

The Chapter Headings Of The *Fusûs*

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Introduction

The recent publication of two complete English translations of Ibn al-'Arabî's *Fusûs al hikam*¹ will undoubtedly contribute to a more general appreciation of this work's central importance for the school of Ibn al-'Arabî. But the innumerable obscurities and ambiguities that the reader faces in the English text will certainly help him understand why in the past the Arabic works has never been read without a commentary, a teacher, or both. No doubt any English translation is itself a commentary; but a translation that limits itself to explaining the literal meaning of the text, without the additional clarification provided by the traditional commentaries, can never do justice to the full range of ideas and doctrines discussed in the *Fusûs*.

As pointed out elsewhere in some detail² the most influential commentaries upon the *Fusûs al-hikam* were written by four figures tied to one another by master-disciple relationships stemming from Ibn al-'Arabî himself. The first was Sadr al-Dîn al-Qûnawî (d. 673/1274), Ibn al-'Arabî's son-in-law, chief disciple, foremost interpreter, and the author of *al-Fukûk*, a commentary on the central themes of each chapter of the *Fusûs*. At his behest his disciple Mu'ayyid al-Dîn al-Jandî composed one of the earliest and most extensive commentaries on the *Fusûs* itself. Two other commentaries were written by 'Abd al-Razzâq al-Kâshânî (d. 730/1329 or 736/1335-6), who studied the *Fusûs* with al-Jandî, and Dâwûd al-Qaysarî (d. 751/1350), who studied it with al-Kâshânî.

Of these four works, al-Qaysarî's is the most useful for understanding the literal meaning of Ibn al-'Arabî's text, since it follows it most closely and seldom branches off into discussions not immediately relevant to the passage at hand. (It is true that other, later commentaries treat the text itself with much more care, e.g., that of Jâmî or al-Nâbulusî, but none of the possesses the authority of the earlier works).³ Al-Kâshânî's commentary offers relatively little aid in reading the text itself, though it provides interesting interpretations of the ideas discussed. Al-Jandî pays no attentions to textual difficulties, but elaborates upon the metaphysical and cosmological implications and ramifications of Ibn al-'Arabî's statements in great detail. The main reason al-Jandî's work – alone among these four commentaries – has not yet been published is undoubtedly its great length; it submerges the text of the *Fusûs* in copious and often prolix speculation.* In contrast, al-Jandî's master al-Qûnawî deals with the main themes of the *Fusûs* as implied by the chapter headings with characteristic concision, though his habit of packing a wide range of ideas into few words makes his "commentary" seem as dense as the text itself.

In what follows I have attempted to explain the significance of each of the chapter headings of the *Fusûs* as understood by these four figures. For a number of reasons, this study is far from complete. To discuss in full detail all the interpretations mentioned by

¹ R.J.W. Austin, *Ibn al-'Arabî: The Bezels of Wisdom*. New York, Paulist Press, 1980.

² See my forthcoming book on al-Qûnawî; cf. NN, pp. xxxviii-xliv (Persian introduction).

³ Al-Jâmî's commentary was published on the margin of that by al-Nâbulusî, *Sharh jawâhir*, 2 vols., Cairo, 1303-1323/1886-1905).

these commentators would require a full-length book. Only to deal with the points raised by al-Qûnawî would demand a complete translation of *al-Fukûk* (the printed text of which – adding to the difficulty – abounds in errors) and a lengthy commentary. In addition, at this writing I do not have access to a manuscript of al-Jandî's work, and therefore can only make use of brief passages quoted and often abbreviated by Jâmî in *Naqd al-nusûs*. Nevertheless, previous study has shown that a good deal of al-Jandî's material is inspired by *al-Fukûk*, while al-Kâshânî and al-Qaysarî in turn take many of their interpretations from al-Jandî.

Finally, a note should be added about the method of translation. Most of the texts follow the original Arabic closely, even word by word; but especially in the first few chapters I have felt free to add words and phrases of explanation within the text itself in order to avoid the use of too many brackets or explanatory footnotes.

The following abbreviations are employed:

- BW. R.W.J. Austin, *Ibn al-'Arabî: The Bezels of Wisdom*, New York, 1980.
- F. *Al-Fukûk* by Sadr al-Dîn al-Qûnawî, on the margin of al-Kâshânî's *Sharh manâzil al-sâ'irîn*, Tehran, 1315/1897-98.
- FS. *Fusûs al-hikam*, ed. A. 'Afîfî, Cairo 1946.
- J: NN. K. Al-Kâshânî, *Al-Jandî*, *Sharh fusûs al-hikam*, quoted in NN., Cairo, 1966.
- NN. Jâmî, *Naqd al-nusûs fî sharh naqsh al-fusûs*, ed. W.C. Chittick, Tehran, 1977.
- Q. Al-Qaysarî, *Sharh fusûs al-hikam*, Tehran, 1299/1881-82.

The Subject Matter of the *Fusûs*

Al-Qûnawî explains the importance of Ibn al-'Arabî's work as follows: "The *Fusûs al-hikam* is one of the most precious short writings of our Shaykh... One of the last and most complete books sent down upon him, it came to him from the Station of Muhammad, the Fountainhead of the Essence, and Unitary All-Comprehensiveness. So it contains the epitome of the spiritual perception (*dhawq*) of our Prophet – God's blessing be upon him – concerning the knowledge of God. It also points to the source of the spiritual perceptions of the prophets mentioned within it. It leads every man of spiritual insight to the gist of their spiritual perceptions, the objects of their intentions and aspirations, the sum of all they achieved, and the outcome of their perfections. So it is like the seal of everything comprised within the perfections of each of them; it gives news of the source of what they encompassed and what they made manifest." (F 184).

From the point of view of Ibn al-'Arabî's school, the key to the subject matter of the *Fusûs* and to Ibn al-'Arabî's source of inspiration when he wrote may be discerned in the words that al-Qûnawî employs at the beginning of this passage: "the station (*maqâm*) of Muhammad, the Fountainhead of the Essence (*mashrab adh-dhât*), and the Unitary All-Comprehensiveness (*al-jam' al-ahadî*)." But before we consider these terms in the context of Ibn al-'Arabî's teachings, it is necessary to say a few words about his overall method of approach and some of the technical terms he and his followers employ.

It is obvious that the Sufis are not primarily concerned with a rational or intellectual understanding of things. As pointed out elsewhere,⁴ they base their teachings first upon Revelation – i.e., the Koran and the Hadith – and second upon understanding Revelation through "unveiling" (*kashf*), a direct mystical apprehension of the Truth. Hence, when the Sufis explain what they have perceived through and unveiling of the mysteries, they follow a totally Islamic mode of expression. In other words, to the extent that these perceptions take on intellectual and imaginal (*mithâlî, khayâlî*) form, they are clothed in the garb of the Islamic Revelation. In practice this means that the majority of the metaphysical, cosmological, mystical, spiritual, and moral exposition to be found in the writings of Ibn al-'Arabî's school are presented in terms of the 'Divine Names and Attributes' (*al-asmâ' wa'l-sifât al-ilâhiyyah*).

The Names and Attributes are the universal entifications (*al-ta'ayyunât al-kulliyah*) of the Nonidentified Essence (*adh-dhât al-ghayr al-muta'ayyanah*), In other words, although the Essence is nondetermined and nondelimited (*mutlaq*) in Its absolute Ipseity (*al-huwiyyah*), It manifests Itself outwardly in certain modes that can be summarized as the Divine Names mentioned in the Koran. For example, God calls Himself Merciful, Seeing, and Forgiving. Hence we know that He possesses the Attributes of Mercy, Sight, and Forgiveness. (It is important to remember that in Ibn al-'Arabî's school, the terms Name and Attributes provide the framework for describing God's nature, and, more particularly, for explaining how He displays Himself outwardly within creation just as a light throws out rays.

Ibn al-'Arabî and his followers refer constantly to the fact that all of creation is but the outward manifestation (*zuhûr*), theophany (*tajallî*), or effusion (*fayd*) of God. Every single thing in the whole of existence is a form (*sûrah*) or a locus of manifestation (*mazhar, majlâ*) within which one or more of the Attributes display themselves. Ultimately, each individual thing manifests its own reality (*haqîqah*), immutable entity (*'ayn thâbitah*), meaning (*ma'nâ*), or quiddity (*mâhiyyah*). These four synonymous terms refer to the "nonexistent objects of God's Knowledge" (*al-ma'lûmât al-ma'dûmah*), i.e., the things (*ashyâ'*) as they are known *in divinis* by God Himself "before" their creation. According to some formulations, these immutable entities are the reflections or theophanies of the Divine Names; from another point of view each individual thing or entity is a Name of God, deriving all its reality and entification from Him, just as it takes from Him its existence when it enters the created world. From this second point of view the creatures are looked upon as particular Names of God (*asmâ' juz'iyyah*), while the Names and Attributes mentioned in the Koran and in Tradition are universal Names of God (*asmâ' kulliyah*). As Names aspects of the Reality (*al-haqq*), although the Reality Itself remains forever transcendent in relation to Its theophanies.

If everything is a locus of manifestation for a Divine Name, so also does it manifest intermediate realities. Between the level of Divinity where the Divine Names become entified and the sensory world (*'âlam al-hiss*) or World of Corporeal Bodies (*'âlam al-ajsâm*), two other worlds act as intermediaries: the World of Spirits (*'âlam al-arwâh*) and the World of Image-Exemplars (*al-mithâl*) or Imagination (*al-khayâl*).⁵ Each spirit acts as

⁴ "Mysticism verses Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History: the as-Tûsî, al-Qûnawî Correspondence," *Religious Studies* 17, 1981, pp. 87-104, esp. pp. 89 ff.

⁵ See W.C. Chittick and P.L. Wilson, *Fakhruddin 'Iraqi: Divine Flashes*, New York, 1982, p. 11ff.; Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qûnawî to al-Qaysarî," *Muslim World*, forthcoming.

a locus of manifestation for a Divine Name at the ontological level of the spiritual world; in turn that spirit is manifested in the two worlds that lie below it by existents proper to those levels.

With these introductory remarks we can return to al-Qûnawî's statement concerning the source of the spiritual perception displayed in the *Fusûs*: "The Station of Muhammad, the Fountainhead of the Essence, and the Unitary All-Comprehensiveness." These three terms are synonymous; they describe a single spiritual station from different points of view. Since Muhammad is the greatest and the last of the Prophets, his station embraces all the perfections possessed by the other prophets; they are no more than different refractions of his undifferentiated light. If his station corresponds to the "Fountainhead of the Essence," it is because his immutable entity – the Muhammadan "reality" – is the Greatest Name, the Name of the Essence Itself; so his reality is the Nondelimited Essence's first manifestation. This is why his spirit was the first thing created by God (cf. chapter 27, below). As for the "Unitary All-Comprehensiveness," that is the Essence viewed as an absolute and undifferentiated Oneness that comprehends the infinite possibilities of outward manifestation and entification. Certain formulations suggest that this appellation of the Essence embraces two other, better known labels: Exclusive-Unity (*ahadiyyah*), or the Essence conceived as an absolute Oneness (*wahdah*) that negates all manyness (*kathrah*), and Inclusive-Unity (*wâhidiyyah*), or the Essence conceived as embracing all ontological perfections.⁶ Al-Qûnawî and others state explicitly that the highest station attained by prophets other than Muhammad is that of Inclusive-Unity – although more often they manifest one or other of the Divine Names that are embraced by Inclusive-Unity – while Muhammad alone among the prophets dwells in the station of Exclusive-Unity.⁷

All of these considerations help explain why the *Fusûs* is fundamentally Koranic in conception and execution. It presents its teachings in terms of the Names and Attributes mentioned in the Koran and the @adith. —ne could even call the work a commentary on certain Koranic verses and prophetic sayings, especially those referring to the role of the prophets. More particularly, the *Fusûs* explains how each of the prophets manifests certain Divine Names and Attributes.

It has often been pointed out that the *Fusûs* is not "logically" constructed. As one of its translators remarks, "The overall impression on the reader is lack of proper organization and continuity."⁸ This is certainly true. Even al-Qûnawî makes such remarks as the following: "If God had not displayed His bounty toward me by giving me a share in the root and origin of the Shaykh's spiritual perceptions, I would not be able to discern his purpose from the sense of his words." (F 208) The very name of al-Qûnawî's work is derived from his intention to "remove (*fakk*, pl. *fukûk*) the seals of the *Fusûs*, clarify the mystery of its source, unveil what is hidden within it, and open what is locked inside." (F 185) Obviously this suggests that from the very beginning the *Fusûs* was considered a difficult text.

But certainly another reason for the obscurity of many passages in the *Fusûs* is that we are unfamiliar with a perspective that sees all things as the theophanies of God's Names and Attributes. In such a vies, realities of the sensory world that seem unrelated to

⁶ See Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences."

⁷ See Chittick and Wilson, *Fakhruddin 'Iraqi*, index, s.v. "Or Nearer."

⁸ Austin, BW, p. 20.

us have an inward affinity (*munâsabah*) because they manifest the same Name. For example, Ibn al-'Arabî and his followers quickly discern relationships between the four elements and certain prophets. In one passage al-Qûnawî alludes to the fact that the prophetic signs (*âyât*) of various prophets are tied to the four elements or to the three kingdoms of nature (mineral, vegetable, and animal). Moses is related to a bush, Noah to water, and Abraham to fire. "Each of the four elements and three kingdoms is related to god in respect of a specific Name; and the prophecy of each of these prophets emanated from the same Name to which his miraculous sign is related" (F 242-43; cf. chap. 27, below). If a person is accustomed to take the things of this world for what they appear to be, he can hardly contemplate them as symbols and loci of manifestation for higher realities. Even if one can accept such a perspective intellectually, that is a far cry from having the realities of things "unveiled" so that one sees God under the aspects of His Names and Attributes in all things.

The prophets are direct signs from heaven sent by God for a specific purpose. Having been sent expressly to "give news" about God, they reveal His Reality much more clearly than most other things. Ibn al-'Arabî and his followers translate this religious idea into their own terminology when they say that the prophets are direct loci of manifestation for the Universal Divine Names rather than for the particular Divine Names. (The former are limited in number to the "ninety-nine" specified by Tradition or the 150 or so mentioned in the Koran while the latter are infinite in number in keeping with the infinity of the creatures). Thus, to discuss the prophets – of the "words" (*logoi*) of God – is to explain how the Divine Names manifest themselves directly in this world. And to study the prophets is also to investigate the workings of the universe and the activity of nature; for both the prophets and natural phenomena reveal the Names. These points are explained by al-Qûnawî as follows:

"Know that each prophet and saint, except the Perfect Men among them, is the locus of manifestation for one of the universal realities of the world, for the divine Names peculiar to that reality, and for the spirits of those Divine Names – spirits which are referred to by the Koran as the Supreme Council (XXXVII 8, XXXVIII 69) – with all the diversity of their levels and relationships. The Prophet alludes to this fact with his words, 'Verily Adam dwells in the first heaven, Jesus in the second, Joseph in the third, Idris in the fourth, Aaron in the fifth, Moses in the sixth, and Abraham in the seventh.' It is obvious that their spirits are not localized, so what the Prophet wants to point out is only the strength of their relationships to those heavens in respect of their levels, sciences, states, and the levels of their communities, for the states of these prophets in this world are the outward form of the properties of those heavens. In the same way the great Sufis all refer in their technical terminology to saints who are 'upon the heart of Gabriel,' others who are 'upon the heart of Michael,' others who are 'upon the heart of Israfil,' etc." (F 275-76; NN 240-41)

At the beginning of the above passage al-Qûnawî excludes the "Perfect Men" form consideration. he is alluding to a point already discussed: The Prophet Muhammad and his perfect followers manifest the All-Comprehensive and Greatest Name, which embraces all the universal Names and realities of the world, not only one or some of them.

