

The Fathomless Sea

Vol. 1

Introduction, Surat al-Fatihah, and Surat al-Baqarah

THE FATHOMLESS SEA

a *Tafsīr* of the Illustrious Qur'ān

Al-Baḥr al-Madīd fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd

Abu-l-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mahdī
ibn 'Ajībah al-Ḥasanī, (1160/1161–1224 AH)

Vol. 1

Introduction, Surat al-Fatihah,
and Surat al-Baqarah

Translated by
Asadullah Yate

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To my teacher, the Master of the Habibiyya-Shadhiliyya Tariqa,
Shaykh Dr Abdalqadir as-Sufi, may Allah be merciful to him

Table of Transliterations

ء	'	ض	ḍ
ا	a	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	'
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y
ص	ṣ		

Long vowel

ا	ā
و	ū
ي	ī
أُ	aw
أَيَّ	ay

Short vowel

َ	a [<i>fathah</i>]
ُ	u [<i>dammah</i>]
ِ	i [<i>kasrah</i>]

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The Arabic for the *āyats* is from the Algerian State edition of the *riwāyah* of Imam Warsh from the *qirā'ah* of Imam Nāfi' of Madina, whose recitation is one of the ten *mutawātir* recitations that are mass-transmitted from the time of the Prophet ﷺ.

There are minor omissions in the text. Some poems have been omitted which the author quotes to illustrate a point of grammatical usage or as an example of orthography or the usage of a word, often a derivative of the root of the word used in the *āyah*, but not the actual word used. Often it is difficult to convey the sense in English. Occasionally the author explores a grammatical matter or a tangential issue, and some of these may have been shortened. English grammatical terms used to translate Arabic grammatical terms do not have exactly the same meaning, sometimes rendering a precise translation of them problematic and often obscure.

FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

The translation of this magnificent *tafsīr* was undertaken at the behest of Shaykh Dr. Abdalqadir as-Sufī, may Allah be merciful to him, who also authorised the translation of the *Noble Qur'an – a new rendering of its meanings in English, Muhammad Messenger of Allah – ash-Shifā' of Qāḍī 'Iyād*, and *al-Muwatta'* of Imam Mālik, all translated by Aisha Abdurrahman and Abdalhaqq Bewley, and a great many other works.

The importance of this work is that it stems from the school of Madina and the perspective that Islam, Īmān and Iḥsān – i.e. the sciences of *Sharī'ah*, creedal statements of belief (*ʿaqīdah*), and the science of purification of the heart and character from base qualities and their adornment with the best (*taṣawwuf*) – together comprise the entire life-transaction (*dīn*). Thus throughout this work, the author, may Allah be merciful to him, drawing on the soundest sources, assumes this perspective and explicates the Noble Qur'ān, drawing on scholars of Qur'ānic commentary (*tafsīr*) such as al-Bayḍāwī and Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbī, may Allah be merciful to them. And over and above that, he clearly demarcates a further level, clearly and carefully distinguishing it from the commentary, in passages he calls Indications (*ishārāt*), making no claim that these passages are themselves commentary on the *āyats*, but simply things that the *āyats* have suggested.

SOME NOTES ABOUT OUR APPROACH

The Arabic language classically contains neither capital letters, punctuation, brackets, quotation marks, or emphases such as italics and bold. Thus Islamic scholarly works present an unbroken stream of prose, and in works such as Qur'ānic commentary, the *āyats* of the Noble Book and the commentary are not separated but are a continuous narrative. This is also true of work in other disciplines such as jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Ordinarily, readers and students would have known what words were from Qur'ān and what were interpolation for explanatory purposes. This work is no different. In our typesetting, however, we have retained the

modern convention of presenting the translation of the words of the Qur'ān in italics while putting the author's explanatory words in regular Roman font.

This translation assumes a certain basic knowledge of Islamic vocabulary. We have adopted the following approach: where possible we have given a translation in English and, where necessary, including the original Arabic word in brackets. In some places we have given the Arabic word on its own, hoping that familiarity with its meaning may have been established. There is also a glossary of terms on p.473.

The author introduces each section with "The Ḥaqq has said," the Ḥaqq being the name of Allah meaning the True, the Real, which we have retained untranslated because of the author's wish to emphasise that Allah, exalted is He, is the One Who necessarily exists.

Some basic terms are:

ākhirah the next life

ʿarīf a gnostic, someone who has direct knowledge of Allah

dīn 'life-transaction' rather than 'religion'

dunyā literally: the lower or nearer, the life of this world

īmān trust, affirmation, belief, being true to the trust

iḥsān good treatment and behaviour, "to worship Allah as if you see Him, for if you do not see Him, He sees you."

kufī covering over, ingratitude, disbelief, and rejection

kāfir someone who disbelieves or rejects the truth

maʿrifah literally 'recognition', – gnosis, i.e. direct knowledge of the Divine rather than indirect, inferential knowledge

muḥsin someone who has *iḥsān*

mūmin someone who has *īmān*

ṣalāt the formal prayer comprising standing and reciting Qur'ān, bowing and prostrating, preferably done by men together five times a day in a mosque

taṣawwuf sufism

zakāt a tax taken by the leader's *zakāt* collectors, and distributed to eight categories, in particular the needy and the destitute

Since it is the style of Arabic, both in the usage of the Noble Qur'an and in the tradition of knowledge that has come about because of it, that there is often ellipsis (*ḥadhf*), meaning the omission of implied words which are nevertheless understood by the reader, we have included the translator's helpful explication of these, but without use of the brackets which, from scrupulousness, the translator used to set them apart from the literal translation of the text. That is to facilitate the reader's

experience of the narrative flow of the text without the intrusion of too much scholarly apparatus, which is how it is experienced in the Arabic original.

Although a work of the highest academic order, it is certainly not a text to be merely studied ‘objectively’ in a pedantic fashion; rather, it is for seekers and the lovers of Allah, a mighty compendium of the sciences of *taṣawwuf*, a guide for the seekers after Allah, being a handbook for people of action: each *āyat* is explained by drawing on preceding traditional *tafsīrs* and is then followed by an *ishārah*, an indication, on the part of the author Shaykh Ibn ‘Aḥbah, of what the *murīd* must do in the light of the *āyat* in question to advance on the Path, in other words, precise instructions from one of Allah’s *awliyā’* - who has attained the goal himself – which transmit existential knowledge and enable arrival for all those who embrace this guidance. It is, as the author emphasises throughout, necessary for such a seeker to have the guidance of a living Shaykh and the company of other wayfarers on the path to gnosis.

PUBLISHER’S FOREWORD TO THE ARABIC EDITION

In the name of Allah All-Merciful, Most Merciful

Praise belongs to Allah, may He be exalted, for His copious blessings, and may the peace and blessings be upon the seal of the Prophets and Messengers Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdallāh and on his family and all of his Companions.

This book, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Majīd – The Fathomless Sea: A Tafsīr of the Illustrious Qur’ān* by the Imam Ibn ‘Ajībah al-Ḥasanī رحمہ اللہ we present to the reader in a new edition edited on the basis of two manuscripts, together with a comparison with the edition printed and published in Cairo in 1990 by means of a grant from Prof. Dr. Al-Ḥasan ‘Abbās Zaki, and edited and annotated by Aḥmad ‘Abdallāh al-Qurashi Ruslān. The two texts used in this edition are:

The first, a text belonging to the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, no. 26246, photocopied from the photocopies held outside of the aforesaid, this copy consisting of four volumes, missing only some of Sūrat al-A’rāf – the Ramparts, from the first volume, from p.156 to p.187. the copyist of this manuscript was Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ghaffār at-Tuhāmī a contemporary of the author and he finished the fair copy of it 6th Rabī‘ al-Awwal in AD 1221.

The second, a copy kept in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, no. 541, *Tafsīr* Taymur, also consisting of four volumes missing from the last volume of it from *āyah* 10 of Sūrat az-Zukhruf – The Gold Ornaments, until the end of the Sūrah. This manuscript was copied in 1299 AH and is full of defects, misspellings and corruptions.

We have based our printing of the work on the first and made it the “mother” copy on account of the clarity of its script and the absence of misspellings.

We ask Allah, exalted is He, that He may accept this work of ours undertaken solely for His noble Face, and He is the All-Hearing, the Quick to Respond, and all praise belongs to Allah.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ARABIC EDITION

In the name of Allah All-Merciful, Most Merciful

All praise belongs to Allah the Lord of the worlds and peace and blessings be on our master and Prophet Muḥammad and on his good and pure family and on his noble and exalted Companions

This *tafsīr* of the Qur’ān entitled *al-Baḥr al-Madīd fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Majīd – the Fathomless Sea: A Tafsīr of the Illustrious Qur’ān* is by the Imam, the mighty scholar, Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mahdī ibn ‘Ajībah al-Ḥasanī died 1224 AH.

The Imam Ibn ‘Ajībah relied for his sources on many of the authors of *tafsīrs* who preceded him, among them:

- 1 *Tafsīr Anwār at-Tanzīl* – The Lights of Revelation – of al-Bayḍāwī
- 2 The *Tafsīr* of Abū as-Su‘ūd
- 3 *Tafsīr al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz* – The Concise Compilation – of Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah
- 4 The *Tafsīr* of ath-Tha‘labī
- 5 The *Tafsīr* of an-Nasafī
- 6 *Kitāb at-tashīl li ‘ulūm at-tanzīl* – the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Juzayy al-Andalusī
- 7 *Hāshiyat as-Suyūṭī ‘alā tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī* – gloss on the *tafsīr* of al-Bayḍāwī entitled *Nawāhid al-Abkār wa Shawārid al-Afkār* – the Swelling Breasts of the Virgins and the Anomalies of Thought
- 8 *Hāshiyat Abī Zayd al-Fārisī ‘alā tafsīr al-Jalālayn* – the gloss of Abī Zayd al-Fārisī on the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*

The method of the Imam ibn ‘Ajībah in his *tafsīr* comprises the following:

- 1 He begins the *tafsīr* of the *sūrah* with a designation of the place of revelation, Makkan or Madinan, and the number of its *āyats* and any difference of opinion in these latter
- 2 Then he mentions the relationship to the *sūrah* before it, the reason for its revelation and the excellent aspects of it and its content in general

3 Then he begins making a *tafsīr* of the *āyats* based on the following method:

- a *Tafsīr* of the Qur’ān on the basis of the Qur’ān, by mention of another *āyat* which is not explained which comments on and explains this *āyat* – and this is a well-known method used by many *mufasssīrūn*;
- b Mention of the various ways of recitation of the *āyat*;
- c Reliance on the noble *sunnah* and narrations when making a *tafsīr* of the *āyat*;
- d Attention to linguistic, grammatical and diacritical interpretations, and attention as well to an explanation of the meanings of the individual words of the Qur’ān and poetic citations which testify to such meanings;
- e Attention to the rulings of *fiqh* when *āyats* regarding rulings are in question. He transmits the judgments of the four *madhhabs* and in particular that of Imam Mālik;
- f A *tafsīr* of *ishārah* – indication, this being the method based on *taṣawwuf*. Shaykh az-Zurqānī said in his definition of *tafsīr* based on indication: “It is *ta’wīl* – an interpretation, of the Qur’ānic *āyats* other than its literal meaning, by way of subtle indications which manifest from the masters of wayfaring and *taṣawwuf* – where it is possible to make a correlation between them and the literal meaning.”

