

The Spiritual Life: Prayer and Supplication

For the Muslim, the necessary personal concomitant of professing God's Unity is devotion to Him. The outward dimension of this devotion is shaped by the Shari'ite injunctions concerning worship: the canonical prayer, whether mandatory or recommended, fasting, pilgrimage, almsgiving, etc. But the inward dimension of Muslim devotions is much more difficult to grasp. Unlike the outward dimension, it cannot be defined in so many sentences. It can only be perceived through studying the lives and spiritual radiance of holy men and saints. Some of the most intimate glimpses of the pious Muslim soul are to be found in supplications.¹

Prayer in Islam can be divided into four basic forms: canonical prayer (*salat*), supplication (*dua'*), litany (*wird*) and invocation (*dhikr*). One can say that the first, especially in its mandatory form, corresponds to what is implied in Christianity by mass or holy communion. The second is equivalent to "personal prayer", or simply to what the Christian often understands by the term "prayer" as such. The mandatory canonical prayer must be performed at specific times every day and according to strictly defined rules, while the recommended form also follows the same strict pattern (standing, bowing, prostrating, sitting, etc.).

But one may "supplicate" God at any time and in any circumstance, without any set pattern or formulae. Supplications are strictly voluntary and "free". As for litanies and invocations i.e., the recitation of Quranic formulae or one or more of the Names of God, like supplication these are voluntary, although they are not so "free" since they follow set patterns, and like the canonical prayer, must be in Arabic. Litanies may be performed by any pious Muslim, whereas invocations are recited almost exclusively by the Sufis.

Although supplications left by the great saints of early Islam are of the type of "free prayer", invariably they have one element in common: since they were recited in Arabic (although they may be made in any language), they are largely inspired by Quranic images and incorporate Quranic verses and formulae. Also, they are usually rhythmic and very often, as in all four prayers translated here, employ rhymed prose (*saj'*). Hence in this part I have divided the lines of the translation in keeping with the rhythm of the original in order to give a better idea of the style.

The author of the first supplication is Imam Husayn, the Third Imam, who was martyred at Karbala and is probably the most important Imam in popular Shi'ite devotion. Certainly the days of mourning for him (in particular *tasu'a* and *'ashura*, the ninth and tenth of Muharram), are still the most solemn and carefully observed holidays in the Shi'ite calendar.

Imam Husayn made his supplication—one of the most famous in Shi'ite annals, one year during the pilgrimage to Mecca on the Day Of Arafah (the ninth of Dhu-l-hijjah), and it has been recited by pious Shi'ites ever since. On that day pilgrims pass the time at Mount Arafat occupying themselves with canonical prayer, reciting the Quran, litanies, invocations and supplications. The spirit of the day is well represented in the Imam's prayer.² The second and third prayers are taken from the Fourth Imam's *al-Sahifat al-Sajjadiyyah*, referred to in the introduction.

As for the fourth and final prayer, it was given by the Twelfth Imam to his second "deputy" (*na'ib*), Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Uthman ibn Said, who acted as the Imam's spokesman for many years until his death in 304/916–7 or 305/917–8. Here it is important for those not familiar with Shi'ite doctrines to understand that after the Twelfth Imam went into "occultation" at a young age in the year 260/873–4 and thus disappeared from the eyes of men, he maintained contact with four persons in succession until the last of them died in the year 329/940–1. Then his "greater occultation" (*al-ghaybat al-kubra*) began. He will not reveal himself again until the end of time.

A. al-Husayn, the Third Imam

Prayer for the Day of Arafah

Praise belongs to God

whose decree none may avert,

and whose gift none may prevent.

No fashioner's fashioning is like His fashioning,

and He is the Generous, the All-embracing.

He brought forth the varieties of unprecedented creatures

and perfected through His wisdom all He had fashioned.

Hidden not from Him are harbingers,

nor lost with Him are deposits.³

He repays every fashioner,

feathers the nest of all who are content
and has mercy upon all who humble themselves.

He sends down benefits
and the all-encompassing Book
in radiant light.

He hears supplications,
averts afflictions,
raises up in degrees,
and knocks down tyrants.

For there is no god other than He,
nothing is equal to Him,

*"Like Him there is naught,
and He is the Hearing, the Seeing"* (43 : 11),

the subtle, the Aware,
and *"He is powerful over all things"* (5 : 120 etc.).

O God, I make Thee my quest
and bear witness to Thy Lordship,
acknowledging that Thou art my Lord
and to Thee is my return.[4](#)

Thou originated me by Thy blessing before I was a thing remembered.[5](#)
Thou created me from dust,
then gavest me a place in the loins (of my fathers),
secure from the uncertainty of Fate and the vagaries of
the ages and the years.

I remained a traveller from loin to womb in a time

immemorial of past days

and bygone centuries.

In Thy tenderness, bounty and goodness toward me Thou

didst not send me out into the empire of the

leaders of disbelief, those who broke Thy

covenant and cried lies to Thy messengers.[6](#)

Rather, Thou sentest me out to that guidance which had

been foreordained for me, the way which

Thou madest easy for me

and in which Thou nurtured me.

And before that Thou wert kind to me through Thy

gracious fashioning

and abundant blessings.

Thou originated my creation from a sperm-drop spilled[7](#)

and madest me to dwell in a threefold gloom among flesh,

blood and skin.[8](#)

Thou gavest me not to witness my creation,[9](#)

nor didst Thou entrust me with anything of my own affair.

Then thou sentest me out into the world for the guidance

that had been foredained for me, complete

and unimpaired.

Thou watched over me in the cradle

as an infant boy,

provided me with food,
wholesome milk,
and turned the hearts of the nurse-maids toward me.

Thou entrusted my upbringing to compassionate mothers,
guarded me from the calamities brought by the jinn
and kept me secure from excess and lack.

High art Thou, O Merciful! O Compassionate!

Then when I began to utter speech

Thou completed for me Thy abundant blessings.

Thou nurtured me more and more each year

until, when my nature was perfected

and my strength balanced,

Thou madest Thy argument encumbent upon me by

inspiring me with knowledge of Thee,

awing me with the marvels of Thy wisdom,

awakening me to the wonders of Thy creation which Thou

hadst multiplied in Thy Heaven and Thy earth,[10](#)

and instructing me in Thy thanks and remembrance.

Thou madest encumbent upon me Thy obedience and worship,

madest me to understand what Thy messengers had brought

and madest easy for me the acceptance of Thy good pleasure.

Thou wast gracious to me in all of this, through Thy

succour and kindness.

Then, since Thou created me from the best soil,[11](#)

Thou wert not satisfied, my God, that I should have one

blessing without another.

Thou provided me with varieties of sustenance

and kinds of garments

and Thy tremendous, most tremendous, graciousness to me

and Thy eternal goodness toward me.

And finally, when Thou hadst completed for me every blessing

and turned away from me all misfortunes,

Thou wert not prevented by my ignorance and audacity

from guiding me toward that which would bring me nigh to Thee

or from giving me success in that which would bring me close to Thee.

For if I prayed to Thee Thou answered,

if I asked of Thee Thou gavest,

if I obeyed Thee Thou showed Thy gratitude,

and if I thanked Thee Thou gavest me more.[12](#)

All of that was to perfect Thy blessings upon me and

Thy goodness toward me.

So glory be to Thee; Glory be to Thee,

who are Producer and Reproducer,[13](#) Laudable, Glorious.

Holy are Thy Names and tremendous Thy bounties.

So which of Thy blessings, my God, can I enumerate by counting and mentioning?

For which of Thy gifts am I able to give thanks ?

Since they, O Lord, are more than reckoners can count[14](#)

or those who entrust to memory can attain by knowledge.

But the affliction and hardship, O God, that Thou turned

and averted from me

is more than the health and happiness that came to me.