The Formula of the Chapter Headings

Each chapter heading of the *Fusûs* takes the form, "The *fass* of the Wisdom (*hikmah*) so and so," e.g. "The *fass* of the Wisdom of Divinity in the Word Adam." A more literal rendering, awkward in many cases, would be, e.g., "The *fass* of the Divine Wisdom in the Adamic Word." The three nouns repeated in each heading – *fass*, *himah* and *kalimah* – are explained in detail by the commentators. The key term, *fass*, will be dealt with last.

Wisdom is "knowledge of the realities of things as they are in themselves ('*alâ mâ hiya 'alayh*) and activity ('*amal*) in keeping with that knowledge" (Q 59). Or again, it is "knowledge of the realities, attributes and properties of things as they are in themselves along with volitional words and deeds that are necessarily correct" (K 7, NN 84).

Traditional definitions of *hikmah* almost invariably combine '*ilm* and '*amal*, knowledge and works, theory and practice. Moreover, the knowledge that wisdom encompasses is true, since it corresponds to things as they are in themselves. In Sufism this means that the knowledge is not only of concrete things in this world, but also of the "realities", i.e., the immutable entities, of things as known by God. In addition, wisdom is connected to proper and appropriate activity. When a "wise man" performs an act, it will always conform to the ultimate necessities of the situation.

"Word" refers primarily to the person of the prophet, just as Jesus is referred to as God's Word in the Koran (III 45, IV 171; K 7, Q 48). It is true that the Koran alludes to all existent things as words of God, e.g., in the verse, *If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, though We brought the like of it as replenishment* (XVIII 109). But as al-Kâshânî (p. 7) points out, in the *Fusûs* "complete words" (*al-kalimât al tâmmât*) are meant, not partial and incomplete words. The former are referred to in the Prophet's prayer, "I seek refuge in God's complete words." The commentators also hold that "words" here may refer to the spirits of the prophets (Q 48, K 7; cf. F 187).

The term *fass* (pl. *fusûs*) in the first place means ringstone. Ibn al-'Arabî writes in the *Fusûs*, "The heart of the gnostic or the Perfect Man corresponds to the setting (*mahall*) for the ringstone of a ring upon a ring. The setting does not differ from the ringstone, but follows it in size and shape. The setting is round if the ringstone is round, and square, six-sided, eight-sided or otherwise if the ringstone is a square, six-sided, eight-sided or otherwise. This is because the setting of the ring must be similar to the ringstone, not different from it." (FS 120; BW 149).

Al-Qaysarî defines the ringstone of a ring (*fass al-khâtim*) as "that which decorates a ring and upon which the name of its owner is inscribed, so that he may seal his possessions" (p. 60). Here a further important element in the image of the "ringstone" is mentioned: the fact that rings were normally seal rings and that the ringstone was employed to leave an imprint in wax. This explains the significance of the title of Ibn al-'Arabî's epitome of the *Fusûs*: "The Imprint of the Ringstones" (*Naqsh al-fusûs*).⁹

Al-Qaysarî and Jâmî follow the image of the sealring in interpreting a sentence of the *Fusûs* where Ibn al-'Arabî defines what he means by *fass*. After listing the 27 Chapter headings of the work, he writes, "The *fass* of each wisdom is the Word to which that wisdom is attributed." Jâmî expands upon this as follows: "The place where each wisdom

⁹ See "Ibn al-'Arabî's own Summary of the *Fusûs*," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn al-'Arabî Society* 1, 1982, pp. 30ff.

is inscribed is the Word to which the wisdom is attributed in respect of the heart (*qalb*) of that word. Hence the *fass* of each wisdom is the Word's heart, not the Word itself. Ibn al-'Arabî himself alludes to this at the very beginning of the *Fusûs* where he says, 'Praise belongs to God, who sends down wisdom upon the hearts of the Words'" (J 161; cf. Q 96).

Fass also means epitome and quintessence (Q 60). In Ibn al-'Arabî's definition of *fass*, this meaning seems to dominate. Thus the above passage can be translated, "The epitome of each (kind of) wisdom is (represented by) the prophet to whom it is attributed." It is in view of this meaning that one may follow T. Izutsu and translate the word *fî* ("in") in the chapter heading as "as embodied in", e.g. "The Quintessence of the Wisdom of Divinity as embodied in the Word Adam."

To each "wisdom" mentioned in the *Fusûs* a certain attribute is appended. Ultimately, these attributes are derived from divine Names, though some of them are not mentioned in the Koran or the Hadith. But as was pointed out above, from the point of view of Ibn al-'Arabî and his followers, in the last analysis everything is a Name of God. The particular attribute mentioned in each chapter bestows a special color on the wisdom in question, making it one kind of wisdom among other kinds, each of which is embodied in a particular prophet.

Al-Qaysarî summarizes this whole discussion as follows: "If we take *fass* to mean quintessence, the *fass* of each wisdom signifies the quintessence of the sciences actualized by the spirit of the prophet mentioned; these sciences are required by the Name that dominates over that prophet, for it effuses them into his spirit in keeping with his preparedness and receptivity. If we take *fass* to mean ringstone, then the *fass* of each wisdom is the heart (of the prophet), within which are imprinted the sciences specific to him" (p. 60).

I

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF DIVINITY AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD ADAM

Divinity (*ilâhiyyah*) here refers to the ontological level designated by the Name Allah, which encompasses all Names and Attributes (Q 59, NN82). In other words, the Name Allah embraces all ontological perfections, the universal categories of which are delineated by the "Most Beautiful Names" (*al-asmâ al-husnâ*), i.e., the Names of God mentioned in the Koran. Names other than Allah (e.g., the All-Knowing, the Willing, the All-Seeing, the All-Forgiving) refer to relatively specific and delimited properties of the Absolute Being, but the Name Allah refers to all perfections at once, to the Absolute Being as such. It is the "All-Comprehensive Unity" (*ahadiyyat al-jam'*) of the Names, since it embraces all of them in a unified and invisible Whole.

The name "Adam" refers to mankind as such, as Ibn al-'Arabî points out in *Naqsh al-fusûs* (K 7).¹⁰ So what is meant by the "Word Adam" is the universal spirit that is the source of mankind. As Ibn al-'Arabî himself says, "Adam is the single soul from which humankind was created" (FS 56, BW 57; Q 60-61).

"The Wisdom of Divinity or of the divine Name Allah was singled out for Adam because mankind was created to be God's vicegerent (*khalîfah*); as such, his ontological

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 35.

level comprehends and synthesizes all the ontological levels of the 'world' (*al-'âlam* [= *mâ siwâ Allah*, "everything other than God"]). Hence he is the mirror that reflects the ontological level of Divinity and acts as a receptacle for the manifestation of all the Divine Names. Nothing else possesses such a receptivity. In reality, Adam is the locus of manifestation (*mazhar*) for the Name 'Allah'" (Q 59, NN 84).

In sum, the title of the first chapter of the *Fusûs* signifies that the wisdom pertaining to the all-comprehensive Name of god, i.e., Allah, is embodied in Adam, the prototype of mankind and the first of the Perfect Men. Al-Qûnawî discusses all these points as follows: "The reason the Adamic Word was singled out for the Presence of the Divinity is that the two of them share in All-Comprehensive Unity. The Presence of Divinity, referred to by the Name Allah, comprises all the detailed properties and characteristics of every one of the Names...; no Name acts as an intermediary between it and the Essence, which is contrary to the case of every other Name.

In the same way no intermediary lies between man and the Reality (*al-haqq*) in respect to both his reality (*haqîqah*) and his ontological level (*martibah*), for his reality consists of the isthmus-nature (*barzakhiyyah*) that comprehends and combines the properties of Necessity and of possibility. Hence he encompasses both sides" (F 188).

II

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF EXPIRATION AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD SETH

Since the three terms repeated in each chapter heading have been explained, it will be sufficient from here on to follow the commentators and discuss only the relationship between the particular type of wisdom being presented and the prophet in question.

The literal significance of *nafath* is "to send out the breath softly" (Q 96, NN 111). Here the term alludes to the expiration of the Breath of the All-Merciful (*nafas al-rahmân*) i.e., the effusion of existence upon the quiddities or archetypal entities, which then become outwardly manifest as the things or entities of the world (F 195, K 33, Q 96, NN 111).

In Hebrew the name Seth signifies "gift of God" (BW 69, F 195, K 33, Q 96), since God gave him to Adam after the loss of Abel (Q 96). "Adam was a first entification of the Nondelimited Being; his ontological level embraced all the ontological levels contained in the world in a synthesized and summated fashion (*ijmâl*). God wanted to particularize that synthesized unity in accordance with the Breath of the All-Merciful, i.e., the deployment of existence upon the immutable entities. This intention on God's part derives from His Names the All-Bestower (*al-wahhâb*) and the All-Generous (*al-jawâd*), upon which depend the Names the Producer (*al-mubdi'*) and the Creator (*al-khâliq*). The next ontological level after that of Divinity is that of production (*mubdi'iyyah*) and bringing into existence (*mûjidiyyah*), but it cannot be actualized without the expiration of the Breath of the All-Merciful; through it the entities become outwardly manifest in existence, just as they had been inwardly nonmanifest. Hence the Wisdom of Expiration was placed next to the Wisdom of Divinity and it was singled out for the Word Seth, who follows the First Entification (i.e., the level of Divinity) and became the locus of manifestation for the theophany of Generosity." (Q 96).

Al-Qaysarî's presuppositions and points of departure in the above discussion are expressed more explicitly by al-Qûnawî: "In respect of the utter simplicity (*sarâfah*) of Its Essence and Its Nondelimitation (*itlâq*), the Reality is not described by the attribute of productivity, nor does It become the principle (*masdar*) of anything whatsoever. The first entification that becomes entified comprehends all entifications and possesses the All-Comprehensive Unity. It pertains to the True Man, of whom Adam is the outward form. The ontological level that follows this entification must be that of Principiality (*masdariyyah*), which possesses the attribute of Unlimited Effusion (*fayyâdiyyah*) and results in the bestowal of existence upon the universe. Hence the quintessence of the Wisdom of Expiration pertains to the Word Seth, for his name means 'gift of God', while 'expiration' refers to the expiration and deployment of the One Breath, i.e., the existence that becomes deployed over the quiddities, which in turn act as receptacles for it and make it manifest. Moreover, when this effusion is considered from the point of view of its Origin and Source, it is One; its name is the 'Gift of the Essence', since it emanates from the Reality in keeping with the Reality's Essence, and it has no other cause. But when this gift is considered from the point of view of the plurality of its outward forms within the receptacles and their constant variegation, then it is referred to as the 'Gift of the Names.'" (F 195-96).

The word "*nafath*" also signifies "inspiration", as in the words of the Prophet, "The Holy Spirit inspired (*nafatha*) into my heart that no soul will die until it receives its full allotment of provision; so be moderate in your seeking" (Q 96, NN 111). Finally, *nafath* also refers to a special kind of expiration in which the breath is blown out softly while the mouth articulates the syllable *thu*. This expiration is practiced by those who are knowledgeable in the spiritual properties of things and have mastered the incantations, spells and charms discussed in the sapiential sciences. Through this special expiration these men disseminate and deploy a spiritual property within a form and transmit it toward something to which they direct their attention. Both of these interpretations of the significance of *nafath* are also acceptable, since Seth was inspired with the religious sciences by God Himself; and He taught him the sciences of the spiritual properties of things and of the angels, sciences that pertain to the subjugation, control, and exercise of free disposal (*tasarruf*) among the creatures by means of Names, letters, words, verses, etc. (J: NN 111-12).

III THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF THE ALL-GLORIFIED AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD NOAH

All-Glorified (*subbûh*) is an Attribute of God signifying that He transcends every imperfection and defect. It is synonymous with the word *musabbah* from the same root, a term associated with the angels because of a number of Koranic verses, such as, *We glorify Thy praise* (II 30) and *We are the glorifiers* (XXXVII 166). "Angels" are practically synonymous with "spirits"; they dwell in the World of the Spirits, the first level of created existence. With these introductory remarks, we can turn to the words of al-Qûnawî, who lays the groundwork for most of the remarks of the other commentators.

"The first of the divine ontological levels is that of All-Comprehensive Unity. Considered at this level, God is the First and the Principle, and the Emanator. The first

receptacle for the effusion of the divine Essence is the World of the Spirits, the inhabitants of which are the most perfect existents in certain respects: they are free of the manyness of possible existence, they are not compounded of parts, and they are void of the defects that existents acquire because of the intermediaries between them and God. The spirits have a more perfect relationship to God's Inclusive-Unity (*wahdâniyyah*)¹¹ than other existents, which become related to it in respect of intermediaries. As a result the spirits only perceive certain divine perfections, i.e., those which pertain to their relationship with the Presence of Inclusive-Unity and the fact that they act as receptacles for an effusion of existence that is free of the color of most of the properties related to intermediaries and the manyness of possible existence. Hence they only know God in respect of His disengagement (*tajarrud*) from and transcendence (*nazâhah*) in relation to manyness and composition, all the while that they maintain their utter need for and dependence upon Him. Hence it is that they make manifest and are colored by the attribute of professing God's transcendence and His incomparability with the creatures (*tanzîh*).

"As for Noah, he was the first of the messengers (*mursalûn*). The first attribute of a messenger is to demand of his community that they acknowledge God's Unity (*tawhîd*) and transcendence, and avoid the association of all others with Him. Hence the attribute that dominated over Noah was the profession of God's transcendence and the affirmation of His incomparability with the creatures... In Noah became manifest the primacy of the World of the Spirits and the fact that it acts as a receptacle for the first effusion of the Divine Inclusive Unity. He made manifest the properties and attributes of this first effusion; as a result, when he saw his people worshiping idols, jealousy and wrath overcame him. He called down destruction upon them after having described their defects and wrongdoing. In this respect, he was similar to the angels who blamed Adam and said, What, wilt Thou place within the earth one who will work corruption and shed blood, while we glorify Thy praise and call Thee holy? (II 30)". (F 197-98)

IV

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF THE ALL-SANCTIFIED AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD IDRIS

"The word All-Sanctified (*quddûs*) is synonymous with *muqaddas*, which derives from the verb *taqdis*, just as *mesabbah* (All-Glorified) derives from *tasbîh*. Literally *quddûs* means 'to purify'. As a technical term it means to purify and sanctify God of everything not worthy of His station – e.g., possible existence, need, and the imperfections of engendered existence, which He transcends absolutely – and also of everything that is considered a perfection in relation to the possible existents, whether they be disengaged (spiritual) or non-disengaged (corporeal); for God and His intrinsic perfections are higher than every perfection and greater than anything that can be conceived by intellect, understanding, or imagination. This is because every perfection attributed to others lies below its original station and is delimited, i.e., excluded from true Non-delimitation – for it ultimately derives from the Perfection of God.

