

Pure Gold from the Words of Sayyidī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dabbāgh

*(Al-Dhabab al-Ibrīz min Kalām
Sayyidī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dabbāgh)*

By

Aḥmad b. al-Mubārak al-Lamaṭī

A Translation with Notes and an Outline by

John O’Kane and Bernd Radtke



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CHAPTER FIVE

[1] Pp. 613-17. Zarrūq (d. 1493) said that training disciples in the strict sense had ceased. Al-Dabbāgh explains that such isn't the case today. Zarrūq was reacting to abuses in his day and age. The true shaykh cleanses a novice's body of its vanities and removes the darkness contained in it, rendering it capable of bearing the secret. The shaykh increases a novice's love of the Prophet.

[2] Pp. 617-21. Halting-stations of the carnal soul one must traverse in order to have a meeting with the Prophet in a waking state. After receiving illumination and the secret one must advance through stations of vision (*mushāhada*). If someone claims to have seen the Prophet, let him be questioned about the Prophet's pure states. It will be clear who answers on the basis of direct vision. Lights that enter the body due to illumination include light from the Prophet's body.

[3] Pp. 621-22. The shaykh's effective will (*himma*) trains the novice and arises from the shaykh's faith in God. If the novice's love of the shaykh arises from the light of his own faith in God, the shaykh will assist him even if he's absent, nay even if he's dead and a thousand years have gone by.

[4] Pp. 622-24. Which is more worthy, al-Shādhilī's path of thankfulness (*shukr*) or al-Ghazzālī's path of ascetic struggle (*mujāhada*). Both are correct but the path of thankfulness is more correct and sincere.

[5] Pp. 625-29. Can a person know what his capacity (*qābiliyya*) is for being a novice? Capacity is like manliness; it has different degrees in different persons. Certain people are innately predisposed to become a Friend of God. Others are predisposed toward wickedness. This is borne out by al-Lamāṭī's experience as a teacher.

[6] Pp. 629-31. What's the meaning of the claim that Iblīs was Sahl al-Tustarī's shaykh with regard to: 'And My mercy embraces all things' (7/156).—? Al-Dabbāgh exposes how Iblīs made use of a specious argument in his interpretation of this Qur'ānic verse.

[7] Pp. 631-33. 'In disobedience there are a hundred mercies which are accorded the believer.' Explanation: the believer is

preoccupied with extreme fear after realizing he's committed a sin which in turn prevents him from committing any further sins.

[8] P. 633. Some theological conundrums such as: 'In everything I see I see God', whereas God is above residence in a thing and union with it. Confusion arises because of the fact that the knower of God sees God's actions in created things.

[9] Pp. 633-35. When the believer visualizes the Prophet's form in his mind, does this form come from the world of the spirit or from the world of images or from the world of the imagination? And is a person who hears the Prophet speak protected from Satan, as in the case of beholding the Prophet in a dream?

[10] Pp. 635-36. During the *dhikr* performance a disciple witnessed the presence of the Prophet. Is this vision (*mushāhada*) a vision of illumination or a vision of thought? Al-Dabbāgh explains that it's a vision of thought based on pure faith and sincere love. Story of the butcher who talks to his dead son in the marketplace.

[11] Pp. 636-54. Examples of intense love that removes one's sense of separate identity. They exemplify the bond of love that's required between the shaykh and the disciple. Al-Dabbāgh explains further aspects of how the disciple must love the shaykh (pp. 638-40). Two signs of the proper kind of love in a disciple: everything he does is for the shaykh's interest, and he exhibits complete reverence toward the shaykh (pp. 640-42). The meaning of 'the body's certainty' (pp. 643-44). Twelve stories that illustrate the relationship between the shaykh and the disciple (pp. 644-54).

[12] Pp. 654-62. Writers on the thaumaturgic gifts of the Friends of God convey a wrong impression about the Friends. People imagine the Friend can do anything, but even the Prophet was only granted some of the things he asked for from God. Differences between the Friends and prophets. Story of the man from Algiers who visited a Friend in Fez but rejected him because of his unimposing appearance (pp. 658-59). Jurists who deny contemporary Friends of God on the basis of descriptions of Friends in earlier generations.

[13] Pp. 662-69. Al-Lamāṭī defends the Friend of God who's received illumination against criticisms based on the *sharī'a*. The only persons who thoroughly comprehend the *sharī'a* are the Prophet and his perfect heirs such as the Support in every age. Don't judge a Friend on the basis of hearsay. Al-Dabbāgh

compared the diversity among the Friends of God to the variety of flowers that appear in springtime. Al-Lamaṭī feels concern for jurists because throughout past generations they've often denied the Friends.

[14] Pp. 669-76. Don't judge Friends of God by appearances. God may be protecting them by making them appear to have committed a sin. Otherwise people would imagine that they're on the level of prophethood. The perfect Friend is like a mirror. His behavior reflects the company he's in. The four categories of seekers (pp. 671-72). If the Friend is overwhelmed by fear during vision, he may do something indecent in order to bring himself back to his senses. He may expose his 'private parts' or indulge in bawdiness and shamefulness. Story of the foolhardy old man who invested all his money in a ship during the winter season (pp. 675-76).

[15] P. 677. The Friend of God's purpose is to bring people together with God. The seeker mustn't only ask the Friend to fulfill his wishes or for things that increase his estrangement from God. The Friend will come to hate him.

[16] Pp. 677-79. The relation between the hearing (*samāʿ*) of knowers of God and their higher vision (*mushāhada*). A Friend who weeps when he sees a cat rubbing its chin with its paw. He perceives this as God's action and prostrates himself before the cat. After receiving illumination, a person remains in the same situation even if it's a reprehensible profession like being a butcher. To change would be affectation and equivalent to the sin of wine-drinking.

(51) CHAPTER FIVE

On the office of the spiritual master (*shaykh*) and being a disciple (*irāda*), and some of what we heard from him on this subject—God be pleased with him!

[1]

One of the jurists asked him—God be pleased with him—whether what's been said is true or not, namely that the training of disciples has ceased.

The text of the question is: 'Our lord and imam, you whom God has given the illumination He confers on His noble Friends and has honored by family ties with the house of prophethood—the most excellent blessings and purest peace be upon him who

possesses prophethood—teach us—for God has taught you from His divinely communicated knowledge—that which, by elucidation of direct speech as well as similitudes, removes incomprehension from men's hearts and frees their minds from fetters, so that they come to acquire the spiritual sciences. For it's reported that the Prophet said—blessings and peace be upon him: "Mankind is God's family, and the dearest of mankind unto God are those who most benefit His family."¹

One of the questions, oh Sayyidī, concerns what's transmitted from the shaykh Zarrūq—God be pleased with him: "Training disciples in the strict sense has ceased. All that remains is training by means of [a shaykh's] effective will (*himma*) and spiritual state (*ḥāl*). So give your attention to the Book and the Sunna without any additions and omissions."² Was this peculiar to his own day and age or has training disciples ceased until the descent of our lord Jesus [at the end of time]—peace be upon him—? And if you say it's ceased, what caused it to cease? And if you say it still remains, then who is the shaykh to whom the spirit of the novice (*murīd*) should be entrusted, and who should exercise authority over it through spiritual retreat (*khalwa*) or whatever he wishes? Specify for us in what clime and what country the person is found at whose hand one of God's bondsmen may attain success.'

And this jurist (52) was referred to previously in connection with explaining [the letter] *qāf* and interpreting the *ḥadīth* of the two books which contain the names of the people of Paradise and Hell.³

Al-Dabbāgh answered—God be pleased with him: 'The purpose of training is to purify the body (*al-dhāt*) and cleanse it of its vanities so it becomes capable of carrying the secret. This can only be done by removing darkness from the body, severing from its orientation attachments of falsehood and then severing from it falsehood (itself). Sometimes this occurs due to the purity in its fundamental nature, God having cleansed it without an intermediary. Such was the situation of the three noble generations that were the best of generations. People in those generations were engaged with the truth and sought after it. If

¹ Cf. editor's ftn., II, p. 51; as well as *Concordance* IV, p. 437.

² Quotation not found in Zarrūq's *Qawā'id al-taṣawwuf*; see different forms of *tarbiya* mentioned there on pp. 39 f.; on other works by Zarrūq cf. Nwyia, *Ibn 'Abbād*, p. 252.

³ See p. 446 and p. 202 respectively.

they slept, they slept in the truth. If they were awake, they were awake in the truth. And if they set themselves in motion, their motion was in the truth. Thus anyone whose deeper vision God had illuminated and who then looked at their interiors would find that their minds—with rare exception—were engaged with God and His Apostle and sought to attain whatever is pleasing to God and the Apostle. For this reason there was much good in them. The light of truth shone in their bodies, and religious science (*‘ilm*) and the attainment of a degree of independent juridical interpretation (*ijtihād*) appeared among them that can’t be described or supported. Consequently, spiritual training wasn’t necessary in those generations. The shaykh met his novice who was to be the possessor of his secret and the heir to his light, and he [simply] spoke in his ear and by this means alone the novice received illumination because of the purity of bodies, the clarity of minds and because of the novice’s longing for upright behavior.⁴

But sometimes this occurs—I mean the separation of darkness from bodies—through the shaykh bringing it about, and this is after the noble generations when intentions have been corrupted and inner convictions have become dulled. Minds are then engaged with the world, seeking to attain fulfilment of lusts and the enjoyment of pleasures. The shaykh, endowed with deeper vision, now meets his novice and heir, he recognizes him and looks him over. He finds that the novice’s reason is engaged with falsehood and the fulfilment of lusts, and he finds his body follows his reason in this. It amuses itself with those who pursue trivial amusement, it’s neglectful with those who are neglectful, and it sides with the worthless. In the midst of this the limbs set themselves in motion in uncommendable actions because the mind which is the body’s master is attached to falsehood, not to the truth. Thus if he finds the novice in this state, he orders him to undertake spiritual retreat (*khalwa*), recollection of God (*dhikr*), and to diminish his food. (53) In spiritual retreat he’s separated from the worthless who are among the number of the dead. Through recollection of God false speech disappears along with trivial play and foolishness which were on his tongue. And through diminishing food the vapors in the blood diminish as does lust, and the mind returns to being engaged with God and His Apostle. If the novice then attains this cleanliness and purity,

⁴ From: ‘The purpose of training is to purify...’ cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 132, l. -1 to p. 133, l. 6.

his body is able to support carrying the secret. And this is what shaykhs aim for in their training and by imposing spiritual retreat.

And so matters stood for a while, until truth consorted with the false and light consorted with darkness. The people of falsehood now trained whoever came to them, having them enter spiritual retreat and imparting God's names with a corrupt intention and a purpose contrary to the truth. Moreover, they might add magic incantations and such usages that provoke God the Sublime's deceit (*makr*) and forms of lulling someone into false contentment (*istidrājāt*).⁵ This state of affairs was widespread in the eras when the shaykh Zarrūq—God be pleased with him—and his spiritual masters lived. Thus it appeared to them to be good advice regarding God and His Apostle to tell the people to withdraw from this kind of training in which the idle were numerous. They had the people stand in the courtyard of safety which is devoid of fear and sorrow, namely adherence to the Sunna and the Book which don't lead astray anyone who takes (54) them as his guide. The words of these masters—God be pleased with them—were uttered by way of advice and caution. It wasn't their wish—God be pleased with them—to eliminate altogether the true training. Far be it from them! Indeed, the light of the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—still remains and its goodness is all-embracing and its blessing will prevail until the Day of Resurrection.

As for your words: "Who is the shaykh?", the answer for you is: The shaykh accorded leadership is someone who knows the Prophet's states—God's blessings and peace be upon him—and whose body has been given the Prophet's light to drink so that he's come to follow the Prophet's steps—God's blessings and peace be upon him! God the Sublime has provided him with perfect faith and purity of divine knowledge (*'irfān*). So this is the one accorded leadership. You must love him and associating with him will bring profit. Indeed, he joins the bondsman with his Lord and removes from him doubts about his knowledge of God and causes him to advance in his love of the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him!

As for your words: "Specify for us in what clime and what country he's to be found", the answer for you is: Praise be to God—there are numerous persons of such description in [different] countries and among the bondsmen. And don't look

⁵ From: 'But sometimes this occurs...' cited in *Rimāh* I, p. 133, ll. 7-31.

for him outside the people of the Sunna and the Community. Seek him and you'll find him! "God is with those who are godfearing and those who do good" (16/128).'

[2]

The same jurist also questioned him about the shaykh who lays claim to seeing the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him! The wording of the text goes: 'Oh Sayyidī, one of them', i.e. one of the questions, 'is that when it comes to someone who claims to see the Prophet in a waking state—God's blessings and peace be upon him—the knowers of God say his claim is only to be accepted on the basis of proof. That is to say, he's traversed all but one of three thousand halting-stations. Therefore it's incumbent on whoever makes this claim to explain these halting-stations afterwards. What I seek from your Eminence—God perpetuate it—is that you enumerate the halting-stations for us, even if [only] by means of a symbol and summarily or whatever is possible of them—and not at great length.'

He answered—God be pleased with him: 'In the interior of every body there are three hundred and sixty-six veins, each vein bearing its own special attribute with which it was created. The knower of God endowed with deeper vision beholds these veins shining and aflame in their various characteristics. Lying has a vein set aflame by its own attribute, envy has a vein that shines by means of its attribute and hypocrisy has a vein that shines by means of its attribute, betrayal has a vein that shines by means of its attribute, conceit has a vein that shines by means of its attribute, and pride has a vein that shines by means of its attribute, and so it continues until you cover all the veins. Thus if the knower of God looks at bodies, he sees each body like a lantern with three hundred and sixty-six candles fixed in it. Each candle has its own quality which isn't like any other candle. Moreover, each one of these attributes has (55) subdivisions and categories in it. Desire, for instance, has categories depending on what it's focused on. If it's focused on the genitals, this is one category. If it's focused on rank, this is another category and if on money, this is another category and if on hope that time remains [to repent], still another category. And the same is true of lying because if someone with this attribute doesn't tell the truth, it's considered one category. If someone with this attribute thinks another person isn't telling the truth and doubts his words and doesn't believe him, this is considered another category.'

The bondsman doesn't receive illumination until he's traversed all these stations. But if God wishes His bondsman well and renders him fit for illumination, He gradually eliminates them from him one after the other. If, for example, God eliminates from him the attribute of lying, the bondsman reaches the station of truthfulness and then the station of confirming the truth. If God eliminates the attribute of desire for wealth, he reaches the station of asceticism, and if the desire for sins, he reaches the station of repentance, or if the desire for hope that time remains [to repent], he reaches the station of aversion to the House of deception (the world), and so on.

Then if he receives illumination and the secret is placed in his body, he advances by stages in the stations of beholding (*mushāhada*) the worlds. The first thing he beholds are the earthen bodies, next the translunar bodies and then the bodies of light. Then he beholds God the Sublime's actions as pervading His creation. In his beholding the earthen bodies there are stages. The first thing he beholds is the earth that he's on. Next he beholds the oceans that are on the earth. Then he beholds what's between the earth he's on and the second earth, because his sight penetrates the boundaries up to the second earth. Then he beholds the second earth, next he penetrates the boundaries up to the third earth. And so it proceeds until the seventh earth. He then beholds the air between himself and the first heaven, next the first heaven itself. And so it proceeds as in the previous manner with the earth. Then he beholds Barzakh and the spirits that are in it, then the angels and the guardian angels, and the affairs of the hereafter.

In the case of each of these visions (*mushāhadāt*) the bondsman is subject to a rightful claim from among the rightful claims of Lordliness (*rubūbiyya*) and a proper rule of behavior from among the rules of being God's bondsman (*'ubūdiyya*). In this barriers appear to him and he experiences hindrances. He beholds frightful and deadly things. If it weren't for God the Sublime conferring success and His generosity toward the impotent bondsman and His mercy on him, the bondsman would return from the least of these stages rendered feeble-minded because of them.

His traversing the stations of vision (*mushāhada*) and their terrors is more difficult for him than the stations of the attributes (56) of carnal souls, because his traversing the stations of attributes was internal and he didn't know about it until after illumination. But his traversing the stations of vision is external.

He beholds it directly and sees it because it's something he delves into after illumination. If his gaze is pure and the light of his deeper vision is complete, and if God shows him such mercy that after it no hardship exists, then God—He is exalted—will bestow on him sight of the chief of the first and the last [of mankind]—upon him be the best of blessings and the purest peace! He'll see him directly and behold him in a waking state. God the Sublime imparts to him what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and what has never occurred in any human being's heart. He now attains the station of well-being and happiness. May he take delight in this felicity!

If you consider the above-mentioned number of attributes and the categories contained in them along with the stations occurring in the previous visions, you'll find that they exceed the aforementioned number. Moreover, the pure qualities of the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—aren't concealed from his religious community. The religious scholars—God be pleased with them—have recorded what God—He is blessed and sublime—distinguished him with in his body's exterior and in its interior—the most excellent blessings and purest peace be upon him! Whoever claims to have seen him in a waking state, let him be questioned about some of the Prophet's pure states and let his answer be heard. It won't be unclear which person answers on the basis of direct vision, nor will he be confused with anyone else. Peace!

