĀ*

The Prophet referred to Islam's third dimension with the term *iḥsān*, which he defined in the Hadith of Gabriel as "worshiping God as if you see Him, because if you do not see Him, He nonetheless sees you." The Koran employs the word *iḥsān* and its active participle, *muḥsin* (the person who has *iḥsān*), more than seventy times. Sometimes, the subject of the verb is God, and *al-muḥsin* is usually found in the lists of the divine names. As a human quality, *iḥsān* is always praiseworthy. Verses such as the following illustrate that human *iḥsān* is closely connected to divine *iḥsān*. *Who is better in religion than the one who submits his face to God, being a* muḥsin? (4:125). *Have* iḥsān. *God loves those who have* iḥsān (2:195). *God's mercy is near to the* muḥsins (7:56). *God is with the* muḥsins (29:69).

Literally, *iḥsān* means putting the good and the beautiful into practice. The Koranic usage makes clear that this is not only an external and ethical good, but also an internal, moral, and spiritual good. Hence, "virtue" may suggest some of what it involves. The Prophet's definition stresses the internal dimensions of the quality, tying it to an attitude of soul. For the Sufi sages, the internal and spiritual dimensions of *iḥsān* are, in any case, obvious.

Among the Koranic evidence that Sufis cite to show the spiritual dimensions of *iḥsān* is that the Book describes God's own qualities with the superlative adjective from the same root. In four verses it speaks of God's "most beautiful names" (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*). As the first Shahadah makes clear, everything good belongs essentially to God, and accidentally—if at all—to the creatures. "There is no god but God" means that all the qualities denoted by the most beautiful names belong to God in a true sense, and to other things in some other sense. It follows logically that "There is no good but the divine good," "There is no mercy but the divine mercy," and ultimately, "There is nothing truly real but the Real." *Iḥsān*, putting the good and the beautiful into practice, implies bringing God's goodness and beauty—real goodness and beauty—into the soul and the world.

One of the many ways of describing the process of achieving human perfection is to say that it involves "assuming the character traits of God" (*al-takhalluq bi akhlāq Allāh*). God's character traits are identical with His most beautiful names. The biblical and prophetic saying, "God created human beings in His own image" or "form" (*ṣūra*) was interpreted to mean that the innate disposition (*fiṭra*) of human beings embraces all the qualities designated by God's names.

To become perfect is to bring the latent divine qualities within oneself into full actuality. It is to act, know, and be as God would act, know, and be, were He to assume human form.

The acting is the easiest, since it can be described and delineated in exact terms. Hence, everyone is told to act. This is the Shariah, incumbent upon all.

The knowing is much more difficult. Although "The search for knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim," the extent to which a person seeks and actualizes knowledge will depend upon personal qualifications.

Finally, to be as God would be is by far the most difficult, since it involves an utter transformation of the personality. This is Sufism's primary concern, and relatively few people attempt to achieve it.

On the level of seeking knowledge, a person might take any of several routes. The minimum knowledge that is incumbent upon every Muslim, as Ghazālī points out, is what allows a person to know the creed and perform the required practices.[18] People who feel themselves to be drawn to a broader and deeper knowledge of the religion will not follow the same paths. Some will become experts in jurisprudence, others in Kalām or philosophy, and still others in various other fields of learning. Both philosophy and theoretical Sufism have described the possibilities of human knowledge and awareness in terms that make it clear that

these are unlimited, since the ultimate degree of knowing involves a lifting of many of the barriers that separate the finite from the Infinite.

It needs to be kept in mind that this seeking of knowledge—to the extent that it pertains to knowledge of the objects of faith—helps in the deepening and perfecting of faith. One cannot have faith in something about which one has no knowledge. In the same way, the more knowledge one gains of the nature of things—that is, the things dealt with under the heading of Islam's three principles—the firmer becomes one's commitment to what one knows.

The process of deepening one's knowledge is inseparable from that of knowing the most beautiful names of God, which are the archetypes of all that exists. To the extent that one knows these names and their implications, one becomes committed to and engaged in the human goodness and beauty that they demand. To "worship God as if you see Him" is to serve Him through becoming His vicegerent (*khalīfa*) and manifesting His qualities within oneself and the world.

A number of Koranic terms have semantic fields that overlap with *iḥsān* and are used in similar senses in the literature. Two are of particular interest: *ikhlāṣ* and *taqwā*.