¹¹ Al-Qûnawî, following Ibn al-'Arabî (see M. Chodkiewicz tr., *Awhad al-Dîn Balyânî, Epître sur l'Unicité Absolue*, Paris, 1981, p. 27), contrasts this term with *ahadiyyah*, "Exclusive-Unity;" only in two or three instances does he employ the synonymous term *wâhidiyyah*, instead, which is preferred by most of his followers. See Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences."

"The Name All-Sanctified is one of the Most Beautiful Names; it is more specific than All-Glorified both qualitatively and quantitatively, in the sense that it places greater emphasis upon God's transcendence and dissimilarity. That is why it is mentioned second when the words of the angels are quoted in the hadith: 'All-Glorified! All-Sanctified!' It can be said that All-Sanctified signifies that God's Essence transcends both transcendence or incomparability (*tanzîh*) and immanence or similarity (*tashbîh*). Thus it is said, 'God is far greater than that anything should be considered either incomparable with Him or similar to Him!' The specific kind of incomparability denoted by the Name All-Sanctified is not embraced by the Name All-Glorified; in another sense, it is much stronger." (Q 151; cf. F 198-99)

"The difference between Noah's declaration of God's incomparability and that professed by Idris lies in the fact that Noah's mission and spiritual perception were equivalent to a declaration of incomparability by the intellect alone, whereas Idris's declaration embraced both intellect (*'aql*) and the soul (*nafs*). Idris practiced ascetic disciplines until his spirituality dominated over his corporeal nature and his constitution; he became spiritualized and used to discard his body and make ascents to heaven. He mixed and associated with the angels and spirits and left the category of humankind. For sixteen years he neither slept nor ate, until he became a disengaged intellect and was taken to heaven. Noah in contrast enjoyed the shares of both the lower soul and the spirit; he married and had children and is called the 'Second Father'. Hence Idris's declaration of God's incomparability was more intense and complete, since Idris declared God incomparable in respect to His entification within his own entity. thus he transcended the filth of nature and corporeal things and became himself a disengaged intellect; his sensual nature totally dropped away from him." (J: NN 138)

V

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF RAPTUROUS LOVE AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD ABRAHAM

"When a person possesses the attribute of rapturous love (*hayamân*), he will never confine his attention to a single direction nor will he be distinguished by a specific attribute. Rather, he will turn toward the Beloved and be qualified by Him, however He may manifest Himself." (NN 147; cf. F 200)

The attribute *muhayyan* is usually employed by Ibn al-'Arabî and his followers in only one other instance: to refer to a particular kind of angels who are known as the "Enraptured Spirits" (*al-arwâh al-muhayyamah*). The name is explained by the following sentence, which is often quoted as a hadith: "They have been enraptured (*hâmû*) in the Majesty and Beauty of God since He created them." Al-Qûnawî states that they are referred to in the following prophetic saying: "God possesses a white earth where the sun takes thirty days to cross the sky. It is filled with creatures who do not know that God is disobeyed in the earth of that He has created Adam and Iblis"¹² These angels seem to lie at the same ontological level as the First Intellect (*al-aql al-awwal*), also called the Supreme Pen (*al-qalam al-a'lâ*), i.e., the first and highest level of created existence. The difference would lie in the fact that part of the First Intellect's attention is turned toward creation through the intermediary of the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-mahfûz*), while the

¹² *Tabsirat al-mubtadî*, quoted in NN, p.49.

enraptured angels turn all their attention toward their Creator. According to the commentators, the ontological level to which this chapter of the *Fusûs* refers was actualized first by these spirits.

"God manifested Himself to the Enraptured Spirits in the theophany of His Beauty's Majesty, and they became absent (*ghâbû*) from themselves. They have no awareness of themselves or of anything other than God. The theophany's Uncreatedness (*haqqiyyah*) overwhelmed their creatureliness (*khalqiyyah*), the absorbed and consumed them. In a secondary manner this ontological level is actualizing among the Perfect Men who are prophets in the person of Abraham. The love of God so overwhelmed him that he washed his hands of his own father and his people, sacrificed his son in His path, and left all of his wealth, despite its well-known abundance.

"It is related that certain angels said to God, 'Of course Abraham loves Thee, considering the goodness, blessings, bounties, wealth, prestige, prophecy, sovereignty, and Book that Thou hast given him. In face of all these gifts, his love is not great.' God said to them 'Test him!' So they became corporealized before him in the form of men and mentioned God to him by declaring His Incomparability: 'The All-Glorified, the All-Sanctified, the Lord of the Angels and the Spirit!' Then Abraham heard these words, he was seized by ecstasy and rapturous love for God and requested that they repeat the words. They asked him for a wage, so he gave them one-third of his wealth. Then they mentioned Him again in remembrance. Again he requested that they repeat the words, and he gave them the second third of his wealth. They glorified God by mentioning Him in remembrance, and Abraham was overcome by joy. His rapturous love increased, and again he requested that they repeat the word for him and completed his test, they told him they were angels of God." (J: NN 147-48)

"The Koran (VI 77ff.) describes how, in the intensity of his love for God, Abraham looked for Him in the stars, because of the manifestation of luminosity therein. *When night outspread over him he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord.' But when it set he said, 'I love not the setters.' When he saw the rising, he said, 'This is my Lord.' But when it set, he said, in the overwhelming sway of rapturous love, 'If my Lord does not guide me, I shall surely be of the people gone astray'*, i.e., those who are bewildered in God's Beauty. When he saw the sun rising he said, *'Oh my people, surely I am quit of what you associate with God'*. When his rapturous love reached its perfection, he became annihilated (*fanâ*) from his own self. God manifested Himself to him, so he gained subsistence (*baqâ*) in Him in the station of all-comprehensiveness (*jam'*) and separative discernment (*farq*). He perceived God in the loci of manifestation within the heavens, i.e., the spirits, and within the earth, i.e., the corporeal and solidified bodies. He said, *'I have turned my face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth'* through the theophany of His Being upon them and through pervading them with His own Essence, *'a man of pure faith*, submitted (*muslim*), annihilated of my own acts, attributes and essence in His Acts, Attributes and Essence, *'I am not of the idolators'*, those who affirm the existence of others (*ghayr*), for I have found the Divine Essence in the forms of the engendered existents through unveiling (*kashf*) and direct vision (*'iyân*)." (Q 168, NN 147-48)

"Abraham was the first mirror in which the affirmatory (*thubûtî*) divine Attributes became manifest and the first person for whom they became character traits... Therefore he possesses priority in manifesting the affirmative divine Attributes in the sense that through his reality, the Essence became clothed in Attributes. That is why the Prophet

said "The first person who will be clothed on the Day of Resurrection will be Abraham,' for that is a commensurate recompense – the last will accord with the first." (F 202, 200; NN 149)

"Ibn al-'Arabî places the Wisdom of Rapturous Love after the Wisdom of the All-Sanctified because, after mentioning the negatory (*salbî*) Attributes that declare God's incomparability, it was necessary to mention the properties and levels of the affirmatory Attributes and their first human manifestation. In this way Ibn al-'Arabî completed knowledge of the Essence, for negatory Attributes can never provide complete knowledge." (F 202, NN 148-9)

VI THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF TRUTH AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD ISAAC

As already indicated, Ibn al-'Arabî and his followers divide the whole of existence, from God to the physical world, into a number of levels. The two fundamental levels are God and the world, or the Uncreated and the created. The created level in turn is divided into two basic levels: the World of the Spirits and the World of Corporeal Bodies. Then between these two stands and "isthmus" (*barzakh*) or intermediate world that partakes of the attributes of both and is called the World of Image Exemplars (*mithâl*) or Imagination (*khayâl*). The Isthmus in turn is divided into two levels, one of which stands closer to the spirits, and the other closer to the corporeal bodies. These two levels are referred to as the domains of nondelimited (*mutlaq*) and delimited (*muqayyad*) image exemplars.

The commentators agree that the subject of this chapter is the World of Delimited Image Exemplars. In a long passage (F 203ff.) al-Qûnawî points out that everything manifested within the World of Nondelimited Image Exemplars conforms totally and correctly to that which exists in the World of the Spirits, from which it gains its existence. But the World of Delimited Image Exemplars is colored by the nature of the receptacle, e.g., by the mental faculties of the person who receives it. Hence, in exercising their imagination most people conceive images which are delimited by their own selves and circumstances. In contrast, the Perfect Men have overcome their own individual limitations; what they contemplate at the level of delimited imagination in fact corresponds correctly to the World of Nondelimited Image Exemplars. Therefore, what they see is "true" (*haqq*).

Al-Qaysarî summarizes al-Qûnawî's explanation and points out the Koranic basis for the use of the term *haqq*: 'Below the World of Disengaged Spirits stands the level of the World of Image Exemplars or Imagination. The first person to become clothed in the Affirmatory Attributes, which are the spirit of the Imaginal World, was Abraham. So the Shaykh mentions the wisdom of the World of Delimited Image Exemplars in conjunction with the word Isaac, thus observing the order of existence, even though he does not necessarily follow such an order in all the chapters. The reason he mentions the World of Delimited Imagination, and not the nondelimited kind, is that it is an image and a likeness of the World of Nondelimited Image Exemplars and is given to every individual in order that he can ascend to the higher level. So the Shaykh speaks of the branch, though that is like speaking of the root.

"The reason this wisdom of 'truth' is connected to Isaac is that when Abraham perceived a vision, Isaac made that vision come true with his words, *My father, do as thou art bidden; thou shalt find me, God willing, one of the patient* (XXXVII 102). In other words, Isaac said to Abraham, 'Make what you have seen in your vision some true in the sensory world.' In the same way, Joseph said, This is the interpretation of my vision of long ago; my Lord has made it come true (XII 100)." (Q 184)

VII THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF EXALTATION AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD ISHMAEL

Al-Qaysarî explains the connection between exaltation and Ishmael as follows: "The Wisdom of Exaltation was ascribed to the Word Ishmael because God made him the locus of manifestation for the Name the 'Exalted' (*al 'alî*). That is why his spiritual resolve (*himmah*) was exalted and he was *true to his promise* (XIX 54). Because of his exalted state, he was *pleasing to his Lord* (XIX 55)" (Q 199-200)

Al-Jandî, and following him Jâmî, state that the reason for the connection between Ishmael and exaltation is the following Koranic verse "referring to Ishmael": *We appointed unto him a tongue of truthfulness, exalted*. But the verse (XIX 50) reads "unto them", not "unto him", and it mentions Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but not Ishmael. (J: NN 165; Jâmî, *Sharh al-fusûs*, II, p. 5; K 114 seems to be alluding to the same thing).

Al-Qûnawî's discussion of this chapter is important both for the light it throws on other chapters and for the many examples it provides of the type of Koranic exegesis typical of Ibn al-'Arabî's school. In spite of the length, I quote it in some detail:

"This chapter revolves around two Divine Attributes: Exaltation (*'uluww*) and Good-pleasure (*ridâ*). The first of these derives from the Oneness of the Essence, while the second derives from the All-Comprehensiveness of the Names. [Here al-Qûnawî wants to point out that the unique Oneness of the Essence means that It is exalted above all things, while the fact that It embraces all the Names means that God is "well-pleased" with all things, even those that are "astray" from the point of view of the commandments of religion, since they are only displaying the properties of His Names. Cf. chapter 10 of the *Fusûs*].

"As for the reason that exaltation was singled out for Ishmael, in one respect this is because of his relative superiority over the other sons of Abraham, since [as the ancestor of the Arab tribes] he was like a vessel containing the mystery of the Muhammadan perfection, whose relationship to God's Essence is most complete. In the same way, Isaac was like a vessel for the mysteries of the Divine Names made manifest by the [Jewish] prophets. This point is alluded to in the Koran in the story of Abraham: We gave him Isaac and Jacob, and We appointed the Prophecy and the Book to be among his seed (XXIX 27). Each of the prophets is the locus of manifestation for one of the Names, while the "Book" refers to that which embraces all revealed religions (*al-sharâ'î*). Just as the religion revealed to Ishmael embraced the Book and therefore the statues of all religions, so also our Prophet comprehends the properties of all the Divine Names.

"The fact that the Shaykh is discussing these two Attributes leads him to write at the beginning of the chapter, 'He that is called "Allah" is One in His Essence and All through

His Names.' Ibn al-'Arabî's summary of this chapter in *Naqsh al-fusûs* confirms this point..."

After quoting *Naqsh al-fusûs*, al-Qûnawî sets out to discuss Abraham and his children and to show how each of the represents a different aspect of the Reality. He repeats what he has said earlier about Abraham, i.e., that he represents the pository Attributes of God, which allow us to declare in a positive manner that God is, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Merciful, etc.; and which means that in a certain respect God is similar to the creatures and the creatures are similar to Him (*tashbîh*). They are contrasted with the negatory Attributes, those which demand that we declare Him and the creation incomparable (*tanzîh*). As we have already seen, the third and fourth chapters of the *Fusûs* are concerned with the negatory Attributes; hence we can say that Abraham possesses a special relationship to the Essence in respect of the Attribute of Omnipotence (*iqtidâr* [i.e., because the Divine Power brings creation into existence]). Then Ishmael represents the receptivity (*qâbiliyyah*) of the world, within which God displays His Power. That is why the Koran singles him out as the prophet who is *pleasing to his Lord* (XIX 55). In other words, Ishmael complies totally with his Lord, since he is the locus of manifestation for the properties of his Power.

"In respect of its receptivity toward everything that takes the shape within it, the world is like the Kaaba. God alludes to this in referring to the existence of the world and of the things within it: *By the Mount, a Book inscribed and a parchment unrolled, and the House frequented [the Kaaba]* (LII 1-3). Here the Mount is the level of the world in respect to its immutable entity and its possibility; the Book inscribed is the possible existents manifested outwardly within the page of existence – the parchment unrolled.