And I witness, my God, by the truth of my faith,

the knotted resolutions of my certainty,

my pure and unadulterated profession of Unity,

the hidden inwardness of my consciousness,

the places to which the streams of light of my eyes

are attached,

the lines on my forehead's surface,

the openings for my breath's channels,

the parts of my nose's soft point,

the paths of my ears' canals,

what my lips close upon and compress,

the movements of my tongue in speaking,

the joint at the back of my mouth and jaw,

the sockets of my molar teeth,

the place where I swallow my food and drink,

that which bears my brain,

the hollow passages of my neck's fibers,

that which is contained in my breast's cavity,

the carriers of my aorta,

the places where my heart's curtain¹⁵ is attached,

the small pieces of flesh around my liver,

that which the ribs of my sides encompass,

the sockets of my joints,

the contraction of my members,

the tips of my fingers,

my flesh,

my blood,

my hair,

my skin,

my nerves,

my windpipe,[16](#)

my bones,

my brain,

my veins,

and all of my members,

what was knitted upon them in the days when I was

a suckling baby,

what the earth has taken away from me,

my sleep,

my waking,

my being still,

and the movements of my bowing and prostrating,

that had I taken pains and had I striven

for the duration of the epochs and ages

were my life to be extended through them

to deliver thanks for one of Thy blessings,
I would not have been able to do so,
except by Thy grace, which alone makes encumbent
upon me never-ending and ever renewed
gratitude to Thee,
and fresh and ever present praise.

Indeed, and were I and the reckoners among Thy
creatures ever so eager
to calculate the extent of Thy bestowal of blessings,
whether past
or approaching,
we would fail to encompass it through numbers
or to calculate its boundaries.

Never How could it ever be done!

For Thou announcest in Thy eloquent Book
and truthful Tiding,

**"And if you count God's blessing, you will never
number it" (14 : 34).**

Thy Book, O God, Thy Message, has spoken the
Truth!

And Thy prophets and messengers delivered Thy
revelation that Thou hadst sent down upon
them
and the religion that Thou hadst promulgated for them

and through them.

And I witness, my God, by my effort,

my diligence,

and the extent of my obedience and my capacity,

and I say as a believer possessing certainty,

"Praise belongs to God,

who has not taken to Him a son"

that He might have an heir,

"and who has not any associate in His dominion"

who might oppose Him in what He creates,

"nor any protector out of humbleness" (17 : 111)

who would aid Him in what He fashions.

So glory be to Him,

glory be to Him!

"Why, were there gods in earth and heaven other than

God,

they would surely go to ruin" (21 : 22) and be rent¹⁷.

Glory be to God, the Unique, the One,

"the Everlasting Refuge" who "***has not begotten, nor***

has He been begotten,

and equal to Him there is none" (112 : 2-4).

Praise belongs to God,

praise equal to the praise of the angels stationed near to Him

and the prophets sent by Him.

And God bless His elect, Muhammad,
the Seal of the Prophets,
and his virtuous, pure and sincere household, and give
them peace.

Then he began to supplicate. He occupied himself with prayer as tears ran from his blessed eyes. Then he said:

O God, cause me to fear Thee as if I were seeing Thee,[18](#)

Give me felicity through piety toward Thee,
make me not wretched by disobedience toward Thee,
choose the best for me by Thy decree (*qada'*)
and bless me by Thy determination (*qadar*),
that I may love not the hastening of what Thou hast
delayed,
nor the delaying of what Thou hast hastened.

O God, appoint for me sufficiency in my soul,
certainty in my heart,
sincerity in my action,
light in my eyes,
and insight in my religion.

Give me enjoyment of my bodily members,
make my hearing and my seeing my two inheritors,
help me against him who wrongs me,
show me in him my revenge and my desires,
and console thereby my eyes.

O God, remove my affliction,
veil my defects,
forgive my offence,
drive away my Satan,[19](#)
dissolve my debt,
and give me, my God, the highest degree
in the world to come and in this world.

O God, to Thee belongs the praise,
just as Thou created me and made me to hear and to
see;
and to Thee belongs the praise,
just as Thou created me and made me a creature
unimpaired
as a mercy to me,
while Thou hadst no need of my creation.

My Lord, since Thou created me
and then made straight my nature;
my Lord, since Thou caused me to grow
and made good my shape;[20](#)
my Lord, since Thou didst good to me
and gavest me well-being in my soul;
my Lord, since Thou preserved me
and gavest me success;
my Lord, since Thou blessed me

and then guided me;

my Lord, since Thou chosest me

and gavest me of every good;

my Lord, since Thou gavest me to eat

and drink;[21](#)

my Lord, since Thou enriched me

and contented me;[22](#)

my Lord, since Thou aided me

and exalted me;

my Lord, since Thou dothed me with Thy pure covering

and smoothed the way for me by Thy sufficient

fashioning:

Bless Muhammad and the household of Muhammad,

aid me against the misfortunes of time and the

calamities of nights and days,

deliver me from the terrors of this world and the

torments of the world to come

and spare me from the evil of that which the evildoers

do in the earth.

O God, as for what I fear, spare me from it,

and as for what I seek to avoid, guard me against it.

in my soul and my religion watch over me,

in my travelling protect me,

in my family and my property appoint for me a

successor,

in what Thou hast provided for me bless me,

in my soul humble me,

in the eyes of men magnify me,

from the evil of jinn and men preserve me,

for my sins disgrace me not,

for my inward secrets shame me not,

for my action try me not,

of Thy blessings deprive me not

and to other than Thee entrust me not.

My God, to whom wouldest Thou entrust me?

To a relative? He would cut me off.

Or to a stranger? He would look at me with displeasure.

Or to those who act toward me with arrogance?

But Thou art my Lord and the sovereign over my affair.

I would complain to Thee of my exile and the

remoteness of my abode,

and that he whom Thou hast made sovereign over me

despises me.

My God, so cause not Thy wrath to alight upon me.

If Thou becomest not wrathful with me

I will have no care,²³ glory be to Thee

But Thy protection is more embracing.

So I ask Thee, O Lord, by the Light of Thy Face by which the

earth and the heavens are illuminated, shadows are removed,
and the affairs of the ancients and the later folk are set aright,
not to cause me to die when Thy wrath is upon me,[24](#)
nor to send down upon me Thy anger.

The pleasure is Thine

The pleasure is Thine,
to be satisfied with me before that.

There is no god but Thou, Lord of the Holy Land,[25](#)

the Sacred Monument,[26](#)

and the Ancient House,[27](#)

upon which Thou caused blessing to descend

and which Thou madest a sanctuary for mankind.[28](#)

O He who pardons the greatest sins by His clemency!

O He who lavishes blessings by His bounty!

O He who gives abundance by His generosity!

O Sustenance to me in my adversity!

O Companion to me in my solitude!

O Aid to me in my affliction!

O Benefactor to me in my blessing!

O my God

and God of my fathers,

Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob![29](#)

Lord of Gabriel, Michael and Israfil![30](#)

Lord of Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets,

and his household, the chosen ones!

Revealer of the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms and the Criterion,[31](#)

and Sender down of **Kaf Ha' Ya' Ayn Sad, Ta' Ha', Ya' Sin**, and the Wise Quran![32](#)

Thou art my cave (of refuge) when the roads for all their

amplitude constrict me

and the land for all its breadth is strait for me.

If not for Thy mercy, I would have been among the perishing,

and Thou annullest my slip.

If not for Thy covering me,[33](#) I would have been among the disgraced,

and Thou confirmest me with help against my enemies.[34](#)

And if not for Thy helping me, I would have been

among those overcome.[35](#)

O He who appropriated loftiness and exaltation to Himself,
so His friends (*awliya'*) are mighty through His might!

O He before whom kings place the yoke of abasement

around their necks,

for they fear His overwhelming power!

**"He knows the treachery of the eyes and what the
breasts conceal"** (40 : 19)

and the unseen brought by time and fate.

O He about whom none knows how He is but He!

O He about whom none knows what He is but He!

O He whom none knows but He!

O He who squeezed the earth onto the water and held

back the air with the sky!

O He to whom belong the noblest Names![36](#)

O He who possesses kindness which will never be cut off!

O He who assigned the cavalcade to Joseph in the barren land,

brought him out of the well

and made him a king after slavery!

O He who returned him to Jacob after "**his eyes were**

whitened with sorrow that he was suppressing" (12 : 84)[37](#)

O He who removed affliction and tribulation from Job[38](#)

and restrained Abraham's hands from the sacrifice of

his son after he had reached old age and

his life had passed by![39](#)

O He who answered the prayer of Zachariah

and bestowed upon him John,

not leaving him childless and alone![40](#)

O He who brought Jonah out from the stomach of the fish![41](#)

O He who parted the sea for the Children of Israel, then saved them

and drowned Pharoah and his hosts![42](#)

O He who sends winds heralding His mercy![43](#)

O He who does not hurry (to act) against those of His

creatures who disobey Him![44](#)

O He who rescued the sorcerers after (their) long denial!