As for our work with respect to this book it was as follows:

- A We have listed the Qur’ānic *āyats* and attributed them to their Sūrah and noted their number;
- B We have compared the texts with their original sources as transmitted by the author, in particular the *tafsīrs* of al-Bayḍāwī, Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi and al-Qushayrī;
- C In the margin of the book we have explained any unusual or difficult words or phrases, relying for this on the well-known dictionaries;
- D We have supplied a full explanation of the chain of narration of *ḥadīths* and reports and have checked the text of the *ḥadīth* relying on the recognised books of *ḥadīth*;
- E We have explained the lines of poetry cited as testimony to a particular use in the text and indicated where they are most likely to be found;
- F We have given full biographies of the most important persons mentioned in the text, and in conclusion we hope that this work of ours has been undertaken sincerely for the face of Allah, exalted is He, and to Allah alone belongs perfection and it is He Who helps to success.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR¹

The author is the Imam, the mighty scholar, Abu-l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mahdī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad, known as Ibn ‘Ajībah, surnamed Abu-l-‘Abbās, Ḥasanī by lineage, Tetouan his abode, his acquisition of knowledge in Fes, Mālīki by *madhhab* and Shādhilī his *ṭarīqah*.

The Imam was born in the village of A‘jabeesh, of the tribe of Anjara who inhabit the mountains surrounding the city of Tetouan, located in the extreme north of Morocco, ten kilometres from the Mediterranean coast. He was born according to his register, in the year 1160 or 1161 AH but there is no difference of opinion with respect to the other sources in which the date of his birth is recorded, they only mentioning 1161 AH. The reason for the lack of certainty as to which of the two years it is arises from the fact that his birth was not recorded as a date but rather was recorded as being the same time as the event of the siege of al-Mustaḍīr ibn Ismā‘īl of Tetouan which occurred between the two years of 1160 and 1161.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Ajībah grew up in a household whose people were known for their upright way of life and *taqwā*. He devoted himself to memorisation of the Qur’ān from an early age, and distinguished himself by his capacity to concentrate on the realm of knowledge and for his sharpness and natural genius. He moved to the town of Qaṣr al-Kabīr where he lived for about two years, during which he exerted himself in acquiring knowledge such that he said of himself, “I neglected myself and forget its affair, and I would study in seven sessions between the night and the day.”

The student was not satisfied with the knowledge he acquired in the town of Qaṣr al-Kabīr, but rather it made him even more enthusiastic to come to Tetouan, this town being a centre of knowledge and wisdom, the abode of many ‘*ulamā*’ – so Ibn ‘Ajībah arrived here at the age of twenty, took up residence and devoted himself with great seriousness to knowledge in all its aspects: his company of learning varied between the leading *fuqahā*’, *mufasssirūn*, *muḥaddithun*, linguists, grammarians, experts in verbal conjugation, in logic and he gave his attention to all of them, listening to them, acquiring knowledge from them, they in turn devoting themselves to him, giving all they had to him on realising his readiness and capacity – and so night turned to day.

¹ The sources and references of the biography of Ibn ‘Ajībah are the following: *al-A‘lām* by az-Ziriklī 1/245, *Muḥjam al-Mu‘liḥ* by ‘Umar Riḍā Kahālāh 1/63, *Fihris at-Taymūriyyah* 3/196, *aṭ-Ṭarīqah ash-Shādhiliyyah wa A‘lāmihā* by Dr Darneeqa pp. 92-94, *Shajarah an-Nūr az-Zakiyyah* by al-Ḥasan al-Kūhin p. 164, *Muḥjam al-Maṭbū‘āt* – Sarkees 1/169, *Fahrasah* of ash-Shaykh al-Mufasssir.

It was not long before the fruit of this earnestness and striving manifested such that when our Shaykh reached the age of twenty-nine his reputation shone bright and his importance was so appreciated that he set about teaching in the mosques and schools of Tetouan. But this did not prevent him from continuing his pursuit of knowledge in those places where it was likely to be found – for the thirst of the one seeking *maʿrifah* is never quenched whatever the nature of the source. It was to be expected that every time he drank at the source he found knowledge sweet and this only increased his thirst for it – for knowledge has no end or limits. Our Shaykh used to say after his sessions of teaching, “With respect to outward knowledge we learnt and taught such that I never abandoned the arena of knowledge after having the honour to teach – for we taught those beneath us and learnt from those above us.”

He speaks about what he acquired of knowledge, saying, “What I acquired of intellectual knowledge was a knowledge of logic, *kalām* – according to the *madhhab* of the Ahl as-Sunnah, and the important aspects of astronomy; as for various knowledges of the life-transaction – knowledge of the Qurʾān, in particular *tafsīr*; and we acquired the various kinds of *fiqh*, the principles of *fiqh*, the principles of the life-transaction (*uṣūl ad-dīn*) and we also acquired knowledge of *ḥadīth*, knowledge of the biography of the Messenger ﷺ, knowledge of the *ghazwahs* and raiding parties, of history, the characteristics of excellence of the Messenger ﷺ; and of linguistic knowledge – knowledge of the language of Arabic and the conjugations of its verbs, of grammar and rhetoric in its various aspects; and as for *taṣawwuf*, it is my favourite knowledge and my abode and place of alighting, so my portion of it is sure and well-known, and my hand open and generous.” Thus his portion of the knowledge and arts of his age was copious for he encompassed all the knowledges of his time and this was reflected in his *tafsīr* such that this *tafsīr* “the Sea” was a mirror of his vast culture.

HIS SHAYKHS

Our Shaykh Abu-l-ʿAbbās was a student of many of the *ʿulamāʾ* of his age, the most well-known being:

The *faqīh* the Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn al-Quraysh [d. 1197 AH];

The *faqīh* Shaykh Abu-l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn Shatīr al-Ḥasanī [d. 1191 AH];

The great scholar Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Janawī al-Ḥasanī [1135 – 1200 AH];

The great Muḥaddith Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad at-Tawdi ibn at-Ṭālib ibn Sawdah al-Murrī [1111 – 1209 AH];

The Ḥāfiẓ ‘Abdallāh aṭ-Ṭayyib ibn ‘Abd al-Majīd ibn Kirān [1172 – 1227 AH];

The great scholar Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Banīs, of Fes by birth and upbringing [1160 – 1213 AH];

The great scholar the ṣāliḥ Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Warzārzi.

THE ‘AQĪDAH OF IBN ‘AJĪBAH

He is of the Sunnī ‘*aqīdah*, having *īmān* and trusting in all that the earliest right acting generations trusted in, and he has no connection to anyone who acts contrary to what they held to; and in more than one place in his works he asserts that the best of *madhhab*s in matters of ‘*aqīdah* is the *madhhab* of the earliest generations, comprising holding to rejecting any comparison of Him in human terms (*tanzīh*), abstaining from contention in ambiguous matters and contenting oneself with what has been transmitted in the manner it has been transmitted as long as there is no need to restrict the meaning as conditional such that its ambiguity is removed without addition to its meaning. In his *tafsīrs* are places in which his ‘*aqīdah* is manifest and from these arise robust rebuttals of contentious sects and a demolition of their arguments – whenever a matter of difference is mentioned, making clear the judgment of the Ahl as-Sunnah in such matters is necessary.

He devoted one of his treatises to an explanation of what he recorded on the matter, namely *Risālah al-‘Aqā’id*, the Treatise Regarding Aspects of ‘*Aqīdah*, and among the statements in this treatise is that to one of his *murīds*: “You must hold to the conviction that Allah existed before created beings, from before-endless-time, there being nothing preceding Him, endlessly without any beginning, continuing in existence forever without any end, eternal without end, and that He has no corporeal form, nor a **substance** (*jawhar*) which is limited or predestined by others, that He is not similar to forms – not by way of supposition, nor does He admit of division – and He is not a substance (*jawhar*), and substances do not take up location in Him, nor is He of incidental nature and no accidents or incidentals take up location in Him; indeed He is not like any existent reality and no existent reality is like Him, and no one is comparable to Him; He is not limited by any measure or quantity and no perception or examination can contain Him; and no direction or location can contain Him. He is nearer to the slave than his jugular vein and He witnesses everything but His proximity cannot be compared to the proximity of corporeal things just as His Essence (*Dhāt*) cannot be compared to the essences of things; and He has no location in any thing and nothing can find

a location in Him, may He be exalted above any supposition that He may be contained in place, just as He is free of any limitation through time.” As to the matter of His settling on the Throne he says, “You must hold to the conviction that Allah has settled on the Throne in the manner He has stated and according to the meaning He meant by this ‘settling upon’ but free of any touching in the human sense or settling or fixing, or location or occupying in a corporeal sense; and the Throne does not bear Him but rather the Throne and that which it bears are borne by the subtle aspects of His power and subjected to His grasp; and He is above the Throne and above all things.”

HIS *TAṢAWWUF*

When Shaykh Ibn ‘Ajībah had attained the greatest share and portion of the knowledges of his time, both those of the intellect and those transmitted, and obtained of them that which ensured his leadership in knowledge in his land, wayfaring on the path of *taṣawwuf* became beloved to him and he took part in the emergence of the movement of Shaykh al-‘Arabī ad-Darqāwī, the renewer of the Shādhilī *ṭarīqah* at the beginning of the second millennium AH, and Shaykh Ibn ‘Ajībah found in the Darqāwī *ṭarīqah* a Shaykh in whom was contained all the sciences of *adab* of a leading Shaykh of Instruction. So he connected to Shaykh Muḥammad al-Buzīdī al-Ghumārī, the student of Shaykh ad-Darqāwī, took from him the Darqāwī Shādhilī *ṭarīqah* and devoted a whole section in the autobiography (*Fihris*) to his unique experience of *taṣawwuf* and his striving on its path, such a striving as only the truthful and sincere would be able to bear. His sincere efforts were quick to bear fruit: the oceans of his knowledge flowed over, the lights of gnosis shone in his breast and he obtained the great opening and the pure and copious Divine flood of *ma‘rifah*. The rank of an exemplar of teaching (imam), and perfected man was bestowed on our Shaykh and in all this he was both capable and generous. Shaykh al-Kūhin says of him, “His glance was an elixir. If someone came to him or someone who knew him met him, then he would raise that person to the realms of the good actions of the right acting by the wrong actions of those brought close” – and so the number of his followers and *murīds* grew great, they attained inner illumination and reached the stations of the knowers of Allah (gnostics).” Al-‘Askarī says of him: “He was the Proof of the Darqāwī group, the one who explained its precepts and who spread its distinguishing features, who explored its knowledges until he became a source of its suns, its moons and its stars.”

Al-Kūhin also says of him, “He attained to what he clearly attained to, spoke

about the secrets of the people of perfection, disclosed wondrous knowledges and extraordinary secrets, and the people of the Maghrib were unanimous in affirming his rank as a *walī* (*wilāyah*).” On another occasion he said, “He was given the capacity to speak clearly about the secrets of the people of Allah, he reached the stations of those who know their Lord and so became the Pole of the age (*qutb*), the unique *walī* of his time and he spoke about that which dazzled the intellects of the eminent.”