Ikhlāṣ derives from a root having to do with purity, cleanliness, and freedom from admixture. Frequently translated as "sincerity," it means to purify, or to free something from extraneous elements or factors. The Koran employs the verb in the sentence, *akhlaṣū dīnahum li'llāh* (4:146): "They freed their religion from admixture for God," or "They purified their religion for God." Koran translators have rendered this sentence in a variety of ways: "They are sincere in their religion to God" (Palmer); "They make their religion pure for Allah (only)" (Pickthall); "They make their religion sincerely God's" (Arberry); "They are sincere in their devotion to God" (Dawood); "They grow sincere in their faith in God alone" (Asad); "They dedicate their religion solely to God" (Irving). In eleven more verses, the Koran speaks approvingly of "the *mukhliṣūn* [those who have *ikhlāṣ*] for God in their religion."

The hadith literature employs the term *ikhlāṣ* in suggestive ways, such as "purifying works for God" and "purifying the heart for faith." Hadiths sometimes mention the "sentence of *ikhlāṣ*," meaning the first Shahadah, which turns the mind and heart away from everything other than God. *Ikhlāṣ* is often taken as the antonym for *shirk* (associating others with God), which is the only unforgivable sin, and as a synonym for *tawḥīd*, which is also defined by the first Shahadah. Sura 112 of the Koran, which begins, *Say: He is God, One*, is called both the "Sura of *Tawḥīd*" and the "Sura of *Ikhlāṣ*." In short, the hadith literature makes explicit what the Koran implies—sincerity is a deepening of works and faith such that one's only motive in acting and thinking is God. If *tawḥīd* can be understood to mean the voicing of the sentence, "There is no god but God," *ikhlāṣ* implies that *tawḥīd* is internalized so that it becomes the determining factor in thought and action.

The word *taqwā* is especially significant in the present context because the author of the three treatises discusses it in some detail. It and related terms from

the same root are employed far more frequently in the Koran than either *iḥsān* or *ikhlāṣ* and their derivatives. The term is especially difficult to translate and, with some trepidation, I have chosen "god-wariness."

The root of the word *taqwā* has two interwoven senses: to fear and to protect oneself. The basic meaning in the Koranic context is to stand in awe of God, to fear the consequences of acting against His will, and to do everything in one's power to protect oneself from these consequences. The term implies observing the religion meticulously, sincerely, and with full presence of mind. In the verbal form of *ittaqā*, the word often takes God as object, and I translate, "to be wary of God." That *taqwā* is a human quality established in relationship to God is clear in any case, whether or not God is mentioned in the immediate context.

The Koran always mentions the god-wary in positive terms. They have taken God's message to heart, have put it into practice completely, and will inhabit the Garden. In contrast, both those who have submitted (*muslimūn*) and those who have faith (*mu'minūn*) are sometimes criticized, whether explicitly or implicitly. Most of the Koran's commandments are addressed to those who have faith—that is, those who have recognized the truth of the message and are attempting to put it into practice. The Koran frequently tells the faithful that they must have *taqwā*, so it is a goal toward which they should be striving. Several verses say that the god-wary are the ones whom God loves and has guided. In effect, it is they who have perfected their works and faith.[19] The hadith literature employs the term *kalimat al-taqwā* (the sentence of god-wariness) as a synonym for the sentence of *ikhlāṣ* or *tawḥīd*—that is, the first Shahadah.

The Koran provides a great deal of evidence for suggesting that *taqwā* expresses in a single word the sum total of all good and beautiful human attributes, or the perfect human embodiment of Islam in its deepest sense. This is particularly clear in the verse, *The noblest of you in God's eyes is the one among you who has the most* taqwā (49:13). Translators have tried in various ways to bring out the fundamental importance of this term for Koranic religiosity. Each of the following translations reflects the translator's idea of the key virtue in Islam.

"The most honourable of you in the sight of God is the most pious of you" (Palmer). "The noblest among you with Allāh is the most dutiful of you" (Muhammad Ali). "The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct" (Pickthall). "The noblest among you in the sight of God is the most godfearing of you" (Arberry). "The most honourable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty)" (Habib). "The noblest of you in God's sight is he who is most righteous" (Dawood). "The noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him" (Asad). "The noblest among you with God is that one of you who best performs his duty" (Irving).

The term "god-wariness" makes *taqwā*'s orientation toward God explicit, brings out the implication of being aware and mindful, and avoids the negative and sentimental undertones of words such as "piety," "dutifulness," and "righteousness."