They had early benefitted from His blessing,

eating His provision

and worshipping other than Him;

they had opposed, denied and cried lies to His messengers.[45](#)

O God!

O God!

O Beginner, O Creator with no compeer!

O Everlasting who has no end!

O Living when nothing was alive!

O Quickener of the dead![46](#)

O "***He Who is aware of the deserts of every soul***" (13 : 33)!

O He toward whom my gratitude was little,

yet He deprived me not!

My transgression was great,

yet He disgraced me not!

He saw me committing acts of disobedience,

yet he made me not notorious!

O He who watched over me in childhood!

O He who provided for me in my adulthood!

O He whose favors toward me cannot be reckoned and

whose blessings cannot be repaid!

O He who has confronted me with the good and the fair,

and I have confronted Him with evil and disobedience in return!

O He who led me to faith before I had come to know

gratitude for His gracious bestowal!

O He upon whom I called when I was sick

and He healed me,

when naked

and He clothed me,

when hungry

and He satisfied me,

when thirsty

and He gave me to drink,

when abased

and He exalted me,⁴⁷

when ignorant

and He gave me knowledge,

when alone

and He increased my number,

when away

and He returned me,

when empty-handed

and He enriched me,

when in need of help

and He helped me,

and when rich

and He took not from me.

I refrained from (calling upon Thee in) all of that

and Thou caused me to begin (to call).

Thine are the praise and the gratitude!

O He who overlooked my slip,

relieved my distress,

heard my prayer,

covered my defects,

forgave my sins,

caused me to reach my desire,

and helped me against my enemy!

If I were to count Thy blessings, favors and generous

acts of kindness

I would not be able to reckon them.[48](#)

O my Protector!

Thou art He who was gracious,

Thou art He who blessed,

Thou art He who worked good,

Thou art He who was kind,

Thou art He who was bounteous,

Thou art He who perfected,

Thou art He who provided,

Thou art He who gave success,

Thou art He who bestowed,

Thou art He who enriched,

Thou art He who contented,[49](#)

Thou art He who sheltered,[50](#)

Thou art He who sufficed,

Thou art He who guided,

Thou art He who preserved (from sin),

Thou art He who covered (my sins),

Thou art He who forgave,

Thou art He who overlooked,

Thou art He who established (in the earth),⁵¹

Thou art He who exalted,

Thou art He who aided,

Thou art He who supported,

Thou art He who confirmed,

Thou art He who helped,

Thou art He who healed,

Thou art He who gave well-being,

Thou art He who honored

● blessed art Thou

● and high exalted!

So Thine is the praise everlasting,

and Thine is gratitude enduringly and forever

Then I, my God, confess my sins,

so forgive me for them.

I am he who did evil,

I am he who made mistakes,

I am he who purposed (to sin),

I am he who was ignorant,

I am he who was heedless,

I am he who was negligent,

I am he who relied (upon other than Thee),

I am he who premeditated,

I am he who promised,

I am he who went back on his word,

I am he who confessed (my sins)

and I am he who acknowledged Thy blessings upon me

and with me and then returned to my sins.

So forgive me for them,

O He who is not harmed by the sins of His servants

nor needs He their obedience.

He gives success through His aid and His mercy to

whomsoever of them works righteousness.

So praise belongs to Thee, My God and My Lord!

My God, Thou commanded me and I disobeyed

and Thou forbade me and I committed what Thou hadst forbidden.

I became such that I neither possessed any mark of guiltlessness

that I might ask forgiveness

nor any power

that I might be helped.

Then by what means shall I turn toward Thee, O my

Protector !?

What, by my ears?

Or my eyes?

Or my tongue?

Or my hand?

Or my leg?

Are not all of them Thy blessings given to me?

And with all of them I disobey Thee, O my Protector!

Thine is the argument and the means against me.[52](#)

O He who veiled me (my sins) from fathers and mothers lest

they drive me away,

from relatives and brothers lest they rebuke me,

and from kings lest they punish me!

If they had seen, O my Protector, what Thou hast seen from me,

they would not have given me respite,

they would have abandoned me and cut me off.

So here I am, O my God,

before Thee O Lord,

humbled, abased, constrained, despised,

neither possessing guiltlessness that I might ask forgiveness

nor possessing power that I might be helped.

There is no argument with which I might argue,

nor can I say I committed not (sins) and worked not evil.

And denial, were I to deny–my Protector!–could hardly profit me.

How could it ever do that ?

For all of my members are witness against me for what I have done.[53](#)

And I acted with certainty and without any doubt that
Thou wilt ask me about great affairs,
and that Thou art the equitable Judge who does no wrong.
Thy justice is deadly for me and I flee from Thy every just act.
If thou chastisest me, O my God, it is for my sins after
Thy argument against me;
and if Thou pardonest me, it is by Thy clemency,
generosity and kindness.

"There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee!"

Truly I am one of the wrong-doers" (21 : 87).

There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee!

Truly I am one of those who pray forgiveness.

There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee!

Truly I am one of those who profess Thy Unity.

There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee!

Truly I am one of the fearful.

There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee!

Truly I am one of those who are afraid.

There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee!

Truly I am one of the hopeful.

There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee!

Truly I am one of those who yearn.

There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee!

Truly I am one of those who say "There is no god but Thou".

There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee!

Truly I am one of the petitioners.

There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee!

Truly I am one of the glorifiers.

There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee!

Truly I am one of those who magnify.

There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee, my Lord,

and the Lord of my fathers, the ancients!

My God, this is my praise of Thee exalting Thy majesty,

my sincerity in remembering Thee by professing Thy Unity,

and my acknowledgment of Thy bounties by enumeration,

even though I acknowledge

that I cannot reckon them for their multitude, their abundance,

their manifestness and their existence from ancient times

until a present in which Thou hast never ceased to

care for me through them

from when Thou created me and brought me into

existence in the beginning of (my) life,

by enriching from poverty,

relieving affliction,

bringing ease,

removing hardship,

dispelling distress,

and (giving me) well-being in body

and soundness in religion.

Were all the world's inhabitants, both the ancients and

the later folk, to assist me in attempting to

mention Thy blessing,

I would not be able, nor would they, to do so.

Holy art Thou and high exalted, a generous, mighty, merciful Lord.

Thy bounties cannot be reckoned,

nor Thy praise accomplished,

nor Thy blessings repaid.

Bless Muhammad and the household of Muhammad,

complete Thy blessings upon us

and aid us in Thy obedience.

Glory be to Thee! There is no god but Thou.

O God, truly Thou hearest the destitute,

removest the evil,⁵⁴

succourest the afflicted,

healest the sick,

enrichest the poor,

mendest the broken,

hast mercy upon the young

and helpest the old.

There is no Support other than Thee

and none powerful over Thee.

And Thou art the Sublime, the Great.

O Freer of the prisoner in irons!

O Provider of the infant child!

O Protection of the frightened refugee!

O He who has no associate and no assistant!

Bless Muhammad and the household of Muhammad,

and give me this evening the best of what Thou hast given

to and bestowed upon any of Thy servants,

whether a blessing Thou assignest,

a bounty Thou renewest,

a trial Thou avertest,

an affliction Thou removest,

a prayer Thou hearest,

a good deed Thou acceptest

or an evil deed Thou overlookest.

Truly Thou art gracious,

Aware of what Thou wilt,

and Powerful over all things!

O God, truly Thou art the nearest of those who are called,

the swiftest of those who answer,

the most generous of those who pardon,

the most openhanded of those who give

and the most hearing of those who are asked of.

O Merciful and Compassionate in this world and the next!

Like Thee none is asked of;

and other than Thee none is hoped for.

I prayed to Thee and Thou answered me,

I asked of Thee and Thou gavest to me,

I set Thee as my quest and Thou hadst mercy upon me,

I depended upon Thee and Thou delivered me,

I took refuge with Thee and Thou sufficed me,

O God, so bless Muhammad, Thy servant, messenger and prophet,

and his good and pure household, all of them.

And complete Thy blessings upon us, gladden us with Thy gift

and inscribe us as those who thank Thee and remember Thy bounties.

Amen, amen, O Lord of all beings!