THE SHAYKHS OF TAŞAWWUF OF IBN ‘AJĪBAH

The wayfaring of Ibn ‘Ajībah on the path of *taşawwuf* was at the hand of two men:

The first, Shaykh ad-Darqāwī, namely Abu-l-Ma‘ālī al-‘Arabī ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥasanī, known as ad-Darqāwī, that is, related to his grandfather Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf, Abū Darqah on account of the large shield with which he would protect himself in times of war. Al-Kūhin describes him as being the “model of the people of perfection, the Guide (Murshid) of the Wayfarers to the highest stations and states, and the imam of those who strive strenuously.” Al-‘Askarī praised him as “the great gnostic (*‘ārif*), the well known Pole (*qutb*),” and the author of *as-Salwā*, “He was one of the gnostics of Allah, of those who indicate Allah by their words, their actions and all their states, combining all the best qualities of good behaviour and character.” Al-Azharī said of him, “He was a sign indicating gnosis (*ma‘rifah*) of Allah. He was born in 1550 AH in the tribe of Banī Zarwāl in the north of Morocco and devoted himself to acquiring knowledge in Fes. Then he met Shaykh ‘Alī al-Jamal and travelled the path of wayfaring at his hand. He established the Darqāwī-Shādhilī *ṭarīqah* and a countless number of Shaykhs, masters of great authority and profound awareness were formed at his hand.” Shaykh ibn Sawdah al-Murrī said, “When Mawlānā al-‘Arabī died he left behind about forty thousand students, all capable of pointing to Allah, may He be praised. He died, may Allah have mercy on him, in the good month of Ṣafar 1239 AH.” He composed the following works:

Ar-Risālah – The Letter,² and it is entitled *Bashūr al-Hadiyyah fī madhhab aṣ-Ṣūfiyyah*. Ibn Idrīs al-Kitāni said of it, “His letters, may Allah allow us to benefit by them, are the most beneficial of letters for the *murīd*, and those which show most clearly the nature of wayfaring and divesting oneself of all that is other-than-Allah (*tajrīd*), and no wayfarer may do without them.”

² Mawlay al-‘Arabī ad-Darqawī, *The Darqawi Way – Letters from the Shaykh to the fuqara’*, 2nd Edition, Diwan Press 2025.

Written Gems (Jawāhir al-Qirṭās).

The Qualities of Shaykh ‘Alī al-Jamal (Manāqib ash-Shaykh ‘Alī al-Jamal).

The second, Shaykh al-Būzīdī, namely Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥabīb Aḥmad al-Būzīdī al-Ḥasanī of the tribe of Ghamārah in the north of Morocco, to whom Abu-l-Ḥasan ash-Shādhilī is also related. He met ad-Darqāwī and stayed with him for sixteen years, and al-Būzīdī is counted as the closest follower of ad-Darqāwī. He was not schooled and could not write or read but despite this, Allah gave him unimaginable knowledges and secrets. He authored a book *The Adab which is Pleasing in the Way of Taṣawwuf (al-Adab al-Murdiyyah fī Tarīq aṣ-Ṣūfiyyah)*, about which al-Kūhin said, “Whoever studies it comes to the conclusion that al-Būzīdī was unique in his time, a shaykh of the people of gnosis (*irfān*).” He also wrote a *Qaṣīdah in Tā’* on the subject of wayfaring which has been commented on by a student of Ibn ‘Ajībah.” He died, may Allah have mercy on him, in 1229 AH and his tomb is in Mostaghanem in the territory of Oran in Algeria.

A great number of the most excellent people of Allah became masters at his hand. Al-Kūhin says: “Even if the only student of his were Sayyidī ibn ‘Ajībah al-Ḥasan then this would have been enough – although a whole group from amongst his students of the most excellent people of Allah became masters, countless in number, all of whom possessed the utmost gnosis and the greatest capability. Amongst his sayings, “There is nothing more noble than the state of integrity and soundness (*istiḳāmah*) in the inward and the outward, as the acts of breaking norms (*karamāt*) in the realm of the senses are only in the state of integrity and soundness of the outward not in that of the inward, but the state of integrity and soundness of the inward and the outward is only that of the acts of breaking norms (*karamāt*) of meanings and anyone who thinks that being a *walī (wilāyah)* is anything additional to the state of integrity and soundness is ignorant of the state of being a *walī*.”

It was on the basis of this kind of instruction that our Shaykh Abu-l-‘Abbās was raised and he spent his life of *taṣawwuf* and knowledge between ad-Darqāwī and al-Būzīdī until he received his spiritual opening from them and acquired what only the men of Allah can acquire. In this respect he says, “By Allah, we have not known our hearts and have not tasted the sweetness of meanings until we have been in the company of the men of the people of meanings.”

HIS WORKS

He composed works of *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth*, *fīqh* and the Arabic language; however most of his works are on *taṣawwuf*. In all he composed more than forty-five works, some comprising many volumes, some an average number and some small in size

but copious in knowledge. Most of these are still in the form of manuscripts and have not appeared in print.

1. *TAFSĪR* AND WORKS ABOUT THE VARIOUS FORMS OF RECITATION

- 1 *The Fathomless Sea: a Tafṣīr of the Illustrious Qur'ān* (*Al-Baḥr al-madīd fī tafṣīr al-Qur'ān al-majīd*) which is the present work.
- 2 *The Great Tafṣīr on the Fāṭiḥah* (*At-Tafṣīr al-Kabīr li-l-Fāṭiḥah*), comprising 268 folios which he wrote before *The Fathomless Sea* as is clear from what he says at the end of *The Great Tafṣīr*: “This shall be followed inshā'Allāh by a *tafṣīr* of Sūrat al-Baqarah.” However, the copyist of the manuscript says following this that “this, that is, *The Great Tafṣīr on the Fāṭiḥah*, is an independent *tafṣīr*; then he composed another concise *tafṣīr* on which he based his *tafṣīr The Fathomless Sea*.” The copy was completed in 1233 AH by ‘Abd al-Ghafūr ibn at-Tuhāmī.
- 3 *An Intermediate Tafṣīr on the Fāṭiḥah* (*At-Tafṣīr al-Wasīṭ li-l-Fāṭiḥah*). The author of *al-Iṣlāḥ* has mentioned that it comprises 17 folios, a copy of which, no. 148K, is to be found in the Depository Library of Rabat. An edition of it has been completed in 1213 AH.
- 4 *A Concise Tafṣīr on the Fāṭiḥah* (*At-Tafṣīr al-Mukhtaṣar li-l-Fāṭiḥah*), a manuscript copy of which is to be found in Dār al-Kutub al-Misriyya, comprising two folios. Ibn ‘Ajībah completed it on a Tuesday, 5th Rabī‘ ath-Thānī 1219 AH
- 5 *Scattered Pearls Regarding Instruction in the Mutawāṭir Recitations* (*Ad-Durar al-Mutanāthirah fī tawjīh al-qirā’at al-mutawāṭirah*) i.e. those received by multiple lines of narration, this being a work, according to Ibn ‘Ajībah, comprised of the courtesies (*adab*) of recitation, a description of the ten Shakyhs and their forms of recitation, and instructions as to the recitation of each of them. It consists of twenty fascicles.
- 6 *A Disclosure and Explanation of the Ambiguous āyats of the Qur’ān* (*Al-Kashf wa-l-Bayān fī mutashābih al-Qur’ān*).

2. *HADĪTH* AND THE VARIOUS *DHIKRS* OF THE PROPHET ﷺ, I.E. THE FORMS IN WHICH HE REMEMBERED ALLAH

- 7 *A Gloss on the Minor Compendium of as-Suyūṭī* (*Ḥāshiyah ‘alā-l-jāmi‘ aṣ-Ṣaghīr li-s-Suyūṭī*). He finished its composition in the middle of Sha‘bān 1224 AH, a manuscript copy of which is to be found in the General Depository Library in Morocco, no. 1831D. He completed its writing in 1251 AH
- 8 *Forty Hadith about the Principles of the Dīn* (*Uṣūl*), the *Derivative Rulings* (*Furū’*),

and *Subtle Matters* (*Arbaʿūn ḥadīthan fī-l-uṣūl wal-furūʿ wa raqāʿiq*), a work he has mentioned in the autobiography.

- 9 *Sunnī Lights about Prophetic Dhikrs* (*Al-Anwār as-Sunniyyah fī-l-Adhkār an-Nabawiyyah*). This he finished writing in 1205 AH. A manuscript of this is to be found in the library of Tetouan, no. 853m, and another copy in the General Depositary in Morocco, no. 2134d
- 10 *Duʿās and Dhikrs to wipe out Wrong Actions and Crimes* (*Al-Adʿiyah wa-l-adhkār al-mumaḥiqah li-dh-dhunūb wa-l-awzār*). This he completed 1222 AH. A manuscript of this is to be found in Tetouan, no. 2744q.m.

3. FIQH AND ʿAQĪDAH

- 11 *A Gloss on the Abridgement of Khalīl* (*Ḥāshiyah ʿalā Mukhtaṣar Khalīl*). Ibn ʿAjībah mentions that he did not complete it.
- 12 *Treatise on aspects of ʿAqīdah and the Ṣalāt* (*Risālah fī-l-ʿaqāʿid wa-ṣ-ṣalāh*). A manuscript of this is to be found in Dār al-Kutub al-Misriyya, (*majāmīʿ* Shinqeeti no. 4/7). This he completed in 1199 AH, it being a small treatise, not more than ten folios, although it is copious in knowledge.
- 13 *An Easing of the Entrance to Promoting Actions with a Sound Intention when Drawing Close to Allah* (*Tashīl al-madkhal li-tanmiyyah al-aʿmāl bi-n-niyyah aṣ-ṣāliḥah ʿinda-l-iqbāl*), this being a work about intent and its rules. He finished it in 1196 AH and there is a copy in Tetouan, no. 872q.m.
- 14 *The String of Pearls of Dhikr regarding the Decree and Destiny* (*Silk ad-durar fī dhikr al-qadāʾ wa-l-qadar*),³ this the Shaykh wrote during the time of the plague which ravaged Tetouan in 1213 AH. It comprises 28 folios. The Shaykh completed it after midday on Friday, 3rd Shawwāl 1214 AH. There is a manuscript of it in the General Depositary in Morocco no.1148k.

4. THE ARABIC LANGUAGE

- 15 *Pure Spiritual Openings concerning the Commentary of the Introduction known as the Ājurrūmiyyah* (*Al-Futūḥāt al-quḍsiyyah fī sharḥ al-muqaddimah al-Ājurrūmiyyah*). This is a work in which our Shaykh explains the grammar of the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Ājurrūm, a commentary in which he combines grammar and *taṣawwuf*. A copy of this is to be found no 2004d/1:q.m. in the General Depositary in Rabat. It comprises 219 folios. He was able to finish it in the afternoon 18 Rabīʿ an-Nabawī 1223 AH.

