

**AL-GHAZĀLĪ AS AN ISLAMIC REFORMER
(MUṢLIḤ):**

An Evaluative Study of the Attempts of the Imam Abū Ḥāmid
al-Ghazālī at Islamic Reform (*Iṣlāḥ*)

by

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious,
the Most Merciful*

ABSTRACT

Notwithstanding the enduring and rich “legacy of *iṣlāḥ* (Islamic reform),” the study of it is relatively scarce and remarkably limited to the modern times. The present study attempts to shed some light on this legacy by evaluating the contribution of an outstanding pre-modern Muslim scholar, al-Ghazālī. Surprisingly, some studies create an absolutely positive picture of him, while others portray him in an extremely negative light. Thus, this study raises the question of whether it is justifiable to classify him as a *muṣliḥ* (Islamic reformer). In light of the analysis of the concept “*iṣlāḥ*” and the complexity of al-Ghazālī’s time, the study demonstrates his life-experience and verifies that he devoted himself to general *iṣlāḥ* at a late period of his life, after succeeding in his self-*iṣlāḥ*. Further, the study assesses his *iṣlāḥī* teachings in general, namely those formulated in the *Iḥyā’*, and evaluates the claimed effects of his attempts at *iṣlāḥ*. The study also highlights a number of strengths and weaknesses of al-Ghazālī’s efforts and critically discusses some of the criticism directed at him. By weighing up the points for and against al-Ghazālī, this study concludes by asserting that classifying him as a *muṣliḥ* appears to be fairly justified.

DEDICATION

*To the one who has sacrificed much for me; to the one who has added a sweet taste to my unsettled life; to my wonderful and supportive wife,
Aisha Al-Emadi.*

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Transliteration List

- The transliteration system follows the *Transliteration Scheme for Arabic Scripts*, approved by the Library of Congress and the American Library Association, available online:
<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsa/romanization/arabic.pdf>
- Terms which have become very common in English usage—such as names of dynasties and others widely used un-technical terms—particularly those which appear in most of the extended English dictionaries are written as they appear in the dictionaries.

Romanization of Constants

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

Romanization of Short Vowels

اَ = a
اُ = u
اِ = i

Romanization of Long Vowels

اَ = ā
اِ = ī
اُ = ū

INTRODUCTION

I.1 A Thematic Background:

“Yet thy Lord would never destroy communities for doing wrong while as its members were *muṣliḥūn*” (Q.11:117). This translated Qur’ānic *āyah* (verse)¹ reveals one of the Divine norms relating to the life of communities; the efforts of the *muṣliḥūn*,² i.e., those who fulfil *iṣlāḥ* which may be translated roughly as reform,³ are safeguards for the whole of their communities from general destruction.⁴ This signifies, from a Qur’ānic point view, the necessity of ongoing *iṣlāḥ* in any community. This necessity increases when *ifsād* (spreading or causing corruption), the opposite of *iṣlāḥ*, increases, because the spread of *fasād*⁵ (corruption) in a community is a real threat to all its members, as the Qur’ān warns.⁶

Furthermore, the mission of the prophets, according to the Qur’ān, is to fulfil the duty of *iṣlāḥ*, as Prophet Shu’ayb clearly stated: “I desire only *al-iṣlāḥ*, as far as I am able” (Q.11:88). Thus, *iṣlāḥ* is an essential duty in the Islamic doctrine.

By attempting to correct the aspects of *fasād*, the *muṣliḥūn* undertake a prophetic mission and fulfil a vital Islamic duty. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that in

¹ For translating this and other Qur’ānic quotations, I have consulted the following translations of the Qur’ān: (1) Arberry J. Arberry, *The Koran: Interpreted*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982; (2) A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’ān: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Bierut: Dār al-Qur’ān, n.d.; (3) M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur’an: A new translation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; and (4) N. J. Dawood, *The Koran: Translated with Notes*, London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1999. My translation, however, largely follows Arberry’s most poetic translation, but with frequent amendments to his, especially when I think there is misunderstanding of the original text.

² Sing. *muṣliḥ*.

³ More about the meaning of *iṣlāḥ*, and its English equivalent, will be discussed in **Chapter One**.

⁴ This is based on the *Tafsīr* (Exegesis) of the Prophet’s renowned companion, Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687f), see Ibn ‘Abbās, *Tafsīr*, Q.11:117, online version: <http://altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=10&tSoraNo=11&tAyahNo=117&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0>, visited on 11/07/2007.

⁵ More about this term will be discussed below.

⁶ Read, for example, Q.17:16.

every generation along the history of the Islamic *Ummah*, there were a number of devoted Muslims working towards the fulfilment of the duty of *iṣlāḥ*, though every one in his own way.⁷ These continuous efforts of the *muṣliḥūn* throughout Islamic history resulted in what can be called the “legacy of the *muṣliḥūn*,” which includes their *iṣlāḥī* teachings, as well as their *iṣlāḥī* actions.

Although there have been continuous attempts at *iṣlāḥ* along the Islamic history⁸ and the “legacy of the *muṣliḥūn*” is so rich, the study of *iṣlāḥ* as a separate topic is somewhat new and the knowledge gap in the literature of *iṣlāḥ* is noticeably wide. The available studies that deal with *iṣlāḥ* as a separate topic are relatively few, and are mainly limited within the views and the achievements of a number of distinguished *muṣliḥūn* of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who are considered the main contributors to the early modern movement of *iṣlāḥ*.⁹

The study of *iṣlāḥ*, I believe, should not be limited to the contribution of these *muṣliḥūn*, and should not ignore the earlier efforts of distinguished persons, who richly contributed to the “legacy of the *muṣliḥūn*.” This is particularly because *iṣlāḥ*, as Merad justifiably puts it, “...is deeply rooted in the basic soil of Islam, and cannot therefore be viewed solely in relation to the intellectual trends that appeared in the Muslim world at the beginning of the modern period.”¹⁰

New scholarship studies on the *muṣliḥūn* in a wider scope are needed in order to discover their rich “legacy” in depth, and shed more light on the topic of *iṣlāḥ*, as a distinctive Islamic duty. This is very important, particularly in the contemporary age

⁷ For a brief useful discussion of the historical continuity of *iṣlāḥ* in the Islamic history, see: A. Merad, “*Iṣlāḥ*,” *EF*², Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978, Vol. 4, pp. 141f.

⁸ Cf. al-sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Nadwī, *Rijāl al-Fikr wa-al-Da‘wah fī al-Islām*, Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 2002, Vol. 1, p. 93.

⁹ For an informative outline of the contributors to this movement, though within the Arab nationalist dimension, see: Basheer M. Nafī, *The Rise and Decline of the Arab-Islamic Reform Movement*, London: The Institute of Contemporary of Islamic Thought, 2000.

¹⁰ Merad, “*Iṣlāḥ*,” *EF*², Vol. 4, p. 141.

in which the calls for *iṣlāḥ* have become very popular in the Islamdom,¹¹ and led to an ongoing debate over various aspects of the projects of *iṣlāḥ*. By such new studies, it is hoped that much of these controversial issues would be treated systematically.

The present thesis is one step towards discovering part of the rich “legacy of the *muṣliḥūn*” and is a conscious effort to shed some fresh light on the topic of *iṣlāḥ* as a distinctive Islamic duty by introducing the Imam Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (450/1059-505/1111) as a *muṣliḥ* (Islamic reformer), whose name “springs to mind” among the long and honourable chain of the *muṣliḥūn*,¹² and by studying his main efforts and teachings, from an *iṣlāḥ* perspective.

This study may very likely meet some immediate objections, and in fact I have already experienced this. For those who may raise such abrupt objections at the outset, I would like to say right at the beginning that a fair judgment should be based on evaluating the methodology and the findings of the study rather than simply judging by the title.

I.2 The Literature on al-Ghazālī:

Numerous studies have been done on al-Ghazālī, in almost all the major languages of the world.¹³ This is partially because he has been regarded as a highly respected thinker, and his thoughts have been fully appreciated by countless Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Masses of Muslims over the centuries since his time have regarded

¹¹ I have borrowed this practical term from Hodgson who defines it as “the society in which Muslims and their faith are recognized as prevalent and socially dominant in one sense or another—a society in which, of course, non-Muslims have always formed an integral, if subordinate, element...” Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974, Vol. 1, p. 58. The term Islamdom, as Hodgson has practically noticed, has the following three advantages over the other alternative term, i.e., “Islamic world”: (1) More efficient in compound phrases; (2) “Islamic” is too broad; and (3) the world is one, see *ibid*.

¹² Merad, “*Iṣlāḥ*,” *EF*², Vol. 4, p. 142.

¹³ To gain a rough idea about this interesting phenomenon, visit the following website, which contains hundreds of books and articles about al-Ghazālī in various languages: <http://www.ghazali.org>

him as the *mujaddid*¹⁴ (revivalist) of the 5th century A.H. as well as *ḥujjat al-Islām*¹⁵ (the Proof of Islam) and thus for them he is a leading authoritative figure and a unique Imām. At the same time, a number of well-known non-Muslim scholars have paid tribute to al-Ghazālī, and have heaped lavish words of praise on him, such as the following: “one of the greatest intellectuals of the Islamic society,”¹⁶ “a great writer,”¹⁷ “one of the most renowned and influential writers in the history of Muslim religious thought,”¹⁸ “the greatest of all Muslims since the day of the Prophet,”¹⁹ and “one of the greatest thinkers Islam [has] ever produced.”²⁰

The vast number of studies on this highly distinguished man is also due to the fact that he has contributed richly to various fields of thought, to the extent that he has been considered “a composite of great personalities [and] a master of various disciplines.”²¹ This explains why he has been introduced in a number of studies as a Sufi (Muslim mystic),²² as a *faqīh* (jurist),²³ as a *mutakallim* (theologian),²⁴ as a critic

¹⁴ See, for example, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Zabīdī, known as Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Mutaqīn bi-Sharḥ Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 2005, Vol. 1, pp. 35-7.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi’īyah al-Kubrā*, Cairo: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Ḥusaynīyah, 1906, p. 101.

¹⁶ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī*, Edinburgh: The University Press, 1963, p. 1.

¹⁷ Margaret Smith, *al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, London: Luzac and co., 1944, p. 5.

¹⁸ R. M. Frank, *al-Ghazālī and the Ash‘arite School*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1994, p. 1.

¹⁹ Samuel M. Zwemer, *A Moslem Seeker After God*, p. ii.

²⁰ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in Al-Ghazali*, p. 3.

²¹ Aḥmad Z. M. Ḥammād, “Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s Juristic Doctrine in al-Mustaṣfā min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl with a translation of Volume one of al-Mustaṣfā min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl,” a PhD dissertation, the University of Chicago, March 1987, Vol. 1, p. 2, available online in PDF: <http://www.ghazali.org/books/azhmd-p1.pdf>.

²² As in the book of Smith, *al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, London: Luzac and co., 1944.

²³ As in the study of Ḥammād, “Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s Jurist Doctrine in al-Mustaṣfā.”

²⁴ As in the study of M. A. R. Bisar, “al-Juwayni and al-Ghazali as theologians with special reference to al-Irshad and al-Iqtisad,” a PhD thesis submitted to Edinburgh University in 1953.

of *Kalām* (Islamic theology),²⁵ as a *faylasūf* (philosopher)²⁶ and as a critic of philosophy²⁷ at the same time.

Another reason which contributed to the considerable increase in the studies on al-Ghazālī is that his very complex course of life, as well as a number of his views and works, both the genuine ones and those whose authenticity has been questioned, have sparked off ongoing debates amongst scholars and have provoked sharp criticism among his critics since his age up to the present time.²⁸

This fact about the number of the studies on al-Ghazālī has led some to say that it is difficult to find any element of originality in a new study on him, because he has been given all the deserved attention in academic research.²⁹ On the contrary, it has been argued that al-Ghazālī is far greater than to be fully covered in the studies to date, and that there is still much need for more studies on him.³⁰

Although it is true that with this significant amount of studies, it is very challenging to display originality in a fresh study, I side with the second view. Moreover, I would add that there are various aspects of his life and thought, which have still not been adequately studied yet, and thus they deserve to be studied further. One of these, in my view, is the aspect of *iṣlāḥ*, which, despite its special importance, does not seem to have gained enough concern from researchers. As Ṣāliḥ al-Shāmī has rightly noticed, due to the blinding glare of the two famous honorific titles of al-

²⁵ As in the book of Richard M. Frank, *al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.

²⁶ As in the study of 'Abd al-Amīr al-'Asam, *al-Faylasūf al-Ghazālī: I'ādat Taqwīm li-Manḥā Ṭaṭawwriḥ al-Ruḥī*, Amzil (Tonia): al-Dār al-Tūnisīyah li-al-Nashir, 1988.

²⁷ As in the book of Iysa A Bello, *The Medieval Islamic Controversy between Philosophy and Orthodoxy: Ijmā' and Ta'wīl in the conflict between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989.

²⁸ For an outline of a number of the critics of al-Ghazālī over the centuries and a brief discussion of their main criticisms, see Yūsif al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī bayna Mādihīh wa-Nāqidih*, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1994, pp. 117-86.

²⁹ As in the book of al-'Asam, *al-Faylasūf al-Ghazālī*.

³⁰ Farīd Juḥa, *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī*, Damascus: Ṭilās li-al-Dirāsāt wa-al-Tarjama wa-al-Nashir, 1986, p. 13.

Ghazālī, i.e., *hujjat al-Islām* (the Proof of Islam) and the *mujaddid* (revivalist) of the 5th century A.H., other titles are less well known, if at all, including the title “*muṣliḥ*” (Islamic reformer).³¹

To the best of my knowledge, there is as yet no detailed and focused study on al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ*, but there are relatively few studies which have partially dealt with this crucial aspect. For example, in a chapter entitled “*al-Imām al-Muṣliḥ*,” al-Shāmī, in his well-presented general book about al-Ghazālī, gives just a few representative examples of his *iṣlāḥī* role.³² Similarly, al-Nadwī, in a section of his book *Rijāl al-Firkr wa-al-Da‘wah fī al-Islām*, presents him as a “*muṣliḥ ijtīmā‘ī*” (social reformer), and briefly discusses his social reform as represented in al-Ghazālī’s most celebrated work, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*.³³ In a more interesting way, al-Kilānī devotes a section in his unique book, *Hākadhā Ḍahra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn wa-Hākadhā ‘Ādat al-Quds*, to al-Ghazālī’s *iṣlāḥī* efforts.³⁴ The purpose of that section of the book was to briefly show al-Ghazālī’s role in the *iṣlāḥī* movement, which, according to al-Kilānī, developed over the 5th-6th century A.H. and resulted in a reformed Muslim generation, to which the Muslim leader Salāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin, d. 589/1193) belonged, which could defeat the Crusaders.³⁵ Al-Ghazālī, al-Kilānī argues, was the founder of that fruitful movement.³⁶ However, it was not intended in al-Kilānī’s book to study closely the *iṣlāḥī* efforts of al-Ghazālī. As a result, there are important relevant points, which have not been covered by al-Kilānī, that deserve to be studied. Furthermore, some of his arguments, though positively presented, are

³¹ Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī: Ḥujjat al-Islam wa-Mujaddid al-Mi‘ah al-Khāmisah*, Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1993, pp. 7f.

³² al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, pp. 195-256.

³³ al-Nadwī, *Rijāl*, Vol. 1, pp. 295-315.

³⁴ Mājid ‘Irsān al-Kilānī, *Hākadhā Ḍahra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn wa-Hākadhā ‘Ādat al-Quds*, Dubai: Dār al-Qalam, 2002, pp. 101-74.

³⁵ al-Kilānī, *Hākadhā Ḍahra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, pp. 101 & 174.

³⁶ al-Kilānī, *Hākadhā Ḍahra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 101.

questionable, and thus need to be examined. Moreover, he completely ignores the controversy over al-Ghazālī. It is hoped that the present study overcomes these shortcomings.

I.3 The Problem:

Besides the absolutely positive picture of al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ* created in the above studies, a remarkably conflicting image of al-Ghazālī has been given by other writers. A good representative of these is al-Mahdāwī who considered al-Ghazālī as a representation of the backwardness of the Muslim *Ummah* at that time, and that he reflects the defeat of the Muslims before the Crusaders,³⁷ totally opposite to al-Kīlānī's argument mentioned previously.

In a similar way, there have been two contrary positions on the worth of al-Ghazālī's thought. In the view of Lazarus-Yafeh, for example, al-Ghazālī's "ideas about religion, faith, the relationship between God and man and between man and man have always seemed extremely "modern" to me and are expressed so convincingly that they crossed the barriers of time and religion."³⁸ Yet according to al-Mahdāwī, his views are outdated and only deserve to be stored in "museums of thoughts."³⁹

Such great controversy leads us to raise the following two central questions at the outset: (a) how far is it justified to consider al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ* and (b) to what extent do al-Ghazālī's teachings of *iṣlāḥī* nature withstand criticism and prove worthy over time?

³⁷ Isma'īl al-Mahdāwī, *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī: al-Falsafa al-Taṣawwuf wa- 'Ilm al-kalām*, Marrakish: Tansift, 1993, p. 6.

³⁸ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzali*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1975, p. 3.

³⁹ al-Mahdāwī, *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī*, p. 7.

As a deliberate attempt to answer these controversial and challenging questions in a balanced way, I suggest the following positive hypothesis, and I will do my best to verify it in the course of subsequent chapters.

I.4 The Hypothesis:

The present study attempts to verify the following positive hypothesis:

At a late period of his life, al-Ghazālī sincerely devoted his career to *iṣlāḥ*. During this period, he made serious *iṣlāḥī* efforts, and effectively conveyed his *iṣlāḥī* teachings. These teachings have various great strengths, which withstand criticism highly and have proven useful over the centuries, as well as some serious weaknesses, which are potentially of negative influence, and are very open to criticism. As a result, his teachings have had two contrary effects: one is positive and favourable and the other is negative and unappreciative. Despite such weaknesses, and regardless of their negative consequences, al-Ghazālī can still be properly classified as a *muṣliḥ*.

It is difficult to claim that by determinedly attempting to verify this hypothesis, I would resolve the problem concerning the conflicting images of al-Ghazālī illustrated above, but it is hoped that valid interpretation of the causes of this phenomenon will be given, and that some possible partial solutions will be proffered.

I.5 The Methodology:

Hoping to verify the above hypothesis, I have taken the following methodological steps:

1. Constructing an analytical definition of *iṣlāḥ*: To correctly judge whether al-Ghazālī was a *muṣliḥ* necessitates that we first define the term “*iṣlāḥ*.” In addition, the definition of *iṣlāḥ* shall provide us with essential prerequisites

and important tools for systematically studying al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ*. Since I, with the best of my ability in literature search, have not been able to find a definition of the term which is sufficient for the purpose of the present study, I have had to construct a provisional definition in **Chapter One**. To achieve this, I have analysed the morphology of the term “*iṣlāḥ*” and its lexical explanation. Besides, because it is an Islamic concept, I have also analysed its usages in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth. In addition to defining it, I have taken the following two steps to further clarify the term: firstly, I have examined the extent to which the English term “reform”, which is usually used as a rendering of *iṣlāḥ*, is an equivalent translation of it. Secondly, I have examined the similarities and differences between “*iṣlāḥ*” and each of the following concepts which are sometimes connected to it, whether justifiably or not: *tajdīd* (renewal or restoration), *taghyīr* (change), and *al-amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar* (commanding right and forbidding wrong).

2. Setting the historical context: In the belief that it is important to bear in mind the historical context in which al-Ghazālī lived, in order not to misunderstand and misjudge his efforts and teachings, I have presented an overview of his age in **Chapter Two**. The overview focuses on the political setting and the religio-intellectual life at that time, which shall provide sufficient background and an essential foundation for the unfolding discussion.
3. Discussing the life-experience of al-Ghazālī: To clearly and justifiably show in which period of his life, he really sought *iṣlāḥ*, and which of his works represent that period, I have discussed in **Chapter Three**, at considerable length, his life-experience, relying primarily on his own account about his spiritual and intellectual progression in his genuine book *al-Munqidh min al-*

Dalāl (Deliverance from Error), and also on the primary available biographies of al-Ghazālī. Since the truthfulness of al-Ghazālī's account has been the object of doubt, I have closely dealt with such doubt throughout the chapter.

4. Surveying al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāḥī* efforts: Since it is essential to determine the extent of al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāḥī* efforts, in order to be able to fairly justify the classification of al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ*, I have tried to objectively survey his main *iṣlāḥī* efforts in **Chapter Four**. The survey is based on a careful study of al-Ghazālī's major authentic works, which belong to his *iṣlāḥī* period, namely the *Ihyā'*.
5. Assessing al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāḥī* teachings: For the purpose of discovering the main strengths and weaknesses of al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāḥī* teachings and judging how far they stand criticism, I have devoted **Chapter Five** to the assessment of his *iṣlāḥī* teachings in general, and to a discussion of the main criticisms levelled against his views and teachings. The assessment in this chapter is based on the following major criteria: (1) originality, (2) clarity, (3) deepness, (4) balance between individualism and collectivism, (5) realism and practicality, and (6) Islamic-justification. By judging with this range of criteria, though apparently limited, the assessment has, I hope, covered the key points which serve the intended purpose.
6. Studying the effects of al-Ghazālī's attempts at *iṣlāḥ*: To evaluate the consequences of al-Ghazālī's attempts at *iṣlāḥ*, I have discussed in **Chapter Six** a number of phenomena which have been regarded as effects of al-Ghazālī's efforts and I have assessed the main controversy surrounding the evaluation of these effects.

I.6 The Scope:

The present study, like other research studies carried out within the confines of a limited time frame, is bound to have a finite scope. Although the present study introduces al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ*, it by no means deals with all the issues which are related in one way or another to his agenda of *iṣlāḥ*. In fact each of the following chapters has its limitations, as will be defined in its respective introduction. These limitations, however, are hopefully justified on the grounds that the intended purposes of each chapter will be satisfactorily fulfilled and thus the hypothesis of the study will be reasonably verified regardless of the limitations.

CHAPTER ONE

ANALYTICAL DEFINITION OF *ISLĀH*

1.1 Introduction:

Defining the concept of *iṣlāḥ* is an essential and practical start for studying al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ* (Islamic reformer). The definition is a form of reference for the topic. To judge correctly whether al-Ghazālī was a *muṣliḥ* or not, depends initially on what is meant by *iṣlāḥ*.

Moreover, a number of basic elements, which form a sound and logical foundation for the topic, are expected to be obtained by dealing with this essential question. A list of key words on the topic of *iṣlāḥ* is developed through the activity of defining it. The field and the scope of *iṣlāḥ* are also very likely to be specified in its definition. In addition, the definition, when precisely constructed, provides proper parameters for limiting the topic, and excluding that which does not relate to it. Similarly, the distinguishing characteristics which clarify *iṣlāḥ* and separate it from other topics, with which it might be confused, is provided by the definition. Furthermore, the criteria by which an occurrence of *iṣlāḥ* is determined are invoked in its definition. Based on all these necessary elements, it can be decided what aspects of al-Ghazālī's thought and efforts are related to the topic of *iṣlāḥ*, and thus should be considered in the present thesis.

Since it does not seem that there is a ready-made definition of *islāh* to satisfy the purpose of the present thesis in the available related literature,¹ there is a special need to construct a satisfactory definition of the term at the very beginning of the present study.

Having stated this, the following question arises: which method of defining can fulfil the present need? Among the various possible methods of defining,² the analytical method appears to be the most useful and thus it is chosen here to define *islāh*. In addition to the fact that it is broadly considered the best method of defining,³ the analytical method is very fruitful in the context of the present thesis. Defining *islāh* by giving a detailed analysis of it provides much-needed elaboration of the concept and not just a simple introduction to its meaning.⁴

The approach taken in this analysis is semantic. This approach, “as the name itself reveals, literally means to analyse the structure of [a] word along the lines indicated by the articulation of its meaning.”⁵ This method of semantic analysis, as Toshihiko Izutsu clearly explains, “consists in applying a careful procedure of linguistic analysis to the meaning structure of [a] word, in splitting up its complex structure of meaning into a number of well-defined constituents.”⁶

The choice of this method leads to another logical question: what data should be considered in this analysis in order to attain the previously stated essential and practical result? Since *islāh* is essentially an Arabic term, the first obvious piece of data which needs to be considered here is the available meaning and usages of the term in the

¹ There are useful brief discussions of the definition of the term—though not sufficient enough for the need of the present thesis—in the following sources: A. Merad, “*Islāh*,” in *EP*², Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978, Vol. 4, p. 141; and John O. Voll, “Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: *Tajdid* and *Islah*,” in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 33f.

² The methods of definition are discussed thoroughly by Richard Robinson in his unique book *Definition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962, pp. 93-148.

³ Robinson, *Definition*, p. 97.

⁴ For a scholarly discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of the analytical method of defining, see Robinson, *Definition*, pp. 97f.

⁵ Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran: A Study in Semantics*, Tokyo: Keio Institute of Philological Studies, 1959, p. 6.

⁶ Izutsu, *The Structure*, p. 6.

Arabic language. This is done in two steps described in section 1.2 below: the first is analysing the morphological description of *iṣlāḥ*, and the second is analysing the available explanation of the term in a number of leading and celebrated Arabic lexicons.⁷

In addition to this essential type of data, the original Islamic perspective of *iṣlāḥ* also has to be considered in defining the concept. This is because firstly *iṣlāḥ* is an Islamic concept, as “it is deeply rooted in the basic soil of Islam.”⁸ Secondly, the topic of the present thesis lies within an Islamic context—al-Ghazālī is studied as an Islamic reformer—and thus the definition of *iṣlāḥ* is employed particularly in this context. For these reasons, the usages of the term *iṣlāḥ* in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth—the two essential Islamic resources which provide the basis of the Islamic conception of the term—are analysed in section 1.3.

Based on the findings of all these analysed dimensions of the concept, the definition of *iṣlāḥ* is practically formulated in section 1.4.

Other than the first essential aim of defining *iṣlāḥ*, this chapter has two more objectives, which shall contribute in clarifying the concept of *iṣlāḥ*. The first is to examine the extent to which the English term “reform,” which is usually used as a rendering of *iṣlāḥ*,⁹ is an equivalent translation of the Arabic term *iṣlāḥ*. In section 1.5, this examination is done in the light of the constructed definition of *iṣlāḥ*, and the meanings of the term “reform” as well as its usage.

⁷ Namely: (1) *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* of al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d. 170/786); (2) *Jamharat al-Lughah* of Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933); (3) *al-Muḥīṭ fī al-Lughah* of al-Ṣāḥib ibn ‘Abbād (d. 385/995); (4) *al-Ṣiḥāḥ fī al-Lughah* of al-Jawharī (d. 393/1003); (5) *al-Muḥkam wa-al-Muḥīṭ al-‘Aẓam fī al-Lughah* of Ibn Sīdah (d. 458/1066); (6) *Asās al-Balāghah* of al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144); (7) *Lisān al-‘Arab* of Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311); (8) *Tāj al-‘Arūs* of Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791); (9) and finally the late lexicon, *al-Mu’jam al-Waṣīṭ* of the Arabic Language Academy in Cairo. For a scholarly and informative English account on the traditional Arabic lexicons, which is drawn chiefly from the unique work of al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzhir*, see the preface to Lane’s *Madd al-Qāmūs: an Arabic—English Lexicon*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1863, pp. xii-xx.

⁸ A. Merad, “*Iṣlāḥ*,” *EP*², Vol. 4, p. 141.

⁹ See, for example, Merad, “*Iṣlāḥ*,” Vol. 4, p. 141; and Voll, “Renewal and Reform,” p. 32.

The last objective of the present chapter is to understand the differences and similarities between *iṣlāḥ* and other concepts which are sometimes connected to it, justifiably or not. Since “it is not often that one can analyse a concept without also considering other concepts which are related to it, similar to it, or in some way importantly connected with it,”¹⁰ *iṣlāḥ* is compared and contrasted with each of the following concepts in section 1.6: “*tajdīd*” (renewal or restoration), “*taghyīr*” (change), and “*al-amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*” (commanding right and forbidding wrong).

1.2 *Iṣlāḥ* in the Arabic Language:

To satisfactorily analyse the meaning of the term *iṣlāḥ* in Arabic, at least two essential pieces of linguistic information have to be studied: the morphological description of the term and the available lexical explanation of it. The former gives the basics and provides some useful hints for consulting the Arabic lexicons, while the lexicons themselves provide the literal meanings of the term, and also cross-refer to the related words and demonstrate their usage by Arabs. This will be evident in the following two sub-sections.

1.2.1 Morphological Description of *Iṣlāḥ*:

The term *iṣlāḥ* is the *maṣḍar* (infinitive noun) of the transitive verb “*aṣlaḥa*” since the *wazn* (stem form) of its verb is “*af‘ala*,” as is known in Arabic morphology. The basic root of this transitive verb is “*ṣalaḥa*,” an intransitive verb which is derived from its *maṣḍar* “*ṣalāḥ*.” And the epithet from *ṣalāḥ* is *ṣāliḥ*, whereas the epithet from *iṣlāḥ* is *muṣliḥ*. All these derivatives share the same three basic radical letters, which are *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

¹⁰ John Wilson, *Thinking With Concepts*, Cambridge: The University Press, p. 30.

From this basic morphological explanation, four essential general conclusions emerge. First, *iṣlāḥ* denotes the same phenomenon as that indicated by its verb “*aṣlahā*” but it is free from time or tense, unlike the verb. Second, *iṣlāḥ* is a causative term, the outcome of which is *ṣalāḥ* or a *ṣāliḥ* thing/person. Third, the performer of *iṣlāḥ* is called *muṣliḥ* or in other words a *muṣliḥ* is one who conducts *iṣlāḥ*. Fourth, all these derivatives are related and thus studying them should all help in clarifying the idea of *iṣlāḥ*.

Before proceeding to the next sub-section, an important limitation of the topic should be presented at once. According to al-Jawharī, the *maṣdar* of *ṣulḥ*—a noun which means *silm*¹¹ (peace) and *taṣāluḥ*¹² (reconciliation)—is not *ṣalāḥ*, but rather *ṣilāḥ*,¹³ which means *muṣālahah*¹⁴ (conciliation). On the basis of this precise lexical explanation, two main divisions of *iṣlāḥ* can be differentiated here in respect of their outcome: the first causes *ṣalāḥ*, while the second brings *ṣulḥ*. Consequently, it can be stated that the latter does not lie within the scope of this thesis, though it is called *iṣlāḥ* and the epithet derived from it is *muṣliḥ*.

By studying al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ*, it is not intended to study him as one who makes *ṣulḥ* (reconciliation) between disputants. Therefore, whatever is related to the topic of *ṣulḥ* is not part of the concern of the present thesis, and in the interests of conciseness, is not even considered in the proposed definition of *iṣlāḥ*.

¹¹ Ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam*, eds. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā et al., Cairo: Maʿhad al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi-Jāmiʿat al-Duwal al-ʿArabīyah, 1958-73, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

¹² See al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, *al-ʿAyn*, ed. Maḥdī al-Makḥzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāʾī, Baghdad: Wazārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Iʿlām, 1980-5, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

¹³ See al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Ghafūr ʿAṭṭār, Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1377 A.H., under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

¹⁴ See al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

1.2.2 Lexical Explanation of *Iṣlāḥ*:¹⁵

The term *iṣlāḥ*¹⁶ is defined as the opposite of *ifsād* in the consulted Arabic lexicons, which explicitly mention the term,¹⁷ and no further interpretation is given. Supposedly, studying the meaning of *ifsād* in its respective location¹⁸ in the lexicons sheds some light on the meaning of *iṣlāḥ* in a contrary way; however, no direct definition is given there. This makes it a necessity to study the other related derivatives of *iṣlāḥ*, as well as *ifsād*, in order to find clues for more clarification of the idea of *iṣlāḥ*.

Starting with the transitive verb “*aṣlahā*,” two related senses of the term are given in two different contexts. The phrase “*aṣlahā al-shay’* (a thing)” means “*azāla fasādah*”¹⁹ (He removed its *fasād*). And in the phrase “*aṣlahā al-shay’ ba‘da fasād*,”²⁰ the verb “*aṣlahā*” means “*aqāma*”²¹ (to set right or correct). Thus, the phrase can be translated as “he set right or corrected the thing after *fasād*.”

These senses of “*aṣlahā*” clearly show that the act of *iṣlāḥ* is directed only against *fasād*, and this is a crucial limitation of the idea of *iṣlāḥ*. Moreover, they suggest that *iṣlāḥ* is a corrective change of *fasād*. This indication ought to be the core of the definition of *iṣlāḥ*, since it presents the superior category to which *iṣlāḥ* belongs—i.e., that of change—and at the same time it highlights an essential distinguishing characteristic of *iṣlāḥ*, that is, correctness.

¹⁵ All the explanations concerning *iṣlāḥ* and its related derivatives are found in Arabic lexicons under its three basic radical letters: *ṣ-l-ḥ*. In some lexicons, all the words containing these radical letters are listed under the last letter “*ḥ*” whereas in others they are listed under the first letter “*ṣ*”, depending on the method of listing in the respective lexicon.

¹⁶ The term is introduced in the Arabic lexicons with the definite article “*al*,” which is of the generic type in this context.

¹⁷ See, for instance, al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*; and Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1997, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

¹⁸ Under its radical letters *f-s-d*.

¹⁹ Ibrāhīm Muṣṭafā et al. (eds.), *al-Mu‘jam al-Waṣīṭ*, Istanbul: Dār al-Da‘wah, 1989, p. 520, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

²⁰ Ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

²¹ Ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

By linking this very significant finding with the fact that the outcome of *iṣlāḥ* is *ṣalāḥ*, as stated earlier, *iṣlāḥ* can be basically defined as a corrective change of *fasād* into *ṣalāḥ*. Now, to expand this rather vague definition, the available meanings and usages of both *fasād* and *ṣalāḥ* in the lexicons must be studied.

As to *ṣalāḥ*, it is defined in almost all of the consulted lexicons only by its opposite: *ṭalāḥ* in some lexicons²² and *fasād* in others.²³ The *Mu‘jam al-Waṣīṭ*, however, is an exception, for it gives two senses for *ṣalāḥ*.²⁴ The first sense is *istiḳāmah*. It literally refers to being in a path following a straight line and it is figuratively likened to being in a right path.²⁵ Obviously, this figurative meaning of *al-istiḳāmah* is the one which is applicable to *ṣalāḥ*, rather than the literal meaning. The second sense of *ṣalāḥ* is “*al-salamah min al-‘ayb*”²⁶ (being free from defect), which is a negative sense of the term.

Furthermore, *ṣalāḥ* may also refer to a state of benefit, as can be concluded from one of the senses of the intransitive verb “*ṣalaḥa*.” In the *Mu‘jam al-Waṣīṭ*,²⁷ this verb can be used in the sense of “*kāna nāfi‘an*” (being beneficial).

Another shade of meaning for *ṣalāḥ* is observed by reflecting on a figurative usage of the aoristic verb “*yaṣluḥu*” stated in some lexicons as in the following sayings: “*hādhā al-shay’ yaṣluḥu lak*”²⁸ (this thing is suitable for you), “*hādhā al-adīm yaṣluḥu lil-na‘l*”²⁹ (this leather is suitable for sandals), and “*fulān lā yaṣluḥu liṣuḥbatik*”³⁰ (such

²² See al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, *al-‘Ayn*, Cairo: Majma‘ al-Lughah al-‘Arabīyah, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*; Ibn Durayd, *Jamharah*, Hyder Abad: Dāirat al-Ma‘ārif, 1344-5 A.H., under the radical letters *ḥ-ṣ-l*; and Ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

²³ See al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*; and Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

²⁴ Muṣṭafā et al. (eds.), *al-Mu‘jam al-Waṣīṭ*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

²⁵ See al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī (d. c.502/1108), *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur‘ān*, ed. Ṣafwān Dāwūdī, Damascus: Dār al-Qalam and Beirut: al-Dār al-Shāmīyah, 1997, under the radical letters *q-w-m*.

²⁶ Muṣṭafā et al. (eds.), *al-Mu‘jam al-Waṣīṭ*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

²⁷ Muṣṭafā et al. (eds.), *al-Mu‘jam al-Waṣīṭ*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

²⁸ See al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

²⁹ al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-Balāghah*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2001, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

³⁰ al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-Balāghah*, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-ḥ*.

a person is not appropriate to accompany you). According to this usage, *ṣalāh* implies suitability or appropriateness.

In the light of the senses of *ṣalāh* previously discussed, it can be stated that the outcome of the act of *iṣlāh* is a state of benefit, directness in the sense of commitment to a right path, absence of defect and suitability.

Turning to the two opposites of *ṣalāh*, a number of meanings and usages of the terms are mentioned in Arabic lexicons and are thus worth studying. With regard to *fasād*, it is used in the following senses, as listed in the *Muʿjam al-Waṣīṭ*:³¹ “*al-talaḥ wa-al-ʿaṭab*” (destruction & ruin), “*al-iḍṭirāb wa-al-khalal*” (disorder & deficiency), “*al-jadb wa-al-qahṭ*” (barrenness & drought), and “*ilhāqu al-ṭarar*”³² (inflicting detriment). If we examine these senses, the last one appears to be the most general, since the others can be regarded as various forms of detriment.

Additional forms of *fasād* can be concluded from the following usage of its verb “*fasada*.” In the phrase “*fasada al-shayʿ*,” *fasada* can mean:³³ *baṭala* (became false, invalid or of no avail). Thus, a further form of *fasād* is a state of falsehood or invalidity.

One more form of *fasād* can be learned from the origins of the name of “*ḥarb al-fasād*” applied to a war which happened in the pre-Islamic period between two Arab sub-tribes.³⁴ It was called so, because the first group patched their sandals with the ears of the second, and the second group drank wine in the skulls of the first.³⁵ Giving this war in particular the name of “*ḥarb al-fasād*” indicates that these acts deviated unjustifiably from the established moderation of warfare at the time. Consequently, an unjustified deviation from an established moderate norm is a form of *fasād*.

³¹ Muṣṭafā et al. (eds.), *al-Muʿjam al-Waṣīṭ*, under the radical letters *f-s-d*.

³² Strangely, although *fasād* is a noun, the phrasing of this sense suits an infinitive and not a noun.