O God, O He who owned and then was all-powerful,

was all-powerful and then subjected,

was disobeyed and then veiled (the sin of disobedience),

and was prayed forgiveness and then forgave.

O Goal of yearning seekers

and utmost Wish of the hopeful!

O He who "**encompasses everything in knowledge**" (65 : 12)

and embraces those who seek pardon in tenderness,

mercy and clemency!

O God, truly we turn towards Thee this evening,

which Thou honored and glorified through Muhammad,

Thy prophet and messenger,

the elect of Thy creation,

the faithful guardian of Thy-revelation which bears good

tidings and warning and which is the light- giving lamp⁵⁵

which Thou gavest to those who surrender (*al-muslimin*)

and appointed as a mercy to the world's inhabitants.⁵⁶

O God, so bless Muhammad and the household of Muhammad,

just as Muhammad is worthy of that from Thee, O Sublime!

So bless him and his elect, good and pure household, all of them,

and encompass us in Thy pardon,

for to Thee cry voices in diverse languages.

So appoint for us a share this evening, O God,

of every good which Thou dividest among Thy servants,

every light by which Thou guidest,⁵⁷

every mercy which Thou spreadest,⁵⁸

every blessing which Thou sendest down,

every well-being with which Thou clothest

and every provision which Thou outspreadest.⁵⁹

O Most merciful of the merciful!

O God, transform us now into men successful,

triumphant,

pious,

and prosperous.

Set us not among those who despair,

empty us not of Thy mercy,

deprive us not of that bounty of Thine for which we hope,

and set us not among those deprived of Thy mercy,

nor those who despair of the bounty of Thy gift for which we hope.

Reject us not with the disappointed,

nor those driven from Thy door.

O Most Magnanimous of the most magnanimous !

O Most Generous of the most generous!

Toward Thee we have turned having sure faith,

repairing to and bound for Thy Sacred House.[60](#) [60]

So help is with our holy rites,

perfect for us our pilgrimage,

pardon us,

and give us well-being,

for we have extended toward Thee our hands

and they are branded with the abasement of confession.

O God, so give us this evening what we have asked of Thee

and suffice us in that in which we have prayed Thee to

suffice us,

for there is none to suffice us apart from Thee

and we have no lord other than Thee.

Put into effect concerning us is Thy decision,

encompassing us is Thy knowledge[61](#)

and just for us is Thy decree.

Decree for us the good

and place us among the people of the good!

O God make encumbent upon us through Thy magnanimity
the mightiest wage,
the most generous treasure
and the lastingness of ease.

Forgive us our sins, all of them,
destroy us not with those who perish,⁶²

and turn not Thy tenderness and mercy away from us,

O Most Merciful of the merciful!

O God, place us in this hour among those
who ask of Thee and to whom Thou givest,
who thank Thee and whom Thou increasest,⁶³
who turn to Thee in repentance and whom Thou
acceptest⁶⁴

and who renounce all of their sins before Thee and whom
Thou forgivest,

O Lord of majesty and splendor!

O God, purify us,
show us the right way
and accept our entreaty.

O Best of those from whom is asked!

And O Most Merciful of those whose mercy is sought!

O He from whom is not hidden the eyelids' winking,
the eyes' glancing,
that which rests in the concealed,

and that which is enfolded in hearts' hidden secrets!

What, has not all of that been reckoned in Thy knowledge

and embraced by Thy clemency ?

Glory be to Thee and high indeed art Thou exalted above

what the evil-doers say!

The seven heavens and the earths and all that is therein praise Thee,

and there is not a thing but hymns Thy praise.[65](#)

So Thine is the praise, the glory and the exaltation of majesty,

O Lord of majesty and splendor,

of bounty and blessing

and of great favor!

And Thou art the Magnanimous, the Generous,

the Tender, the Compassionate.

O God, give me amply of Thy lawful provision,

bestow upon me well-being in my body and my religion,

make me safe from fear[66](#)

and deliver me from the Fire.

O God, devise not against me,[67](#)

lead me not on step by step,[68](#)

trick me not[69](#)

and avert from me the evil of the ungodly among jinn and men.

Then he lifted his head and eyes toward Heaven. Tears were flowing from his blessed eyes as if they were two waterskins, and he said in a loud voice:

O Most Hearing of those who hear!

O Most Seeing of those who behold!

O Swiftest of reckoners![70](#)

O Most Merciful of the merciful!

Bless Muhammad and the household of Muhammad,

the chiefs, the fortunate.

And, I ask of Thee, O God, my need.

If Thou grantest it to me,

what Thou holdest back from me will cause me no harm;

and if Thou holdest it back from me,

what Thou grantest me will not profit me.

I ask Thee to deliver me from the Fire.

There is no god but Thou alone,

Thou hast no associate.

Thine is the dominion, and Thine is the praise,

and Thou art powerful over everything.

O my Lord!

O my Lord!

Then he said "O my Lord" over and over. Those who had been gathered around him, who had listened to an of his prayer and who had limited themselves to saying "amen" raised their voices in weeping. They stayed in his company until the sun went down, and then all of them loaded their mounts and set out in the direction of the Sacred Monument.[71](#)

B. 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin, the Fourth Imam

1. In Praise of God

Praise belongs to God,

the First, without a first before Him,

the Last, without a last behind Him.

Beholders' eyes fall short of seeing Him,

describers' imaginations are not able to depict Him.

He originated the creatures through His power with an origination,

He devised them in accordance with His will with a devising.

Then He made them walk on the path of His desire,

He sent them⁷² out on the way of His love.

They cannot keep back

from that to which He has sent them forward,

nor can they go forward

to that from which He has kept them back.

He assigned from His provision to each of their spirits

a nourishment known and apportioned.

No decreaser decreases those whom He increases,

no increaser increases those of them whom He decreases.

Then for each spirit He strikes a fixed term in life,

for each He sets up a determined end;

he walks toward it through the days of his span,

he overtakes it through the years of his time.

Then, when he takes his final step

and embraces the reckoning of his span,

God seizes him to the abundant reward

or the feared punishment

to which He has called him,

That He may repay those who do evil for what they have done

and repay those who do good with goodness, (53 : 31)

as justice from Him

(holy are His names, and manifest His boons).

He shall not be questioned as to what He does,

but they shall be questioned. (21 : 23)

Praise belongs to God, for,

had He withheld from His servants the knowledge to praise Him

for the uninterrupted kindnesses

with which He has tried them

and the manifest favours[73](#)

which He has lavished upon them,

they would have moved about in His kindnesses

without praising Him,

and spread themselves out in His provision

without thanking Him.

Had such been the case,

they would have left the bounds of humanity

for that of beastliness

and become as He has described in the firm text of His Book:[74](#)

They are but as the cattle-nay, but they are further astray from the way!. (25 : 44)

Praise belongs to God, for

the true knowledge of Himself He has given to us,

the thanksgiving He has inspired us to offer Him,

the doors to knowing His Lordship He has opened for us,

the sincerity towards Him in professing His Unity

to which He has led us,

and the deviation and doubt in His Command

from which He⁷⁵ has turned us aside;

a praise through

which we may be given long life

among those of His creatures who praise Him,

and overtake those who have gone ahead

toward His good pleasure and pardon;

a praise through which

He will illuminate for us the shadows of the interworld,⁷⁶

ease for us the path of the Resurrection,⁷⁷

and raise up our stations

at the standing places of the Witnesses⁷⁸

on the day when every soul will be repaid

for what it has earned –

they shall not be wronged; (45 : 22)

the day a master shall avail nothing a client,

and they shall not be helped; (44 : 41)

a praise

which will rise up from us to the highest of the '*liliyun*'⁷⁹

in a book inscribed,

witnessed by those brought nigh, (83 : 20-21)

a praise whereby

our eyes may be at rest when sight is dazzled,[80](#)

our faces whitened when skins are blackened,[81](#)

a praise through which

we may be released from God's painful Fire

and enter God's generous neighbourhood,

a praise by which

we may jostle the angels brought nigh

and join the prophets, the envoys,

in a House of Permanence that does not remove,

the Place of His Generosity that does not change.

Praise belongs to God,

who chose for us the good qualities of creation,

granted us the agreeable things of provision,[82](#)

and appointed for us excellence

through domination over all creation;

every one of His creatures submits to us

through His power

and comes to obey us

through His might.[83](#)

Praise belongs to God,

who locked for us the gate of need

except toward Him.