Now if you're satisfied with this, be happy with it! But if you wish to hear more, know that if God the Sublime confers illumination on the bondsman, He provides him with a light from the lights of truth which enters his body from all directions. It penetrates the body until it's penetrated flesh and bone. From its cold and the hardship of its entering the body the bondsman suffers what approximates the agonies of death. It's characteristic of this light that it imparts secrets of created beings through the beholding of which God wishes to bestow illumination on this bondsman. And the light enters his body, being variously colored with the colors of the said created beings. So if, for example, God the Sublime wishes to bestow illumination on him through beholding created beings on the surface of this earth, then the light in question comes to him one time and it penetrates him with the secrets by means of which the bodies of the offspring of Adam were formed. Another time it comes to him with the secrets by means of which (57) animals were formed. And another time

it comes to him with the secrets by means of which inanimate things such as fruits, vegetables, etc., were formed. But he won't receive illumination through beholding any of them until he's first given to drink of their secrets. However, on each occasion he suffers what he suffered the first time. And among the created beings is the chief of existence and the luminary of direct witnessing—God's blessings and peace be upon him! But if God promises the bondsman to bestow on him illumination through beholding the Prophet's noble body—God's blessings and peace be upon him—he won't behold him until he's been given to drink the secrets which the Prophet's noble body contains.

Let's suppose that the body before illumination is like something dark and that the noble body [of the Prophet] is like a light with various rays that number one hundred thousand or more. If God wishes to be merciful to this dark body, the light that assists it and provides it with drink comes to it one time. It penetrates it with these rays one after the other. Let's suppose, for example, the ray of patience. By means of it the blackness of its opposite, consisting of fear and anxiety, disappears. Another time the light comes to it with a different ray. Let's suppose it's the ray of mercy. Then the blackness of its opposite, which is a lack of mercy, disappears. And another time it comes to it with a different ray. Let's suppose the ray of forbearance. By means of it the blackness of its opposite disappears. And so it continues until you go through all the rays that are contained in the Prophet's pure, illuminated body. Then all the characteristics associated with black bile disappear from the dark body. At this point the bondsman is capable of beholding the [Prophet's] noble body because as long as some blackness remains with him, blackness is in his body, and he's unable to behold the noble body until all blackness leaves his body.

But we don't mean that if he's given to drink the secrets that are in the noble body that he contains them to the perfect degree they have in the Prophet's noble body. Rather we mean he's given to drink the secrets to the extent that his body and his fundamental nature can support. Nor do we mean that if he's given to drink some of these rays that they diminish in the noble body and their place remains empty of them. Indeed, the lights don't disappear from their place by someone partaking of them.

Thus it's become clear to you that the bondsman doesn't behold the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—until all his characteristics are effaced by the arrival of these noble

secrets and subtle lights. And this involves traversing stations that can't be counted and are beyond any reckoning.

(58) The excellence of God's Apostle admits no limit
That can be expressed by speech of the mouth.⁶

It's as if whoever limited them to two thousand or more was reporting on his own situation and the illumination he'd received. He still lacks what he lacks. As for what was previously said about denying vision (*mushāhada*) to the person who hasn't been given all the lights to drink—what we meant by this was denial of perfect vision. Whoever still lacks a ray of light but experiences a vision hasn't experienced it with perfection. But God knows best!

[3]

And the said jurist questioned him about the novice (*murīd*) who increases if the shaykh is present and becomes less if the shaykh is absent. The wording of the text goes: 'Oh Sayyidī, one of them', i.e. one of the questions, 'is that if the novice associates with the perfect shaykh who's a knower of his Lord and the novice claims the shaykh trains him through his effective will (*himma*) and yet should the human physicality of the shaykh be absent due to death or travel, the novice feels a weakness in himself as far as his spiritual state, religious knowledge and action—then what's the meaning of the shaykh's training him through his spiritual state and effective will and the novice's deriving benefit from him, given that his benefit from the shaykh grows weak once the shaykh is distant from him?'

He answered—God be pleased with him: 'The perfect shaykh's effective will is the light of his faith in God—He is mighty and glorious! By means of it he trains the novice and causes him to advance from one situation to another. If the novice's love of the shaykh comes from the light of his own faith, the shaykh assists him whether he's present or absent, nay even if he's died and a thousand years have elapsed. This is why the Friends of God of every age receive assistance from the faith of the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—and he trains them and causes them to advance—the most excellent blessings and purest peace be upon him—because their love of him is a pure, unadulterated love which comes from their own faith. On the other hand, if the novice's love of the shaykh comes from the novice's body and not from his faith, he has benefit from it as long as the shaykh is

⁶ Al-Būṣīrī, *Dīwān*, p. 167, l. -1.

present. But then if one body is absent from another body, severance takes place.

The sign of the body's love is that his love of the shaykh is for the sake of benefit or to ward off harm in this world or in the world to come. And the sign of love based on faith is that it's solely for the sake of God's face, (59) and not for any other purpose. If the novice experiences a decrease in himself during the shaykh's absence, the fault lies with the novice, not with the shaykh.⁷ But God knows best!

[4]

And the said jurist also questioned him about whether the path of thankfulness (*shukr*) or the path of ascetic struggle (*mujāhada*) is more worthy. This is the wording of the text: 'And another question, oh Sayyidī—God be pleased with you and give you contentment—concerns the difference between the path of the Friend and knower of God, al-Shādhilī, and his followers on the one hand, and the path of al-Ghazzālī—God the Sublime be pleased with him—and his followers, on the other hand.⁸ As for the first path, it revolves entirely around thankfulness and joy in the divine Benefactor without hardship and trouble. As for the other path, it revolves around self-mortification (*riyāḍa*), fatigue, hardship, sleeplessness, hunger, and suchlike. So, oh Sayyidī, are the two not in agreement about self-mortification? And then does al-Shādhilī order gratitude after one has come close to reaching God or when reaching Him, or does he order gratitude and joy in God from the first instant and the outset? [Finally,] is it possible for one man to travel both these paths or is it impossible to benefit from the one without turning away from the other. Give [us] a clear answer!'

(60) He answered—God be pleased with him: 'The path of thankfulness is the original path, the one adhered to by the hearts of the prophets, the elect Companions and others as well. It entails worship of God the Sublime with sincerity in being God's bondsman (*'ubūdiyya*) and disavowal of all allotments in acknowledgement of impotence, shortcoming, and failure to fulfill the rightful claim of Lordliness (*rubūbiyya*), while this [attitude] remains constant in the heart during the passage of hours and periods of time. When God—He is blessed and exalted—knew their truthfulness in this, He rewarded them with

⁷ From: 'And the said jurist questioned him...' cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 213, ll. 9 to -2.

⁸ Cf. 'Eighteenth Century', pp. 341 f.

what His generosity requires in the way of illumination regarding knowledge of Him and attainment of the secrets of belief in Him—He is mighty and glorious! When the adherents of self-mortification heard about the illumination these people received, they made this the object of their own seeking and desire. They sought after it by means of fasting, rising [at night], sleeplessness and continuous spiritual retreat, until they came to attain what they attained.

And from the start emigration (*hijra*) on the path of thankfulness was to God and to His Apostle, not to illumination and the acquisition of unveilings. Emigration on the path of self-mortification, however, was aimed at illumination and the acquisition of spiritual ranks.

Journeying on the first path is a journey of hearts, while on the second path it's a journey of bodies. And illumination on the first path is a sudden onslaught that the bondsman hadn't been desiring. While the bondsman was in the station of seeking repentance and forgiveness of sins, behold clear illumination came over him!

Both paths are correct but the path of thankfulness is more correct and more sincere. Both paths are in agreement about self-mortification but in the first there is self-mortification of hearts by means of their attachment to God—He is mighty and glorious—and their compulsory devotion to His door and taking refuge with God in what one does and omits to do, and avoiding the forgetfulness that occurs in between one's occasions of spiritual presence (*hudūr*). In short, self-mortification consists of attaching one's heart to God—He is sublime and exalted—and perseverance in this, even if the exterior isn't involved with immense worship. Therefore the one who adopts it fasts and breaks his fast, rises [at night] and sleeps, is intimate with women, and undertakes all the stipulations of the law contrary to mortification of the flesh.⁹

And another time, after having said: 'Emigration on the path of self-mortification was aimed at illumination and the acquisition of spiritual ranks', he added: 'After illumination there's the person who remains with his first intention. His heart is concerned with the things he beholds in the worlds and he delights in the unveiling he experiences, walking on water, covering (61) great distances in one step, and this he considers to be the goal. Such a

⁹ From: 'The path of thankfulness is the original path...' cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 134, ll. 2-27.

person is one of those whose hearts were empty of God—He is mighty and glorious—at the outset as well as in the end. He's one of: "...the greatest losers in their works whose striving goes astray in the present world, while they think they're doing good deeds" (18/103).

And among them is someone whose intention changes after illumination. God the Sublime shows him mercy and takes him by the hand. His heart then attaches itself to God—He is sublime and exalted—and he turns away from anything other than God. The situation that occurred for this person after illumination was the starting point for the path of thankfulness. But what a distance there is between these two paths! What a difference between their goals!

In short, journeying on the first path is a journey of hearts and on the second a journey of bodies. The intention on the first path is pure, while on the second it's adulterated. The illumination on the first path is a sudden onslaught that the bondsman hadn't desired and it's divine, while on the second it's acquired by a stratagem and a means. Thus illumination is divided into these two kinds. The illumination on the first path is only acquired by a believer who's an intimate and beloved knower of God, in contrast to that of the second path. Indeed, you've heard that [Christian] monks and rabbis of the Jews practice forms of self-mortification by means of which they attain certain results that lure them to destruction (*istidrājāt*).¹⁰

He said—God be pleased with him: 'In what we have to say here we're speaking about self-mortification in general, whether it be authentic or false. We aren't speaking about the self-mortification of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī in particular—God be pleased with him! Verily, he was an imam of truth and a Friend of God with sincerity.

As for the question: "And is it possible for one man to travel both these paths?", the answer is that it's possible, for no contradiction exists between the two. It's possible for a person to attach his heart to God—He is mighty and glorious—with regard to everything he does and omits to do, while he engages his exterior in forms of ascetic struggle and self-mortification. But God the Sublime knows best!

¹⁰ From: 'Emigration on the path of self-mortification...' cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 134, l. -10 to p. 135, l. 1.

[5]

And the same jurist questioned him further. The wording of the text goes: 'And another question, oh Sayyidī, concerns whether it's possible for a human being to know his capacity (*qābiliyya*) for being a novice or his lack thereof? I mean his particular capacity (*qābiliyya*).¹¹ Or can this only be made known to him by someone else, an upright shaykh or a brother who gives sincere advice?'

(62) He answered—God be pleased with him: 'A person can know by himself what his capacity is by observing the dominant element in his thought. The latter is what his body has been created for, and it's necessary for the body to follow what his thought is engaged in, whether his body was established in it from the beginning or not. Anyone whose thought is dominated by love of God and an inclination for Him, awareness of His awesome power, and fear before His splendor and majesty—this is a sign that God wishes that person well, whether his body was established in offenses or in acts of conformity. Even if it was established in offenses, God the Sublime will see that it returns to goodness, well-being, upright behavior and success. Moreover, the said capacity is like manliness and bravery which differ in intensity and weakness, and you can recognize its different degrees. Whoever looks at a group of boys playing recognizes which one's manliness is strong and which one's manliness is weak, and which one's manliness is intermediate. It's this way with the people of capacity. They differ with regard to the presence of the kind of thought just referred to. Among them is someone who's on a high level because that thought is dominant in him at all times, and there's someone to whom it only comes on rare occasions, and then there's someone in the middle.

The secret behind this is that the thought and the ideas that occur in the interior are a light from the lights of reason which the reason imparts to the body in accordance with the divine decree and what destiny has predetermined. If good has been intended for the body, reason casts into it the thought for good and its causes, so that the body attains it. If evil has been intended for the body, reason casts into it the thought for evil and its causes, so that the body reaches it and obtains it.

Similarly, the good follows the three previously mentioned degrees of thought, and evil as well follows the degrees of

¹¹ On this concept cf. 'Neo-Sufism', p. 72, in particular fn. 72. It plays an important role in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought; see Chittick, *Path*, p. 91.

thought concerning it. Moreover, capacity isn't conferred by what's been predetermined. Rather capacity [simply] appears in everything the divine decree predetermined that the body would attain and reach.

Now whoever looks at a group of boys and it's been predetermined that one of them will be a scribe and another will be a bleeder and another will be a policeman, for example—the first knows how to wield a pen for writing and he acquires this with the least instruction. He doesn't know how to wield a razor to give relief [by bleeding someone] and he doesn't know how to wield a knife. And if he were instructed, what good would it do? And the second knows how to wield a razor but doesn't know how to wield a pen and a knife. And the third knows how to attach a knife but doesn't know how to wield a pen and a razor.

(63) "Everyone is given help with what he was created for."

It's the same for someone whose dominant thought is commerce in cloth and suchlike and yet his father wants to set him up in agriculture. No good comes from him. But were his father to set him up in commerce, what he accomplished would satisfy and please his father. What this indicates is that capacity for every matter is based on thought about it. Everyone has understanding of whatever his thought is occupied with. But God alone gives success!

I, al-Lamāṭī, would add that I heard the following from the Shaykh—God be pleased with him:

'A woman who lived in by-gone days had two sons and a daughter. When she was on the point of dying, she said to those [with her]: "My son So-and-so will become one of the godly men and the other son will be one of the wicked. The girl will come to have much wealth and abundant worldly goods." She was asked: "Do you know the Unseen?" She replied: "I don't know the Unseen but I looked at the first son and I saw that he's filled with fear of God the Sublime. He does nothing unjust to any of the boys. His Lord—He is exalted—is continually present in his heart. So I knew he'll become good. I looked at the second one and I saw he was the opposite. So I knew his final outcome will be wicked. And I looked at the girl when she was still small and I found that from old rags she was making ankle-rings, necklaces and bracelets, and whatever women wear and adorn themselves with. She was always busy with this. So I knew she'll end up with many worldly goods.'"

I, al-Lamaṭī, would add that someone informed me that there was an orphan and his mother put him to work in silk-making. He worked at it and it was very hard for him. Then one day he passed by some people who were engaged in plaster-work and sculpting and ornamenting plaster. He said: 'I looked at them and my mind was swept away by them. That day I abandoned silk-making and went to work with them. My limbs performed the work rapidly and my heart felt enthusiasm. It was as if I'd been in prison but now I'd come out. I possessed a great facility for understanding plaster-work and I never returned to silk-making.'

(64) And I should add that today he's chief of the group occupied with the craft of plaster-work and: 'Everyone is given help with what he was created for.'

One of the people informed me that he once owned a weak donkey and lived opposite a group in the desert. [He related:] 'Among them was a small orphan boy whose only concern was riding my donkey. But he rode it the way one rides a horse. He put spurs made of thorns on his feet and attached a bridle made of palm leaves to the donkey. In his hand he held a lance made from sticks. And so he went on moving about on the donkey. As often as we drove him away, he'd come back to the donkey if we weren't watching it. When the child grew up and reached maturity, he returned with the stewards who train the horse of the sultan¹²—God give him victory—and: "Everyone is given help with what he was created for."'

And here let's relate the story about a teacher of boys who used to test them by giving them birds. He ordered each of them to slaughter his bird in a place where no one would see him. So they [all] went and slaughtered their birds, except for one of the boys who was called Abū'l-^cAbbās al-Sabtī¹³—God be pleased with him! He returned to the shaykh with his bird and said: 'In every place where I wanted to slaughter it, I found God with me.' The shaykh—God be pleased with him—then realized that he'd attain the station of divine knowledge. He gave him counsel and didn't stop watching over him. But God the Sublime knows best!

And I heard the Shaykh say—God be pleased with him: 'If a man is innately predisposed toward Friendship with God and God establishes him among people of disobedience and he remains with them for a while, should one of the Friends of God then pass

¹² The sense of '...he returned with the stewards who train the horse of the sultan' is uncertain.

¹³ See fn. 162 in Author's Introduction; his *nisba* derives from Ceuta.

before him and the man is with that disobedient group, the disposition in him for Friendship with God will come to life—through God’s permission—and he’ll experience happiness, joy and the breast’s expansion. And this will happen solely because the Friend of God passed before them, even if the one innately predisposed toward Friendship with God didn’t know him and the Friend didn’t speak to him and no words were exchanged between them. On the other hand, if they do associate together and become acquainted with one another, don’t even ask about the coming to life of the man’s innate disposition and the increase of good within him during every moment! And if the man is innately predisposed toward wickedness—toward theft for example—and God establishes him among people of Friendship with God and divine knowledge (*‘irfān*) and he comes to serve them and consort with them (65) for a while, and should a thief, for instance, then pass before this group, the disposition for theft in the man will come to life and his breast will rejoice in the wickedness within him. And his experiencing such an upheaval will happen solely because the thief passed before him, without his becoming acquainted with him and associating with him. However, if they do become acquainted with one another, his wickedness will then become complete—God protect us from this—and: “Everyone is given help with what he was created for.”