FELICITY

The goal of observing Islam's three dimensions is to gain salvation. The term most commonly employed for salvation in Islamic texts is *sa'āda*, which means happiness. I will be translating it with the Latinate word "felicity" in order to remind the reader that this happiness pertains fundamentally to life after death. The opposite of felicity is "wretchedness" (*shaqā'*).

The tradition locates felicity in paradise and wretchedness in hell, even though both have foretastes in this world. But Sufis stress *tawḥīd* and *ikhlāṣ*. In their view, perfecting works and faith involves relating all things back to God as well as purifying activity, thought, and will from service to anything other than God. If a person worships God with the intention of avoiding hell and gaining paradise, an ulterior motive has crept in, a concern for oneself rather than God. Since a god is anything that one serves, some authorities maintain that this is a subtle form of associating other gods with God (*shirk khafī*), and hence it prevents complete *ikhlāṣ*.

In Sufi literature one commonly meets the theme of desiring God alone and rejecting paradise. Many Muslim authors divide human beings into three major groups on the basis of Sura 56. The "Companions of the Left" will inhabit hell. The "Companions of the Right" will live in paradise, and "those brought near to God" (*al-muqarrabūn*) actualize full *tawḥīd* and *ikhlāṣ*. In the Sufi view, the members of this last group have erased both paradise and hell from their vision. We will meet this theme in all three texts translated below.

To reach felicity is to dwell in paradise or to live with God. But felicity has many levels. The Koran implies—and the tradition affirms—that the greatest felicity is the encounter (*liqā'*) with God, a term our author frequently mentions. This encounter means that people have a vision (*ru'ya*) of God. Theological debates about the nature of this vision—and whether it was attainable in this world— were common. If a distinction can be drawn here between the perspective of the Sufis and the theologians, it is that the Sufis held that one can encounter God already in this world, while the theologians maintained that the encounter will not occur until after death. Our author refers to the encounter in this world as the "arrival" (*wuṣūl*).

Although Sufis maintain that God can be encountered in this world, many— if not most—give an ambiguous answer to the question of actually seeing Him, whether here or in paradise. Usually they maintain that God *in Himself* cannot be seen, although He can be seen in the form in which He chooses to disclose Himself. Moreover, He discloses Himself in keeping with the receptacle. From here it is only one step to the position that God discloses Himself to all things—in this world as well as the next—in keeping with their capacities or preparednesses (*isti'dād*). God is never absent from His creatures. God is *nearer than the jugular vein* (50:16) and *with you wherever you are* (57:4). However, people are absent from God. He is there to be seen, but seeing Him takes a special kind of eye. Gaining that eye depends on actualizing *tawḥīd* and *ikhlāṣ*.

To encounter God is to encounter the object of one's faith. Here again, the importance of faith's cognitive dimension comes to the forefront. If Islam's third dimension stresses the deepening of faith, this implies that the object of one's faith comes to coincide more and more exactly with the Real. Ibn al-'Arabī among others insists that the "god of belief" is always distinct from God in Himself, since a finite receptacle can never grasp the Infinite.[20] But the knowledge achieved through deepened faith is far beyond that which depends on rational arguments and conclusions. As our author often remarks, through god-wariness, faith can be transmuted into unveiling or the direct vision of the realities of things.

Unveiling allows people to "see God," since their faith and knowledge are transmuted into witnessing God's self-disclosures. This vision of God brings us back to *iḥsān*, which is "to worship God as if you see Him." As the Sufis like to point out, the highest degree of *iḥsān* is to worship God without the "as if"— that is, while actually seeing and recognizing Him through His self-disclosures. This is how many of them interpret the saying of the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law 'Alī, "I would not worship a God whom I did not see."

In sum, Islam's third dimension completes the first two. Its characteristics confirm the hierarchical relationship that was mentioned in connection with works and faith. There can be works without faith, but no faith without works. In the same way, there can be faith without perfection, but no perfection without faith and the works that are a part of faith.

Hence Islam and being a Muslim have three basic degrees. The first and most superficial degree is defined as "voicing the Shahadah," the first of the five pillars. Within the first degree, there are, of course, many subdegrees that jurisprudence is able to differentiate. This explains the debates over issues such as whether simply voicing the Shahadah is sufficient to be a Muslim, or whether a person also has to observe the other pillars.