So how can we praise Him?

When can we thank Him?

Indeed, when?[84](#)

Praise belongs to God,

who placed within us the organs of expansion,

assigned for us the agents of contraction,[85](#)

gave us to enjoy the spirits of life,[86](#)

fixed within us the limbs of works,

nourished us with the agreeable things of provision,

freed us from need through His bounty,

and gave us possessions through His kindness.[87](#)

Then He commanded us that He might test our obedience [88](#)

and prohibited us that He might try our thanksgiving.

So we turned against the path of His commandments

and mounted the backs of His warnings.[89](#)

Yet He hurried us not to His punishment,[90](#)

nor hastened us on to His vengeance.

No, He went slowly with us through His mercy,

in generosity,

and awaited our return through His clemency,

in mildness.

Praise belongs to God,

who showed us the way to repentance,

which we would not have won save through His bounty.

Had we nothing to count as His bounty but this,

His trial of us would have been good,

His beneficence⁹¹ toward us great,

His bounty upon us immense.

For such was not His wont in repentance

with those who went before us.⁹²

He has lifted up from us

what we have not the strength to bear,⁹³

charged us only to our capacity,⁹⁴

imposed upon us nothing but ease,⁹⁵

and left none of us with an argument or excuse.⁹⁶

So the perisher among us is he who perishes in spite of Him⁹⁷

and the felicitous among us he who beseeches Him.

And praise belongs to God

with all the praises of

His angels closest to Him,

His creatures most noble in His eyes,

and His praisers most pleasing to Him;

a praise that may surpass other praises

as our Lord surpasses all His creatures.

Then to Him belongs praise,

in place of His every favour upon us

and upon all His servants, past and still remaining,

to the number of all things His knowledge encompasses,

and in place of each of His favours,

their number doubling and redoubling always and forever,

to the Day of Resurrection;

a praise whose bound has no utmost end,

whose number has no reckoning,

whose limit cannot be reached,

whose period cannot be cut off;[98](#)

a praise which will become

a link to His obedience and pardon,

a tie to His good pleasure,

a means to His forgiveness,

a path to His Garden,

a protector against His vengeance,

a security against His wrath,

an aid to obeying Him,

a barrier against disobeying Him,

a help in fulfilling His right and His duties;

a praise that will make us felicitous

among His felicitous friends,[99](#)

and bring us into the ranks

of those martyred[100](#) by the swords of His enemies.

He is a Friend, Praiseworthy![101](#)

2. Prayer for the Morning and Evening

Praise belongs to God,

who created night and day

through His strength,

set them apart

through His power,

and appointed for each

a determined limit

and a drawn-out period.[102](#)

He makes each of the two enter into its companion,

and makes its companion enter into it,[103](#)

as an ordainment from Him for His servants

in that through which He feeds them

and with which He makes them grow.

He created for them the night,

that they might rest in it

from tiring movements

and wearisome exertions[104](#)

and He made it a garment for them

that they might be clothed

in its ease and its sleep,[105](#)

that it might be for them refreshment and strength,

that they might reach therein pleasure and passion.

He created for them the daytime, giving sight,

that they might seek within it of His bounty,[106](#)

find the means to His provision,

and roam freely in His earth,

searching for that through which
to attain the immediate in their life in this world
and to achieve the deferred in their life to come.

Through all of this He sets right their situation,

tries their records,[107](#)

and watches their state in

the times for obeying Him,

the waystations of His obligations,

and the places of His ordinances,

that He may repay those who do evil with what they have done

and repay those who do good with goodness. (53 : 31)

O God,

to Thee belongs praise

for the sky Thou hast split into dawn for us,[108](#)

giving us to enjoy thereby the brightness of daytime,

showing us sought-after nourishments,

and protecting us from the striking of blights.

In the morning we and all things, every one, rise for Thee,

the heaven and the earth

and what Thou hast scattered in each,[109](#)

the still and the moving,

the resident and the journeying,

what towers up in the air and what hides under the ground.

We rise in the morning in Thy grasp:

Thy kingdom and authority contain us and Thy will embraces us.

We move about by Thy command[110](#)

and turn this way and that through Thy governing.

We own nothing of the affair

except what Thou hast decreed

and nothing of the good

except what Thou hast given.

This is a fresh, new day,

over us a ready witness.

If we do good,

it will take leave from us with praise,

and if we do evil,

it will part from us in blame.[111](#)

O God,

bless Muhammad and his Household,

provide us with the day's good companionship

and preserve us against parting from it badly

by doing a misdeed

or committing a sin, whether small or great![112](#)

Make our good deeds within it plentiful

empty us therein of evil deeds,

and fill what lies between its two sides for us

with praise and thanksgiving,

wages and stores,

bounty and beneficence!

O God,

ease our burden on the Noble Writers,[113](#)

fill our pages for us

with our good deeds,[114](#)

and degrade us not before them

with our evil works!

O God,

appoint for us in each of the day's hours

a share from Thy servants,[115](#)

a portion of giving thanks to Thee,

and a truthful witness among Thy angels!

O God, bless Muhammad and his Household

and safeguard us from before us and behind us,

from our right hands and our left hands

and from all our directions,[116](#)

a safeguarding that will preserve from disobeying Thee,

guide to obeying Thee,

and be employed for Thy love!

O God, bless Muhammad and his Household

and give us success in this day of ours,

this night of ours,

and in all our days,

to employ the good,

stay away from the evil,

give thanks for favours,

follow the Sunna's norms,

avoid innovations,

enjoin good behaviour,

forbid the disapproved,[117](#)

defend Islam,

diminish falsehood and abase it,

help the truth and exalt it,

guide the misguided,

assist the weak,

and reach out to the troubled!

O God,

bless Muhammad and his Household

and make this

the most fortunate day we have known,

the most excellent companion we have accompanied,

and the best time in which we have lingered!

Place us among the most satisfied of all Thy creatures

whom night and day have passed by,

the most thankful of them

for the favours Thou hast done, the firmest of them

in the laws Thou hast set down in the Shari'a,

and the most unyielding of them

toward the prohibited acts

against which Thou hast cautioned!

O God,

I call Thee to witness

and Thou art sufficient witness [118](#)

and I call Thy heaven and Thy earth to witness

and Thy angels and Thy other creatures who inhabit them

in this my day,

this my hour,

this my night,

and this my resting place,

that I bear witness

that Thou art God,

other than whom there is no god,

Upholding justice, [119](#)

Equitable in judgement,

Clement to the servants,

Master of the kingdom, [120](#)

Compassionate to the creatures,

and that Muhammad is Thy servant and Thy messenger,

Thy chosen from among Thy creatures.

Thou didst charge him with Thy message

and he delivered it; [121](#)

Thou didst command him to counsel his community

and he counselled it.

O God, so bless Muhammad and his Household

more than Thou hast blessed any of Thy creatures!

Give him for our sake the best Thou hast given any of Thy servants,

and repay him on our behalf better and more generously

than Thou hast repaid any of Thy prophets

on behalf of his community!

Thou art All-kind with immensity,

the Forgiver of the great,

and Thou art more merciful

than every possessor of mercy!

So bless Muhammad and his Household,

the good, the pure, the chosen, the most distinguished!

C. Muhammad al-Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam

Prayer for the month of Rajab

Shaykh al-Tusi has related that this noble writing came out of the Sacred Precinct on the hand of the great Shaykh, Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn 'Uthman ibn Sa'id¹²² – may God be pleased with him. Recite it on each day of the month of Rajab.

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

O God, I ask Thee by the meaning of all that by which Thou art

called upon by those who govern with Thy authority:

those who are entrusted with Thy mystery,

welcome Thy command, extol Thy power,

and proclaim Thy majesty.

I ask Thee by Thy will which speaks within them, for Thou hast

appointed them
mines for Thy words,
and pillars of the profession of Thy Unity, Thy signs
and Thy stations,
which are never interrupted in any place.
Through them knows he who knows Thee.
There is no difference between Thee and them,
save that they are Thy servants and Thy creation,
their doing and undoing is in Thy hand,
their origin is from Thee and their return is to Thee.
They are aides, witnesses, testers, defenders, protectors
and searchers.
With them Thou filled Thy heaven and Thy earth until it
became manifest that there is no god but Thou.
So I ask Thee by (all of) that,
and by the positions of Thy mercy's might
and by Thy Stations and Marks
that Thou bless Muhammad and His household
and increase me in faith and steadfastness.
O Inward in His outwardness and Outward in His inwardness
and hiddenness!
O Separator of light and darkness!
O described by other than (His) Essence and well-known
in other than (His) likeness!