I, al-Lamaṭī, would add that this is a broad subject and a useful path familiar to whoever has taught religious knowledge and suchlike to the people. If these words about capacity are presented to him, he’ll find they’re like a transcribed copy of what happened to him during the period of his teaching and his efforts. Indeed, God the Sublime—He’s endowed with generosity and benevolence—established me in the station of teaching and I remained in it for some twenty-seven years. When I heard what the Shaykh said—God be pleased with him—about capacity and the spontaneous thoughts that bodies rely on, I compared it with what happened to many people who studied with me and I found what he said to be precise and universally applicable. Thanks to this I cast from myself many burdens that I’d borne while I was teaching them. I’d gone to extremes in giving them sincere advice and explaining by means of offering an argument and proof. I’d wanted good for them and desired it for them so much that it came to inhabit my body. All of this became my food and drink with them. But then after that they didn’t amount to

anything. Everything I'd built up with them over a period of years was eradicated by their simply associating with some idle person, or in fact it was eradicated by my simply neglecting them and not exhorting them. They were like a riding animal that goes on walking as long as you beat it but if you stop beating it, it comes to a halt. With many other people, however, the opposite happened, namely after they'd simply mixed and associated with me, what they heard from me settled in their hearts. And they went on acquiring increase in every session that they sat with me, despite my not making an extreme effort with them the way I'd done with the other group.

I continued to think about this and to seek the cause for it until I heard what the Shaykh said—God be pleased with him—concerning capacity. I told him what had happened to me with the first group and he said to me—God be pleased with him: 'Cast the burden from yourself. You're striking cold iron. People are given help with what they were created for and beginnings point to final outcomes. So look at beginnings and accommodate people in their proper places.' This is the sense of what he said—God be pleased with him—and from that day on I felt relief. I acquired great knowledge—praise be to God—about people's situations with regard to capacity in every matter. Praise be to God!

Now if you're clever and smart, bright and intelligent, place these words before your eyes, because (66) thanks to them you'll rid yourself of many burdens when associating with different categories of people, given the diversity of their natures. But God alone confers success—He is sublime!

[6]

And the said jurist asked him a question that's generally connected with this subject. The wording of the text goes: 'Oh Sayyidī, another question is this: What's the meaning of what Iblīs¹⁴ the Cursed One said to the Friend of God Sahl b. 'Abd Allāh al-Tustarī¹⁵ about the verse of God the Sublime's word: "And My mercy embraces all things" (7/156)?

Iblīs said to him: "Restriction is your characteristic, not God's characteristic."¹⁶ And the verse was a restrictive one and [yet] Iblīs' words were in accordance with religious learning. What

¹⁴ On Iblīs see especially Ritter, *Meer der Seele*, pp. 536 ff./*Ocean*, pp. 553 ff. The story referred to here isn't mentioned in Awn, *Satan's Tragedy*.

¹⁵ Not dealt with in Böwering, *Mystical Vision*.

¹⁶ Al-Sha'rānī, *Anwār qudsiyya* II, p. 4.

ploy is available to the bondsman so as to restrict the word of God the Sublime, although the verse is restrictive without his restriction,¹⁷ and despite the fact that the shaykh who's a knower of God and a trainer of knowers of God, Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Ḥātimī,¹⁸ says: "The Cursed One is the [spiritual] master of Sahl in this regard and his teacher." Give an answer and be rewarded for it. Upon you be the purest greeting and the best salutation!

I, al-Lamaṭī, would note that the description of the debate between Iblīs—God curse him—and Sahl—God be pleased with him—is as follows. Iblīs said: 'Verily, God the Sublime says: "And My mercy embraces all things", and I am a thing.' Sahl replied to him: 'But God adds: "I shall prescribe it for those who fear God" (7/156), and you're not among them. So the generality contained in "all things" is restricted.' Then Iblīs—God curse him—said to him: 'Restriction is your characteristic, not God's characteristic—He is exalted!' At that Sahl stopped and didn't give a reply. Hence al-Ḥātimī says: 'Iblīs was Sahl's shaykh with regard to this useful point, namely that restriction is his characteristic, not God's characteristic—He is sublime and exalted!'

(67) The shaykh al-Shaʿrānī¹⁹—God the Sublime have mercy on him—relates the story but remains silent about it. The questioner imagined from his silence that the story was true. The difficulty in this lies in postulating restriction on God's part—He is exalted—and not on the part of Sahl. Thus he posed his question to the Shaykh—God be pleased with him!

Al-Dabbāgh answered—God be pleased with him: 'The restriction in the verse is on God's part—He is exalted—and not on the part of people. Iblīs' adherence to the specious argument that he cites—God curse him—is a false adherence. Correctness lies with Sahl—God be pleased with him—not with Iblīs—God curse him! The explanation of the praise for these words which passed over his tongue—God curse him—is that al-Ḥātimī and Sahl understood by them something which Iblīs didn't understand and which didn't occur in his thought. In Sahl al-Tustarī it aroused what was in repose and awakened in him what was sleeping and concealed. He returned to beholding what he knew from God—He is sublime and exalted! Indeed, after receiving illumination and knowledge of God as He really is, if

¹⁷ The sense here is unclear.

¹⁸ The famous Ibn al-ʿArabī; not mentioned in Awn.

¹⁹ 'Ibrīziana', p. 144, CI; he died 973/1565.

the Sufis—God be pleased with them—look at the situation they were in before illumination, they find that they'd been imposing restrictions on God in innumerable forms while being unaware of it, and that they hadn't known God as He should rightly be known—He is sublime and exalted! When the Cursed One said: "Restriction is your characteristic, not God's characteristic", these words caused Sahl's attention to focus on the two situations and he experienced what he experienced, even though the Cursed One didn't intend the meaning Sahl's attention focused on, nor had it entered his thought. This is a particular form of hearing (*samāʿ*) on the part of the Sufis—God be pleased with them!

A shaykh came to the house of one of his disciples. He knocked at the door and there was no one else in the house but the disciple. The disciple said: "Who's knocking at the door? There's no one here but me." When the shaykh heard his words: "There's no one here but me", he was thunderstruck and fell down unconscious. The disciple knew nothing of this. Whoever says the disciple is the teacher of his shaykh in this sense isn't in any trouble.

And a girl asked her father to bring her something from the market. The father went out to get it and the mother said to her: "Why do you bother your father?" The girl replied to her: "Do I have anyone but him?" A Sufi heard what she said and fell down unconscious.

In this way the falsity of Iblīs' words—God curse him—are made known, as well as the truth of sudden insights of the Sufis and their allusions—God be pleased with them! But God the Sublime knows best!

[7]

(68) And the same jurist asked him a question not far from this subject, the text of which is: 'And another question, oh Sayyidī, concerns what's transmitted from one of the knowers of God, namely: "In disobedience there are a hundred mercies which are accorded the believer." What are these hundred mercies whose origin is in God the Sublime's wrath and His justice? And what's the secret of their being transformed into His mercy and His generosity?'

He answered—God be pleased with him: 'What's meant by this disobedience is the sin of the believer who's a knower of his Lord's majesty and His awesomeness. Someone with this knowledge only commits the sin in question due to the dominance of the divine decree. Nor do we mean in particular the

knower of God who's received illumination, but we mean one whose faith is sincere and whose certainty is pure. Indeed, in such a case fear of his Lord—He is blessed and exalted—doesn't abandon him even while he's obedient, so how would it abandon him in a state of sin. The cause of fear settling in his body is his knowledge of God's awesome power—He is sublime and exalted! So if we suppose the persistence of this knowledge and the absence of its opposites in the way of forgetfulness, etc., then fear persists and it settles in the body and doesn't leave him, not even when he's in a state of obedience. Indeed, he's afraid of performing acts of obedience in a way which distances him from God the Sublime. You see him trembling in fear of this possibility so that he finds no repose at all. He's overcome by this fear prior to acting, in the midst of acting, and after acting. He continually anticipates what will befall him from his Lord, fearing the awesomeness of divine lordliness and its power. Now if this is the state he's in while being obedient, what's his state like if he's committed a sin?

One of the believers sinned against his Lord—He is mighty and glorious—and after that disobedience he lived twenty-four years. Not one moment elapsed for him during this long period without tears flowing from his eyes because of fear about the disobedience. Thanks to the blessing of the fear arising from that disobedience, God—He is blessed and exalted—protected him during so long a period from committing sins and He rewarded him out of His generosity—He is exalted—with awareness of the Knower of the Hidden during this long time. Due to the disobedience the bondsman in question acquired innumerable forms of mercies.

In short, the matter revolves around fear which is permanently settled in the body and its cause is the continual (69) knowledge of the power of divine lordliness. This knowledge comes into the body from the spirit and the spirit is from the Heavenly Assembly (the angels) who are the most knowledgeable beings in creation about their Lord—He is mighty and glorious! Thus if the body is pure and the spirit provides it with some of its forms of knowledge, the bondsman will profit in all his states, both in his obedience and in his disobedience. If the body isn't pure and the spirit veils its forms of knowledge from it, then the body is given to lusts and inclined to pleasures, and this is what settles into the body. The praiseworthy situation becomes in its view like sleep and what prevails is what has settled in, for the command belongs

to him who prevails. Now his actions are in order to achieve his lusts. He pursues the goal of benefiting the body and not what being God's bondsman requires in order to fulfill the rightful claim of divine lordliness. He sins to fulfill his pleasures, nor is it of any concern to him. Consequently, it's clear that the matter doesn't revolve around obedience and disobedience but it revolves around fear and its opposite. In reality, it revolves around knowledge and ignorance. Moreover, the said number—I mean the hundred mercies—isn't meant in a precise sense. Rather the meaning is what we've indicated. But God the Sublime knows best!

The above-mentioned jurist still had two more questions. Let's present them here and then we'll be free to return to the [proper] subject.

[8]

The same jurist said: 'One of the questions, oh Sayyidī, concerns the saying of the knowers of God: "In everything I see I see God." But how can the eternal (*al-qadīm*) be seen in the contingent (*al-ḥādith*), since God is elevated above residence [in a thing] and union [with it]? And then there's their saying: "He is neither He Himself (*ʿaynuhū*), nor is He other than Himself (*ghayruhū*)."' But this entails doing away with contradictions and that's impossible.'

He answered—God be pleased with him: 'As for the meaning of the first saying: "In everything I see I see God", these are people who because of the power of their divine knowledge (*ʿirfān*)—God be pleased with them—behold His actions in fashioned things and created beings. There's definitely no created thing that doesn't contain the actions of God the Sublime—without His residence [in it] and without His union [with it]. And there are other secrets that shouldn't be divulged and shouldn't be told. In short, the complete answer mustn't be recorded in a book.

As for the second saying, it's unclear. Indeed, the eternal is different from the contingent. Moreover, what's different from something absolutely can't be the same as it, but is dissimilar from it most certainly and without a doubt. Exact identity (*ʿayniyya*) is eliminated, whereas being different (*ghayriyya*) is established. But God alone confers success!

[9]

(70) [The jurist then said:] 'And the following, oh Sayyidī, is another question: "When the believer visualizes in his mind the

form of the Prophet—God’s blessings and peace be upon him—and represents it with a distinct identity, does it come from the world of the spirit? Or does it come from the world of images? Or from the world of the imagination? And is the person who experiences the mental form, as well as the comprehensible conversation and discussion it includes, protected from Satan as in the case of a vision in sleep, in accordance with the Prophet’s words—God’s blessings and peace be upon him: “Whoever sees me [in a dream] really sees me, for Satan is unable to take on my appearance.”? Is it as the Prophet says—blessings and peace be upon him—or is it not like this? Answer and be rewarded for it! And upon you be the purest greeting and salutation!”²⁰

(71) He answered—God be pleased with him: ‘This visualization is from the person’s spirit and his reason. Whoever turns his thought to the Prophet—God’s blessings and peace be upon him—the latter’s form occurs in his mind. If he’s one of those who know the Prophet’s noble form because of being a Companion or one of the religious scholars who’ve made an effort investigating it and then learned it, the form will occur in his thought more or less the way it really is outwardly. On the other hand, if he isn’t one of these two, he’ll visualize him in a human form of extreme perfection in physical constitution and character traits. Perhaps the form that’s in his thought will correspond to the externals or perhaps it will differ from them. What’s present in thought is the form of his body—God’s blessings and peace be upon him—not the form of his spirit—blessings and peace be upon him! What the Companions beheld—God be pleased with them—and what the religious scholars have reported about is the body, not the noble spirit. Thought is only occupied with what a person understands and is familiar with.

As for your words: “Does it come from the world of the spirit?”, if by this you mean the visualization, it’s from the world of the spirit, that is to say from the spirit of the person thinking. But if you mean by this what’s present, that is to say: “Is what’s present in our thoughts his spirit—God’s blessings and peace be upon him—?”, it’s just been stated that this isn’t the case.

As for the conversation and discussion, if this occurs to the person thinking, then his body is pure and his spirit likes the body and doesn’t veil its secrets from it but is like a friend is with

²⁰ This subject is dealt with at length by Meier in *Taşliya*, pp. 369 ff.

his friend. Moreover, the conversation is protected [against Satan] and true. If, however, the body is the opposite of this, then the matter itself is the opposite. But God alone confers success!' Al-Dabbāgh's answers come to an end here. God be pleased with him and give us benefit through him—amen!

[10]

One day I recounted for him—God be pleased with him—that a certain godly man was performing the recollection of God (*dhikr*) with a group of his disciples. One of them suddenly underwent a change of complexion. His state was altered and he changed the way he was sitting. They asked him: 'Why did you do that?' He replied: 'And know that the Apostle of God is among you' (49/7). He meant by this that the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—was present with them at that moment and that he'd beheld this.

And I asked the Shaykh—God be pleased with him: 'Is this vision (*mushāhada*) that the man experienced a vision of illumination or a vision of thought?'

He replied: 'A vision of thought, not a vision of illumination. But even if a vision of thought is inferior to a vision of illumination, it's still only experienced by people of pure faith, sincere love and truthful intention.

(72) In short, it's only experienced by someone whose attachment to the Prophet is complete—God's blessings and peace be upon him! How many a person experiences this vision and thinks it's a vision of illumination, whereas it's a vision of thought! Yet if you compare this category of people who experience such a vision—and they haven't received illumination—with the multitude of believers, the multitude in this respect is as nothing and its faith compared with their faith is like a non-entity. But God the Sublime knows best!'

I, al-Lamaʿī, would add that what confirms the mental vision and that it's experienced by someone who hasn't received illumination is the fact that it's experienced by someone whose love is perfected for a person, even if that person isn't the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him!

A butcher informed me that a son of his whom he loved very dearly died and the son's person remained constantly in his thought. His mind and his limbs were with him entirely. This was his usual state night and day. Finally, one day he went out to the Bāb al-Futūḥ, one of the gates of Fez—God watch over the city—in order to buy sheep as is the wont of butchers and his thought

was preoccupied with the matter of his dead son. While his thought was thus preoccupied, behold he saw him with his eyes. The son came toward him and stood by his side. The butcher said: 'I addressed him and I told him: "Take hold of this sheep"—a sheep he'd bought—"so I can buy another one." A brief loss of consciousness had come over me. When those who were nearby heard me speak with the boy, they asked: "Who are you talking to?" When they spoke to me, I came back to my senses and the boy disappeared from my sight. God alone knows what an emotion I felt in my interior—He is blessed and exalted!'

I, al-Lamaṭī, would add that I heard the Shaykh say—God be pleased with him: 'Love like this must exist between the novice and the shaykh. It confers great benefit.'

[11]

And I heard him say: 'Those who possess this love inflict harm and confer benefit, just as this occurs with the people of the power of free disposal (*taṣarruf*).' And he said: 'If the fire of love ignites, nothing can withstand it.'

I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'A certain shaykh had a disciple and the disciple loved him dearly so that the shaykh was never absent from his feelings and thoughts. If the shaykh did something in his house, the disciple imitated it in his house. If the shaykh, in his house, called out to his daughter: "Oh Fāṭima!", the disciple called out: "Oh Fāṭima!" in his house. If the shaykh said: "Do (73) this!", the disciple in his house said: "Do this!" And if the shaykh began to wind his turban around his head, the disciple would take hold of something and begin to wind it around his head. This is the way his states were at all times in relation to the shaykh's state. Through love like this that reaches such a degree [spiritual] inheritance occurs.'

I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'A certain person was in love with a girl of beautiful appearance. His love for her reached the stage where if someone shouted and called out her name: "Oh Fāṭima", the lover would reply: "Yes!", without being aware of it.' He said—God be pleased with him: 'Relate this point from me, for I saw it with my own eyes. If someone called out her name, he replied: "Yes", and he was unaware of it. Now if such love occurs in humorous circumstances, what must serious people be like [in this respect]!'