On the second level, people are Muslim if, being Muslim in the first sense, their beliefs are correct. This is the domain in which theologians set up their catechisms and creeds.

On the third and final level, the issues of sincerity, virtue, and human worth are discussed. On every level, there is a different understanding as to what "Islam" implies. Different schools of thought offer different interpretations. If anything differentiates the Sufis from other Muslims here, it is not only that they consider all three dimensions worthy of attention, but also that they view the third dimension as the proper fruition and completion of the first two.

PRIORITIES

The Sufi authorities along with other ulama take the first Shahadah as the fundamental truth in terms of which all other things must be understood. Hence their primary concern is God. But Sufi texts have a way of bringing out God-

centeredness more clearly than do, let us say, texts on jurisprudence, Kalām, or philosophy.

The jurists soon ignore God by devoting all their attention to the details of the Shariah. The proponents of Kalām are interested in God, but primarily as an object of rational thought and cold analysis. They keep Him at arm's length, stressing His inaccessibility and incomparability. God becomes largely an abstraction—an ''It''—of interest only inasmuch as He reveals certain laws and principles through the prophets. The philosophers usually put the religious language of Islam into the background, and they often seem careful to avoid mentioning the Koranic names of God. They prefer an approach that today we would call ''objective'' and ''academic.'' Hence they like to refer to God with terms such as ''necessary being'' or ''first principle.''

The Sufis agree with the Kalām authorities that God is inaccessible. But they add that, just as He is ever-absent, so also He is ever-present. Inasmuch as He is present, He is eminently desirable and lovable. The God that Sufis keep at the center of their concerns is the God whom people want to have around, not the God who instills terror in the heart and plays a dominant role in jurisprudence and Kalām. Awareness of God's presence gives birth to joy and delight. This helps explain why Sufi texts are characterized by a stylistic lightness not found in writings from other branches of religious learning. It also suggests why most of the great poets of Islamic civilization are rooted in the Sufi tradition.

Scholars have often pointed out that ''post-axial'' religions are concerned mainly with salvation, and Islam is no exception. Although the religion is all about God, it is also totally anthropocentric, because knowledge of God is oriented toward the ultimate concern of every human being—one's personal destiny. The Koran and the Hadith focus all of their attention, directly or indirectly, on the question of what the reality of God implies for human beings.

In the Sufi reading, human felicity is inseparable from God Himself. This is implied in the saying, ''God created Adam in His own form.'' The human being is a form (*ṣūra*), and every form demands an inner reality, a ''meaning'' (*maʿnā*). In some mysterious fashion, this inner reality is God Himself. Understanding this, and fully experiencing and living all its consequences, is the ultimate goal of *tawḥīd*. Through *iḥsān*—the perfection of what is good and beautiful in human beings—people come to embody and manifest the most beautiful names of God, or the reality of God Himself. Then they become worthy of the honor that God accords to Adam in the Koran, that of being God's vicegerent on earth.

In general, the Muslim authorities—and this is especially true of Sufis—put first things first (*al-ahamm faʾl-ahamm*). The Prophet said, ''I seek refuge in God from a knowledge that has no profit.'' Profitable knowledge is knowledge that leads people to felicity. Any knowledge that does not pertain directly to the achievement of felicity must be placed in the background. Hence, these three treatises—in the manner of other traditional writings on Islamic faith and works—are oriented toward eschatology, life after death, avoiding wretchedness (*shaqāʾ*),

and achieving permanent happiness. If our author is concerned only with works, the contents of faith, and perfection, it is because he sees these alone as immediately relevant to felicity. These dimensions of human existence must be addressed if people are to situate themselves correctly in relation to ultimate reality.

The accent on achieving felicity demands a strict hierarchy of values. This hierarchy is defined in terms of God, the ultimate value. Secondary values are those that come directly from God, such as the Koran and the Prophet. Third-level values—such as the Hadith and the Shariah—come from God through the intermediary of the second-level values. In this hierarchical way of looking at things, what is nearer to God is better. What brings about nearness to God (*qurb*, a term that is practically synonymous with felicity) is better than what brings about separation from Him. Any knowledge that helps bring about nearness is profitable, and any knowledge that works against nearness is unprofitable and should be avoided. That is why Ghazālī can write, alluding to the saying of the Prophet just cited,