"Because of these correspondences and the fact that each locus of manifestation gives news of what it manifests, Abraham had to be the custodian of the Kaaba and Ishmael his assistant. For the Kaaba, the first house built for men, corresponds to the reality of the world, which became a receptacle for the first bestowal of existence by God in respect to His Attribute of Power – an Attribute of which the First Intellect is the outward form. Thus our Shaykh was asked about the First Intellect and the mode of its creation. He replied that it had been created by the Attribute of Power, not by any other. For this reason the Intellect is also called the Pen – for a pen is connected, which represents power. In this respect Abraham is the locus of manifestation for the First Intellect, which is the first means whereby existence was given to the world and the precondition for establishing the 'house' of the world at the level of possible existence. Then Ishmael is the locus of manifestation for the Universal Soul, which is the Guarded Tablet, i.e., the locus for the book of existention in all its myriad details. Abraham speaks of these points – to those who understand the esoteric interpretation of the Koran – in a number of verses. Here he speaks in the tongue of the First Intellect and the Soul: *And when Abraham, and Ishmael with him, raised up the foundations of the house* alluding to the existence of the world. *'And (make) of our seed,'* i.e., the individual souls, *'a nation submissive to Thee; and show us our holy rites,'* i.e., the outward forms of the angels, prophets, and saints. *'And turn towards us; surely Thou turnest, and art All-compassionate.'* 'Turning' alludes to the return of every soul to God in the aspect of total poverty and need in order to take from His Effusion the replenishment it needs [to stay in existence]. *'And our Lord, send among them,'* i.e., among our seed, *'a messenger, one of them, who shall recite to them*

Thy signs, and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them; Thou art the All-Mighty, the All-Wise' (II 127-8).

"God also gives news of this 'All-Compassionateness' related to the Intellect and the soul in another place in His Book (XIV 35): Abraham says, '*My Lord, make this land,*' i.e., this world, '*secure,*' i.e., from nonexistence, '*and turn me and my sons away from serving idols,*' i.e., the forms that make up the natural world. Here 'sons' are the individual souls, like 'seed' in the preceding verse. '*My Lord, they (idols) have led astray many men.*' I.e., the spiritual attributes and faculties, as is the case with most human beings, for in them we witness nothing of spiritual attributes or true human characteristics. Hence God has said that they are *like cattle; nay, they are further astray (XXV 44)* than animals. And in another place, He prefers stones to them (II 74), so he makes their level lower than that of inanimate objects. Then Abraham says, '*Whoso follows me*' in purity and actualizing perfection by governing his body so that his natural constitution's mastery over him is exhausted, both by the properties of intellect – with God's grace – and by him who is sent to men form among themselves, i.e., the 'messenger' referred to in the first verse, '*Verily he belongs to me,*' for, although I do not possess a natural constitution to be overcome or that might overcome me, yet God has turned His kind attention toward me. As a result, the properties of my Necessary Existence have nullified the properties of my possible existence. '*Our Lord, I have made some of my seed to dwell in a valley where is no sown land by Thy Holy House.*' The valley that possesses no sown fields is this world of generation and corruption, to which pertains total poverty; for the place of true sown land demands that whatever has no existence be sent out into existence, but the world of generation and corruption is not like that: some parts of it are in need of other parts, and as a whole it is totally in need of being given replenishment from the upper world. To this point God alludes with His words, *And in heaven is your provision and what you are promised (LI 22).*

"In the above verse Abraham's words 'Thy Holy House' allude to the True Heart of man, which embraces God, as He said in the *Hadith qudsi*: 'Neither My heaven nor My earth embraces Me, but the heart of My believing servant does embrace Me.' This Heart alone becomes the place where God's Essence and all His Names reside.

"*Oh Lord, let them perform the prayer,*' i.e., let them turn their attentiveness toward Thee in total poverty and need. '*And make the hearts of some people yearn towards them.*' This alludes to the spirits which descend upon the Perfect Men – the prophets and the saints – and those who are near them. '*And provide them with fruits,*' i.e., spiritual inspirations and sciences from God's own Presence. '*Haply they will be thankful.*'

"*Our Lord, Thou knowest what we keep secret,*' i.e., those things which our 'unmade' preparadnesses demand,¹³ but which have not yet become manifest to us, '*and what we publish,*' i.e., that which has been actualized for us and made manifest to us. '*From God nothing whatsoever is hidden in earth and heaven.*' This refers to the various levels of giving and receiving effects that become outwardly manifest, ranged between the properties of Necessary Existence and possible existence. In other words, God knows the preparadnesses of the forms of the upper world and its inhabitants. Hence the words are singular – He did not say, 'the heavens and the earths.'

¹³ "Unmade" (*ghayr maj'ûl*) because god did not "make" them be the way they are; they are immutably fixed in His Knowledge from eternity-without-beginning to eternity-without-end. See ch. 14, below.

"Then Abraham says, *'Praise belongs to God, who has given me, though I am old, Ishmael and Isaac'* (XIV 39); these two are the Intellect and the Soul. As for Jacob's relationship to him, this is mentioned in another verse: *And We gave him Isaac and Jacob, and We appointed the Prophecy and the Book to be among his seed* (XXIX 27). Here Jacob corresponds to the Primum Mobile, for Intellect, Soul, and Primum Mobile all emanate from the First Intellect; and just as the twelve signs of the zodiac become entified within the first sphere, so Jacob had twelve sons.

"In another verse (II 30), God says *'Who therefore forsakes the religion of Abraham but he who is foolish toward his own soul?*, i.e., he who is ignorant of his own soul, of its worth and level. For within the soul are the means to actualize man's spiritual perfection. The religion of the First Intellect, which comprehends all meanings and realities, consists of the totality of God's Attributes of the pository Divine Attributes and the virtues. Thus God said, *And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them, He said, 'Behold, I make you a leader for the people'* (II 124). So Abraham made leadership (*imâmah*) manifest, just as the first leadership belongs to the First Intellect." (F 207-13)

VIII THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF EASE (OR OF SPIRIT) IN THE WORD JACOB

"The obvious interpretation of the attribute *rwh* is that it should be read *rawh*, 'ease', in keeping with the Koranic verse where Jacob says, *'Do not despair of God's ease; of God's ease none despairs except the people of the unbelievers'* (XII 87). For in the case of each prophet, Ibn al-'Arabî refers to what has been revealed in the Koran. Moreover, in this chapter Ibn al-'Arabî explains the meanings of the word *dîn* ('religion'), i.e., submission (*inqiyâd*), recompense (*jazâ*) and custom (*'âdah*), through each of which true ease, and even everlasting and eternal ease, becomes established. As for submission, the reason that ease can be realized through it is obvious; he who submits to God's commands, avoids His prohibitions, and turns his face toward Him, will attain the supreme and ultimate ease. As for 'recompense', this is because when a man comes to know that recompense depends on the entities, which are the concomitants and preparadnesses of his own essence – even though the existence and creation of the entities comes from God – then he will actualize a tremendous ease, since he will know that everything God gives him depends upon the nature of his own self and essence. Hence he will praise only himself. That is why the Shaykh says in this chapter, 'He himself benefits himself and punishes himself; therefore let them blame and praise none but himself' (BW 115). As for 'custom', this also is obvious: when a person becomes accustomed to something, he takes joy in it and finds ease.

"It is also possible to read *rwh* as *rûh* ('spirit'), since all three meanings of *dîn* are related to the nature of the spirit that governs the body. Al-Qûnawî inclines toward this interpretation in his *Fukûk* [as does al-Kâshânî in his commentary]." (Q 213-14)

In a relatively lengthy discussion, al-Qûnawî points out that religion and the spirit are tied together by the common attribute of "governing" (*tadbîr*). The spirit governs the body in two ways: first, in a mode that is natural and unselfconscious, what al-Qûnawî calls *dhâtî*, i.e., pertaining to its very essence or "intrinsic"; and in a manner that must be

acquired through spiritual maturity and selfconscious effort (*kasbî, ta'ammulî*). Thus the body functions without and effort on man's part, because of the spirit's intrinsic activity. But the spirit also governs the body by directing it in the path of self-perfection (*istikmâl*) and of becoming qualified by God's virtues (*takhalluq bi akhlâq Allâh*) and adorned by His Attributes (*tahallî bi sifâtih*).

Next al-Qûnawî discusses certain aspects of religion and points out how its "governing" parallels that of the spirit. On the one hand its function is that of *siyâsah*, the governing of society by providing laws and the means of enforcing them. In other words, it maintains the best interests (*maslahah*) of the world in whatever the prevailing situation may be, both in relation to the general conditions and specific details. Second, it governs man and society by directing their gaze toward the affairs of the next world and the ultimate outcome of their activities.

As for Jacob's relationship to the spirit, this is because, as was mentioned in the last chapter, Jacob is like the locus of manifestation for and symbol of the Primum Mobile of first heaven, which is also called the Throne (*al-'arsh*) and which represents the farthest limit of the visible or corporeal world. So the Throne is the first corporeal form governed by a spirit. Finally in the story of Jacob as related to the Koran, al-Qûnawî finds a number of correspondences between Jacob and the various meanings of the word *dîn*. (F 217ff.)

IX THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF LIGHT AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD JOSEPH

Briefly the connection between Joseph and Light lies in the fact that his ability to interpret dreams and visions entailed a kind of "illumination". Moreover, dreams and visions pertain to the World of Imagination, which is luminous in relation to the corporeal world.

Jâmî summarizes the explanations provided by al-Jandî and al-Qaysarî as follows: "The World of Image Exemplars is a luminous world, and Joseph's unveiling was imaginal; within him appeared the power of 'cognitional luminosity' (*al-nûriyyat al-'ilmiyyah*) related to the unveiling of imaginal forms, i.e., the science of interpretation in its most perfect mode. Everyone who has known that science after him has received it from his ontological level and benefited from his spiritual rank." (NN 177; cf. Q 224)

Both al-Qaysarî and al-Kâshânî summarize a rather long discussion by al-Qûnawî that is worth in its entirety: "True Light brings about perception, but cannot be perceived itself, since It is the very Essence of the Reality in respect of Its disengagement from all relationships and attributes. Thus, when the Prophet was asked 'Hast thou seen thy Lord?', he answered, 'He is Light – how should I see Him?' In other words, Disengaged Light cannot be perceived. God makes similar allusions in His Book (XXIV 35) when He refers to the manifestation of His Light within the various levels of the loci of perception: *God is the Light of the heavens and the earth; the likeness of His Light is as a niche, wherein is a lamp...* Having finished mentioning the various levels of His Light's likeness, He says, Light upon Light. Now one of these lights is 'brightness' (*diyâ*), while the other is Nondelimited Light. That is why He completes His words by saying, '*God guides to His Light whom He will*, i.e., God guides by means of His Light that becomes

entified within the loci of manifestation [i.e., 'brightness'] to His Nondelimited, Unique Light.

"When Ibn 'Abbâs was asked whether the Prophet had seen his Lord, he answered that he had. Then the questioner was told about 'A'isha's words concerning the Prophet; she had asked him about the vision of his Lord, and he had replied, 'He is Light – how should I see Him?' So the questioner referred once more to Ibn 'Abbâs, who said, 'Woe upon thee! That is when He reveals Himself in the theophany of His Light that is His Light!' In other words, vision and perception are only possible in respect of the Essence's disengagement from loci of manifestation and through the veil of the ontological levels, vision is possible. Thus the poet has said,

Like the sun – though it does not let you
gaze at its face.
When a thin cloud veils it,
you can see it.

"The Prophet alluded to something like this when he spoke of the paradisiacal vision of God that is similar to the vision of the sun and the moon. He said that the people of Paradise see their Lord and that nothing stands between them 'except the cloak of magnificence over His Face in the Garden of Eden.' Thus he reports that the level of the veil remains, i.e., the level of the locus of manifestation. So know this!

"I have already spoken of the nature of True Light and the fact that perception takes place through It, though It cannot be perceived. Know also that darkness cannot be perceived, and it allows the perception of other things to take place. So each of the three – Light, darkness, and brightness – possesses a special excellence. The excellence of True Light lies in Its primacy and principality: It causes every hidden thing to become unveiled. The excellence of darkness lies in the fact that its becoming connected (*ittisâl*) with True Light brings about the perception of that Light, which was impossible before the connection. And the excellence of brightness lies in the fact that in its very essence it combines the two sides and thus possesses both excellences...

"This Sheer Light is not different from Being, the Reality. Without doubt, Sheer Being is conceived of as opposite to nonexistence – for nonexistence can certainly be conceived of by the mind [even if it can never be actualized in the world]. And the mind understands that darkness pertains to nonexistence, just as luminosity pertains to Being. This is why the possible existent [=the nonexistent entity] is described as 'dark'; then it becomes illuminated by Being, and hence becomes outwardly manifest. Thus, the possible existent's darkness derives from one of its two aspects, i.e., nonexistence. The Prophet alluded to this when he said, 'God created the creatures in darkness. The He sprinkled them with His light,' so they became outwardly manifest. In this hadith, 'created' (*khalaqa*) means 'determined' [or 'identified'], for determination precedes the bestowal of existence. Then the 'sprinkling of Light' alludes to the effusion of Being upon the possible existents.¹⁴

"The nonexistence that is conceived of by the mind in opposition to Being has no actualization outside the mind, and Sheer Being cannot be conceived. So in respect to the fact that the level of nonexistence is conceived in opposition to Being, it is like a mirror.

¹⁴ Cf. "Ibn al-'Arabî's own Summary," ch. XXII (p. 82).

As for that which becomes entified between the two sides, that is the reality of the World of Image-Exemplars, whose intrinsic attribute is brightness.

"When something is an intermediary between two other things but its relationship to one of the two sides is stronger than its relationship to the other side, then it is described by the attribute and called by the name of the side that dominates. The World of Spirits and what lies beyond it, i.e., the Worlds of the Names and Attributes, are described by Light and everlasting existence; while the world of generation and corruption is described by turbidity and darkness, since it lies opposite the World of Spirits, i.e., the World of Light. That is why our Shaykh calls this wisdom by the name 'Light' though in reality it pertains to brightness, not to Sheer Light.

"But that which acts as an intermediary between man's elemental plane and his spirituality is the World of Delimited Imagination.¹⁵ The forms that become outwardly manifest within it depend upon the relationship of the possessor of delimited imagination to the two sides. If his relationship to the side of the spirits and what lies beyond them is strong, his imaginings will be true and related to the Reality, Being, Knowledge, and Light. But if his relationship to the sensory world is stronger, because of the domination of the properties of its disequilibrating (*munharif*), engendered, and corrupt forms, and because of its variegated states far from equilibrium (*i'tidâl*), then his imaginings, whether in wakefulness or sleep, will be corrupt, and his opinions and beliefs will be incorrect, since they will be empty of the cognitional light and its everlasting, ontological quality." (F 222ff.)

X

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF UNITY AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD HUD

The commentators agree that the Unity referred to in this chapter is the "third level" of Unity, pertaining to the Divine Acts or creatures, the first level being that which pertains to the Essence, and the second that which pertains to the Names and Attributes. In general, the Divine Acts relate to the Name "Lord" (*rabb*), whose activity is to nurture (*tarbiyah*) every single existent. In this connection the commentators refer to the following Koranic verse, which is placed in the mouth of Hûd: *Truly I have put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord; there is no creature that crawls, but He takes it by the forelock. Surely my Lord is on a straight path.* (XI 56; cf. K 149-50, Q 241, NN 183-84, F 233-34).