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'Sayyidi Maṣṣūr used to say—God the Sublime have mercy on him: "What happened to a certain Christian lad is proof against anyone

who lays claim to love of God the Sublime. The lad fell in love with the daughter of one of their important men. When he'd met her and slept with her in the same bed and his thought had been completely swept away in oceans of love for her, she looked at his face and noticed a pimple on it. She wanted to remove it. She had a knife but it was poisoned, though she was unaware of its poison. She removed the pimple and the poison spread through his body. His spirit then departed while he was "absent" in his love of her. Now this was an infidel. He reached the point in his satanic love that his spirit departed without his being aware of it. So how must the state of believers be with their Lord—He is mighty and glorious—?

I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'A devotee (*muhibb*) derives no benefit from a [spiritually] great person loving him, even if the great person is a prophet. The small person must love the great one and only then will he derive a benefit from the great person's love. However, God the Sublime is the exception. If God—He is exalted—loves the bondsman, he'll benefit from His love, even if the bondsman turns away completely.'

He said—God be pleased with him: 'If a small person loves a great person, he attracts what's in the great person—but this doesn't happen the other way round.' In front of al-Dabbāgh was a pear. He said: 'If God the Sublime provides this pear with love for a sour apple, for example, and the love is very strong, the pear will absorb what's in the apple. If we (74) then split open the pear, we'll find the apple's sourness inside it. On the other hand, we won't find anything of the pear's flavor inside the apple. But it's different with God the Sublime. If the bondsman loves Him, he won't attract any of His secrets to himself unless God loves him. The secret behind this difference is that God the Sublime doesn't love a bondsman until He's caused him to know Him. By means of that knowledge the bondsman becomes aware of His secrets—He is exalted—and thus he experiences attraction to God the Sublime. It's otherwise if the bondsman's love is without knowledge of his Lord—He is mighty and glorious! In that case it doesn't accomplish anything.'

Then I said: 'They say the shaykh is with his disciple in the disciple's body and that he resides there with him.'

He replied—God be pleased with him: 'That's true. And it's like this with the disciple because if his love is strong, he attracts the shaykh so that he's as you indicated and the disciple's body

becomes a place where the shaykh resides. And everyone adorns his place of residence.' Here he's alluding to the shaykh's influence on the disciple's body when he resides in it.

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'If the disciple loves the shaykh with complete love, the shaykh resides with him in his body. The disciple is like a pregnant woman who carries her child. Sometimes her foetus is entirely healthy and remains in a proper condition until she gives birth. Other times the foetus is lost and nothing comes of it. And other times it falls asleep and then [eventually] wakes up. Its waking up varies. It may wake up after a month, it may wake up after a year, or it may wake up later than that. So this is the disciple's situation if he's pregnant with his shaykh. 1) Sometimes his love is pure, complete and uninterrupted, and so the shaykh's affair appears in his body until God confers illumination on him. 2) Other times his love is interrupted after it had been sincere and the interruption is caused by the appearance of a barrier—we beseech God for protection from this! Then his intention toward the shaykh changes, and the shaykh's secrets are cut off from the disciple's body after they'd been shining upon it. 3) Other times his love halts in its progression for a short period or for one of middling length or for a long period. Then the secrets of the shaykh's body are held back from the disciple's body. If the love returns, the secrets return.

So let the disciple examine himself regarding which of these three categories he belongs to. And let him beseech God the Sublime for forgiveness and well-being, for success and for guidance. Indeed, He is all-hearing and close at hand!

(75) I, al-Lamaṭī, would add that these are the categories found among the disciples. So let the disciple be mindful of these words for they're precious with respect to this subject. But God knows best!

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'The disciple doesn't profit from loving his shaykh if he loves him for his secret or his Friendship with God or his religious learning or his nobility or for any reasons such as these. Let the disciple's love be attached and directed to the shaykh's person (*dhāt*), and not because of a cause and not because of a motive, but as is the love that exists between youths. Indeed, they love one another without any motives that incite love but simply out of affection alone. This is the love that must exist between the disciple and the shaykh so the disciple's love doesn't fade into ulterior motives

and causes. For when love does fade into such things, Satan enters into it and introduces many doubts into it. Then sometimes it ceases and other times it stops [progressing], as was previously discussed in the last two categories.²¹ But God knows best!

I asked him—God be pleased with him: ‘Why does love for the sake of religious learning (*‘ilm*), Friendship with God, the secret, and things such as these, not bring benefit?’

He replied—God be pleased with him: ‘Because secrets, divine insights (*ma‘ārif*) and suchlike are all from God the Sublime and everyone loves God the Sublime but up to this point has still not loved his shaykh. Someone’s love of his shaykh proves to be true if he loves him exclusively for his person (*dhātihī*), not because of the secrets he’s achieved.’

Then I said: ‘The person (*dhāt*) of the shaykh is likewise from God the Sublime. Everything is from Him. So why is there benefit in love of one part but not another?’ He replied: ‘That’s true. But by love of the person (*dhāt*) we mean to express figuratively that the love is purely for the sake of God the Sublime because no benefit or anything else can be imagined from the person in itself. If love is directed toward it, this is a sign of purity from flaws.’

And I said: ‘People necessarily must have motives and desires. Whoever tills land for the purpose of winter barley will harvest the same. So he loves tilling for the sake of the barley, not for the sake of tilling itself (*li-dhātihī*).’

He replied—God be pleased with him: ‘Yes, but if winter barley is his intention, though he pursues it to begin with, (76) his thought is then occupied with something else and it no longer remains on his mind. This person acquires much barley and he achieves immense success. On the other hand, if his thought is preoccupied with the barley day and night and he starts thinking and calculating how much it will amount to and what he’s going to do with it if it grows, this person won’t acquire any barley. Before he acquires any barley, doubt will overcome him. He’ll go on asking himself: “Am I going to attain this barley? Perhaps such-and-such a blight will strike it or the Banū So-and-so will plunder it.” By contrast, the first person’s thought is at rest concerning the matter of the barley and the matter of doubt. This is a description of the person who loves the shaykh for his own

²¹ From: ‘A devotee (*muḥibb*) derives no benefit...’ cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 114, l. 11 to p. 115, l. 8.

sake (*li-dhātihī*) and the person who loves him for some [other] reason.'

One day I was talking with al-Dabbāgh while we were in Jazā' Ibn 'Āmir²² in the protected city of Fez—God the Sublime watch over it—and he said to me: 'Sayyidī Maṣṣūr is at the head of the street. Would you like to meet him and make his acquaintance?' I replied: 'Yes, oh Sayyidī, most willingly! How would I not wish to meet the Pivot?' Then he said to me—God be pleased with him: 'For my part, even if I supposed your father and your mother had begotten a hundred who resembled you in your form, your qualities and your religious learning and in every characteristic of your person, inwardly and outwardly, I wouldn't look at a single one of them. You're my allotment and my portion, whereas they're like all [other] people in my view.' I then woke from my negligence and was roused from my sleep. I realized that what I brought forth was nothing. Surely, love accepts no partnership. But God knows best!

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'What seeks the secret, on the part of the disciple, is his earthen body (*al-dhāt al-turābiyya*) and what confers the secret, on the part of the shaykh, is his earthen body. If the disciple's earthen body loves the earthen body of the shaykh with an exclusive love, the shaykh's body will provide the disciple's body with its secrets and its divine insights. And if the disciple's body loves the secrets of the shaykh's body and love fades into its secrets and its divine insights, the earthen body will impede it from what it seeks. Then neither the spirit nor anything else will be able to do a thing for it. So let the disciple make the utmost effort in loving the body (person) of his shaykh, avoiding benefit absolutely. There's no strength and no power save in God, the High and the Mighty!'

.....
And I asked him—God be pleased with him—whether any indication and sign of love exists.

(77) He replied—God be pleased with him: 'There are two indications.

The first indication is that the disciple's repose is in his shaykh's person and he only thinks about the latter, only acts for its sake, only experiences rapture through it, only delights in it and is only sad because of it, so that everything he does and omits to do, in secret and openly, with presence and absence, is for the interests

²² The name of a street in Fez; today Jazā' is pronounced Gzā.

of the shaykh's person and what's suitable for it. He doesn't pay attention to his own person and its interests.

The second indication is polite behavior and reverence toward his shaykh. Even supposing his shaykh is in a well and he's in a minaret, he'll see with the eyes of his head that he's the one who's in the well and that the shaykh is in the minaret. This is because reverence for the shaykh has so overwhelmed his heart, indeed it's even overwhelmed his reason.'

And he said—God be pleased with him: 'People actually think the disciple is under obligation to the shaykh for a friendly service. In reality, however, it's the disciple who renders friendly service to the shaykh. Previously it was stated²³ that love on the part of a great man confers no benefit but love on the disciple's part exercises attraction. So if it weren't for the purity of the disciple's body and the limpidity of his reason, his carnal soul's receptivity for good and his love that exercises attraction, the shaykh wouldn't be able to do anything. And if it were the shaykh's love that brought benefit, then everyone who received his training would succeed and attain what the [eminent] men have attained.'

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'An indication that the disciple loves the shaykh with sincere, beneficial love is the following. His love is able to bring about the disappearance of the secrets and blessings in the shaykh's body so that the shaykh's body is stripped of all that and becomes like the bodies of all ordinary people. If the love then persists as it was, it's sincere love. But if the love shifts and fades with the disappearance of the secrets, this is a false love. But God knows best!'

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'An indication of pure love is that the scales the disciple uses [to assess] the shaykh are abolished so that in the eyes of the disciple the shaykh's actions, words, and every one of his states, have all been rightly guided and had success conferred on them by God. As for what he's able to understand, so much the better. As for what contains a secret he doesn't understand, he consigns it to God the Sublime in the firm conviction that the shaykh is right. But when he considers it possible that the shaykh isn't right, inasmuch as it appears to him that the shaykh is doing something improper, then he's fallen on his head and entered the company of the liars.'

²³ See p. 637.

(78) He said—God be pleased with him: ‘The shaykh doesn’t demand any external service from his disciple, or that he consume his worldly goods on his behalf, or anything in the way of physical works. But he does make this one demand of him, that he believe the shaykh possesses perfection, God-given success, divine knowledge, deeper vision and closeness to God—He is mighty and glorious—and that he continue in this belief from one day to the next, from one month to the next, and from one year to the next. If that belief is present, the disciple will profit from it and profit from everything he does for the shaykh in the way of service after that. If this belief isn’t present or is present but doesn’t persist, doubts will arise in him and the disciple won’t amount to anything.’

.....

And I was with him one day near the Bāb al-Ḥadīd, one of the gates of Fez—God watch over the city—and a certain person was with us. He behaved with much respect toward the Shaykh and was submissive whenever the occasion presented itself such that none of the companions of the Shaykh—God be pleased with him—could match him in this regard. Then the Shaykh—God be pleased with him—said to him: ‘Oh So-and-so, do you love me for the sake of God—He is mighty and glorious—?’ He replied: ‘Yes, I do, oh Sayyidī, with a sincere love for the noble face of God, devoid of concern for appearance and reputation.’ This made me jealous when I heard it. The Shaykh said to him: ‘But do tell me, if you heard that I was [spiritually] divested and the secrets that are in my body disappeared, would you still love me?’ He replied: ‘Yes, I would!’ Then the Shaykh said: ‘And if they told you I’d become a garbage collector and a street-sweeper or something like that, would you still love me?’ He replied: ‘Yes, oh Sayyidī!’ The Shaykh said: ‘And if they told you I’d become a sinner who commits offenses and doesn’t care, would you continue to love me?’ He replied: ‘Yes, I would!’ The Shaykh said: ‘And even if I went on doing this for a year and then a year and then a year...?’, and he counted up to twenty years. The man replied: ‘Yes, and no doubt and no hesitation would affect me.’ At that I said to the man: ‘Woe unto you! This is a matter you won’t be able to sustain.’

The Shaykh then told him: ‘I’m going to test you.’ I said to the man: ‘Woe unto you! Here is the beginning of fear for your sake. How can the blind sustain being tested by someone with sight? Seek pardon and forgiveness from the Shaykh and admit to him

your weakness and inadequacy. I'll support you in this.' Then we all beseeched the Shaykh for forgiveness and pardon. But what was foreordained was foreordained up to the point where he tested him with something that contained his well-being but the reason for it wasn't apparent to him and he couldn't support it. His intention toward the Shaykh—God be pleased with him—then changed.'

I, al-Lamaṭī, would add that only a person whose clay (*fakhhār*) is true (79) can support a secret of God. He must be true in resolve, effective in determination and keen in belief. He listens to none of [God's] bondsmen and has performed the prayer for the dead over everyone but his shaykh.²⁴

* * *

Let's write down some stories on this subject so that anyone who wishes good for himself may draw a lesson from them. Before that, however, I intend to present words I heard from the Shaykh—God be pleased with him—which will serve as an introduction to the stories.

I heard him say²⁵—God be pleased with him: 'Before I received illumination I beheld a black, terrifying form that was very tall with the appearance of a camel. This happened to me once. When I received illumination and I beheld what was predestined for me from the worlds of my Lord, I searched for the world of terrifying form and sought to know in what place its kind was located. But I acquired no information about it. I asked Sayyidī Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm about this—God be pleased with him—and he informed me that this kind of form didn't really exist. I asked him: "So what was it I beheld?" He replied: "This is the action of the spirit—I mean the spirit of your body." I asked him: "How is that?" He replied: "If the body sets something before its eyes and is absolutely certain of it, the spirit assists the body in creating the form which it's certain of and has begun to fear. The spirit assists the body in creating it even if there's some harm in it for the body." He said: "There's nothing which stands up to the body's certainty, whether on the side of good or on the side of wickedness."

Sayyidī Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm said: "Before I received illumination I passed through a place and on the way a river appeared to me which only ships could traverse. It was one of the

²⁴ From: 'He must be true in resolve...' cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 106, l. 9.

²⁵ The next four paragraphs and the first eight of the enumerated stories that follow are cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 106, l. 16 to p. 110, l. 1.

rivers on the surface of the earth. I then felt an immense certainty in my body that I could walk on it and that I wouldn't sink or suffer any harm." He said: "I placed my foot on the surface of the water and my certainty increased. I went on walking on top of the water until I crossed to the other shore. When I came back on another occasion, certainty had disappeared from my body and I began to have doubts about walking on it. I lowered my foot to test the water but my foot sank in the water. I removed my foot and I knew I was unable to walk on it."

The Shaykh said—God be pleased with him: 'As long as the body is absolutely certain about something, (80) Satan doesn't draw close to it. But he draws close to it if certainty has left it. And he knows when it's gone because he flows inside the blood of Adam's offspring. So if he sees that it's left, he approaches the body with doubts so that the body loses the good.'

He said—God be pleased with him: 'And absolute certainty is like the fortified wall of a city. When a city has a wall, the enemy has no hopes concerning it. But when a breach occurs in the wall, and gates and openings appear in it, the enemy makes haste to enter. The defect of Satan and his temptation is a consequence of the defect of the body's wall which is absolute certainty. So let every intelligent person hasten to maintain the well-being of his body's wall so that Satan doesn't approach him and no human being disturbs him.' Another time I heard him say in the same regard—God be pleased with him: 'If someone truthful promises a person something to do with concerns in the hereafter or the present world, and the person when he hears the promise is calm and assured, being certain the promise is true, this is a sign that without a doubt he'll attain the matter. If when he hears the promise he's disturbed and has misgivings about the truth of the promise, this is a sign that he won't attain the matter. Absolute certainty is the characteristic sign of the people of truthfulness and actualization (*taḥqīq*). We beseech God the Sublime by His grace and His generosity to bestow on us His sweetness and His secrets!

.....

But now for the stories! One of them I heard from the Shaykh—God be pleased with him—is as follows: 1) 'There was a man who lived in earlier times whom God intended to show mercy (*raḥma*), and he loved the godly men. God put it in his heart to withdraw from his property. Thus he sold the property, collected the price, and set out with it to see a person famous for

his godliness. Groups from all regions came to visit the person, and so this blessed man (*marḥūm*) went to him with all his money. He travelled until he reached his town. Then he asked for his house and it was shown to him. He knocked at the door and a [female] servant came out who said: "What's your name?" He replied: "°Abd al-°Alī."

Now the shaykh famous for Friendship with God was one of the sinners who spend extravagantly (*musrif*) on themselves. He had a boon-companion who accompanied him in wine-drinking and other things, and his name was °Abd al-°Alī. So he had the same name as the blessed person. The servant girl went off and said to the shaykh: "The person who knocked at the door is named °Abd al-°Alī." Thinking it was his boon-companion, he said: "Let him in!"

The man then entered before the shaykh and found the wine in front of him and a dissolute woman with him. But God the Sublime bestowed on him disregard for all this. (81) He went up to the shaykh and said: "Oh Sayyidī, I heard about you in my country. I've come to you so you may guide me to God—He is mighty and glorious! This is my money. I've brought it to you for the sake of God the Sublime." The shaykh said: "God accepts it from you." The shaykh then ordered the servant girl to provide him with a flat-bread which the man took. And the shaykh gave him a hoe and ordered him to work in a garden he owned and that he assigned to him. The blessed man straightway departed with a serene carnal soul and a happy heart because the shaykh had accepted him. Off he went rejoicing in the work. Though he felt tired from his journey to the shaykh, he didn't rest [along the way] before he reached the garden. Then he set to work with happiness, delight and eagerness of soul.