³ Published in: Shaykh Ahmad ibn ʿAjība, *Four Gems of Tasawwuf*, 2023 Diwan Press

5. BIOGRAPHIES

- 16 *Flowers of the Garden with regard to the Various Generations of Prominent Persons* (*Azhār al-bustān fī ṭabaqāt al-a'yān*). Makhlūf has mentioned it in *Shajarah an-Nūr* with the title *Azhār ri'yād az-zamān fī ṭabaqāt al-a'yān* and the author of *al-Islāh* has mentioned it with the title of *Azhār al-bustān fī ṭabaqāt al-'ulamā' wa-ṣ-ṣūlahā' wa-l-a'yān*. In it the Shaykh has given the biographies of the leading figures of the *madhhabs* of *fīqh* and has described the well known figures of the *madhhab* of Imam Mālik, from his time until the time of Ibn 'Ajībah, arranged according to when they lived, classified according to centuries, then he has followed it by mention of the grammarians, scholars of *ḥadīth* (*muḥaddithūn*) and some of the people of *taṣawwuf*. Ibn 'Ajībah has mentioned that he did not complete it despite its large size. It is a work which should be published. A manuscript copy is to be found in the General Depositary in Rabat, no. 286k and there is a copy in the Institute for the Revival of Manuscripts in Cairo, no 1352AH.
- 17 *The Autobiography* (*Al-Fahrasah*) being a biography of the Shaykh himself which he finished emending in 1224 AH although he started it a considerable time before. The first time it was printed was in French, translated by the Muslim French orientalist Jean Louis Michon, then it was published in Arabic in Egypt 1990 AD edited by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ.

6. TAṢAWWUF

- 18 *The Lights of the Sunnah regarding the Commentary on the Hamziyyah Qaṣīdah* (*al-Anwār as-sunniyyah fī sharḥ al-qaṣīdah al-Hamziyyah*), a manuscript copy of which is in Tetouan, no. 131, comprising 230 folios. He finished this in 1199 AH.
- 19 *Divine Openings regarding the Commentary on the Basic Research* (*Al-Futūḥāt al-ilāhiyyah fī sharḥ al-Mabāḥith al-Aṣliyyah*),⁴ this being a major commentary on the verse work of Ibn al-Banā as-Saraqusṭī about *adab* and the foundations of *taṣawwuf*. He finished the fair copy in the middle of Ramaḍān 1211 AH. The book has been published more than once, the most recent of which was that published by 'Alam al-Fikr, 1982 CE, edited by the Ustādh 'Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Ḥasan Maḥmūd.
- 20 *Pure Flashes of Inspiration regarding the Commentary on the Zarrūqī Wazīfah* (*Al-Lawā'ih al-quḍsiyyah fī sharḥ al-Wazīfah az-Zarrūqiyyah*, i.e., the daily round of *dhikrs* prescribed by Zarrūq which he completed in 1197 AH, a manuscript copy of

⁴ Shaykh Ahmad ibn 'Ajība, *The Basic Research*, translated by Abdalkhabir al-Munawwarah and Haj Abdassabur al-Ustadh, 1998, Madinah Press.

- which is to be found, no.301m, Tetouan and in the General Association for Books in Egypt there is a manuscript copy which was written in 1200 AH, no. 816/a. m. collection, under the name *al-Lawāfih al-qudsiyyah*.
- 21 *Awakening of Desire regarding the Commentary on the Hikam (Iqāz al-himam fī sharḥ al-Hikam)*,⁵ the most famous of the books of the Shaykh and the most famous of the commentaries on the *Hikam* of Ibn Aṭā'illāh. He finished the fair copy 8th Jamādā al-awwal, 1211 AH, and it has been printed more than once in Egypt and Syria, among them, the edition of Dār al-Ma'ārif in Egypt 1985 CE edited and introduced by Muḥammad Aḥmad Ḥasbullāh.
 - 22 *A Dīwān of Qaṣīdahs on Taṣawwuf (Dīwān qaṣā'id fī-t-taṣawwuf)* which contains almost five hundred verses, varying between long and middle length *qaṣīdahs* and the *dīwān* is followed by the book of *The Autobiography (Fahrasah)* printed and edited by Dr 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṣālīḥ.
 - 23 *Treatise condemning Backbiting and praising Isolation and Silence (Risālah fī dhamm al-ghībah and madḥ al-'uzlah wa-ṣ-ṣamt)*, a manuscript copy of which is with General Association for Books in Egypt no. 3299j. He finished writing it in 1198 AH.
 - 24 *Commentary on the Beautiful Names (Sharḥ al-asmā' al-ḥusnā)*. Ibn 'Ajībah mentions it in his autobiography saying, "I have devoted a chapter to each name just as al-Qushayrī has done in *at-Taḥbīr*." There is a manuscript copy in the Depository of Qayrawiyyīn no. 1511.
 - 25 *Commentary on the Burdah of al-Abūṣayrī (al-Būṣayrī) (Sharḥ Burdah al-Abūṣayrī)*. He finished this in 1203 AH and al-'Allāmah Dāwūd mentioned that it comprises 238 folios
 - 26 *Commentary on the Great Hizb of ash-Shādhilī (Sharḥ al-Hizb al-kabīr li-sh-Shādhilī)*, a manuscript copy of which is in Tetouan among the collection no 301. It comprises 145 folios. He finished it in 1200 AH
 - 27 *Commentary on 'al-Ḥiṣn al-Ḥaṣīn – the Inaccessible Fortress' on the words of the Lord of the Messengers (Sharḥ kitāb al-Ḥiṣn al-Ḥaṣīn min kalām Sayyid al-Mursalīn)* of Ibn al-Jazarī who died in 739 AH. Ibn 'Ajībah has mentioned that he did not complete it.
 - 28 *Commentary on the Wine Qaṣīdah of Ibn al-Fārid (Sharḥ al-Qaṣīdah al-Khamriyyah)*, the opening of which is "We drank ancient wine in memory of the Beloved," a manuscript copy of which in normal script is in the General Association for

⁵ Ahmad ibn 'Ata'illah al-Iskanderi and Ahmad ibn 'Ajiba, *The Wisdom of the Hikam*, compiled by Abdalhaqq Bewley. 2024 Diwan Press. A substantial selection from the book.

Books in Egypt amongst the collection no. 3299 AH. He finished the fair copy Monday the middle of Ramaḍān 1213 AH.⁶

29 *Commentary on the Qaṣīdah al-Munfarījah (Relief) (Sharḥ al-qaṣīdah al-Munfarījah)* of Ibn an-Naḥawī. It was written in 1201 AH. A manuscript is to be found no. 407/6m in Tetouan. It comprises 40 folios

30 *Commentary on the Qaṣīdah in Hā' on Taṣawwuf by ar-Rifā'ī (Sharḥ al-qaṣīdah al-hā'īyya fī taṣawwuf li-r-Rifā'ī)* which begins:

O He Who become so magnificent that His meaning becomes subtle

no one wears the cloak of His grandeur except Him

There is a manuscript copy no. 1974d/9q in Rabat. He completed this in 1213 AH. It comprises 31 folios.

31 *Commentary the Glittering Stars regarding Praise of the Best of Creation (Sharḥ al-kawākib ad-durriyyah fī madḥ Khayr al-barriyyah)*, of which there is a manuscript copy in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah no. 117 Sha'r Taymūr.

32 *Commentary on the Tā'īyyah of al-Būzīdī (Sharḥ tā'īyyah al-Būzīdī)* of which there is a copy 1736d/11q in Rabat and also in Tetouan, no. 845. It comprises 95 folios. He completed it on Friday 16th Ramaḍān 1221 AH and the beginning of the *qaṣīdah* is as follows:

O you who are in the splendour of His beauty and secret of His perfection, might and sublimity

33 Another lengthy commentary on the *Tā'īyyah* of al-Būzīdī. He finished it on the morning of Wednesday 14th Dhu-l-Qa'dah al-Ḥarām 1222 AH. It was copied by 'Abd al-Ghafūr at-Tuhāmī in 1235 AH. It comprises 25 folios.

34 *Commentary on the Tā'īyyah of Shaykh 'Alī ibn Mas'ūd al-Ju'aydī (Sharḥ 'alā tā'īyyah ash-shaykh 'Alī ibn Mas'ūd al-Ju'aydī at-Taṭwānī)* the first line of which is:

I begin in the name of Allah after praise of Him for the countless blessings both great and fine...

He composed it in 1196 AH and it comprises 35 folios as mentioned by the author of *al-Islāḥ* as transmitted by Dāwūd in *Tārīkh Taṭwān* – History of Tetouan

35 *Commentary on the Rā'īyyah of al-Būzīdī about Wayfaring (Sharḥ rā'īyyah al-Būzīdī fī sulūk)*. He finished it in 1213 AH as mentioned by the author of *al-Islāḥ* as transmitted by Dāwūd. It comprises about 30 folios.

⁶ Published in: Shaykh Ahmad ibn 'Ajība, *Four Gems of Tasawwuf*, 2023 Diwan Press

36 *Commentary on the Ṣalāt of Ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ḥātimī* (*Sharḥ ṣalāt Ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ḥātimī*). A manuscript copy is in the Dr. Al-Ḥasan ‘Abbās Zakī library. It comprises ten folios. He finished the fair copy on Thursday at the end of Jumādā al-Ūlā 1219 AH. This commentary has been published in Morocco in 1402 AH

37 *Sharḥ* of the verses “make *wuḍū’* with the water of the unseen if you are the possessor of a secret” attributed to Imam Junayd while it is also attributed to Shaykh Ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ḥātimī. There is a manuscript copy no. 1736/d in Rabat. This commentary is to be found in *Awakening of Desire regarding the Commentary on the Ḥikam* (*Iqāz al-himam fī sharḥ al-Ḥikam*) pp-45-48

39 *Commentary on the Short Poem about Love of Allah* (*Sharḥ ‘alā maqṭa‘ fī maḥabbati-llāh*) of ash-Shushtarī the beginning of which reads:

The news proved true with me and penetrated my secret

There is a manuscript copy in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, in the collection no. 3299j. He completed this in Ṣafar 1214 AH

40 *Commentary on the Text about what the Majestic Name refers to* (*Sharḥ naẓm mā yadullu ‘alayhi lafẓ al-jalālah li-sh-Shushtarī*), of ash-Shushtarī, the beginning of which reads:

An *alif* before the two *lāms* and a *hā’* is the coolness of the eye

There is a manuscript copy in the General Association for Books no. 3299j. He completed it on Thursday in the middle of Ṣafar 1214 AH

41 *Commentary on the Nūniyyah of ash-Shushtarī* (*Sharḥ nūniyyah ash-Shushtarī*), the beginning of which reads:

I see a seeker of increase, not good from me,
by way of thought he shot an arrow which struck me

There is a manuscript copy in Rabat no. 1736d/7. It comprises 63 folios. The Shaykh completed in in 1220 AH

42 *Uncovering the Veil from the Secret of the Innermost Core of the Hearts* (*Kaṣḥf an-niqāb ‘an sirr lubb al-albāb*). He completed the fair copy on 18th Dhu-l-Qa’dah 1219 AH. It comprises 9 folios. There is a manuscript copy in Dār al-Kutub in the collection 3299/h.

43 *Mi’rāj/Ascent of Longing for the Realities of Taṣawwuf* (*Mi’rāj at-taṣawwuf ilā ḥaqā’iq at-taṣawwuf*). It is about the terms of *taṣawwuf*. The Shaykh has listed about a hundred terms and made detailed descriptions of its subjects and themes. He completed it in 1221 AH. The book has been published in Damascus in 1355 AH/1937 by the Matba‘ al-‘Iṭidāl, edited and annotated by Muḥammad ibn

Aḥmad al-Ḥasanī and it has also been translated by Monsieur J.L. Masson into French.