Al-Qûnawî explains the relevance of this verse in more detail: "What Hûd refers to is related to God's controlling power, i.e., His Act. But in the reports that have reached us concerning him, it is obvious that in his eyes the Act's oneness dominates over the multiplicity that appears within it, since he does not take intermediate causes and means into account. He says, *There is no creature that crawls, but He takes it by the forelock.* Thus he attributes the taking to the He-ness or Ipseity, which is the Essence Itself; he mentions no hand, Attribute, or anything else. This type of spiritual vision pertains to those who have attained to intermediate stations on the Path (*al-mutawassitîn*)." (F 240)

¹⁵ Cf. the long description of this world quoted from al-Qûnawî in "The Five Divine Presences."

XI.
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF OPENING
AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD SALIH

The term "opening" (*fath*) is employed by Ibn al-'Arabî to refer both to the various descending stages of God's Self-manifestation and the ascending levels of perfection that the traveller achieves in his journey to God. The descending and ascending arcs form a single Circle of Being, much discussed by al-Qûnawî:¹⁶ God's command (*amr*) descends to the lowest stages of corporeal manifestation and then returns to Him. "He governs the Command from heaven to earth, then it ascends to Him in one day, whose measure is a thousand years of your counting" (Koran XXXII 5). Al-Qûnawî's disciple al-Farghânî explains the connection between this Circle and the concept of opening while commenting on the divine Name "He who opens" (*al-fattâh*):

"Opening is the sending out of good from the confines of its hiddenness and the manifestation of plenty and light from the constriction of darkness (*zulmah* [i.e., "nonexistence" or nonmanifestation]) and summated unity (*ijmâl*). The first outward manifestation of this Name takes place in the particularized deployment (*tafsîl*) of spiritual forms within the Guarded Tablet after the constriction of the summated unity referred to as "*Nûn*, by the Pen" (Koran LXVIII 1). Next is the opening of imaginal forms within the materia of the Entity of Dust (*mâddah 'ayn al-habâ* [the *materia prima*]) and the Greatest Element (*al-'unsur al-a'zam*). Next is the opening of mineral forms from the constriction of the sewn up mass (*ratq*: cf. Koran XXI 30), which resulted from the first conjunction and combination of the elements. Next is the opening of animal forms after the constriction of their matter. Next is the opening of human, Adamic forms after the constriction and combination of their matter – water and clay. Next is the opening of the womb of every animal and of humankind to accept the sperm, after its constriction and contraction. Next is the opening which is the acceptance of an animal or human form after the constriction of being a lump of flesh. Next is the opening of the entification and particularized deployment of the soul in respect to its faculties, after the constriction of its summated reality that had become entified in order that it could become manifested within the sensory world to govern a constitution made ready for it. Next is the opening of the gate of birth and manifestation within this outward plane after the constriction of the mother's belly and the darkness of the womb. Next is the opening of the gate of understanding and discernment after the constriction of the properties of being veiled. Next is the opening of the gate of faith and submission (*al-islâm*) after constriction, ignorance, and the properties of cattle. Next is the opening of the gate of intelligence, knowledge, and drawing conclusions concerning the Maker on the basis of His handiwork after the constriction of the properties of imaginings. Finally is the opening most complete and general in benefit and property, that of the gate of the heart's birth from the constriction of the womb of the the soul. Then the highest, most perfect, and most preferred opening is the 'Manifest Opening' (Koran XLVIII 1); it is the opening of theophany and the unveiling of the uncreated lights after the constriction of the curtains of creatureliness. This is sanctity from God, the Truth."¹⁷

¹⁶ See Chittick, "The Circle of Spiritual Ascent according to al-Qûnawî," *Neoplatonism and Islam*, ed. P. Morwedge, Albany, forthcoming.

¹⁷ Al-Farghânî, *Muntaha 'l-madârik*, Cairo, 1293/1876, vol i, pp. 40-41. Cf. al-Qûnawî's long discussion of opening, *Tafsîr*, pp. 264ff./153ff.

The title of Ibn al-'Arabî's magnum opus *al-Futûhât al-Makkiyah* (The Meccan Openings) alludes to this last kind of opening, while in the present chapter of the *Fusûs*, he is concerned mainly with the first kind. As he defines it, "Opening is the state through which the things are brought into engendered existence" (FS 134, BW 167). In other contexts, he also discusses other meanings of "opening", especially in connection with the "Keys to the Unseen," *mafâtîh al-ghayb*, where "key" means literally "that which opens." The phrase is derived from the Koranic verse, "With Him are the Keys to the Unseen – none knows them but He" (VI 59). These Keys are usually said to be Names of God's Unknown Essence in virtue of which the First Entification takes place. Then certain of God's Names at this level are referred to as "Secondary Keys." Thus Ibn al-'Arabî writes, "What descends from these Secondary Keys, degree by degree, are the keys of the secondary causes and the like, right down to the very last cause. These are called the 'Keys to the Unseen that bring about entified existence' (*mafâtîh ghayb al-îjâd al-'aynî*). Then the Command reverses after outward existence, since its last existent is man; he turns things around by making the unseen into a key and the key into the unseen. He takes the last secondary cause as a key, and through it he opens its unseen cause... Ultimately he reaches the Final Cause."¹⁸

As al-Qûnawî points out (F 237), the main subject of this chapter of the *Fusûs* is "triplicity", without which the world would receive no existence from its Creator. "He discusses the mystery of the bestowal of existence, which is the first outward opening. The reason he uses the form *futûh* [pl. of *fath*] rather than *fatîh* [active participle of the same root, the word *fâtihah* thus signifying "that which opens"] is that there are many kinds of opening, their number being equal to the number of the Keys to the Unseen. So the Shaykh displayed courtesy to his Creator by keeping [the plural form], this wishing to maintain harmony with God in pointing out the bestowal of existence from the Unseen." After referring the reader to his work, *The Keys to the Unseen*, al-Qûnawî provides further elucidation of the nature of the keys.

Al-Kâshânî summarizes al-Qûnawî's exposition as follows: "Sâlih was singled out for the Wisdom of Opening because the sources of the bestowal of existence are the primary Names of the Divine Essence, then the tertiary Names, such as the OPener and the Bestower of Existence. God singled out Sâlih for opening the gate to the Unseen by cleaving open the mountain for his she-camel." (K 166-7) Here al-Kâshânî refers to the she-camel of Sâlih (cf. Koran VII 73, XI 64, XXVI 155 etc.), which according to the Koran commentators, miraculously appeared to him from inside a mountain.

¹⁸ Ibn al-'Arabî, *Miftâh al-ghayb* (The Key to the Unseen), quoted in S. Hakîm, *al-Mu'jam al-suffi*, Beirut, 1981, p. 867. Note that al-Qûnawî's major metaphysical and cosmological opus is called *Mafâtîh al-ghayb*.

XII
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF THE HEART
AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD SHU'AYB

Jâmî summarizes the relationship between Shu'ayb and the Heart, man's spiritual center, in two passages, the first of which he quotes from al-Qûnawî (F 243) and the second from al-Kâshânî (K 173):

"First the Shaykh took into account Shu'ayb's name, which means "branching out" in Arabic – for it has been related that Hûd, Sâlih, Shu'ayb, Jonah, and Lot were all Arab prophets. The heart is the source of the branches which are scattered in the various regions of the human body, as well as in the bodies of other animals, the heart is the first part of the body to become into existence. Moreover, Shu'ayb had many 'branches' because of his numerous children and descendants.

"Second, Shu'ayb was dominated by the attributes related to the heart, such as commanding equity and filling up the measure and the balance justly (cf. Koran VII 85, XI 84-85, XXVI 182-83); for the heart is the locus of manifestation for equity (*'adl*), the outward form of the unity that combines outward manifestation with inward non-manifestation, and the manifestation of the constitutional equilibrium of the body and the just balance of the soul. By means of the heart, life and divine effusion reach all the bodily parts equally and equitably. Moreover, to it pertains the unity that combines the faculties of the spirit, the soul, and the body; these faculties branch out from it in accordance with the straight balance and are distributed to each organ in keeping with its preparedness and receptivity. Spiritual replenishment comes to the heart constantly according to a guarded measure, and the heart gives everything its due." (NN 198)

XIII
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF STRENGTH
AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD LOT

The views of the commentators are summarized by al-Qaysarî: "Lot was weak among his people, while they were strong and powerfully veiled from the Truth. they did not accept what he had brought them from God, but continued to work corruption in the land by occupying themselves with bestial passion and immersing themselves in worldly things. Finally Lot said, '*Oh would that I had power against you, or might take refuge in a strong pillar*' (X 180). He sought refuge in God in respect of the fact that He is *Strong, Terrible in retribution* (Koran VIII 52, XL 22). So He exterminated them with terrible retribution." (Q 289; cf. K 188, F 251).

XIV
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF DESTINY
AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD EZRA

Jâmî (NN 211-12) combines the explanations of three of the commentators as follows:

"'Pre-determination' (*qadâ*) is the general decree (*al-hukm al-kullî*) of God concerning the entities of the existents as these entities are in themselves [i.e., before

existence]. In other words, it is His decree concerning the states that will occur for them from eternity without beginning to eternity without end. As for 'destiny' (*qadar*), it is the particularized deployment of that decree through the bestowal of existence upon the entities in accordance with the times and situations required by their individual preparednesses. Hence destiny refers to the fact that each state of an entity is conditioned by a particular time and brought about by a specific cause. (Q 298-99)

"The 'mystery of destiny' (*sirr al-qadar*) is this: it is impossible for the essence, attributes and acts of any created entity to become manifest within existence except to the 'measure' (*qadr*) of its intrinsic preparedness's specific character. Then the 'mystery of the mystery of destiny' is this: these immutable entities are not 'outside' (*khârji*) of God. He has known them from eternity without beginning, and they are entified within His Knowledge as they are in themselves. Or rather, they are the relations (*nisab*) or states (*shu'ûn*) of the Essence, and so it is impossible for their realities to change; for they are the realities of God's Essence and that which pertains to God's Essence cannot undergo 'making' (*ja'l*),¹⁹ change, alteration, increase, or decrease. (J: NN 211)

"Hence it is known that God never entifies anything from Himself – whether it be an attribute, and act, a contingent state, or whatever – for His Command is one, just as He is one. His One Command consists of the effect (*athar*) of His Unique Essence, which effuses the One, All-pervading Being upon the possible existents; they act as Its receptacles, become manifest through It, and make It manifest. These existents are plural, variegated, and different in their states and attributes in accordance with that their own 'unmade' realities demand – realities which are entified within the Beginningless Knowledge. One of the requirements and concomitant properties of Ezra's reality was that he conceived of a desire to know the mystery of destiny; he turned his thought toward the ruined village, considering it unlikely that it could return to its previous state." (F 252)

According to the Koran (II 259), Ezra *passed by a city* [i.e., Jerusalem] *that had fallen down upon its roofs. He said, "How should God give life to this now that it is dead?" So God made him die a hundred years, then He raised him up, saying, "How long hast thou tarried?" He said, "I have tarried a day, or part of a day." He said, "Nay, thou has tarried a hundred years. Look at thy food and drink – it has not spoiled; and look at thy ass. So We would make thee a sign for the people. And look at the bones, how We shall set them up, and then clothe them with flesh." So when it was made clear to him, he said, "I know that God is powerful (qadîr = 'determines destiny') over all things."*

"Thus, Ezra's thought and doubt became the occasion for God to display to him several kinds of return and a number of properties of His Power...One of them was that He preserved an outward form that normally would have quickly changed and disappeared – He preserved it from alteration and kept it as it was. This is the situation of Ezra's food and drink. Another is that He preserved Ezra's form dissolution and the separation of its parts, even though the spirit that governs the body had turned away from it; He replenished his body with power and with something that allowed it a kind of equilibrium. Life once again became joined to it and hence it became prepared for the return of the spirit. Finally God maintained the substance that made up his ass's outward form – even though its parts had dissolved. Then He made other accidents grow up, supported by those substances and similar to the previous accidents." (F 202, 204, 203)

¹⁹ See note 13.

XV
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF PROPHECY
(OR ASCENDANCY) AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD JESUS

As al-Qûnawî points out, the adjective *nabawiyyah* can be derived from the root *naba'*, i.e., "to give news, to prophecy," or from the root *nabâ'*, i.e., "to become elevated, to ascend." In contrast with most other commentators, he prefers the second interpretation: "By applying this attribute to Jesus, our Shaykh does not mean it in the sense of 'giving news,' for each of the prophets mentioned in the *Fusûs* shares in this attribute. Rather, he is referring to Jesus' 'elevation.'" (F 256) Then in a long and complicated discussion, during which he explains the symbolism of various letters of the alphabet and the role of Gabriel in Jesus' conception, al-Qûnawî tells why Jesus was "elevated" above other prophets. Among other things, he explains the meaning of Jesus' title, the "seal of sanctity," which in a sense corresponds to Muhammad's name, the "seal of prophecy."

Al-Qaysarî and al-Kâshânî both prefer the derivation of the attribute from the root *naba'*:

"The Wisdom of Prophecy was singled out for the Word Jesus – even though all these word are prophetic – because his prophecy was innate and dominated over his state. He prophesied (*anba'a*) from God in him mother's womb with his words, '*Grieve not, surely thy Lord has set below thee a stream (sarî)*' (XIX 24); and in the cradle with his words, '*God has given me the Book and made me a prophet*' (XIX 30); and he continued to prophecy up until the time he was made a prophet – which was his fortieth year, since the Prophet said, 'No prophet was raised up until his fortieth year.' It has also been said that the attribute is derived from *nabâ'*..." (K 207, NN 215)

"This wisdom was singled out for Jesus because he prophesied through general prophecy from eternity without beginning to eternity without end and through specific prophecy from the time he was raised up as a prophet. Hence he gave news of his prophethood in the cradle...and he gave news of his beginningless lordship (*siyâdah*) over men with his words '*Grieve not, surely thy Lord has set below thee a master (sarî)*,' i.e., a lord over the people. That is why he was dominated by prophesying about the states of spiritual men (*rûhâniyûn*), and for the most part he called people to the inward (*al-bâtin*). It has also been said that the adjective derives from *nabâ'*...