Due to God's decree—He is mighty and glorious—and His friendliness toward this blessed man, his arrival before the shaykh who was an impostor and an extravagant spender coincided with the death of one of the great knowers of God. The latter was also one of the members of the Dīwān, and the Support as well as the seven Pivots were present at his death. They said to him: "Oh Sayyidī So-and-so, how many times we told you: 'Descend to one of the cities of Islam! Then maybe you'll meet someone to inherit your secret from you.' But you didn't listen to us. Now the hour of your death has arrived and your secret will be lost and you'll be left without an heir." He replied to them: "Oh my lords, even while I remained in my place, God the Sublime has

sent me the person who will inherit from me.” They asked him: “Who is he?” He replied: “[‘]Abd al-[‘]Alī, who’s gone to visit So-and-so the impostor. Just look at his purity of heart with God—He is mighty and glorious—and at his perfect sincerity, firmness of mind, effective resolve, and his deep-rooted certainty. He saw what he saw but his thought wasn’t shaken and no doubts were aroused in him. Have you ever heard of a purity such as his body contains? So do you agree to his inheriting [from me]?” They replied: “Yes, we do!”

The spirit then departed from the Friend of God and [‘]Abd al-[‘]Alī was united with the secret. God—He is mighty and glorious—rewarded him for his good intention. He then experienced illumination. He realized where the mercy had come from and that the shaykh he’d journeyed to was given to extravagance and an impostor and that God the Sublime had shown him mercy solely because of his intention. But God alone confers success!’

2) And another one I heard from the Shaykh—God be pleased with him—is: ‘There was a shaykh who had a sincere disciple and one day the shaykh wished to test his sincerity. He said to him: “Oh So-and-so, do you love me?” He replied: “Yes I do, oh Sayyidi.” He said to him: “Whom do you love more, me or your father?” He replied: “You, oh Sayyidi.” Then he said: “Let’s see now! If I ordered you to bring me your father’s head, would you obey me?” He replied: “Oh Sayyidi, how would I not obey you? But you shall see presently.” And he immediately departed. This occurred after people had gone to sleep. So he scaled the wall of his family’s house and ascended to the roof. Then he entered the apartment of his father and mother. (82) He found his father having intercourse with his mother. He left him no time to satisfy his desire but knelt on his father—who was on top of his mother—and cut off his head. He brought the head to the shaykh and cast it down before him.

The shaykh exclaimed: “Woe unto you! You’ve brought me the head of your father!” He replied: “Yes, oh Sayyidi! Isn’t this it?” The shaykh said: “Woe unto you! I was only joking.” The disciple said to him: “As far as I’m concerned, none of your words contain any jesting.” Then the shaykh—God be pleased with him—said to him: “Look! Is this the head of your father?” The disciple looked and behold, it wasn’t his father’s head. The shaykh said to him: “Whose head is it?” He replied to him: “The head of So-and-so the [Christian] renegade ([‘]*ilj*).”

Al-Dabbāgh said: 'The people of their city were making use of many renegades like slaves from the Sudan.'

He said: 'His father was absent that night and his wife betrayed him in bed. She had a rendez-vous with a [Christian] renegade and she gave herself to him. This was unveiled to the shaykh—God be pleased with him—and he sent his disciple to kill him as described in order to test his sincerity. He came to realize the disciple was a mountain among mountains. He became the heir to the shaykh's secret and took charge of his illumination after him. But God alone confers success!'

3) And another that I heard him relate—God be pleased with him—is: 'A disciple came to a shaykh who was a knower of God and said to him: "Oh Sayyidī, acceptance rests with God—He is mighty and glorious!" He replied: "Yes, it does." And he ordered the disciple to reside with him and to devote himself to serving him. He gave him a hoe that had a ball of iron added on the end of it which had no benefit but made the hoe heavier. And the disciple was to be the heir of the shaykh on condition that he paid no attention to the said iron ball. If he did pay attention to it and remarked: "What's the use of this? What good does it serve? The only thing it does is add weight"—then he wouldn't inherit anything from him.'

He said—God be pleased with him: 'So he went on serving him for seven years and he worked with the hoe. Meanwhile, not one vein of doubt stirred in him, nor did storms of Satan's winds sway him. The said ball became like non-existence which is neither seen nor heard. And this is the situation of the sincere on whom God has conferred success.'

4) And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'There was a knower of God—He is mighty and glorious—who had (83) a sincere disciple and he was the heir to his secret. God the Sublime then made him witness many shocking things on the part of his shaykh. Despite this, no doubt arose in the disciple. When his shaykh died and God bestowed illumination on the disciple, he beheld these things [the way they were] and understood that the shaykh had behaved correctly regarding them. They contained nothing that the law condemns. They'd only appeared to him to be doubtful.

One of these was that there was a woman among the shaykh's neighbors who was known for wickedness. The disciple knew her personally. And the shaykh had a wife who looked like her but the disciple wasn't acquainted with the wife. Now the shaykh had

a place where he practiced spiritual retreat between the entrance of the house and the rooms. The disciple wouldn't go into it but would stop in the entrance. It happened that the woman known for wickedness entered before the disciple while he was in the entrance and then she passed through the house. It also happened that the shaykh's wife who looked like her came forth and entered unto the shaykh in his retreat. The shaykh had sent for her to satisfy his natural desire with her. So she entered and the shaykh went to her. Meanwhile, the woman who looked like her passed on to the rooms. The disciple cast a glance at the retreat and he saw the wife with the shaykh and the shaykh was having his way with her. The disciple was sure she was the woman known for wickedness. But God kept his heart tranquil and Satan didn't upset him.

Then the wife came out and it was the time for prayers. The shaykh came forth for the prayers and performed his ablutions with sand (*tayammum*). He had a disorder which prevented him from performing a major ritual ablution [with water]. The disciple, however, was sure the shaykh performed his ablutions with sand without an injury. But God kept the disciple's heart tranquil.

Likewise, the shaykh suffered from a disorder that hindered him from digesting food so that they prepared juice for him by squeezing a melon and brought him the juice to drink. The disciple came in and found him drinking it. He was sure it was wine. But God kept his heart tranquil and no doubt arose in him.

When God then bestowed illumination on him, he understood that the woman the shaykh had intercourse with was his wife, not the woman known for wickedness. And he understood that the shaykh's performing his ablutions with sand was because of the injury to his body. And he understood that the liquid the shaykh drank was melon juice, not wine. But God alone confers success!

5) And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'A disciple had a brother in God—He is mighty and glorious! This brother died and the disciple remained. And if God bestowed anything on him, he'd divide it between his children and the children of his brother in God. The disciple owned a piece of land along with his [real] brothers. It was unjustly sold off by the Makhzan and when they received the price for it, the disciple's share came to forty *mithqāls* in today's coin.

His brothers said to him: "What are you going to do with your money?" He replied: "I'm going to divide it between myself and

the children of my brother in God.” They thought he was a fool and said: “We’ve never met anyone with your lack of intelligence! Make use (84) of your money. Buy this with it and do that with it. Abandon this stupidity you’re engaged in.”

His carnal soul wanted to incline toward what they said but he told it: “Oh my carnal soul, what will you say to God—He is mighty and glorious—if you’re standing before Him tomorrow and He says to me: ‘I bestowed on you forty *mithqāls* and you appropriated them for yourself and caused the rightful claim of brotherhood to perish. So today I shall let you perish the way you caused it to perish.’”

God conferred success on him. He divided the money between himself and the children of his brother in God. When he left them, God bestowed illumination on him and gave him what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and what has never occurred in any human being’s heart. God made him one of the knowers of God because of his purity of intention, the fidelity of his resolution, and the effectiveness of his certainty. But God alone confers success!’

6) And I heard from someone other than the Shaykh—God be pleased with him: ‘A great man had a number of disciples (*aṣḥāb*) and he suspected that only one of them possessed excellence. One day he wanted to put them to the test and test them he did. Everyone of them then fled, except that one individual. What happened is that he neglected them so they gathered at the door of his retreat (*khalwa*). Then he made appear to them the form of a woman who came to him and entered his retreat. The shaykh stood up and went inside with her. They were sure the shaykh was engaged in immoral behavior with her. Thus they all dispersed and their intention was lost, except that one person. He went off and, having fetched some water, he started to heat it so the shaykh could perform his ritual ablutions with it.

Then the shaykh came out and said: “What’s this you’re doing?” He replied: “I saw the woman go inside and I thought perhaps you need to perform a major ritual ablution. So I’ve heated the water for you.” The shaykh said to him: “You still follow me after you saw me commit a sin?” He replied: “Why wouldn’t I follow you? Sin isn’t an impossibility in your case. It’s only an impossibility where prophets are concerned—blessings and peace be upon them! I haven’t associated with you because you’re a prophet and commit no sins. I’ve associated with you because you’re a human being and you’re more knowledgeable

about the path than me. Your knowledge of the path still remains in you and the qualities I've known you to possess haven't disappeared. My intention [toward you] hasn't changed and my thought hasn't been shaken."

Then the shaykh said to him: "Oh my son, this world represented itself in the form of a woman and I did this on purpose so that the other group would separate from me. So come into the retreat with me, my son—God bestow success on you! Do you see a woman in here?" He went inside and he didn't find a woman. Now further love was added to his previous love. But God alone confers success!

7) And I saw in the book of Muḥyī al-Dīn, the student of Tāj al-Dīn al-Dhākir (85) al-Miṣrī²⁶—God have mercy on him—that someone went to one of the great men and said to him: 'Oh Sayyidi, I want you to bestow on me the secret that God has distinguished you with.' The shaykh replied: 'But you won't be able to support it.' The disciple said: 'I can support it and I have the capacity for it.' So the shaykh tested him with something that caused him to fall on his head. We beseech God for protection from this!

What happened is there was a youth staying with the shaykh, whose father was an eminent man. When that disciple said: 'I can support the secret', the shaykh said to him: 'I'll bestow on you the secret—if God is willing!', and he ordered him to reside with him. Then the shaykh ordered the youth to hide somewhere so that no one would see him. The shaykh then had a ram brought to his retreat and slaughtered it. He placed some of the blood on his clothes and, carrying a knife in his hand, he went to the said disciple. Blood was dripping from his hand and he appeared to be in a rage. The disciple said: 'What's happened to you, oh Sayyidi?' He replied: 'The youth So-and-so provoked my anger. My carnal soul lost control and has slaughtered him. He lies slaughtered in that place.' And he pointed to the retreat where he'd slaughtered the ram. 'If you want the secret, my son, conceal this matter and don't mention it to anyone. If his father asks me about him, I'll tell him: "Your son fell ill and has died." He'll believe me and the matter will turn out favorably. So perhaps, my son, you'll help me and protect me in this affair. Should you do so, I'll bestow the secret on you—if God the Sublime is willing!'

²⁶ 'Ibrīziana', p. 145, CII; Tāj al-Dīn died *circa* 920/1514; cf. editor's fn., II, p. 85.

Thinking that now the shaykh was in his grip, (86) the disciple's face changed and his wrath was visible. But he said: 'I'll do it', though the falsity of his words was evident. He then left the shaykh and quickly went to the young man's father. He informed him of the story and said to him: 'The false shaykh we believed had good in him has just killed your son. He was encouraging me to cover it up and asked me to conceal it from you. If you're in doubt about the matter, come with me immediately. You'll find your son wallowing in his blood.' At that the people exclaimed: 'Woe unto you! Sayyidī So-and-so would never do this. Perhaps this is only how it appears to you.' But he said to them: 'Come with me and my truthfulness or my falsity will be revealed.'

What he said spread among the people and the government authorities heard it. So with the disciple in the lead they hurried along their way to the shaykh until they came to a halt before the shaykh's retreat. They knocked at the door and the shaykh emerged. He asked them: 'What is it you want? What brings you here?' They replied to him: 'Haven't you heard what this person is saying?', and they pointed to the disciple. The shaykh asked him: 'What's happened?' The disciple replied: 'What you urged me and asked me to conceal, that's what's happened!' The shaykh said: 'Nothing has occurred between me and you. I've never spoken to you.' The disciple replied: 'Lying won't save you! You've killed someone's son.' And the people rushed toward the shaykh from every side, [exclaiming:] 'You've killed someone's son and now we're going to kill you, oh enemy of God! You who dupe the people with your worship and deceive them with your spiritual retreat (*khalwa*)!'

The shaykh said: 'Ask him how he knows I killed him.' The disciple replied: 'Didn't you come out to me with traces of blood on your hands and clothes?' The shaykh said: 'Yes. I'd slaughtered a sheep.' The disciple said: 'Then let's go into the retreat, if you're telling the truth.' So they went inside and found the slaughtered sheep. The disciple said: 'You've hidden the murdered person's body. You've put this sheep in its place so as not to be killed because of it.' The shaykh said: 'But let's see! If the young man comes out with no harm to him, will you know you're among the liars who shall not prosper?' The disciple said: 'Bring him out, if you're telling the truth.' The shaykh sent for the youth. He came forth and was unaware of what had

happened. When the people saw him, they implored the shaykh [for forgiveness] and began (87) to curse the false disciple.

Thereupon the shaykh said to him: 'Oh liar, didn't you claim you could sustain the secret and had the capacity for it? So why couldn't you conceal this matter of no importance? But we did this to you because you claimed you could support the secret. Be gone! We've bestowed on you the secret that's appropriate for your kind.' From that day forward this disciple was a warning for those who can learn a lesson, and a severe reprimand for those with false claims. We beseech God for success through His grace!

8) A wondrous story took place involving another man. He was the chief (*shaykh*) of a travelling party of pilgrims and was from the Maghrib. He was especially interested in meeting godly men. He loved them and was searching for someone at whose hands he might profit. This was his usual practice when he went out to the East and when he returned to the West. Then he met a godly man in Egypt who entrusted him with a deposit and told him: 'The man who asks you for this is your master (*ṣāhib*).' Thus he went on making the rounds among the godly men he knew, one by one, until he came back to his home town. He entered his house and remained there for a certain time. Then one day his neighbor met him and said to him: 'Where's the deposit So-and-so gave you in Egypt?' He then realized that his neighbor was the Lord of Time (*ṣāhib al-waqt*). He fell at his feet and, kissing them, he exclaimed: 'Oh Sayyidī, how have you hidden yourself from me? Without neglect I've gone to every godly man who was pointed out in the East and the West. Yet you're my own neighbor and the closest of people to me.'

Then he asked him for the secret God had distinguished him with. But the shaykh told him: 'This is something you can't support.' He replied: 'But I can support it, oh Sayyidī!' And the shaykh said: 'If you can support it, act in accordance with the condition I set.' He asked: 'What's your condition, oh Sayyidī?' The shaykh replied: 'It's a condition entailing no great loss for you, namely that you shave this long beard of yours.' He said to him: 'Oh Sayyidī, how is this possible for me? (88) Along the road to the East I'm respected and revered because of my beard.' 'If you want the secret', said the shaykh, 'do what I've told you.' He replied to him: 'Oh Sayyidī, this is something I can't support.' The shaykh said to him: 'Then you're left having committed no offense against me, since you didn't accept my condition.'

And so he left him. When the shaykh died and the man had missed what he missed, he felt remorse and said: 'If in the time of the shaykh I'd possessed the intelligence I possess today, I'd have done what he said and even more!'

9) And I heard a trustworthy person relate the following,²⁷ and he was someone who used to see the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—in a waking state and smell the scent of the Prophet's city—God's blessings and peace be upon him—while in the city of Fez: 'I was with a Friend of God on Friday in the al-Andalus Mosque in the protected city of Fez—God watch over it—and when I'd performed the Friday prayers and come out of the mosque, suddenly a man appeared who kissed the hand of that Friend of God. He said: "Oh Sayyidi, I love you for the sake of God—He is mighty and glorious!" Glancing at him with a disapproving look, the Friend of God replied to him: "Don't you realize that God knows whatever is secret and has kept it hidden?" That is to say, isn't God's knowledge [of something] and His good reward for it enough for you? The Friend of God then departed.

The person who claimed to love [him] wept because of what he heard from the Friend. I went up to him and said: "Oh you there, what you've claimed is an awesome matter and the shaykh must necessarily test you. Be a man! Otherwise this will be the cause of separation between you and the shaykh."

The trustworthy person continued: 'He was a neighbor to the shaykh in one of the shaykh's gardens and the shaykh possessed a fig-tree within the garden's boundaries. The man with the claim of love used to collect its fruit every year. The shaykh was forbearing. He pardoned and forgave him, and was a good neighbor. But when the man claimed to love him, the shaykh abandoned putting up with this bother and said to him: "The tree is my tree. Nothing of it belongs to you!" The one who claimed [to love him] disagreed with him and said: "It belongs to me!" Now the shaykh entered into serious strife and enmity with him, such that I heard the claimer cursing at the shaykh—God be pleased with him!'