Delimiter of every delimited thing!

Witness of all that is witnessed!

Bringer into existence of every existent!

Counter of everything counted!

Depriver of all that is deprived!

There is none worshipped but Thou,

Possessor of Grandeur and Generosity!

O He who is not conditioned by "how" or determined

by "where" !

O veiled from every eye!

O Everlasting!

O eternally Self-subsistent and Knower of all that is known!

Bless Muhammad and his household

and Thy elect servants,

Thy mankind in veils,[123](#)

Thy angels brought nigh,

and the untold multitudes (of angels) set in ranks and

encircling (the Throne).[124](#)

And bless us in this our venerated and honored month

and the sacred months that follow it.

In it bestow blessings upon us copiously,

make large our portions,

and fulfill for us (our) oaths,

by Thy most tremendous, most tremendous, greatest and

noblest Name,

which Thou placed upon the day, and it brightened, and
upon the night, and it darkened.

And forgive us that of ourselves which Thou knowest and we

know not,

preserve us from sins with the best of presentations,

suffice us with the sufficiencies of Thy determination,

favor us with Thy fair regard,

leave us not to other than Thee,

hold us not back from Thy goodness,

bless us in the lifespans Thou hast written for us,

set aright for us the inmost center of our hearts,

give us protection from Thee,[125](#)

cause us to act with the fairest of faith,

and bring us to the month of fasting[126](#)

and the days and years that come after it,

O Lord of Majesty and Splendor!

[1.](#) See C. Padwick, Muslim Devotions, London, 1961.

[2.](#) See Shi'ite Islam, pp. 210–11.

[3.](#) Cf. Quran (73: 20): "And lend to God a good loan. Whatever good you shall forward to your soul's account, you shall find it with God as better, and mightier a wage."

[4.](#) Cf. Quran (40: 43). In another place, using a different root form for the verb "return", the Quran says in one of the verses most often heard in the Islamic world, "Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return" (2: 156).

[5.](#) Cf. Quran (76: 1): "Has there come on man a while of time when he was a thing unremembered?"

[6.](#) The sin of breaking God's covenant is often described in the Quran. For example, "Such as break the covenant of God after its solemn binding . . . they shall be the losers." (2: 27). And "Crying lies to the messengers" is often mentioned as a major sin of past nations, e.g., "And the people of Noah, when they cried lies to the Messengers . . ." (25: 37).

[7.](#) Cf. Quran (75: 36–37): "What, does man reckon he shall be left to roam at will? Was he not a sperm-drop spilled? . . ."

[8.](#) Reference to Quran (39: 6): "He created you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation, in a threefold gloom."

[9.](#) Cf. Quran (18: 52): "I made them not to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor their own creation"

[10.](#) Cf. Quran (16: 13): "And that which He has multiplied for you in the earth of diverse hues. Surely in that is a sign for a

people who remember."

11. Reference to the Imam's descent from the Prophet. Cf. the first selection from 'Ali above (p. 29).
12. Cf. Quran (16: 7): "And when your Lord proclaimed: If you give thanks, I will give you more"
13. Cf. Quran (30: 11): "God produces creation, then He reproduces it, then unto Him you will be returned." Also (29: 19); (30: 27).
14. Cf. Quran (14: 34) and (16: 18): "And if you count God's blessing, you will never number it."
15. The "curtain of the heart" (*hijab al-qalb*) is the pericardium.
16. The windpipe is not mentioned in some editions of *Mafatih al-jinan*.
17. Cf. Quran (19: 88–91): "And they say, 'The All-merciful has taken unto Himself a son.' You have indeed advanced something hideous! The heavens are wellnigh rent of it and the earth split asunder, and the mountains wellnigh fall down crashing for that they have attributed to the All-merciful a son"
18. In the famous hadith concerning *ihsan* or "spiritual virtue" it is said that "Spiritual virtue is that you should worship God as if you were seeing him, and if you see Him not, He nonetheless sees thee."
19. Cf. Quran (43: 36): "Whoso blinds himself to the Remembrance of the All-merciful, to him We assign a Satan for comrade."
20. Cf. Quran (64: 3): "He shaped you and made good your shapes". See also (40: 64).
21. Cf. Quran (26: 79): ". . . who created me, and Himself guides me, and Himself gives me to eat and drink. . . ."
22. Cf. Quran (53: 48): "And that He it is Who enriches and contents."
23. Some editions add here the phrase "other than Thee".
24. Cf. Quran (9: 55): "So let not their possessions or their children. please thee; God only desires thereby to chastise them in this present life, and that their souls should depart while they are unbelievers."
25. I.e., Mecca and the land surrounding it.
26. The "Sacred Monument", known as Muzdalifah, is the place where the pilgrims spend the night after the day at Arafat. Cf. Quran (2: 198): "When you press on from Arafat, remember God by the Sacred Monument."
27. I.e., the Ka'bah, called the "Ancient House" in reference to the tradition that it was constructed by Abraham. See Quran (22: 29) and 33; also (14: 35–7)
28. Cf. Quran (2: 125): "And when We made the House a resort for mankind and a sanctuary...."
29. A further reference to the Prophet's blood descent from the Abrahamic line of prophets.
30. Israfil is the angel who according to Islamic tradition blows the trumpet at the time of the Resurrection.
31. The Criterion (*al-furqan*), is one of the names of the Quran, mentioned several times in its text, such as (3: 4) and (25: 1).
32. Kaf Ha' Ya Ayn Sad are Arabic letters which appear at the beginning of the chapter of Maryam, Quran 19. Ta' Ha' and Ya' Sin are also letters appearing at the beginning of Quranic chapters, 20 and 36 respectively, from which the chapters take their names. "The Wise Quran" is a tide which appears in Quran (36: 2).
33. Al-Sattar, "He who covers (faults and sins)", is one of the names of God.
34. Cf. Quran (3: 13): "God confirms with His help whom He will."
35. Cf. Quran (3: 160): "If God helps you, none can overcome you."
36. Akram al-asma'. God's "fairest names" (*al-asma' al-husna*) are referred to several times in the Quran, such as (7: 180) and 20: 8.
37. For the story of Joseph in the Quran see chapter XII.
38. Cf. Quran (21: 83–84) and (38: 42–45).
39. Cf. Quran (37: 102–105) and (14: 39).
40. See Quran (21: 89–90).
41. The story of Jonah and the "fish" is referred to in Quran (68: 48–50).
42. Cf. Quran (26: 63–66 etc).
43. Cf. Quran (25: 48): "And He it is Who sends the winds, glad tidings heralding His mercy, and We send down purifying water from the sky." See also (7: 57) and (30: 46).
44. Cf. Quran (18: 59): "Thy Lord is the Forgiver, Full of Mercy. If He took them to task (now) for what they earn, He would

hasten on the doom for them; but theirs is an appointed term from which they will find no escape."

45. Reference to the story of Moses and the sorcerers, related several times in the Quran, especially (7: 111–126); (20: 62–73) and (26: 36–51).

46. A divine Name used in Quran (30: 50) and (41: 39).

47. Cf. Quran (3: 26): "Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt, and Thou abasest whom Thou wilt."

48. Again reference to Quran (14: 34) and (16: 18).

49. Cf. Quran (53: 48): "He it is who enriches and contents."

50. Cf. Quran (93: 6): "Did He not find thee an orphan and shelter Thee?"

51. Cf Quran (7: 10): "We have established you in the earth . . .".

52. Cf Quran (6: 150): "To God belongs the argument conclusive."

53. Cf Quran (41: 19–20): "Upon the day when God's enemies are mustered to the Fire duly disposed, till when they are come to it, their hearing, their eyes and their skins bear witness against them concerning what they have been doing."

54. Cf. Quran (27: 62): "He who answers the constrained, when he calls unto Him, and removes the evil and appoints you to be successors in the earth."