> "Profitable" knowledge is what increases your fear of God, your ability
> to see your own faults, and your knowledge of how to serve your Lord.
> It decreases your desire for this world and increases your desire for the
> next. It opens your eyes to the defects of your own works so that you
> guard against these defects.[21]

To the extent that the Islamic sciences are oriented toward goals other than human felicity, they do not deal with profitable knowledge. Hence, they do not pertain directly to Islam but to what Marshall Hodgson calls "Islamdom." Of course, I am speaking in relatives, not absolutes. I would not remove from the category of Islamic knowledge any specific science cultivated by Muslims. But some sciences are closer to the salvific ideals of the religion, while some are further away. All of them can have their profit. The criterion of "Islamicity" here is much more subjective than objective. For some people, knowledge of the natural world may be a barrier to faith in the unseen reality of God, for others it may be a necessity for the same faith. The differing perceptions of the soteriological relevance of the sciences help explain the differing opinions of the Muslim intellectuals—such as jurists and philosophers—on what sort of knowledge needs to be acquired.

THE SCIENCES OF UNVEILING AND PRACTICE

At the beginning of *Easy Roads*, our author divides religious knowledge into two types: the science of faith and the science of god-wariness. He identifies these with the sciences of unveiling and those of practice—terms which, he tells us, are employed by the ulama. He certainly has Ghazālī in mind as one of these ulama, since Ghazālī goes to great length in the first book of the *Iḥyā'* to explain the

nature of knowledge and of these two types of knowledge in particular. Ghazālī's major point is that the knowledge incumbent on every Muslim is the science of practice.

Note the distinction between the word *'amal*, which I translate as "works," and *mu'āmala* (practice), which is the third-form *maṣdar* from the same root. *'Amal* means working, doing or making something, something done, an activity, a work. The third-form *maṣdar* implies interaction. According to Lane's *Lexicon*, *mu'āmala* means "he worked, laboured, served, acted, or transacted business with him." Hence, "practice" is a work that keeps God in view, whereas works do not necessarily involve God. However, they *should*—and this is precisely the point. One can perform works that do not follow the Shariah, or works that observe the Shariite rules but are contradicted by the intention or the attitude. Ghazālī repeatedly reminds his readers that the competence of the jurists extends only to activity—the works themselves—not to the intention behind the activity. Their jurisdiction is the Shariah alone. As he remarks about the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*),

> The jurist rules that a person's ritual prayer is correct if it exhibits the form of the acts along with the outward preconditions, even if the person is negligent throughout the whole prayer, from its beginning to its end, thinking instead about the calculation of his transactions in the market.[22]

For Ghazālī, in short, the science of practice deals with the deepening of works. In contrast, the science of unveiling pertains to the deepening of faith. *Mukāshafa* (unveiling), is a third-form *maṣdar* from *kashf*, which I also translate as unveiling. Most Sufi texts employ *kashf* and *mukāshafa* interchangeably. If there is a difference in nuance, it has to do with the interpersonality implied by the third-form *maṣdar*. Unveiling is not one-sided, since it pertains to a relationship between the human being and God.

It should be kept in mind that, although the knowledge gained through unveiling is different from that gained through reason, it is not irrational. Rather, unveiling is suprarational in the sense that it is inaccessible to reason without God's direct help.

One of the classic tales told to illustrate the difference between rational knowledge and unveiling concerns the Sufi shaykh Abū Sa'īd Abi'l-Khayr (d. 440/1049) and the great philosopher Avicenna (428/1037), who is mentioned in a similar context in a poem quoted by our author. The story, of course, comes from Sufi sources, since unveiling is pictured as superior to reason. It is noteworthy that no contradiction is seen between the two types of knowledge, because it is recognized that they have the same objects. I tell the story as I remember it, without reference to a source. In any case, the point of the story does not lie in its historical accuracy.

Avicenna went to Maymana with his train of students to visit the great shaykh Abū Sa'īd, who lived there surrounded by many disciples. The two immediately took a liking to each other, and Abū Sa'īd led Avicenna into his private chamber,

where they sat together for three days and three nights. No one interrupted them, except to take in food and refreshments. After three days, Avicenna mounted his horse and rode off, his students following. After a respectful lapse of time, the eldest student asked Avicenna, "O great master, how did you find that man Abū Saʿīd? His disciples make extravagant claims about him." Avicenna replied, "Well, everything I know, he sees."

Back in Maymana, one of Abū Saʿīd's close disciples was delegated by the others to inquire about this philosopher, whose disciples were so cocksure about his knowledge of everything under the sun. Abū Saʿīd replied, "Well, it's true. Everything I see, he knows."