And I, al-Lama'i, heard this [trustworthy] man say: 'We went on the pilgrimage and when I visited the Prophet's grave—God's blessings and peace be upon him—a state came over me. I said: "Oh Apostle of God, I hadn't thought I'd come to your city and

27 The whole story, in shortened form, is cited in *Rimāh* I, p. 200.

then go back to Fez.” From the direction of the noble grave I heard a voice say: “If I’m held within this grave, let whoever comes from among you remain here. But if I’m (89) with my religious community wherever they may be, go back to your country.” He said: ‘I went back to my country.’ God the Sublime confers success!

10) And I heard the Shaykh say—God be pleased with him: ‘One of the shaykhs drawn unto God (*al-majādhīb*) displayed bad conduct and the people fled from him. One day he even poured wine on his clothes. The people smelled the scent of wine coming from him and they fled from him. Only the heir to his secret stayed with him. The shaykh in question said: “I did this on purpose so these ants would flee from me”—he was referring to the multitude of people who were following him. “I have no need of them. There is need only for you!” God alone confers success!’

11) And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: ‘A man came to one of the Friends of God and began to contemplate him. He let his gaze pass over him until he’d contemplated him from head to foot. The Friend of God said to him: “What is it you want?” He replied: “Oh Sayyidī, this is my booty. I want my body to look at your body so that tomorrow it will intercede for my body before God.”’ The Shaykh said—God be pleased with him: ‘That man gained great profit!’

When he recounted this story—God be pleased with him—he used to say: ‘There are still people left in this religious community. Praise be to God!’ God alone confers success!

12) And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: ‘A person of sincerity came to someone he believed had goodness in him and he said to him: “Verily, I love you in God—He is mighty and glorious!” The shaykh replied to him—and this was the time of the morning prayers: “If you wish to profit, don’t ever go back to your house. Go to (90) the East.”’ Al-Dabbāgh said: ‘He obeyed and didn’t contradict him. And so he gained this world and the world to come. God alone confers success!’

[12]

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: ‘Those who compile writings about the thaumaturgic gifts of the Friends of God—God be pleased with them—though they benefit the people by informing them about the Friends, also do them great harm because they confine themselves to relating miracles and relate nothing of the ephemeral things that are done by the Friends who

possess these gifts. Anyone reading their words and seeing miracle after miracle, one case of the power of free disposal after another, and one unveiling after another, will imagine the Friend of God has no lack of power when it comes to something he desires and that nothing in the way of offenses ever issues from him, not even on the level of appearances. Thus the reader falls into grave ignorance, thinking the Friend of God is characterized by one of the qualities of divine Lordliness, namely that he can do whatever he wishes and is unaffected by any incapacity. And the reader thinks the Friend is characterized by one of the qualities of prophethood, namely sinlessness.

Now the first matter belongs to the special attributes of Lordliness and God the Sublime didn't confer it on his noble apostles, so how would he confer it on his Friends? God the Sublime said to His Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him: "None of the matter is to do with you, whether He turns toward them or punishes them. For they are evildoers" (3/128). And He said: "You don't guide whomever you please but God guides whomever He wishes" (28/56).

And the Prophet said—God's blessings and peace be upon him: "I asked my Lord—He is mighty and glorious—for two things and He bestowed them on me. And I asked him for two more things but He refused them to me." God the Sublime said: "Say: 'He is able to send punishment upon you from above you...'" (6/65). And I (the Prophet) exclaimed: "I seek protection [from this] with Your noble face", and God said: "I have granted it." "...or from under your feet..." (6/65). And I exclaimed: "I seek protection [from this] with Your noble face", and God said: "I have granted it." "...or to confuse you in sects..." (6/65). And I exclaimed: "I seek protection [from this] with your noble face", but God said: "It has already been decreed." "...and to make you taste the violence of one another" (6/65). And I exclaimed: "I seek protection [from this] with Your noble face", but God said: "It has already been decreed."

God the Sublime replied to Noah's request to save his son from drowning [as follows]: "And Noah called to his Lord and said: 'My Lord, my son is of my family and Your promise is surely the truth. You're the most just of those who judge.' God said: 'Oh Noah, he isn't of your family. It isn't a righteous deed. Don't ask Me what you have no knowledge of. I admonish you lest you should be (91) among the ignorant'" (11/45). And God the Sublime said: "God has formulated a similitude for the

unbelievers—the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous bondsmen but they betrayed them so they were of no avail at all for them against God” (66/10).

Today if people see that a Friend of God invokes God but his prayer isn’t answered or they see that his son isn’t on the right path or that his wife isn’t godfearing, they say: “He isn’t a Friend of God. For if he were a Friend of God, God would answer his prayer. And if he were a Friend of God, he’d set right the people of his house.” They think the Friend of God can set right someone other than himself, even though he isn’t able to set himself right. God the Sublime has said: “If not for God’s generosity to you and His mercy, not one of you would ever have been pure but God renders pure whom He wishes” (24/21).

As for the second matter, namely sinlessness, it’s one of the characteristics of prophethood, and Friendship with God doesn’t compete with prophethood.’

He said—God be pleased with him: ‘The good which appears on the part of the Friend of God is actually due to the blessing of the Prophet—God’s blessings and peace be upon him—since faith (*īmān*) which is the cause of that good has come to him through the mediation of the Prophet—God’s blessings and peace be upon him!

As for the body of the Friend of God, it’s like all bodies, with the exception of the prophets—blessings and peace be upon them! The prophets are naturally disposed to sinlessness and in their nature is knowledge of God the Sublime and fear of God. Therefore they have no need of a law to follow and no need of a teacher to benefit from. The truth residing in their bodies—which is the letter (*ḥarf*) of prophethood inherent in them—conducts them along the proper track and the righteous path.’

He said—God be pleased with him: ‘Were it the intention of those who compile writings on thaumaturgic gifts to explain the state of the Friend of God they write about, if they recounted what occurred to him after illumination in the way of enduring upright matters as well as ephemeral matters, people would come to know the Friends of God in reality. They’d know the Friend of God sometimes raises up a prayer of supplication and it’s answered, but sometimes it isn’t answered. He wishes for something and sometimes it’s granted, but sometimes it isn’t granted. This is just as happened with the noble prophets and the apostles—blessings and peace be upon them! What’s additional in the case of the Friend of God is that sometimes obedience appears

upon his limbs and sometimes wrongdoing appears upon them like with all people. But the Friend of God is distinguished from them by one thing, namely the divine insights (*ma'ārif*) God the Sublime has assigned him and the illuminations He's conferred on him. Despite that, disobedience (92) manifests itself in him but this is [only] according to what appears to us and not in reality. For the vision (*mushāhada*) he experiences rejects disobedience and it hinders sin, though not in a way that goes as far as sinlessness so that Friendship with God competes with prophethood. Hindrance to sin in the prophets is essential (*dhātī*), whereas in the Friends of God it's contingent (*'aradī*). It's possible for it to disappear in the Friends of God but it can't disappear in the prophets.

The secret behind this is what was previously explained, namely that the good of prophets comes from their bodies (*dhawāt*), whereas the good of the Friends of God comes from other than their bodies. Thus the sinlessness of the prophets is essential, whereas the sinlessness of the Friends of God is contingent. So if the perfect knower of God commits an act of disobedience, it's only to do with appearances (*ṣūratī*), not with reality (*haqīqī*). His intention is to use it to test and examine the person who witnesses it. This involves secrets. We beseech God the Sublime to give us success in believing in His Friends, the way He has given us success in believing in His prophets—blessings and peace be upon them!

And he said—God be pleased with him: 'Whoever knows the life (*sīra*) of the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—with regard to his food and drink, his sleep and his waking, and all his circumstances in his house, and knows his life with regard to his wars and military expeditions, how fortune at times favored him and other times turned against him, and how people requested a group of his Companions from him but then went and betrayed them as in the case of the expedition of al-Rajī²⁸ and the expedition of Bi'r Ma'ūna, and whoever knows what happened in the incident of Ḥudaybiya and other similar cases—(93) and all of this involves Lordly secrets about which God the Sublime informed our Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—for such an individual acquaintance with the Friends of God is easy. He won't consider important the ephemeral matters and the human characteristics that he sees in their exterior.

²⁸ On al-Rajī^c, Bi'r Ma'ūna and Ḥudaybiya cf. the list of Muḥammad's military campaigns and embassies in Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* IV, p. 257.

It's incumbent on an intelligent person who loves goodness and the people of goodness to read frequently the life of the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him! This will guide him to acquaintance with the Friends who are knowers of God and nothing from their affairs will be obscure for him. This then is how much the pen is capable of clarifying. A hint to the sensible and the wise is sufficient!²⁹ God alone confers success!

.....

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'A man may hear of a Friend of God in a distant country and create for himself an image of the Friend that corresponds to the miracles reported about him. If he then finds him to be different from the image previously formed in his mind, he harbors doubt about whether the person is a Friend of God.'

(94) Then he related—God be pleased with him: 'A man in Algiers heard about a Friend of God in Fez. Many miracles by the Friend were reported to him. He created for himself an image of the Friend as being a great shaykh with an awe-inspiring presence and he set out to meet him to acquire some of his secrets. When he reached the city of Fez, he asked for the Friend of God's house and was directed to it. He thought the Friend would have doormen stationed at the entrance to his house. He knocked at the door and the Friend of God came out. The visitor said: "Oh Sayyidī, I'd like you to advise me as to the whereabouts of my lord the shaykh"—for he thought the person who came out to him was the doorman. The Friend said to him: "The person you've come from your country to see and for whose sake you've journeyed for a month or more is none other than myself." The man said: "Oh Sayyidī, I'm a foreigner and I've come to the shaykh in great longing. Direct me to him and may God have mercy on you!" He spoke like this because when he looked at the Friend of God, he didn't perceive any sign in him or an awesome appearance. The Friend said to him: "Oh poor wretch, I'm the one you seek." The visitor said: "I tell you I'm a foreigner. I've asked you to show me to the shaykh but you're mocking me." The Friend said to him: "As God is my witness I'm not mocking you!" At that the visitor exclaimed: "God is your sufficiency!", and he departed. This was because he found the

²⁹ From: 'Those who compile writings about thaumaturgic gifts...', at the beginning of the section, cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 32, l. 17 to p. 33, l. -2.

Friend different from the image he'd formed of him in his thought.'³⁰

I, al-Lamaṭī, would add that many a person has failed for this reason. If someone reads books written about the miracles of the Friends of God, he pictures the Friend more or less in accordance with what he's heard in the books. If he then compares this image with the Friends of God of his own era, he has doubts about all of them due to the characteristics he sees in them that aren't recorded in the books. Had he witnessed the Friends of God whose miracles have been recorded before their miracles were recorded, he'd have perceived some characteristics in them that he disapproves of in the people of his own era. In some persons ignorance may reach the point that they deny Friendship with God to anyone among the people of their own era because of the constraints established in their minds concerning Friendship with God and its actualization by means of rules. If someone applies these rules to a person among the people of his own time, he finds they don't fit that person and so he denies Friendship with God to him. The result is he comes to believe in a general Friend of God who has no existence in the external world. He doesn't know that Friendship with God is purely a question of God the Sublime choosing His bondsman and no creature among created beings is capable of defining it precisely.³¹

.....

(95) A story connected with this subject took place between a jurist from the people of the present day and age, and myself. What happened is he brought me one of the books of the Sufis in which the conditions and the rules of Friendship with God are recounted as well as what the Friend of God who's adopted as a shaykh should be like. He said to me: 'I want you to hear from me what's said in this book about Friendship with God and the conditions for being a Friend.' I knew what he was hinting at and that he intended to denounce someone who was referred to as a Friend of God. He wanted to read me what was in the book and if I acquiesced to it, he'd force me to accept the denial and objection in his interior against the Friends of God—He is mighty and glorious! So I said to him: 'Don't read me what's in the book until you answer a question for me. Once you've answered me,

³⁰ From: 'A man may hear of a Friend of God...' cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 38, ll. 3-18.

³¹ From: '...that many a person has failed for this reason...' cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 31, ll. 6 to -12.

read me whatever you wish. Tell me whether the author of this book has fully comprehended God's treasure-chambers, His bestowal of gifts and His awesome sovereignty? Or is he as al-Khaḍīr said to Moses³²—peace be upon them: “Compared with God's knowledge the smallness of my knowledge and your knowledge is surely like the smallness of this sparrow's sip of water from the sea.”?

Now if you say: “He fully comprehends God's sovereignty and His treasure-chambers”, declare it so I may hear it from you.’ The jurist said: ‘God forbid we should say such a thing.’ [And I said:] ‘If you reply: “He's like what al-Khaḍīr said to Moses—peace be upon them!”’, then silence would be more appropriate for him. He's like the ant that had a tiny hole where he took refuge and dwelt. Coming forth from it, he found a grain of wheat and was delighted with it. He brought it into his dwelling and his delight led him to begin shouting and calling out: “Oh all you ants, no one but me has a place of refuge! I alone am well-off!”’

Then I said to him: ‘Really, you're tiring your throat and causing pain to your head without profit. How is it right for someone who knows that the knowledge of Moses and al-Khaḍīr compared with God's knowledge is like a sparrow's sip of water from the sea, to make a decision about the noble Lord and say: “To this person He doesn't show mercy and on this one He doesn't confer illumination, and this fellow isn't a Friend of God, and the rules of Friendship don't apply to this one, nor do they fit this fellow.”?’ Now if God the Sublime shows mercy to a bondsman who's an infidel and gives him faith, and then straightway confers illumination on him, what principle still remains pertaining to Friendship with God? If you're told that the sultan who's contingent, weak and has been put in charge of the people, makes his slave So-and-so rich, obstructs the noble free-man So-and-so, and rewards the Jew So-and-so in this way and that, you wouldn't regard it as implausible because you believe (96) no one rivals him when it comes to his sovereignty. If you believe this with regard to a contingent king, how can you deny it to the eternal King—He is exalted—based on your rules and your principles? For surely you believe that He is: “An accomplisher of what He wishes” (85/16) and: “One Who prevails in His purpose” (12/21).’

³² On Khaḍīr and Moses see also p. 852, ftn. 14.

And the jurist replied: 'What you say is correct. By God, it's the truth!' Then folding up his book, he added: 'If we were to say these authors comprehend God's knowledge, how wretched would be what we said! And if we said they don't comprehend even a trifle of His knowledge, we must necessarily not put a restraint on God on the basis of their principles. So if they were silent, it would certainly be more appropriate for them. The rightly guided one is he whom God guides, and how many persons have been rightly guided before these principles and rules existed! God alone confers success!'³³

.....

Another debate occurred between myself and a man of poverty (*faqīr*) devoted in service to the godly men—God be pleased with them! What happened was that both I and he often frequented one of the Friends of God. When that Friend of God died, I began to frequent another Friend. He, on the other hand, remained in the retreat (*zāwiya*) of the first one. One day he met me and said: 'Oh So-and-so, I'd like your advice.' I replied: 'Gladly! I'm at your service.' But I already understood his purpose. He said: 'You were previously with Sayyidi So-and-so and his Friendship with God wasn't doubted by [even] two people. Nowadays you've gone to someone else. You're like a person who abandons pearls and rubies, and exchanges them for stones.' I asked: 'Are you speaking on the basis of (97) a deeper insight (*baṣīra*) or on the basis of something other than a deeper insight? If your words are based on a deeper insight, tell it to us so we may tell you what we possess. If what you say is based on other than a deeper insight, tell us its proof.' He replied to me: 'It's as evident as the sun.' I said to him: 'If someone says to you: "Your words distance you from God and bring you closer to Satan", you'd reply to him: "What's your proof?" If he says: "It's as evident as the sun", what would you answer him? He fell silent and didn't know what to say.

I said to him: 'I've thought about your proof and occupied my mind with your demonstration. But there's only one thing I've found as proof for you.' He asked me: 'And what's that?' I said: 'You believe you're a partner with God in His sovereignty inasmuch as He doesn't bestow anything and doesn't confer illumination except with your permission. Conferral of illumination on a man you disapprove of doesn't occur with your

³³ From: 'A story connected with this subject...', at the beginning of this subsection, cited in *Rimāh* I, p. 31, l. -11 to p. 35, l. 8.

permission and God the Sublime isn't able to confer it except with your permission. In this way it's possible for you to deny the upright bondsman of God. If you believed that God has no partner in His sovereignty and no one competes with Him in His bestowing gifts, you'd acquiesce to those good things God's bondsmen have had bestowed on them by their Lord—He is mighty and glorious!' At that the man of poverty exclaimed: 'I turn to God the Sublime in repentance! I turn to God the Sublime in repentance! I turn to God the Sublime in repentance! What you say is the truth. By God, we're no more than meddling prattlers. Whatever we denied was done in falsehood. God alone confers success!'