³³ See Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, ed. ‘Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj et al., Kuwait: Wazart al-Irshād wa-al-Anbā’, 1965-89, under the radical letters *f-s-d*.

³⁴ See Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, under the radical letters *f-s-d*.

³⁵ See Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, under the radical letters *f-s-d*.

Unlike *fasād*, no direct and explicit meaning is found in the lexicons for the second antonym, *ṭalāḥ*. However, a meaning is given to a related infinitive: *al-ṭalāḥah*, which means “*al-i’yā*”³⁶ (fatigue, jadedness, or tiredness) and “*al-suqūt min al-safar*”³⁷ (travel-weariness).³⁸ Related to *ṭalāḥ* also, *iṭlāḥ* is given as a *maṣḍar* for the transitive verb “*aṭlaḥa*” as in “*aṭlaḥtuhu anā iṭlāḥā*”³⁹ meaning *ḥasartuhu*⁴⁰ (I weakened him or I fatigued him). Another similar usage is stated for the related inflection *ṭalīḥ*. It is used as an epithet in the saying “*nāqah ṭalīḥu asfār*”⁴¹ meaning “*jahadahā al-sayr wa-hazalahā*”⁴² (a she-camel exhausted and rendered lean by its journeys). By linking all these similar and related meanings, it can be concluded that *ṭalāḥ* implies lack of ability to function according to one’s essential nature, due to overwork or overuse.

In addition, *al-ṭalāḥ* implies lack of goodness or benefit, as is indicated by a usage of the related word *ṭāliḥ*. When it is applied to a man, *ṭāliḥ* means “*lā khayra fīḥ*”⁴³ (in whom there is no goodness or benefit).

1.3 The Islamic Perspective of *Iṣlāḥ*:

As with any Islamic term, the definition of *iṣlāḥ* has to include the Islamic dimension of the term, especially when the definition is used within an Islamic context, such as the present topic. This vital dimension is highlighted below by examining the usages of the term in the two essential Islamic resources: the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth.

³⁶ Ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam*, under the radical letters *ṭ-l-ḥ*.

³⁷ Ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam*, under the radical letters *ṭ-l-ḥ*.

³⁸ In translating the lexicographical quotes, I have benefited much from the unique Arabic-English lexicon of Lane, Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003.

³⁹ See Ibn Durayd, *Jamharah*, under the radical letters *ḥ-ṭ-l*.

⁴⁰ al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, under the radical letters *ṭ-l-ḥ*.

⁴¹ al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, under the radical letters *ṭ-l-ḥ*.

⁴² al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, under the radical letters *ṭ-l-ḥ*.

⁴³ See Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, under the radical letters *ṭ-l-ḥ*.

1.3.1 The Qur'ānic Usages of *Islāh*:

The term *islāh* and the related derivatives are used in the Qur'ān in various contexts.⁴⁴ Some of these usages, however, are beyond the scope of the present examination and thus they are excluded right from the beginning. Among these excluded usages are those in the context of *ṣulh*,⁴⁵ because it is outside the range of this thesis, as noted above. Also the usages of *islāh* as a direct action of Allāh⁴⁶ are excluded for the same reason.

Thus, the examination here is restricted to the Qur'ānic contexts in which the idea of *islāh* is referred to as a human task, the outcome of which is a state of *ṣalāh*. The approach of this examination is semantic. It attempts to derive the meanings from the text itself. For the purpose of elucidation, two helpful tools are used. The first is to examine each Qur'ānic text in the light of its context. The context usually gives helpful hints for the intended meaning of the text.⁴⁷ The second useful tool is to link the text under examination with the related Qur'ānic texts in other places since very often “the Qur'ān explains itself.”⁴⁸ Within the extent of this approach, a number of the most celebrated Qur'ānic exegeses, both early and late, are consulted, with special attention given to exegeses focusing on semantic indications.

A very basic point observed by examining the Qur'ānic usages of *islāh* meaning a human task is that the term *islāh* does not seem to be transferred from its original Arabic meanings to a purely religious or technical meaning as in the usages of some

⁴⁴ For a comprehensive listing of these usages, see 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li-al-Fāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1991, under the radical letters *ṣ-l-h*, pp. 520-3, and for an electronic search, visit: http://www.altafsir.com/Quran_Search.asp.

⁴⁵ As in Q.2:224, Q.4:114, Q.49:9-10.

⁴⁶ As in Q.21:90, Q.33:71, and Q.47:2.

⁴⁷ Calling it the “contextual approach,” I applied this tool in my MA dissertation and found it very helpful: see Mohamed Al-Musleh, “The Qur'anic Treatment of the Story of Ibrāhīm (Abraham): A ‘Contextual’ Approach,” MA Dissertation, SOAS, University of London, 2000-1.

⁴⁸ For the history and the significance of this principle in interpreting the Qur'ān, see Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style*, London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1999, pp. 160-2.

other Qur’ānic concepts. Moreover, the idea of *iṣlāḥ* is presented in the Qur’ān as meaning the opposite of *ifsād*. This is evident in a number of *āyāt* (Qur’ānic verses) which mention the two ideas in conflict with each other. For instance, the Qur’ān states **“Allāh knows the *mufsid* from the *muṣliḥ*” (Q.2:220).**

However, the Qur’ānic usages of *iṣlāḥ* and its opposite indicate a number of distinguishing characteristics of the Islamic perspective of *iṣlāḥ*, which add some unique Islamic nuances to the concept. It is important then to consider these characteristics and nuances in defining the concept of *iṣlāḥ* from the Islamic perspective.

One of these distinguishing characteristics concerns the evaluation of *iṣlāḥ*. The Qur’ān considers *iṣlāḥ* as an extremely necessary, very honourable and highly praised task. From the Qur’ānic prospective, *iṣlāḥ* is a safeguard for society, as the Qur’ān clearly states: **“Thy Lord would not destroy communities unjustly while their members were *muṣliḥūn*” (Q.11:117).** In addition, the reward of the *muṣliḥūn* is guaranteed in the Qur’ān; Allāh states: **“surely We leave not to waste the reward of the *muṣliḥūn*” (Q.7:170).** At the same time, the *mufsidūn*, totally opposite to the *muṣliḥūn*, are strongly condemned in the Qur’ān: **“Allāh loves not the *mufsidūn*” (Q.5:64 & Q.28:77).**

Moreover, fulfilling the task of *iṣlāḥ* was the utmost concern of the prophets mentioned in the Qur’ān. The Prophet Shu‘ayb, for instance, clearly states to his people: **“I desire only the *iṣlāḥ*, as far as I am able” (Q.11:88).** Similarly, the Qur’ān quotes the Prophet Ṣāliḥ as he forbids his people from *ifsād* (Q.7:74). Accordingly, those who occupy themselves chiefly with *iṣlāḥ* tread in the steps of the prophets and thus they are appropriately regarded as *muṣliḥūn* from the Islamic perspective. This, then, may

rightly be considered an Islamic standard for a *muṣliḥ*, i.e., *iṣlāḥ* should be the top priority of one who ranks among the *muṣliḥūn*.

Comprehensiveness is another characteristic of the Qur’ānic perspective of *iṣlāḥ*. The Qur’ānic scope of *iṣlāḥ* is very broad; it includes various fields and is not limited within the confines of religion in its strict sense. This appears in the following observations.

First, the usage of the term *iṣlāḥ* denotes generality in the following *āyah*: **“They ask thee concerning orphans. Say: *iṣlāḥ* for them (*lahum*) is good” (Q.2:220)**. As the term *iṣlāḥ* here is indefinite and followed by “*lahum*,” it is not restricted to any particular matter to do with orphans but instead is related to all their affairs.⁴⁹

Second, the verb *aṣlahā* is linked with *tawbah* (Islamic repentance) for different kinds of sin and crime: (a) theft (*sariqah*) in **Q.5:38-9**, (b) fornication (*fāḥishah*) in **Q.4:15-6**, (c) evil (*sū’*) in **Q.6:54 & Q.16:119**, (d) concealing what Allāh has sent down in clear proofs and guidance (*kitmān mā-anzala Allāh min al-bayyināt wa-al-hudā*) in **Q.2:159-60**, (e) denying belief after believing (*kufr ba’da īmān*) in **Q.3:86-9**, (f) hypocrisy (*nifāq*) in **Q.4:145-6**, and (g) accusing chaste women of fornication (*qadhf al-muḥṣanāt*) in **Q.24:5**. It is worth noting that the idea of *iṣlāḥ* in these contexts is related to the self, as the contexts suggest, although the verb “*aṣlahā*” has no explicit object in any of them.⁵⁰

Finally, the broad variety in the examples of the *mufsidūn*, and similarly the examples of *ifṣād* mentioned in the Qur’ān, indicate in a contrary way the wide scope of the Qur’ānic perspective of *iṣlāḥ*. Some of the clearest examples of the *mufsidūn* given in the Qur’ān are as follows. Firstly, hypocrites: in referring to them, Allāh says:

⁴⁹ See Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa-al-Tanwīr*, Q.2:220.

⁵⁰ According to some *mufasirūn* (Qur’ān exegetes), it is possible that the verb “*aṣlahā*” in some of these contexts, namely in **Q.3:89**, is an intransitive verb in the sense of “*dakhala fī al-ṣalāḥ*” (to come under the state of *ṣalāḥ*), see, for example, Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854), *Rūḥ al-Ma’ānī fī Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm wa-al-Sab’ al-Mathānī*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Arabī, 1997, Vol. 3, p. 217.

“Truly, they themselves are the *mufsidūn* but they are not sensible” (Q.2:11). Secondly, the people of the Prophet Lot: in Q.29:30, for example, the Prophet Lot prays: “My Lord, give me victory over the people who are *mufsidūn*.” Thirdly, Pharaoh and his chiefs: “Then We sent, after them, Moses with Our tokens to Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they acted unjustly towards them. So behold thou how was the end of the *mufsidūn*” (Q.7:103). Fourthly, the sorcerers of Pharaoh before they believed in the Lord of the Prophet Moses:

“Then, when the sorcerers came, Moses said to them, ‘Cast down whatever you will cast.’ And when they had cast, Moses said, ‘What you have produced is sorcery; Surely Allāh will suppress it. Surely, Allāh upholds not the work of the *mufsidūn*” (Q.10:80-81),

Lastly, the transgressors (*al-fāsiqūn*): after mentioning them in Q.2:26, the Qur’ān in the following *āyah* lists some of their attributes. Among these attributes is that they are “causing corruption (*yufsidūn*) in the earth.”

Among the examples of *ifsād* indicated in the Qur’ān are the following:

(1) Barring others from the path of Allāh, as is suggested by the following *āyah*: “For those who disbelieve and bar [others] from the path of Allāh, We shall add chastisement over their chastisement, for that they were causing corruption (*yufsidūn*)” (Q.16:88). The *āyah* shows that these people deserve two penalties. Since they are disbelievers, it is understood that the first penalty is for their disbelief. The additional penalty therefore has to be for their additional evil deed, that is, barring others from the path of Allāh.⁵¹ Thus, their act of *ifsād* refers to this evil deed since it is

⁵¹ See, for example, Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, ed. Sāmī ibn Muḥammad al-Salāmah, 1999, Vol. 4, p. 593. The same edition available online: <http://www.qurancomplex.com/Quran/tafseer/Tafseer.asp?t=KATHEER&TabID=3&SubItemID=1&l=arb>.

the cause of their additional penalty, as is understood from the phrase **“for that they were causing corruption (*yufsidūn*).”**

(2) Shedding blood: after being told by the Creator that a successor will be set on the earth, the angels reply in **Q.2:30: “How can Thou set therein one who will cause corruption (*yufsid*) on it and shed blood...”** Since the conjunctive style in this reply is in the type of *‘atf al-khāṣ ‘alā al-‘ām*⁵² (joining the particular to the general), then it is understood that shedding blood is *ifsād*.

(3) Destroying tillage and stock: with the same conjunctive style as in the above example, the verb *“yufsidu”* is joined with the phrase **“to destroy tillage and stock”** in **Q.2:205**.

(4) Turning away from the truth and following falsehood: this can be derived from **Q.3:62-63**. Following an episode from the story of Jesus, the Qur’ān comments:

“This certainly is the true narrative. There is none worthy of worship save Allāh, and surely Allāh is the All-mighty, the All-wise. And if they turn away, surely Allāh knows the *mufsidūn*” (Q.3:62-63).

This context shows that turning away from the truth and following falsehood instead is *ifsād*.⁵³

The most distinguishing characteristic of the Qur’ānic perspective of *iṣlāḥ* is the one concerning its criteria. It is essential to note that, from the Qur’ānic perspective, not every claim of *iṣlāḥ* can be justified as a real *iṣlāḥ*. The claim of the hypocrites which is refuted in the Qur’ān proves this. When it is said to the hypocrites that they should not cause *ifsād*, they are quoted in the Qur’ān as saying: **“we are only *muṣliḥūn*” (Q.2:11)**, but the Qur’ān refutes this claim: **“Truly, they themselves are the *mufsidūn* but they are not sensible.” (Q.2:12).**

⁵² See al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854), *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, Vol. 1, p. 221.

⁵³ I was led to this point by the inspiring interpretation of the *āyah* by Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, Vol. 2, p. 55.

This shows that certain criteria have to be met in order to justify a case of *iṣlāḥ* from the Qur’ānic perspective. The Qur’ānic usages of *iṣlāḥ* and the related words indicate a number of such essential criteria.

Among these criteria is conforming to the original right order of the earth and its beneficial norms, which have been set by the Creator. This is indicated in **Q.7:56**: **“Do not cause corruption (*lā-tufsidū*) in the earth after the *iṣlāḥ* of which.”** The phrase **“after the *iṣlāḥ* of which”** indicates that it is *ifsād* to change the original right order of the earth and its beneficial norms which have been set by the Creator.⁵⁴ As a result, conforming to them is a criterion of *iṣlāḥ*.

Another criterion of *iṣlāḥ* indicated in the Qur’ān is being committed to truthfulness, since the opposite is a criterion of *ifsād*, as stated in the Qur’ān. Following an episode from the story of Jesus, the Qur’ān comments:

“This certainly is the true narrative. There is none worthy of worship save Allāh, and surely Allāh is the All-mighty, the All-wise. And if they turn away, surely Allāh knows the *mufsidūn*” (Q.3:62-63).

This context shows that turning away from the truth and following falsehood instead is a sign of *ifsād*.⁵⁵ On the contrary, committing to truthfulness is a criterion of *iṣlāḥ*.

Two further criteria of *iṣlāḥ* are: being firmly committed to the Scripture of Allāh and seriously worshipping Him. These criteria can be highlighted in the following examination of the *āyah* **Q.7:170**. This *āyah* starts with the relative pronoun **“those”** and is followed by two descriptions, those **“who hold fast to the Scripture and keep up the prayer.”** It appears from the predicate in the *āyah*, which is **“surely we do not waste the wage of the *muṣliḥūn*,”** that these descriptions are for the *muṣliḥūn*.

⁵⁴ For a justified argument of this indication, see Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa-al-Tanwīr*, Q.7:56.

⁵⁵ I was led to this point by the inspiring interpretation of the *āyah* by Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, Vol. 2, p. 55.

1.3.2 Prophetic Usages of *Iṣlāh*:

Being the second primary source of Islam after the Qur’ān, the Prophetic Ḥadīth need to be consulted in order to gain a complete picture of the original Islamic perspective of the concept of *iṣlāh*. What does this primary source add to the Qur’ānic semantic and characterizing points concerning *iṣlāh*? By searching in a number of the leading collections of Ḥadīth,⁵⁶ two groups of Prophetic traditions are found helpful to examine for the sake of the present task: the traditions which related to *iṣlāh* and those which related to its opposites.

Several useful semantic and characterizing points which shed more light on the Islamic perspective of *iṣlāh* are indicated in some Prophetic traditions, in which *iṣlāh* or related derivatives are employed. The most striking Prophetic tradition related to *iṣlāh* is the one about the strangers (*al-ghurabā’*). Among the different narrations of this tradition,⁵⁷ the extended narration of al-Tirmidhī is of special significance, because it refers explicitly to the idea of *iṣlāh*. The last part of this narration reads:

“Surely the *Dīn* was strange when it began and it will become strange as in its beginning, so blessedness for the strangers (*al-ghurabā’*) who will set right or correct what people would have corrupted or perverted in my norm (*yuṣliḥūn mā-afṣada al-nnās min sunnatī*).”⁵⁸

By praising the strangers and introducing them as *muṣliḥūn*, this unique narration gives a valuable Prophetic justification for *iṣlāh*. In addition, the narration clearly shows that

⁵⁶ These are: (1) the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870); (2) the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875); (3) the *Sunan* of Abū Dawūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889); (4) the *Musnad* of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855); (5) the *Sunan* of Ibn Mājah (d. 273/887); (6) the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892); (7) and the *Sunan* of al-Nasā’ī (d. 303/915).

⁵⁷ The basic wording of this tradition is narrated in several books of Ḥadīth, including Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* under *Kitāb al-Imān, Bāb Bada’ al-Islām Gharībā* (for the traditions narrated by Muslim, I consulted the abridged edition of al-Mundhirī, *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, edited by Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1987).

⁵⁸ al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi’ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Nassār, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 2000, under *Kitāb al-Imān, Bāb Majā’ ann al-Islām Bada’ Gharībā*, no. 2630, Vol. 3, pp. 449f.

one task of *iṣlāh* from the Islamic perspective is to restore the original norm of Islam as exemplified in the life of the Prophet Muḥammad.

Another Prophetic tradition related to *iṣlāh* is that in which the Prophet used the verb “*yuslihu*” in the sense of repair. As narrated by Abū Dawūd, the Prophet said: “When a thong of one of you is cut, then he should not walk in one sandal until he repairs (*yuslihu*) his thong...”⁵⁹ By being directed to the way someone dresses, this Prophetic teaching signifies that among the Islamic dimensions of *iṣlāh* is the outward appearance or the exterior and not just the purely inward religious dimensions, a point which assures the comprehensiveness of the Islamic perspective of *iṣlāh*.

Although it is true that Islamic *iṣlāh* can be directed to the exterior, the priority, however, should be given to the interior. This is another distinguishing characteristic of the Islamic perspective of *iṣlāh*. The priority given to looking inward is evident in the very well-known Prophetic tradition in which it is clearly stated that the *ṣalāh* and the *fasād* of the whole body depend on the condition of the heart.⁶⁰ This shows that the priority in *iṣlāh* should be given to the interior state.

Before leaving this tradition, an additional significant indication can be highlighted. The tradition indicates that self-based *iṣlāh* can be in the form of purifying the heart. More elucidation on this form of *iṣlāh* is found in the following interesting Prophetic tradition: “Truly, *ṣāliḥ* mode (*hadī*), *ṣāliḥ* manner (*samt*), and moderation (*al-iqtiṣād*) are one part of twenty five parts of Prophecy (*al-nubūwh*).”⁶¹ In addition to showing the degree of importance of self-purification from the Islamic perspective, this tradition indicates that self-purification is meant in the religious sense.

⁵⁹ Abū Dawūd, *Sunan*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Khālīdī, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 1996, under *Kitāb al-Libās, Bāb fī al-Inti‘āl*, no. 4137, Vol. 3, p. 72.

⁶⁰ See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1999, under *Kitāb al-Imān, Bāb Faḍl man Istabra’ li-Dīnih*, no. 52, p. 12.

⁶¹ Abū Dawūd, *Sunan*, under *Kitāb al-Adab, Bāb fī al-Waqār*, no. 4776, Vol. 3, p. 253.

One further Prophetic tradition related to *iṣlāh*, which is worth noting, is the tradition about the *muṣliḥ* slave. As narrated by the Imam Muslim, the Prophet said: “For the owned slave who is *muṣliḥ* there are two rewards.”⁶² The sense of *iṣlāh* in this narration becomes clear when another narration of the same tradition is linked with it. In the other narration of the tradition—which is also narrated by the Imam Muslim but from another chain of narrators—the Prophet said: “Surely, if the slave advises his master and perfects his worship to Allāh, his reward will be doubled for him.”⁶³ This narration explains that what qualifies the slave to be a *muṣliḥ* and thus to deserve a double reward are his advice and the perfection of his worship. Thus, giving advice and perfecting one’s worship are two *iṣlāhī* works.

Reflecting on the Prophetic usages of the opposites of *iṣlāh* leads correspondingly to some additional elucidation of the Islamic perspective of *iṣlāh*. One of these usages is in the following Prophetic tradition in which *fasād* is articulated:

“If someone, whose religiousness (*dīn*) and morality (*khuluq*) please you, proposed to marry a girl through you, then you should accept his proposal; unless you do that, there would be *fitnah* (temptation) on earth and wide *fasād*.”⁶⁴

This tradition shows that preference should be given to the religiousness (*dīn*) and morality (*khuluq*). Although it is specifically mentioned in the context of marriage, this principle can also be applicable in other matters. Therefore, giving the priority to the *dīn* and *khuluq* can be considered an Islamic criterion of *iṣlāh*.

Having mentioned the *dīn*, it is worth mentioning another Prophetic tradition which indicates a unique Islamic form of *iṣlāh* concerning the *dīn*. In this tradition, the

⁶² Narrated by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, under *Kitāb al-Aymān, Bāb Thawāb al-‘Abd wa-Ajruh Idhā Naṣaḥ li-Sayidih wa-Aḥsan ‘Ibādata Allāh*.

⁶³ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, under *Kitāb al-Aymān, Bāb Thawāb al-‘Abd wa-Ajruh Idhā Naṣaḥ li-Sayidih wa-Aḥsan ‘Ibādata Allāh*.

⁶⁴ al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, under *Kitāb al-Nikāḥ, Bāb ma-Jā’ Idhā Jā’akum man Tarḍawn Dīnah fa-Zawijūh*, no. 1085, Vol. 2, pp. 172f.

comparative form of the adjective *fāsid*—i.e., *afsad*—is used in an interesting comparison: “Two hungry wolves released in a herd of sheep are not more harmful (*afsada*) to them than one’s greed for wealth and fame to his *dīn*.”⁶⁵ Conversely, to cure spiritual illnesses such as the greed for wealth and fame is an Islamic way of *iṣlāḥ* in the circle of *dīn*.

1.4 Phrasing the Definition of *Iṣlāḥ*:

In light of the previous analysis, we may attempt to incorporate all the features of *iṣlāḥ* in the following tentative definition: *iṣlāḥ*, as an Islamic concept, is a human corrective task in which any state of *fasād* is correctively changed into its opposite desired state which meets the Islamic criteria presented in the Qur’ān and/or exemplified in the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (S. A. A. W); and by *fasād* it is meant a state of loss of the benefit of a thing, inexcusable detriment, or unjustified deviation from a moderate norm.

Now, if there is any change in the meaning of *iṣlāḥ* over time, as has been recently argued,⁶⁶ it would be, in our view, due to the differences on the justification of the criteria of both *fasād* and its opposite state, which are the variables in the definition of *iṣlāḥ*.

⁶⁵ al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, under *Kitāb al-Zuhd, Bāb ma-Jā’ fī Akhdh al-Māl bi-Ḥaqqih*, no. 2376, Vol. 3, p. 319.

⁶⁶ Voll, for instance, states that “over the centuries the specific meanings of *tajdid* and *islah* [sic] have changed, depending on the evolution of Islamic thought and the changing circumstances of the Islamic community,” (Voll, “Renewal and Reform,” p. 32).

1.5 *Iṣlāḥ* and Reform: Degree of Equivalence:

In the literature in English concerning the topic of *iṣlāḥ*, the term is generally translated as reform.⁶⁷ To justify this translation, however, the degree of equivalence between the two terms needs to be precisely examined.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary,⁶⁸ there are various lexical senses of “reform” when it is used as a transitive verb.⁶⁹ By examining these senses and comparing them to those of *iṣlāḥ* discussed above, the following two observations can be made.

First, there are some senses of “reform” which are equivalent or at least very similar to some shades of the meaning of *iṣlāḥ*. These senses are:⁷⁰ (1) to make a change for the better in (an arrangement, state of things, practice), (2) to correct, put right (an error or mistake), (3) to bring (a person) to abandon some evil conduct and adopt a right one, (4) to improve one’s own character, (5) to bring into a better state or improve, either by some change of form, or by the removal of faults or abuse, and (6) to put an end to (disorder etc.) by introducing a better procedure.⁷¹

Second, “reform” has some other equivalent or very similar senses to some of those indicated by *iṣlāḥ*, which are now obsolete.⁷² These include the following:⁷³ (1) to restore to the original form, (2) to rebuild after (destruction...), and (3) to repair (damage...). The image associated with these senses of “reform” is crucial to the meaning of *iṣlāḥ*. Being out of date, however, these senses of the term are no longer

⁶⁷ See, for instance, A. Merad, “*Iṣlāḥ*,” in *ET*, Vol. 4, p. 141; and John O. Voll, “Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: *Tajdid* and *Islah* [sic],” in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, pp. 33f.

⁶⁸ Which is the most comprehensive English dictionary.

⁶⁹ See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, the entry “reform.” Available also online: <http://dictionary.oed.com>

⁷⁰ See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the entry “reform.”

⁷¹ Compare these senses with the lexicographical meanings of “*iṣlāḥ*” above.

⁷² See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the entry “reform.”

⁷³ See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the entry “reform.”

reflected in its current usage. This considerably reduces the degree of equivalence between *iṣlāḥ* and reform in its current usage.

But even if all the senses of reform are considered, the scope of *iṣlāḥ* is still broader. Thus, some essential dimensions of *iṣlāḥ* will be lost when the term is replaced by “reform.” This loss is enough to make the serious researcher avoid the use of “reform” in place of *iṣlāḥ*, at least for the sake of precision. At the very most, “reform” is only a partial equivalent for *iṣlāḥ*.

What really widens the gap between the two terms are their religious overtones. *Iṣlāḥ* is an Islamic concept, whereas “reform” is ecclesiastical: it has been tied to the tradition of the Reformation of the 16th century which led to the establishment of the Protestant churches.⁷⁴ Therefore, using the latter to refer to the former may cause considerable misunderstanding.

In short, to avoid any confusion, the term *iṣlāḥ* should not be translated as “reform.” Alternatively, it should be used in its transliterated form and explained in detail whenever there is a need. When translation is unavoidable, however, the adjective “Islamic” should be used before “reform” as a rendering for *iṣlāḥ* in order to reduce the gap between the two terms.

1.6 The Relationship between *Iṣlāḥ* and Other Concepts:

This section compares and contrasts the Islamic concept *iṣlāḥ* with the following three concepts: “*tajdīd*” (renewal or restoration), “*taghyīr*” (change), and “*al-amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*” (commanding right and forbidding wrong). The aim of this step is not, however, to fully analyse these concepts, but rather to shed more

⁷⁴ See Konrad Reppen, “Reform,” translated from German to English by Robert E. Shillenn, in *the Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Reformation*, New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, Vol. 3, p. 392.

light on the concept of *iṣlāḥ* itself by highlighting the main similarities and differences between *iṣlāḥ* and these three concepts which are sometimes, justifiably or not, associated with *iṣlāḥ*. This aim alone guides the following examination and controls its points of interest.

1.6.1 *Iṣlāḥ* vs. *Tajdīd*:

The term *tajdīd* is used in some studies⁷⁵ to mean the same or similar to the Islamic term *iṣlāḥ*. But the examination below shows that, although there are some similarities between the two terms, there are also some important differences which need particular attention.

Unlike *iṣlāḥ*, the concept of *tajdīd* is not Qur’ānic, i.e., the word does not appear in the Qur’ān. It originated as an Islamic concept, however, from a unique Prophetic tradition in which the derived verb *yujaddid* is employed: “Verily, Allāh will send to this *Ummah* (Muslim nation) at the head of each hundred years *man* (the one or those who) *yujaddidu* for it its *dīn*.” As a result, the concept *tajdīd*, which is the *maṣdar* (infinitive noun) from the verb “*yujaddidu*,” refers in the Islamic sense to the task mentioned in this tradition. The one who fulfils this task is called the *mujaddid*.

In order to precisely compare and contrast *iṣlāḥ* and *tajdīd*, it is essential to fully examine the implications of the task referred to in the above tradition. The starting point in this examination is the indication of *dīn* to which the task of *tajdīd* is directed.

The term “*dīn*” is a comprehensive Islamic concept. Based on a deep examination of the uses of the term “*dīn*” and the related derivatives both in classical Arabic and in

⁷⁵ See, for example, Voll, “Renewal and Reform,” pp. 33f.

the Qur’ān, a study by Maududi⁷⁶ demonstrates that the Qur’ān employs the term in one or more of the following four senses or shades of meaning: “(1) Sovereignty and supreme authority, (2) obedience and submission to such authority, (3) the system of thought and action established through the exercise of that authority, and (4) retribution meted out by the authority, in consideration of loyalty and obedience to it, rebellion and transgression against it.”⁷⁷

The study also shows that in some Qur’ānic contexts, the term is used in a sense of

“a whole way of life in which a person gives his submission and obedience to someone whom he regards as having the ultimate authority [i.e., Allāh alone in the case of the *dīn* of Islam]; [he] shapes his conduct according to the bounds and laws and rules prescribed by that being, looks to him for recognition, honour, and reward for loyal service, and fears the disgrace or punishment that could follow any lack on his part.”⁷⁸

These nuances of meaning of “*dīn*” show how comprehensive this concept is. It is, however, vital to recall that the primary signification of the concept is obedience and submission. This distinguishes “*dīn*” from other similar Arabic terms referring to a system of religion, such as “*millah*.” As al-Aṣḥānī states, “*dīn* is similar to *millah* but the former is used as regard to obedience and submission to the *Sharī’ah*.”⁷⁹

Now, what is meant by the task of *tajdīd* when it is directed to the *dīn* of the Muslim *Ummah* in the above sense of “*dīn*”? To answer this question, we should study the meaning of the verb “*yujaddidu*” mentioned in the tradition about *tajdīd*. Being a transitive verb in the *muḍāri‘* (aorist) tense, “*yujaddidu*” means to make or render

⁷⁶ S. Abul A‘la Maududi, *Four Basic Qur’ānic Terms*, translated from Urdu to English by Abu Asad, Lahore (Pakistan): Islamic Publications Ltd., 1982.

⁷⁷ Maududi, *Four Basic Qur’ānic Terms*, p. 94.

⁷⁸ Maududi, *Four Basic Qur’ānic Terms*, pp. 99f.

⁷⁹ al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī (d. c.502/1108), *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur’ān*, ed. Ṣafwān Dāwūdī, Damascus: Dār al-Qalam and Beirut: al-Dār al-Shāmīyah, 1997, under the radical letter *d-ī-n*.

“*jadīd*.” With regard to the meaning of the epithet *jadīd*, there are three possible senses in the lexicons. The primary sense of *jadīd* is derived from “*al-jadd*” meaning “*al-qaṭ*”⁸⁰ (cut); it is said “*thawbun jadīd*” meaning a garment newly cut off by the weaver.⁸¹ Based on this primary sense, *jadīd* is used, as al-Aṣḥānī states, for anything which has been newly or recently originated.⁸² A second sense of *jadīd* is learned from its *maṣḍar* (infinitive), “*al-jiddah*,” as opposed to “*al-bilā* or *al-khalq*”⁸³ (the state of becoming shabby or worn out). A third sense of *jadīd* presented in some lexicons is “*mā lā ‘ahda laka bih*”⁸⁴ (a thing of which you have had no knowledge).

It is obvious, however, that the task of *tajdīd* mentioned in the tradition about the *mujaddid* should not be interpreted—on the basis of the indications of the first and the last senses of *jadīd*—as changing the *dīn* of the *Ummah* or making it different in a sense amounting to a loss of original identity, otherwise this tradition would contradict with other Prophetic traditions which proscribe *bid’ah* (innovation in the *dīn*). Therefore, to avoid falling into this kind of contradiction, the Islamic *tajdīd* should be bound by the original model of the *dīn* which is presented in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah and is believed to have been exemplified by the first Muslim Community.

Having considered this, the only possible sense of *jadīd*, in the light of which the task of *tajdīd* can be interpreted correctly, is the third one. Accordingly, the Islamic task of *tajdīd* can be understood as a human corrective activity by which the *dīn* of the Muslim *Ummah* is revived and restored in the light of its original model after a state of obliteration, loss or deviation.

⁸⁰ See Ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*, al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*; and Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*.

⁸¹ al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*; and Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*.

⁸² al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, under the radical letter *j-d-d*.

⁸³ See Ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*; al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*; Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*; and Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*.

⁸⁴ See Ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*; Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*; and Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, under the radical letters *j-d-d*.

Comparing and contrasting this interpretation of *tajdīd* and the previous definition of *iṣlāḥ*, the following similarities and differences can be accepted:

- (1) Both *tajdīd* and *iṣlāḥ* are Islamic corrective tasks; however, the former was introduced only in the Ḥadīth, while the other was introduced in both the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth.
- (2) Unlike *iṣlāḥ*, the scope of *tajdīd* is restricted within the field of *dīn*, as is stated in the tradition of *tajdīd*.
- (3) It is in the field of *dīn* only, where *iṣlāḥ* may overlap with *tajdīd*.
- (4) Every *mujaddid* is *muṣliḥ* but not every *muṣliḥ* is *mujaddid*.
- (5) The task of *tajdīd* is bound by more restrictive conditions than those of *iṣlāḥ*.

1.6.2 *Iṣlāḥ* vs. *Taghyīr*:

The term *taghyīr* in Arabic is the *maṣdar* (infinitive noun) of the transitive verb *ghayyara*, as in the phrase “*ghayyarahū*” which can mean one or more of the following: *ḥawwalhu*, *baddalhu*, and *j’alahu ghayra ma-kān*⁸⁵ (he transformed it, converted it and rendered it different). Thus, it is equivalent to the term “change” in English. This shows that *taghyīr* can linguistically be either a change for the better or a change for the worse.

In the Qur’ān, however, the aoristic form of verb “*ghayyara*”—i.e., “*yughayyiru*”—appears only in contexts where change is for the worse: **“Surely I [Satan] will mislead them...and surely I will command them so they will change (*fala-yughayyirunna*) Allāh’s creation...” (Q:4:119), “...Allāh would never change a grace that he conferred on a people until they change (*yughayyirū*) what is within themselves”**

⁸⁵ Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, under the radical letters *gh-y-r*.

(Q.8:53), “...Surely Allāh does not change (*yughayyiru*)⁸⁶ the condition of a people until they change (*yughayyirū*)⁸⁷ what is within themselves. And whenever Allāh wills harm (*sū’*) for a people, nothing turns it back; apart from Him, they have no protector.” (Q.13:11).

It is worth noting that *taghyīr* cannot be considered either an Islamic concept or an Islamic task such as *iṣlāḥ*; it does not seem that there is a direct Qur’ānic or Prophetic appeal to change for the sake of change. The only exception to this observation occurs when *taghyīr* is directed against *al-munkar*. It is only then that *taghyīr* becomes part of the Islamic unique duty “*al-amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*,” as will be shown when this duty is compared and contrasted with *iṣlāḥ*.

In addition to the above essential difference between *iṣlāḥ* and *taghyīr*, another major difference between the two terms can be clearly observed from the meaning of the term *taghyīr* itself: *taghyīr* is more general than *iṣlāḥ*. Therefore, not every *taghyīr* is *iṣlāḥ* whereas every *iṣlāḥ* is a particular form of *taghyīr*, since *iṣlāḥ* is a corrective change. The two terms may overlap only when *taghyīr* is directed against *fasād*.

1.6.3 *Iṣlāḥ* vs. “*al-Amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*”:

The phrase “*al-amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*” is a combination of two parts. The first part consists of two terms which are opposite in meaning to those in the second: “*amr*,” which means “commanding” or “enjoining,” stands opposite to “*nahy*,” which means “forbidding”, while “*ma’rūf*,” which literally means “known,” is the opposite of “*munkar*,” which literally means “unknown.”⁸⁸

⁸⁶ As the closing of the *āyah* indicates, the change here is for the worse. In addition, there is an agreement among the classical *mufsiṣirūn* (Qur’ānic exegeses) on this connotation.

⁸⁷ See the previous note.

⁸⁸ The term *ma’rūf* is derived from “*irfān*” which means ‘*lm* (knowledge) whereas *munkar* is derived from its opposite “*nakirah*,” see Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, under the radical letters ‘-r-f.

Similar to *iṣlāḥ*, the duty of “*al-amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*” is firmly rooted and highly valued in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth. There are numerous favourable references to the doctrine in these two basic sources of Islam. These references clearly establish the obligatory nature of the task and show the need for it. In the Qur’ān, for instance, Allāh addresses the believer as follows: **“Let there be a nation of you, calling to what is good, and commanding what is *ma’rūf*, and forbidding what is *munkar*; those are the prosperers” (Q.3:104).**

The external sense of this doctrine suggests that it denotes merely a verbal duty and thus it may seem far distinct from *iṣlāḥ*, which is a sort of change. However, by fully examining both the Qur’ānic and Prophetic references related to this subject, it becomes evident that the duty is not always verbal, but can be in other forms as well, particularly as a response to *munkar*. In a famous Prophetic tradition, which can be conveniently called “the three modes tradition,”⁸⁹ the Prophet, for instance, states: “Whoever sees a particular *munkar* and is able to change it with his hand, let him do so; if he can’t, then with his tongue; if he can’t, then with his heart...”⁹⁰ It is not within the purpose of the present discussion, however, to examine all the possible “modes” of the duty and the controversial issues which they may raise. What is connected to the present theme, nevertheless, specifically arises when the duty is in the form of changing “*munkar*” physically. This is mainly because the duty in this form becomes a sort of “human corrective change” and thus it belongs to the same general classification of *iṣlāḥ*.

In order to know precisely the relationship between *iṣlāḥ* and “changing *munkar*,” we should analyse the meaning of the term “*munkar*” as an Islamic concept and compare, or contrast it with “*al-fasād*.” To start with, “*al-munkar*,” as its literal sense reveals, indicates disapproval and rejection. Like “*fasād*,” the term can be generally

⁸⁹ I have borrowed this name from Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 32.