Sufis and philosophers frequently distinguish between suprarational and rational knowledge by calling one of them * maʿrifa* (gnosis) and the other *ʿilm* (knowledge or learning). One of my favorite aphorisms is cited anonymously by Qushayrī. "The gnostic is above what he says, but the possessor of learning [*ʿālim*] is below what he says."[23]

The ulama are below what they say because they understand only the surface implications of the words that they quote from the Koran, the Sunnah, and the traditional authorities. If the Sufi shaykhs are above what they say, this is because their words express only dimly the realities that they have seen and verified. Rūmī makes the same point in a slightly different fashion.

> Those people who have studied or are now studying imagine that if they
> attend faithfully here they will forget and abandon all their knowledge.
> On the contrary, when they come here their sciences all acquire a spirit.
> The sciences are all paintings. When they gain spirits, it is as if a lifeless
> body receives a spirit.[24]

The description of Sufism as Islamic "esoterism" relates directly to the type of knowledge gained through unveiling and gnosis, since it cannot be expressed in terms completely accessible to the ulama and the common people. The Sufi shaykhs do not necessarily conceal their knowledge, but people who have not verified it are "below" it.

Ghazālī points out that all Muslims have the obligation to deepen their works through understanding the sciences of practice, but he stresses that the sciences of unveiling are of a different sort. Everyone must know a certain amount about practice in order to be able to establish a correct relationship with God. But Ghazālī makes clear that unveiling, by its very nature, pertains to an elect—those whose hearts have been opened up to knowledge by God. Hence Ghazālī makes no attempt to explain the sciences of unveiling in the *Iḥyāʾ*, a book which, he tells us, deals specifically with practice. He defines and describes unveiling as follows:

> Unveiling is knowledge of the nonmanifest domain [*al-bāṭin*] and the
> goal of all the sciences. One of the gnostics says, "I fear that if a person
> has no share in this knowledge, he will come to an evil end." The least

share of it is that you acknowledge its truth and concede its existence in those who are worthy of it.

Another gnostic said, "If a person has two traits—innovation [*bid'a*] and pride [*kibr*]—nothing of this knowledge will be opened up to him."

It has been said that whoever loves this world and insists on following caprice [*hawā*] will never reach the reality of this science, even though he may reach the reality of the other sciences....

The science of unveiling is the knowledge of the sincere devotees [*siddīqūn*] and those brought near to God [*muqarrabūn*]. It consists of a light that becomes manifest within the heart when the heart is cleansed and purified of blameworthy attributes. Many things are unveiled by means of this light. Earlier the person had been hearing the names of these things and imagining vague and unclear meanings. Now they become clarified.

The person gains true knowledge of God's Essence, His perfect and subsistent attributes, His acts, His wisdom in creating this world and the next world, and the manner in which He makes the next world the consequence of this world; the true knowledge of the meaning of prophecy and the prophets, the meaning of revelation, the meaning of Satan, the meaning of the words "angels" and "satans," how the satans have enmity toward human beings, how the angel becomes manifest to the prophets, and how revelation reaches them; the true knowledge of the dominion of the heavens and the earth; the true knowledge of the heart and how the hosts of the angels and the satans confront each other within it; the true knowledge of the difference between the suggestion of the angel and the suggestion of the satan; the true knowledge of the next world, the Garden, the Fire, the chastisement of the grave, the Path, the scales, and the accounting; the meaning of God's words, *Read your book! Your soul suffices you this day as an accounter against you* [17:14]; the meaning of His words, *Surely the abode of the next world is life, did they but know* [29:64]; the meaning of the encounter with God and looking upon His generous Face; the meaning of nearness to Him and alighting in His neighborhood; the meaning of achieving felicity through the companionship of the higher plenum and connection to the angels and the prophets; the meaning of the disparity of degrees of the people of the Gardens, such that some of them see others as if they were shining stars in the middle of heaven; and so on.[25]

Our author provides similar lists of the sciences of unveiling, as in the introduction to *Clarifications,* and he devotes most of his attention to elucidating what this knowledge entails. In contrast, Ghazālī keeps his descriptions of these sciences to a minimum and emphasizes god-wariness and practice much more than the author of these three treatises.