[13]

And understand—God give you success—that the Friend of God who's received illumination knows the truth and what's correct, nor is he confined to any one school of religious law (*madhhab*). If all the schools of religious law were nullified, he'd be able to bring the divine law (*sharī'a*) back to life. How could this be otherwise? The Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—is never absent from him for the blinking of an eye, nor does he ever emerge for an instant from the vision of God—great is His glory! Consequently, he knows the purpose of the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—and the purpose of God—great is His glory—with regard to His religiously binding prescriptions and other things. Now if this is so, he's proof against others and no others are proof against him, for he's closer to the truth than someone who hasn't received illumination. So how is it permitted to deny someone of this description and to say he's offended (98) against So-and-so's school of religious law in such-and-such a matter? If you hear the latter, then whoever wishes to deny the Friend of God endowed with illumination necessarily falls into one of the following categories:

Either he's ignorant of the divine law which is most often the case with people of denial—and this person isn't fit to express denial, for the blind man can never deny someone with sight and it would be better for him to occupy himself with removing his ignorance.

Or he's a scholar of one particular school of religious law who's ignorant of the other schools, and he'd only express denial if he believed truth was exclusive to his school and he wouldn't go beyond it to any other school, and this belief isn't held by

anyone among the Assenters (*al-muṣawwiba*) or among the Fault-finders (*al-mukhaṭṭi'a*).

As for the Assenters, they believe that truth is in every school of religious law and all of the schools are correct in their view. God's judgement (*ḥukm*) in their view is as numerous as the opinions of independent scholars of jurisprudence (*mujtahids*). Whoever holds the opinion that something is forbidden with regard to a legal judgement, for him that's God's judgement. Whoever holds the opinion that the very same thing is permissible, for him this is God's judgement. As for the Fault-finders, in their view God's judgement is one, not multiple, and only one position is correct. However, they don't confine what's correct to one school of religious law. Rather the truth in a particular legal judgement is the opinion of a leading authority (*imām*). In another legal judgement it's the opinion of a different authority. It would thus be better for the denier to occupy himself with removing this false belief.

Or he's a scholar of the Four Schools of religious law. Yet it isn't possible for him to express denial either, unless he believed the truth had been banned from the ways of following the law (*madhāhib*) other than the four established schools of the religious scholars, ways such as that of al-Thawrī, al-Awzā'ī, °Atā',³⁴ Ibn Jurayj,³⁵ °Ikrima, Mujāhid, Ma°mar,³⁶ °Abd al-Razzāq, (99) al-Bukhārī and Muslim, Ibn Jarīr,³⁷ Ibn Khuzayma,³⁸ Ibn al-Mundhir,³⁹ Ṭāwūs,⁴⁰ al-Nakha'ī, Qatāda, and others among the Followers as well as their adherents back to the ways of the Companions—God be pleased with them one and all! But this is a false belief. Occupying himself with a remedy for it would be better than occupying himself with denial of the Friends of God who've received illumination. Now if you've reached this point, you've understood that in reality denial is only permitted to someone who's thoroughly comprehended the divine law (*sharī'a*) and the only one who's thoroughly comprehended the law is the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—and his perfect heirs such as the Supports in every age—God be

³⁴ GAS I, p. 30.

³⁵ GAS I, p. 91; died 150/767.

³⁶ See p. 328, fn. 242.

³⁷ I.e. al-Ṭabarī.

³⁸ GAS I, p. 601; died 311/924.

³⁹ See p. 458, fn. 76.

⁴⁰ He died 106/724; cf. editor's fn., II, p. 99.

pleased with them! As for anyone else, their silence would be better for them, if they had any understanding. And what we're talking about is denial of the people of truth among those who've received illumination. As for the people of darkness and error, their circumstances are clear to whoever examines them.⁴¹

Someone asked permission from his shaykh to deny the Friends of God who possess the truth and have received illumination. He said to the shaykh: 'Oh Sayyidī, I'll only deny them on the basis of the scales of divine law. Anyone I find who's upright I'll accept and anyone I find deviating I'll deny.' His shaykh replied to him: 'I'm afraid (100) you won't have all the weights [as a counterpoise] necessary for weighing. If you only have some of the weights and not others, your scales won't be correct.' Here he's referring to what was previously mentioned about expressing denial while being ignorant.⁴²

I was with a person endowed with cleverness and intelligence and he heard someone pose a question to a Friend of God who'd received illumination. The question was about the surah that follows the *Fātiḥa* (*umm al-Qur'ān*), namely: 'If someone performing the ritual prayers forgets the surah and arranges prostration as compensation⁴³ for it but then forgets the prostration up to the point that he says *salām* and much time has gone by, are his prayers then invalid because of omitting the compensatory prostration—on the basis that the surah contains three customary observances (*sunan*)? Or is this not the case, on the basis that the surah doesn't contain three customary observances? The shaykh al-Ḥaṭṭāb⁴⁴ and others as well hold the first view, whereas the commentators on the *Risāla* [of Ibn Abī Zayd]⁴⁵ hold the second view. And the questioner asked this Friend of God who'd received illumination to specify for him what was the truth in God the Sublime's view. The Friend replied quickly: 'The truth in God the Sublime's view is that forgetting the surah in no way obligates one to perform a prostration and if someone performs a prostration because of it, his prayers are invalid.' And the Friend of God was a common person with no

⁴¹ From the beginning of section [13] cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 88, l. 20 to p. 89, l. 7.

⁴² From: 'Someone asked permission from his shaykh...' cited in *Rimāḥ* I, p. 87, ll. -9 to -6.

⁴³ Sense is uncertain.

⁴⁴ See p. 551, ftn. 32.

⁴⁵ GAS I, pp. 478-81; the author died 386/996.

formal education. The questioner knew him and knew the elevation of his rank with regard to illumination. So when he heard his answer, he knew it was the truth without any doubt.

As for the man with cleverness and intelligence, he experienced doubt and uncertainty. He said to the questioner after they'd left the Friend's presence: 'Surely this man'—i.e. the Friend of God—'is ignorant and knows nothing. Look how ignorant he is about God's judgement in this obvious matter. He says: "If someone omits the surah, he doesn't have to perform a prostration." But Ibn Rushd⁴⁶ considers the surah to be among the confirmed customary observances, just as he considers reciting it out loud or silently to be among such observances.' The questioner replied: 'The Friend who's received illumination isn't restricted to a school of religious law but he circulates with the truth wherever it circulates.' The clever man, who was a scholar of religious learning, said: 'We never go beyond the teachings of our imam Mālik.'

The questioner replied: 'What the Friend endowed with illumination said is what Ashhab⁴⁷ transmits from Mālik, the way the latter reports it in the *Tawdīh*.⁴⁸ He transmits from the imam that the surah is recommended but it isn't a customary practice (*sunna*). Moreover, this is the teaching (*madhhab*) of al-Shāfi'ī—God be pleased with him—whose view is that the surah is one of the external forms that impart [additional] good but isn't one of the customary practices. If someone performs a prostration in its place, his ritual prayers are invalid. Now our question to the Friend of God was that he specify the truth without any restriction. This isn't exclusive to what's known in Mālik's school of religious law. He's specified what we asked him about. This accords with a particular report transmitted from Mālik and it's also the way (*madhhab*) followed by al-Shāfi'ī—God be pleased with the two of them! So what responsibility rested with the Friend of God with regard to his answer?'

This was the reply the questioner gave. When the clever man heard it, he was cut off and he didn't know what to say. I would add that such is the manner and the habit of the deniers. All you find in their case is sheer deficiency!

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⁴⁶ 'Ibrīziana', p. 145, CV; he died 595/1198.

⁴⁷ *Wāfi* IX, p. 278, no. 4200; GAS I, p. 466.

⁴⁸ No work entitled the *Tawdīh* which would fit in this context has been identified; cf. GAS I, indices, s.n. *Tawdīh*.

(101) I had a discussion on this same subject with one of the eminent jurists among our shaykhs—God be pleased with them! He said to me one day: ‘Oh So-and-so, I’d like to give you some advice out of affection and complete friendship toward you.’ I replied: ‘Oh Sayyidī, please do. I should be glad to hear it.’ Then he said—God be pleased with him: ‘The people are on one side and you’re all alone on the other side, concerning a man whose unveiling and Friendship with God you acknowledge. The people are critical in his regard, whereas you believe in him. But it’s impossible that you’re right all by yourself.’ And he spoke along these lines, this being the gist of what he said.

I replied: ‘Your advice to me would be complete, oh Sayyidī, if you’d answer me what I’m about to ask you. Answer this and your advice will be complete and your reward will be with God.’ He said to me—God be pleased with him: ‘Ask whatever you wish.’ I asked: ‘Oh Sayyidī, have you met the man, heard his words, and discussed any matters with him so that what the people say became clear to you?’ He replied to me: ‘I’ve never met him and I’ve never seen him.’ Due to the affection and friendship between us I cast aside shame and modesty, and I said to him: ‘It surely seems to me, oh Sayyidī, that you’ve done the reverse of what’s correct. You’ve sought certainty in the domain of opinion where no certainty is possible and in the domain of certainty you’ve let yourself be satisfied with opinion or even with doubt, nay but even a lie and falsehoods.’ He replied to me—God be pleased with him: ‘Explain to me what you mean by these words.’

I said to him: ‘When you study religious jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and passages are cited for you from the *Mudawwana*⁴⁹ or the *Tabṣira*⁵⁰ of al-Lakhmī or the *Bayān*⁵¹ of Ibn Rushd or the *Jawāhir*⁵² of Ibn Shās and from (102) a compendium of jurisprudence like these, if it’s possible to consult these sources and to see them for yourself, surely you don’t rely on the quotation of an intermediary, even if the intermediary is someone such as Ibn Marzūq⁵³ and al-Ḥaṭṭāb and the *Tawḍīḥ* and others like that. This is the domain of opinion but it’s as if you’re

49 ‘Ibrīziana’, p. 145, CIII; by Saḥnūn who isn’t mentioned here; he died 240/854.

50 ‘Ibrīziana’, p. 145, CIV; al-Lakhmī died 478/1085 or 498/1104

51 ‘Ibrīziana’, p. 145, CV; Ibn Rushd died 520/1126.

52 ‘Ibrīziana’, p. 145, CVI; Ibn Shās died 610/1213.

53 Cf. editor’s ftn., II, p. 102; he died 564/1169.

seeking certainty and so you aren't satisfied with the quotation of trustworthy, established witnesses but you approach the matter directly for yourself. Yet in this area certainty is never possible. What you do is muster stronger opinion against opinion which is weaker than it. After all, quotation by the said intermediaries is closer to what's correct 1) because they're closer in time to the authors of the Six Compendia [of the canonical *ḥadīths*]. Indeed, they're closer to them than we are without a doubt. And 2) because the manuscripts available to the intermediary on these principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl*) have been transmitted by one of the paths for transmitting reports. But in our case we have no direct report about them and no sound manuscripts dealing with them. It's even possible that your manuscript copy contains additions and omissions. So with what certainty do you reject al-Ḥaṭṭāb's quotation from them, given that he benefits from the two points mentioned, whereas you don't?

As for your being satisfied with opinion in the domain where certainty is possible, this man, about whom you've heard what you've heard, exists, is alive and is present with you in the city and no great distance separates the two of you. Coming to know him is a felicity not followed by wretchedness, if God bestows success in loving him and according him leadership. It's perfectly possible for you to go before him and then to believe in him, know happiness and win profit, or to criticize him and go away. You'll experience certainty with regard to one of these attitudes and the darkness of doubt will disappear from your heart. But in this profitable matter and likely good, whose benefit is assured and whose possessor attains success, you're satisfied with the transmission of godless men and liars. It's been your regular practice, in the domain of opinion and little profit, not to be satisfied with the transmission of trustworthy, reliable men but to engage in the matter directly for yourself. So shouldn't you proceed the same way in this domain which is the domain of certainty, the benefit of which is pure felicity? Isn't your behavior—God be pleased with you—the reverse of what's correct?

The jurist said—God be pleased with him: 'You've silenced me with this argument. By God, I'll never be able to give an answer to it. Bear witness that I turn to God in repentance—He is mighty and glorious!'

I said to the shaykh in question: 'In (103) that case you must follow my example for two particular reasons. Firstly, you know

my deeper vision concerning things. Secondly, you know I've kept company with the said man for many years. So I know what no one else knows about him. As for those liars and godless persons, most of them like yourself have never met him. They depend instead on hearsay which has no basis to it and the cause for this is that they're excluded and forsaken [by God]. We beseech God for success, through His grace, His generosity and His nobility!' The jurist said—God be pleased with him: 'There's nothing to add to what you say.'

Next another jurist met me and he was one of the shaykhs of the previous jurist. He said to me: 'So-and-so tells me you have a cogent argument for every opponent.' Then he looked at the previously mentioned jurist and said: 'Didn't you tell me So-and-so said this and that to you?' He replied: 'Yes, I did.' The two of them then said together: 'With those words you've severed our back.'

I would add that these two jurists are the very top of their category among the people of this day and age. No one in their era has attained their level. As for the people of denial below these two, most of them depend on hearsay which has no basis to it, as previously indicated. The most clever among them, with regard to his denial, relies on saying: 'We used to know Sayyidī So-and-so and he wasn't like this'—he means here that the person being denounced wasn't like Sayyidī So-and-so. He doesn't know that flowers are of many kinds, and as for the palm-tree: 'Palms in pairs and palms single, watered with one water. And some of them We give preference above others with regard to fruit. Surely there are signs in that for a people who understand' (13/4).

I entered a garden in the season of spring with the Shaykh—God be pleased with him! For a while he looked at the variety of its flowers and its blossoms. Then he lifted his head to me and said: 'Whoever wishes to know the variety of the Friends of God and the difference between them in halting-stations and states despite their being rightly guided and correct, and their sweetness in the hearts of the people, let him look at the variety of these blossoms and flowers with their sweetness in hearts.' But if he says: 'Sayyidī So-and-so whom I knew wasn't like this', confining God's mercy to the Friend of God he was acquainted with, then he's rendered narrow what's spacious. When the bedouin who (104) urinated in the mosque said: 'Oh Lord God, have mercy on me and on Muḥammad but don't have mercy on

anyone besides us!', the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—said to him: 'Verily, you've fenced in what's spacious.'⁵⁴ And if what [the critic] said is because he thinks all who've been shown mercy must be like the Friend of God he was acquainted with, it's been previously stated that they consist of a variety of kinds. Moreover, the criticism would have to be uniformly applied. Thus this objection would also apply to the Friend of God he knew. Surely he wasn't like the Friend of God who went before him. If it's objected that the third wasn't like the second, it's objected that the second wasn't like the first who went before him.

.....

I've discussed this subject at length and recounted these debates that took place between myself and the jurists—God be pleased with them—out of a desire that good should come to the group of jurists and students of religious learning, and out of love for them and by way of sincere advice. For they've been afflicted with denial of the pious, virtuous and pure lords in all the generations and the ages throughout all the rural districts, villages and big cities. But their denial doesn't go beyond what I've mentioned on this subject.⁵⁵ Indeed, whoever among them is just and thinks over what we've written here will change his stance. The truth will become evident for him and what's correct will appear to him. I've so often engaged in debate with the jurists on this subject, thinking that they based their denial on genuine matters. But when I examined them I found the matter as I've described it to you. But God is the guide to what's correct. There's no Lord except Him and no good except His good! 'In Him I have put my trust and to Him I turn in repentance' (11/88).

[14]

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'One shouldn't look⁵⁶ at the exterior of the Friend of God and weigh [matters] in accordance with it. Whoever does so will forfeit this world and the world to come. Wondrous and marvelous things are contained in the Friend of God's interior. He can only be

⁵⁴ Cf. editor's fn., II, p. 104; and *Concordance* I, p. 424.

⁵⁵ Conservative Islamic circles are on record as opposing Sufi currents of thought and the spiritual claims of the Friends of God since the second century of the *hijra*. Jurists have always been in the forefront of that opposition. See *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, Introduction, pp. 1 ff.

⁵⁶ From: 'One shouldn't look at the exterior...' the whole of section [14] is cited in *Rimāh* I, pp. 126-130.

compared to a piece of wool with a piece of silk inside it that's only revealed in the hereafter. It's the reverse with anyone who isn't a Friend of God. They're like a piece of silk that contains a piece of wool inside it. God protect us from this situation!

(105) And let's write down the many reasons we've heard from the Shaykh—God be pleased with him—for the appearance of offenses in the exterior of the Friend of God. These were scattered [remarks] that we've collected together here. And so we say the following:

I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'One of the strictly truthful (*ṣiddīqūn*) Friends of God had a sincere disciple who loved him very much. God caused the disciple to be aware of the secrets of his Friendship with God so that he exaggerated his love for him. He almost considered his shaykh to be in the halting-station of prophethood. God then made the shaykh appear to have committed the sin of fornication, as a mercy on behalf of the said disciple. When the disciple saw this, he renounced that exaggeration in belief and accorded his shaykh his rightful place. God then bestowed illumination on the disciple.' Al-Dabbāgh said—God be pleased with him: 'Had the disciple persisted in his first belief, he'd have become one of the infidel apostates. We beseech God for protection from this!'