"Here by 'prophecy' is not meant the prophecy of law-giving, which is shared by all the prophets; otherwise, they also would deserve the attribute. Rather, what is meant is the beginningless general prophecy (*al-nubuwwat al-'âmmat al-azaliyyah*), which is not shared by any of the prophets or saints, each of which derives his sanctity from Jesus' lamp. He is the possessor of this station for all eternity, since he is the seal of sanctity, as was mentioned in chapter two (cf. BW 67). This he possesses the beginningless general prophecy principally, but others only become qualified by the attributes of sanctity and prophecy by acquiring the necessary preconditions. In the same was, our Prophet is a prophet from eternity-without-beginning in respect of law-giving prophecy, while other prophets only acquire that after being raised up as prophets." (Q 314)

XVI
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF THE ALL-MERCIFUL
AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD SOLOMON

Almost every chapter of the Koran begins with the phrase, "In the Name of GOD, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate." These two adjectives both derive from the word "mercy" (*rahmah*), which Ibn al-'Arabî and his followers identify with Being, for God says, *My mercy embraces all things* (Koran VII 156), and the only attribute that all things that exist in the world share is (at least in God's Knowledge) existence. According to Ibn al-'Arabî's school, the Names All-Merciful and All-Compassionate delineate two basic kinds of mercy, as discussed in the present chapter.²⁰ Though these two Names are often mentioned independently in the Koran, they are paired only five times. In one of these instances they are connected with the name of a prophet: *It is from Solomon and it is in the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate* (XXVII 30). This is one reason for the relationship between Solomon and mercy. (cf. Q 348)

The brief discussions of the kinds of mercy found in al-Qaysarî and al-Kâshânî are derived from al-Qûnawî's lengthy exposition in *al-Fukûk* (263-68):

"Know that mercy is divided in the first place into two kinds: that related to the Essence, and that related to the Attributes. Each of these is in turn divided into general (*'âmmah*) and specific (*khâssah*). Thus there are four roots, from which derive 96 branches, giving a total of 100. For the Prophet has said, 'God possesses 100 mercies, of which He has sent down but one...'. God has called attention to this with His words at the beginning of the Koran: *In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate. Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the world's creatures, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.*' The two mercies referred to in the first formula itself are those that pertain to the Attributes.

"Next you should know that the mercy pertaining to Solomon is the general mercy of the Attributes, within which the property of the general mercy of the essence is also present. God refers to the latter when He says, through the tongue of the angels, *'Our Lord, Thou embracest everything in mercy'* (XL 7). This is why Solomon's decree and free-disposal pervaded the entire world. For God subjected to him both the higher and the lower worlds.

"As for God's subjection of the lower world to Solomon, this is apparent in his control over the jinn, mankind, the wild beasts, the birds, and the other animals of the land and the sea. His decree was even extended to the four elements: God *subjected to him the wind, that ran at his command* (XXXVIII 36). And He subjected to him the water, within which the satan – who are made of fire – dived for him. This is one of the greatest subjections, since it combines what pertains to fire with what pertains to water, even though their natures are opposed. Hence God said, *'And of the satans, some dived for him and did other, lesser work'* (XXI 82). Thus He gives news that everything they did for him was less than the diving, because of what I mentioned concerning the difficulty of combining opposites. And the earth was also subjected to him, so that he settled within it wherever he willed.

"The fact that God subjected the upper world to him is also obvious to those who have eyes – for everything that was made possible for him in this world was an effect of

²⁰ See BW 187 ff.; "Ibn al-'Arabî's own Summary," p. 62.

God's subjection of that world to him and His teaching him the causes of control and free-disposal. So understand! All of these things are effects of the general property that pertains to general mercy.

"As for the specific mercy of the Essence, that is grace (*'inâyah*), which is also called the *sure footing*.

(X 2). This is one of the effects of God's love for certain of His creatures, love that has no known cause, e.g., knowledge, works, or something else. God alludes to it in His word concerning Khidr: *We had given him mercy from Us, and We had taught him knowledge proceeding from Us* (XVIII 65).

"As for the specific mercy of the Attributes, that is singled out for the felicitous; its property is divided into two parts, temporary and non-temporary. The temporary kind pertains to the felicitous in this world, those who attain their desires in most of their states most of the time, but not in the next world. That is why God alludes to the exclusion of Solomon from their number: *And he has a near place in Our presence, and a fair journey's end* (XXXVIII 40). Thus He combines two felicities for him, while his felicity is not temporary, but everlasting in its properties. The non-temporary specific mercy pertains to the people of paradise, since their bliss is everlasting, as God says, *A gift unbroken* (XI 108). So it is a gift never cut off, pure of adversity and unsullied by things that might lessen it. Thus God says, *Say: 'Who has forbidden the ornaments of God which He brought forth for His servants, and the good things of His providing?' Say: 'These, on the Day of Resurrection, will be purely for those who believed during the life of this world'* (VII 32). So His words, 'on the Day of Resurrection' and 'purely' call attention to the fact that, although certain believers may attain to these things in this world, they are sullied by adversity and hardship; the particular characteristics of this level and plane do not yield them up without troubles and difficulties. So the felicitous only attain to them in paradise, which is an inviolable place, free of everything that might produce darkness or distress. The reason for this is that – as the Prophet has told us – it is located in the Noble Footstool, while its proof is the Throne of the All-Merciful encompasses all existent things in mercy, knowledge, and property.

"As for the Footstool, it is the locus of manifestation for the 'seat' of the Name All-Compassionate, which makes (the general mercy) specific. In the same way the Throne is the seat of the Name All-Merciful, which possesses generality, and of no other Name [alluding to the verse, *The All-Merciful sat Himself upon the Throne* (XX 5)]. I have pointed out already that every heaven is the locus and seat of the property of one of God's Names; so that heaven is related to God only in respect of that Name. Through the station of that Name the Command revealed to the heaven becomes entified. God alludes to this point with His words. *He revealed to each heaven its Command* (XLI 12).

"So remember this, for I have given you knowledge of the division of the mercy pertaining to both the Essence and the Attributes into general and specific. I have clarified them for you and taught you that the mercy that *embraces all things* is existence, and that the Name All-Merciful is God's Name in respect of the fact that He is Sheer Being, whose light is deployed over the existent possible things. He gave news of this with His words, *God is the light of the heavens and the earth* (XXIV 35). Then He mentioned the levels of Light's outward manifestation and the 'likeness' of the materia that are its loci. For you should know that in respect of the Source of existence's deployment and entification, i.e., the Unseen Ipseity of God, it possesses universal levels

of entification and outward manifestation. The first is the World of Meanings; then there is the World of Spirits, whose relationship to outward manifestation is more complete than that of the World of Meanings. Then comes the World of image-Exemplars, which gives bodily shape to the spirits and meanings, i.e., they do not become outwardly manifest and entified within it except in bodily form. Finally there is the World of Sense Perception, the first part of which is the form of the Throne, which encompasses all sensory bodies and defines the six directions. With the Throne the supra-formal journey of existence in its universal levels, the last of which is the World of Sense Perception – a journey that emanates from the Unseen Ipseity – comes to an end, or 'seats itself'. For after the Throne, Being's entifications and variegations of outward manifestation consist only of particularized deployment and composition. Hence it becomes clear that in and through the Throne the degrees of manifestation come to an end, as we have explained. That is why in the Koran God's 'sitting Himself' is ascribed only to the Name All-Merciful.²¹ For the All-Merciful is the outward form of the mercy which *embraces all things* and whose universal manifestation come to an end at the Throne...

"The Command continues to deploy itself in descending degrees of outward manifestation until it reaches its limit in humankind, which is the target of all natural faculties, Name-derived and Necessary propertied, angelic attentivenesses and celestial effects, as well as the locus where all of these are joined together and combined... The aforementioned properties and effects and the characteristics of outward manifestation and entification continued to come out from the Unseen to the Visible, from latency to actuality, and from the Presence of Inward Non-manifestation to the Presence of Outward Manifestation within the human plane..until in this manner the Command ended up at David and Solomon. David was the locus of manifestation for the universal aspects of those Name-derived properties, Lordly Attributes, spiritual effects, and natural faculties, as well as the place where all of these became joined together. Hence he was worthy of bringing about the outward manifestation of the station and properties of vicegerency (*khilâfah*, cf. Koran XXXVIII 26) and the properties of *Wisdom and Speech Decisive* (XXXVIII 20). Then Solomon became his heir in combining these things together, but he surpassed him in their actual particularized deployment, in outward and manifest authority, and in elevated, universal, and general subjection. So no one has appeared in existence with greater kingdom or more general authority than Solomon, nor will anyone ever appear. For when everything destined by God to become manifest – the mysteries of Lordship and those things which are attributed to God and to engendered existence – reached the utmost degree of its outward manifestation from the Presence of Divine Knowledge [= the World of Meanings] to the farthest degree of manifestation as known by God, petrification occurred through God's answering Solomon's prayer: 'My Lord, forgive me, and give me a kingdom such as may not befall anyone after me' (XXXVIII 35). So all of these things, after the perfection of their outward manifestation, began to return from the Presence of Outward Manifestation to the Presence of Inward Non-manifestation, through a kind of gradual process like that which they underwent then they came from non-manifestation to manifestation. For there is only manifestation after non-

²¹ By "Name" here, al-Qûnawî has in mind the various delimited Names that envisage God from a certain point of view, not the Name of the Nondelimited Essence, i.e., Allah, since "Allah" is said to seat Himself upon the Throne in a number of verses (e.g., XIII 2, XXXII 4).

manifestation and non-manifestation after manifestation; that which is taken from non-manifestation comes into manifestation, and vice-versa."

XVII
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF EXISTENCE
AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD DAVID

"David was singled out for the Wisdom of Existence because existence only became complete through the vice-gerency of God in the human form, and although the first person in this species in whom vice-gerency became perfected through the power of subjection was David. For God subjected to him the mountain and the birds, which chanted glorification with him: *With him We subjected the mountain to hibe glory at evening and sunrise, and the birds, duly mustered, every one to him reverting* (XXXVIII 18). He combined within him kingdom, speech, and prophethood, as indicate by His words, *We strengthened his kingdom, and gave him wisdom and speech decisive.*' (XXXVIII 20). Likewise the first person whom God addressed as a vicegerent clearly and directly was David (XXXVIII 27). Exercising free-disposal in the kingdom through subjection is a tremendous affair which could not be completed by David alone, so God gave him Solomon, whom He made his partner through His words. *'And We gave David and Solomon knowledge, and they said 'Praise belongs to God who has preferred us over many of His believing servants''* (XXVII 15). In the same way: *'And We made Solomon to understand it, and unto each of them We gave judgment and knowledge'* (XXI 79). So Solomon was a complement to David's perfection in vice-gerency, since God singled out for him perfect free-disposal in all things. Hence existence reached its perfection of outward manifestation through Solomon's existence. This is why David's Wisdom is placed next to Solomon's; whereas Solomon's Wisdom comes prior to David's because of the superiority he manifested through his own particular excellence. It is as if these two chapters are a single Wisdom dealing with the outward manifestation of existence's perfection, but they are two wisdoms in that the Wisdom of the All-Merciful appeared in the branch, since every branch possesses what is in the root along with something else that pertains to it alone. Hence Solomon's Wisdom was placed first because of that added something..." (K 244)

Al-Qaysarî's interpretation differs from that of al-Kâshânî, though he seem to allude to certain doubts about his own explanation at the end of the passage:

"What is meant by the 'Wisdom of Existence' is the wisdom of the existence pertaining to the human world, not of existence as such. For Non-delimited Existence – Being – does not pertain exclusively to any single thing; much less can it pertain exclusively to a single one of the prophets.

"Adam was the first human individual; he manifested the all-comprehensiveness of the human reality as required by his own entification, and he displayed all that was in keeping with his own preparedness and the equilibrium of his own personal constitution. But the station of vice-gerency could not manifest itself totally through him. That is why the station of messengerhood only appeared with Noah, who was the first of the messengers. Thus the effects and properties of the human all-comprehensiveness became manifest totally in David, and it was perfected by his son Solomon. Because the two of them shared in this all-comprehensiveness, God mentioned them together with His

words, 'We gave David and Solomon knowledge' (XXVII 15) and 'Men, we have been taught the language of the birds, and we have been given of everything' (XXVII 16). In gratitude for this bounty the two of them said, 'Praise belongs to God, who has preferred us over many of His believing servants' (XXVII 15).

"Since David was the first in whom the property of vice-gerency became manifested *in toto*, God mentions his vice-gerency explicitly while addressing him, though such is not the case with Adam's: 'David behold, We have appointed you a vice-gerent in the earth; therefore judge between men justly' (XXXVIII 27). For this reason, it was appropriate that the Wisdom of the existence that pertains to man be joined to the Word of David. But God knows best." (Q 366)

The basic arguments of both al-Kâshânî and al-Qaysarî are derived from *al-Fukûk*, selections from which can indicate some of the subjects al-Qûnawî considers:

"Know that much of what I will mention in explaining this chapter is in one respect a supplement to what was mentioned in clarifying the mysteries of Solomon's states; for David and Solomon share in their mysteries to a tremendous degree. God has alluded to this sharing in His Book [Al-Qaysarî's words quoted above follow this section of al-Qûnawî's exposition rather closely]...

"In placing these two Wisdoms together, the Shaykh seems to be alluding to something of what I have already clarified concerning the mystery of existence, the fact that it becomes deployed in the degrees of outward manifestation, and the fact that it is identical with the mercy that *embraces all things*.

"We have already explained that mercy is of two kinds, i.e., pertaining to the essence and pertaining to the Attributes, and that each kind possesses a general and a specific property. We mentioned the general property pertaining to general mercy, the fact that it pertains especially to Solomon, and all other pertinent information plus a little more. Now you should know that the specific property connected to the general mercy of the Attributes derives from the vicegerency of mankind. thus its properties appear gradually in the ontological levels in accordance with the loci that manifest the reality of the Divine and Perfect Man. The perfection of this reality's outward manifestation reaches its utmost limit in the Adamic [or "human"] form, which is its most perfect locus of manifestation. The forms that precede the Adamic form do not possess the preparedness to allow the human reality to attain to a complete outward manifestation; nor do they allow the property of this reality's ontological level – a level sometimes called 'Divinity' (*ulûhiyyah*) and sometimes 'vice-gerency' – to become manifested. Moreover, even Adam himself was not able to complete this outward manifestation. As a result, the human reality undertook another manifestation, journey, and development within the range of the human earth..." (F 269ff.)

Most of the rest of al-Qûnawî's detailed discussion explains why David was a more perfect vicegerent – i.e., locus of manifestation for all of God's Names, or for the all-comprehensive Name "Allah" – than Adam. As usual in such passages, he bases himself almost totally on the interpretation of certain Koranic passages and hadiths.

XVIII
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF BREATH
(OR THE SOUL) AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD JONAH

"The Wisdom of Breath (*nafas*) was joined to the Word of Jonah because God, with His All-Merciful Breath, relieved (*naffasa*) Jonah of his sorrows, which had been caused by his people, his family, his children, and the fact that he *was of those rejected; then the fish swallowed him down while he was blameworthy* (XXXVII 141-42). So he glorified God, admitted his fault, asked forgiveness, and called out into the darkness: *'There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee! I have been one of the wrongdoers'* (XXI 87). Then God relieved him of his sorrows and gave him his family and his family and his flocks. God said, *We delivered him out of grief; even so We deliver the believers* (XXI 88)." (J: NN 240)

Al-Jandî also writes as follows: "I found in the handwriting of the Shaykh, the author of the *Fusûs*, a vocalization of the attribute in the title as *nafasiyyah* ('of breath'). We corrected our manuscripts accordingly, though we had been reading it as *nafsiyyah* ('of the Soul'). Our Shaykh, the perfect imam, Sadr al-Dîn al-Qûnawî, has explained it as *nafsiyyah* in *al-Fukûk*... Both readings are justified." (J: NN 240)

Al-Kâshânî follows al-Jandî almost word for word, but al-Qaysarî prefers al-Qûnawî's interpretation, while summarizing it and explaining its superiority:

"Know that the human rational soul is the locus of manifestation for the All-Comprehensive Name 'Allah'. In this respect it is an isthmus (*barzakh*) between the divine and the engendered attributes, and between the universal and the particular meanings. Because of its isthmus-nature, the soul became attached to the body – for an isthmus by definition must contain that which pertains to both sides. So the human soul combines what is pure spirituality and sheer meaning – transcending time and space and devoid of change and temporality – with what is totally body, in need of time and space and subject to changing periods and places. As a result, the soul brings to completion both the upper, spiritual world and the lower, corporeal world; it is a vicegerent in God's kingdom, governing His subjects. That is why the shaykh mentions the soul's Wisdom after that of Solomon and David – it completes what pertains to the vice-gerency.