⁹⁰ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, under *Kitāb al-Imān*, *Bāb min al-Imān taghyīr al-Mnkar*.

classified as a categorical negative value term. There is disagreement among the Qur’ānic exegeses, however, on what can justifiably be listed under this categorical term; some have restricted it to particular sins, while others have widened it to include every evil.⁹¹ The external sense of the term, nevertheless, suggests, as Abū Ḥayyān points out, *al-‘umūm* (generality or general character). This general character makes the present task of comparing and contrasting the meaning of “*munkar*” and “*fasād*” very difficult.

Yet, within the Islamic discipline of *fiqh* (jurisprudence)—where the rules and conditions of the duty of “*al-amr bi-al-ma‘rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*” are normally studied—the generality of the term “*munkar*” has been restricted by certain conditions which have to be present in a particular case, in order to justifiably consider such a case a *munkar* and thus eligible for opposition as a duty. By considering these conditions, the present task becomes easier. According to al-Ghazālī’s account, there are four conditions with regard to *munkar*:⁹² (1) being forbidden in the *Sharī‘ah*⁹³ (), (2) currently existing, (3) being apparent for the exponent of the duty, and (4) being known without the need of *ijtihād*.⁹⁴

In the light of the above conditions, it becomes apparent that *munkar* overlaps with *fasād* when all these conditions exist in a particular case; however, *fasād* is wider than *munkar* since the former is not necessarily restricted by all these conditions. As a result, *iṣlāḥ* partially overlaps with “changing *munkar*.”

⁹¹ See, for instance, Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), *Tafsīr*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, Beirut: Mu’asasat al-Risālah, 2000, Vol. 7, p. 61, the same edition available online: <http://www.qurancomplex.com/Quran/tafseer/Tafseer.asp?t=TABARY&TabID=3&SubItemID=1&l=ar>, and Ibn ‘Aṭīyah (d. 541/1146), *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, Doha: Mu’assat Dār al-‘Ulūm, 1977, Vol. 3, pp. 256f.

⁹² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d., Vol. 2, pp. 324f. For an extended English summary of al-Ghazālī’s account on the duty, see Cook, *Commanding Right*, pp. 428-46.

⁹³ The comprehensive body of Islamic rules and laws.

⁹⁴ The scholarly mental activity of deriving a rule of the *Sharī‘ah* from authoritative evidence.

Another difference between the two tasks appears in their ultimate goals. The task of changing a particular *munkar*, such as drinking wine publicly, can be fulfilled by simply stopping it. The task of *iṣlāḥ*, in contrast, is not completely fulfilled unless a *fāsid* person—e.g. one who drinks wine—is guided to repent and to become *ṣaliḥ* instead.

CHAPTER TWO

SETTING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction:

When studying a historical figure like al-Ghazālī, it is essential to consider the historical context in which he lived. Failure to do so may in the first instance lead to serious misunderstanding of his thoughts; essentially, as Samuel Zwemer puts it, “...we cannot understand a man unless we know his environment.”¹ In the second instance, it could cause extremely incorrect evaluation of his achievement particularly since, as ‘Abd al-Maqṣūd has rightly stated,² the criteria of judgment and the circumstances in the time of al-Ghazālī were very different to those in the contemporary age.

In order to avoid committing such a serious methodological oversight, it is not enough to simply know al-Ghazālī’s biography since, as Zwemer has interestingly pointed out, “...biography is only a thread in the vast web of history, in which time is broad as well as long,”³ but more than that we need, he continues, to “...transport ourselves to the time in which he lived.”⁴ Thus, I ought to present an overview of the age of al-Ghazālī in this chapter, before turning to the main task of the study. The focus of this overview is the historical information which is important to bear in mind

¹ Samuel M. Zwemer, *A Moslem Seeker after God*, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920, p. 23.

² Muḥammad al-Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Maqṣūd, “*Tarbiyat al-Ṣafwah ‘ind al-Ghazālī: Dirasah tarbawīyah li-risālat Ayyuha al-Walad*,” in Muḥammad Kamāl Ja‘far (ed.), *al-Imām al-Ghazālī: al-dhikrā al-mi‘awīyah al-tāsi‘ah li-wafātih*, Doha: University of Qatar, 1986, p. 470.

³ Zwemer, *A Moslem Seeker*, p. 24.

⁴ Zwemer, *A Moslem Seeker*, p. 23.

at the outset, and at the same time shall establish a necessary foundation and introductory background for the forthcoming discussions. Thus, it is not intended to give an inclusive overview of the age of al-Ghazālī; however, the best attempt is made to point out the main features of that age.

2.2 The Overall Condition of Islamdom:

At the beginning of the age of al-Ghazālī, Islamdom was spread across three continents. The Arab Peninsula, the Levant, Mesopotamia, the Persian Plateau, Northern Africa and al-Andalus (Muslim Spain) formed *Dār al-Islām* at that time. However, the frontiers of Islamdom kept changing slightly over the age. Muslims gained new strategic lands, while losing other valuable ones, as shall be demonstrated shortly.

Over this age, Islamdom was noticeably in a complex, diverse and changing condition, to the extent that making any sweeping generalization here may create an unbalanced picture of that age. The classical Muslim society with its dominant purely Arabic-language culture under the uniting umbrella of the magnificent caliphate had changed into a diverse society, both linguistically and culturally⁵, which was ruled by multiple independent “governments” with no single uniting political force. On one hand, there were clear symptoms of decline in Islamdom, and the Muslims, generally speaking, were suffering from fundamental weaknesses; in the words of Hillenbrand, they “were living through exceptionally turbulent times.”⁶ On the other hand, there were, at the same time, particular elements of prosperity and strengths, and overall the

⁵ Hodgson, *The Venture*, Vol. 2, p. 3.

⁶ Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 36.

Muslim *Ummah* was still, as Hodgson put it, "...certainly the most widely spread and influential on the globe."⁷

To better understand the complex condition of Islamdom in the age under study, and to gain a balanced picture of that age, an extended overview is necessary. Thus, a somewhat detailed outline of the political and religio-intellectual dimensions of that age will be drawn below.

2.3 The Political Setting:

Al-Ghazālī lived in a time of totally new political order compared to the earlier classical Abbasid era. By the birth of al-Ghazālī, the Abbasid Caliphate had already been suffering from political disintegration. There was no single political power ruling the whole of Islamdom at that time. Instead, the Islamic *Ummah* was ruled by various individual local "governments." Furthermore, the Caliphate had been challenged by the competing Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt based on Ismā'īlism and which had been receiving advantageous support from the Ismā'ilī Shiite all around Islamdom, but this opponent Caliphate suffered from symptoms of weakness during the age of al-Ghazālī.

While the early part of the age of al-Ghazālī witnessed the rapid rise of the Seljuk and Almoravid dynasties, towards the end of the same age they started to decline.

To adequately understand the changing political setting of that age, an overview on the status of the Caliphate and the provincial "governments" of the time is presented under the following sub-headings.

⁷ Hodgson, *The Venture*, Vol. 2, p. 3.

2.3.1 The Status of the Abbasid Caliphate:

Al-Ghazālī lived through the reigns of three successive Abbasid caliphs: al-Qā'im Bi-amr-Allāh,⁸ al-Muqtadī Bi-amr-Allāh,⁹ al-Mustazhir Bi-Allāh.¹⁰ With regard to their personal characteristics, it is reported that all three caliphs were religious, and were men of Islamic morality and noble personality.¹¹ The good characters of the three caliphs, however, are not projected in the status of the Caliphate itself which, although it somehow retained its authority, had lost its previous power.¹²

During the reign of al-Qā'im, to begin with, the Caliphate suffered from a dramatic decline and its centre experienced a state of disorder for a while. Moreover, the Caliph himself was debased to the extent that he was imprisoned for a period of

⁸ Abū-Ja'far Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Qādir, titled al-Qā'im Bi-amr-Allāh who was the twenty sixth caliph in the line of the Abbasid dynasty. He became Caliph in 422/1031 and continued to hold the position until his death in 467/1075. At the time of this caliph's death, al-Ghazālī, who was seventeen years old, had not moved to Baghdad yet.

⁹ Abū-al-Qāsim Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Abd Allāh, titled al-Muqtadī Bi-amr-Allāh who, at the age of twenty, succeeded his grandfather, al-Qā'im, and held the Caliphate till he died in 487/1094.

¹⁰ Abū-al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad, known by his title al-Mustazhir Bi-Allāh. He became Caliph in 487/1094 at the age of sixteen succeeding his father al-Muqtadī. Al-Ghazālī and other 'ulmā' are among those who attended the *bay'ah* (pledge of allegiance) of al-Mustazhir and who gave the oath of allegiance to him (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1998, Vol. 8, p. 494).

¹¹ The historian Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), for example, characterized al-Qā'im as "pious, religious, ascetically-minded, learned, held a strong trust in Allāh Almighty, and very patient" (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 406.) With regard to al-Qā'im's attitude to ruling, Ibn al-Athīr reported that "he was devoted to justice and fair treatment, and always wanted to satisfy people's needs, not thinking to deny anything which was requested from him" (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 406.) Similarly, al-Muqtadī was religious, beneficent, and a man of strong personality and great zealousness (Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (d. 911/1505), *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1988, p. 338.) Concerning al-Mustazhir, it is reported that he was of good morality, beneficent, charitable, kind, generous, and that he loved 'ulamā' and pious people (al-Suyūfī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'*, p. 341.) It is worth mentioning that al-Mustazhir was highly praised by al-Ghazālī in his book, *Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭiniyah wa-Faḍā'ih al-Mustazhiriyyah*, in which he firmly states that the Caliph al-Mustazhir was qualified for the *Imāmah* (supreme leadership of the Muslims) since he, as al-Ghazālī passionately argued and desperately attempted, though not very convincingly, to prove from the *Sharī'ah* perspective, was gifted with the requisite qualities and conditions for that position (see al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭiniyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmīyah, 1964, pp. 169-94, trans., Richard Joseph McCarthy, "Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭiniyya," in Richard Joseph McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error*, translation of *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* and other relevant works of al-Ghazālī, Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, n. d, pp. 234-9.)

¹² For a discussion on the distinction between "authority" and "power" and the attraction between them as illustrated in the Abbasid Caliphate during the fifth/eleventh century, see George Makdisi, "Authority in the Islamic Community," in George Makdisi, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad*, Hampshire: Variorum, 1990, part VIII, pp. 118-20.

time by the the commander and chief of the army of Baghdad, Arslān al-Basāsīrī.¹³ As the populace inclined towards al-Basāsīrī,¹⁴ a rebellion took place during which the harem of the Caliph was entered without permission and the Caliph's palace was plundered.¹⁵

From the time of al-Basāsīrī's revolutionary movement in Baghdad, the name of the Abbasid Caliph was replaced by the name of the Fatimid Caliph in the Friday *khutbah* and in the coins struck.¹⁶ This ignominious fall from power of the Abbasid Caliph did not end until al-Basāsīrī fled Baghdad in 451/1059 as the first great Seljuk¹⁷ Sultan Tughril-Beg,¹⁸ responding to an appeal for help from the Caliph al-Qā'im,¹⁹ marched into Iraq, with no other thought but, as Ibn al-Athīr reported,²⁰ to restore the Caliph to his Court.

To a considerable extent, the Caliph al-Qā'im was rehabilitated by the Sultan Tughril-Beg²¹ who initially regarded the Caliph, from whom he had obtained a valuable legitimacy of his rule,²² as his master and treated him with great respect on

¹³ This was in the year 450/1058 when the commander and chief of the army of Baghdad, Arslān al-Basāsīrī, who turned away from al-Qā'im and supported the Fatimid Caliph, al-Mustanshir bi-Allāh, instead, took control of Baghdad and imprisoned the Caliph al-Qā'im (see Zāhīr al-Dīn Nīshābūrī (d. ca. 579/1184 or 80/1185), *The History of the Seljuq Turks From the Jāmi' al-Tawārīk: An Ilkhanid Adaption of the Saljūq-nāma of Zāhīr al-Dīn Nīshābūrī*, Translated from Persian by Kenneth Allin Luther, ed. C. Edmund Bosworth, Richmond (Surrey): Curzon Press, 2001, p. 42; see also Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 341f..)

¹⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 343.

¹⁵ See Nīshābūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks*, p. 42.

¹⁶ See Nīshābūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks*, p. 42.

¹⁷ Transformed from the Turkish *Selchük*; also spelled Saljuq which is transformed from the Arabic *Saljūq*, (see Carla L. Klausner, *The Seljuk Vezirate: A Study of Civil Administration*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973, p. iv).

¹⁸ Abū Ṭālib Ṭoghril-Beg Muḥammad b. Mikā'il b. Saljūq.

¹⁹ Nīshābūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks*, p. 42.

²⁰ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 345.

²¹ Although he possessed various excellent qualities, he had some bad traits of character; according to Ibn al-Athīr, he was "wise, tactful, one of the most forbearing of men, and the most able to keep his secrets...He used...to take care of the daily prayers, and to fast in Mondays and Thursdays," at the same time he was "tyrannical, brutal and cruel," (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 362).

²² The Caliph al-Qā'im gave orders for the *khutabā'* (Muslim pulpits) of Baghdad mosques to give the Friday *khutabah* in the name of Ṭoghril-Beg (see, for instance, Nīshābūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks*, p. 41; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 323).

various occasions.²³ The Caliph in turn was so pleased with him to the extent that he placed him in control of all the lands that were under the Caliph's authority and addressed him as *Malik al-Mashriq wa-al-Magrib* (the King of the East and West).²⁴ In addition, to cement his relationship with the Sultan, he married his niece.²⁵

Nevertheless, great tension developed shortly between the two. Some of Tughril-Beg's actions disturbed and offended the Caliph.²⁶ Moreover, the actual control in Iraq, including Baghdad—the hometown of the Caliph and the centre of the Caliphate—passed within a couple of years into the hands of Tughril-Beg and thus the power of the Caliph became very limited, even in the purely Caliphate responsibilities, such as the administration of the revenues of Iraq.²⁷

On one hand, the spiritual dominion of the Caliph al-Qā'im became wider²⁸ during the reign of Tughril-Beg's successor the Sultan Alp-Arslān²⁹ (455/1063-465/1072) who succeeded in occupying new lands in the name of the Abbasid Caliphate.³⁰ In return, the Caliph bestowed on the new Sultan the honorific titles '*Aḍḍ al-Dawlah* (the Strong Arm of the State) and *Ḍiyā' al-Dīn* (the Light of the Religion).³¹ Furthermore, the cordial relation between the two was strengthened to a certain extent when the Caliph's son and heir apparent, al-Qā'im, married the Sultan's

²³ See, for instance, Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 337 & 346.

²⁴ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 337.

²⁵ Her name was Arslān Khātūn, also called Kahdījah; she was the daughter of Dāūd, brother of the Sultan Tughril-Beg. The marriage was in 448/1056, a year after the first arrival of Tughril-Beg in Baghdad. (See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 327).

²⁶ Tughril-Beg's daring marriage to the Caliph's daughter is a case in point. The marriage broke the noble tradition of the previous Abbasid caliphs, because it was the first marriage of a non-Arab to a member of the Caliph's own family (see Muḥammad Musfir al-Zahrānī, *Nufuth al-Salājiqah al-Sīāsī fi al-Dawlah al-Abbasīyah*, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, p. 102.) In addition, the marriage took place despite the initial opposition of the Caliph who was eventually compelled to accept it (see, for example, Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 357f and al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'*, p. 335.)

²⁷ See, for example, al-Zahrānī, *Nufuth al-Salājiqah*, pp. 107f.

²⁸ Cf. Sir William Muir, *The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline, and Fall*, ed. T. H. Weir, Edinburgh: John Grant, 1924, p. 582.

²⁹ Abū Shujā' Alp-Arslān Muḥammad b. Abī Sulymān Chaghri-Beg Dāwūd b. Mikā'il.

³⁰ See below (2.3.2).

³¹ C. E. Bosworth, "The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217)," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, Vol. 5, p. 55.

daughter in 464/1071-2.³² On the other hand, the new Sultan gradually interfered in the Caliphate's affairs to the extent that he dared to appoint Caliphal officers without the knowledge of the Caliph and even without paying attention to his annoyance.³³

Following the death of the Caliph al-Qā'im, the Caliphate in al-Muqtadī's days, as Ibn al-Athīr states, became greater than it had been before.³⁴ New strategic and valuable lands³⁵ were occupied by Malik-Shāh—the Seljuk Sultan who succeeded Alp-Arslān—and came under the spiritual dominion of the Caliph al-Muqtadī. To a certain extent, al-Muqtadī was honoured by the Sultan Malik-Shāh,³⁶ but he also was eventually intensely annoyed by the growing control and interference of the Sultan and his officials in the Caliphate's prerogatives.³⁷

During the reign of al-Mustazhir, the Caliphate experienced very difficult times; yet, as Muir puts it, “whether in the history of the fanatical strife at home, or of the Crusade Christians in the Syrian lands, the Caliph's name is hardly ever noticed.”³⁸ In addition, he, as well, experienced disturbance by the Seljuks³⁹ similar to that in his father's days, but to a relatively lesser extent, due to the conflicts which occurred among the Seljuks themselves during his reign.⁴⁰

³² See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 391, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 174-5.

³³ See al-Zahrānī, *Nufuth al-Salājiqah*, p. 109.

³⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 494, for translation of sections related to the history of the Seljuk Turks over the year 420/1029 to the year 490/1096-7, see D. S. Richards, *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks: Selections from al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rīkh of 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002, p. 272. I have chiefly relied on Richard's translation of the parts selected by him, but my translation differs from his sometimes, particularly when I think that there is mistranslation of the original text.

³⁵ See below (2.3.2).

³⁶ Cf. Muir, *The Caliphate*, p. 582.

³⁷ For example, Malik-Shāh made the Caliph unwillingly discharge his vizier, Fakhr al-Dawlah. (see al-Zahrānī, *Nufuth al-Salājiqah*, pp. 109f.) Although al-Muqtadī, on the advice of Nizām al-Mulk—the wise and pious vizier of Malik-Shāh—married Malik-Shāh's daughter seeking his cordiality, the marriage soon ended in separation, and the relation between the two became worse to the extent that Malik-Shāh marched from Ispahan to Baghdad aiming to replace the Caliph, but he died before he completed his plan (Tāj al-Dīn Abū Naṣr 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), *Ṭabqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrā*, Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥusaynīyah, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 143.)

³⁸ Muir, *The Caliphate*, p. 582.

³⁹ See al-Zahrānī, *Nufuth al-Salājiqah*, pp. 114f.

⁴⁰ See below (2.3.2).

It is important to bear in mind though that these serious tensions between the Abbasid Caliphs and the Seljuk Sultans did not, as precisely noted by Huart, "...have its roots in religious questions but was of a personal nature."⁴¹ The Seljuks always regarded the office of the Caliphate as the highest authority of the whole Islamic *Ummah*, and thus, as Sunni military leaders loyal to the Abbasid Caliphate, they were religiously responsible for defending it.⁴²

Although the Abbasid Caliphate had lost its classical fame by the time of al-Ghazālī, the Caliph of the time continued to exercise some power and authority, though it was limited, and seems to have been mostly symbolic or prestigious. The Caliph, for instance, was still responsible for appointing the Caliphate officials such as *Qādī al-Quḍāh* (the Chief Jurist). Moreover, he continued to be considered a political legitimizer for the independent local rulers. In order for the position of any ruler to be considered legitimate in a particular province, and thus be supported by both the general public and the *'ulamā'*, the ruler had to be accredited by the Caliph of the time. This explains the determination of the rulers of that time to receive such legitimacy.⁴³

As an upholder of the *Sharī'ah* and within his power—regardless of how limited it was—the Caliphs of the time also attempted to combat some aspects of *fasād* that

⁴¹ Cf. Huart, "Seldjuks," *EI*, Vol. 4, p. 210.

⁴² Cf. Huart, "Seldjuks," *EI*, Vol. 4, p. 210.

⁴³ A good example for this is when the Almoravid Emir Yūsif b. Tāshfīn took control over Granada in 483/1090, which was the beginning of his rule in al-Andalus (Muslim Spain), he wrote to the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadī in Baghdad seeking his accreditation; the Caliph in turn legitimized his rule, and thus the Emir received his letter of investiture from Baghdad (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 448.)

appeared in their reigns.⁴⁴ He also prohibited the outflow of waste water from bath-houses into the Tigris, and made their owners dig pits for the waste water.⁴⁵

The caliph's officials of the time also played certain administrative roles.⁴⁶ However, the real players in the whole political scene at that age were not the Caliph or his officials, but rather the Seljuk Sultan and his officials, as we shall further illustrate below.

2.3.2 The Seljuk Sultanate:

Before spreading their supremacy over Iraq and before starting their noticeable interference in the Abbasid Caliphate office in Baghdad,⁴⁷ the Seljuks⁴⁸ had already furthered their sway over vast areas of Central and Western Asia,⁴⁹ displacing the former Ghaznavid and the Būyid authorities there. In the first three decades of the age of al-Ghazālī, the expansion of the Seljuks continued and reached its zenith at the death of the Sultan Malik-Shāh in 485/1092, which was a turning point in the history of the so-called “Great Seljuks.”

After establishing his rule in Kirmān, which was almost independent, the Seljuk commander, Qāwurt,⁵⁰ succeeded in crossing the Persian Gulf and bringing Oman

⁴⁴ Al-Muqtadī, for example, ordered the expulsion of singing girls and *mufsidāt* from Baghdad, and prohibited boatmen from ferrying men and women together; he also prohibited the outflow of waste water from bath-houses into the Tigris, and made their owners dig pits for the waste water (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 494.)

⁴⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 494.

⁴⁶ See A. K. S. Lambton, “The Internal Structure of the Saljuq Empire,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, p. 213.

⁴⁷ As presented above.

⁴⁸ Their name originated from Saljūq b. Tuqqāq, a leader of Ghuzz (Oghuz) tribal Turks, who—knowing that the ruler of Turks, Bayghu (or Yabghu), was thinking to kill him—migrated with his followers to *Dār al-Islām* near Bukhārā and embraced Islām there towards the end of the fourth/tenth century, see, for instance, Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 236.

⁴⁹ This includes the following provinces and territories which had been ruled by a number of Seljuk emirs: Khurāsān, Khwārizm, Jurjān, Ṭabristān, Daylam, Azerbaijan, Arran, Iṣfahān and Kirmān, see, for instance, Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdah al-Miṣrīyah, 1967, Vol. 4, pp. 4-10; and C. E. Bosworth, “The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217),” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, pp. 23-53.

⁵⁰ Also spelled as Qavurt and Qāwurd.

under his control, putting an end to the Būyid rule there, during the reign of his younger brother, the Seljuk supreme Sultan Alp-Arslān (455/1063-465/1072).⁵¹

Moreover, the Sultan Alp-Arslān himself successfully mounted daring raids into the Byzantine Empire. A year after his accession, Alp-Arslān campaigned in Armenia, capturing its old capital, Ani, and other key Armenian cities from their Byzantine garrisons.⁵² In addition to expanding his Sultanate by conquest, Alp-Arslān succeeded in making some rulers of the time give allegiance to him.⁵³

During the reign of the forceful Sultan Malik-Shāh (465/1072-485/1092), the Seljuks further expanded their frontiers by conquering new strategic lands including al-Hijāz, Yemen,⁵⁴ Samarqand, and Kashghar.⁵⁵ In this reign also, Sulymān b. Qutalmish, a distant cousin of Malik-Shāh, succeeded in making new conquests in Asia Minor, capturing Byzantine cities as far as the shores of the Sea of Marmara, and founding a Seljuk dynasty in Anatolia with its capital at Nicaea in about 470/1077.⁵⁶

Being Sunnis and loyal to the Abbasid Caliph, the Seljuks attempted to put an end to the Fatimid Shiite rule, as they had successfully done with regard to the Būyid Shiite authority. Concerning their attempt against the Fatimids, the Seljuks were

⁵¹ See C. E. Bosworth, "The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217)," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, pp. 59 & 88.

⁵² This tremendous achievement was, as reported by Ibn al-Athīr, an occasion for rejoicing in Muslim communities and a victory which attracted special praise of the Abbasid Caliph in whose Court the victory's report was read. (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 368-70, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, pp. 152-5.)

⁵³ For example, in 457/1064-5, as the Sultan crossed the Oxus marching towards Jand, where his ancestor had been buried, the ruler of Jand received him and loaded him with magnificent gifts, and pledged his allegiance (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 375, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 157.)

⁵⁴ Being ordered by the Sultan to conquer al-Hijāz and Yemen, a number of the Seljuk emirs marched on this campaign in 485/1092-3 until they reached Yemen and took control of it, treating its inhabitants wickedly (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 478, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 252.)

⁵⁵ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 457-60, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, pp. 239-42.

⁵⁶ This was an almost totally independent dynasty which lasted to the early years of the eighth/fourteenth century and which has become known as the Seljuks of Asia Minor or al-Rūm (see, for instance, Cl. Huart, "Seldjuks," in *EI*, Vol. 4, p. 211; and C. E. Bosworth, "Saldjūkids," in *EI*², Vol. 8, p. 948.)

partially successful for they liberated some key lands during the age under study;⁵⁷ an achievement which may be seen as a victory for all Sunnis of the time.⁵⁸

Despite their remarkable expansion, the Seljuks had various internal weaknesses, some of which were inherent in their Sultanate system.⁵⁹ As Klausner rightly pointed out, “the tendency toward internal quarrels and the division of the imperial territory into petty principalities during the Seljuk period may be considered a basic weakness of the empire and a major cause of its demise.”⁶⁰ Internal disputes over supremacy among the Seljuk emirs occurred frequently throughout Seljuk history, including the period of the Great Seljuks.⁶¹

⁵⁷ In addition to al-Hijāz and Yemen, Aleppo slipped from the Fatimids’ hands, and submitted to the Sultan Alp-Arslān in 463/1070-1 (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 387, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 168); Jerusalem and other neighbouring towns were taken from Egyptian garrisons by Atsiz al-Khawarzmī, one of the emirs of the Sultan Malik-Shāh, in 463/1071 (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 390, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 173); the same Emir also besieged Damascus, which had been under the suzerainty of the Fatimids, in 468/1076 (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 410, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 191); and at Malik-Shāh’s command, his brother, Tutush, conquered Homs and other Fatimid Syrian coastal cities in 485/1092-3 (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 47f7, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, pp. 251f).

⁵⁸ Cf. Huart, “Seldjuks,” in *EI*, Vol. 4, pp. 209f.

⁵⁹ Klausner, *The Seljuk Vezirate*, p. 9.

⁶⁰ Klausner, *The Seljuk Vezirate*, p. 10.

⁶¹ In 456/1063, Shihāb al-Dawlah Qutalmish, a member of the Seljuk family, rebelled against the Sultan Alp-Arslān and marched with large forces to Rayy to seize control, but the Sultan despatched a great army to suppress the rebellion, and the two armies joined in a battle which ended in the death of Qutalmish and the overwhelming defeat of his army (see Nīshābūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks*, p. 45; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 367, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 151-2). In the same year, Fakhr al-Mulk Payghu b. Mīkhā’īl, who had ambitions to take power for himself, rebelled in Herat against his nephew Alp-Arslān, who as a result marched against him with large forces and suppressed the rebellion, however he spared his uncle’s life and treated him respectfully (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 366, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 149). Three years later, the Sultan Alp-Arslān went into another battle, but this time against his elder brother Qāwurt, the ruler of Kirmān, after he rebelled against the Sultan; yet the Sultan succeeded in suppressing the rebellion, forgiving his elder brother and restoring him to his rule (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 379, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 160). The death of the Sultan Alp-Arslān in 465/1072 provoked a bloody dispute over the throne of the Sultanate between Malik-Shāh, who was named by his father Alp-Arslān as his successor, and his uncle Qāwurt who again declared an armed rebellion against the new Sultan and unsuccessfully intended to seize the Sultanate (see Nīshābūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks*, pp. 57f). Similarly, Tekesh rebelled against his brother the Sultan Malik-Shāh in 473/1081, seized Tirimidh and other towns, and marched to Nīshāpūr, with the ambition of controlling Khurasān. However, the Sultan hastened to Khurasān and arrived before his brother, who withdrew to Tirimidh; peace was then arranged between the two (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 423, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 202), though it did not last long. Four years later, Tekesh abandoned his allegiance to his brother and declared a new rebellion which again was put down by Malik-Shāh, who took his brother prisoner this time (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 435, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 216).

Beside their internal weaknesses, the Seljuks faced some very serious external threats. One of the biggest threats was the Christian Byzantine counter-attack. This began in 462/1069-70 when the Byzantine Emperor, Romanus, attacked Manbij in al-Shām with a large army, plundering its territories and killing its inhabitants, but because of the serious lack of provisions he returned to his home lands.⁶² In the following year, he marched again with a vast heterogeneous army, but this time eastward, aiming first to reoccupy Armenia,⁶³ which had been recently conquered by the Seljuks.⁶⁴

The Seljuks, however, responded well, though temporarily, to this external threat. As soon as he received the news of Romanus' march, the awe-inspiring Sultan Alp-Arslān announced *jihād* against the Emperor and hurried with relatively small troops to confront this grave threat immediately.⁶⁵ At Malazgirt,⁶⁶ the two armies clashed in a decisive one-day battle on Friday, 14/11/463-19/8/1071, ending with a bitter defeat for the Byzantine army, and the capture of the Emperor Romanus himself, who was treated honourably and kindly by the Sultan, who freed him for a ransom, the release of all Muslim prisoners in the Byzantine Empire, and a promise of military support whenever needed.⁶⁷

Although this historic victory of the Seljuks, as Runciman put it, “was the most decisive disaster in Byzantine history,” it did not put an end to the Byzantine danger. It only provided a temporary protection of the Seljuk frontiers and removed the threat of a possible alliance between the Byzantines and the Fatimids.⁶⁸

⁶² See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 384, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 166.

⁶³ See, for example, Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951, Vol. 1, p. 62.

⁶⁴ See above.

⁶⁵ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 388f, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, pp. 170-1.

⁶⁶ Also spelled Malazgird and Mantzkirt.

⁶⁷ See Nīshābūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks*, p. 52; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 389, trans., Richards, *The Annals*, p. 171.

⁶⁸ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, p. 64.

In addition to the Byzantine threat, the Seljuks suffered terribly from the revolt of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī Shiites, known also as the Bāṭinīyah, which seriously attempted to put down the whole Seljuk rule.⁶⁹ Towards the end of Malik-Shāh's reign, followers of this Shiite schism, under the leadership of Ḥasan al-Ṣabāḥ (d. 518/1124), secured themselves in the fortress of Alamūt in the mountains of Daylam north of Qazvīn.⁷⁰ Considering this a growing threat, Malik-Shāh commanded the Emir Arslān Tāsh to march against this dangerous group in 485/1092, but the Emir was completely defeated.⁷¹ Consequently, these Ismāʿīlī Shiites adopted a policy of open revolt which took the form of dreadful large-scale assassinations of their enemy's effective political, as well as intellectual leaders.⁷² The assassination of the Sultanate's renowned vizier Nizām al-Mulk⁷³ in 485/1092 is a case in point.⁷⁴

This murder was a severe blow for the Sultanate. In his capacity as the vizier or the chief minister for thirty years, he played a fundamental role in the expansion and the administration of the Seljuk Sultanate. During the reign of Alp-Arslān, Nizām al-Mulk, as Bosworth concisely put it, “had a free hand in directing the administration of the empire; in addition, he spent much time on military duties, accompanying his

⁶⁹ See, for instance, Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, p. 58.

⁷⁰ See W. Madelung, “Ismāʿīliyya,” *EI*², Vol. 4, p. 199; and Cl. Hurat, “Ismāʿīliyya,” *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 550.

⁷¹ Hurat, “Ismāʿīliyya,” *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 550.

⁷² See Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, p. 58; and W. Madelung, “Ismāʿīliyya,” *EI*², Vol. 4, p. 199.

⁷³ Abū ʿAlī Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Ṭūsī, he is mostly known by his honorific title *Nizām al-Mulk*, meaning Order of the Kingship.

⁷⁴ According to a widely accepted account, Nizām al-Mulk was assassinated by a Bāṭinī (see, for instance, Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 37; ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), *Kitāb al-ʿIbar*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 1992, Vol. 5, pp. 14f; and al-Subkī, , *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 3, pp. 142f), but there is another account holding the Sultan Malik-Shāh responsible for his murder because of the growing tension built up between the two over time (see, for example, Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar*, Vol. 5, pp. 14f; and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 3, pp. 142f). The first account, as al-Subkī pointed out, appears more likely (al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 3, p. 143). Malik-Shāh had great trust and deep respect for Nizām al-Mulk to the extent that he handed him almost all affairs and regarded him as his father, bestowing on him the honorific title “Atābig” which means the father emir (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 396f, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, pp. 181f). In addition, he played a considerable role in stabilizing his rule. All this renders the second account very unlikely.

master and also undertaking expeditions of his own.”⁷⁵ His authority became greater during the reign of Malik-Shāh⁷⁶ who handed him all the administrative affairs.⁷⁷ Thus, much of the Seljuk achievements in these two reigns resulted from the contribution of Nizām al-Mulk.

The death of Nizām al-Mulk was a tremendous loss, not only for the Seljuks, but also for all the subjects of the Sultanate especially the Sunni ‘*ulamā*’ of the time. Being just and pious, he abolished many types of dues and taxes.⁷⁸ He was credited with enhancing the Sunni educational and intellectual activities by founding—and generously supporting—the Nizāmīyah⁷⁹ *madrasahs* (institutions of Islamic specialized learning) in several cities of the Sultanate.⁸⁰ Being himself a scholar, Shāfi‘ī in *madhab*,⁸¹ he cancelled the cursing of the Ash‘arīyah from the Friday *khutbah*⁸² and brought the Ash‘arī ‘*ulamā*’, who had fled the lands in which the cursing applied, to their home towns.⁸³ It is reported that the Vizier’s court was bustling with leading ‘*ulamā*’ and men of letters from whom he received much praise.⁸⁴

⁷⁵ Bosworth, “The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217),” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, p. 59.

⁷⁶ Despite his noticeable authority in the Sultanate, Nizām al-Mulk encountered considerable opposition. Various Sultan’s officials and relatives challenged his power and caused him disturbance (for a discussion on his opponents from within the Seljuk administration, see Bosworth, “The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217),” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, pp. 74-77.).

⁷⁷ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 396, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 181.

⁷⁸ See, for example, Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 5, p. 15; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 481, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 257.

⁷⁹ Named in his honour.

⁸⁰ See al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 3, p. 137; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 481, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 257.

⁸¹ See al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 3, p. 135.

⁸² This cursing started during the reign of the Sultan Tughril-Beg who was persuaded by his Vizier ‘Amīd al-Mulk al-Kunurī to order the cursing of both the Shiites and the Ash‘arīyah. (see, for instance, Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 5, p. 15; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 481, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 257)

⁸³ See, for example, Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 5, p. 15; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 481, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 257.

⁸⁴ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 481, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 257.

Only a month after the murder of his Vizier, the Sultan Malik-Shāh faced his death. Consequently, the Seljuks painfully experienced a relatively long period of internal disorder and violent conflict,⁸⁵ in which a visible decline of the Sultanate started. As Bosworth nicely and precisely described, “instead of that sultan’s firm rule, a situation immediately arose involving various young, untried princes and their ambitious mothers, with no wise and restraining hand in the state like Nizām al-Mulk.”⁸⁶

When Malik-Shāh died, his ambitious widow, Turkān Khātūn, with the help of her vizier Tāj al-Mulk, placed her six-year-old⁸⁷ son, Maḥmūd, on the throne of the Sultanate, after securing the backing of the army and emirs, by distributing large sums of money to them,⁸⁸ and after getting a conditional agreement of the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadī.⁸⁹ Fearing that Barkyāruq, Malik-Shāh’s oldest son and Maḥmūd’s thirteen-year-old⁹⁰ half-brother, may dispute the Sultanate with her son, Turkān Khātūn duly issued an order for his arrest.⁹¹ Soon after he was arrested in Isfahan, however, the adversary Nizāmīyah party, which consisted of Nizām al-Mulk’s relatives and partisans,⁹² rioted in the city, freeing Barkyāruq from prison and proclaiming him Sultan. Driven only by their hate of Tāj al-Mulk, who had been a

⁸⁵ Cf. Bosworth, “The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217),” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, p. 102.

⁸⁶ Bosworth, “Saldjūkids,” in *EI²*, Vol. 8, p. 942.

⁸⁷ Nishābūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks*, p. 65.

⁸⁸ See Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 5, p. 16; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 482, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 258.

⁸⁹ When Turkān Khātūn sent to the Caliph requesting his agreement concerning the mentioning of her son’s name in the *khuṭbah* as the Sultan, he agreed on the condition that the Emir Anz should lead the armies and care for the country on the advice of Tāj al-Mulk who should also be in charge of the regulation of the officials and the collection of revenues. She initially refused this condition, but finally she agreed as she was told, by al-Ghazali who was the Caliph’s messenger to her, that the *Sharī‘ah* does not allow her son to be ruler because of his age (see Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 5, p. 16; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 484f, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, pp. 262f).

⁹⁰ See Nishābūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks*, p. 65.

⁹¹ See Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 5, p. 16; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 484, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 262.

⁹² Bosworth, “The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217),” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, p. 103.

deadly enemy of their murdered master, Nizām al-Mulk.⁹³ As a result, Turkān Khātūn and her son marched with the army from Baghdad to Isfahan, but as they approached the city, Barkyāruq and the Nizāmīyah party left the city towards al-Rayy, whereupon several emirs with their troops joined Barkyāruq's group, forming a single force.⁹⁴ Consequently, Turkān Khātūn sent the army to fight Barkyāruq and the two forces joined in a fierce battle, which resulted in complete defeat of Turkān Khātūn's army and the capture of Tāj al-Mulk, who was then killed by the Nizāmīyah men in 486/1093.⁹⁵ This defeat though did not stop that ambitious lady from acting against Barkyāruq until her sudden death in 487/1094, followed shortly by her son's death.⁹⁶

Another serious dispute over succession occurred in these troubled times between Barkyāruq and his uncle Tutush, the governor of Damascus, who attempted unsuccessfully to take over the Sultanate following his brother's death.⁹⁷

At the beginning of the year 487/1094, Barkyāruq gained the recognition of the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadī, who bestowed on him the honorific title *Ruk al-Dīn* (Pillar of Religion), and his name started to be mentioned in the Friday *khutbah* in

⁹³ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 484f, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, pp. 262f.