He said—God be pleased with him: 'This is one of the secrets regarding things that appeared in connection with the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—such as in the case of pollinating the palm-trees when he said: "If you didn't do it, they'd [still] turn out well."⁵⁷ So then they omitted the pollination and bad dates resulted, i.e. the dates were no good.

Another one was that he said—God's blessings and peace be upon him: "I beheld in a dream that we entered the Holy Mosque [in Mecca] in safety, having shaved and cut our hair."⁵⁸ Then he came forth—blessings and peace be upon him—with his noble Companions—God be pleased with them—but the polytheists drove them off and they only entered a year later. And there were other cases like that. God—He is sublime and exalted—did these things with his noble Prophet lest the Companions believe he was endowed with divinity. And that's why God the Sublime said: "You don't guide whomever you please, but God guides whomever He wishes" (28/56). And God the Sublime said: "You have no part in the matter" (3/128), and other things like that.

⁵⁷ See p. 390, at the beginning of section [18].

⁵⁸ Not found.

And the purpose in all this is concentration on God—He is exalted! But God knows best!’

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: ‘The perfect Friend of God varies in accordance with the hearts and intentions of those who seek him. Whoever has a pure intention will see him in perfection itself. Miracles appear to him from the Friend and what’s pleasing. But whoever has a bad intention will experience the opposite of this. In reality, what appears to each (106) individual is only what’s attractive and ugly in his own interior. The Friend of God is like a mirror in which attractive and ugly images are revealed. For whomever perfection and guidance toward God appear from the Friend, let him praise God—He is blessed and exalted! For whomever something other than this appears let him seek the cause with himself.’

Al-Dabbāgh said—God be pleased with him: ‘If God wants the wretchedness of a group and their lack of benefiting through the Friend of God, He employs him in the wickedness and disobedience they’re engaged in and they think the Friend is like themselves. But that’s not how he is. As a result, the Friend, in his state of Friendship with God, is represented as sitting with a company who drink wine and as drinking wine with them. And so they think he’s a wine-drinker. In fact, his spirit has taken on a particular form and makes appear what it makes appear. In reality, the form is non-existent. Actually, it’s the shadow of his body. It behaves as they behave, like an image that appears in a mirror. Thus if you begin to speak, it speaks and if you start to eat, it eats. If you begin to drink, it drinks. If you start laughing, it laughs and if you undertake motion, it moves. It imitates you in everything that comes forth from you. But in reality neither eating nor anything else comes forth from it because it’s the shadow of your body, not something real. So if God wishes the wretchedness of a group, the Friend of God appears with them by means of the shadow of his body and begins to practice whatever they practice. But God alone confers success!’

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: ‘The Friend of God considers the interior of the persons who seek him. As for their exterior, it’s of no consequence to him. The seekers comprise four categories. One category has an exterior that’s equal to its interior with regard to belief. This is the happiest category. Another category has an exterior that’s equal to its interior in disapproval. And this is the most far afield. Another category has a believing exterior but its interior is disapproving.

This is the most harmful of the categories for the Friend of God, as was the hypocrite in connection with the Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—because if the Friend looks at his exterior and wishes to benefit him, the interior obstructs him. And if, having seen his interior, he wishes to be distant from him, the person's exterior gives him hope.'

He said—God be pleased with him: 'The Friend of God hears the speech of the interior, just as he hears the speech of the exterior. For the Friend this category is like someone with whom two men have sat down, the one inside the other. The visible man says: "You're my lord. I submit to your command and your prohibition. I'll be obedient and follow your direction." But the one on the inside says: "You aren't a Friend of God. The people are mistaken in what (107) they think about you. I'm in doubt about your affair and what the people say about you." And other things like this.

Now an ignorant person who isn't familiar with the interior considers this category to be equal to the first category. So if he sees the first category gain profit—and this category does obtain much good from the Friend of God—he says to himself: "Why doesn't the third category gain profit? After all, this person behaves properly and performs service himself and complies with commands and prohibitions like the first category." Then he says to himself: "Maybe there's some flaw and deficiency on the part of the Friend of God?" This is a wide door to discussion about shaykhs and for the intrusion of doubt about them.

As for the fourth category, it has an interior which is believing and an exterior which is disapproving. One can only imagine this as coming from envy. We beseech God for protection and well-being, through His grace and His nobility—amen!

And I questioned him one day—God be pleased with him—asking him: 'These sciences that emerge from you and that you speak about, do you have need of "seeking (*qasḍ*)" and "being made use of (*isti'māl*)" as far as they're concerned, or not?'

He replied—God be pleased with him: 'The perfect Friend of God is absent in the vision of the True—He is sublime and exalted—and isn't veiled from Him for the blinking of an eye. His exterior is with mankind, and the True—He is exalted—makes use (*yast'amil*) of his exterior with the seekers according to what's been divinely preordained for them. Someone whom God has assigned mercy from a Friend, God designates that exterior for him and makes the Friend utter sciences and makes appear for

him good things that are beyond description. As for someone whom God wishes ill and hasn't assigned anything from the Friend's hand, He withholds the Friend from him and prevents him from uttering divine insights. I can only make a comparison between the Friend of God with the seekers and the rock of the Israelites.⁵⁹ If the rock were in the presence of the Friends of God the Sublime, twelve springs would gush forth from it, whereas if it were in the presence of His enemies—He is exalted—not a single drop would emerge from it.'

I, al-Lamaʿī, would add that I witnessed this numerous times in the Shaykh—God be pleased with him! If someone was before him who didn't believe in him, not one instructive point would emerge from him. He'd be unable to talk about any of the sciences directly imparted from God (*ladunī*) and the Lordly insights until that person got up and left. And he'd counsel us, (108) saying: 'When someone like this man is present, don't ask me anything until he gets up and leaves.' Before this counsel we were ignorant of the matter. We'd question the Shaykh and want to extract precious things and Lordly secrets from him so the man who was present would hear and repent. But when we questioned him—God be pleased with him—we found him to be like a different man whom we didn't know and who didn't know us. It was as if the sciences that appeared from him had never been of importance to him. That was until he told us what the cause was and we understood the secret behind it. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'The great Friend of God sins as far as matters appear to people but he isn't a sinner. In fact, his spirit veils his body and appears in its form. Thus, if the body engages in sin, it isn't sin. For instance, if it eats something forbidden, as soon as it places it in its mouth, it can cast it anywhere it wishes. The cause of this apparent sin is the wretchedness (damnation) of those present—God the Sublime protect us from this! Likewise, if you see a great Friend of God perform a miracle, bear witness that God the Sublime wishes good to those who are present. If he commits a sin, bear witness to their wretchedness (damnation). Just as their spirits have charge over their thaumaturgic gifts, they also have charge over their apparent sins. But God knows best!'

⁵⁹ When the Israelites wandered in the Sinai desert and had need of water, Moses struck a rock with his staff. 'Thereupon twelve springs gushed from the rock' (Q. 2/69).

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: ‘The Friend of God may be overwhelmed by direct vision and fear that his earthen body will be destroyed. He may then make use of things which return him to his senses, even if they entail what’s reprehensible, in accordance with: “If two harms present themselves, you undertake the lesser one.” Now if someone saw him do this and didn’t know the explanation for it, he might rush to denounce him and be deprived of his blessing (*baraka*). It’s stipulated in law—that is in the pure *sharī‘a*—that if a limb is afflicted with a gangrenous sore and this causes fear for the body, it’s permitted to amputate the limb to save the body. This is the case even though a limb isn’t to be harmed. But this is in accordance with: “If two harms present themselves, you undertake the lesser one.” Similarly, if a person fears perishing from intense hunger, it’s permitted to eat carrion, both to consume one’s fill and to provide oneself with provisions from it. And there are other such applied rules which fall under this principle. These things which cause the body of the Friend to return to its senses were (109) habitual practices before illumination. And every body has its own habits. Now understand this on the basis of a hint, for a detailed explanation and explicitness would prove disagreeable. But God knows best!’

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: ‘If the private parts of someone other than a Friend of God are exposed, the noble angels flee from him because they’re overcome with shame. And the meaning of “private parts” is the physical private parts which are visible, as well as the mental private parts which consist of bawdiness and shameless language. But in the Friend of God’s case, the angels don’t flee from him if he behaves like this because he does so for a proper reason. He ceases to cover his private parts for the sake of something more worthy. After all: “One carries out the stronger of two benefits.” Moreover, he’s rewarded for covering his private parts, even though he didn’t do so. For it was only because something stronger impeded him that he failed to do it. If it hadn’t been for that something stronger, he’d have done it. So it’s as if he did the two together and he’s rewarded for both of them.’

I asked: ‘What’s this stronger thing for the sake of which he abandoned covering his private parts or for the sake of which he spoke using bawdy language?’

He replied—God be pleased with him: ‘Everything that causes the body to return to its world of the senses and causes its reason

to return. So if for one person exposing his private parts achieves this, that's what he does. If for someone else bawdy speech and shameless words bring it about, that's what he does. And if for a third person something else from among ephemeral things achieves this, then that's what he does. And so on and so forth.'

Then I said: 'Why does the body have need of something that makes it return to the world of the senses? Can it be absent from that world?'

He replied—God be pleased with him: 'Yes, a person can be absent from it.' And he made use of a similitude to explain the absence in question. He said: 'It's like a man who has six hundred *qinṭārs* [of silver]. He's grown old and become blind. He's completely cut off from managing affairs (*tadbīr*). None the less, he has innumerable children and they're all small and incapable of anything. Then he sends the money for the purpose of trade with people who travel the sea at a time when the sea is terrifying, highly destructive and unsafe. He hasn't set aside a single cent (*fil*s) for himself and his children. And don't ask about the state of the man's reason. It departed with the people of the ship and has become completely separated from the body. It's then that two afflictions befall him.

(110) The first of them is the blocking of the orifices of the arteries that bring nourishment to the body. This takes place because they're burned by the heat that arises when his thought becomes preoccupied with the matter of the ship.'

I, al-Lamaṭī, would note that I beheld a man, one of those who know the glorious Qur'ān by heart and a man of religious learning, whose reason was damaged—we beseech God for protection from this—because of a desire for predicting affairs (*tadbīr*), alchemy and treasures. This concern settled in his reason and his thought was engaged with it day after day. His complexion became sallow, he sat very little with people, and eventually he only ate a small amount of food. His situation went on getting worse until he soon died—we beseech God for protection from this! And the secret behind this was what the Shaykh indicated—God be pleased with him—regarding the blockage of the orifices of the arteries which nourish the body. This causes the body to suffer damage, and a man's bloom and freshness disappears. He succumbs to a yellow pallor and languishing until he wastes away and dies.

[He said:] 'And the second affliction is that if reason departs with the people of the ship and is cut off from the body for a

long absence, the spirit will then come forth from the body and never return to it. For when it was breathed into the body in the first place, it entered grudgingly and unwillingly. So once it finds a way to come forth, it will come forth and never return to the body again. Now if God decides that the body's appointed hour has elapsed, this is the start of its illness and the appearance of its infirmities until God's command arrives. But if God—He is sublime—decides the body is to linger for a while, the spirit will come forth from it along with the reason, which is the spirit's innermost secret, and take charge of managing the body, despite being separated and cut off from it. This is the beginning of feeble-mindedness. If the man in question were to find a means to return his reason to its first situation and to remove the people of the ship from his reason, he'd remain safe from these two afflictions.'

He said: 'Friends of God the Sublime experience absences the same way. Thus if you see them making use of some bawdiness and laughter and things like that which causes their reason to return to them and preserves the continuance of their bodies for them, don't act in haste and deny them. Indeed, they only avail themselves of such things for this proper purpose, and people have benefit from them during the period their bodies remain.'

(111) I, al-Lamaṭī, would note that there were many times when we were with the Shaykh—God be pleased with him—and he said: 'Roar at us because much good will arise for you from that.' And one time he said to me: 'I would only compare the person who experiences vision (*mushāhada*) to an eagle that's flying in the air and has risen very high in its flight. Then you must suppose the sky is filled with winds and that a man holds in his hand a thin string joined and tied to the eagle's body. If the man sees the eagle rise very high in its flight, and the winds are about to carry it off to a place from which it will never return, he begins to draw in the string little by little, fearing it may break. Then, little by little, the eagle descends until it returns to the hand of its owner. Now it's the same with these ephemeral things that the earthen body is accustomed to. They bring the body back to its world of the senses.'

I should add that were it my intention to relate some of these things that happen to the knowers of God—God be pleased with them—I'd be departing from my subject. But God knows best!

[15]

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: ‘The purpose of the Friend is to point the way to God the Sublime and bring people together with Him, and induce renunciation of everything but God. So if the one who seeks the Friend sets about asking him for this matter, he’ll surely find profit with him. But if he sets about asking him to fulfill wishes and desires and doesn’t question him about his Lord and how to know Him, the Friend of God will come to hate him and detest him. On the other hand, he’ll be safe if he manages to avoid a calamity afflicting him for any of the following reasons. One reason is that his love of the Friend of God isn’t for the sake of God the Sublime’s face but is wavering. Wavering love entails manifest loss. The light of truth will never descend on it. Another reason is that the Friend of God sees him in his attachment to other than God the Sublime as being in the essence of estrangement and wishes to release him from it, whereas the bondsman wishes him to increase his estrangement. The Friend of God sees that he’s left the date (*tamra*) and picked up the hot ember (*jamra*). Now the date is knowledge of God the Sublime and engagement before Him. The hot ember is estrangement from Him and grasping what’s other than Him, along with an inclination for the world and reliance on its vanities. Still another reason is that if the Friend helps him in fulfilling some of his desires and confronts him with some unveilings, the bondsman sometimes thinks this is what knowledge of God (*maʿrifa*) should be about and what people desire, and there’s nothing to strive for beyond it. But all this is error and leads to the Friend of God hating him.’

(112) I, al-Lamaʿī, would add that it’s because he hates him and deceives him that the Friend causes certain offenses to appear in his own person or tells him something that won’t actually happen so as to drive him off in this way. But God knows best!

[16]

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: ‘The hearing (*samāʿ*) of the people of divine knowledge (*ʿirfān*) is based on their vision of the True—He is sublime! The things they hear are like a ship with which they cleave the seas of vision (*mushāhada*). They rely on these things and by means of them they arrive at visions that are beyond description. This is because the object of their vision—He is sublime—is living and eternal without equal and peer. All that this body can rely on is what’s

possible in contingent expression from among the things the body is accustomed to and has grown up with.'

He said: 'If their vision expands and they come to be among the great, their love (*'ishq*), as it appears to people, approximates the love of those given to jesting. Such is the case because of the delight, joy and rapture that they experience during their vision of God's action among His creatures—He is sublime and exalted! When they behold this, their spirit experiences delight that can't be described. It even happened to one of them—God be pleased with him—that he saw a cat rubbing its chin with its paw and then the Friend of God began to weep. His tears gushed forth and he prostrated himself before the cat so that his tears drenched the ground in front of the cat.'

I asked him: 'What's the secret behind this?'

He replied—God be pleased with him: 'The spirit beheld the True—He is sublime and exalted—doing this movement and began to prostrate itself before Him, abasing itself and weeping before Him—He is sublime and exalted! And the body, which complies with the spirit, began to do what the spirit was doing and to imitate it in this. To the people his prostration appeared as if it was on behalf of the cat. But the Friend of God, while weeping and prostrating himself, only beheld the True—He is sublime! He was weeping because of Him, and abasing and humbling himself for His sake.'

He said—God be pleased with him: 'This happens to them continually. But if the body is absent from its reason, it complies with the spirit. If the body isn't absent from its reason, reason stops it from this for the sake of maintaining appearances. Then you note that if the Friend of God observes a branch swaying among the trees, he experiences what has just been described. That's why they say: "If my Lord strikes me with stones, they're dearer to me than fruits"—due to the delight and joy he experiences when beholding action on His part—He is mighty and glorious! But God knows best!'

And I heard him say—God be pleased with him: 'If God the Sublime bestows illumination on a bondsman and the latter is in a particular situation—whatever situation it may be—he remains that way, even if the situation is of a reprehensible nature as in the case of being a butcher (113) and other such reprehensible professions. Thus he remains in his situation and doesn't leave it, because he considers leaving it to be affectation before the people. Affectation before the people is a greater sin in the view

of someone who's received illumination than drinking wine and similar sins.

He said—God be pleased with him: 'I know a man in Ramla in the land of Syria on whom God bestowed illumination and he was in a situation that caused people to laugh at him, like the situation of the man known in the city of Fez as Mu^cayzū. And he remained in his situation after illumination and didn't leave it.'

I, al-Lamaṭī, would note that the situation of the said Mu^cayzū was that boys and others among the dim-witted would follow him around all day long and jeer at him.

He said—God be pleased with him: 'And I know another man on whom God bestowed illumination and before this he'd been a drummer. He remained in his situation after illumination and didn't leave it.'

I, al-Lamaṭī, would add that I heard many [other] awesome secrets from him on this subject—God be pleased with him—that mustn't be consigned to books. But God knows best!