"As for the connection between the soul and Jonah, that is because, just as God afflicted Jonah with the fish, so also He afflicted the soul with its attachment to the body. *Jonah called out in the darkness, 'There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee! I have been one of the wrongdoers;'* and *God said concerning him, We delivered him out of grief; even so We deliver the believers.* In the same way the soul turns its attention toward its Lord, in the midst of the darkness of nature, the hylic ocean, and the turbid body. Then God's Oneness and Uniqueness are unveiled for it, and it acknowledges them and admits its own weakness and incapacity. So God delivers it from the perils of nature and irradiates it with the lights of the Law, the Way, and the Truth... He provides it with spiritual bliss in the midst of the corporeal hell... So this wisdom is read *nafsiyyah*, not *nafasiyyah* as some have read it..., since there is nothing in its presentation that would support the latter reading. And God knows best what is meant." (Q 379)

XIX
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF THE UNSEEN
AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD JOB

Following al-Jandî, both al-Kâshânî (K 259) and al-Qaysarî (Q 386-87) point out that the connection between Job and the Unseen stems from the fact that all of his states, whether before, during, or after his trial, came from the Unseen. Jâmî quotes al-Jandî's discussion, with some minor additions from al-Kâshânî, as follows:

"Job's states before the time of his trial came from the Unseen because God bestowed upon him without any effort at acquisition on his part as such property, son, fields, livestock, servants, and slaves as He had never given to anyone before.

"During his trial, his states derived from the Unseen for the following reason: he was performing pious works to the extent of all the people of the earth, or more. Iblis and his sons became jealous of him, so they decided to trouble him; they considered his works excessive and overdone. But God was mentioning and thanking Job in the High Council. So Iblis said, 'Considering all these gifts, blessings, and bounties that God has given him, his works are insignificant. If he were in a state of trial and poverty but had patience and endured, then his works would be of greater worth and higher station.' So he was given permission to test and try him. The story of Job's affliction is well known – Satan was given power over what he desired. so the springs dried up, the rivers were cut off, the land was ruined, trees and crops withered, Job's livestock perished, his sons and daughters died, and most of his family and relatives left him. All of this was an Unseen trial, with no known cause or apparent reason, in a short period. Then after his separation from his family and property, Satan visited him with affliction in his own self. So pains and illnesses appeared in his unseen regions, and worms were born in his body and his unseen parts and organs. But he had patience, for he knew the secret. He endured and did not cease his invocation (*dhikr*) and thanksgiving, meeting the situation with fair patience. He complained to none but God until the end of his trial.

"Then when the trial reached its limit and the affliction its end, while he had diminished nothing of his works, acts of obedience, invocations, and different kinds of thanksgiving, not had he complained or shown impatience, God's argument against the accursed one and the other satans was completed. Job's Lord manifested Himself to him in an Unseen theophany; so he called to his Lord, 'Verily Satan has visited me with affliction' (cf. Koran XXI 83, XXXVIII 41). He removed his afflictions and *gave to him his family, and the like of them with them, as a mercy* (XXXVIII 43) from Him and from the storehouse of the Unseen. He made manifest to him from the unseen of the earth *a lavng-place cool, and a drink* (XXXVIII 42). And all of this derived from the strength of Job's faith in the Unseen and his confidence in what God had stored for him in the Unseen. So all of his affairs came from the Unseen." (NN 245-46)

Al-Qûnawî apparently assumes that the connection between Job and the Unseen is obvious, since he explains the significance of the chapter on a deeper level: "Know that there are two great mysteries alluded to in the fact the this chapter is named the 'Wisdom of the Unseen'. The first is that tribulation and trials are painful and disagreeable in respect of their outward forms to the souls and natures of all men. Only that person is able to bear them with patience who possesses a strong relationship with the Unseen world and is confident in their fair outcome and praiseworthy fruit; such a person has

recognized the truth of the divine and prophetic Revelations or is cognizant of the worlds that lie beyond sense perception. This makes it easy for him to endure painful tribulations with patience, wince he knows or hopes for their fair outcome... In any case, the benefit is unseen, while the torment is apparent and present.

"The second mystery is that even if man is confident, because of realized faith or direct vision, that patience during tribulations will bear praiseworthy fruit, this does not necessitate the return to him of exactly what he has lost; how then should it mean the return to him in this world of 'the like of it with it' as well?

"Both of these mysteries are found in the situation of Job. Thus have I opened for you the gate to this station. So enter into it, if you are worthy for it. If you, do, you will gain awareness of many of the mysteries of religious duties and the different forms of spiritual exercises that are difficult for the body and the soul. Likewise you will know why it is beneficial to encourage the performance of such acts in the next world, or in both together. And you will know the difference between divine gifts that arrive from the beginning – so that they are not earned – and what comes outwardly or inwardly as a result of acquisition." (F 278-79)

XX

THE QUINTESENCE OF THE WISDOM OF MAJESTY AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD JOHN

Al-Qaysarî explains clearly the central ideas discussed by al-Jandî and al-Kâshânî: "We have pointed out on another occasion that all the Divine Attributes and Lordly Names that pertain to Severity (*qahr*) are called 'Majesty' (*jalâl*), while all that pertain to Gentleness (*lutf*) and Mercy are called 'Beauty' (*jamâl*). The first group of Attributes gives rise to contraction, hope, intimacy, gentleness, and compassion. John was constantly in a state of contraction and fear of God. He readily turned to sorrow, and he wept so much that his tears produced furrows in his cheeks. The Prophet of God has related that once Jesus laughed and John said to him, 'It seem you feel secure from God's deception and torment.' Jesus replied, 'It seems you have lost hope in God's bounty and mercy.' Then God revealed to them, 'The more beloved of you to Me is he who thinks best of Me.' In the end John was killed, and his blood did not cease boiling until 70,000 unbelievers were slain in retaliation. Hence the Wisdom of Majesty was singled out for his Word." (Q 397-98)²²

XXI

THE QUINTESENCE OF THE WISDOM OF MASTERY AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD ZACHARIAH

Al-Kâshânî and al-Qaysarî follow al-Qûnawî's discussion closely. He writes in *al-Fukûk*, "Zachariah's wisdom is called that of mastery because his states were dominated by the Divine Name 'The Master' (*al-mâlik*); for *malk* means 'power' (*shiddah*), and *malîk* means 'powerful'. God is the *Possessor of Strength, the Firm* (LI 58); He confirmed Zachariah with a strength that affected his spiritual resolve (*himmah*) and attentiveness

²² For a second point, added to the above by al-Qûnawî (F 281) and explained by Jâmî, see "Ibn al-'Arabî's own Summary," pp. 79-80.

(*tawajjuh*). As a result his prayers were answered and he achieved his desire (Koran XIX 3-7). For spiritual resolve is one of the causes that pertain to the inward and nonmanifest. Such causes are stronger in effect and more why the inhabitants of the spiritual world possess a more complete strength and greater effectivity than the inhabitants of the sensory world.

"We should also remember the situation referred to in the verse, *We set his wife right for him* (XXI 90). If God had not given Zachariah and his wife succour through a Lordly, Unseen strength outside of ordinary causes, his wife would not have been set aright, and she could not have borne a child. That is why, when God gave Zachariah the good tidings of John, he found that strange and said, '*Oh my Lord, how shall I have a son, seeing that my wife is barren, and I have attained to the declining of old age?*' (XIX 8). God answered him with His words, '*Easy is that for Me, seeing that I created thee aforetime, when thou wast nothing*' (XIX 9). In other words, although the accomplishment of such a thing is difficult, or rather, impossible from the standpoint of outward causes, it is easy for the Possessor of Complete Power, Strength, and Firmness. Then, just as that strength from God flowed into Zachariah and his wife, so also it went beyond them into John. That is why God said to him. '*Oh John, take the Book with Strength*' (XIX 12). So know this, for it is the secret of the chapter on Zachariah." (F 283-84; NN 257-58)

XXII

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF INTIMACY AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD ELIAS

Al-Kâshânî summarizes the points that are made by al-Qûnawî and paraphrased by al-Qaysarî: "Elias was singled out for the Wisdom of Intimacy because he was so dominated by spirituality and celestial powers that he came to have an affinity with the angels and became intimate with them, while at the same time he was intimate with mankind through his corporeality. Hence he was intimate and mixed with the two groups; in each of them he had many intimate friends. Then through the perfection of his spirituality he reached a station where death had no effect of him, like Khidr and Jesus." (K 276; NN 259)

XXIII

THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF GOOD-DOING AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD LUQMAN

All the commentators point out the close connection between good-doing (*ihsâs*) and wisdom (*hikmah*), the latter of which is associated with Luqman especially because of the Koranic verse, *Indeed, We gave Luqman wisdom* (XXXI 12). Al-Qûnawî sets the pattern: "Good-doing has three levels, the properties of the first of which are united and associated with the properties of wisdom. As a result, good-doing and wisdom are like brothers. The property and requirement of wisdom is to put a thing in its place in the most appropriate way and for its possessor to restrain his own soul..." (F 286)

Al-Qaysarî's straightforward exposition summarizes the more complicated explanations provided by others:

"Literally, *ihsân* means to do the good (*khayr*) that should be done, with one's property, words, acts, and states. Thus the Prophet said, 'God has written good-doing for all things, so when you sacrifice, do it well; and when you kill, do it well.' According to the outward understanding of the Law, good-doing is 'to worship God as if you see Him,' as is mentioned in the famous hadith. According to the Law's inward understanding it is to contemplate God in all the ontological levels – for His words, 'as if you see Him,' are addressed to those who are veiled.

"Good-doing possesses three levels. The first is that indicated by its literal meaning, i.e., that you do good towards all things, even toward that person who does evil towards you, whom you excuse; and you look upon all existents with the eye of mercy and compassion. The second is worship with total presence, as if the worshiper saw his Lord. The third is the contemplation of the Lord with all things and in all things. Thus God says in the chapter on Luqman, *And whosoever submits his will to God, being a good-doer, has laid hold of the firmest handle* (XXXI 22). So here a good-doer is one who contemplates God while submitting his essence and his heart to Him.

"The reason the Wisdom of Good-doing was singled out for Luqman is that he was the possessor of wisdom, as witnessed by the Koran. And God says, *Whosoever has been given wisdom has been given much good* (II 269). So Luqman is the possessor of good (*khayr*), which is the equivalent of good-doing, i.e., to do what is proper whenever one acts. 'Wisdom' is to put a thing in its proper place. So good-doing and wisdom dwell in a single valley. Moreover, wisdom demands good-doing toward all things." (Q 428)

XXIV THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF IMAMATE AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD AARON

Al-Kâshânî and al-Qaysarî summarize the remarks of al-Qûnawî who writes: "Know that the imamate mentioned here and in similar places is only mentioned because it is one of the names of the vice-gerency, to which pertain authority and priority. From a certain point of view the imamate can be divided into two kinds: direct, or designated with intermediary. The first kind may be non-delimited, exercising its sway in the whole of existence, or delimited; whereas the second kind can only be delimited. The first kind is referred to in God's words to Abraham, '*Behold, I make you an imam for the people*' (II 124). The second kind is like Moses' appointment of Aaron: '*Be my vicegerent among my people, and put things aright*' (VII 142)..."

"Every messenger of God sent with the sword is one of His vicegerents... Everyone agrees that both Moses and Aaron were prophets sent with the sword, combining messengerhood and vice-gerency; moreover, Aaron also possessed the indirect imamate, since he was appointed vicegerent by his brother. Hence he combined both kinds of imamate and his wisdom was attributed to it rather than any other attribute." (F 287-88; NN 264-65)

XXV
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF EMINENCE
AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD MOSES

Al-Qaysarî presents a succinct summary of al-Qûnawî's discussion and of a further consideration added by al-Kâshânî: "Moses was singled out for the Wisdom of Eminence because of God's words, '*Fear not, thou art the more eminent*' (XX 68). Therefore God made him more eminent than Pharaoh, who had claimed eminence with his words, '*I am your Lord the most eminent*' (LXXIX 24; cf. K 303). Because of his eminent station with God, Moses was singled out for a number of things: 1). It is mentioned in a sound hadith that 'God wrote the Torah for him with His own hand', just as ~He planted the tree of Tûbâ with His own hand, created the garden of Eden with His own hand, and created Adam with His own hand.' 2). Moses is closely related to the station of All-Comprehensiveness given only to our Prophet. 3). The number of Moses' followers is very large, as is mentioned in a hadith about the Day of Resurrection. 4). The Prophet said, 'Do not consider me superior to Moses, for (on the Day of Resurrection) all men will swoon, and I will be the first to regain consciousness. Then I will find Moses holding fast to one of the pillars of God's Throne. So I do not know if he has been recompensed because he swooned when Mt. Sinai crumbled (Koran VII 143), or if God has made an exception in his case.'" (Q 443-44; cf. F 289-90).

XXVI
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF RECOURSE
AS EMBODIED IN THE WORD KHALID

The later commentators add little more than details from the traditional accounts of Khâlid's life to al-Qûnawî's explanation: "The word *samad* has two meanings: to be hollow, and to have recourse or seek refuge; here the latter meaning is intended. Khâlid did not manifest the properties of his prophecy to his people in the sensory world because of their opposition to him. So he directed them to have recourse to his grave one year after his death. Then when a flock of sheep accompanied by a bob-tailed ass should pass, they should open his grave, and he would give them good news, God willing, of the knowledge he had gained. But his sons did not allow his people to do this, so the properties of his prophethood never became outwardly manifest. Hence his prophethood pertained to the Isthmus (*barzakh*), as our Shaykh has pointed out. The details of his story are to be found in the books of Hadith and history. Since he did not manifest his prophethood on this plane, the Prophet did take him into account when he said, 'I am the nearest of men to Jesus son of Mary, for there is no prophet between him and me.'" (F 291)

XXVII
THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WISDOM OF SINGULARITY
(OR UNIVERSALITY) AS EMBODIED
IN THE WORD MUHAMMAD

"The Wisdom of Singularity was singled out for Muhammad because he was the first entification through which the Unique Essence became entified, before any other entification. So through him the other entifications, infinite in number, became outwardly manifest. Entifications are arranged in an order corresponding to genera, species, kinds, and individuals, some of them embraces by others, while Muhammad embraces them all. So he is one and singular existence, none being equal to him; for no one has become entified equal to him in level. Beyond him lies only the Unique and Non-delimited Essence, transcending every entification, attribute, name, delineation, delimitation, and description. So he possesses singularity exclusively.