⁹⁴ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 485, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 263.

⁹⁵ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 485, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 263.

⁹⁶ See Bosworth, "The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217)," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, p. 105.

⁹⁷ When Tutush with his troops succeeded in taking control of some Syrian and Iraqi territories and set out to Azerbaijan in 486/1093; consequently, Barkyāruq took his army and marched against his uncle. At this critical point, two of the chief commanders in Tutush's troops agreed to leave him and join Barkyāruq, whereupon Tutush withdrew to al-Shām, realizing that he had become incapable of meeting Barkyāruq's force (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 487-9, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, pp. 265f; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, Vol. 5, pp. 17f). In the following year and after gathering numerous troops, Tutush resumed his activity to usurp the Sultanate by attacking and controlling several cities in al-Shām, Iraq, Armenia and Azerbaijan (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 494, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 273; see also K. V. Zettersteen, "Barkiyārūk," in *EI*, Vol. 1, p. 662). This violent attack ended only when he was completely defeated, and then slain in a decisive battle with his nephew Barkyāruq, which took place near Rayy in 488/1095 (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 502, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, pp. 278f; ; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, Vol. 5, p. 19. See also K. V. Zettersteen, "Barkiyārūk," in *EI*, Vol. 1, p. 662).

Baghdad.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Barkyāruq did not enjoy this recognition long, for a number of his close relatives, other than his uncle Tutush, rebelled against him.⁹⁹

The most serious and long-running revolt against Barkyāruq was led by his half-brother Muḥammad. In a period of eight years, starting from 490/1097, there were ongoing fierce struggles with changing success between these two brothers.¹⁰⁰ This period was characterised by changes of allegiance among the Turkish, Kurdish, and Arab emirs which added to the general confusion of the time.¹⁰¹

This long-standing dispute, which led to massive destruction and widespread harm, ended only when Barkyāruq, lacking resources, took the initiative and arranged for a permanent peace agreement in 497/1104, consisting of agreed division of the Sultanate between him and his brother Muḥammad so that each one would be an independent sultan in his own lands.¹⁰² In the following year, Barkyāruq died, after appointing his fourteen-year-old son Malik-Shāh as his successor,¹⁰³ who was shortly dethroned by the Sultan Muḥammad.¹⁰⁴ Thus, Muḥammad became the only supreme Seljuk Sultan for the following thirteen years (498/1105-511/1118).¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 493, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 271.

⁹⁹ His uncle Arslān Arghūn repelled in Khurāsān, before he was murdered by a page in 490/1097; Barkyāruq whereupon controlled Khurāsān without fight and handed it to his brother Sanjar (see Nīshābūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks*, p. 68; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, pp. 7-9, trans., Richards, *The Annals*, pp. 289-91; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, Vol. 5, pp. 20-2). In the same year, Muḥammad b. Sulaymān, a cousin of Barkyāruq's father, allied with the ruler of Ghazana, who supported him with a large well-equipped army, rose in revolt against Barkyāruq in Khurāsān, but it was suppressed by Sanjar (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 9, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 291; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, Vol. 5, p. 22).

¹⁰⁰ At least five battles raged between the two (see Nīshābūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks*, p. 71; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, Vol. 5, pp. 25-380).

¹⁰¹ Bosworth, "The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217)," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, pp. 108f & 114.

¹⁰² See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, pp. 70f; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, Vol. 5, pp. 38f.

¹⁰³ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 77; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, Vol. 5, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 79-81; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, Vol. 5, pp. 1f.

¹⁰⁵ See Bosworth, "The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217)," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, p. 113.

Similar to the previous Sultans, Muḥammad, in order to secure his reign, had to deal with members of the Seljuk dynasty who rebelled against him.¹⁰⁶

The gravely everlasting internal crisis, from the death of Malik-Shāh onwards, profited only the lurking enemies of the Seljuks. The Bāṭinīs, the old enemies of the Seljuks, intensified their dreadful activity during this crisis, contributing to the turbulence of the time. Moreover, in the same period, the Crusaders¹⁰⁷ came onto the scene, starting a fierce military campaign and eventually invading valuable Muslim lands in Anatolia and the Levant, which became an awful nightmare for the Seljuks, in particular, and all Muslims of the time, in general.¹⁰⁸

2.3.3 The Fatimid Independent Caliphate:

The existence of the Fatimid Caliphate clearly exemplified the serious problem of the political disunity of Muslims during the time of al-Ghazālī. By completely rejecting the authority of the Abbasid Caliph and adopting the name of Caliphate, the Fatimid Caliphate broke the symbolic political unity of the Muslim *Ummah*. According to the Fatimid's ideal, however, the adaptation of the name of Caliphate was a dream to restore the Muslim unity.¹⁰⁹ Although the Fatimid Caliphate was an outcome of an Ismā'īlī *da'wah* (religious preaching),¹¹⁰ it was not meant to be a state representing the Ismā'īlīs only, but all Muslims, a dream which never became real.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ In 499/1105, he suppressed the rebellion of Mankubars (or Mengü-Bars), a grandson of Alp-Arslān, in Nahāwand (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 88; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, Vol. 5, pp. 43f). In the following year, Qilij-Arsalān (or Qilich-Arsalan), the Seljuk independent ruler of al-Rūm, controlled Mosul, omitted the name of the Sultan Muḥammad from the *khuṭbah* and replaced it with his name; but then he was defeated by the Sultan's commander Jāwli,¹⁰⁶ and eventually drowned in a river (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, pp. 104-7; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, Vol. 5, p. 45).

¹⁰⁷ Called *al-ifranj* (Franks) in the Islamic classical sources. Cf. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁸ See the appendix.

¹⁰⁹ See Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, p. 21.

¹¹⁰ Cf. E. Grafe, "Fāṭimids," *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 88.

¹¹¹ See Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, p. 21.

Being based on the Ismā‘īlī’s tradition, the legitimacy of the Fatimid Caliphate was always challenged. The Fatimid’s claim of being descendants of the daughter of the Prophet, Fāṭimah, and her husband ‘Alī, the cousin of the Prophet (S.A.A.W.), through Ismā‘īl son of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq—on which the Fatimids relied in legitimizing their authority—was denied by their opponents.¹¹² Furthermore, the claimed origin of the Fatimids is wrapped with uncertainty, for several different genealogies are found in the sources, even those of the Ismā‘īlīs.¹¹³ The Sunni historians, with very few exceptions, refer to the Fatimids as ‘Ubaydīs, connecting them to ‘Ubayd-Allāh al-Mahdī, the first Fatimid Caliph.¹¹⁴

Regardless of its legitimacy, the Fatimid Caliphate was a real challenge to the Abbasid Caliphate. However, the extent of this challenge was reduced by the rise of the Seljuks who, being ideological and political enemies of the Fatimids, displaced the Fatimids from a number of their former provinces, as shown above. Similarly, more Fatimid provinces came under other different authorities.¹¹⁵ As a result, the dominion of the Fatimids became very limited. Other than Egypt itself, and with the exception of temporary recognition in some lands,¹¹⁶ only Yemen, under the dynasty of the Ṣulayḥīs, remained loyal to the Fatimid Caliphs, before it was also conquered by the Seljuks in 485/1092-3.¹¹⁷

In addition to its shrinking threat, the Fatimid state suffered from serious challenges during the age of al-Ghazālī. One of these challenges was the shaky loyalty

¹¹² See M. Canard, “Fāṭimīds,” *EI*², Vol. 2, pp. 850-2.

¹¹³ See Canard, “Fāṭimīds,” *EI*², Vol. 2, pp. 850-2.

¹¹⁴ According to al-Suyūṭī, who did not include the Fatimid caliphs in his book on Caliphs and argued that their *imāmah* was not legitimate quoting the views of some distinguished ‘*ulmā*’, only the ignorant mass call the ‘Ubaydīs Fatimids (al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā*’, pp. 3-5).

¹¹⁵ In 484/1091-2, Sicily was taken from the Fatimids, and came under the control of the Franks (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 471-4). Furthermore, the Fatimid’s African provinces were gradually losing their connection with the central government in Egypt, and had started to become independent or to restore their allegiance to the Abbasid Caliph of the time.

¹¹⁶ As in Mosul and Baghdad upon the revolutionary of al-Basāsīrī.

¹¹⁷ See above (2.3.2).

of the leaders of the state. There were incidents of disloyalty of some leaders in the Fatimid state even in Egypt itself.¹¹⁸

The most serious challenge for the Fatimid state was the disorder in Egypt itself for a period of time. A major cause for this was the very terrible seven years' famine (457/1065-464/1072), which exhausted the resources of the state.¹¹⁹ The military disturbance contributed much to the disorder. Among the Fatimid troops, which consisted of soldiers of different origins, including Berbers, Turks, Daylamīs, and Sudanese slaves, there was always a feeling of jealousy and hatred.¹²⁰ This feeling provoked battles between the troops on some occasions, as in 454/1062 and 459/1067.¹²¹

The insecurity of the *viziers*, which generally speaking characterized the Fatimid vizierate,¹²² seems to be another cause for the disorder in Fatimid Egypt. There was continual coming and going of viziers between 454/1062 and 466/1074.¹²³

Another serious challenge faced the Fatimid state was its loss of the support of the Ismā'īlī "diaspora" resulting from the Nizārī schism.¹²⁴ The death of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir in 487/1094, who had reigned for fifty-eight years, provoked a deep split between the Ismā'īlīs over the succession to the *imāmah*.¹²⁵ When al-Mustansir's youngest son Aḥmad was raised to the throne and given the title of al-Musta'ī by the Fatimid Vizier al-Afdal, his eldest brother Nizār, who had been originally nominated by his father as successor, rose in revolt. However, this was

¹¹⁸ In 462/1070, for example, Nāsir al-Dawlah stopped the *khutabah* in the name of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir in Alexandria and the surrounding areas and replaced it by the name of the Abbasid Caliph of the time (see Canard, "Fāṭimids," *EI*², Vol. 2, p. 859).

¹¹⁹ Cf. Grafe, "Fāṭimids," *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 88.

¹²⁰ See Canard, "Fāṭimids," *EI*², Vol. 2, p. 858.

¹²¹ See Canard, "Fāṭimids," *EI*², Vol. 2, p. 858.

¹²² Canard, "Fāṭimids," *EI*², Vol. 2, p. 858.

¹²³ Canard, "Fāṭimids," *EI*², Vol. 2, p. 858.

¹²⁴ Stern, S. M., "al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh," *EI*², p. 440.

¹²⁵ See Jamāl al-Dīn Abī al-Maḥāsīn Yūsūf Ibn Taghrībardī (874/1470), *al-Nunjūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, Cairo: al-Mu'assasah al-Miṣrīyah al-Āmmah li-al-Ta'līf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1964, Vol. 5, pp. 1425.

suppressed and consequently Nizār was put in prison.¹²⁶ As a result, the *imāmah* of al-Musta‘lī was accepted by the majority of the Egyptian Ismā‘īlīs, many in Syria and all of the Yemeni Ismā‘īlīs, while the Persian and some Syrian Ismā‘īlīs were in favour of Nizār, refusing the *imāmah* of his younger brother.

In spite of the above symptoms of decline, the Fatimid state—generally speaking—“enjoyed great prosperity.”¹²⁷ In addition, the Fatimid Caliphs of the time, namely al-Mustanşir who was the richest among the Egyptian caliphs, lived extreme luxurious life.¹²⁸

With regard to the Fatimid administration, the actual power was mainly not in the hands of the caliphs.¹²⁹ This was partially because the three consecutive Fatimid caliphs of the time were placed on the throne while they were mere children.¹³⁰ As a result, there was usually a regent who acted on behalf of the caliph and maintained great power. This led to the interference of women in government, which was an evident feature of the Fatimid state.¹³¹

Moreover, the actual control was in hands of the viziers or military leaders even when the Caliph became mature.¹³² For example, the all-powerful Vizier and *Amīr al-Juyūsh* (head of the troops) Badr al-Jamālī, who was summoned by the Caliph hoping to save the state from downfall upon its serious deterioration, held full control of the civil, judicial and religious affairs.¹³³ The power of the Fatimid viziers and the

¹²⁶ See Madelung, “Ismā‘īliyya,” *EI*², Vol. 4, p. 200.

¹²⁷ Canard, “Fāṭimids,” *EI*², p. 860.

¹²⁸ See Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951.

¹²⁹ See Canard, “Fāṭimids,” *EI*², pp. 857f.

¹³⁰ al-Mustanşir was seven-years old, al-Musta‘lī aged eight, and al-Āmir was only five (see Canard, “Fāṭimids,” *EI*², p. 860).

¹³¹ During the first years of his reign, al-Mustanşir, for instance, was under the regency of his mother (see Grafe, “Fāṭimids,” *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 91).

¹³² Cf. Canard, “Fāṭimids,” *EI*², p. 858.

¹³³ See C. H. Becker, “Badr al-Djamālī,” *EI*, Vol. 1, p. 560.

military leaders was so great to the extent that on some occasions they acted against the will of the caliphs.¹³⁴

2.3.4 The Almoravid Rule:

Shortly before the birth of al-Ghazālī, the Almoravids (al-Murābiṭūn), under the spiritual leadership and the supreme authority of the Mālikī scholar ‘Abd-Allāh b. Yāsīn,¹³⁵ had enthusiastically emerged¹³⁶ from the Western Sahara spreading his *iṣlahī* teaching,¹³⁷ abolishing illegal practices and announcing *jihād* against the infidels, the oppressors and the superficial followers of Islam in that desert, which was inhabited by disputing tribes.¹³⁸

In a relatively short time, the Almoravids succeeded in making the Saharan tribes either under their authority or their allies through diplomacy, missionary work and eventually a number of challenging militant campaigns,¹³⁹ which had been led, in addition to Ibn Yāsīn, initially by the Emir of the army Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar, who was killed in one of the battles in about 448/1056, and then by his brother the Emir Abū Bakr.

¹³⁴ For instance, al-Mustanṣir was forced by the army to accept al-Afdal, son of Badr al-Jamālī, as his Vizier after the death of his father in 488/1095.

¹³⁵ This scholar has been introduced as the founder of the Almoravids, (see, for instance, Doutté, E. “‘Abd-Allāh b. Yāsīn,” *EI*, Vol. 1, p. 32) while Yūsūf b. Tāshufīn has been regarded as the real founder of the Almoravids dynasty (see, for example, Halima Ferhat, “Yūsūf b. Tāshufīn,” *EF*², Vol. 2, p. 356.).

¹³⁶ There is no agreement on the details about the emergence of this movement, as has been correctly observed by Norris (H. T. Norris, “al-Murābiṭūn,” *EF*², Vol. 2, p. 583), but the outline which follows is based on the broadly accepted account of the development of the movement. For a critical treatment of the diverse reports about the Almoravids, see I. Hrbek, and J. Devise, “The Almoravids,” in M. Elfasi, (ed.) *General History of Africa*, California: University of California Press, 1988, Vol. 3, pp. 337-366.

¹³⁷ For his religious teaching, see Nehemia Levtzion, “‘Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn and the Almoravids,” in John Ralph Willis (ed.) *Studies in West African Islamic History*, London: Frank Cass, 1979, Vol. 1, pp. 85-8.

¹³⁸ On the religious and political situations of these tribes prior to the rise of the Almoravids, see Hrbek, “The Almoravids,” *General History of Africa*, Vol. 3, pp. 337-42; and Levtzion, “‘Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn,” *Studies in West African Islamic History*, Vol. 1, pp. 82-5 & 88-90.

¹³⁹ See ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Ṣallābī, *al-Jawhar al-Thamīn bi-Ma‘rifat Dawlat al-Murābiṭīn*, Sharjah: Maktabat al-Ṣahābah, 2001, pp. 54f.

As a response to a complaint which had been sent to Ibn Yāsīn from the inhabitants of Sijilimāsah about the oppression of its emirs, the Almoravids army marched to the country, liberated its people and appointed their own governor.¹⁴⁰ This being done, the trans-Saharan trade routes came under the control of the Almoravids.¹⁴¹

Following this achievement, the Emir Abū Bakr urged his people to control the Maghrib, which had been divided into pretty tribal principalities. Between 448/1056 to 451/1059, they were able to bring under their control strategic territories, including Wādī Dar‘a, the Sūs region and Aghmāt whereupon Abū Bakr married the widow of its ruler, the redoubtable and intelligent queen Zaynab al-Nafrāwīyah,¹⁴² who would soon play a noticeable role in the history of the Almoravids before her death in 464/1071.

In about 451/1059, the Almoravids lost the founder of their movement, Ibn Yāsīn, in a raid against the heretic Bargwāṭa Berbers. With this incident a new phase of the Almoravids movement began. It transformed itself into a dynastic rule.¹⁴³ Although it is reported that Ibn Yāsīn was succeeded by Sulymān b. ‘Adū as a religious reference,¹⁴⁴ who in turn faced his death in 452/1060, but he had no significant role in the history of the Almoravids when compared to Abū Bakr b. ‘Umar¹⁴⁵ who appeared to be the sole ruler of the Almoravids to the extent that the Almoravids golden *dīnārs*¹⁴⁶ were struck in his name.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁰ See Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 6, pp. 216f.

¹⁴¹ See Levtzion, “The Western Maghrib,” *Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 3, p. 333; and Hrbek, “The Almoravids,” *General History of Africa*, Vol. 3, p. 347.

¹⁴² See Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 6, p. 217.

¹⁴³ Cf. Hrbek, “The Almoravids,” *General History of Africa*, Vol. 3, p. 348.

¹⁴⁴ See Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 6, p. 217.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. A. Bel, “Almoravids,” *EI*, Vol. 1, p. 318.

¹⁴⁶ On the Almoravids coinage, see Levtzion, “The Western Maghrib,” *Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 3, p. 336.

¹⁴⁷ See Norris, “al-Murābiṭūn,” *EI*², Vol. 7, p. 585.

Having established himself as a ruler, Ibn ‘Umar made another raid against the Bargwāta, succeeding this time to subjugate these Berbers whose lands extended to the north as far as the Atlantic Ocean.¹⁴⁸ Before finishing the campaign in the Maghrib and the establishment of the Almoravids new capital of Marakesh, Ibn ‘Umar returned to the Sahara in order to resolve a serious dispute between two branches of the Saharan tribes threatening the unity of the Almoravid state, but before that he appointed his cousin Yūsūf b. Tāshfīn as his lieutenant in the Maghrib, committed to him the task of continuing the conquests in the Maghrib and even abounded his new wife Zaynab, after divorcing her, to him.¹⁴⁹ Having intensified the Almoravids army and made it composed of heterogeneous soldiers changing its old character of being dependent only on particular Saharan tribesmen,¹⁵⁰ the new leader gradually completed the conquest of the whole Maghrib up to Tilimsān which fell in 476/1083.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, he continued the construction of Marakesh,¹⁵² the new capital and his base.

It is reported that Ibn Tāshfīn was known as a pious, strong-willed and subtle man,¹⁵³ who was generous to the ‘*ulamā*’, whom he was constantly consulting.¹⁵⁴ Though faithful to his desert customs, Ibn Tāshfīn ruled his subjects nicely,¹⁵⁵ avoiding cruel acts.

On the advice of his wife, Zaynab, he subtly showed his cousin Ibn ‘Umar that he was not willing at all to give him back the supreme authority in the Maghrib when the

¹⁴⁸ See Bel, “Almoravids,” *EI*, Vol. 1, p. 319.

¹⁴⁹ See Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 6, p. 217.

¹⁵⁰ On this new strategy, see Ferhat, “Yūsūf b. Tāshufīn,” *EF*², Vol. 2, p. 356; Levtzion, “The Western Maghrib,” *Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 3, p. 334; and Hrbek, “The Almoravids,” *General History of Africa*, Vol. 3, p. 350.

¹⁵¹ Cf. al-Ṣallābī, *al-Jawhar al-Thamīn*, pp. 69-71.

¹⁵² The construction of this capital was completed during the reign of Ibn Tāshfīn’s son, ‘Alī, see Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 6, p. 218.

¹⁵³ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 329.

¹⁵⁴ Ferhat, “Yūsūf b. Tāshufīn,” *EF*², Vol. 2, p. 356.

¹⁵⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 329.

latter succeeded in re-establishing peace in the Sahara, and returned to the Maghrib, attempting unsuccessfully to resume his previous supremacy.¹⁵⁶ Avoiding conflict, Ibn ‘Umar went back to his original land where he met his death in 480.¹⁵⁷ Upon the death of Ibn ‘Umar, the Almoravids unanimously submit to Ibn Tāshfīn, calling him Amīr al-Muslimīn,¹⁵⁸ reserving the title Amīr al-Mu‘minīn for the Abbasid Caliph, whose title appeared on the Almoravids *dīnārs*,¹⁵⁹ indicating their symbolic loyalty to him.

Due to the religious vigour of Ibn Tāshfīn and his formidable troops, he was called by the Andalusain Muslims to defend their country from the Spanish Christian invasion.¹⁶⁰ After responding successfully to this external challenge, Ibn Tāshfīn found himself with the great opportunity to unite the Andalusian petty states under his rule. As he did in the Maghrib, he succeeded in uniting al-Andalus. “It was under this union that the Muslim civilization of Spain made its greatest impact on Morocco.”¹⁶¹

The achievement of Ibn Tāshfīn was acknowledged with pride not only in the Maghrib, but also in the Mashriq to the extent that the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad legitimized his rule upon his request.¹⁶²

In 500/1106, Ibn Tāshfīn faced his death, passing on to his son ‘Alī¹⁶³, a vast state extending from the Atlantic Ocean to Bijāya (Bougie) in the North-East and to the Sudan in the South-East; and from Ghana in the South to the north of the Iberian peninsula.¹⁶⁴ ‘Alī b. Tāshfīn was acknowledged as Amīr al-Muslimīn throughout the Almoravid provinces, save in Fez where its governor, ‘Alī’s cousin Yahyā b. Abī,

¹⁵⁶ See Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 6, p. 218.

¹⁵⁷ See Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 6, p. 218.

¹⁵⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 330.

¹⁵⁹ See Levtzion, “‘Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn,” *Studies in West African Islamic History*, Vol. 1, pp. 87.

¹⁶⁰ See Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, Vol. 6, p. 220.

¹⁶¹ Levtzion, “The Western Maghrib,” *Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 3, p. 331.

¹⁶² See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 448.

¹⁶³ He was carefully chosen by his father as his successor from four other sons, see Lévi-Provencal,

“‘Alī b. Yūsūf b. Tāshufīn,” *EI*², Vol. 1, p. 389.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Norris, “al-Murābiṭūn,” *EI*², Vol. 7, p. 585; and Bel, “Almoravids,” *EI*, Vol. 1, p. 319.

refused to submit to him.¹⁶⁵ Consequently, ‘Alī marched against him and removed him from his position.¹⁶⁶

During the reign of ‘Alī, which lasted more than the age of al-Ghazālī,¹⁶⁷ the Almoravids rule was troubled by serious challenges¹⁶⁸ and thus it marked the beginning of its decline. The ensuing dramatic events,¹⁶⁹ however, are beyond the scope of this chapter.

2.3.5 The Muslim Rule in al-Andalus:

During the first three decades of al-Ghazālī’s age, there was a state of political confusion in the Iberian Peninsula, al-Andalus, which had started since the central government of the Umayyad Caliphate in Cordoba—the capital and the symbol of unity of al-Andalus throughout its history¹⁷⁰—had become paralysed and eventually collapsed in 422/1031. The Islamic rule there at the time was nothing but a variety of politically disunited petty kingdoms and states,¹⁷¹ which depended on local resources.¹⁷² Their rulers, who were known as *mulūk al-ṭawā’if* (kings of parties or factions), represented varied ethnic groups, namely Berbers, Slavs and local Arab families.¹⁷³ A number of these rulers were mainly driven by their own interests, without much concern for the general benefit of Andalusians as a whole.¹⁷⁴ They

¹⁶⁵ Bel, “‘Alī b. Yūsūf b. Tāshafīn,” *EI*, Vol. 1, p. 290

¹⁶⁶ Bel, “‘Alī b. Yūsūf b. Tāshafīn,” *EI*, Vol. 1, p. 290

¹⁶⁷ His reign ended in 537/1143, see E. Lévi-Provencal, “‘Alī b. Yūsūf b. Tāshufīn,” *EP*², Vol. 1, p. 389.

¹⁶⁸ Namely the rise of the Almohads movement. Cf. Bel, “‘Alī b. Yūsūf b. Tāshafīn,” *EI*, Vol. 1, pp. 290f.

¹⁶⁹ For an outline of these events, see Lévi-Provencal, “‘Alī b. Yūsūf b. Tāshufīn,” *EP*², Vol. 1, pp. 389f.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Andalus*, New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1996, p. 132.

¹⁷¹ See Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākūshī, Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad. *al-Bayān al-Mughrib fī Akhbār Mulūk al-Andalus wa-al-Maghrib*, Paris: Paul Euthner, 1930, Vol. 3, p. 155.

¹⁷² See Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, pp. 29f.

¹⁷³ See D. J. Wasserstein, “Mulūk al-Ṭawā’if: 2. In Muslim Spain,” *EP*², Vol. 7, p. 552; Watt, *A History of Islamic Spain*, Edinburgh University Press, 1965, pp. 91f; and Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 134.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Abd al-Rahmān ‘Alī al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1987, p.325.

tended to seek control of their neighbours¹⁷⁵ and thus grasp more resources.¹⁷⁶ To achieve their interests, they did not refrain from forming depraved alliances with the Christian rulers in the north against their brethren Muslims.¹⁷⁷

There were at least thirty-eight¹⁷⁸ *ṭāifah* kingdoms and states, which were of varied strength and size.¹⁷⁹ The strongest among them was in Seville,¹⁸⁰ which was ruled by Banū ‘Abbād. During the reign of al-Mu‘tamid¹⁸¹ (461/1068-484/1091), the boundaries of this small kingdom were expanded in the west and south-west.¹⁸² Moreover, Cordova itself, which had been ruled—since the collapse of the Caliphate there—by Banū Jahwar¹⁸³ who had always adopted a peaceful policy towards their neighbours,¹⁸⁴ was added to the kingdom of Seville in 461/1069.¹⁸⁵

In the north of al-Andalus, there was the Hūdids kingdom, with its capital in Saragossa, which had been founded by Sulymān b. Muḥammad b. Hūd who had made his five sons governors along the kingdom: Aḥmad in Saragossa, Yūsif in Lleida, Muḥammad in Calatayud, Lub in Huesca and al-Mundhir in Tudela.¹⁸⁶ Following the death of their father, every one acquired a firm grip on his territory. However, Aḥmad, who was extremely ambitious, did not refrain from using evil tricks to get rid of his brothers, in order to control what their possessions; in this he largely succeeded.¹⁸⁷

¹⁷⁵ See al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, p.324.

¹⁷⁶ Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 144.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, pp. 325f

¹⁷⁸ This is according to the list of Wasserstein which is based on data in numerous sources, see David Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party-Kings: Politics and Society in Islamic Spain 1002-1068*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, pp. 83-98.

¹⁷⁹ See al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, pp. 354f.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Watt, *A History of Islamic Spain*, p. 92.

¹⁸¹ His full name is Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād, but he is mostly known by al-Mu‘tamid which is abbreviation of his honorific title al-Mu‘tamid ‘Allā Allāh. He succeeded his father al-Mu‘taḍid (433/1042-461/1068).

¹⁸² See Watt, *A History of Islamic Spain*, p. 92.

¹⁸³ See Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākūshī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, Vol. 3, pp. 185f.

¹⁸⁴ See Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 137.

¹⁸⁵ See al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, p.325.

¹⁸⁶ Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākūshī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, Vol. 3, p. 222.

¹⁸⁷ See Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākūshī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, Vol. 3, pp. 222-4; and al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, p.356.

To the south of this kingdom, there was another *ṭāifah* state with its capital in Valencia, which was ruled by al-Manṣūr ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Muḥammad b. ‘Āmir, who died in 452/1061 and was succeeded by his son al-Muḥafar ‘Abd al-Malik.¹⁸⁸ In 1065, al-Ma’mūn Yahyā b. Dhī al-Nūn, the *ṭāifah* king of Toledo and the father in law of al-Muḥafar, added Valencia to his *ṭāifah* kingdom and replaced his son in law by Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.¹⁸⁹ When the king of Toledo died in 467/1075, he was succeeded by his grandson al-Qādir, Valencia became independent again, but it continued to be ruled by Abū Bakr.¹⁹⁰

These selected examples clearly show the dangerous political disunity of al-Andalus during this period regardless of its preserved religious and cultural unity.¹⁹¹ Although there were still striking Andalusian achievements at the time, noticeably in literary activities and particularly in poetry,¹⁹² the Andalusians of this period experienced regrettable conditions chiefly in political affairs as a result of their disunity. They in short, as Kennedy clearly put it, “were increasingly harassed, both militarily and financially, by the Christian powers to the north, and their rulers seem to have been powerless to respond except by paying large sums of money...to their tormentors.”¹⁹³

As they became aware of the weakness of the Andalusians, the Christian rulers in the north made use of this opportunity to force *ṭāifah* kingdoms to pay excessive

¹⁸⁸ See Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākūshī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, Vol. 3, pp. 164f; and al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, pp. 366f.

¹⁸⁹ See al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, p. 367.

¹⁹⁰ See al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, p. 367.

¹⁹¹ On such unity, see Wasserstein, “Mulūk al-Ṭawāif,” *EP*, Vol. 7, p. 553.

¹⁹² Cf. Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 132; and Watt, *A History of Islamic Spain*, p. 92.

¹⁹³ Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 145.

tributes to them.¹⁹⁴ More grievous experience for the Andalusians of the time was the Christians' aggressive invasion of valuable parts of their lands.¹⁹⁵

In response to this sorrowful and threatening condition, a number of Andalusian sincere 'ulamā' supported by few rulers, or vice versa, made serious efforts to rescue their lands and to revive their unity.¹⁹⁶ Some of these efforts were fruitful. A good example is the successful mobilization of local volunteers for the *jihād* against the invaders of Barbastro, an effort which led to liberation of the city in 475/1065.¹⁹⁷ The most striking effort was the emergency meeting, following the crisis of Toledo, which was summoned by the *tāifah* king of Seville, al-Mu'tamid, and was attended by some 'ulamā' and other *tāifah* rulers.¹⁹⁸ The result of this was an agreement to seek the support of the Almoravids' Emir, Ibn Tāshfīn, and his strong army.¹⁹⁹

Responding to this call, Ibn Tāshfīn crossed with his army from the Maghrib to al-Anadaluṣ where he was joined by some of the *tāifah* rulers and their troops. These joint forces clashed with the Christians army under Alfonso VI at Zallāqah on Friday 12 Rajab 479 (23/10/1086), which led to a decisive defeat of the army of Alfonso VI and its retreat to Toledo with great loss.²⁰⁰ Shortly after this, Ibn Tāshfīn and his army, save a garrison unit, returned to the Maghrib for uncertain reasons.²⁰¹

The defeat of Alfonso VI at Zallāqah did not stop the Christians' growing serious threat in al-Andaluṣ, and this threat was by no means enough reason for the *tāifah*

¹⁹⁴ For example, the ruler of Castile and Leon, Alfonso VI (475/1065-502/1109), was able to force al-Mu'tamid, the king of Seville, to enter into the established tributary system (see Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, pp. 145-9; and Watt, *A History of Islamic Spain*, p. 93).

¹⁹⁵ Barbastro, for instance, was catastrophically invaded by Normans and Franks after desperate resistance from its people in 456/1064 (see Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākūshī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, Vol. 3, pp. 225f; and al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, pp. 359ff). In the same year, the Andalusians lost Coimbra (Wasserstein, *The Rise*, p. 249). More striking was the fall of Toledo in the hands of Alfonso VI in 478/1085 (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 439).

¹⁹⁶ See al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, pp. 336-54.

¹⁹⁷ See Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākūshī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, Vol. 3, p. 227; Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 151; and al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, pp. 362f.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 162; and al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, p. 392.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 162; and al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, p. 392.

²⁰⁰ See Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 163 and al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, pp. 407f.

²⁰¹ Cf. Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 163.

rulers to unite and halt the disputes between them. As a result, a number of letters from the Andalusian notables and *fatāwā* from some *fuqahā'* of the Mashriq, among them was al-Ghazālī, were sent to Ibn Tāshfīn urging him to rescue Islam and Muslims in al-Andalus.²⁰²

In response to this, Ibn Tāshfīn marched to al-Andalus, but this time with two challenging tasks: resisting the Christian threat and dethroning the depraved *tāīfah* kings, a matter in which he was supported by *fatāwā* from some of the Andalusian *fuqahā'*.²⁰³ On both, he performed effectively. Before his death in 500/1106, he could occupy almost all of al-Andalus,²⁰⁴ establishing the Almoravids rule there which lasted more than the age of al-Ghazālī.

2.4 The First Crusade and the Muslim Response:

As shall be examined below, the response of al-Ghazālī to the grave challenge of the Crusaders has prompted heavy criticism. Before examining al-Ghazālī's position on that challenge, it is important to recall its historical context and to know what really happened and what the response of the Muslims of the time in general was in order to fairly and properly examine al-Ghazālī's position in particular. Therefore, the chronological sequence of the Crusading campaign and the Muslim response to it need to be studied closely. However, since by doing so in this chapter would make it to appear disproportionate and would probably be seen as a digression, I have devoted an appendix to undertake this task.

²⁰² See al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, p. 442.

²⁰³ Cf. Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 164.

²⁰⁴ On this, see al-Ḥijjī, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, pp. 442-4.

2.5 The Religio-Intellectual life:

Despite the political disintegration of the Islamic state in the fifth/eleventh century, there was striking intellectual productivity in various provinces of Islamdom. As al-Dīp has pointed out,²⁰⁵ each of the provincial “governments” at the time was eager to have its own *madrasahs*, ‘*ulamā*’, men of letters and poets. Associated with the productivity in the intellectual life, however, there were intellectual disputes among various schools of thought.

The purpose of the present section is to shed some light on the main features of the religio-intellectual life of the time, by outlining the major religious movements and intellectual trends. This is in preparation for discussing al-Ghazālī’s life and thought. Since it is important to bear in mind the background of these movements and trends, their development prior to the age under study will be briefly mentioned. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a full-fledged background of these movements and trends, a determined effort is made to give a satisfactory account of them which should fulfil the intended purpose.²⁰⁶

2.5.1 The Trends of Sufism:

Before al-Ghazālī’s support for Sufism,²⁰⁷ it had gradually gone through a number of phases. It had started as merely various notable and influential trends of asceticism (*zuhd*), scrupulousness (*wara’*) and devotion to divine worship (*‘ibādah*) as represented by a number of ascetic Muslims²⁰⁸ in the first/seventh and second/eighth

²⁰⁵ See al-Dīp’s introduction to al-Juwaynī’s book, *al-Burhān fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Dīb, Doha (Qatar): Maṭābi‘ al-Doha al-Ḥadīthah, 1399 A.H., p. 21.

²⁰⁶ It should not be expected from this account though neither to examine al-Ghazālī’s effect on these trends and movements nor to survey his discourse in the relevant areas of intellectual debates, as this will be dealt with in some detail in the forthcoming chapters.

²⁰⁷ Transformed from the Arabic term *taṣawwuf*.

²⁰⁸ Namely al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), Mālīk b. Dinār (d. 128/745), Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 160/77), Ibn al-Mubārīk (d. 181/797), Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawīyah (d. 185/801) and Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyād (d. 188/803).

centuries. However, it was only during the second/eighth century, in which worldly aspirations increased among Muslims, compared to the earlier generation, when the name *mutaṣawwifah* or *ṣūfiyyah*,²⁰⁹ which stands for the advocates of Sufism, was specially given to those who aspired to divine worship.²¹⁰

With the emergence of purely Sufi works during the third/ninth century,²¹¹ Sufism transformed to “a complex theory of the mystical discipline, and thereafter to a highly developed theosophy.”²¹² Thus, this marked the formation of Sufism as a distinct Islamic discipline,²¹³ called *‘Ilm al-Taṣawwuf* (the knowledge of the Islamic Mysticism) or as more precisely sometimes called *‘Ilm al-Bāṭin* (the knowledge of the inner self) as juxtaposed with *‘Ilm al-Zāhir* (the perceptible knowledge).²¹⁴

In this phase, two distinct trends appeared within Sufism.²¹⁵ The first was a moderate trend, largely ethical in nature, represented by Sufis who attempted to justify their *taṣawwuf* in the light of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.²¹⁶ The second trend, which tended to be philosophical,²¹⁷ was exemplified by extreme Sufis who gave utterances of their claimed very intimate experiences which became known as *shaṭaḥāt*²¹⁸ (ecstatic utterances). This extreme trend is usually linked with²¹⁹ both Abū

For a recent English survey of the devotional trends of these early ascetic Muslims and their diversity, see Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, pp. 10-35.

²⁰⁹ Commonly appears in the English sources as Sufis.

²¹⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, Beirut: Dār Ihyā al-Turāth, n.d, p. 467, trans., Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958, Vol. 3, p. 76.

²¹¹ Such as *Kitāb al-Ri’āyah li-Ḥuqūq Allāh* (Book of Observance of What is Due to God) by al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), *Kitāb al-Kashf wa-al-Bayān* (Book of Unveiling and Elucidation) by Abū sa’id al-Kharrāz (d. ca. 286/899) and the various *rasā’il* (epistles) of al-Junayd (d. 298/910).

²¹² A. J. Arberry, “Mysticism,” in P. M. Holt and et al (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1970, Vol. 2, p. 606.

²¹³ See Abū al-Wafā al-Ghunaymī al-Tiftazānī, *Madhkal ilā al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī*, Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī’, 1989, p. 95.

²¹⁴ See L. Massignon, “Taṣawwuf,” *EF*, Vol. 10, p. 314.

²¹⁵ al-Tiftazānī, *Madhkal*, p. 99.

²¹⁶ al-Tiftazānī, *Madhkal*, p. 99.

²¹⁷ See al-Tiftazānī, *Madhkal*, pp. 99 & 145.

²¹⁸ On this phenomenon, see the book of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Shaṭaḥāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, Kuwait: Wakālat al-Maṭbū’āt, 1978. For al-Ghazālī’s explanation of this term, see below (4.2.2.5).

²¹⁹ See, for example, al-Tiftazānī, *Madhkal*, p. 126.

Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/848),²²⁰ who is reported to say “*subḥānī, subḥānī*”²²¹ (praise be to me, praise be to me), and al-Ḥusayn b. Mansūr al-Ḥallāj, who was executed by the authorities in 309/922 due to his *shataḥāt*,²²² though their ecstatic utterances, as stated by Knysh, “varied considerably and represented two distinctive types of mystical experience.”²²³

It has been widely argued that during this phase some foreign or un-Islamic elements penetrated into the Islamic *taṣawwuf* as is particularly evident in the sayings of the extreme Sufis. Farrūkh, for example, lists four sources of such elements: Greek philosophy, Indian religions, Christianity and even Chinese philosophy.²²⁴ However, such link between the Islamic *taṣawwuf* and foreign sources has been questioned.²²⁵

During the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries, the movement of Sufism entered a third phase in which the Sufi tradition developed considerably with the appearance of various Sufi literature covering all the key aspects of ‘*Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*’.²²⁶ Notable examples of the Sufi works representing this phase and which became classical and original references for the later Sufis are the following:²²⁷

²²⁰ On the contradicting accounts of his date of death, see Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, edited by Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1998, p. 68.

²²¹ See, for instance, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Arabī, n.d, Vol. 1, p. 36.

²²² Such as his saying “*anā al-Ḥaqq*” (I’m the Truth), as stated by al-Ghazālī (al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 36). However, there is no agreement on the reason behind al-Ḥallāj’s execution. Some argue that this was due to his challenging political views (see, for example, ‘Umar Farrkh, *Tārīkh al-Fikr al-‘Arabī ilā Ayyām Ibn Khaldūn*, Beirut: 1981, p. 4742). Ironically, he has been considered by some, particularly by European writers, as a “martyr of mystical love,” (see, for example, Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975, p. 62; and Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, trans., Herbert Mason, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 280f).

²²² Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 140.

²²³ Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 69.

²²⁴ ‘Umar Farrkh, *Tārīkh al-Fikr al-‘Arabī ilā Ayyām Ibn Khaldūn*, Beirut: 1981, p. 474.

²²⁵ See, for instance, Aḥmad Amīn, *Zuhr al-Islām*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Maṣriyyah, 1955, Vol. 4, p. 157.

²²⁶ Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 116.

²²⁷ For an overview of these works and their authors, see Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 118-27.

1. *Kitāb al-Luma‘ fī al-Taṣawwuf* (The Book of Flashes) by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988);
2. *al-Ta‘arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al- Taṣawwuf* (An Introduction to the Ṣūfī Doctrine) by Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990);
3. *Qūt al-Qulūb* (The Nourishment for the Hearts) by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996);
4. *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah* (Generations of the Ṣūfīs) by Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021).

Towards the end of this phase, there was a sort of decline in the originality of Sufism, as witnessed by the distinguished Sufi of the fifth/eleventh century, Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072). In his very famous Sufi book, *al-Risālah* (the Epistle) which was completed in 438/1046 as mentioned in his introduction,²²⁸ he sadly describes this phenomenon by stating that most of the earnest (*al-muḥaqqiqīn*) Sufis had eventually vanished.²²⁹ Moreover, he records his sorrowful observation of the rise of pretend Sufis who “claim that the secrets of the Oneness [of God] have been unveiled to them and that they have been freed from human rules.”²³⁰ Worrying that this would be considered as the path of the original *ṣūfiyyah*,²³¹ he composed his book attempting to revive Sufism in the light of the ideas and practices of the earlier true Sufis, whom he carefully distinguished from pretend Sufis. The book is described as “a carefully designed and admirably complete account of the theoretical structure of Sufism.”²³²

²²⁸ Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah*, edited by ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. al-Sharīf, Cairo: Maṭba‘at Ḥassān, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 20.

²²⁹ al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, Vol. 1, p. 22.

²³⁰ al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, Vol. 1, p. 22.

²³¹ al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, Vol. 1, p. 22.

²³² A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1969, p.71.

The *Risālah* of al-Qushayrī “...carries a clear apologetic message, casting Sufism as a legitimate and respectable Islamic science that is in complete harmony with the precepts of the *Sharī‘ah*.”²³³ Thus, al-Qushayrī on this regard, al-Tiftazānī argues,²³⁴ paved the way for al-Ghazālī who adopted the same idea.

Al-Ghazālī’s famous strong announcement that the method of the *ṣūfiyyah* is the soundest method,²³⁵ after experiencing and examining various branches of knowledge and after receiving outstanding recognition,²³⁶ and his serious effort to prove this in the light of the *Sharī‘ah*²³⁷ can be considered a turning point in the history of the movement of Sufism. No wonder he, as Knysh puts it, “...is seen by many as Sufism’s greatest champion.”²³⁸

Like al-Qushayrī, al-Ghazālī attacked most of the contemporary Sufis, accusing them of pretence and falsehood and revealing their faults.²³⁹ In addition, he criticized and rejected the *shataḥāt* of the extreme Sufis, considering them as harmful innovations.²⁴⁰ Therefore, he can be classified as one of the moderate Sufis and in fact he has been considered as “the master of moderate medieval mysticism.”²⁴¹

Although it is true that the movement of Sufism had succeeded in attracting great champions like al-Ghazālī, it is equally true that there have been a number of very noticeable critics and opponents of Sufis, even those who have been widely classified

²³³ Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 131.

²³⁴ al-Tiftazānī, *Madhkal*, p. 148.

²³⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, eds. Jamīl Ṣulībā & Kāmil ‘Ayyād, Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1967, p. 106.

²³⁶ As we shall discuss in Chapter three.

²³⁷ See, in particular, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 3, pp. 23-6.

²³⁸ Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 140.

²³⁹ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 2, p. 250 & Vol. 3, p. 404.

²⁴⁰ See, for instance, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 36.

²⁴¹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975, p. 55.

as moderate, since its early formative period.²⁴² The distinguished Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) is a case in point. He is reported to warn of his contemporary, the renowned Sufī al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) by stating: “Don’t be deceived because he lowers his head. He is a bad person. You cannot know him unless you have tested him. Don’t talk to him, and don’t pay respect to him.”²⁴³ Similarly, Abū Zar‘ah used to warn from the books of al-Muḥāsibī.²⁴⁴

The anti-Sufi trend continued to exist during the age of al-Ghazālī. This is especially evident in the Maghrib where the Almoravids appeared to oppose the movement of Sufism, “despite a certain Sufī flavour in the lifestyle of the Saharan men in their early *ribāṭs*.”²⁴⁵

More striking is the anti-Sufi movement which existed in al-Andalus during the Almoravid rule there. The rulers as well as some of the Andalusian ‘*ulamā*’ were involved in this movement, which led to the burning of al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’*. However, there have been considerable controversies over the reasons behind this extremely hostile reaction.²⁴⁶

²⁴² For a recent collection of papers on the polemics between Ṣūfīs and anti-Ṣūfīs throughout the Islamic history, see Frederick De Jong and Bernd Radtke (eds.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, Leiden: Brill, 1999.

²⁴³ Quoted in Josef Van Ess, “Sufism and its Opponents,” in Frederick De Jong and Bernd Radtke (eds.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, p. 28.

²⁴⁴ Abū al-Faraj Abd-al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, Riyadh: Dār al-Mughnī, 2000, p. 186.

²⁴⁵ Norris, “al-Murābiṭūn,” *EF*, Vol. 7, p. 587.

²⁴⁶ See Muṣṭafā Binsibā‘, “*Iḥrāq Kitāb al-Iḥyā’ lil-al-Ghazālī wa-‘Ilāqatuh bi-al-Ṣīrā’ Bayn al-Murābiṭīn wa-al-Mutaṣawwifah*,” ; and Maribel Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus,” in Frederick De Jong & Bernd Radtke (eds.) *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, pp. 191-7.

2.5.2 The School of the *Falāsifah*:²⁴⁷

By the second half of the fifth/eleventh century, the activity of the *falāsifah* in Islamdom had already taken the shape of an intellectual school. Its foreign seeds had been sown in the productive Islamic soil through Arabic translation²⁴⁸ of Hellenic philosophical works,²⁴⁹ a process which was seriously developed²⁵⁰ during the reign of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Manṣūr (137/754-159/775) and then it was systematically progressed during the reign of al-Ma'mūn (198//813-217/833).²⁵¹

The precursor²⁵² of the school and “the earliest systematic protagonist of Hellenism”²⁵³ was al-Kindī (d. c. 256/873), who is called the *faylasūf al-‘Arab* (philosopher of the Arabs)²⁵⁴ and is said to have effectively participated in the translation process.²⁵⁵ He was followed by a number of adherents of Greek philosophy who participated considerably in the development of *falsafah* in Islamdom, namely al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), who, as Ibn al-Nadīm states, “was one of the leaders in

²⁴⁷ This Arabic word—sing. *faylasūf*—refers to the adherents of *falsafah* which is used in this context as a technical term referring to all branches of philosophical sciences of Greek origin as had been established and developed in Islamdom since the second/eight century. This is usually called Muslim Philosophy in the English modern sources (see B. Carra de Vaux, “Falsafa,” *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 48) or Islamic philosophy (see, for example, W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962) and in the Arabic modern sources it is called *al-falsafah al-Islāmīyah* (see, for instance, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Marḥabā, *Min al-Falsafah al-Yūnānīyah ilā al-Falsafah al-Islāmīyah*, Beirut: Manshūrāt ‘Uydāt, 1983, pp. 336f). In the Muslim classical sources, *falsafah* does not seem to be given an Islamic label (see, for instance, Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, Beirut: Dār Ihyā al-Turāth, n.d., pp. 480f). Since this labelling has always been controversial, it is avoided here.

²⁴⁸ Mostly done by Syriac-speaking Arab Christian translators (see Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, p. 9).

²⁴⁹ Such as those which are ascribed to Socrates, Aristotle and Plato.

²⁵⁰ According to Ibn al-Nadīm, the Umayyad prince Khalid b. Yazīd b. Mu‘āwīyah, who was called the “Wise Man of the Family of Marwān,” initiated the process of translation into Arabic by commanding a group of Greek philosophers to translate books on alchemy from Greek and Coptic into Arabic (See Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Gustav Flügel, Leipzig (Germany) : Verlag Von F. C. W. Vogel, 1871, p. 242, trans., Bayard Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, Vol. 2, p. 581). Fakhry, however, states that “it is certain that the process of translating scientific and philosophical works did not begin in earnest until the ‘Abbāsīd period, and in particular until the reign of al-Manṣūr...” (see Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 16-8).

²⁵¹ See Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 18-24.

²⁵² Cf. B. Carra de Vaux, “Falsafa,” *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 48; and Albert Hourani, *A History of Arab Peoples*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1991, p. 172.

²⁵³ Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 113.

²⁵⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, p. 255, trans., Bayard Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, p. 615.

²⁵⁵ See Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 82f.

the field of logic and the ancient sciences,”²⁵⁶ and Ibn Sīnā²⁵⁷ (d. 428/1037) who, according to de Vaux, “placed the sum total of Greek wisdom at the disposal of the educated Muslim world in a readily intelligible fashion with his own ingenious developments of it.”²⁵⁸

Since the early stages of the emergence of this school, there had been an ongoing conflict between the *falāsifah* and the *mutakallimūn*, particularly the Ash‘arīs,²⁵⁹ who were engaged in refuting various philosophical theories which they found incompatible with Islamic doctrine.²⁶⁰ Some of the *falāsifah* in their turn had attempted seriously to reconcile between *falsafah* and Islam.²⁶¹ This, however, had not resolved the serious disagreement between the two parties, which seems inevitable because, as Bello rightly pointed out, “their sources of authoritative knowledge and their educational background are divergent in essence and nature.”²⁶²

Despite the attack of the *mutakallimūn*, *falsafah* continued to be influential during the age under study, particularly among educated Muslims, to the extent that a group of them, as al-Ghazālī himself sadly observed in his time, abandoned all the Islamic duties as a result of being influenced by the *falāsifah*.²⁶³ What intensified such influence of the *falāsifah*, according to al-Ghazālī, was the weak arguments of those

²⁵⁶ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, p. 263, trans., Bayard Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, p. 629.

²⁵⁷ Known in English sources as Avicenna.

²⁵⁸ B. Carra de Vaux, “Falsafa,” *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 49.

²⁵⁹ As pointed out by Arnaldez, “since strictly orthodox Sunni Islam has never welcomed philosophic thought, *falsafah* developed from the first especially among thinkers influenced by the sects, and particularly by the Shī‘ā; and this arose from a certain prior sympathy, from such sects having absorbed gnostic ideas, some related to Hellenistic types of gnosis, others to Iranian types...” (R. Arnaldez, “Falsafa,” *EI*², Vol. 2, p. 769).

²⁶⁰ Cf. Bello, *The Medieval Islamic Controversy*, pp. 3f.

²⁶¹ See Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 228.

²⁶² Bello, *The Medieval Islamic Controversy*, pp. 3f.

²⁶³ al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, ed. Sulymān Duniyā, Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1980, p. 74, trans., see Sabih Ahmad Kamali, *al-Ghazali’s Tahafut al-Falāsifah*, Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963, p. 2.

who opposed them.²⁶⁴ This is why he criticized the approach of the *mutakallimūn*, before him, in refuting *falsafah* by stating that what they had to say in their books “...was nothing but obscure scattered remarks, patently inconsistent and false, which could not conceivably hoodwink an ordinary intelligent person, to say nothing of one familiar with the subtleties of the philosophical sciences.”²⁶⁵ At the same time, he criticized those who presumed that the way to defend Islam from the ‘evil’ of *falāsifah* was to reject all their sciences.²⁶⁶ Moreover, he argued that none of the ‘ulamā had directed his endeavour to fully and deeply grasp *falsafah* in order to be eligible to undertake the task of refuting its unsound elements.²⁶⁷ To fill this gap, al-Ghazālī composed his book *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Collapse or Inconsistency of the Philosophers) which is a thoroughgoing refutation of particular metaphysical theories²⁶⁸ of ancient philosophers, after achieving “a profound knowledge of the doctrine of his opponents,”²⁶⁹ as is evident in his book *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, which was written before the *Tahāfut*, as we shall further discuss in the following chapter.

2.5.3 The Movement of the Bāṭiniyah:

The name of the Bāṭiniyah was very noticeable during the age of al-Ghazālī, not only in the political field, but also in the religious and intellectual circles. Among the

²⁶⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 120, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 90, & W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, translation of al-Ghazālī’s *al-Munqidh* and *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1953, p. 73.

²⁶⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 74, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 61, & W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, translation of al-Ghazālī’s *al-Munqidh* and *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1953, p. 29.

²⁶⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 80, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 64, & W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, translation of al-Ghazālī’s *al-Munqidh* and *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1953, p. 34.

²⁶⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 74, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 61, & W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, translation of al-Ghazālī’s *al-Munqidh* and *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1953, p. 29.

²⁶⁸ His reaction to these as well as his position from other philosophical sciences will be further discussed below (4.2.2.5).

²⁶⁹ Shlomo Pines, ‘Islamic Philosophy,’ in Sarah Stroumsa (ed.) *Studies in the History of Arabic Philosophy: The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1996, Vol. 3, p. 36.

various appellations given to the Ismā‘īlī sect²⁷⁰ over different ages,²⁷¹ “*al-Bāṭiniyah*,” according to al-Sharastānī (d. 548/1153),²⁷² was the most popular one, particularly in Iraq. The reason behind this appellation is explained by al-Ghazālī himself as follows:

“They were thus named simply because of their claim that the *ẓawāhir* [pl. of *ẓāhir*: exoteric meaning] of the Qur’ān and the Traditions have *bawāṭin* [pl. of *bāṭin*: esoteric meaning] analogous, with respect to the *ẓawāhir*, to kernel with respect to the shell; and the *ẓawāhir* by their forms instil in the ignorant and foolish clear forms, but in the view of the intelligent and discerning they are symbols and indications of specific truths.”²⁷³

In order to educe the *bāṭin* from the *ẓāhir*, the Bāṭinīs developed a distinct type of *t’awīl* which, as Hodgson correctly and shortly describes, “was symbolical or allegoristic in its method, sectarian in its aims, hierarchically imparted, and secret.”²⁷⁴

Another name for this sect which is worth mentioning is al-Ta‘līmīyah, so called because, as al-Ghazālī explains, “the basis of their doctrine is the invalidation of *al-ra’y* (individual reasoning) and the invalidation of the exercise of intellects and the call to men to *al-ta‘līm* (instruction or learning) from the infallible Imām.”²⁷⁵ This name, according to al-Ghazālī,²⁷⁶ was the most appropriate in his time because the contemporary Bāṭinīs emphasised this idea in their propaganda.

In the age of al-Ghazālī, the movement of the Bāṭiniyah was greatly stimulated by the activity of Ḥasan al-Ṣabāḥ (d. 518/1124) who travelled widely in Persian regions,

²⁷⁰ It branched off from Shiite and differed from other sub-divisions by the belief in the *Imāmah* of Ismā‘īl (d. 143/760), the eldest son of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (see Abū al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Aḥmad al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), *al-Milal wa-al-Niḥal*, Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Mutanabbī, 1992, pp. 81f, trans., A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn, *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa’l-Niḥal*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1984, pp.164ff).

²⁷¹ al-Ghazālī counted ten appellations given to this sect and he gave a particular reason for each one (al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā’ih al-Bāṭiniyah*, pp. 21-5, trans., McCarthy, “*Faḍā’ih*,” pp. 156-8).

²⁷² al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, p. 82, trans., Kazi and Flynn, *Muslim Sects*, p. 165.

²⁷³ al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā’ih*, p. 21, trans., McCarthy, “*Faḍā’ih*,” p. 181.

²⁷⁴ Hodgson, “Baṭiniyya,” *EF*², Vol. 1, p. 1098.

²⁷⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā’ih*, p. 25, trans., McCarthy, “*Faḍā’ih*,” pp. 182f.

²⁷⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā’ih*, p. 25, trans., McCarthy, “*Faḍā’ih*,” pp. 183.

acting as a missionary and thus winning numerous partisans.²⁷⁷ This activity transformed into a widespread dangerous revolt in al-Ghazālī's age, when the followers of al-Ṣabāḥ carried out assassination missions in various regions, targeting particularly active Sunni political officials and *'ulamā'* alike.²⁷⁸

In addition to its threat to the Sunni political system, shown above, this movement was a real challenge for the Sunni *'ulamā'* of the time as well. The seriousness of this challenge is evident in the number of al-Ghazālī's books which were devoted to refute their doctrine, as we shall discuss below.

2.5.4 The Status of *'Ilm al-Kalām*:

In this context, *'Ilm al-Kalām*²⁷⁹ is used to refer to the discipline which, as defined by Ibn Khaldūn,²⁸⁰ “involves arguing (*al-hijāj*) with rational proofs (*bi-al-adillah al-aqlīyah*) in defence of the articles of faith (*al-'aqāid al-imānīyah*) and refuting innovators (*al-mubtadi'ah*) who deviate in their dogmas from the early Muslims (*al-salaf*) and the *Ahl al-Sunnah*²⁸¹.” Before the contribution of al-Ghazālī in the field, *'Ilm al-Kalām* in this sense had established itself as a distinct branch of Islamic knowledge.

²⁷⁷ See W. Madelung, “Ismā‘īliyya,” *EF*², Vol. 4, p. 199; and Cl. Hurat, “Ismā‘īliyya,” *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 550.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, p. 58.

²⁷⁹ The Arabic term *'ilm* means “a branch of knowledge” while the term *al-kalām* literally means “word or speech”. As an approximate rendering, it, as Gardet pointed out, is often translated as “theology” (L. Gardet, “‘Ilm al-Kalām,” *EF*², Vol. 3, p. 1141), but this seems a misleading translation.

²⁸⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth, n.d, p. 458, trans., Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958, p. 34.

²⁸¹ This term is translated by Rosenthal as ‘Muslim orthodoxy’ (Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, p. 34) but this is liable to prove misleading. To avoid this, it is better to transliterate it and consider it as a technical term. While the Mu‘tazilah called themselves *Ahl al-‘Adl wa-al-Tawḥīd*, the name *Ahl al-Sunnah* was given to those who opposed them, particularly the Ash‘arīyah and the Māturīdīyah (See Aḥmad Amīn, *Zuhr al-Islām*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Maṣrīyah, 1955, Vol. 4, p. 96).

It is difficult, as correctly noted by Gardet,²⁸² to precisely know when *‘Ilm al-Kalām* became a distinct discipline. It can be generally stated, however, that it had gradually developed as a result of the disputation on certain details of Islamic faith in the first half of the second/eighth century which led to the rise of the Mu‘tazilah and other theological sects as separate entities.²⁸³

The one who has been regarded as the leader (*imām*)²⁸⁴ of the *mutakallimūn*²⁸⁵ among the Sunnīs, is Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (260/873-324/935), the founder of the Ash‘arīyah theological school, for he intensively used *kalām* or rational argument to the defence of Islamic faith and to refute the innovations of the Mu‘tazilah and the Imāmīyah,²⁸⁶ though he was not the first who adopted this approach.²⁸⁷ His approach was followed by numerous disciples and followers,²⁸⁸ mainly adherents of the Shāfi‘īyah School of *fiqh*, who became known as the Ashā‘irah.²⁸⁹

Al-Ash‘arī’s approach in *kalām* was then considerably enhanced by al-Qādī Abū Bakr al-Baqilānī (d. 403/1013), who “became the head of the approach”²⁹⁰ at the time. By al-Baqilānī’s important contribution, which included the introduction of rational

²⁸² Gardet, “‘Ilm al-Kalām,” *EF*², Vol. 3, p. 1141.

²⁸³ Cf. Shlomo Pines, “Islamic Philosophy,” in Sarah Stroumsa (ed.) *Studies in the History of Arabic Philosophy: The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1996, Vol. 3, p. 11.

²⁸⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth, n.d, p. 464, trans., Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958, p. 49.

²⁸⁵ This technical term, sing. *mutakallim*, refers to the practitioners of *kalām*.

²⁸⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth, n.d, p. 465, trans., Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958, p. 50.

²⁸⁷ See Montgomery Watt, “al-Ash‘arī, Abu’l-Ḥasn,” *EF*², Vol. 1, p. 694.

²⁸⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth, n.d, p. 465, trans., Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958, p. 50.

²⁸⁹ At the same time, besides the Ash‘arīyah, there was the Māturīdīyah school, which was named after its founder Abū Maṣū‘ūr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Samarqandī al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) and followed by the Ḥanafīs; both schools represented the Sunnis at the time (see D. B. Macdonald, “Māturīdī,” *EI*, Vol. 3, p. 414; and W. Madelung, “Māturīdīyya,” *EF*², Vol. 6, pp. 847f).

²⁹⁰ This quote is my translation of Ibn Khaldūn’s statement in the *Muqaddimah* (p. 465): “*taṣadara lil-imāmah fī tarīqatihim*,” which strikingly mistranslated by Rosenthal (p. 50) as “he attacked the problem of the imamate in accordance with the way they had approached it!”

premises on which arguments and speculation on the subject depend,²⁹¹ this approach, according to Ibn Khaldūn's evaluation, "was perfected and became one of the best speculative disciplines and religious sciences."²⁹²

Despite such perfection, the approach was by no means universally accepted even within Sunnī schools. The use of rational arguments was considered by the Ḥanbalīs as an objectionable innovation.²⁹³ The Mālikī School of *fiqh*, which was dominant in the Maghrib, did not welcome theological speculation.²⁹⁴

In the second half of the fifth/eleventh century, a new approach of *kalām* was adopted and it was called the approach of the later *mutakallimūn* (*ṭarīqat al-muta'akhhirīn*).²⁹⁵ Unlike the earlier *mutakallimūn*, the practitioners of the new approach heavily employed logic in their argumentation, considering it as a norm and yardstick for arguments in general and not restricted to philosophical sciences.²⁹⁶ With the help of this yardstick, they, as Ibn Khaldūn pointed out,²⁹⁷ rejected many of the basic premises which the earlier *mutakallimūn* had established. Moreover, to refute the *falāsifah*,²⁹⁸ who became serious opponents of the later *mutakallimūn*²⁹⁹ after the tide of the Mu'tazilah had receded,³⁰⁰ they had to "recourse to the weapons which their rationalist opponents had borrowed from the Greeks."³⁰¹

The forerunner of this new approach was al-Ghazālī's teacher Imām al-Ḥaramayn Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085).³⁰² Although Ibn Khaldūn states that al-

²⁹¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth, n.d, p. 465, trans., Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958, p. 50.

²⁹² Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 465, trans., Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, p. 51.

²⁹³ Watt, "al-Ash'arī, Abu'l-Ḥasn," *EF*², Vol. 1, p. 696.

²⁹⁴ Albert Hourani, *A History of Arab Peoples*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1991, p. 167.

²⁹⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 466, trans., Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, p. 52.

²⁹⁶ See Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, pp. 465f, trans., Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, pp. 51f.

²⁹⁷ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, pp. 465f, trans., Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, p. 52.

²⁹⁸ This technical term is discussed below (2.5.2).

²⁹⁹ Cf. Gardet, "Ilm al-Kalām," *EF*², Vol. 3, p. 1146.

³⁰⁰ See Hourani, *A History of Arab Peoples*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1991, p. 166.

³⁰¹ Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 6.

³⁰² Gardet, "Ilm al-Kalām," *EF*², Vol. 3, p. 1145.

Ghazālī was the first to write in accordance with this new approach, traces of such development, as pointed out by Watt,³⁰³ appear in al-Juwaynī's works. Regardless of whether or not he initiated this approach, al-Ghazālī had a distinguished contribution in this field as we shall discuss below.

During the time of al-Ghazālī, *kalām* attracted a lot of adverse publicity. This is evident in the occurrence of dreadful incidents and trials, particularly in Baghdad, as a result of heated disputes over *kalām* even within the Sunnīs themselves, not to mention opposing sects. Two such incidents, which are reported by Ibn al-Athīr, are extremely striking and thus worth mentioning. The first was in 469/1077 when Abū Naṣr, son of Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, visited Baghdad and held preaching sessions in the Nizāmīyah Madrasah.³⁰⁴ Because he supported the school of al-Ash‘arī and his followers became numerous, his Ḥanbalī opponents attacked the Market of the Madrasah, killing a number of people.³⁰⁵

In 470/1077, the second incident occurred when the preacher al-Sharīf Abū al-Qāsim al-Bakrī al-Maghribī, who was also Ash‘arī, was appointed by Nizām al-Mulk in the Nizāmīyah of Baghdad.³⁰⁶ In his preaching there, he would insult the Ḥanbalīs by saying “((Solomon was no unbeliever, but the devils disbelieved))³⁰⁷; by Allāh Aḥmad [i.e. Ibn Ḥanbal] was no unbeliever, but his followers have disbelieved.”³⁰⁸ Consequently, fights and trials occurred between him and his followers on one side and the Ḥanbalīs in the other.³⁰⁹

These and similar incidents clearly show how serious the effect of the publicity of *kalām* was during that time.

³⁰³ See Watt, “al-Ash‘arī, Abu’l-Ḥasn,” *EP*², Vol. 1, p. 696.

³⁰⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 413, trans., D. S. Richards, *The Annals*, p. 193.

³⁰⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 413, trans., D. S. Richards, *The Annals*, p. 193.

³⁰⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 428, trans., D. S. Richards, *The Annals*, p. 207.

³⁰⁷ Quoting the Qur’anic *āyah* [Q: 2:102].

³⁰⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 428, trans., D. S. Richards, *The Annals*, p. 207.

³⁰⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 428, trans., D. S. Richards, *The Annals*, p. 207.

2.5.5 The Condition of *‘Ilm al-Fiqh*:

By the age of al-Ghazālī, *‘Ilm al-Fiqh* (the Discipline of Islamic Jurisprudence) had passed through its formative stages and had become mature and distinct Islamic scholarship.³¹⁰ Only four *madhāhib*—sing. *madhhab*—of *fiqh* (schools of jurisprudence) had continued to be followed and considered as authoritative by the Sunnīs: the Mālikī, the Ḥanafī, the Shāfi‘ī and the Ḥanbalī schools.³¹¹

It has been repeatedly stated and commonly accepted that the gate of *ijtihād*³¹² had been closed since the fourth/tenth century with the agreement of the *fuqhā’*—sing. *faqīh*—(Muslim jurists) themselves.³¹³ This, however, has been seriously questioned by Hallaq. By systematically and chronologically examining original works of *fiqh* belonging to the fourth/tenth century onwards, he has definitively proven that the activity of *ijtihād* had continued to be used in developing positive rules by the capable *fuqhā’*, who were known as the *mujtahidūn*,³¹⁴ in each *madhhab* throughout the first fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries.³¹⁵

During the age of al-Ghazālī, there were a number of highly qualified *fuqhā’*, such as—in addition to al-Ghazālī himself—Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Dāmigānī (d. 478 A.H.), ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī (d. 483 A.H.), Abū al-Walīd Sulymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī (d. 494), Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Rushd al-

³¹⁰ For the formative stages, see Mustafā Aḥmad al-Zarqā, *al-Madkhal al-Fiqhī al-‘Ām*, Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1998, Vol. 1, pp. 159-202; and Muḥammad al-Khudārī, *Tarīkh al-Tashrī‘ al-Islāmī*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, n.d., pp. 5-215.

³¹¹ See, for instance, Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 448 & 456, trans., Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, Vol. 3, p. 8 & 31.

³¹² As Hallaq precisely put it, “*ijtihād* is the exertion of mental energy in the search for a legal opinion to the extent that the faculties of the jurist become incapable of further effort,” (Wael B. Hallaq, “Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?” in Wael B. Hallaq, *Law and Legal Theory in Classical and Medieval Islam*, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1994, Part V, p. 3).

³¹³ See, for example, Joseph Schacht, “Law and Justice,” in P. M. Holt and et al (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Islām*, pp. 563f; similarly in his book *An Introduction To Islamic Law*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964, pp. 69f; and al-Zarqā, *al-Madkhal al-Fiqhī*, Vol. 1, p. 203.

³¹⁴ Sing. *mujtahid*, i.e. practitioner of *ijtihād*.

³¹⁵ Hallaq, “Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?” in Hallaq, *Law*, Part V, pp. 10-20.

Qurṭubī (d. 525 A.H.), Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Umar al-Timīmī al-Māzirī (d. 526 A.H.), Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī al-Fayrūzabādī al-Shīrāzī (d. 476 A.H.), Ibn al-Ṣabbāg Abū Naṣr ‘Abd al-Sāyid b. Muḥammad (d. 477 A.H.), Abū al-Ma‘ālī ‘Abd al-Malik ‘Abd Allāh al-Juwaynī (d. 487 A.H.), and Ibn ‘Aqīl. Some of them considered themselves as capable *mujtahidūn* within the principles of the schools to which they belonged, and they were regarded by others as such.³¹⁶ They produced outstanding extended *fiqh* literature which characterized that period.³¹⁷

This period was also characterised by the prevalence of intense debates among *fuqahā’* of various *madhāhib*, especially between Ḥanafīs and Shāfi‘īs,³¹⁸ and often in the presence of viziers and nobles, particularly in Irāq and Khurāsān.³¹⁹ In these debates, each *faqīh* aimed to prove the correctness of his respective *madhab*, to clarify its methodology, to defend the principles of its rules against refutation and to highlight the pitfalls of his opponent *madhab* in the light of certain rules.³²⁰ This activity, in which al-Ghazālī himself was seriously and skilfully engaged during a particular time of his life,³²¹ was called the art of *al-khilāf wa-al-jadal* (polemics and dialectics).³²²

Although this intellectual activity produced interesting subtle scholarship,³²³ it, as al-Ghazālī disapprovingly observed,³²⁴ often resulted in evil consequences such as envy, rancour, backbiting and haughtiness, not to say the engagement of those who

³¹⁶ Hallaq, “Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?” in Hallaq, *Law*, Part V, p. 15.

³¹⁷ al-Zarqā, *al-Madkhal al-Fiḥī*, Vol. 1, pp. 208-9.

³¹⁸ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 42.

³¹⁹ See, for example, Muḥammad al-Khuḍarī, *Tarīkh al-Tashrī‘ al-Islāmī*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, n.d., p. 226; and al-Zarqā, *al-Madkhal*, Vol. 1, p. 209.

³²⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 456, trans., Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, Vol. 3, p. 31.

³²¹ As shall be discussed in Chapter three.

³²² Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, pp. 456-7, trans., Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, Vol. 3, pp. 31-4.

³²³ al-Zarqā, *al-Madkhal*, Vol. 1, p. 209.

³²⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 1, pp. 45-7, trans., Nabīh Amīn Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, translation of *Kitāb al-‘Ilm* of al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’*, New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, n.d., pp. 110-6.

lack self-restraint in impatient cursing and fierce quarrels. Thus, generally speaking it was motivated by fanaticism, rather than scholarly purposes.³²⁵

³²⁵ al-Zarqā, *al-Madkhal*, Vol. 1, p. 209.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LIFE-EXPERIENCE OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ

3.1 Introduction:

Al-Ghazālī lived for fifty-five years during which he had a very rich and complex experience. This chapter discusses his life-experience. The principal aim of this discussion is to answer the following key question: in which stage of his multi-stage life did he really seek *iṣlāh*, and which of his numerous works represent that stage? Answering this question is of a real significance to the present thesis as the subsequent discussions will be founded on it. To satisfactorily and justifiably answer this question, I need to examine closely the whole life-experience of al-Ghazālī. In this examination I will rely rather heavily on al-Ghazālī's own honest avowals about his spiritual and intellectual development reported in his undoubtedly authentic book *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (Deliverance from Error) in addition to the primary available biographies of him.

Before I proceed further, however, I shall pause for a while to clear up the specious doubts which have been cast by al-Baqarī on the truthfulness of al-Ghazālī in *al-Munqidh*. In his book entitled *I'tirāfāt al-Ghazālī* (The Confessions of al-Ghazālī), which frustratingly discusses in detail al-Ghazālī's account in *al-Munqidh*, al-Baqarī bluntly concludes that this account is mostly not true and generally does not correspond to the historical reality; it is rather by and large a fictional didactic story which al-Ghazālī wished to be his; a story composed of chiefly idealistic confessions with few truthful ones from al-Ghazālī. Thus, the book—al-Baqarī spuriously

argues—should no longer be considered as a reliable source neither for his own intellectual history nor for his personal spiritual evolution.¹ In his book, al-Baqarī insistently wants to convince his reader that al-Ghazālī, would have sought, “...very consciously and often very judiciously, to leave to posterity a fictional image of his personality and to give an interpretation of his life which give him an unrivalled place in all the domains of thought and of the life of the Muslims of his time.”²

I will closely deal with al-Baqarī’s extremely critical discussions of al-Ghazālī’s book throughout this chapter, but I ought to express a number of general reservations right at the outset:

1. The approach of al-Baqarī is subjectively selective, which seems intentional; accepting as truth al-Ghazālī’s confessions, which support his preconception, while rejecting his other declarations contradicting with his own speculation.
2. Doubting al-Ghazālī’s honesty by relying solely on extremely critical reading of a single book, i.e., the *Munqidh*, as al-Baqarī has done, is far from being a sound approach.
3. In his discussions, al-Baqarī has totally ignored the biographies of al-Ghazālī, namely the one by his contemporary Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Ghāfir b. Ismā‘īl al-Fārisī, and other historical evidences which strongly prove the truthfulness of al-Ghazālī’s account, as shall be seen shortly.
4. The overall structure of al-Baqarī’s argument is harmfully affected by, as Abd-El-Jalil perfectly puts it, “...its apriorism, its contrived [systematique]

¹ ‘Abd al-Dāym Abū al-‘Aṭā al-Baqarī, *I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍah al-‘Arabīyah, 1971, pp. 167-9.

² The quote is a good summary for the explicit message which al-Baqarī repeatedly puts across to his reader; it is originally from an article for J. M. Abd-El-Jalil in *Autor de la Sincérité d’Al-Gazzālī*. Vol. I. pp. 57-72, Damascus: Mélanges Louis Massignon, 1956, which is a counter argument of al-Baqarī’s book, and it is cited in the introduction of McCarthy to the *Deliverance from Error*, p. 24.

character, its aggressiveness, its “lacunae,” its paralogisms, and “the geometric spirit” of its author.”³

Therefore, I side with McCarthy’s comment in totally agreeing with Abd-El-Jalil’s conclusion regarding al-Baqarī’s doubts that “nothing of that authorizes a doubt about Ghazālī’s sincerity. The human, intellectual and spiritual value of the *Munqidh* remains firm, though it cannot *of itself alone* serve as a historical source.”⁴

Having said this, I feel confident then to use the *Munqidh* as a primary source in this thesis and particularly in this chapter. However, since, as McCarthy rightly points out “Ghazālī’s primary purpose in writing seems to have been didactic, not to give a detailed and precise historical account of himself,”⁵ I must not rely solely on the book, but rather I shall consult also the primary available biographies of al-Ghazālī whenever the need arises.

3.2 Dependent Learning and Premature Authorship:

The first reported learning experience of al-Ghazālī started when his poor and pious father, who—regretting that he himself was illiterate—heartily wished that his only two young sons Muḥammad and Aḥmad become learned and educated, charged—on his death—a Sufī friend⁶ to educate and take care of them.⁷ Following the death of the father, the Sufī began the task until the little money which had been left by the father for this purpose was exhausted.⁸ Consequently, the Sufī sent the two brothers to a *madrāsah* where free food and accommodation were provided in

³ Cited in the introduction of McCarthy to *Deliverance from Error*, p. 26.

⁴ Cited in the introduction of McCarthy to *Deliverance from Error*, p. 26.

⁵ McCarthy’s introduction to *Deliverance from Error*, p. 26.

⁶ Unnamed in the sources.

⁷ See, al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 102.

⁸ See, al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 102.

addition to teaching.⁹ Referring to this incident, al-Ghazālī at a later age used to say “we sought knowledge not for the sake of Allāh, but it was unwilling to be for the sake of any other than Allāh.”¹⁰ The truthfulness of the second part of this frequently cited statement, however, has been extremely doubted by al-Baqarī while he selectively has assured the first part,¹¹ as I shall discuss below.