The title of this book recalls Montgomery Watt's *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, and it might be asked why I did not call it, "The Faith and Practice of a Thirteenth-Century Sufi." My answer is that the three works translated here have a much broader relevance and appeal than do the two works translated by Watt.

The second section of Watt's work translates Ghazālī's *Beginning of Guidance*, which is a relatively detailed introduction to the practice of the Shariah. The first section contains *Deliverance from Error*, Ghazālī's fascinating account of his own intellectual and spiritual journey. It is fair to call this a description of Ghazālī's faith—and not anyone else's—because it is a personal work that tells us much more about Ghazālī's intellectual background and milieu than about the concerns of most Muslims of his or other times. Moreover, Ghazālī wrote the work with clear polemical aims in the style of a Kalām treatise. He wants to warn the ulama—because no one else could have understood all the references and technical terms—to avoid certain dangerous heresies and to recognize the necessity of Sufism for the full manifestation of Islamic virtues. However, he makes little attempt to describe or explain the contents of Islamic faith.

If the three texts translated here deserve to be attributed to Islam rather than to a specific person, it is because they provide a systematic overview of the three principles of faith along with an outline of practice in terms which, I think, would be recognizable and largely acceptable to most intelligent Muslims from the author's lifetime to the dawn of modern times. If the text's provenance were unknown, little more than stylistic peculiarities would make us attribute it to the thirteenth rather than, for example, to the eighteenth century, or to Turkey rather than to Iran or India.

Ghazālī's approach is different from that of our author in the relative weight that he gives to faith and practice. In his best known works and as presented in Watt's *Faith and Practice*, Ghazālī pays a great deal more attention to practice and to the inner attitudes that should accompany it than he does to the actual contents of faith. In contrast, the three works translated here, taken together, stress the contents of faith far more than practice. This is not only because of the peculiarities of these three texts. Rather, it reflects a change in emphasis in Sufi writing that occurs in the 150 or so years that separate the two figures. Ibn al-'Arabī, of course, is the major milestone here, since no one before him (or after him) discussed the contents of faith in such exhaustive detail.

Practically every scholar who has written in broad terms about the history of Sufism has remarked on this shift of emphasis in Sufi writings. Various theories have been proposed as to what took place.[26] Let me simply suggest here that one of the many reasons for this shift has to do with a principle expressed in a famous aphorism by the fourth/tenth-century Sufi Būshanjī. "Today Sufism is a name without a reality, whereas before it was a reality without a name." In earlier periods, the reality of Sufism to which Būshanjī is alluding was the full actualization of Islam on all three dimensions of works, faith, and perfection. By Būshanjī's

time, the transformative power present in the initial period was already being lost. What had been the living reality of sincerity and god-wariness was turning into a topic for academic discussion or a means to deceive the simple-minded. Given that the essentials of Islam were becoming more and more inaccessible with the passage of time, Sufi authors found it necessary to go into greater detail than before. They felt that people needed more detailed explanation in order to understand what was at issue in being human.

Ghazālī represents a widespread opinion when he says that it is incumbent upon people to learn as much as the science of faith as is necessary to keep their faith firm.[27] When their faith starts to waver, they have need of greater explanation. Certainly the historical circumstances between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries—a period that witnessed among other things the serious decline of the caliphate—provided people with reasons to question their presuppositions about the meaning of life. It is perhaps a sign of our own times that many people today recognize a greater need than ever before for the elucidation of the internal logic of religious world views.

NOTES

1. *Al-dīn*, for which "religion" is the most common translation. The root meaning of the term is to become obedient and submissive, to be obedient to God, to follow a way. For present purposes, it is sufficient to know that the term is differentiated from "Islam" by the fact that a person can follow any path as a religion, including a false belief or deviant way of doing things, whereas Islam denotes submission and obedience to God on the basis of the Koranic revelation.

2. In the hadith, which is found in several versions in the standard sources, Gabriel comes to the Prophet in the appearance of a bedouin and asks him questions about the religion. For a translation of the text from Bukhārī and Muslim, see Tabrīzī, *Mishkāt al-maṣābīḥ* 5. A number of modern scholars have used this hadith as a model for understanding Islam's concerns. One of the earliest was Martin Lings, *A Moslem Saint of the Twentieth Century* 44–45.

3. *Iḥyā'* 1:14 (1.1.2.3); see also the translation of the passage in its context by Faris (Ghazālī, *Book of Knowledge* 42).