"And since he embraces all (*kull*) entifications, the Shaykh also called this chapter the Wisdom of Universality (*kulliyyah*). But there is no difference between these two names except in point of view. In relation to other entifications, his entification is the universal of universals." (K 336)

"Muhammad's wisdom is described by singularity because he was singled out for the station of the Divine All-Comprehensiveness, beyond which is only the level of the Unique Essence. For he is the outward manifestation of the Name Allah, the Greatest Name, which comprehends all Names and Attributes. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the Shaykh also called this Wisdom that of Universality: the Prophet comprehends all universals and particulars; no Name possesses any perfection not embraced by his perfection or any locus of manifestation not made outwardly manifest by His Word. Moreover, the first thing to actualize singularity was his immutable entity, for it was the first engendered existent to find outward existence through the Holy Effusion was his holy spirit, just as he has said, "The first thing created by God was my light." (Q 470)

As usual, the above points discussed by al-Kâshânî and al-Qaysarî were explained first by al-Qûnawî in *al-Fukûk*. In many ways his remarks there recapitulate the whole of the "universal logos doctrine" set forth in the *Fusûs*, and therefore deserve to be quoted extensively despite their length.

"Our Shaykh called this Wisdom both that of Universality and that of Singularity. Each of these names manifests a mystery that you will understand through the fundamental teaching that follows: I will give news of the Muhammadan perfection, its source, the secret of its all-comprehensiveness and its being a 'seal', and the relationship of the signs of the other prophets to his signs and of their shares from God to his share. With this fundamental teaching I will seal my words concerning the 'seals' of these ringstones.

"Know that each thing is a locus of manifestation for the Reality, but in view of a specific aspect and definite mode. In respect of that mode and aspect through which the Reality brings certain possible existents into existence, a certain Name becomes entified; the Name then delineates the aspect and mode through which the given existent is linked to God. This is the situation of every single existent with respect to the Reality. However, the difference between the prophets and great saints – the men of God – and others is that

the prophets and saints are loci of manifestation for universal Names which are related to the other Names – to which the other existents and the generality of men are linked – just as genera and species are related to individuals. Moreover, in the same way that there is a disparity between genera and species in dominion and compass, so also there is a difference in degree among the prophets and saints. The Prophet alludes to this point when describing the Resurrection: 'A prophet will come with a group of people, another will come with two men, another with one man, and still another by him self.'

"The secret in what I have been discussing is that every prophet and saint – except our own Prophet and the Perfect Men among his heirs – only becomes linked to God in respect of a determined aspect and specific mode that is called one of the 'Names' of God. The reason for this is that with respect to the Non-delimitation of His Essence, the utter simplicity of His Oneness, and the Oneness of the effusion of His Essence, nothing is related to God and no existent is linked to Him.

"What we are leading up to is that the relationship of the great Men of God to the Reality in an ascending direction reaches its utmost limit at the First Entification, which lies one degree below the Exclusive-Unity of the Essence. The First Entification comprehends all entifications and brings them into relationship with the Essence because of its own Inclusive-Unity, which is the source of all Names and Attributes. Some of the Sufis refer to the Names and Attributes and the 'properties of the NEcessary Being,' properties that result from Its aspects and modes. These entifications comprehended by the first Entification are also related to the level of possible existence, because of the properties of the possible objects of God's Knowledge [i.e., the immutable entities], objects which are multiple through the delimitation which relate them to possibility. Because of their disparate and different preparednesses, they bring about manyness in the One Being, which emanates from Non-delimited Being, i.e., from God's Essence; and since this last is non-entified, none but the most perfect of the prophets and saints can realize it.

"The situation of our Prophet and the Perfect Men among his inheritors in relation to the First Entification – which I said was the source of the Names and the Attributes – is different from that of others. For this entification is not their utmost limit in their knowledge of God in every respect, nor the farthest limit of their connection to Him; they have been singled out for a state peculiar to them and known by none but God. They mention it to no one, except to someone whom they know will certainly become a Perfect Man. So they give him news of this or something like it by training him...

"I have already alluded to the fact that every prophet is the locus of manifestation for one of the Names of God and that through his prophethood and messengerhood he becomes entified and related to God in respect of that Name. You should also know that the signs of every prophet, whether they be one or many, consist of the properties of the Name to which he, his prophethood, and his messengerhood are tied. When God allows a person to understand this mystery, he will know the reason for the disparities in the degrees and levels of the prophets and saints in prophethood, sainthood, and messengerhood. Likewise he will understand the secret of God's words, *These messengers, some We have preferred over others* (II 253), and the fact that his preference, although it is established in certain respects, is not established in respect of messengerhood itself, just as God said: *We make no distinction between any of His messengers* (II 285). In other words, there is no distinction in the soundness of their link

to God because of the oneness of messengerhood in respect of its reality. The disparity only derives from their source and their link to a particular Attribute or Name of God. For it is obvious that the Names and Attributes are disparate in the range of their dominion, their scope, their influence, and the strength of their effectivity. I have already referred to this point in a number of places.

"I pointed out that Names such as Creator, Maker, Shaper, Form-Giver, Contractor, and Expander are like gatekeepers for the Name All-Powerful and its effectivity. But in spite of the great scope of All-Powerful in relation to other Names, it follows the Willing, which in turn follows the Knowing. Hence the levels of the Names, as I have pointed out, are disparate; some are like genera, some like species, and some like individuals. Once you have understood and envisioned this fundamental point, you will know that every prophet comes with a sign pertaining to one of the principles or elements of the world, for his prophethood is tied to God in respect of the Name that is related to that element. One can cite Noah's special relationship to water; or Abraham's building the Kaaba, his special relationship to fire, and his contemplation of the universal and non-delimited elemental composition.²³ For Abraham was preferred over others by the vastness of his scope and dominion, since he is closely related to the Presence of all-encompassing All-Comprehensiveness that was singled out for our own Prophet. He whose relationship is closest to All-Comprehensiveness is the greatest in prophethood and the most complete in scope.

"You should also meditate upon the properties of Moses' prophethood and his signs, like fire, the rod, the bush, water, the stone from which twelve springs flowed forth, and the fact that his signs were restricted to nine, which is the limit of the cardinal numbers. Contrast him with a prophet whose sign was only wind [e.g., Hûd; cf. Koran XLVI 24]. And look at the signs that were bestowed exclusively on our own Prophet: he was given the Koran and a messengerhood and mission for all mankind; the earth was made a mosque for him and its dust a means for purification; the moon was split for him; he was given the knowledge of the ancients and the later folk; he was made the seal of the prophets; and the authority of his Sharî'ah was made to extend to the Resurrection.

"Know that if I were to begin to explain all these mysteries, I would have to write to great lengths. But I will mention a few examples, though which you can ascend – with God's confirmation and grace – to knowledge of things that have not been observed by the spiritual perception of anyone who has gone before me; things that – by my life – have never been written in my book. And praise belongs to God, the Benefactor.

"Let us begin, with God's permission, with mention of the mystery of the sign of Noah, who was the first of the messengers, and then those of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. We will end with the seal of the law-giving prophecy and messengerhood, Muhammad.

"First, the Verifiers (*muhaqqiqûn*)²⁴ among the People of God all agree that milk, water, honey, and wine are loci of manifestation and symbols for God-given knowledge. Their common perception is confirmed from the exoteric point of view by sound prophetic tradition...

²³ This seems to be an allusion to Koran II 260: Abraham asks God to show him how He gives life to the dead. God tells him to dismember four birds, scatter the parts on four hills, and then call them, and they will come to him. The "four birds" would then allude to the four elements (cf. Rûmî: "The elements are four birds with their feet tied together...", *Mathnawî* III 4428).

²⁴ I.e., the masters who have reached the Truth (*al-haqîqah*). Al-Qûnawî often refers to his own school that of "Verification".

"Know also that the source of God's decree among His creatures, the reason they become related to it, and the origin of its relationship to them are solely His Essence's beginningless Knowledge, within which the forms of the objects of Knowledge are entified from eternity-without-beginning to eternity-without-end in constant mode. This Knowledge is the first cause of everything that God brings into existence. His predetermination and destiny are subordinate to His Knowledge. Hence He comes to know the objects of His Knowledge in a manner established by the requirements of their own realities; for when knowledge is gained, it is subordinate to its object, as has been mentioned more than once.

"Since God's decree concerning the creatures originates in Knowledge, and since water is a locus of manifestation and symbol for knowledge, the perfect Divine Wisdom demanded that the sign of the first messenger sent to the creatures in the form of His decree and in accordance with His Knowledge be water. This then is the secret of Noah's sign.

"The attribute of Speech (*kalâm*) is one of the 'forms' or 'relations' of 'shares' – call it what you wish – of God's Knowledge. Through it – i.e., the command *Be!* – the gate of God's effectivity among the creatures was opened and thus the existents came from Knowledge into outward manifestation in entified existence, ranged in degrees according to their genera, species, and individuals, and displaying their effects continuously in this world and the next. Hence the sign of our Prophet was Speech;²⁵ just as the property of Speech pervaded every one of the objects of Knowledge for which God determined existence in the world – for He said to the Pen [according to the *hadîth qudsî*], ~Write My Knowledge in My creatures until the day of Resurrection' – so also the property of Muhammad's Sharî'ah

pervades all men and all sharî'ahs and extends to the end of time. But this is not the case with other prophets, for their messengerhoods and sharî'ahs are particular, delimited, and finite in dominion. Since the property and dominion of his Sharî'ah is all-pervading, the whole of the earth was made a mosque for him and his community. Likewise its dust was made a means of purification. The properties of his messengerhood embrace the properties of all the messengers who passed away before him, or who still remain, like Jesus and Elias. Such also is the case of his prophethood in relation to the Khidr, even if those who are veiled differ as to whether or not Khidr was a prophet; for the greatest Verifiers all agree that he was.

"The reason that the moon was split for Muhammad and appeared in a for that showed he was exercising free-disposal over it is as follows: although the sphere of the moon is the smallest of the spheres in volume, it is the most comprehensive in terms of dominion and property, for within it the faculties of all the other spheres and of the angelic attentivenesses are combined, and through it they are dispersed and distributed in this world among its inhabitants. That is why it is the sphere of vicegerency. So when the Possessors of Vision gain knowledge of the reason for the splitting of the moon, they also became aware of the mystery of our Prophet's All-Comprehensiveness and the fact that he is the seal of the prophets. I.e., since he is the last and the most all-comprehensive of the messengers, he exercised free-disposal in the last of the spheres, the most all-comprehensive in relation to the celestial faculties and characteristics. He also exercised

²⁵ No doubt this refers both to the Koran, which is God's inimitable speech, and to the Prophet's own eloquence, mentioned in his words, "I am the most eloquent of the Arabs."

free-disposal in this world and 'was given the keys to the treasures of the earth and the heaven,' as he reported five days before his death. Thus he went beyond everyone who had been given free-disposal in this world...

"His perfections that prove his All-Comprehensiveness are many, but the greatest of them are concealed in this world, though unveiled in the next. He alluded to this in speaking of the Resurrection and the opening of the gate of intercession. Likewise he said, 'I will stand at the right hand of the Throne in a station within which will stand no one else from the two worlds.' Or again: 'I will be the lord of men on the Day of Resurrection.' He has mentioned many more details of this. Moreover, the Sharī'ah, the intellectual sciences, and unveiling all agree that man will not attain to any perfection after death that he has not already realized in the present plane. Hence, all these perfections to which the Prophet alludes were already actualized for him here, but he kept them hidden because of the requirements of this domain; for the present plane is the World of Mystery. *The day when the secrets are tried* (LXXXVI 9) will only appear in the next world, for that is the World of Unveiling and the time of boasting.

"Among the things that pertain exclusively to Muhammad is the perfection of the friendship that tears apart every veil, a station that includes the degree of being God's beloved. Friendship (*khullah*) has two levels. The utmost limit of the first is complete proximity, while the veil still remains... This station belongs to Abraham (*al-Khalīl* [the 'friend'])... Concerning him the Prophet said, 'On the Day of Resurrection when people beseech Abraham saying, "You are God's friend, so intercede for us," he will answer, "I am only a friend from behind the veil."... But the Prophet announced as follows five days before his death: 'I have had brothers and sincere companions among you, but I am absolved before God of having taken any of you as a friend. If I were to take a friend, I would take Abū Bakr as a friend. Verily God has chosen me as His friend: last night I was given the keys to the treasures of the earth and the heaven.' And we know that this friendship is not like the other, for he was preferred above all messengers. Since Abraham's friendship was formed behind the veil, the Prophet's friendship must be actualized without a veil. This is the level of being God's beloved, which he expressly mentions in another hadith. It consists in each of the lovers being a mirror for the other. So understand this! It is the reason for the All-Comprehensiveness that results in his being the seal of the prophets and in many of his other perfections.²⁶

"Once you have come to understand what I have mentioned concerning the mystery of the Muhammadan perfection and his exclusive qualities, you will understand that the excellence of other prophets in terms of their signs derives from the measure of their relationship to the All-Comprehensiveness that pertains exclusively to our Prophet. Hence, Abraham's sign are preferred over those who were given only one or two signs because of their large number and their greatness. For the greatest of his signs was the fact that he built the Kaaba, since the earth is the locus of vice-gerency and the outward form of the Presence of All-Comprehensiveness. It is mentioned in the hadith that God spread out the earth from the site of the Kaaba; so He determined for Abraham the central point of the earth, from which it had been spread out. Moreover, after Abraham departed from this domain, he was placed by God in the seventh heaven, which is the locus of the earth's spirituality. Thus it is established that he was related to both the form and the spirituality of the earth. So understand this! In the same way God subjected to him fire,

²⁶ On the Perfect Man's love for God, see Chittick and Wilson, *Fakhruddin 'Iraqi*, especially pp. 17ff.

which is the highest of the elements in place. It was because Iblis was made of fire that he was able to boast before Adam (Koran VII 12). If God's quarrel with Iblis had taken place over Abraham, Iblis would not have been able to wax proud before him, since God had subjected fire to him. So meditate upon this!

"Among the sign of Moses was the fact that God manifested Himself to him as his very need, i.e., fire. Among them also are the bush, the rod, and the stone from which flowed forth twelve springs. In addition, God had subjected water to him at first, when he was thrown in to the sea and preserved by God, and later when Pharaoh and his folk persuaded him.

"Jesus is related to the station of All-Comprehensiveness because his spiritual perception and states are included in the circle of the Muhammadan All-Comprehensiveness and colored by its properties, for through him God will seal the statues of this Sharī'ah [at the end of time]. This is in addition to what was given especially to him, such as the fact that God taught him *The Book, the Wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel* (III 48), gave him the power to revive the dead, to create birds from clay, to revive with the breath, to cure the congenitally blind and the leprous, and to have knowledge of what people eat in their homes and what they store away; and He sent down upon him the Table from heaven (Koran V). So understand, and you will reach the truth!" (F 291-300)