55. Cf Quran (41: 4) and (33: 46).

56. Cf Quran (21: 107).

57. The symbolism of light and darkness is employed often in the Quran, not to mention its usage in Sufism and philosophy, such as the School of Illumination (ishraq) of Suhrawardi. A good example of Quranic usage is the following: "God is the Protector of the believers; He brings them forth from the shadows into the light" (2: 257). There is also the famous "Light Verse" (24: 35), which contains the sentence "God guides to His Light whom He will."

58. Cf Quran (42: 28).

59. Cf Quran (17: 30).

60. Again a reference to the rites performed on the Day of Arafah. The "Sacred House" is of course the Ka'bah.

61. Cf. Quran (65: 12).

62. The word "destroy" (ahlak, from whose root is derived the word "those who perish", halikun) is used repeatedly in the Quran in reference to God's punishment of the evildoers, especially those of generations and ages past, as a sign and a warning for those present. For example, "Have they not regarded how We destroyed before them many a generation . . ." (6: 6). See also (10: 14); (19: 98); (21: 9); etc.

63. Cf Quran (2: 58): "We will forgive you your sins and will increase (reward) for the right-doers."

64. Cf Quran (9: 104): "God is He who accepts repentance from His servants."

65. This sentence is almost a word for word quotation of Quran (27: 44).

66. Cf. Quran (106: 4): "Let them serve the Lord of this House who has . . . made them safe from fear."

67. Cf. Quran (3: 54): "And they devised, and God devised, and God is the best of devisers." See also Quran (13: 42); (27: 50), etc.

68. Cf Quran (7: 182–183): "And those who cry lies to Our signs—step by step We lead them on from whence they know not." See also (68: 44).

69. Cf. Quran (4: 142): "The hypocrites seek to trick God, but God is tricking them."

70. A divine Name appearing in Quran (6: 62).

71. At this point the compiler remarks that some sources add another section to Imam Husayn's prayer, a section which he then relates himself. Other authorities, such as Majlisi, express their doubts as to the authenticity of this last section.

In fact it is almost certainly by Ibn 'Ata'allah al-Iskandari, and therefore I have not translated it here. Readers interested will find a translation in V. Danner, Ibn 'Ata'illah's Sufi Aphorisms, Leiden, 1973, pp. 64–9. See W. Chittick, "A Shadhili Presence in Shi'ite Islam", Sophia Perennis, vol. I, no. 1, 1975, pp. 97–100.

72.

In Talkhis al-riyad, a commentary on the ,Sahifah (Tehran, 1381/1961–2, p. 34) al-Sayyid 'Alikhan al-Shirazi (d. 1120/1708–9), mentions an objection that some people might be tempted to make here, i.e., that "the pronoun 'them' refers to all creatures, while certain of the creatures are God's enemies, so how should this statement be correct?

The answer is that in its essential and primordial nature according to which it was originally created (cf. Quran 30: 30), every soul loves and seeks the good, and all good flows from God's goodness, just as all existence flows from His Being. Therefore in reality the creatures love only Him, even if their love be in accordance with His Name 'the Outward' and in terms of external beauty and goodness, or worldly station and property, or anything else."

Then al-Shirazi quotes Ibn al-'Arabi in the *Futuhat al-makkiyyah*: "None loves any but his Creator, but He is hidden from him under the veil of Zaynab, Su'ad, Hind and Layla (names of women), dirhams and dinars, worldly position, and all that exists in the world, for one of the causes of love is beauty—which belongs only to Him—since beauty incites love through its very nature. Now, 'God is beautiful, and He loves beauty' (a saying of the Prophet), and thus He loves Himself. Another cause of love is virtue (*ihsan*) and virtue is only perfect when it comes from God: None is virtuous but God (*la muhsin illallah*).

So if you love beauty, you love none other than God, for He is the Beautiful; and if you love virtue, you love none other than He, for He is the Virtuous. In every case, the object of love is none other than God." This is one of the themes of the *Lama'at of Fakhr al-Din 'Iraqi*, translated by W. C. Chittick and P. L. Wilson, New York, forthcoming

73. Cf. Quran (89: 15–16): "As for man, whenever his Lord tries him, and honours him, and blesses him, then he says, 'My Lord has honoured me'."

74. On the meaning of "clear text of His Book", see above, p. 56, note 48.

75. Literally, "concerning His affair (*amr*)". Al-Shirazi explains "His affair" as meaning "either the knowledge of His nature and attributes, or of His religion and Shari'ah" (p. 56).

76. Here the Interval or "isthmus" (*barzakh*) refers to the time between death and resurrection. It is referred to in Quran (23: 100): "And beyond them is an Interval until the day when they are raised." See Shi'iite Islam, pp. 164–5; also the Encyclopedia of Islam (new edition), vol. I, pp. 1071–2.

77. According to a hadith of the Prophet, "Verily the passage from the grave to the Plain of Gathering ('arsat al-mahshar) on the Day of Resurrection will be burdensome for some people and smooth for others" (quoted by al-Shirazi, p. 62).

78. The Stations of the Witnesses (*mawaqif al-ash'ad*) are the stations of angels, prophets, Imams and believers who at the Resurrection act as witnesses over the deeds performed by men during their earthly lives. These Witnesses are referred to in Quran (11: 18) and (40: 51).

79. 'Illiyyun, mentioned in Quran 83: 18 and 19, is variously interpreted. For example, it is said to be the highest level of heaven, or a place in the seventh heaven where the souls of believers are taken after their death, or the book in the seventh heaven in which are written the deeds of angels and of righteous men and jinn.

80. Cf. Quran (75: 7) ff.: "But when sight is confounded and the moon is eclipsed and sun and moon are united, on that day man will cry: Whither to flee !"

81. Cf. Quran (3: 106): "The day when some faces are blackened, and some faces whitened. As for those whose faces are blackened—'Did you disbelieve after you had believed? Then taste the chastisement for that you disbelieved.' "

82. Cf. Quran (40: 64): "And He shaped you, and shaped you well, and provided you with the good things".

83. Besides the many Quranic verses which point to man's "central" position in the Universe because of his capacity as viceregent or caliph of God, the being who partakes of all of the divine Names and Attributes, there are many other verses indicating one of the major results of his special rank: his domination over all of the Universe. For example: "And He subjected to you the night and day, and the sun and moon" (16); "Have you not seen how God has subjected to you whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth ?" (31: 20). See also (14: 32–33); (22: 65), etc.

84. The Arabic reads "la mata", which according to al-Shirazi can be interpreted in two ways: either it means "Nay (it is impossible to thank Him), when (could it be possible?)", or "(It is) not (correct to say) when, (for that implies that it is possible to thank Him)" (p. 75).

85. According to al-Shirazi, the reference is to the expansion and contraction of the organs of the body, such as nerves, muscles, veins, arteries, flesh, etc. (p. 75)

86. Or "breaths of life". Al-Shirazi comments: "Arwah may be the plural of *ruh*, meaning spirit, in which case the meaning is explained by the tradition transmitted from Imams 'Ali, al-Baqir and al-Sadiq: 'There are five (spirits) possessed by Those

Brought Nigh (cf. Quran 56: 2): the spirit of sanctity, through which they know all things; the spirit of faith, through which they worship God; the spirit of power, through which they wage holy war against enemies and attend to their livelihood; the spirit of passion, through which they partake in the joy of food and marriage; and the spirit of the body, through which they move and advance. There are four spirits possessed by the Companions of the Right (Quran 56: 8), since they lack the spirit of sanctity; and there are three possessed by the Companions of the Left (Quran 56: 8) and beasts, since they lack (the spirit of sanctity and) the spirit of faith.

"Arwah may also be the plural of rawh, which is a 'breath of wind'. The arteries of the body possess two movements, contractive and expansive. It is their function to draw 'smoky' vapors from the heart with their contractive movement and to attract with their expansive movement fresh and pure breaths of air, through which the heart is refreshed and its natural heat is drawn from it. By means of this 'breath of wind' the animal faculty and the natural heat are diffused throughout the body. Thus this breath of wind by which the heart refreshes itself is the 'breath of life'. If it is cut off from the heart for a period of time, life also will be cut off from it" (p. 75).

87. Cf. Quran (53: 48): "And that He it is who enriches and contents."

88. Al-Shirazi quotes here a tradition of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq: "Gratitude for blessings is to avoid what is forbidden" (p. 77).