No certain details are available about the sort of learning al-Ghazālī received in his early childhood, but it seems that he was taught basic Islamic and Arabic studies.¹² For the later time, however, the biographies of al-Ghazālī mention that he studied, while he was still a child, a portion of *fiqh* under Aḥmad al-Rādhkānī¹³ in Ṭūs.¹⁴ Then, he left for Jurjān (Gurgan) where he studied under Abū Naṣr al-Ismā‘īlī with whom he recorded *al-Ta‘līqah*,¹⁵ which is his first reported publication on the Shafī‘ī *fiqh*.¹⁶ The writing of the *ta‘līqah*, which is in this context refers to what Makdisi rightly explains as a “collection of notes taken from the lectures of his master, or from both the master’s lectures and works,”¹⁷ at al-Ghazālī’s time was an essential method of learning.¹⁸ Such *ta‘līqah* used to be “...studied, memorised and submitted to the

⁹ See, al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 102.

¹⁰ See, al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 102.

¹¹ See, al-Baqarī, *I‘tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, p. 28.

¹² Cf. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī*, Edinburgh: The University Press, 1963, pp.21f.

¹³ Or al-Zādkānī.

¹⁴ See, the earliest biography of al-Ghazālī by Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Ghāfir b. Ismā‘īl al-Fārisī, who was his contemporary and associate, which is quoted from his lost book, *al-Siyāq fī Tarīkh Khurasān*, by Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī (d. 571/1176), in *Tabīn Kadhīb al-Muftarī*, Damascus: al-Qudsi, 1347 A.H, p. 291, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 14; see also, Abū al- ‘Abbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Khallikān (d. 681/1282), *Wafīyāt al-‘yān wa-Anbā’ Abnā’ al-Zamān*, ed. Iḥṣān ‘Abbās, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977, Vol. 4, p. 2176, trans., Bⁿ Mac Guckin De Slane, *Ibn Khallikān’s Biographical Dictionary*, Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1868, Vol. 2, p. 621; and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 103.

¹⁵ See, the biography of al-Ghazālī by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusaynī al-Wāsiṭī (d. 776/1374), which is originally recorded in his unprinted book, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-‘Alīyah fī Manāqib al-Shāfi‘īyah*, but a separate manuscript of the biography itself has been recently edited by ‘Abd al-Amīr al-‘Asam and printed as an appendix in al-‘Asam’s book, *al-Faylasūf al-Ghazālī*, p.177; see also, al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 103.

¹⁶ See, ‘Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, *Mu‘allafāt al-Ghazālī*, Kuwait: Wakālat al-Maṭbūcāt, 1977, pp. 3-5.

¹⁷ George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981, p. 114.

¹⁸ See, Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, p. 114.

master for examination and quizzing with a view to being promoted to the class of ifta'.”¹⁹

In the case of al-Ghazālī, however, he “...neglected to impress on his memory what he had written”²⁰ in the *Ta'liqah*, as the following denoting story²¹ shows. Road robbers fell upon him in his way back to Tūs and seized all what he had. When they left, he ran after them, but the robber chief threatened him with death, whereupon al-Ghazālī begged him for the return of his *Ta'liqah* only, explaining that it would be of no use for them and that he had travelled just for the sake of hearing, recording and obtaining the knowledge in it. The robber chief then gave it to him, but after scoffing at al-Ghazālī's claimed knowledge, which could be lost by simply taking away the *Ta'liqah*.

Reflecting on this sardonic comment, al-Ghazālī drew a salutary lesson which marked a major turning point in his intellectual experience. Believing that Allāh had made the robber say this in order to guide him, al-Ghazālī returned to Tūs and spent three years in memorizing the *Ta'liqah* by heart, so that he would not be stripped of knowledge by simply losing his notes, as he is reported to have said.²²

The most rewarding learning experience of al-Ghazālī started when he travelled in his youth to Nishapur and attached himself to the renowned Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī. This Imām was one of the most leading scholars of the time, not only as a prominent theologian, as he has rather imprecisely been primarily introduced,²³ but

¹⁹ Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, p. 114.

²⁰ D. B. Macdonald, “The Life of al-Ghazzālī with special reference to his religious experiences and opinions,” *JAOS*, 1887, p. 76.

²¹ The story is recorded by al-Subkī on the authority of both As‘ad al-Mayhanī and the Vizier Niẓām al-Mulk who heard it from al-Ghazālī himself, see al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 103.

²² al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 103.

²³ See, for example, Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, p. 23.

also and in fact in the first place, as al-Dīb justifiably presents him,²⁴ a brilliant scholar of *fiqh* and *uṣūl* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence).

By being trained under this distinguished scholar, al-Ghazālī entered a distinct stage, which lasted until his teacher passed away in 478/1085; and in which he, through hard work, grew to be a notable person.²⁵ He became, in a relatively short period, fully proficient in Shāfi‘ī *fiqh*,²⁶ highly skilled in *kalām*²⁷ and a leading figure in *al-khilāf wa-al-jadal* (jurisprudential polemics and dialectics).²⁸ During this early stage, he proved to be so talented a pupil that his teacher, al-Juwaynī, appraisingly described him as “a sea to draw in.”²⁹ In addition, while his teacher was still alive, he used to teach his fellow-students³⁰ and composed some books.³¹

According to al-Subkī,³² al-Ghazālī wrote his book entitled *al-Mankhūl*, which is his earliest known authentic book on the discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh*,³³ during the

²⁴ Being specialized in al-Juwaynī and an editor of a number of his books, ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Dīb is considered an authority in this regard. In light of his deep study of al-Juwaynī, he has concluded that introducing this Imām principally as a theologian and that theology or *kalām* is his first discipline is a false postulate and that his books in *fiqh* and *uṣūl*, which are his first fields, are much more than those on *kalām*, see, for example, his introduction to al-Juwaynī’s book, *al-Ghiyāthī*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Dīb, Doha: al-Shu‘ūn al-Dīniyah, 1400 A.H., p. 17f.

²⁵ See, Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīyāt al-A’yān*, Vol. 4, p. 217, trans., Slane, *Ibn Khallikān’s Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 622.

²⁶ For the condition of *fiqh* during the age of al-Ghazālī, see above (2.5.5).

²⁷ For the definition of this branch of knowledge, see above (2.5.4).

²⁸ See, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā’*, ed. Muḥ al-Dīn Abū Sa‘īd ‘Umar b. Gharāmah al-‘Amrawī, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997, Vol. 14, pp. 320f; and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 103.

²⁹ al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 103.

³⁰ See, al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Ṭabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 14; and al-Dhahabī, *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā’*, Vol. 14, p. 321.

³¹ See, al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Ṭabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 14; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīyāt al-A’yān*, Vol. 4, p. 217, trans., Slane, *Ibn Khallikān’s Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 622; and al-Dhahabī, *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā’*, Vol. 14, p. 321.

³² al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 103. Cf. George F. Hourani, “A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī’s Writing,” in *JAOS*, Vol. 104, No. 2, Apr.-June 1984, p. 290.

³³ The authenticity of the book has been confirmed by ‘Abd al-Rahmān Badawī (*Mu‘allafāt al-Ghazālī*, p. 6-10) and more recently by the editor of the *Mankhūl*, Muḥammad Ḥasan Hītū (in his introduction to al-Ghazālī’s *al-Mankhūl min Ta‘līqāt al-Uṣūl*, Muḥammad Ḥasan Hītū (ed.), Damascus, n.p., 1970, pp. 31-3), who has convincingly cleared up the doubts which have been aroused over its authenticity.

lifetime of al-Juwaynī.³⁴ The ending part of the book is “an exposition of the reason for the preference (*taqdīm*) for al-Shāfi‘ī’s *madhab*, may Allāh be pleased with him, over other *madhāhib*.”³⁵ This part contains extreme prejudice and harsh criticism against Abū Ḥanīfah in particular, accusing him of turning the Sharī‘ah upside down, disrupting its course and changing its system.³⁶ In an earlier part of the book, Abū Ḥanīfah is also denied the status of Muḥtāhid, because, as it stated, he lacked knowledge of Arabic language rules and Ḥadīth.³⁷ Most probably it is this book about which Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 973/1565) writes in *al-Khayrāt al-Ḥisān fī Manāqib al-Nu‘mān* the following:

“Some of fanatics...brought to me a book attributed to Imām al-Ghazālī containing extreme prejudice and coarse debasement of Imām al-Muslimīn and the unique among the Muḥtāhid Imāms, Abū Ḥanīfah...as if this al-Ghazālī is the known Imām Muḥammad, the Proof of Islām, while he is not; because in his *Iḥyā’* there is praise for Abū Ḥanīfah...Furthermore, on the copy which I saw it is stated that it is compiled by Maḥmūd al-Ghazālī, who is not the Proof of Islam; and this is why it is written on the margin of this copy: this is a Mu‘tazilī man, his name is Maḥmūd and not the Proof of Islam.”³⁸

In the closing paragraph of the *Mankhūl*, al-Ghazālī states that the book has been restricted to what Imām al-Ḥaramayn mentioned in his *ta‘ālīq*³⁹ (sing. *ta‘līqah* which in this case could be al-Juwaynī’s lectures and works).⁴⁰ Thus, in this book al-Ghazālī,

³⁴ Al-Subkī’s dating of the *Mankhūl* has been recently doubted by the editor of the book, Muḥammad Ḥasan Hītū, because of the occasional appearance of the phrase “*rahimahu Allāh*” (may Allāh have mercy upon him) following the name of Imām al-Ḥaramayn which indicates, in the view of Hītū that the book was written after his death (Hītū’s introduction to al-Ghazālī’s *al-Mankhūl*, pp. 34f).

However, this is not a definite proof since it is possible that such phrase was added in later versions of the book.

³⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, pp. 488-504.

³⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, p. 488.

³⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, p. 471.

³⁸ Cited in Badawī, *Mu‘allafāt al-Ghazālī*, p. 8.

³⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, p. 504.

⁴⁰ See, Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, p. 114.

as Hītū points out, does not look independent.⁴¹ If there is any element of originality in the *Mankhūl*, it would be in its organisation and sectioning, about which al-Ghazālī was curious as he himself states in it.⁴² This, however, does not mean that al-Ghazālī merely copies his master in this book. As a matter of fact, he, as Hītū clearly shows, critically discusses al-Juwaynī's views, rejecting many of them.⁴³

Al-Juwaynī's early influence on al-Ghazālī seems to have been dominant. His influence, as al-Dīb has noted,⁴⁴ is evident by comparing some of the thoughts and even words of al-Ghazālī with those of al-Juwaynī. Moreover, al-Dīb argues that due to the fact that the fame of al-Ghazālī has exceeded al-Juwaynī's and that his books have been much more widespread than those of his teachers, many of the thoughts, particularly in the field of *fiqh*, which have been credited to al-Ghazālī, originally belong to al-Juwaynī.⁴⁵ Although al-Juwaynī's influence on al-Ghazālī cannot be denied as it appears particularly in his early works, the argument of al-Dīb cannot be fully followed without reservation, for it is, unfortunately, not free from overstatement. Being full of admiration for al-Juwaynī and curious to show al-Juwaynī's originality, al-Dīb seems to have exaggeratedly discredited al-Ghazālī in favour of his teacher. It is true that al-Juwaynī was an outstanding original scholar and highly influential, but it is equally true that al-Ghazālī was talented and had considerable degree of independence and uniqueness.

⁴¹ See, Hītū's introduction to al-Ghazālī's *al-Mankhūl*, p. 35.

⁴² al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, p. 504.

⁴³ Hītū's introduction to al-Ghazālī's *al-Mankhūl*, p. 36.

⁴⁴ See, al-Dīb's introduction to al-Juwaynī's book, *al-Ghiyāthī*, pp. 146-151.

⁴⁵ See, al-Dīb's introduction to al-Juwaynī's book, *al-Ghiyāthī*, pp. 146-151.

3.3 Highly Distinguished Scholarly Career:

At the age of twenty eight, al-Ghazālī left Nishapur aiming for the camp-court of the Seljuk Vizier Nizām al-Mulk,⁴⁶ which was a centre of gathering of the ‘*ulamā*’ and the literary men.⁴⁷ From contact with established ‘*ulamā*’, meeting tough adversaries and debating with the distinguished, al-Ghazālī witnessed fine encounters.⁴⁸ Due to his excellence in polemics and his flowing expression, al-Ghazālī’s name gained a great reputation, which spread to distant lands.⁴⁹

Soon after this, being greatly regarded and highly honoured by the Vizier, al-Ghazālī was appointed by him to the professorship in his renowned Nizāmīyah *madrasah* at Baghdad.⁵⁰ In 484/1091-2,⁵¹ he arrived in Baghdad and entered into teaching.⁵² His lessons drew crowds of pupils; their number reached 300 at a time, as he himself recorded in the *Munqidh*.⁵³ Among those who joined his lessons and were impressed by his skills and abilities were a number of distinguished ‘*ulamā*’ such as Ibn ‘Aqīl and Abū al-Khaṭāb, as reported by Ibn al-Jawzī.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ See, al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 14; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīyāt al-A’yān*, Vol. 4, p. 217, trans.,Slane, *Ibn Khallikān’s Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 622; and al-Dhahabī, *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā*, Vol. 14, p. 321.

⁴⁷ See, al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 15; and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 103.

⁴⁸ al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 15.

⁴⁹ See, al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 15; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīyāt al-A’yān*, Vol. 4, p. 217, trans.,Slane, *Ibn Khallikān’s Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 622; and al-Dhahabī, *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā*, Vol. 14, p. 321.

⁵⁰ See, al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 15; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīyāt al-A’yān*, Vol. 4, p. 217, trans.,Slane, *Ibn Khallikān’s Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 622; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā*, Vol. 14, p. 321; and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 103.

⁵¹ See al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, pp. 103f. In this year al-Ghazālī reached the age of thirty-four.

⁵² See, al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 15; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīyāt al-A’yān*, Vol. 4, p. 217, trans.,Slane, *Ibn Khallikān’s Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 622; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā*, Vol. 14, p. 321; and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 103.

⁵³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 74, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 61, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 30.

⁵⁴ Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad, known as Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), *al-Muntazam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa-al-Umam*, Hyderabad: Dā’irat al-Ma’ārif al-‘Uthmānīyah, 1359 A.H., Vol. 9, p. 169.

Throughout his stay in Baghdad, which lasted for four consecutive years,⁵⁵ al-Ghazālī had a conspicuous amount of public success. His lecturing and debating, as al-Fārisī narrated, delighted everyone.⁵⁶ Furthermore, after reaching the rank of *imāmah* in Khurasān, he became the *imām* of Iraq.⁵⁷ Similarly, he, according to Ibn Khallikān, “filled the people of Iraq with admiration, and they conceived for him a great respect.”⁵⁸ Moreover, it is reported that he possessed an enormous dignity and that his reverence became so great to the extent that it surpassed the honour of the notables and the princes.⁵⁹

As a *faqīh*, al-Ghazālī composed, at this stage in his life, a number of works on the Shāfi‘ī *madhab*, which he revived (*jaddada*) according to al-Fārisī.⁶⁰ The most celebrated *fiqhī* books of al-Ghazālī are *al-Baṣīṭ*, *al-Waṣīṭ*, *al-Wajīz*, and *Khulāṣat al-Mukhtaṣar* which have become primary references in the *madhab*.⁶¹ Furthermore, he composed some works in the field of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) namely *Shifā’ al-Ghalīl*. He also wrote books in the art of *al-khilāf wa-al-jadal* (juridical polemics and dialectics) such as *Ma’ākhidh al-Khilāf*, *Lubāb al-Nazar*, *Tahṣīn al-Ma’ākhidh*, and *al-Mabādi’ wa-al-Ghāyāt*.⁶² In addition to these works, he composed several others in various fields, as shall be mentioned below.

⁵⁵ Tell 488/1095.

⁵⁶ al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 15.

⁵⁷ al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 15.

⁵⁸ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīyāt al-A’yān*, Vol. 4, p. 217, trans., Slane, *Ibn Khallikān’s Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 622.

⁵⁹ See, al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 15; and al-Dhahabī, *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā’*, Vol. 14, p. 321.

⁶⁰ al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 292, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 15.

⁶¹ See, al-Qurrah-Dāghī’s introduction to al-Ghazālī’s *al-Waṣīṭ*, Vol. 1, pp. 250-3.

⁶² See, Badawī, *Mu’allafāt al-Ghazālī*, pp. 33-7.

3.4 Epistemological Crisis:

In the *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī records that due to his instinctive thirst for grasping *ḥaqā'iq al-umūr* (the actual reality of things) right from the prime of his life, he was emancipated from the bonds of *taqlīd* (conformism or acceptance of religious dogmas on authority) as early as the age of adolescence.⁶³ He reveals that—after observing that children of Christians, Jews and Muslims always grew up adhering only to their respective religion and by reflecting on the saying of the Prophet (S.A.A.W) “every infant is born endowed with the *fiṭrah* (a sound nature); then his parents make him Jew or Christian or Magian”—his inmost being was moved to seek the reality of the original *fiṭrah* and to sift the beliefs arising through initially the inculcation of the parents and teachers, as there are differences of opinions in discerning what is true from that what is false of these *taqlīdāt*.⁶⁴ Consequently, he became preoccupied with inner quest for what he calls *‘ilm al-yaqīn* (knowledge of certitude) which he defines as:

“That in which the known thing is disclosed in a way that no doubt remains along with it, that no possibility of error or illusion accompanies it, and that the mind cannot even entertain such thing. Not only that but also this security from error is so bound to certainty to the extent that even if it is challenged to be wrong, for example, by someone who turns stones into gold or sticks into snakes, this does not create any doubt or denial.”⁶⁵

By scrutinizing all his cognitions in the light of this definition of certain knowledge, al-Ghazālī tells us that he suffered an inner state of *safsaṭah* (sophistry) for nearly two months in which he extremely doubted within his soul the certainty of all of his knowledge including the *maḥsūsāt* (sense-perception) and even the

⁶³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 63; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 54f, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 21.

⁶⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 63; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 55, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 21.

⁶⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 64; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 55, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 21f.

darūrīyāt (necessary intellectual facts).⁶⁶ He was not cured from this malady until he regained the confidence in the certainty of the necessary intellectual facts by “a divine light being cast into his breast,” as he puts it.⁶⁷

This vivid story of al-Ghazālī’s epistemological doubt has been radically questioned by al-Baqarī; he totally rejects this account of al-Ghazālī’s doubt and presents his own interpretation of it.⁶⁸ His extremely odd interpretation is summarized as follows: al-Ghazālī made up this story and narrated it at the beginning of the *Munqidh* to show that his forthcoming quest for the actual reality was original and independent since this is the normal approach of free thinkers; he took this idea of doubt, but with modification, from the adherence of sophistry without crediting them in the *Munqidh* unlike the case in his other book, *Faḍā’ih al-Bāṭinīyah*, where he discussed the sophistic doubt and explicitly ascribed it to the adherence of sophistry; he did so in the latter, because in it he is arguing against the Bāṭinīyah, who, by being equipped with philosophy, would discover the source of the idea if he did not mention it and thus covering it would count against him, whereas in the *Munqidh* he is writing to the general readers, so he wanted to convince them that the idea of doubt is his own.⁶⁹

Unlike al-Baqarī, Watt states that there is no reason to doubt al-Ghazālī’s experience of such scepticism; yet he strongly doubts that it occurred during an early stage of his life because, according to Watt, it had a philosophical background which “...is shown by the fact that he links it up with a consideration of the nature of

⁶⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 65-7; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 55-7, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 22-5.

⁶⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 67f; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 57, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 25.

⁶⁸ See, al-Baqarī, *I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, pp. 40-50.

⁶⁹ al-Baqarī, *I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, pp. 40-50.

knowledge and certainty,” and thus, Watt adds, “...it must have been preceded by some study of philosophy.”⁷⁰

Apparently, both al-Baqarī and Watt presuppose that the reported doubt of al-Ghazālī was solely philosophically oriented, and only on this assumption are their views based. This, however, can be effectively challenged by the justifiably convincing findings of Bakar’s detailed and in depth analysis of al-Ghazālī’s doubt.⁷¹ To illustrate this well, it is necessary to cite rather heavily from Bakar. Before doing so, it is important to bear in mind that when al-Ghazālī recorded this early doubt in the *Munqidh*, he was over fifty, as he mentioned in the preface of the book,⁷² and thus the style of his account is not a spontaneous outcome of that early period, but is a product of his late, well-organized and deep thought, as Abu-Sway rightly points out.⁷³ This does not seem to be taken into the consideration of al-Baqarī and Watt.

Totally unlike al-Baqarī and Watt, Bakar rightly looks at the doubt of al-Ghazālī “as an integral element of the epistemology of Islamic intellectual tradition to which al-Ghazālī properly belongs.”⁷⁴ He draws our attention to two important factors in the development of al-Ghazālī’s doubt. The first is “...the specific intellectual, religious, and spiritual climate prevailing in the Islamic world during the time of al-Ghazālī, which no doubt constitutes the main external contributory factor to the generation of doubt in the early phase of his intellectual life.”⁷⁵ The second “...concerns the whole set of opportunities which Islam ever places at the disposal of man in his quest for

⁷⁰ Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, p.51.

⁷¹ Osman Bakar devoted a chapter on “The Place of doubt in Islamic Epistemology: al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Experience” in his book entitled *History and Philosophy of Islamic Science*, Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1999, pp. 39-60.

⁷² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 62; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 54, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 20.

⁷³ Mustafa Mahmud Abu-Sway, “al-Ghazālī’s Spiritual Crisis Reconsidered,” *al-Shajarah*, Vol. 1, No. I, 1996, p. 83.

⁷⁴ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 40.

⁷⁵ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 40.

certainty, and what we know of al-Ghazzālī's life tells us that he was very much exposed to these opportunities.”⁷⁶

Bakar's discussion of al-Ghazālī's methodological criticism of *taqlīd* in the *Munqidh* shows that al-Ghazālī was dissatisfied with *taqlīd* because "...it could not quench his intense intellectual thirst.”⁷⁷ Bakar also shows that it was obvious to al-Ghazālī right from his early age that *taqlīd* is “an avenue to both truth and error, but as to what is true and what is false there was an open sea of debate around him, which disturbed him profoundly.”⁷⁸ This, according to Bakar, led al-Ghazālī “to contemplate upon one of the most central questions in philosophy, namely, the question of what true knowledge is, and this marked the beginning of an intensification of his intellectual doubt.”⁷⁹

In addition to this factor in generating al-Ghazālī's doubt, Bakar points out to “...another, and more important, religious and spiritual current which contributed to the genesis of his doubt and which deeply affected his mind.”⁸⁰ Al-Ghazālī himself, Bakar explains, mentioned this “as the existence of numerous schools of thought (*madhāhib*) and groups (*firaq*) within the community of Islam itself, each with its own methods of understanding and affirming the truth and each claiming that it alone is saved.”⁸¹ This religious atmosphere, as Bakar refers to, is described by al-Ghazālī in the opening of the *Munqidh* as “a deep sea in which the majority drown and from which only few are saved.”⁸²

After briefly presenting the views of a number of scholars on the nature of al-Ghazālī's doubt, Bakar states that he agrees with the common view of these scholars

⁷⁶ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, pp. 40f.

⁷⁷ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 45.

⁷⁸ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 45.

⁷⁹ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 45.

⁸⁰ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, pp. 45f.

⁸¹ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 46.

⁸² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 61; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 54, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 20.

that “at the time of his crisis, al-Ghazzālī was neither a philosophical nor a religious sceptic, and that the crisis was an epistemological or methodological one. The *Munqidh* provides ample evidence to support this view.”⁸³

To illustrate that al-Ghazālī was not a philosophical doubter, Bakar adds:

“He never contested the value of metaphysical certitude. He was always certain of the *de jure* certitude of truth. Thus,...he never questioned the possibility of knowledge of *ḥaqā’iq al-umūr*. His natural, intellectual disposition toward seeking that knowledge was, in a way, an affirmation of his personal conviction in the *de jure* certitude of truth.”⁸⁴

Explaining how al-Ghazālī never fell into the “philosophical temptation of the agnostics and relativists,”⁸⁵ Bakar further states that al-Ghazālī’s doubt was not of truth itself, yet it was “of modes of knowledge and modes of accepting truth. But, since by truth, he meant here the inner reality of things, his quest for that reality also implied a quest for its corresponding mode of knowledge.”⁸⁶ This was motivated by “a real theoretical awareness of the possibility of another mode of knowing, which the Sufis claim as theirs”⁸⁷ and this possibility, in the view of Bakar, “must have agitated his mind through his direct personal encounter with the way of the Sufis”⁸⁸ in his early educational background. Based on al-Ghazālī’s early background, which was influenced by a number of Sufis, Bakar is convinced that he:

“...was increasingly attracted to the idea of a direct personal experience of God emphasized by the Sufis. However, he felt a bit disheartened when, in these early attempts at following the Sufi path, he failed to attain that stage where the

⁸³ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 52.

⁸⁴ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 52.

⁸⁵ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 52.

⁸⁶ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 52.

⁸⁷ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 53.

⁸⁸ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 53.

mystics begin to receive pure inspiration from “high above.” In the light of this background, there is a strong reason to believe that Sufism plays a central role in leading al-Ghazzālī to his epistemological crisis.”⁸⁹

To show how al-Ghazālī was never a religious sceptic, Bakar quotes al-Ghazālī’s declaration in the *Munqidh*:

“From the sciences which I had laboured and the methods which I had followed in my inquiry into the two kinds of knowledge, revealed and rational, I had already acquired a sure and certain faith in Allāh Most High, in the prophetic mediation of revelation, and in the Last Day. These three fundamentals of Imān had become deeply rooted in my soul, not because of any specific, precisely formulated proofs, but because of reasons and circumstances and experiences too many to list in detail.”⁹⁰

Commenting on this statement, Bakar says: “The doubting mind of al-Ghazzālī was never cut off from revelation and faith. On the contrary, it was based upon a “sure and certain” faith in the fundamentals of religion.”⁹¹ This “sure and certain” faith has its roots in the idea of degrees of certainty (*yaqīn*) in Islamic gnosis, as conclusively demonstrated by Bakar.⁹²

Now, it would appear possible to accept the conclusion of Bakar that “it is therefore in the light of Islamic epistemology and, especially in the light of the idea of degrees of certainty (*yaqīn*) in Islamic gnosis that the famous Ghazzalian doubt should be studied and understood.”⁹³

⁸⁹ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, pp. 53f.

⁹⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 102; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 78, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 56.

⁹¹ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 54. Although there is no reason to doubt that al-Ghazālī was not a religious sceptic, we may raise the reservation that the quotation to which Bakar refers to does not seem relevant to the doubting period.

⁹² See, Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, pp. 55-9.

⁹³ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, pp. 53f.

3.5 Independent Examination of the Seekers After Truth:

Al-Ghazālī tells us in the *Munqidh* that after his recovery from the sickness of doubt he started to investigate the paths of those seeking the truth whom he categorised into four classes: (1) *al-Mutakallimūn* (the Muslim Theologians), (2) *al-Bāṭinīyah*, (3) *al-Falāsifah* (the Philosophers), (4) *al-Ṣūfīyah* (The Mystics).⁹⁴ Explaining the reason behind this limitation, he states: “The truth cannot transcend these four classes, for these are the followers of the paths of the quest for truth; and if the truth eludes them, there remains no hope of ever attaining it.”⁹⁵ Reminding us with his abandonment of *taqlīd*, which was a result of his inmost quest for grasping *ḥaqā’iq al-umūr* (the actual reality of things), he adds: “For there is no way to return to *taqlīd* after leaving it, since a condition of being a *muqallid* (a conformist or uncritical follower of authority) is that one does not know himself to be such.”⁹⁶ Thus, he applied himself to thoroughly examine “firstly *‘ilm al-kalām* (Islamic theology), secondly the way of *al-falsafah* (philosophy), thirdly the teachings of the Bāṭinīyah, and fourthly the way of the Sufis.”⁹⁷

Before I continue with al-Ghazālī’s account, I ought to first deal with the valid question which has been raised by al-Baqarī⁹⁸ as to why al-Ghazālī restricted his search in these four groups, and assumed that the truth does not exceed them. I share with al-Baqarī this wonder, but I do not agree with his speculation that “this is because he knew in advance that the truth which he would follow was only with the Sufis, or because he wanted to make fictitious premises to conclude this.”⁹⁹ Opposite to this speculation is the following more convincing view of Bakar:

⁹⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 69; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 58, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 26.

⁹⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 69; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 58, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 27.

⁹⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 69; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 58, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 27.

⁹⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 70; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 59, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 27.

⁹⁸ al-Baqarī, *I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, p. 65.

⁹⁹ al-Baqarī, *I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, p. 66.

“There is no doubt that al-Ghazzālī had undertaken this comparative study of all the seekers of the Truth with the view of exhausting all the possibilities and opportunities that were open to him in the pursuit of the highest level of certainty, although by then one could already detect in him a special inclination and sympathy towards Sufism.”¹⁰⁰

I may add to Bakar’s view that what appeared to be a prior inclination towards Sufism in al-Ghazālī’s account could be due to the fact that it was written long after he concluded his examination, as mentioned earlier. Furthermore, even if we presume that “he knew in advance that the truth which he would follow was only with the Sufis,” this does not necessarily lead to al-Baqarī’s conclusion that his examination was fictitious. Instead, it can still properly be seen as an attempt by al-Ghazālī to affirm or verify his ‘prior opinion’ about the ultimate truth by conducting an independent examination of all claimed seekers after truth known to him.

3.5.1 Experience with the Discipline of *Kalām*:

With regard to his experience with *‘ilm al-kalām*, al-Ghazālī states: “I obtained a thorough grasp of it. I consulted the works of the most authoritative *mutakallimūn*, and I wrote on the subject what I wanted to write.”¹⁰¹ Despite that he found this discipline adequate for its own purpose, which is, in his view, protecting the Sunnī creed and defending it against the confusion of the innovators, he realized that it was insufficient for his aim: “So *Kalām* was not sufficient enough in my case, nor was it a remedy for the malady of which I was complaining.”¹⁰² He further explains the extent to which *Kalām* was insufficient for his case:

¹⁰⁰ Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 58.

¹⁰¹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 71; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 59, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 27.

¹⁰² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 72; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 60, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 28.

“It is true that when the discipline of *Kalām* developed, the *mutakallimūn* showed an earnest desire for progressing from simply defending the Sunnah (orthodoxy) to search for *ḥaqā’iq al-umūr*,¹⁰³ and they plunged into the study of substances and accidents with their principles; however, since that was not the aim of their own discipline, their discussion of the subject did not reach conclusiveness. Therefore, it did not provide an effective means of dispelling completely the darkness of the bewilderment due to the differences dividing men.”¹⁰⁴

In his extremely critical discussion against the *Munqidh*, al-Baqarī noticeably miss-presents al-Ghazālī’s evaluation of *‘ilm al-kalām*. Following his misleading selective quoting of al-Ghazālī, he erroneously restates the assessment in view, and on the basis of which he criticises al-Ghazālī. I do not wish to further illustrate and discuss al-Baqarī’s criticism for it is based on a deceptive restatement of al-Ghazālī’s evaluation, but here I shall highlight his misleading way of quoting al-Ghazālī. His selective quoting starts as follow:

“I began studying *‘ilm al-kalām* and thus I obtained a thorough grasp of it and I wrote some books on it. Subsequently, I found it a discipline adequate for its own aim, which is conserving the Sunī creed and guarding it from the confusion of the innovators. But a group of the *mutakallimūn* relied on premises which they took over from their adversaries, being compelled to admit them either by *taqlīd*, or *ijmā’* of the *Ummah* (the Muslim Community’s consensus), or because merely they are from the Traditions and the Qur’ān. “This, however, is of little use in the case of one who admits nothing at all except the primary and self-evident truths.”...”¹⁰⁵

In addition to his impreciseness throughout his quoting, al-Baqarī plainly disregards the following sentence, which is mentioned by al-Ghazālī just before the

¹⁰³ I think both McCarthy and Watt missed the point here, so this is according to my understanding of the original.

¹⁰⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 72; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 60, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 28f.

¹⁰⁵ al-Baqarī, *I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, pp. 66f.

last quoted sentence: “Most of their polemics was devoted to bringing out the inconsistencies of their adversaries and criticizing them for the logically absurd consequences of what they conceded.”¹⁰⁶ By this omission, the quote deludingly imposes the meaning that al-Ghazālī was dissatisfied with the *Kalām* because the *mutakallimūn* “(1) were men of *taqlīd*, (2) because they follow the *ijmā‘* of the Muslim *Ummah*, (3) because they accept the *ayāt* of the Qur’ān just because they are Words of Allāh, (4) and because they hold fast to the Traditions of Muḥammad only because they are the sayings of the Messenger of Allāh.”¹⁰⁷ One cannot but be surprised at such a misleading approach.

3.5.2 Examination of the Way of the *Falāsifah*:

After finishing his examination of *‘ilm al-kalām*, al-Ghazālī says that he turned to the science of *falsafah* (philosophy).¹⁰⁸ At this juncture, he had the following firm conviction:

“One cannot recognize what is unsound in any field of knowledge unless he has a complete grasp of that field to the extent that he reaches the level of the most knowledgeable in the principles of that field; then he must even excel him and attain even greater eminence so that he becomes cognizant of the intricate profundities which have remained beyond the ken of the acknowledged master of the field. Then, and only then, it is possible that the defects he alleges will be seen as really such.”¹⁰⁹

Believing that no one among the Muslim scholars directed his attention and endeavour to that end, he girded his loins for the task of learning the science of *falsafah* by “the mere perusal of their writings without seeking the help of a master

¹⁰⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 72; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 59, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁷ al-Baqarī, *I‘tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁸ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 74; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 60, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 74; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 60, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 29.

and teacher.”¹¹⁰ This was in his spare time in Baghdad, as he states in the *Munqidh*: “I devoted myself to that in the moments I had free from writing and lecturing on the fields of Sharī‘ah; and I was then burdened with the teaching and instruction of three hundred students in Baghdad.”¹¹¹

About the duration and the result of this independent study of *falsafah*, al-Ghazālī writes:

“Through mere reading in those embezzled moments, Allāh Most High gave me an insight into the farthest reaches of the philosophers’ sciences in less than two years. Then, having understood their doctrine, I continued to repeatedly examining its intricate and profundities until I comprehended certainly the measure of its deceit and deception, and its precision and delusion.”¹¹²

This experience made al-Ghazālī realize with certainty that “*al-‘aql* (the intellect or reason) alone is incapable of fully grasping all issues or of resolving all problems.”¹¹³

The outcome of al-Ghazālī’s examination of *falsafah* can be properly appreciated by referring to two of his books: *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* (The Meanings¹¹⁴ of the Philosophers) and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers),¹¹⁵ which both belong to the stage in his life in view.¹¹⁶ The purpose of the *Maqāṣid* is to provide a necessary background for his criticism of particular metaphysical and physical views of the philosophers in the *Tahāfut* by objectively representing the doctrine of the philosophers, as he clearly states in the introduction of the book:

¹¹⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 74; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 61, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 29f.

¹¹¹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 74; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 61, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 29f.

¹¹² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 74f; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 61, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 30.

¹¹³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 91; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 71, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 44.

¹¹⁴ As Macdonald precisely explains, “A *maqṣad* is what is intended or meant. *Maqṣad al-kalām* is “the intended sense of the saying.” The word is thus a synonym of *ma‘nā* in the sense “meaning” or “idea.”” D. B. Macdonald, “The Meanings of the Philosophers by al-Ghazzali,” *Isis*, Vol. 25, No. 1, May 1936, p. 9, available online in PDF: <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/dbm1.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, ed. Sulymān Dunyā, Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1980.

¹¹⁶ Cf. George F. Hourani, “A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī’s Writings,” in *JAOS*, Vol. 104, No. 2, Apr.-June 1984, pp. 292f.

“You have asked me,¹¹⁷ my brother, for a thorough exposition, which would contain a refutation of the philosophers, the contradiction of their opinions and (the disclosure of) their hidden errors and mistakes. But you cannot hope to refute them before you know their doctrines and study their dogmas, for to grasp the falsehood of certain doctrines before having a complete understanding of them is absurd. Such an effort leads only to blindness and error. Therefore, before entering upon a refutation of the philosophers, I deemed it necessary to present an exposition and a full description of their ideas of the logical, physical and metaphysical sciences without, however, distinguishing between the true and the false...The purpose of this book is to give an account of “The Meanings of the Philosopher;” and that is its title.”¹¹⁸

Then, he adds “only after we have completed the exposition will we begin, earnestly and with zeal, a separate book, to be called *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*.”¹¹⁹

With regard to the *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī reports the story behind writing it at the beginning of the introduction of the book. He starts by describing a group of his contemporaries who renounced their religion:

“Now, I have observed that there is a class of men who believe in their superiority to others because of their greater intelligence and insight. They have abandoned all the religious duties Islam imposes on its followers. They look down at the positive commandments of religions which enjoin the performance of acts of devotion, and the abstinence from forbidden things. They defy the

¹¹⁷ As Macdonald points out, “following a regular convention in the writing of didactic treatises, al-Ghazzālī begins with an address to a supposed disciple who has asked for instruction,” (Macdonald, “The Meanings of the Philosophers,” p. 10).

¹¹⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, ed. Maḥmūd Bījū, Damascus: Maṭba‘at al-Ṣabāh, 2000, p. 10; trans., see, Gershon B. Chertoff, “The Logical Part of al-Ghazālī’s Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah: In an anonymous Hebrew translation with the Hebrew commentary of Moses of Narbonee, edited and translated with notes and an introduction and translated into English,” a PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1952, part II, pp. 2f, available on line in PDF on <http://www.ghazali.org/books/chertoff.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, p. 11; trans., see, Chertoff, “The Logical Part of al-Ghazālī’s Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah,” part II, p. 4.

injunctions of Shar‘ (Islamic Law). Not only they don’t abide to the limits prescribed by it, but also they have renounced the Religion altogether...”¹²⁰

Next, he shows how their heresy was a result of their uncritical emulation (*taqlīd*) of the philosophers:

“The heresy of these people has its basis only in *taqlīd* (uncritical acceptance) of whatever one hears from others or sees all around... These heretics have heard the awe-inspiring names of people like Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc. They have been deceived by the exaggerations made by the followers to these philosophers—exaggerations to the effect that the ancient masters possessed extraordinary intellectual powers: that the principles they have discovered are unquestionable: that the mathematical, logical, physical and metaphysical sciences developed by them are the most profound: that their excellent intelligence justifies their bold attempts to discover the Hidden Things by deductive methods; and that with all the subtlety of their intelligence and the originality of their accomplishments they repudiated the authority of religious laws: denied the validity of the positive contents of historical religions, and believed that all such things are only sanctimonious lies and trivialities. When such stuff was dinned into their ears, and struck a responsive chord in their hearts, the heretics in our times thought that it would be an honour to join the company of great thinkers for which the renunciation of their faith would prepare them.”¹²¹

Then, he states that he wrote the book as a response to this phenomenon: “When I saw this vein of folly pulsating among these idiots, I decided to write this book in order to refute the ancient philosophers. It will expose the incoherence of their beliefs and inconsistency of their metaphysical theories.”¹²² He further explains the purpose of

¹²⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, ed. Sulymān Dunyā, Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1980, p. 73; trans., see Sabih Ahmad Kamali, *al-Ghazali’s Tahafut al-Falasifah*, Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963, p. 1.