4. The word *qadar* is commonly translated as "predestination" or "destiny," but these terms have too much theological baggage to suggest *qadar*'s Koranic meaning. In Sufi writings, such as the books of Ibn al-ʿArabī or the three translated texts, the Koranic context is kept firmly in view.

5. See Chittick, "Mysticism vs. Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History."

6. One could interject a theological criticism here by saying that divine grace is being ignored. However, divine grace is implicit in all Islamic theology— when it is not explicit—because human activity is overshadowed by God's activity.

Rūmī often points out that grace and works are simply two sides of the same coin. Typical are the following verses from the *Mathnawī*: "Everyone sees the Unseen in proportion to the clarity of his heart, and that depends upon how much he has polished it....If you say, 'Purity is God's bounty,' well, this success in polishing the heart also derives from His bestowal....God alone bestows aspiration—no wretched beggar aspires to be king" (4:2909-2913; quoted in SPL 162).

    7.   See L. Gardet, "Īmān."

    8.   See S. Murata's detailed study of the heart in *Tao of Islam*, chapter 10.

    9.   Ibn Māja, Muqaddima 9.

  10.   See Wensinck, *Muslim Creed* 125.

  11.   Gardet, "Īmān" 1171.

  12.   In sixteen verses, the Koran employs the root *ḥ.b.ṭ.* (to become null, to fail, to be fruitless) to explain the uselessness of activity without faith. For example, *Those who cry lies to Our signs and the encounter [with God] in the next world—their works are fruitless* (7:147). *They do not have faith, so God has rendered their works fruitless* (33:19).

  13.   Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān* 907.

  14.   Smith, *Faith and Belief* 39–41; see also Asad, *Message* 4, n. 6.

  15.   Smith, "Faith as *Taṣdīq*" 107.

  16.   Ibid. 109.

  17.   Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* 1:19; idem, *Book of Knowledge* 30. Rūmī (*Mathnawī* 1:2835ff) makes fun of the pretensions of the ulama in the story of the grammarian and the boatman. Having gotten in the boat, the grammarian asks the boatman,

> "Have you studied any grammar?" "No," he replied.
>   "Well, half your life has gone to waste."
> The boatman felt sorry for himself,
>   but for the moment made no reply.
> Then the wind threw the boat into a whirlpool
>   and the boatman shouted out to the man,
> "Do you know how to swim? Tell me!"
>   "No," he said, "O you with good answers and fine face."
> He said, "Then your whole life has gone to waste,
>   since this boat will soon be going down."

Rūmī's conclusion is the same as that of Ghazālī. None of the sciences have any use unless they serve the fundamental science, which is that of practice. As Rūmī puts it, you do not need grammar (*naḥw*), but rather obliteration (*maḥw*), which is the dissolution of human limitations achieved by following the prophetic model. Then you will not be drowned when the boat goes down.

18.   Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'* 1:11; idem, *Book of Knowledge* 31–32.

19.   Among the many hadiths that connect god-wariness to perfected faith is the following, which refers to all three dimensions of Islam, but makes faith and god-wariness more or less identical: "The Prophet said, '*Islām* is public ('*alāniya*), while faith is in the heart.' Then he pointed to his breast three times and said, 'God-wariness is here, god-wariness is here'" (Aḥmad 3:153).

20.   See SPK, chapter 19.

21.   Ghazālī, *Bidāyat al-hidāya* 14; also translated in Watt, *Faith and Practice* 107.

22.   Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'* 1:14 (1.1.2).

23.   *Al-'ārif fawqa mā yaqūl wa'l-'ālim dūna mā yaqūl.* Qushayrī, *Risāla* 607.

24.   Rūmī, *Fīhi mā fīhi* 156; translated in SPL 25–26 (see also Rūmī, *Discourses* 163–164).

25.   Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'* 1:15 (1.1.2); also translated in Ghazālī, *Book of Knowledge* 46–48.

26.   Many historians of Sufism have not had much sympathy with Ibn al-'Arabī's theoretical orientation, preferring instead the apparent simplicity of earlier expressions. I say "apparent" because, as soon as one tries to analyze the early Sufi writings and sayings within the religious and cultural context, one finds them packed with nuances and allusions. To make them anything more than "nice sayings" for nonspecialists, one must take on Ibn al-'Arabī's mantle oneself, explaining in detail all sorts of background information, ranging from theology and metaphysics to psychology, sociology, and grammar.

27.   Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'* 11–12; idem, *Book of Knowledge* 34–35.