HIS DEATH

The Shaykh died on the 7th Shawwāl 1224 AH. His death occurred amongst the tribe of Banī Salmān in Ghamārah while Ibn ‘Ajībah was on a visit to his Shaykh al-Būzīdī. He was afflicted by the plague and died in the house of his Shaykh as a result of this plague. His Shaykh made the *ghusl* of him, made the *ṣalāt al-janāzah* over him and buried him in Ghamārah. He was then transferred to Tetouan.

THE FATHOMLESS SEA

A TAFSĪR OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS QUR'ĀN

Al-Baḥr al-Madīd fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd

VOL. 1

INTRODUCTION

SŪRAT AL-FĀTIḤAH & SŪRAT AL-BAQARAH

The author introduces each section with “The Ḥaqq has said,” the Ḥaqq being the name of Allah meaning the True, the Real, emphasising that Allah, exalted is He, is the One Who necessarily exists.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى سِدِّكَ يَا مُحَمَّدٌ وَسَلَامٌ وَسَلَامٌ

INTRODUCTION

In the name of Allah All-Merciful, Most Merciful

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon our master Muḥammad and on his family and Companions

The Shaykh, the imam, the learned and high-minded scholar, the knower of the Lord, the ongoing pole (*qutb*), the model for the wayfarers, the lighthouse of those who arrive at the ocean of gnosis (*ʿirfān*), the place of rising of the sun of eye witnessing, the open road of the *ṭarīqah*, the joiner between the *sharīʿah* and the ocean of the reality (*ḥaqīqah*) Abu-l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-ʿAjībah al-Ḥasanī, may Allah be contented with him and make him content, *āmin*, said:

We praise You Who has manifested Himself to His slaves by His speech, Who by the perfection of His splendour and beauty has opened the tongues of the skilled and perspicacious people of knowledge (*ʿulamāʾ*) that they may reveal His pearls, has caused their hearts to burst open with the springs of wisdom supported by His principles and foundations, such that they have acquired during their diving into His flowing flood, its precious gems and its endless bounties, and so have invalidated by means of His dazzling signs (*āyats*), and His manifest and overwhelming proofs the errors and doubts of those who oppose and are hostile to Him. With respect to everything this author acknowledges his shortcomings, all this water of knowledge having been scooped up according to his own understanding and capacity from the sea of His secrets and His meanings – for it is an overflowing and vast sea whose depths are unknown and a wondrous watery meadow whose flowers and blossoms are never destroyed. And could this be otherwise? it being the speech of a Lord Who is knowledgeable of the most subtle hidden things, of what was, what is and what shall be.

And peace and blessings on our master and lord Muḥammad, the manifest locus of mercies, the one sent with miracles and dazzling clarifications, and on his Family and Companions, the magnanimous and kind, the mountains of certainty in times of crises and increasing difficulties.

Knowledge of the *tafsīr* of the Qur’ān is among the most illustrious of knowledges and the most excellent of things to invest the fruits of reflection and gifts of understanding in. However only the perspicacious person of knowledge (‘ālim) may approach this most momentous of tasks, someone who has firmly fixed his feet in the outward knowledges and occupied his thoughts with the meanings of the illustrious Qur’ān – after he has become proficient in outward knowledge with respect to the Arabic, the declension of its verbs, its modes of language and eloquence, and *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* and history; and who has taken this directly from the mouths of men, then plunged into the knowledges of *taṣawwuf*, its tasting, its states and stations in the company of the people of tasting from among the people of perfection – for otherwise his silence in such a great matter is more conducive to his own and others’ safety, in which case devotion to what he is capable of – namely knowledge of the outward matter of the *sharī‘ah* – is more fitting for him.

Know that the vast Qur’ān has an outward aspect to the people of the outward and an inward aspect to the people of the inward although the *tafsīr* of the inward may only be tasted by the people of the inward – others will not understand it, others will not taste it; moreover it is not valid to mention it except after having established the outward meaning, in which case one may indicate the knowledge of the inward in subtle expressions and fine indications. Whoever cannot attain such understanding and tasting of such secrets should accept this fact and not endeavour to contest this, for the knowledge of tasting lies behind the mountain of intellectual perception and understanding and may not be attained by transmitted knowledge, however many the lines of transmission.

The author of *The Subtle Gifts and Blessings*⁷ said: “Know that the *tafsīr* of this group, that is of *taṣawwuf*, of the words of Allah and those of His Messenger ﷺ by means of wondrous and extraordinary expressions, does not entail an alteration of the literal meaning from its literal meaning – but rather the literal meaning of what is transmitted from the *āyat* and what is indicated by means of the letters of language is understood as such, and *then* the inner aspects of understanding which may be obtained from the *āyat* and *ḥadīth* by the person whose heart has been opened by Allah. It has been related that he ﷺ said, “Every *āyat* has an outward meaning and an inward meaning, a limit and a place of elevation.” Do not then exclude the possibility of your acquiring wondrous meanings from such persons when someone of argument and conflict says to you: “This is an alteration of the words of Allah, may His power and splendour be magnified, as well as of the speech of the Messenger ﷺ,” – for this is not an alteration but rather it would

⁷ *Laṭā’if al-mīnān*, Shaykh Aḥmad ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh.

be an alteration of the words of Allah if they were to say: “The only meaning of this *āyat* is this.” However, they do not say this but rather they affirm only the outward meanings based on the outer meanings of the *āyats*, on what is intended by them and on their content, and so understand from Allah only that which He has permitted them to understand.

Sa’d ad-Dīn said in the commentary on the *‘Aqā’id* of an-Nasafī, after invalidating all deviation from the life-transaction (*ilḥād*): “As for what some of the profound scholars hold to, that texts are to be understood in the first instance on the basis of their outward meanings, despite this there also exist subtle indications of realities which may be revealed to the masters of wayfaring; it is possible to reconcile these with the outward meanings intended and this is an aspect of perfected *īmān* and pure gnosis.” His saying “it is possible to reconcile ...” means that it is possible to indicate such within the inner aspect of the intended meaning such that the secret of the intended meaning is not lost while the language used to express this is not so far removed from the literal as to become a distortion or deviation from the text.

Shaykh Zarrūq said ﷺ, “The perusal of the person of *taṣawwuf* is more particular than that of the Qur’anic commentator or the person expert in the *fiqh* of *ḥadīth* as both the latter only take into account the legal ruling and meaning while the former makes an addition by seeking the indication – after they have both established the literal meaning – otherwise he would be an esotericist outside of the *sharī‘ah* let alone of the people of *taṣawwuf*, and Allah knows best.”

And as for his saying ﷺ, “Every *āyat* has an outward meaning and an inward meaning, a limit and a place of elevation” – the outward belongs to the person who concerns himself with the outward meaning of the words such as grammarians, linguists and those skilled in the declension of verbs; while the inward belongs to those concerned with the meanings of the words – depending on the language used, whether a command, prohibition, narrative, information, news or *tawḥīd* is meant or any other aspect of Qur’anic knowledges, and this is the method of the Qur’anic commentators; while the limit or defining aspect of the *āyat* belongs to those who are concerned with extracting the rulings and laws from it and these are the *fuqahā’* – who content themselves with that which is demonstrated by the wording and what is propounded on its account and do not add anything to this; and the place of elevation belongs to the people of realities and truths from amongst the great persons of *taṣawwuf* because they look beyond the outward of the *āyat* to its inner meaning and so the secrets and knowledges and mysteries are revealed to them, these appearing to them after reflection upon them.

The author of *aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ* said with respect to the *ḥadīth*, “If I had all the gold and silver then I would give it as ransom against the terror of the *ākhirah* and

day of judgment one sees at death”: “He makes a comparison between what he looks down upon, i.e. the events of the Last Day, with the “place of elevation,” that is the source of seeing, that is, the place from where one may look down upon something – because the people of realities and truths look down from the literal manifest aspect of the *āyat* to the inner secrets and plunge into the depths of their ocean.” And Allah knows best.

My shaykh, the Knower of the Lord, Sayyidī Muḥammad al-Būzīdī al-Ḥasanī as well as his shaykh, the all encompassing *qutb*, the Shaykh of Shaykhs, Mawlay al-‘Arabī ad-Darqāwī al-Ḥasanī recommended that I compose a *tafsīr* combining the commentary of the people of the outward with the indications of the people of the inward, and I responded to their request and complied with their wish in the hope that it would become of general benefit and a delight for the hearts and hearing. I have prefaced each *āyat* with whatever is relevant of importance with respect to the Arabic and linguistic usage, then with respect to the literal meanings of the words. Then I have furnished inner indications, keeping a middle course – neither being excessively lengthy or short – in expectation in all of this of whatever treasures the Generous, Forgiver may open up for me. I have called it *The Fathomless Sea: a Tafsīr of the Illustrious Qur’ān (al-Baḥr al-Madīd fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Majīd)*. We ask Allah that He may receive it with acceptance and that it may attain the intended goal, for He has power over whatever He wants and it is He Who is most likely to reply to one’s *du‘ās*, and there is no power and no strength but by Allah, the Most High, the Magnificent, and may the peace and blessings of Allah be on our master Muḥammad and on his family and companions.

In the *tafsīr* of the great Sūrat al-Fātiḥah “the Opening” I have mentioned ten introductory matters connected with the foundations of knowledge, their subsidiary matters, knowledges of the Qur’ān and the source of its springs – so let anyone study these if they wish, and success is by Allah.

SŪRAT AL-FĀTIḤAH “THE OPENING”

It is Makkan and has ten names: “the Opening (*al-Fātiḥah*),” “that which fulfils (*al-Wāfiyah*),” “that which is sufficient (*al-Kāfiyah*),” “the cure (*ash-Shāfiyah*),” “the seven oft-repeated (*as-Sab‘ah al-Mathānī*),” as it contains seven *āyats*. According to ash-Shāfi‘ī the *basmalah* (*bismillāhi-r-rahīmāni-r-rahīm*) is one of them, while Mālik has not included it, but deemed “not of those with anger on them, nor of the misguided” as an *āyat* (*al-Fātiḥah*: 7). It being thus named because it is repeated in every *ṣalāt*; or because the word *mathānī* is from praise (*ath-thanā*), as it contains encompassing praise of Allah. It is also called “the Mother of the Qur’ān (*Umm al-Qur’ān*),” as it is its opening and beginning, “the Instruction as to the proper manner of asking,” “The *sūrah* of the prayer (*ṣalāt*)” on account of its being repeated within each prayer, the “Foundation of the Qur’ān (*Asās al-Qur’ān*),” as it is its origin and beginning and the rest is based on it.

The written copies (*muṣ-ḥafs*) of the Qur’ān, are in accord as to its beginning with “*In the name of Allah, All-Merciful, Most Merciful,*” but there is a difference of opinion amongst the imams, Imam Mālik saying that it is not an *āyat* of the Fātiḥah nor of any other *sūrah* except that of an-Naml – the Ant, while ash-Shāfi‘ī said that it is only an *āyat* of the Fātiḥah, and Ibn ‘Abbās said that it is an *āyat* of each *sūrah*.