89. Al-Shirazi explains that "path" is used in the singular and "trackless wastes" in the plural because the "straight path" is one, while the ways of going astray are many: "This is My straight path, so follow it. Follow not other ways, lest ye be parted from His way" (Quran 6: 154).

90. Cf. Quran (10: 12): "If God should hasten unto men evil (i.e., punishment), as they would hasten good, their term would be already decided for them."

91. Bala', translated here as "benefit", usually means "test", "trial", or "misfortune", but here it is used as in Quran 8: 17, which Arberry, following the commentators, translates, ". . . that He might confer on the believers a fair benefit." See al-Shirazi, p. 81.

92. According to Al-Shirazi (p. 81), this is a reference to the difference between God's "wont" (sunnah) concerning repentance with the Muslims and His wont with the Jews. From the former He only asks regret (al-nadam), but from the latter in addition to regret He also asks "killing of themselves" (qatl anfusihim) as indicated in Quran (2: 54): "And when Moses said unto his people: O my people! Ye have wronged yourselves by your choosing of the calf (for worship) so turn in repentance to your Creator; and kill yourselves."

93. Cf. Quran (2: 286): "Our Lord! Lay not on us such a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us! Our Lord! Impose not on us that which we have not the strength to bear!"

94. Cf. Quran (2: 286): "God charges no soul save to its capacity." According to al-Shirazi this sentence is a reference to the obligations which—according to Muslim beliefs—God imposed upon the Jews, such as, "the performance of fifty canonical prayers per day, the payment of one-fourth of their property in alms" Also it is a reference to the verse, "For the evildoing of those of Jewry, We have forbidden them certain good things that were permitted to them" (Quran 4: 160). See al-Shirazi, pp. 82–83.

95. Cf. such Quranic verses as, "He has chosen you and has not laid upon you in religion any hardship" (22: 78).

96. Cf Quran (4: 165): "Messengers of good cheer and warning, in order that mankind might have no argument against God after the messengers"; and (66: 7): "O ye who disbelieve! Make no excuses for yourselves this day. Ye are only being paid for what ye used to do."

97. "In spite of Him" ('alayh) is explained by al-Shirazi as meaning, "In spite of God's disliking (that he should perish), for He is not pleased that any of His servants should perish. Thus it is that He spreads His mercy over them and hurries them not to punishment for their sins. Rather He is patient with them in His mercy and waits for their return in His kindness.

He opens for them the door of repentance, lifts from them that which they have not the strength to bear and charges them only to their capacity. So it is as if whoever perishes because of his evil deeds after all of this does so in spite of the fact that God does not want him to do so" (p. 84).

98. Al-Shirazi points out that the Imam first gives the Day of Resurrection as the outer limit of His praise, then as a sort of admonition lest he be misunderstood extends it in conformity with Him who is praised. In the same way in another prayer

he says, "A praise eternal (khalid) with Thy Eternity" (p. 88).

99. The term "friend" (wali) of God, referred to for example in the verse, "He befriends the righteous" (8: 190), is interpreted in many ways. According to certain theologians the wali is a person whose belief is sound, who performs his religious duties and who as a result has attained proximity to God. In Sufism the term takes on a technical meaning and is often translated as "saint". See al-Shirazi, pp. 91–92.

100. According to a hadith of the Prophet related through the sixth Imam, "Beyond every one who possesses piety, there are other pious acts, until he is killed in the path of God: when he has been killed in the path of God, there is no further act of piety" (al-Shirazi, p. 93). See also such Quranic verses as (3: 157); (3: 169) and (4: 74).

101. Al-Shirazi remarks, "The appropriateness of terminating this prayer, which is dedicated to praise, with the name 'Praiseworthy' is obvious" (p. 93).

102. Cf. Quran (36: 39): "It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day."

103. Cf. Quran (35: 13): "He makes the night enter into the day and He makes the day enter into the night." The same or similar verses occur several times in the Quran, including (3: 27); (22: 61); (31: 29); and (57: 6).

104. Reference to Quran (10: 68) and several identical or similar verses: "It is He who made for you the night to repose in it."

105. Cf Quran (25: 47): "It is He who appointed the night for you to be a garment and sleep for a rest . . ." and other similar verses.

106. Cf. Quran (17: 12): "We . . . made the sign of the day to see, and that you may seek bounty from your Lord" and other similar verses.

107. Cf. Quran (47: 31): "And We shall assuredly try you until We know those of you who struggle and are steadfast, and try your tidings."

108. Cf. Quran (6: 97): "He splits the sky into dawn . . ."

109. Cf. Quran (45: 3–4): "Surely in the heavens and the earth there are signs for the believers; and in your creation, and the crawling things He scatters abroad, there are signs for a people having sure faith."

110. Al-Shirazi points out that "command" (amr) here means the "ontological (takwini) command" (p. 217). Philosophers and theologians distinguish this, which refers to the laws of creation and which all must obey by the very nature of things, from the "legislative (tashri'i) command", which refers to the laws set down by God in revelation and which man can obey or disobey according to his own free will. The "ontological command" is referred to in such verses as: "His command, when He desires a thing, is to say to it 'Be', and it is" (36: 81).

111. Al-Shirazi quotes a tradition from the sixth Imam: "No day comes upon the son of Adam without saying to him, 'O son of Adam, I am a new day and I am a witness against thee. So speak good in me and work good in me, and I shall witness for thee upon the Day of Resurrection, for after this thou shalt never see me again'" (p. 218).

112. The distinction between minor (saghirah) and major (kabirah) sins is much discussed in Islamic theology. For a sample of Shi'ite views, see al-Shirazi, pp. 219–223.

113. The angels who write down the deeds of men are referred to in Quran (82: 10–11): "Yet there are over you watchers noble, writers who know whatever you do." In explaining what is meant by "Ease our burdens on them", al-Shirazi quotes the celebrated Safavid theologian, Shaykh-i Bahā'i: "This is an allusion to seeking protection with God from excessive talk and from excessive occupation with what entails neither worldly nor other-worldly gain: then the Noble Writers will have fewer of our words and deeds to record." The Prophet said, "I am astonished at the son of Adam: his two angels are on his shoulders, his speech is their pen and his saliva their ink. How can he speak of that which does not concern him?" (p. 224).

114. Cf. Quran (71: especially 10–14): "And when the pages are laid open, and when the sky is torn away, and when hell is ignited, and when the garden is brought nigh, (then) every soul will know what it has made ready."

115. According to al-Shirazi the meaning is, "Appoint for us some of Thy servants that we may seek illumination through their lights and follow in their tracks." He adds a long discussion of the elevated position of the "servant" ('abd), noting that in his highest form he is even more exalted than the messenger. This is the reason for the word order of the formula which every Muslim repeats in his canonical prayers: "Muhammad is His servant and His messenger". Al-Shirazi also points out that some manuscripts read "servanthood" ('ibadah) for "servants" ('ibad) and that this is more in keeping with the context (pp. 227–8).

116. This is a reference to the words of Satan in the Quran: "Then I shall come on them from before them and from behind them and from their right hands and their left hands; Thou wilt not find most of them thankful" (7: 17).

117. Al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar, according to Shi'ites one of the pillars of Islam, and a command which is repeated many times in the Quran, such as (7: 157), and (9: 71).

118. The verse "God is sufficient witness" occurs several times in the Quran, such as (4: 79); (10: 29), etc.

119. These two lines are an almost word for word quotation from Quran (3: 18).

120. A divine Name occurring in Quran (3: 26).

121. Cf. such verses as the following: "Say: 'Obey God and obey the Messenger; then if you turn away, only upon him rests what is laid on him It is only for the Messenger to deliver the Message" (24: 34).

122. The second of the Twelfth Imam's four deputies, referred to in the introduction to Part III, p. 92.

123. I.e., "normal" men, who are veiled from and ignorant of God's true nature.

124. Al-Saffin, the angels "who set the ranks", are referred to in Quran 37: 165; and al-haffin are referred to in (39: 75): "And thou shalt see the angels encircling about the Throne proclaiming the praise of their Lord."

125. This recalls the Prophet's supplication: "I seek refuge in Thy forgiveness from Thy punishment, I seek refuge in Thy approval from Thy anger, I seek refuge in Thee from Thee!"

126. In the Islamic calendar Rajab is followed by Sha'ban and then the month of fasting, or Ramadan, which is considered to the holiest and most blessed month of the year.

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