¹²¹ al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, pp. 73f; trans., see Kamali, *al-Ghazali’s Tahafut*, pp. 1f.

¹²² al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, p. 75; trans., see Kamali, *al-Ghazali’s Tahafut*, p. 3.

the book by saying: “Let it be known that the purpose is to awaken those who think too highly of the philosophers, and consider them to be infallible.”¹²³

Related to the *Tahāfut* is al-Ghazālī’s book entitled *Mi’yār al-‘Ilm* (The Criterion of Knowledge), which is most likely written in this same stage of his life.¹²⁴ According to Dunyā, the editor of the book, the *Mi’yār* is part, and specifically the last part, of the *Tahāfut* which is in his view a trilogy discussing three philosophical subjects: Physics, Metaphysics and Logic for which al-Ghazālī gives various names such as *Mi’yār al-‘Ilm* and *Madārik al-‘Uqūl*; and for this precise finding, Dunyā provides clear internal evidences from the *Tahāfut* itself.¹²⁵

The *Mi’yār*, as Macdonald puts it, is “a book intended to be a standard and guide in intellectual investigations and especially as to the language and technical expressions of the philosophers.”¹²⁶

3.5.3 Investigation of the Teachings of the *Bātinīyah*:

After telling us that *falsafah* was also inadequate to satisfy his aim fully, al-Ghazālī starts to reveal his experience with the *Ta’līmīyah*, i.e., *Bātinīyah*.¹²⁷ In addition to his interior motive in investigating their teachings, it happened that he was commanded by the Abbasid Caliph of the time, al-Mustazhir, to compose a book revealing the reality of their doctrine.¹²⁸ Explaining his approach in fulfilling his task, he states:

¹²³ al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, p. 82; trans., see Kamali, *al-Ghazali’s Tahāfut*, p. 8.

¹²⁴ See, Hourani, “A Revised Chronology,” p. 293.

¹²⁵ Dunyā’s introduction to al-Ghazālī’s *Mi’yār al-‘Ilm*, ed. Sulymān Dunyā, Cairo: Dār al-Ma’ārif, 1961, pp. 14-21.

¹²⁶ Macdonald, “The Meanings of the Philosophers,” p. 14.

¹²⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 91; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 71, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 44.

¹²⁸ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 91; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 71, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 44.

“I began to seek out their works and to collect their views. I had already been struck by some of their novel utterances which were the brainchildren of our own contemporaries but were not consonant with the methodology of their predecessors. So I collected those utterances, arranging them perfectly and formulating them thoroughly, then I conclusively answered them.”¹²⁹

Al-Ghazālī’s summarizes his findings from the investigation of the Baṭinīyah with the following words:

“These also we have examined thoroughly, probing their inside and outside. Their reality comes down to deceiving the common folk and the dim-witted by showing the need for the authoritative teacher, and to disputing men’s denial of the need for the authoritative teaching by strong and effective argument. So it goes until someone tries to help them about the need for the authoritative teacher by saying: “Give us some of his lore and acquaint us with some of his teaching!” Then the disputant pauses and says: “Now that you have conceded to me that much, you need to seek him by yourself, because my aim was limited to this much.” For he knows that, were he to add anything more, he would be put to shame and would be unable to resolve the simplest problem. Nay, but he would be unable to understand it, let alone give an answer to it! This, then, is the reality of their condition... Thus, when we had had experience of them, we also washed our hands of them!”¹³⁰

3.5.4 Exploration of the Method of the Sufis:

Passing all the previous stages, al-Ghazālī turned with his firm will to explore the method of al-Ṣūfīyah, knowing that their method is fully accomplished by the union of knowledge and practice, but since their knowledge was easier for him, he therefore

¹²⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 92; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 71, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 44.

¹³⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 99; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 77, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 53f.

began to gain their knowledge.¹³¹ For this purpose, he—in addition to hearing from contemporary Sufi masters—consulted a number of Sufi writings such as *Qūt al-Qulūb* of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, the books of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, and various reported teachings of al-Junayd, al-Shiblī, and Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, as he states in the *Munqidh*.¹³² As a result, he grasped the very essence of the Sufi theoretical principles and all of what could be gained theoretically of their teachings.¹³³ Then, it became clear to him that their most distinctive characteristic could not be gained through theoretical knowledge, but only by experiencing *al-dhawq* (spiritual taste), *al-ḥāl* (the state of real ecstasy) and the moral change.¹³⁴ He states:

“I knew with certainty that the Sufis were *arbāb al-aḥwāl* (masters of real ecstatic experiences) and not men of words, and that I had apprehended all what can be gained by theoretical knowledge. There remained, then, only what was attainable, not by hearing and study, but by experiencing *al-dhawq* (spiritual taste) and *al-sulūk* (actual disciplining).”¹³⁵

This conviction led al-Ghazālī to a totally new experience and a dramatic change in his life, as will be shown below.

3.6 Serious Inspection of the Inner State:

When he acquired thorough knowledge of al-Ṣūfīyah, as illustrated above, al-Ghazālī lived a period of a very serious self-reflection during which he critically examined his inward conditions. Telling about this period he writes in the *Munqidh*:

¹³¹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 100; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 77, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 54.

¹³² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 100f; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 77, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 54.

¹³³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 100f.

¹³⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 101; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 78, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 54f.

¹³⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 102; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 78, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 55.

“I attentively considered my circumstances, and I saw that I was immersed in *al-‘alā’iq* (worldly attachments or involvements) which had encompassed me from all sides. I also considered my activities, the best of which being teaching and lecturing, seeing that in them I was applying myself to branches of knowledge unimportant and fruitless in the pilgrimage to the hereafter.”¹³⁶

About his intention behind teaching in this period he honestly declares: “I saw that it was not purely for the sake of Allāh Most High, but rather was instigated and motivated by the quest for fame and widespread prestige.”¹³⁷ Thus, he alarmingly became certain that he was “on the brink of a crumbling bank and already on the verge of falling into the Fire,”¹³⁸ unless he would mend his conditions.

As a result, al-Ghazālī seriously thought about migrating from Baghdad and quitting all of his worldly interests, but he kept wavering about it: “I incessantly vacillated between the contending pull of worldly desires and the appeals of the afterlife for nearly six months, starting from Rajab of the year 488 A.H. (July 1095 A.D.).”¹³⁹ At the end of this period, he became tongue-tied and consequently became severely sick of grief to the extent that the physicians lost hope of treating him.¹⁴⁰ In the *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī explains how this crisis was over:

“When I perceived my helplessness and when my capacity to make a choice had completely collapsed, I sought refuge with Allāh Most High as does a hard pressed man who has no way out of his difficulty. He answered me...and made it easy for my heart to turn away from fame, wealth, children and associates. I openly showed that I had resolved to set out to Mecca, while planning in my

¹³⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 103; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 78f, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 56.

¹³⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 103; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 79, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 56.

¹³⁸ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 103; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 79, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 56.

¹³⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 104; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 79f, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 57f.

¹⁴⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 104; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 79f, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 57.

mind to travel to al-Shām. This I did as a precaution, lest the Caliph and the group of my associates might learn of my resolve to settle in Damascus.”¹⁴¹

Consequently, he left Baghdad after he had distributed what wealth he had, save that suffice his essential needs and the sustenance of his children with the excuse that “the money of Iraq was earmarked for the welfare of the people, since it was an endowment for Muslims.”¹⁴²

This straightforward story of al-Ghazālī’s remarkable deportation from Baghdad and the reasons behind it has become a subject of controversy. Opposing views about the reality of this reported event and of al-Ghazālī’s condition prior to it have been put forward by a number of writers on al-Ghazālī. Some have strangely dared to make a diagnosis for his described sickness. Ormsby, for instance, thinks that “certain of his symptoms suggest “melancholy” (*sawdā*’), though the temporary loss of speech may point to other conditions.”¹⁴³ Similarly, Farrūkh confidently, though weirdly, states that “we assert that al-Ghazālī was afflicted with “*al-kanz*” or “*al-ghanz*,” which is a psychological disease largely appears among those who are of extreme religious course.”¹⁴⁴ At the end of his long description of the disease, which is based on medical sources, Farrūkh states that the patient of “*al-kanz*” normally inclines towards a religious life.¹⁴⁵

This awkward approach has been criticised by Abu-Sway.¹⁴⁶ Challenging particularly Farrūkh, he states that “even if Farrūkh were a physician or a clinical psychologist, which he is not, none of al-Ghazālī’s statements warrants the decisive

¹⁴¹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 104; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 80, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 58.

¹⁴² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 104; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 80, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 58.

¹⁴³ Eric L. Ormsby, “The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in al-Ghazali’s *Al-Munqidh*,” in Wael B. Hallaq & Donald P. Little (eds.) *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, Leiden: Brill, 1991, pp. 144f, available online in PDF: <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/eo1.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Umar Farrūkh, *Tārīkh al-Fikr al-‘Arabī ilā Ayām Ibn Khaldūn*, Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1981, p. 494.

¹⁴⁵ Farrūkh, *Tārīkh al-Fikr*, p. 496.

¹⁴⁶ Abu-Sway, “al-Ghazālī’s Spiritual Crisis Reconsidered,” pp. 85-7.

terms that he applied in his “diagnosis.”¹⁴⁷ Commenting on Farrūkh’s last statement, Abu-Sway says: “The latter statement misleads the reader to conceive al-Ghazālī’s “conversion” as a symptom of a disease rather than a genuine religious experience.”¹⁴⁸ I fully agree with Abu-Sway and add that one cannot but be greatly astonished at such a risky approach in dealing with historical accounts.

About the motive behind al-Ghazālī’s departure from Baghdad, there have been various theories which, to variant extent, question his own clear account. Farid Jabre, for example, claims that the migration was because of his fear of assassination by the Bāṭinīs.¹⁴⁹ Attempting to prove this, Jabre quotes al-Ghazālī’s associate, al-Fārisī, stating that al-Ghazālī “told us, “the door of fear was opened. It was so dreadful that I could not do any work, and finally lost interest completely in all other things.”¹⁵⁰ This “fear,” Jabre argues, is not that of Helfire, but that of assassination of the Bāṭinīs.¹⁵¹ Less vigorously, Macdonald, though does not doubt the truthfulness of al-Ghazālī’s account, suggests that “political complications may have helped to bring on his nervous breakdown,”¹⁵² and more specifically he refers to the fact that “Barkiyārūḳ became Great Seldjūḳ and killed his uncle Tutuḥ immediately before the flight of al-Ghazzālī, and the khālīfa at whose court al-Ghazzālī held important place declared for Tutuḥ.”¹⁵³

These speculations, however, do not stand criticism. This is simply because the evidences claimed to support them are far from being convincing. Against Jabre, I side with Nakamura who states that “I simply do not understand why this “fear”

¹⁴⁷ Abu-Sway, “al-Ghazālī’s Spiritual Crisis Reconsidered,” p. 86.

¹⁴⁸ Abu-Sway, “al-Ghazālī’s Spiritual Crisis,” p. 87.

¹⁴⁹ Cited in Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, p. 140.

¹⁵⁰ Cited in Kojiro Nakamura, “An Approach to Ghazālī’s Conversion,” *Orient*, Vol. 21, 1985, pp. 49f.

¹⁵¹ Nakamura, “An Approach to Ghazālī’s Conversion,” p. 50.

¹⁵² Macdonald, “al-Ghazālī,” *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 146.

¹⁵³ Macdonald, “al-Ghazālī,” *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 146.

cannot be that of Hellfire as Ghazālī himself confessed.”¹⁵⁴ Challenging Jabre, Nakamura convincingly points out that “if he had feared the assassination, he would not have dared to criticize the Bāṭinīs;”¹⁵⁵ and “if it is said that Ghazālī was ordered by the Caliph, al-Mustazhirī, to do so, then, I would say, how can it be explained that he kept on criticizing them at Hamadhan and Tus after his retirement?”¹⁵⁶ Adding to Nakamura, Abu-Sway logically argues that if it were true that al-Ghazālī feared assassination, he would not have resided in places under the easy reach of the Bāṭinīs.¹⁵⁷ He further adds: “Why would he wait for a total of six months in Baghdad, before embarking on his journey, if there was imminent danger and if he was preoccupied with his personal safety?”¹⁵⁸

As in the case with Jabre’s claim, the view of Macdonald has been criticized. Abu-Sway again has challenged it by stating that if al-Ghazālī’s only goal was “to disappear from Baghdad in order to escape political difficulties, he could have done so without the trouble of becoming a Sufī, the hardships associated with the distribution of his wealth and leaving his family behind in Baghdad.”¹⁵⁹

In a much more niggling way, al-Baqarī threw nagging doubts on al-Ghazālī’s reported motive behind his departure from Baghdad.¹⁶⁰ Totally opposite to what al-Ghazālī clearly stated that he fled from fame and worldly desires, al-Baqarī claims that he did so to satisfy his longing for more fame and prestige by pretending to be one of the Sufis, who—al-Baqarī argues—were, and always are, respected to the highest degree by the general folk in the Muslim community and taken as close

¹⁵⁴ Nakamura, “An Approach to Ghazālī’s Conversion,” p. 50.

¹⁵⁵ Nakamura, “An Approach to Ghazālī’s Conversion,” p. 50.

¹⁵⁶ Nakamura, “An Approach to Ghazālī’s Conversion,” p. 50.

¹⁵⁷ Abu-Sway, “al-Ghazālī’s Spiritual Crisis,” p. 88.

¹⁵⁸ Abu-Sway, “al-Ghazālī’s Spiritual Crisis,” p. 90.

¹⁵⁹ Abu-Sway, “al-Ghazālī’s Spiritual Crisis,” p. 88.

¹⁶⁰ al-Baqarī, *I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, pp. 106f.

associates by the elites.¹⁶¹ Attempting to support this sweeping generalization about the esteem for the Sufis, al-Baqarī mentions no more than that al-Ghazālī saw how “Nizām al-Mulk used to respect only claimers of knowledge (*ad‘iyā’ al-‘ilm*) and poor Sufis, standing up for them whenever they enter his court, out of respect, and seating them close to him...and when he was once asked about this, he said: “These men, when I bring them close to me, they would appraisingly attribute to me what I don’t deserve!”¹⁶²

Before going further with presenting al-Baqarī’s speculation, I cannot resist making two quick criticisms against his weird approach so far. Firstly, what he mentions about Nizām al-Mulk, for which he does not mention any source, is obviously false. It is most likely a fabrication of the following incident reported by Ibn al-Athīr:

“Whenever the Imām Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī or the the Imām Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī came into the presence of Nizām al-Mulk, he would stand up for the them [i.e., to greet them] and then resume his seat on his cushion. But whenever Abū ‘Alī al-Fārmadhī came in, he would rise to receive him, seat him where he himself had been, and take his seat before him. This was remarked on to him, and he said: “The first two and their like, when they come in to my presence, say to me: ‘you are such and such,’ praising me for what is not in me. Thus, their words increase my self-satisfaction and pride. The latter Shaykh tells me of my soul’s faults and how wicked I am. My spirit is thereby humbled and I recoil from much of what I am doing”¹⁶³

This incident, however, does not support the claim of al-Baqarī. The incident does not indicate that “Nizām al-Mulk used to respect only claimers of knowledge (*ad‘iyā’ al-‘ilm*) and poor Sufis,” and rather it signifies that he used to have a high regard for this

¹⁶¹ al-Baqarī, *I‘tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, p. 106.

¹⁶² al-Baqarī, *I‘tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, p. 107.

¹⁶³ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 481, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 257.

particular Shaykh not simply because he was a Sufi but for his honest advise and daring warning. Surely, not every Sufi has such quality as that Shaykh. Similarly, not every sovereign welcomes such advice and warning like Nizām al-Mulk who, as Ibn al-Athīr reported, “was a scholar, a man of religion, generous, mild-mannered, very forbearing of miscreants, and given to long silences.”¹⁶⁴ In addition, the claim of al-Baqarī about this Vizier totally contradicts the reported fact that “his court was bustling with Qur’ān readers, *fuqahā’*, leading Muslim Imāms (religious scholars), and men of charity and piety.”¹⁶⁵

Secondly, his generalization about the admiration of people for the Sufis is not convincing enough. Thirdly, if al-Ghazālī’s aim were to add to his prestige—which had already reached an outstanding level before his withdrawal—by pretending to be a Sufi, then there was no need for him to spend eleven years in seclusion and self-reforming, as will be illustrated below.

Referring to the report of al-Zabaidī that al-Ghazālī appointed his brother of teaching instead of him prior to his leave, al-Baqarī uses this single incident to accuse al-Ghazālī of being untruthful in his declaration that he abandoned teaching because it is unimportant and fruitless in the way to the Hereafter otherwise he would not have exposed his brother to such evil.¹⁶⁶ Al-Baqarī here, however, totally neglects the fact that his brother was a true Sufi by that time and thus al-Ghazālī did not doubt his sincerity in teaching. In addition, al-Ghazālī did not state that all teaching was not worthwhile in the Hereafter, as al-Baqarī apparently claims, but only mentioned that he himself was engaged in teaching such sort of knowledge. Thus, his brother, being a Sufi, would not bother himself with such knowledge. Moreover, the testimony of al-Fārisī, which will be presented below, proves the sincerity of al-Ghazālī and leaves no

¹⁶⁴ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 480, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 257.

¹⁶⁵ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 480, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 257.

¹⁶⁶ al-Baqarī, *I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī*, pp. 123f.

room for speculated doubts such as that of al-Baqarī, Jabre, Macdonald or any one who would echo them.

3.7 Seclusion and Self-*Islāh*:

For about eleven lunar years¹⁶⁷ followed his first migration from Baghdad, al-Ghazālī lived in a sort of seclusion for the purpose of self-*islāh*. According to his account in the *Munqidh*, this started in Damascus where he lived for nearly two years during which his only occupation was “seclusion and solitude, together with spiritual disciplining and combat, and engaging in self-purification, character reforming and heart cleaning for the constant remembrance of Allāh Most High,” in the way he had learned from the knowledge of *al-ṣūfīyah*.¹⁶⁸

From Damascus, al-Ghazālī states, “I travelled to Bayt al-Maqdis (in Jerusalem), where I used to go daily into the Dome of the Rock and shut myself in.”¹⁶⁹ Then, he adds, “I was inwardly moved by an urge to perform the duty of Ḥaj (the Muslim pilgrimage) and to draw succour from the blessings of Mecca and Medina and the visit to the tomb of the Messenger of Allāh Most High—peace be upon him...”¹⁷⁰ Therefore, he travelled from Jerusalem to Ḥijāz.¹⁷¹

Although al-Ghazālī migrated from Baghdad with the intention of not going back, as he states, he was drawn to it by certain concerns and the appeals of his children.¹⁷² After returning to Baghdad in 490/1097, however, he chose to live in seclusion, still

¹⁶⁷ Started in 488/1095 and ended in 499/1106 as al-Ghazālī mentions in the *Munqidh*, p. 122.

¹⁶⁸ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 105; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 80, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 59.

¹⁶⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 105; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 80f, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 59.

¹⁷⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 105f; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 81, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 59.

¹⁷¹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 106; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 81, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 59.

¹⁷² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 106; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 81, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 59f.

longing for solitude and heart purification, though with some occasional disturbances which resulted from the necessities of livelihood, as he declares.¹⁷³

In the course of those periods of seclusion, al-Ghazālī reveals, “things impossible to count or list in detail were disclosed to me.”¹⁷⁴ However, for the purpose of profiting his reader, he gives his general evaluation of the Sufis and their way:

“I knew with certainty that the Sufis are those who uniquely follow the way to Allāh Most High, their mode of life is the best of all, their way the most direct of ways, their ethic the purest. Indeed, were one to combine the insight of the intellectuals, the wisdom of the wise, and the lore of scholars versed in the mysteries of revelation in order to change a single item of Sufi conduct and ethic and to replace it with something better, no way to do so would be found. For all their motions and quiescences, exterior and interior, are learned from the light of the niche of prophecy. And beyond the light of prophecy there is no light on earth from which illumination can be obtained.”¹⁷⁵

Despite this lavish praise, it should not be taken as representing the exact and only position of al-Ghazālī towards the Sufis and Sufism even after his conversion. As Sherif precisely points out, “the fact that Ghazali identifies himself with the mystics and praises their methods does not mean that he accepts everything they say.”¹⁷⁶ I agree with Sherif in stating that “there are many things in which he does not agree with the mystics.”¹⁷⁷ As it will come apparent below, serious criticism against *al-ṣūfīyah* and their *ṭarīqah* (method or way) is voiced in the *Ihyā'* itself.

Al-Ghazālī's stage of asceticism and self-disciplining has been mentioned in a number of early biographies, though they differ in matter of details, particularly with

¹⁷³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 106; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 81, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 60.

¹⁷⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 106; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 81, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 60.

¹⁷⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 106; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 81, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 60.

¹⁷⁶ Mohamed Ahmed Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975, p. 166.

¹⁷⁷ Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, p. 166.

regard to the places he visited, the duration of his stay in each destination and his activities during these visits. Two of these biographical accounts are well worth quoting: that of al-Fārisī and Ibn Khallikān. According to al-Fārisī's account, al-Ghazālī first performed Ḥaj, and then entered al-Shām where he remained for nearly ten years, visiting *al-mashāhid al-m'azzamah* (the venerated sanctuaries), disciplining his soul, and regulating his character;¹⁷⁸ subsequently, "he returned to his native land where he kept fast to his house, preoccupied with meditation, tenacious of his time, a godly goal and treasure for hearts to everyone who repaired to him and visited him."¹⁷⁹ While he is in al-Shām, he, as al-Fārisī narrated, "began to compose the renowned works to which no one had preceded him, such as *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and the books abridged therefrom, such as *al-Arba'īn* and others."¹⁸⁰ Ibn Khallikān, however, reported the following:

"He abandoned all the occupations in which he had been hitherto engaged, and entered on the path of asceticism and retirement from the world. He then undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca, and, on his return, he proceeded to al-Shām and stopped for some time at Damascus. During his residence in that city, he gave lessons in the western corner of the Great Mosque. He then set out for Jerusalem, where he applied himself with ardour to the practices of devotion, and visited the holy monuments and venerated spots. He next passed into Egypt and remained for some time at Alexandria, whence, it is said, he intended to sail to Maghrib, in hopes of meeting with the emir Yūsuf b. Tāshafīn, the sovereign of Marrakish; but, having received intelligence of that prince's death, he abandoned the project...On Leaving Egypt, he returned to Tūs, his native place where he was preoccupied with meditation."¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ al-Ghazālī's biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn 'Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 293, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 15.

¹⁷⁹ al-Ghazālī's biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn 'Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 293, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 16.

¹⁸⁰ al-Ghazālī's biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn 'Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 293, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 16.

¹⁸¹ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīyāt al-A'yān*, Vol. 4, p. 217, trans., Slane, *Ibn Khallikān's Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 622.

Al-Fārisī's account can be harmonized with that of al-Ghazālī if we would follow the following interpretation suggested by Watt:

“Some of the early biographical notices say that he spent ten years in Syria, having returned there after his pilgrimage to Mecca. Now it seems probable that he returned to Damascus, and that he regarded his pilgrimage and his visit to Jerusalem as belonging to his Damascus period. This is in accordance with his account, provided that we take his phrase about the “journey to the Ḥijāz” to mean a journey to Mecca and back to Damascus; this seems to be a reasonable interpretation.”¹⁸²

On his visit to Egypt and intended plan to visit Ibn Tāshafīn, as it is reported by Ibn Khallikān, there have been conflicting views. Watt, for example, states that “it is certainly possible that there was such a visit on the way to or from Mecca. If it took place, however, it can have been little more than an incident of the journey, and the absence of any mention in *Deliverance from Error* indicates that it had no spiritual significance to al-Ghazālī.”¹⁸³ Abu-Sway, however, totally rejects this report:

“All other accounts confirm that Al-Ghazzāliyy [sic.] was in Khurasan...in 500 A.H./1106 C.E., the year in which Ibn Tāshafīn died. The idea that Al-Ghazzāliyy [sic.] was in Egypt may be refuted on two accounts. His student, Ibn Al-‘Arabiyy [sic.] saw him, after returning from his journey, in the wilderness of Baghdad in 491 A.H./July 1106, is a clear indication of the falsity of such claims.”¹⁸⁴

Leaving aside the controversy surrounding the details of this mysterious period of al-Ghazālī's life, for it seems extremely difficult to resolve completely because of the contradicting reports, I go on to say that this stage, in general, marked a turning point

¹⁸² Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, p. 145.

¹⁸³ Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, p. 146.

¹⁸⁴ Abu-Sway, Mustafa. *al-Ghazzāliyy [sic]: A Study in Islamic Epistemology*, Kuala Lumpur: Diwan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1996, p. 24.

in the whole personality of al-Ghazālī. His contemporary and associate, al-Fārisī, provides us with an eyewitness account of al-Ghazālī's serious *tawbah* (repentance) or fundamental corrective conversion at that stage. Before delivering his account, it is worth noting that al-Fārisī is introduced by al-Subkī as “*thiqah* (trustworthy)”¹⁸⁵ which, as Abu-Sway correctly states, “in this context is a technical term, which considered by many scholars of *ḥadīth* as the highest rank attributed to a Muslim narrator.”¹⁸⁶ Thus, his account is highly reliable.

About al-Ghazālī's conversion, al-Fārisī states:

“Thus, the devil of frivolity and of seeking leadership and fame and of taking on bad qualities was transformed into serenity of soul and nobility of qualities, having done with [outward] forms and rites. He took on the appeal of the godly and reduced his hope and devoted his time to the guidance of men and summoning them to what concerned them regarding the afterlife...”¹⁸⁷

Al-Fārisī tells us that his witness was based on investigation and examination, and not merely observation:

“Indeed, I often visited him, and I did not find in him what I had formerly been familiar with in his regard, viz. maliciousness and making people uneasy and regarding them disdainfully and looking down upon them out of haughtiness and arrogance and being dazzled by his own endowment of skill in speech and thought and expression, and his quest of glory and high status: he had become the exact opposite and had been cleansed of those impurities. I used to think that he was wrapped in the garment of affectation and pretence. Then, I thought, after investigation and examination that, that the matter was not as I thought, and that the man had recovered from madness.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 106.

¹⁸⁶ Abu-Sway, “al-Ghazālī's Spiritual Crisis Reconsidered,” p. 85.

¹⁸⁷ al-Ghazālī's biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 293, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 15f.

¹⁸⁸ al-Ghazālī's biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 294, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 16f.

These remarks are of vital importance. They, as Nakamura¹⁸⁹ and Abu-Sway¹⁹⁰ rightly point out, prove the authenticity and the truthfulness of al-Ghazālī's conversion. They also clearly show how al-Ghazālī was before and after his experience of self-*iṣlāḥ*. This leaves no room for doubting the sincerity of al-Ghazālī's corrective transformation and thus renders any further discussion of this matter unnecessary.

Having stated this, it is not intended here to overstate the significance of al-Ghazālī's conversion. Instead, I agree with Nakamura in stating, against Macdonald's dual division of al-Ghazālī's life based on al-Ghazālī's remarks after his conversion,¹⁹¹ that "I do not take the clear-cut division of Ghazālī's life into two parts: the former is this-worldly, irreligious and the latter other-worldly, religious."¹⁹² However, I do not follow Nakamura in arguing that I cannot take the remarks of al-Ghazālī about his conversion at their face value on the basis that they "were written or uttered when Ghazālī as a veteran Sūfī looked back upon his non-Sūfī way of life long after his conversion,"¹⁹³ and thus, Nakamura adds, it is "quite natural that he should tend to be exaggeratingly critical about it."¹⁹⁴ I cannot fully agree with Nakamura because seeking worldly gains such as fame through supposedly religious activities, which was the case of al-Ghazālī during his teaching career as he himself confessed, is a dangerously serious matter not only from Sufī point view, as Nakamura apparently states, but also from Islamic perspective in general, since it is agreed upon that purification of the intention is of a vital importance according to the Islamic teachings.

¹⁸⁹ Kojiro Nakamura, "An Approach to Ghazālī's Conversion," *Orient*, Vol. 21, 1985, p. 50.

¹⁹⁰ Abu-Sway, "al-Ghazālī's Spiritual Crisis Reconsidered," p. 58.

¹⁹¹ See Macdonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī," pp. 75f.

¹⁹² Nakamura, "An Approach to Ghazālī's Conversion," p. 50.

¹⁹³ Nakamura, "An Approach to Ghazālī's Conversion," pp. 51f.

¹⁹⁴ Nakamura, "An Approach to Ghazālī's Conversion," p. 52.

Our rejection of Macdonald's clear-cut dual division of al-Ghazālī's life, however, is based on another standpoint. It is simply because his view indicates that al-Ghazālī lived almost entirely a secular life before his conversion. This, in our view, is quite extreme. Al-Ghazālī's remarks about his life before his conversion do not necessitate that all his activities in that period were "on purely business basis"¹⁹⁵ or "that he thought only of the reputation and wealth which they were bringing him."¹⁹⁶ Rather, there are clear indications in his remarks that some of his early activities were purely religiously motivated. His examination of various sects at the time is a lucid example. He clearly states in the *Munqidh* that his only motive behind that examination was "to discriminate between the proponent of truth and the advocate of error, and between the faithful follower of the Sunnah and the heterodox innovator,"¹⁹⁷ and that is undoubtedly a purely religious aim. Therefore, al-Ghazālī's avowal regarding his impure intention during his teaching career should not be reflected back on all his previous activities.

Now, it would seem reasonably justified to argue that al-Ghazālī's period of seclusion marked the beginning of his attempt at general *iṣlāḥ*. This is firstly because the outcome of that period, as illustrated above, was his self-*iṣlāḥ*, which is according to his own teaching a prerequisite for general *iṣlāḥ*.¹⁹⁸ Secondly, he, as mentioned above, composed in the same period his celebrated work, the *Iḥyā'*, which is intended to be a major project of *iṣlāḥ*, as will be shown below.

¹⁹⁵ See Macdonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī," p. 75.

¹⁹⁶ See Macdonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī," pp. 75f.

¹⁹⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 62; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 54, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 20.

¹⁹⁸ In the *Iḥyā'*, al-Ghazālī repeatedly warns of being occupied with the *iṣlāḥ* of others, before the *iṣlāḥ* of the self, see, for example, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 39; trans., see William Alexander McCall, "The Book of Knowledge: Being a Translation, with Introduction and Notes of Al-Ghazzālī's Book of the *Iḥyā'*, Kitāb al-'Ilm," a PhD Thesis, Hartford Seminary Foundation, May, 1940, p. 156, available online in PDF: <http://www.ghazali.org/books/McCall-1940.pdf>, and also Nabīh Amīn Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, translation of *Kitāb al-'Ilm* of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, n.d., p. 93, available online in PDF: <http://www.ghazali.org/books/knowledge.pdf>.

3.8 Striving for General *Iṣlāḥ*:

Following his noticeably long experience of seclusion and self-*iṣlāḥ* illustrated above, al-Ghazālī entered a distinct period which can be properly considered as a stage of striving for general *iṣlāḥ*. This classification of that stage, which lasted till his death, is based firstly on al-Ghazālī’s account in the *Munqidh* which clearly shows that his sole desire at that stage was *iṣlāḥ*. After revealing his experience of seclusion in the book, al-Ghazālī immediately informs us about his observation of the widespread of the weakness of men’s faith among various classes and of the reasons behind that according to his own investigation.¹⁹⁹ Subsequently, he saw that it was inevitable at such a time to abandon his seclusion and engage in exposing such sophistries, particularly because he considered himself a very skilled practitioner in such activity, but he kept hesitating and making excuses to remain in seclusion:

“Then, I said to myself: “When will you devote yourself completely to laying bare this affliction and to battling against this dreadful darkness? It is a time of tepidity and an era of error. But even if you were to engage in calling men from their evil ways to the truth, all the men of this age would be hostile to you: how, then, would you stand up against them? And how could you put up with them? For that could be done only at favourable time and under a pious and irresistible Sultan.”²⁰⁰

His hesitation, however, ended when he was strictly summoned by the authority to hasten to Nishapur in order to teach in its Nizāmīyah. Thus, al-Ghazālī states, “it occurred to me that “the reason for excusing yourself has lost its force. Hence your motive for clinging to seclusion should not be laziness, ease, self-aggrandizement and

¹⁹⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 117-20; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 88-90, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 71-3.

²⁰⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 121; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 91, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 74.

protecting yourself from the harm caused by men.”²⁰¹ Shortly, he became more convinced and encouraged to make such move, as he explains:

“I consulted on that matter a number of those skilled in discerning hearts and visions. They unanimously advised me to abandon my seclusion and to emerge from my *zāwiyah* (hospice). In addition to that, many recurrent dreams of pious men attested that this move would be a source of goodness and right guideness, and that it had been decreed by Allāh—Glorious be He—for the head of this century. For Allāh—Glorious be He—has indeed promised to revivify His religion at the beginning of each century. So my hope was strengthened and I became quite optimistic because of these testimonies.”²⁰²

Al-Ghazālī, then, concludes his account about this new move by revealing his intention in returning to teaching and clearly stating his desire for *iṣlāḥ*:

“I know well that, even though I have returned to teaching, I have not really returned; for returning means coming back to a previous state. Formerly, I used to convey the knowledge by which fame is gained, and to invite men to it by words and deeds, and that was my aim and my intention. But now I invite men to the knowledge by which fame is renounced and its lowly rank recognized. This is now my intention, my aim, my desire. Allāh knows that to be true of me. I now earnestly desire to achieve the *iṣlāḥ* of myself and others.”²⁰³

Secondly, the following biographical notices of al-Fārisī concerning the same stage, which generally agree with al-Ghazālī’s account, support the above classification. Explaining how the Vizier Fakhr al-Mulk, son of Nizām al-Mulk, insistently asked al-Ghazālī to return to teaching, al-Fārisī states:

“He [i.e., Fakhr al-Mulk] heard of and verified al-Ghazālī’s position and rank and the perfection of his superiority and his standing and the soundness of his belief

²⁰¹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 121; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 91, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 74.

²⁰² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 122; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 92, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 75.

²⁰³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 123; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 92, & Watt, *The Faith*, p. 76.

and the purity of his conduct. So he sought a blessing from him and had him brought and listened to what he had to say. Then he asked al-Ghazālī not to let his breaths and useful lessons remain sterile, with no one profiting from them or learning from their lights, and he went all out in importuning and suggesting until al-Ghazālī agreed to go forth...He could not but yield to the authority.”²⁰⁴

Distinguishing between al-Ghazālī’s motive at this stage and that in his first teaching experience, al-Fārisī explains that “by bringing forth that with which he had busied himself, he aimed at guiding the deviators (*al-shadhāh*) and benefiting the seekers of guidance (*al-qāṣidīn*) without going back to what he had been divested of, viz. seeking honour and wrangling with his peers and condemning the headstrong.”²⁰⁵ In addition, al-Fārisī reports that he, and others, wonderingly asked al-Ghazālī about his wish for doing what he was summoned to do, and thus al-Ghazālī in defence of that said: “According to my religion I could not conceivably hold back from the summons and the utility of benefiting *al-ṭālibīn* (the disciples). It was indeed imperative for me to disclose the truth and to speak of it and to call to it—and he was truthful in that.”²⁰⁶ Showing that his desire for benefiting and reforming others continued even after his abandonment of formal teaching, al-Fārisī goes on to say:

“He set up a nearby a *madrasah* for the seekers of knowledge and *khāniqāh* (sojourn) for the Sufis. He apportioned his time to the task of those present, such as the recital of the Qur’ān and keeping company with the men of hearts and sitting down to teach, so that not a single moment of his time or of those with him was profitless until the eye of the time attained him and the days begrudged him

²⁰⁴ al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, pp. 293f, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 16.

²⁰⁵ al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 294, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 16.

²⁰⁶ al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, p. 295, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 17.

to the men of his age. Then the Merciful translated him to His gracious proximity.”²⁰⁷

Thirdly, the reported activities of al-Ghazālī at that stage are mostly, if not all, of *iṣlāḥī* nature. He, for example, was teaching the *Iḥyā’*.²⁰⁸ The book is undoubtedly intended to be a major project of *iṣlāḥ* from al-Ghazālī’s point of view. This is clearly indicated in the introduction of the book. To illustrate this well, there seems no better way than literally quoting the words of al-Ghazālī. Addressing his imagined wayward reader, al-Ghazālī states:

“For what has loosened the bond of silence from my tongue and imposed the responsibility of speech and the obligation of utterance on me is your persistent blindness to the essence of reality along with your obstinate aid of what is baseless, flattering ignorance, and stirring up of evil against anyone who prefers to depart slightly from the ways followed by mankind and who inclines a little from the common practice of men in order to conform to the dictates of knowledge.”²⁰⁹

Explaining the reason behind such insistence on going astray at the time, he adds:

“There is no reason for your persistent disapproval except the malady which has become an epidemic among the multitudes. That malady consists in insufficient observation of the high importance of this matter, the gravity of the problem, and the seriousness of the crisis; in not seeing that the next life is approaching and this world is waning; that death is imminent but the journey is still long; that the

²⁰⁷ al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, *Tabīn*, pp. 295f, trans., McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 18.

²⁰⁸ al-Zabīdī lists a number of pupils who orally received the book from al-Ghazālī, see Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), *Iṭḥāf al-Sādah al-Mutaqīn bi-Sharḥ Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 2005, Vol. 1, pp. 62-5.