The proof of Mālik is what is contained in the *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* from him ﷺ, “A *sūrah* has been sent down to me that is not in the Torah and not in the Gospel and there is nothing like it in the Furqān (the Discrimination) meaning, the Qur’ān; then he said: “*Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds,*” but did not mention the *basmalah*. There is also the narration in the *ṣaḥīḥ* collection that Allah said: “I have divided the prayer (*ṣalāt*) between Me and My slave: the slave says *‘praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds,’*” and He begins without the *basmalah*.

The proof of ash-Shāfi‘ī is what has been narrated in the *ṣaḥīḥ* that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would read “*In the name of Allah, All-Merciful, Most Merciful, praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds...*”, and the proof of Ibn ‘Abbās is the recording of the *basmalah* in every *sūrah* of the written copy (*muṣ-ḥaf*) and the fact that the Companions strove to avoid introducing anything which was not the

word of Allah into it – and they would say that what is between the two covers is the word of Allah.

If then you commence the beginning of a *sūrah* you recite the *basmalah*, except that of Barā'ah (at-Tawbah), and we shall discuss this below; if you begin a part of a *sūrah*, then you have the option according to the majority of the 'ulamā'; if you complete a *sūrah* and begin another, then there is a difference of opinion as to whether one should say the *basmalah* or leave it out.

As for its ruling within the prayer (*ṣalāt*), Mālik said that it is disapproved (*makrūh*) in the obligatory prayer but not in the optional; ash-Shāfi'ī said it is an obligation, the leaving out of which invalidates the prayer – according to him one says the *basmalah*, aloud whenever the prayer is done aloud, and silently when done silently; it is the same according to Abū Ḥanīfah except that it is always done silently. As for the proof of Mālik, it is that it is not an *āyat* – in accordance with the *ḥadīth* from Anas in which he says: “I have performed the *ṣalāt* behind the Prophet ﷺ as well as Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, and they would begin with ‘Praise be to Allah the Lord of the Worlds,’ and they would never say the *basmalah*.” The proof of ash-Shāfi'ī is that according to him it is an *āyat* – in accordance with what has been narrated in the *ḥadīth* that it is recited – as mentioned above.

The *basmalah* did not exist before Islam – rather they would write “In Your name, O Allah,” – until “*in the name of Allah be its voyage...*” (Hūd: 41) was revealed and so they wrote “in the name of Allah”, until “*or call on the All-Merciful,*” (Isrā': 110) and so they wrote “in the name of Allah, the All-Merciful,” until “*and it says: ‘In the name of Allah, All-Merciful, Most Merciful,’*” (an-Naml – the Ant: 30) was revealed which they then wrote.

The *alif* was omitted between the *bā'* and the *sīn* through its frequent use and the *bā'* is joined, as it were, to something missing, a noun according to the grammarians of Basra, that is as if one is saying, “my beginning is in the name of Allah,” and so they deem it a subject grammatically speaking; while those from Kufa treated the implied word as a verb “I begin and I recite,” and so attribute a subject to each, treating the *basmalah* as the subject, although its location is where the object would be (it is *manṣūb*). They deem its being at the end is in order to assert its restriction and particularity; and *ism*-name/noun is derived from *as-sumūw*, comprising *sīn*, *mīm* and *wāw*, the root letters to the verb “to be high, raised up” according to the Basrans and its *alif* is omitted; while according to the Kufans it is derived from *as-simah*, the three radicals of which are *wāw*, *sīn* and *mīm*, “a sign” – in which the *wāw* is omitted. As for the proof of the Basrans, it is to be seen in the diminutive and the broken plural of this root – one uses the broken plural *asmā'* and not *awsām* and one uses the diminutive *sumayy* and not *wusaym*.

And the word “Allah” is a designation of the *Dhāt*–Essence which necessarily has existence, which is entitled to all forms of praise. As to whether it is etymologically derived or without any previous source-root, there are two opinions which we shall speak about in the section regarding “*praise be to Allah*,” and likewise the words, “*All-Merciful, Most Merciful*.”

He, the Ḥaqq – the Real, said, may His majesty be glorified:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾ الرَّحْمَنُ
الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾ مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾

2-4 Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful, the King of the Day of Judgment.

I say that “*praise*” is the subject and “*Allah*” the predicate in this phrase, while it is originally in the accusative mode (*manṣūb*) and may be recited with it – the original form would be “*Aḥmadu-llāha* – I praise Allah, which is in the accusative (*manṣūb*) by means of the final “a”, with praise *ḥamdān*) but then has been altered from this to a pronunciation in the nominative case, which is *marfūʿ* with a final “u”, in order to indicate the generality of the praise and its permanence, that it is not a question of its mere newness, recentness or its being an in-time occurrence. In this way the form of the word is denoted while indicating its “independence” in nature – i.e. praise belongs to Allah, even if you do not praise Him. If you were to say “I praise Allah” – such that it affords the same meaning, *ḥamd* being a verbal noun which may be made accusative by means of implicit verbs, it is almost never mentioned together with it; and the definiteness by means of the *alif* and *lām* – literally, in Arabic, “*the* praise belongs to Allah”, refers to the kind or type in general, that is, to the real or true form of itself, without being conditional upon its pervasive, general nature; and its meaning is an indication of what each person knows, i.e. what praise in fact is; or an indication of its being “fully claimed” by Allah – given that all praise in reality belongs to Allah and that there is nothing of benefit but that He is the disposer of it directly or indirectly, as He says, “*Any blessing you have is from Allah*” (The Bee: 53); while it is also said that the definite article refers to the covenant, the one covenanted to praise Him being Allah Himself in His being before-endless-time.

And it is also read *al-ḥamdi lillāhi* and also *al-ḥamdu lullāhi*, rendering them in effect – on account of their use together – one single word.

The meaning of *ḥamd* linguistically is “praise by means of what is beautiful with the intention of honouring and according reverence”; and with respect to its meaning acquired by the customary understanding in *taṣawwuf* it refers to an action which communicates a glorification and extolling of the Bestower of blessings on account of His nature as the Bestower of blessings. *Shukr* linguistically refers to the action of becoming aware by extolling the Bestower of blessings, and it is a synonym of the customary understanding of *ḥamd*; as for the customary understanding of *shukr* it is the slave’s channelling all that Allah has bestowed upon him with respect to hearing and sight to what he has been created for and handing it over to Him. Study our major commentary on the Fātiḥah with respect to the relation between them – in poetry and prose.

The word “Allah” is an extemporaneous substantive name. The *alif* and *lām* are a necessary part of it and are not there to render it definite, as the *alif* and *lām*, i.e. “the” would in other cases. Al-Wāḥidī said: “It is a name which is unique to the Creator, may He be praised. With respect to its description it is on a par with other proper names. No etymology is known for it.” Al-Aqlīshī said: “This name, since it is without derivation, indicates the Essence itself, without any of the Attributes being envisaged; and it is not a derived name from one of the Attributes, like the Knower, the Real, the Creator, the Provider; and on this basis the *alif* and *lām*, with respect to the word Allah, are part of the very word, as the letter *zāy* in the word Zayd – this is what one group hold to and what has been deemed as correct by al-Ghazālī, who has also said that everything which has been said with respect to its derivation is without justification.”

It is also said that it is derived from *ta‘alluh* meaning to worship, while it is also said it is from *walḥān* meaning bewilderment on account of the confusion of people’s intellects on His account; it is also said that its origin is *al-ilāhu* (the God) and then the *hamzah* was omitted and its vowelising transferred to the *lām*, then assimilation of one letter into another occurred and became the consonant, made emphatic to render it more imposing – except if inflected with a *kasrah*, i.e. a short “i” before it.

The word *rabb* is a description or characterisation of Allah, it being originally a verbal noun meaning raising or bringing up, that is causing something to come gradually to perfection. He is then described with this word to emphasise His utmost care in this matter, just as the verbal nouns *ṣawm* and *‘adl* may be used descriptively of persons. It is also said that it is a description from the verbal form *rabbahu*, *yarubbuhu*, the root here being *rababa*, which is then contracted to *rabb* and refers to a king on account of his securing and protecting what he has mastery

of, owns and nurtures; and this is not used to refer to other-than-Him, may He be exalted, except in a restricted sense, as in His saying, “go back to your master (*rabbik*)” (Yūsuf: 50). Ibn Juzayy said: “It has four meanings: God, the Master, the King and the *Muṣliḥ* – the One Who puts right” – and all of these meanings are appropriate with respect to the Lord of the Worlds, although the preferred meaning is God, given its particular application to Allah, may He be exalted.

Ālamīn “the worlds” is the plural of *ālam* and is from the root *‘alima* – to have knowledge of, be aware of, being a noun referring to “that by which one may have cognisance of,” just as the signet ring (*khātam*) refers to that with which one seals, or the stamp by which one marks a page, and “that by which one may have cognisance of” has usually come to refer to the Creator, i.e. all that is other-than-Him with respect to the essences and incidental occurrences – as the possibility of their coming into being and their being in need of the One Who causes is a necessary quality of His Essence and points to His existence. It is in the plural in order to encompass the various kinds of existent realities, and given that sapient beings prevail, it is made plural by means of the *yā’* and the *nūn*, as is the case for their other attributes – so it is a plural not a collective noun, contrary to Ibn Mālik.

It is also said it is a noun referring to those of the angels and the two weighty thrones (*thaqālān*) with knowledge, the humans and the jinn, and it is used by extension for beings or realities other than them. Others say that it refers to people, for each of them is *ālam* “a world or microcosm,” given that each encompasses his like, his fellow men in the macrocosm, and for this reason He has rendered them alike in both of these worlds saying “*There are certainly Signs in the earth for people with certainty; and in yourselves as well,*” (adh-Dhāriyāt – the Scatterers: 21). I say that the words of the poet also indicate this:

O you who are wandering from your secret in the desert
 Look and you shall find all of existence in yourself
 You are perfection both in wayfaring and in your reality
 O you who contain the Divine secret in its entirety.

As for *ar-rahmān ar-rahīm* – *All-Merciful, Most Merciful*, they are both words containing a stressing of the root meaning of *rahīma* “to have mercy,” like the form *ghaḍbān* “most angry” from the root form *ghaḍība* – to become angry, or *‘alīm* “Most knowing” from *‘alima*. As for *rahmah*, linguistically it refers to a gentleness and mildness of heart, and a compassion demanding that one prefer others to oneself and act kindly to others. From this same root is the word *rahīm* “womb” on

account of the womb's "compassion" for what it contains. Moreover, the names of Allah, may He be exalted, are understood with respect to their objective or purpose which are actions without the passivity of beginnings or foundations which are acted upon by an agent and affected in consequence. The word *ar-Raḥmān* "All-Merciful" has a more intense meaning than *ar-Raḥīm* because any addition to the form of the word gives an additional meaning, as *qaṭṭa'a* and *qaṭa'a* "cut to pieces," and "to cut," respectively, and this is understood on occasion as referring to amount and on others as to manner.

Thus on the basis of the first, i.e. amount, it may be said, "O All-Merciful with respect to the world" as it applies in general to both the *mūmin* and the *kāfir*, and, "O Most-Merciful with respect to the *ākhirah*" as it applies in particular to the *mūmin*; with respect to the second, it may be said "O All-Merciful with respect to the world and the *ākhirah*", and "O Most-Merciful with respect to the world" as the blessings of the *ākhirah* are all immense and momentous while those of the world are both illustrious as well as paltry.

Ar-Raḥmān precedes – as any comparison proceeds from the lowest to highest – because mercy with respect to the world comes first, and because *ar-Raḥmān* takes on the meaning of a distinguishing feature which nothing else is described with, that is, the real Bestower of Blessings Whose goal of bestowing mercy is attained and is not applied to other-than-Him, may He be exalted. See al-Bayḍāwī regarding this point. There follows a discussion of both in the section concerning the meanings.

The word *malik* – the *King* is a description of what precedes it. The majority recite it without an *alif*, i.e. not *mālik* – owner, being from *al-mulk* – the kingdom, while 'Āṣim and al-Kisā'ī recite with *alif*, deeming it to be from *milk*, i.e. property, possession. With respect to the former, "the King arriving on the Day of the *Dīn* – judgment" or "the King of the affair on the Day of the *Dīn*" in which "arriving" and "the affair" are implicit. The manner of recitation of the majority is preferred for three reasons: first, a King is of greater importance than a Possessor, as anyone may be described as being a possessor with respect to his wealth, whereas the King is the lord over people; the second reason is His saying, "*The Kingdom will be His on the Day the Trumpet is blown*," (al-An'ām – Livestock 73); the third, that no *alif* may be assumed to have required omission – any omission would indicate something other than the original form of the word.

Yawm ad-Dīn – the Day of Judgement is adverbial in form and an addition of extension to what precedes it. This adverbial form is understood to act as an object. As to its meaning as an adverb it is, "*King on the Day of the Dīn*," or "*the King of the Affair on the Day of the Dīn*," in which case there is an omission of "on the". Two

forms of recitation have been narrated from the Prophet ﷺ that is with an *alif* of elongation and in the contracted mode.

The word *malik* has been recited in many different ways but we have omitted mention of them on account of their being irregular and exceptional. If one were to say *malik* and *mālik* are indefinite as the addition of a noun in the active, subject mode does not need to be particularised – how then may it be said to describe “*the All-Merciful, Most Merciful*” given that they are both in the definite form by means of “the”, I would say that the addition of the noun in the active subject mode is not rendered particular and definite if it refers to the present or future – because then the addition is not exclusive in mode and is merely linguistic, whereas here it refers to continuity and forever as befitting the Attributes of Allah, in which case its addition is pure and true – this has been stated by Ibn Juzayy.

The Real (Ḥaqq), may His Majesty be resplendent, after informing His slaves how they are to praise Him, to revere Him and then to ask Him says: “O My slaves say ‘*Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds,*’” that is, fine praise is the entitlement of the Magnificent, the Majestic and no one else has a right to *ḥamd*, to this praise, as there is no Bestower of Blessings in reality other-than-Him – “*Any blessing you have is from Allah*” (an-Naḥl – the Bee 53); or, all modes of praise are Allah’s in their entirety; or, the *ḥamd* well-known in people’s perception is the *ḥamd* of Allah, may He be exalted, of Himself in His beyond-timeness before He brought creation into existence – such that when He brought His creation into existence He said to all created realities, “*praise be to Allah*” that is “give praise to Me with that *ḥamd*,” with that praise contracted and obligated from before-endless-time.

Indeed He alone is entitled to *ḥamd* as He is Lord of all the worlds – as if someone were to ask Him “why have you made *ḥamd* particular to Yourself” and He replied “because I am the Lord of all the worlds, I have brought them into existence by My mercy, have secured their assistance by My blessings, there being no Bestower of Blessings other than Myself, and so I alone am entitled to *ḥamd* – from Me came the coming into existence, and it is My responsibility to ensure the continuance, I being the Lord of the slaves. So all the worlds in all their variety and types are in My grasp and subject to my raising up and nurturing.”

One man of knowledge said: “Allah’s creations comprise eighteen thousand worlds, half of which are on land the other half in the sea.” Fakhr ar-Rāzī said: “It has been narrated that the sons of Ādam are but a tenth of the number of the Jinn, and the sons of Ādam and the Jinn are a tenth of the amount of land animals, and all of these a tenth of the number of birds, and all of these a tenth of the number of creatures of the seas, and all of these a tenth of the number of angels on earth responsible for the sons of Ādam, and all of these are a tenth of the angels of the

second heaven, and so on in the same proportion up to the seventh heaven, and all this is a quite insignificant number in comparison with the Footstool, and then these are a tenth of the angels of one pavilion from amongst the pavilions of the Throne, the number of the pavilions being one hundred thousand, the length and breadth of each pavilion – if compared with the heavens and the earth and all they contain and all that is between them, then the heavens and the earth are insignificant and paltry. And there is no hand's span of earth but that there is an angel there in prostration, bowing or standing, his voice loud and strident with *subhān-Allāh* and *lā ilāha ill-Allāh*; and all of these in comparison with those who encircle the Throne are as a drop in the ocean, and no one but Allah knows their number – “*No one knows the legions of your Lord but Him*,” (al-Muddaththir – The Enveloped: 31).

Wahb ibn Munabbih said: “The pillars of the Throne are sixty-six in number, and between each two pillars there are sixty thousand open plains, and in each open plain there are sixty thousand worlds, and each world is as wide as that of the jinn and humans.”

All these worlds are in the grasp of the Ḥaqq, the Real, and subject to His nurturing and protection. He affords help and sustenance to the being in each, and is present wherever they are located or buried in death, either to their spiritual nature from the power of knowledge and gnoses, or via their human nature from the power of their corporeal persons – from the Throne to the Carpet of the earth, each pre-assigned the amount of their provision and the period of its availability, their outer forms protected, their locations known, nothing is hidden from Him in the earth or the heavens, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

This nurturing by which the Lord, may He be praised, nurtures His creation is in the form of mercy and kindness on His part, but not required of Him or an obligation on His part, and for this reason He accompanies mention of nurturing with the words “*the All-Merciful, Most Merciful*,” that is, “*All-Merciful*” in that by His blessing He has brought all into being and “*Most Merciful*” by His help and sustaining – two blessings no existent reality is devoid of – and each created reality must be from both, from the blessing by which He has brought all into being and from that by which He helps and sustains, having in the first place bestowed blessing by the bringing into existence and the second by the continuing sustenance, as is stated in the *Ḥikam*. Thus His name “*All-Merciful*” implies the bringing into being of things and their manifestation, and His name “*Most Merciful*” implies their nurturing and sustaining – and for this reason it is not permitted to apply the name *Raḥmān* to anyone or be named so, because bringing into being is not valid except by Him, may He be exalted, contrary to His name

Raḥīm for it is permitted to call someone other-than-Allah by this, given that some of creation share – metaphorically speaking – the quality of being able to give sustenance in the manifest world.

Or He is *All-Merciful* in the world and the *ākhirah*, and *Most Merciful* in the *ākhirah*, because the mercy of the *ākhirah* is particular to those who have *īmān*; or He is *All-Merciful* by the splendour of the blessings, and *Most Merciful* by the particularity, fineness and intricacy of the blessings – such that the splendour of the blessings, for example, is the blessing of Islam, Iman and Ihsan; or, knowledge, guidance, the unveilings, openings of the door of gnosis, and the entry together with the loved ones. The particularity, fineness and intricacy of the blessings, for example, are good health, vitality, *ḥalāl* wealth and other things which shall be mentioned about the *āyat* below regarding *those whom You have blessed*.

Furthermore as He it is about Whom it is understood that He has brought into being, has afforded sustenance, and so is entitled to be the King of all the slaves – He follows this with: *Kīng of the Day of the Dīn*, that is, the One Who disposes over His slaves as He wishes, there being no rejection of what He has decreed and no denial of what He has given them – so He is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords in this Abode and in that; and He has designated the day of the life-transaction, that is the day of requital, in particular with kingship, as it is on this day that the kingdom of Allah shall become visible to the whole of creation – for Allah, may He be exalted, shall make a *tajallī* manifestatio the kingdom of power and lights (*jabarūt*) n to some of His slaves so that those who have *īmān* will actually see Him contrary to the world; for the way He acts, may He be exalted, is only understood by those who have *īmān*, and for this reason many of the ignorant have ascribed kingship to themselves while on the Day of Rising kingship shall belong uniquely to Allah as both the elite and common shall affirm: He says may He be exalted: “*To whom does the kingdom belong today? To Allah, the One, the Conqueror!*” (Ghāfir – Forgiving: 16).

An indication of inner, subtle meanings of this *āyat*: When the Ḥaqq made a manifestation (*tajallī*), may He be praised, from the world of power and lights (*jabarūt*) to the world of Unseen forms (*malakūt*), or one might say from the world of the unseen to the visible world, He made praise of Himself by Himself, and affirmed the Oneness of Himself by Himself. To Allah be attributed the good of al-Harawī, who said:

No one can affirm the oneness of the One
 because anyone who affirms His Oneness rejects.⁸
 The one-ing (*tawhīd*) of anyone who expresses this of himself is defective,
 rendered invalid by the One Who admits of no other but Himself.
 His one-ing of Himself is the true *tawhīd* of Him,
 the description on the part of anyone else
 who describes Him is an aberration.

Thus He says in “one-ing” Himself by means of Himself, by way of an explanation from Himself by means of Himself: “*Praise be to Allah the Lord of the Worlds*” – it is as if He is saying in the opening to His Book that the secret contained in His address is: “I am the One Who praises and the Praised One, and I am the Sustainer of all existence, I am the Lord of Lords, I am the Causer of all causes – to the reader who understands this manner of address, I am the Lord of all the Worlds, I am the Sustainer of the Heavens and the regions of the earth; indeed I am the One Who affirms *tawhīd* in My existence, and the One Who manifests in manifestation (*tajallī*) to My slaves by means of the nobility and generosity of My existence; all the worlds are assured permanence by My permanence, annihilated by the utter oneness of My Essence.”

A man in front of Junayd said, “Praise be to Allah” without saying “the Lord of the Worlds,” to which Junayd said, “My brother complete it,” to which the man said, “what are the worlds worth that they might be mentioned together with Him,” to which Junayd replied, “My brother say it, for if an in-time incidental occurrence is mentioned with the before-endless-time, then the in-time incidental occurrence is necessarily obliterated and the before-endless-time remains.”

He, may He be praised, is saying: “O you who are near to Me, reflect upon My secret for it is most wonderful, I am the Lover and the Beloved, I am near, I am the One Who answers, I am the All-Merciful, the Most-Merciful, I am the King, the Orderer (*dayyān*), I am the All-Merciful by virtue of the blessing of bringing all into being and the Most-Merciful by virtue of My assuring sustenance, from Me is the bringing into being and I am responsible for assuring sustenance, I am the Lord of the slaves, I am the King, the Orderer, I am the One Who rewards good treatment (*iḥsān*) with good treatment, I am the absolute King – if it were not for the ignorance of those of disobedience and contention, they would realise that the command is Ours always – for those people who understand.”

He said in *ar-Risālah al-kubrā* that there is nothing to be learnt from the outward

⁸ He rejects by his very claim to this affirmation – because this claim is an affirmation of his self besides Allah.

manifestations of things, rather the lesson is to be taken from the hiddenmost secret and that is only by the manifestation of the command of the Ḥaqq, the raising of its veil, the end of its concealment and obscurity. So if this manifestation (*tajallī*) comes into being and annihilation (*fanā*) and obliteration (*duthūr*) overwhelm the outward things of this world, the darknesses are dispersed by the shining of the light – then appears the “*eye of certainty*,” and the clear truth is realised, in which case all claims of those who make claims are invalidated – in that manner that the common people understand the invalidation of all such claims on the Day of the *Dīn* – when the kingdom belongs to Allah the Lord of the Worlds – and when has the kingdom belonged to someone other-than-Him? such that His words might be understood to be subject to a restrictive condition: “*Sovereignty on that Day will be Allah’s*,” (al-Ḥajj – the Pilgrimage: 56), or His saying, “*The command that Day will be Allah’s alone*,” (al-Infīṭār – the Splitting: 19) – other than in the outrageous claims of those who claim this from their sick hearts?

Then an explanation of slavehood (*‘ubūdiyyah*) was revealed – by His saying:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾

5 You alone we worship. You alone we ask for help.

I say that “*You alone*” (*iyāka*) is the object of “*we worship*” (*na‘budu*) and precedes it in order to emphasize its importance and to indicate Him exclusively – for this reason Ibn ‘Abbās said: “We worship You and do not worship anyone together with You”; and in order to give precedence to what has precedence in existence, that is the King, the One worshipped, and to declare that the worshipper should have his sight directed towards the One worshipped in the first instance, as well as with respect to the Essence, and from this to the actual worship, not in the sense that the worship issues from him but rather that it is a noble relationship to Him and a link between himself and the Ḥaqq – for the gnostic (*‘arif*), is entitled to arrival if he is completely immersed in perception of the Majestic, the Most Pure, and absent with respect to all that is other-than-Him such that he no longer perceives himself nor any state of the self, rather that it is a manifestation (*tajallī*) of His and a manifestation of His Lordship. For this reason there is what Allah has narrated from His beloved when He says: “*Do not be despondent, Allah is with us*,” (at-Tawbah – Repentance: 40) is preferred over what he narrated from His Kalīm, the one whom He spoke to directly, Mūsā, when he said as He cites him: “*My Lord is with me and He will guide me*,” (ash-Shu‘ārā – The Poets: 62), because he made explicit what he wanted.

You alone (iyyāka) is also the object of *we ask for help (nastaʿin)*, and precedes it in order to emphasise His importance and exclusivity, just as it preceded in *iyyāka naʿbudu* – and the pronoun “You” is repeated. He does not say “*You alone we worship and ask for help*” for a repeated stating of it lends more emphasis to reliance on Allah, and is more conclusive in establishing dependence on Allah, drawing nearer to Allah, and expresses a greater degree of praise – do you not see that your saying “I seek assistance from you, protection from you, and by you I attain my wishes” is more eloquent and expresses a greater degree of praise than your saying, “I seek assistance and protection from you...”?

Worship precedes the seeking of help in order to maintain conformity in Arabic of the rhyme at the end of the *āyats*, and to make clear thereby that an answer to seeking something one needs is more likely if one gives precedence to the means to achieving this need; and whoever becomes immersed in serving the King and commences with this in accordance with his capacity, and then seeks assistance from Him, then his wish will be answered, contrary to someone whom the King has asked to serve Him who says: “Give me something which will help me to do this,” – for this would be a lack of courtesy; and furthermore, whoever calls to mind qualities of reverence will be enabled all the more quickly to humility and worship; and yet further, the fact that if the speaker attributes worship to himself, he then may imagine, out of pride, that it emanates from his own capability – and so he says, “*You alone we ask for help*” after this in order to negate this false imagining.

Tbādah – worship, refers to utmost humility and submission, and because of this one speaks in Arabic of a “subservient path (*tarīq muʿabbad*),” i.e. one which is smooth and passable. *Istiʿānah* means to seek help, that is help for all important matters, or in order to carry out the acts of worship.

The pronoun “we” which is concealed in the two verbs *naʿbudu* and *nastaʿin* refers to the reciter and those guardian angels with him as well as those present with him for the communal *ṣalāt*; or, it refers to him and all the rest of those present. His worship is included in the multiple acts of worship of these others, and his need is admixed with theirs, for it may well be that this worship and need of his may be accepted by the *barakah* of that worship and need of theirs and be answered, and for this reason worship collectively (*jamāʿah*) is stipulated by the law when there is no excuse for worship by oneself. This has been stated by al-Bayḍāwī.

The Real (Ḥaqq), may His majesty be raised in splendour, completing the instruction of His slaves says: “If you praise Me and express your reverence of

Me and you honour Me, then affirm My Lordship and make manifest your worship from yourselves, seek assistance from Me at all times and say: “*You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help.*” It is as if He, may His majesty be raised in splendour – by His mentioning that He is entitled to all forms of praise, both from before-endless-time and in the present because of His being the Lord of all the Worlds and their Sustainer, the Origin of all sources and secondary matters, and because He has bestowed blessings on them in the first instance by bringing them into being, and secondly by sustaining them and is therefore their absolute possessor – is stating that He alone is entitled to be worshipped because in reality there is no Bestower of Blessings other-than-Him, and so He has more right to be worshipped, and it is more fitting that He alone be one’s direction and aim as He proceeds independently, rules and disposes and does not require any help; moreover material help is the very essence of generosity: if this material help is interrupted, existence ceases.

Al-Bayḍāwī said that when He mentions “the One entitled to praise” and describes Him with great attributes, He thus becomes distinct by these from all other essences, and this knowledge being dependent on something which is specific and known, He is thus addressed as such, that is: “O You whose affair is so, we single You out for worship and for seeking help” – so that thereby His particularity becomes more evident, and one may rise from absence to presence before Him; and then so that that which is merely known theoretically becomes actually seen, and that which is merely understood by the intellect be witnessed, and what is absent becomes present. The first phase is based on the beginnings of the state of the knower with respect to remembrance and invocation (*dhikr*), thought (*fikr*) and reflection upon His names, study of His *āyats*, demonstration of the grandeur of His affair and the splendour of His authority, then this is followed by the ending of his affair, that is his plunging into the depths of arrival and his becoming one of the people of witnessing such that he actually sees Him and converses with Him: “O Allah make us from among those of arrival at the source and not among those who follow the traces of existence.” Among the customs of the Arabs is the use of artistic modes of speech and their changing from one mode to another in order to engender what is unexpected and fresh and to stimulate the hearer; thus they may change from the first to the third person or from the third person to the first, such as His saying, “*so that when some of you are on a boat, and We cause them to run before a fair wind,*” (Yūnus: 22) where He does not say, “We cause You”; or His saying, “*It is Allah Who sends the winds which raise the clouds which We then drive to a dead land,*” (Fāṭir – The Bringer into Being: 9), where He does not say, “which He then drives.” See then the rest of his discussion.

The sudden stylistic transition may be seen here in His words, “*You alone we worship*” for He does not say “He alone we worship” although the most obvious assumption is that what precedes it is in the third person; the benefit of this then is that the One described becomes singled out for one’s attention and thereby becomes more present.

Al-Iqlīshī said: “This *āyat* is the one about which the Prophet ﷺ said that when the slave says, “*You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help*,” Allah, exalted is He, says: “This is between Me and My slave and My slave shall have what he is asking for,” meaning: any slave who turns to Me in worship and asks Me for help in this worship, then his worship is accepted and help on My part for him in this worship is there in order that it be performed as it should. Thus worship is an attribute of the slave and help is from Allah, exalted is He, for the slave, and for this reason He says, “so this is between Me and My slave.”

Ibn Juzayy said that this means, “we ask help from You to worship and in all our affairs,” and is proof as to the invalidity of what the *Qadariyyah* and the *Jabariyyah* say – and that the truth lies between their two standpoints.

An indication: When the Ḥaqq became manifest in manifestation (*tajallī*) from the world of the power and lights (*jabarūt*) to the world of Unseen forms (*malakūt*), and He praised Himself by Himself, He also appeared in manifestation (*tajallī*) and came down from the world of the Unseen forms to the world of the seen forms (*mulk*) by His Power and Wisdom in order to make apparent the traces and marks of His names and attributes. Thus He made slavehood manifest and concealed Lordship, made Wisdom manifest and hid Power, made the world of Wisdom address the world of Power and submit to it, become enslaved to it and become in need of it – from Him is the assistance and guidance, and it is He Who protects from the way of misguidance and error.

Thus the world of Wisdom is the world of the imposition of duties and the world of Power is the locus of disposing of the affairs of the slave, the world of Wisdom is the world of corporeal forms, and that of Power the world of the spirits – souls, so “*You alone we worship*” is for the people of the world of Wisdom and, “*You alone we ask for help*” is for those of the world of Power. For this reason Shaykh Abu-l-‘Abbās al-Mursī said ﷺ: “*You alone we worship*” is the *sharī‘ah* and, “*You alone we ask for help*” is the *ḥaqīqah*, “*You alone we worship*” is Islam, “*You alone we ask for help*” is *iḥsān*, “*You alone we worship*” is worship (*‘ibādah*), “*You alone we ask for help*” is slavehood (*‘ubūdiyyah*), “*You alone we worship*” is separation, i.e. your state of distinguishing and discriminating within the everyday actions and forms of this world, “*You alone we ask for help*” is joining, i.e. your joining with Him in the realm of meanings within these acts and forms.

If you wish you may say: “*You alone we worship*” is for the people who act for Allah and these are those who act sincerely for Him (*mukhlisūn*), and “*You alone we ask for help*” is for the people who act by Allah, and these are the people who affirm His Oneness (*muwahhidūn*); and actions for Allah necessarily entail reward, and actions by Allah necessarily entail coming close, actions for Allah necessarily entail the realisation of actions, and actions by Allah entail ensuring one has the correct will and intent; and action for Allah is an attribute of every slave, and action by Allah is the attribute of every person of true intent; and action for Allah is the putting outward rules into action, while action by Allah ensures the correct intent of the innermost reality of the heart, as stated by al-Qushayrī.

People in the state of witnessing the Power and Wisdom of Allah may be classified in three types: one group who are veiled by Wisdom from witnessing Power, and they are the people of veiling who stop at His words “*You alone we worship*”; another group who are veiled by witnessing Power from Wisdom and they are the people of annihilation (*fanā*), who remain with His words “*You alone we ask for help*”; and yet another group who are neither veiled by Wisdom from Power nor Power from Wisdom, who accord each their proper due, and who fulfil the rights of all who have a rightful claim – and they are the people of perfection, and the people of going on (*baqā*), those who combine “*You alone we worship*” with “*You alone we ask for help*.” And success is by Allah.

Then He makes clear the greatest aim and the most important goal, namely the seeking of guidance to and success in actual realisation of the *sharī‘ah*, when He says:

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾

6 Guide us on the Straight Path

I say that “*guidance*” in its basic meaning refers to a showing of something with kindness, and for this reason it is used with respect to what is good. Thus His saying “*and guide them to the Path of the blazing Fire!*” (aṣ-Ṣaffāt – Those in Ranks: 23) is meant ironically, and the verb here is *hadā* with an “a” and in its original form it becomes transitive by means of a *lām* or an *ilā* but here is used as in “*Mūsā chose seventy men from his people,*” (al-A‘rāf – the Ramparts: 155), where the “from” in Arabic is omitted. The word *ṣirāṭ* meaning “Path” is derived from the verb *saraṭa* as in *saraṭa-t-ṭa‘ām* “to swallow food,” so it is as if the path swallows those who