²⁰⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 2; trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 2, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. ix.

provisions are scanty, the danger is great, and the road is blocked; and that whatever learning or work not purely devoted to Allāh is rejected.”²¹⁰

Clarifying the seriousness of the malady of the time and the difficulties surrounding its treatment, he goes on to say:

“With neither guide nor companion the journey on the road to the next life, with its many pitfalls, is toilsomely tiresome. The guides to the road are the ‘*ulamā*’ (religious scholars) who are the heirs of the prophets, but our time is void of them and only the superficial [or those who just apparently resemble them] (*al-mutarassimūn*) remain, most of who have been overcome by Satan and lured by iniquity. Every one of them has become infatuated with his immediate fortune. Thus, they have begun to consider good as evil and evil as good, so that the knowledge of religion has become effaced and the torch of guidance has been extinguished in all over the world. They have made the people imagine that there is no knowledge except the *fatwā* of a government by which judges seek help in settling disputes when the foolish people quarrel; or ability in disputation by which one who seeks glory arrays himself to conquer and silence by argument; or adorned rhymed prose by which the preacher seeks to gradually persuade the common folk, since they do not see anything but these three to trap and snare unlawful vanities (of this world). As to the knowledge of the path to the next life, according to which the pious forefathers trod and which Allāh in His Book called *fiqh* (discernment), *ḥikmah* (wisdom), ‘*ilm* (knowledge), *diyā*’ (illumination), *nūr* (light), *hidāyah* (right guidance), and *rushd* (rectitude), it had become folded away and quite forgotten among people.”²¹¹

²¹⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*’, Vol. 1, p. 2; trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 2f, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. x.

²¹¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*’, Vol. 1, p. 2; trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 3f, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. x.

Then, he clearly states that writing the *Ihyā'* was an attempt to treat that malady: “Since this is a penetrating breach and an intensely black calamity in religion, I have deemed it important to occupy myself in composing this book in order to revive the knowledge of religion and to reveal the ways of the early *imāms*, and to clarify the beauties of the beneficial branches of knowledge current among the prophets and the virtuous fathers.”²¹²

The *iṣlāḥī* nature of the *Ihyā'* is also apparent throughout the book for therein are corrective treatments for various phenomena of *fasād* diagnosed by al-Ghazālī, as shall be extensively illustrated in the following chapter.

Other than the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī composed and taught works of *iṣlāḥī* purposes at this particular stage. The following two in particular are worth a brief mention.²¹³ The first is the *Munqidh*; besides his didactic account about his intellectual and spiritual experience, which in itself has an *iṣlāḥī* function, al-Ghazālī includes in the *Munqidh* his diagnosis of the slackness of Imān (Islamic faith), which was a phenomenon of *fasād* in his time, and directs to his suggested remedies for it, as shall be illustrated in more detail in the following chapter.²¹⁴

The second work of *iṣlāḥī* significance is al-Ghazālī's *Ijām al-'Awāmm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalām*, which is his last known book. As the title indicates, the book was a corrective response to the phenomenon of the publicity of *kalām* at the time of al-Ghazālī, which had harmful consequences as was shown above.²¹⁵

²¹² Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol.1, p. 2; trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 4, and Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, pp. xf.

²¹³ In this context, I have focused on these two works which, in addition to the *Ihyā'*, can be considered as key works in al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāḥī* agenda. The principle aim here is to briefly demonstrate that these works were intended to be *iṣlāḥī* works. Thus, it is beyond the scope of this demonstration to study these works in detail.

²¹⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 117-31; trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 88-98, & Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 68-85.

²¹⁵ See 2.5.4.

In addition to composing and teaching such *iṣlāhī* works, al-Ghazālī sent several letters²¹⁶ of *iṣlāhī* purposes to ruling members as well as ‘*ulamā*’ and other contemporaries, responding correctively to particular wrongdoing and challenges of the time, as shall become apparent in the following chapter.

²¹⁶ His letters in Fārsī composed in al-Ghazālī, *Makātīb*; some have been translated into English by Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1976.

CHAPTER FOUR

SURVEY OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S *ISLĀHĪ* EFFORTS

4.1 Introduction:

The previous chapter has broadly shown how al-Ghazālī became solely concerned with *islāh* at a late stage of his life. This leads to the following question being raised: to what extent did al-Ghazālī at that stage correctively respond to the *fasād* of his age? In our view, it is essential to tackle this question in order to fairly justify the classification of al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ*, recalling that *islāh*, as has been defined above, is a corrective task in which any state of *fasād* is changed into its opposite Islamically justified state. To objectively answer this question, it is necessary to survey al-Ghazālī's efforts of *islāhī* nature. This chapter is devoted to this task.

The approach adopted in this chapter is inductive; a number of al-Ghazālī's major authentic works which belong to his *islāhī* stage,¹ particularly the *Iḥyā'*, have been carefully studied in light of the analysis of the term *islāh* revealed in chapter one and the historical context of al-Ghazālī's time presented in chapter two in order to extract sufficient particulars and then to objectively incorporate them in an intelligible and handy account. This account is by no means exhaustive, but the best attempt is made to cover most of the main *islāhī* efforts of al-Ghazālī as they appear in the works under study and to satisfactorily show the extent of these efforts. So the principal focus of this

¹ Namely the *Iḥyā'*, *al-Munqidh*, *Iljām al-'Awāmm*, *al-Qiṣṭās al-Mustaqīm*, *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah bayn al-Islām wa-al-Zandaqah*, some of al-Ghazālī's *Letters* to the sovereigns of his time, *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Ma 'ānī Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, and *al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl* (for a chronology of these works and other works of al-Ghazālī, see George F. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," in *JAOS*, Vol. 104, No. 2, Apr.-June 1984, pp. 289-302). The other works of al-Ghazālī belonging to the same stage but do not seem to have *islāhī* aspects, such as *Mishkāt al-Anwār* (The Niche of Lights), are beyond the scope of this survey.

chapter is neither to outline each of these works as a whole nor to address all the issues which may fall within the *islāhī* agenda of al-Ghazālī² rather to highlight the *islāhī* aspects of his treatment of a number of key issues raised in these works which can be considered as main *islāhī* efforts.

It is not intended though to undertake a critical assessment in the present chapter. This is because, firstly, including such an assessment here would take up disproportionate space. Secondly, we believe that objectivity necessitates that we present al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* efforts as perceived, before any assessment is made. Therefore, the assessment will be postponed to the following two chapters, which will be devoted to that purpose, though in an overall way. This, however, does not mean that the present survey is merely descriptive but rather analytical, to some extent, as well. The extent of the analysis is directed by the purpose of highlighting the *islāhī* aspects of al-Ghazālī's efforts under study.

For the sake of intelligibility, the present chapter is divided into the following three main sections:

- Al-Ghazālī's diagnosis of *fasād*.
- Al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* attempts to eradicate the roots of *fasād*.
- Al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* treatments of the phenomena of *fasād*.

4.2 Al-Ghazālī's Diagnosis of *Fasād*:

The basis of al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* efforts is his diagnosis of *fasād*. This includes not only particular phenomena of *fasād* in his time, but also what, in his view, lies at the root of *fasād* in general. Therefore, it is important to start with his analysis of the roots of *fasād*, before dealing with the diagnosed phenomena.

² This seems almost an impossible dream to achieve in a single study especially in a timed one like the present.

4.2.1 The Roots of *Fasād*:

Getting at the roots of *fasād*, in general, can be considered the starting point of al-Ghazālī's attempt at *iṣlāḥ*. This is based on his general rule that *iṣlāḥ* cannot be fully achieved without knowing the roots of *fasād* against which *iṣlāḥ* is directed. In the *Iḥyā'*, he repeats "one cannot prescribe a remedy (*al-dawā'*) without diagnosing the malady (*al-dā'*); for remedy means to counteract the causes of the malady."³ Clarifying this rule, he continues "for every disease results from a cause (*sabab*), the remedy for it consists of dissolving the cause, removing it and cancelling it."⁴

At least four dangerous roots of *fasād* are clearly dealt with in the works of al-Ghazālī under review:

- Ignorance.
- Love of the *dunyā* (purely worldly pleasure).
- Weakness of the impulse or motive of *dīn* (religion).
- The dominion of the innate stimuli of *fasād*.

These will be explained below in turn.

4.2.1.1 Ignorance:

Ignorance (*jahl*) is seen by al-Ghazālī as the root of all misery (*shaqāwah*) and the source of every loss (*khusrān*).⁵ Throughout his life, and particularly in his late years, as is evident in his works, al-Ghazālī was always concerned to find out what causes people to be ignorant, or more specifically not to perceive realities or truth. In the *Iḥyā'*, for example, he highlights a number of main causes of ignorance in this sense, namely:

³ See, for instance, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 49, trans., see M. S. Stern, *al-Ghazzali on Repentance*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1990, p. 114, available online in PDF on <http://www.ghazali.org/books/gz-repent.pdf>.

⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 49, trans., see Stern, *al-Ghazzali on Repentance*, p. 114.

⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 401.

1. *Taqīd*: By *taqīd* al-Ghazālī specifically means “accepting an opinion (*qawl*) without proof (*hujjah*).”⁶ As a general rule, *taqīd*, in the view of al-Ghazālī, “is not a way to knowledge (*laysa tarīq^{an} ilā al-‘ilm*), neither in *al-uṣūl* (the fundamentals of religion) nor in *al-furu‘* (the branches of religion)”⁷ Moreover, *taqīd*, he states, can be a veil which obscures the reality of things from the heart, which, according to his teaching, is the seat of knowledge.⁸ Al-Ghazālī noticed that it was this veil that prevented most theologians (*mutakalimūn*), fanatical followers (*muta‘aṣībūn*) of the schools of jurisprudence (*madhāhib*) and even righteous men (*ṣāliḥūn*) from the perception of realities.⁹
2. Satisfaction with the mere intellectual sciences while dispensing with the religious knowledge, which is gained by learning and understanding the Qur’ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet (S.A.A.W.), or the vice versa. On the one hand, al-Ghazālī believes that anyone who relies entirely on the intellect alone, without benefiting from the light of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, is deluded.¹⁰ On the other hand, he is convinced that anyone who entirely sets aside the intellect and is satisfied with mere *taqīd* in religion is ignorant.¹¹ For him, “the intellectual sciences are like food and the sciences of *Sharī‘ah* are like medicines,”¹² and thus, he adds, one cannot do without the other.¹³

⁶ See al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 140.

⁷ See al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 139.

⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 14, trans., see W. J. Skellie, “The Religious Psychology of al-Ghazzālī: A Translation of his Book of the *Iḥyā’* on the Explanation of the Wonders of the Heart.” A PhD thesis= submitted to Hartford Seminary Foundation in 1938, p. 51, available online in PDF on <http://www.ghazali.org/books/skellie.pdf>.

⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 14, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 51.

¹⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 17, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 65.

¹¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 17, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 65.

¹² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 17, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 65.

¹³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 17, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 65.

3. Lack of knowledge of the reality of man's own heart (*qalb*):¹⁴ According to al-Ghazālī, the lack of knowledge regarding the reality of man's heart (*qalb*) leads man to be ignorant of his Lord, because man, al-Ghazālī explains, is predisposed to know God simply by reason of his heart (*qalb*), not because of any of his other faculties.¹⁵ If a man, he declares, fails to know his heart (*qalb*), he indeed knows not himself and thus he indeed knows not his Lord.¹⁶ And the one, al-Ghazālī further states, “who knows not his heart is even more ignorant of other things.”¹⁷ He believes that most people do not know their hearts and therefore they do not really know their own selves.¹⁸ What has intensified man's ignorance about his own reality, in the view of al-Ghazālī, is that he is wrapped up and involved heavily in worldly works, which have initially resulted from the need for food (*qūt*), dress (*kiswah*), and home (*maskan*).¹⁹ Such engagement, in excess, spoils people's minds and causes them to forget or misconceive not only their real nature, but also the purpose of their creation and their final destination, as al-Ghazālī explains.²⁰

4.2.1.2 Love of the *Dunyā*:

Another major root of *fasād* diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is love of the *dunyā*.²¹ In this context, al-Ghazālī does not use the term *dunyā* in its literal sense, which is this world's

¹⁴ It is worth noting that al-Ghazālī's usage of the term heart in this context is not in its material meaning, but rather it is in its spiritual sense denoting the essence of man, as shall be explained below.

¹⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 2, trans., see McCarthy, “*Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajāb al-Qalb*,” in McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 309.

¹⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 2, trans., see McCarthy, “*Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajāb al-Qalb*,” in McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 310.

¹⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 2, trans., see McCarthy, “*Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajāb al-Qalb*,” p. 310.

¹⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 2, trans., see McCarthy, “*Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajāb al-Qalb*,” p. 310.

¹⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 225 & 228.

²⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 228.

²¹ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 63.

life; he uses it rather to refer to any purely worldly pleasure which does not contribute to the joys of the Afterlife.²²

This root of *fasād* has been given very considerable emphasis by al-Ghazālī because of its extremely harmful effects. As al-Ghazālī warns us, it is “the beginning of all misdeeds” (*ra’s kul khaṭī’h*),²³ “the fountain-head of destructive sins” (*ra’s al-khaṭāyā al-muhlikah*),²⁴ “the root of all deficiency,” (*asās kul nuqṣān*) and “the source of all *fasād*” (*manba’ kul fasād*).²⁵ This is why al-Ghazālī considers the *dunyā* a very dangerous enemy to man.²⁶

Al-Ghazālī relates various sorts of *fasād* and sins to love of the *dunyā*.²⁷ Examples of these are the following:

- This love is the root of all engrossing mental distractions (*khawāṭir*) which disturb the concentration of a Muslim’s devotional prayer (*ṣalāh*).²⁸
- This love stops us from fulfilling the duty of “forbidding wrong” (*al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*). This is because greed, which is a symptom of this love, leads to cowardice and weakness.²⁹
- This love prevents from loving God for these two loves do not gather in one heart, as al-Ghazālī explains.³⁰
- This love leads to various afflictions of the heart, such as envy.³¹

²² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 219. For more elaboration on what al-Ghazālī means by love of the *dunyā*, see below.

²³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 165 & Vol. 4, p. 36.

²⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 130.

²⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 165.

²⁶ See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 201.

²⁷ For a further discussion of the teachings of al-Ghazālī on love of the world as the vice from which all other vices come, see Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī: A Composite Ethics in Islam*, Selangor (Malaysia): Central Printing Sendirian Berhad, 1976, pp. 124-6.

²⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 165, trans., see See Edwin Elliot Calverly, *The Mysteries of Worship in Islam*, translation of *Kitāb Asrār al-Ṣalāh* of al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’*, New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan Exporters & Importers, 1992, p. 53.

²⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 2, p. 357.

³⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 202.

³¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 196.

According to al-Ghazālī, what makes people greedy for the *dunyā* is their excessive desire for food and sex.³² In addition, he explains that preferring the *dunyā* over the Afterlife is man's dominant trait, as Allāh says, “**Yet you prefer the life of this world, while the Afterlife is finer and more lasting**”³³ (Q.87:16-7).

Al-Ghazālī reminds us that there are many aspects of this love.³⁴ Among them are: love of wealth and love of status.³⁵

4.2.1.3 Weakness of the Impulse of Religion:

A further dangerous root of *fasād* in the eyes of al-Ghazālī is the degrading of the impulse or motive of religion (*bā'ith al-dīn*). By this, he means “the will-power (*quwwat al-irādah*) emerging in response to the signals of certainty (*tanba'ith bi-ishārat al-yaqīn*), and taming the desire (*al-shahwah*) which emerges at the direction of devils (*ishārat al-shayāṭīn*).”³⁶ Thus, the impulse of religion, according to the teachings of al-Ghazālī, is a condition of man's heart³⁷ and it is one of the major distinctions between men and animals, since it is not found in animals. This denotes that when the impulse of religion degrades, it cannot bring desire under control and this leads to *fasād*.

4.2.1.4 Dominion of the Innate Stimuli of *Fasād*:

Another big root of *fasād*, according to al-Ghazālī, is the dominion of what he calls the inherent qualities of man which stimulate *fasād* or more specifically sins (*mathārāt*

³² al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 88, trans., see T. J. Winter, *al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul and on Breaking the Two Desires*, translation of *Kitāb Riyāḍat al-Nafs* and *Kitāb Kasr al-Shawatayn* of al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā'*, Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2001, p. 129.

³³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 79, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 100.

³⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 231.

³⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 231.

³⁶ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 41, trans., see Stern, *al-Ghazzali on Repentance*, p. 99.

³⁷ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 140.

al-dhunūb).³⁸ In the *Ihyā'* al-Ghazālī specifies that there are four of such qualities: wildness (*bahīmīyah*), bestiality (*sab'īyah*), devilry (*shayṭānīyah*), and superiority (*rabbānīyah*).³⁹ He clarifies that all these qualities are collected in the heart of every man from the time of his creation.⁴⁰

When any of these four qualities becomes predominant and are not controlled, it results in various forms of *fasād*.⁴¹ To further explain this, al-Ghazālī goes on to say that the dominion of anger or irascibility (*ghaḍab*), which is a principle quality of bestiality, causes man to commit the fierce and cruel acts of a predatory animal.⁴² Similarly the dominion of appetite or desire (*shahwah*) makes man behave like a beast in acts of greed and lust.⁴³ Like anger, desire is naturally very rebellious; it often tends to exceed its proper rational limits and causes *fasād*. Al-Ghazālī elucidates that what makes appetite very difficult to control by reason or intellect (*al-'aql*) is that it is perfected or completed in man at a much earlier age, than his reason is.⁴⁴ Furthermore, by continuously following and satisfying desire, it develops quickly and thus becomes stronger than the power of reason. This is why desire, in the view of al-Ghazālī, is man's worst enemy.⁴⁵ "And since man is distinguished from beast by discernment, but at the same time shares with them anger and appetite, there results in him devilishness. So he becomes evil, using discernment to devise varieties of evil and attaining his purpose by cunning and artifice and deception."⁴⁶ In addition, based on the divine

³⁸ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 16 & Vol. 3, p. 10.

³⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 16 & Vol. 3, p. 10.

⁴⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 11, trans., see McCarthy, "*Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajāb al-Qalb*," p. 321.

⁴¹ In his classification of sins (*dhunūb*) in the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī lists various examples of sins that are caused by each of these qualities, see al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 16, trans., see Stern, *al-Ghazzali on Repentance*, p. 55.

⁴² al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 10, trans., see McCarthy, "*Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajāb al-Qalb*," p. 321.

⁴³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 10, trans., see McCarthy, "*Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajāb al-Qalb*," p. 321.

⁴⁴ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 9.

⁴⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 75.

⁴⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 10f, trans., see McCarthy, "*Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajāb al-Qalb*," p. 321.

element in his soul, man claims lordship for himself, and loves mastery and supremacy and such things.⁴⁷

4.2.2 Phenomena of *Fasād*:

Besides the roots of *fasād*, al-Ghazālī diagnoses a number of phenomena of *fasād*, which were prevalent in his time. At least eight major phenomena are very evident in the *is̄lāhī* works of al-Ghazālī and these will be outlined below.

4.2.2.1 Widespread Weakness and Laxity of *Imān*:

One of the phenomena of *fasād* diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is the widespread weakness and laxity of *Imān* (Islamic faith). After ascertaining that this was widespread in his time, al-Ghazālī records in the *Munqidh*⁴⁸, the method by which he discovered the reasons behind it. He states that “for a time I went after individual men, questioning those who fell short in following the *Shar‘* (Islamic revealed Law).”⁴⁹ From this investigation, he concluded that there were four reasons behind the laxity of people’s *Imān*:⁵⁰ These are demonstrated below.

(1) Deception by those engrossed in the science of philosophy. Al-Ghazālī mentions two forms of such deception in the *Munqidh*.⁵¹ The first may be summarized as follows: being amazed by the precision of the philosophers in some divisions of their sciences, such as mathematics, many people formed what al-Ghazālī finds⁵² a high opinion of the

⁴⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 10, trans., see McCarthy, “*Kitāb Sharḥ ‘Ajāb al-Qalb*,” p. 321.

⁴⁸ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.118, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 89, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 70f.

⁴⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.118, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 89, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 71.

⁵⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.117, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 88-9, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 71.

⁵¹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 79-119, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 63-89, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 33-72. As an earlier response, al-Ghazālī’s observation of this deception was recorded in the *Tahāfut*, as he states in the introduction, (*Tahāfut*, pp. 72-4, trans., see Kamali, *al-Ghazali’s Tahāfut*, pp.1-2).

⁵² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.79, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 63, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 33.

philosophers and started to accept everything they said as truth. Consequently, people blindly followed them even as far as heresy, supposing them to be justified. According to al-Ghazālī, what intensified the deception unwittingly caused by the philosophers was the weak counterarguments of those who opposed them.⁵³ The second form of this deception is evident in the claim that by studying philosophy, they became followers of wisdom, which in their view is the true meaning of prophesy, and were thereby absolved from following authority and conducting acts of worship which are—as they claimed—intended for common people in order to control their misdeeds.⁵⁴

(2) Having strayed through the path of Sufism. Two examples are mentioned in the *Munqidh* for those whose faith is weakened as a result of this. The first is those who claim that they have reached a degree in mysticism which is beyond the need of regular worship.⁵⁵ The second is those who offer one of the specious arguments of the Latitudinarians (*Ahl al-Ibāḥah*) as an excuse for the slackness of their faith.⁵⁶ An example of such an argument is, as it appears in the *Ihyā'*, the assumption that the purpose of spiritual disciplining (*mujāhadah*) is to completely suppress all desires; and since this is impossible, they deny the religion and licentiously follow their desires.⁵⁷

(3) Being confused by the specious arguments of the party of Ta'limīyah or Baṭīnīyah. Al-Ghazālī explains in the *Munqidh* that because of the confusion caused by the fallacious arguments of this party, some people become doubtful of every doctrine, declaring that “the truth is doubtful, the way to it blocked, there is much disagreement about it, and no one view is preferable to any other. Moreover, rational proofs

⁵³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.120, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 90, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 73.

⁵⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.119, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 89, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 72.

⁵⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.118, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 89, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 72.

⁵⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.118, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 89, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 72.

⁵⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 42.

contradict one another so that no reliance can be placed on the opinion of independent thinkers...’’⁵⁸

(4) Being deceived by the bad actions of those popularly regarded as ‘*ulamā*’. Al-Ghazālī states that by asking those who have fallen short in following the *Shar‘* about the cause of their failings, some would reply that “if this were a matter one was bound to observe, then the ‘*ulamā*’ would be those most properly bound to it. But among the most renowned among the learned, so-and-so does not perform the prescribed Prayers, and such a one drinks wine, and another devours the assets of religious endowments and the property of orphans, and another feathers his nest with the lavish largesse of the Sultan without being circumspect over what is *ḥarām* (Islamically unlawful), and another accepts bribes for his judgments and testimony, and so on in many similar instances!’’⁵⁹

4.2.2.2 Widespread Sickness of Heart and Evil Character:

A vital phenomenon of *fasād* diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is the wide spread of heart⁶⁰ sickness (*amrād al-qulūb*) and evil character (*akhlāq khabīthah*), which, according to his teaching, is a reflection of the former, as we shall see below. In different places in the *Ihyā’*, he warns that the heart’s sickness is noticeably more widespread in his time than in the past, and there is a worrying ignorance about how to treat it, to the extent that this type of knowledge—as he sadly and worryingly notes—has quite vanished.⁶¹

The ignorance about healing sickness of the heart was a real concern of al-Ghazālī at the stage in view. About this ignorance, he states that “people neglect the knowledge

⁵⁸ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.119, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 89, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 72.

⁵⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.118, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 89, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 71-2.

⁶⁰ Heart in this context is in its spiritual sense, as has explained earlier.

⁶¹ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 63.

of purifying the hearts and are concerned only with ways to treat physical ailments.”⁶²

Al-Ghazālī's concern was based on his observation that the spread of this sickness was more serious than physical illness and mentions three reasons for this:⁶³

- (1) The affected person does not realise that he is sick.
- (2) Unlike physical illness, its aftermath (*'āqibah*) does not appear in this life.
- (3) The lack of doctors (*aṭibā'*)⁶⁴ to treat it and the vanishing of knowledge about it.⁶⁵

Another reason for al-Ghazālī's concern was that, unlike physical illness, the sickness of the heart “abides even after death, and for all eternity.”⁶⁶

In the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī sets forth in detail the symptoms of this sickness, its causes, and its consequences. In a section entitled “An Exposition of the Signs of the Heart Diseases and the Signs of its Return to Health” (*Bayān 'Alāmāt Amrāḍ al-Qulūb wa-'alāmāt 'adihā ilā-al-Siḥḥah*) al-Ghazālī presents a general symptom of the sickness, as follows:

“Know that each member of the body has been created for a particular function, and that it becomes ill when it is no longer able to perform it, or else does so in a disturbed fashion: the hand ails when it can no longer strike...Likewise the heart falls ill when it becomes incapable of performing the activity proper to it and for which it was created, which is the acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, and gnosis (*ma'rifah*), and the love of Allāh and of His worship, and taking delight in remembering Him, preferring these things to every other desire, and using all one's other desires and members for the sake of His remembrance...Therefore, whosoever possesses a thing which is more dear to him than Allāh is harbouring a sickness in his heart, just as a man who, loving to eat mud, and having lost his desire for bread and water, must needs suffer a sickness in his belly.”⁶⁷

⁶² al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 368.

⁶³ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 101.

⁶⁴ The view of al-Ghazālī on this blackness will be elaborated on more below.

⁶⁵ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 401.

⁶⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 61, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 40.

⁶⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 62f, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, pp. 46f.

4.2.2.3 Prevalent Spurious Religiousness:

Al-Ghazālī's diagnosis of *fasād* includes forms of spurious religiousness which, as he observed, were prevalent in his time. One form of such religiousness is extravagance (*tanaṭu'*) of devotion. In various places in the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī warns against religious extravagance, since it often leads to harmful consequences. For example, he warns against excessive scrupulousness (*wara'*) and considers it a form of extravagance in religiousness.⁶⁸ Even if it does not harm the scrupulous person himself, it may, as al-Ghazālī precisely observes, suggest to others that such scrupulousness is vital and thus, because they cannot fulfil even what is easier than this, they would totally ignore scrupulousness altogether.⁶⁹ According to al-Ghazālī such a conviction made many people of his time give up trying to live a religious life.⁷⁰

Other forms of spurious devotion diagnosed by al-Ghazālī are those which were represented by the following groups.

(1) The majority of Sufis: In the *Ihyā'* al-Ghazālī severely criticizes most of the Sufis of his time for being idle, for relying on charity, and for imitating pious people in their dress and words, just for show and the seeking of followers, while their heart is devoid of true piousness.⁷¹

(2) Groups of worshippers (*arbāb al-'ibādah*): Al-Ghazālī diagnoses in the *Ihyā'* various forms of spurious religious activities as practised by the adherents of the following types of Islamic worship or duties: devotional prayer (*ṣalāh*), recitation of the Qur'ān, pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), asceticism (*zuhd*) and “commanding right and forbidding wrong” (*al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar*).⁷²

⁶⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, p. 111.

⁶⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, p. 111.

⁷⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, p. 111.

⁷¹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, p. 250 & Vol. 3, p. 404.

⁷² al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 400-4.

(3) Classes of wealthy people (*arbāb al-amwāl*): Al-Ghazālī gives selective examples in the *Ihyā'* of spurious religious activities performed by groups of wealthy people.⁷³ A case in point is choosing forms of worship in which no expenditure is necessary while hoarding their money out of stinginess.⁷⁴

4.2.2.4 Popularity of Public Wrongs:

Another phenomenon of *fasād* diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is the popularity of wrongs (*munkarāt*) which are commonly met with in public. In the *Ihyā'*, he states that there are many examples of such wrongs in his age, to the extent that it is impossible to enumerate all of them.⁷⁵ He nevertheless mentions a representative selection of these wrongs in a chapter entitled “Common Wrongs in Customs” (*al-munkarāt al-ma'lūfah fī al-'ādāt*). This selection, which is likely to have been contemporary, includes wrongs in mosques (*al-masājīd*), wrongs in markets (*al-aswāq*), wrongs in streets (*al-shawāri'*), wrongs in bath-houses (*al-ḥammāmāt*), wrongs of hospitality (*al-dīāfah*) and general wrongs.⁷⁶

The main cause behind this phenomenon, as explained by al-Ghazālī, was the virtual disappearance of the knowledge and practice of the duty of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” in his age.⁷⁷ Consequently there was a great deal of flattery (*mudāhanah*) among people of his time.⁷⁸

⁷³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 407-9.

⁷⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 409.

⁷⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, p. 342.

⁷⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, pp. 335-42. For an extended summary of these wrongs in English, see Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 442-6.

⁷⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, p. 306.

⁷⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, p. 306.

4.2.2.5 Widespread Heretical Innovations:

Another phenomenon of *fasād* with which al-Ghazālī was greatly concerned was widespread heretical thoughts or forms of heretical innovation (*bid'ah*) in his time. He diagnosed many forms of *bid'ah* during his life. I shall, however, focus on those forms which he considered very dangerous. Such forms may fall into three categories: Sufic deviant thoughts, philosophical heresy, and Baṭinī deviated teachings.⁷⁹

A. SUFIC DEVIANT THOUGHTS.⁸⁰

In the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī classifies some of the claims evolved by some of the Sufis of the time as very harmful ecstasy (*shataḥ*). A case in point of such claims is the claim of excessive love (*'ishq*) of Allāh which leads to the assertion of having attained “unity (*itihād*) [with God], lifting of the veil (*hijāb*), seeing by vision (*al-mushāhadah bi-al-ru'yah*) and addressing by speech (*al-mushāfah bi-al-kiṭāb*).”⁸¹

According to al-Ghazālī such claims do great harm, particularly to the common folk, since it leads to giving up outward deeds and idleness.⁸² Satisfying themselves with the self-justification offered by such claims, several farmers, as al-Ghazālī narrates, relinquished their farms.⁸³

⁷⁹ It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss in detail al-Ghazālī's view on all the heretical innovations diagnosed by him or to review extensively his position on Sufism, philosophy, and Baṭinīyah.

⁸⁰ Although al-Ghazālī considered the method of the Sufis as the soundest method, as has been mentioned above (2.5.1), he strongly rejected some of the Sufic deviant thoughts. This needs to be borne in mind when evaluating al-Ghazālī's effect on Sufism (see 6.5 below). Despite his rejection of such Sufic deviant thoughts, he has strongly accused of relying on Sufi traditions which contradict Islamic principles, as shall be examined below (5.7.2).

⁸¹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 36, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 144, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 85.

⁸² al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 36, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 145, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 86.

⁸³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 36, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 145, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 86.

Another example of Sufic deviance against which al-Ghazālī warns is the claim of some that they are free from religious commandments, giving false excuses for disobeying the Islamic rules.⁸⁴

B. PHILOSOPHICAL HERESY:

The second type of thinking which al-Ghazālī has classified as heretical includes a number of metaphysical theories, which were originally developed by ancient philosophers, and which were blindly accepted by a group of people in his time.⁸⁵ According to him, the thoughts of philosophers—excluding things which are not to be denied at all, because they are not connected to religion—fall under two categories: the first is what must be counted as unbelief (*kufir*) and the second is what must be counted as heretical innovation (*bid'ah*); out of twenty main wrong doctrines of the philosophers connected to metaphysics, three count as unbelief and the rest count as *bid'ah*.⁸⁶ The first three are as follows:⁸⁷ (1) There is no resurrection for bodies and only spirits are rewarded and punished. (2) God knows universals but not particulars. (3) The world is everlasting, without beginning or end. However, their doctrine on certain further issues in metaphysics—such as their denial of the attributes of God—is close to that of the Mu'tazilites who, al-Ghazālī declares, should not be considered infidels because of such views.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 405.

⁸⁵ See al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 79f. Earlier than the *Munqidh* and in more detail, al-Ghazālī dealt with this type of innovation in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, as mentioned above, but this book is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

⁸⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.83, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 66, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 37.

⁸⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.84, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 66, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 37-8.

⁸⁸ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.84, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 67, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 38.

Although geometry and arithmetic, as part of philosophy,⁸⁹ are both permissible (*mubāḥ*) according to the teachings of al-Ghazālī, most of those who practise them have, al-Ghazālī noticed, crossed the line to admit innovations (*bida'*).⁹⁰

C. BAṬĪNĪ DEVIATED TEACHINGS:

The third form of dangerous *bid'ah* diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is the esoteric interpretation of the Baṭīnīs, which dismisses the obvious literal meaning of words in favour of esoteric meanings.⁹¹ In the *Iḥyā'*, al-Ghazālī mentions this method as an example of what he calls heresies (*tāmāt*); and he considers it unlawful and capable of great harm. He explains the reason behind this judgment as follows:

“When words are changed from their literal meanings, without either holding fast to authoritative tradition from *Ṣāḥib al-Shar'* [i.e., the Prophet (S.A.A.W.)] or a necessity justified by reason, the loss of confidence in words becomes inevitable and the benefits of the words of God and His Apostle are in sequence nullified. For no trust can be placed in whatever is understood therefrom, while esoteric meaning cannot be verified; rather opinions differ therein and it is open to various interpretations.”⁹²

Relying on this method, the Baṭīnīs, al-Ghazālī states, destroyed all the *Sharī'ah* by interpreting all its literal meaning to conform to their own views.⁹³ According to al-

⁸⁹ See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 22, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 87, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 46.

⁹⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 22, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 87, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 46.

⁹¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 37, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 144, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 87.

⁹² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 37, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” pp. 147f, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 88.

⁹³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 37, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 148, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 88.

Ghazālī the adherents of this widespread and harmful innovation sought nothing but strange things because human nature is fond of the unusual.⁹⁴

Al-Ghazālī states in the *Munqidh* that although such innovation was weakly supported, it was widespread, due to the weak counterarguments of its critics who out of fanaticism contradict the Baṭīnīs in everything they said, even when their arguments were sound.⁹⁵ Thus, hearing these sound arguments and the weak counterarguments of their critics, many were seduced into thinking that the doctrine of the Baṭīnīs is sound.⁹⁶

4.2.2.6 *Fasād of the Vast Majority of the ‘Ulamā’:*

A crucial phenomenon of *fasād* according to the diagnosis of al-Ghazālī is the *fasād* of the vast majority of the ‘*ulamā*’ of his time. In the introduction of the *Ihyā’*, he states that his time is bereft of true ‘*ulamā*’ and only the superficial, or those who just apparently resemble them (*al-mutarassimūn*), remain, “most of whom have been overcome by Satan and lured by iniquity; every one of them was so wrapped with his immediate fortune that he came to see good as evil and evil as good.”⁹⁷ This seems the most serious phenomenon of *fasād* in his diagnosis. This is mainly because al-Ghazālī held such ‘*ulamā*’ originally responsible for the general *fasād* of the time. He repeatedly states in the *Ihyā’* that “the *fasād* of the people is due to the *fasād* of the kings and the *fasād* of the kings is due to the *fasād* of the ‘*ulamā*’.”⁹⁸ In his view, had it not been evil judges (*qudāh*) and evil ‘*ulamā*’, the *fasād* of the kings would have been

⁹⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 37, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 148, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 88.

⁹⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 93, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 72, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 45.

⁹⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 93, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 72, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 46.

⁹⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 2, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 3, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. x.

⁹⁸ See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 2, p. 357.

decreased because they would have been fearful from the forbidding of the ‘*ulamā*’ of their wrongdoing.⁹⁹

After al-Ghazālī’s self-*iṣlāḥ*, this phenomenon received very considerable attention from him. In the *Iḥyā’*, al-Ghazālī gives emphasis to the *fasād* of the ‘*ulamā*’ and highlights various symptoms of it. He uses the term evil ‘*ulamā*’ (‘*ulamā*’ *al-sū*’) for those who suffer from these symptoms. Examples of these symptoms are listed below.

1. Love of the *dunyā*:¹⁰⁰ The most remarkable symptom of this *fasād* diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is that the ‘*ulamā*’ of his time were ill with love of the *dunyā*.¹⁰¹ Instead of treating people from this source of *fasād*, the ‘*ulamā*’ themselves became its victims.¹⁰²
2. Envy: Another symptom of the *fasād* of the ‘*ulamā*’ highlighted by al-Ghazālī is envy. He diagnosed the cause of it by stating that seeking wealth and status (*jāh*) through their knowledge is what causes envy between them.¹⁰³ Following his habitual approach, al-Ghazālī specifies what he means by the term *jāh*: to dominate the hearts (*mulk al-qulūb*).¹⁰⁴ He further explains how seeking of wealth and status causes envy between the ‘*ulamā*’ themselves.¹⁰⁵
3. Not forbidding wrongs out of cowardice: In the *Iḥyā’*, al-Ghazālī accuses the ‘*ulamā*’ of his time of lack of courage for they were not fulfilling the duty of “commanding right and forbidding wrong,” particularly when the wrongdoer is a ruler.¹⁰⁶ According to him such cowardice resulted from their greed for worldly pleasures.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 2, p. 150.

¹⁰⁰ See, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 51.

¹⁰¹ See, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 51.

¹⁰² See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 63.

¹⁰³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 195.

¹⁰⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 195.

¹⁰⁵ See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 195.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 2, p. 357.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 2, p. 357.

4. Teaching undeserving students: A further symptom of the *fasād* of the '*ulamā*' according to al-Ghazālī is that they did not mind teaching anyone, regardless of his characters and motives. He noticed that some of the '*ulamā*' were teaching foolish (*sufahā*') and wicked (*ashrār*) people, who were engaged in wickedness and whose ultimate purpose for attaining knowledge was to argue with '*ulamā*', and to seek prestige and wealth. What encouraged these '*ulamā*' to do so, in the view of al-Ghazālī, was their love of supremacy, seeking many followers, and boasting, though they were claiming that their intention was to spread knowledge regardless of who would receive it.¹⁰⁸

5. Relying on the approach of hope (*rajā*): Similarly al-Ghazālī accused the preachers of his time of preferring the approach of hope (*rajā*') over the approach of intimidation although the former was not suitable for the people of his time in his view.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, since the aim of the preachers was to please people so that they would praise them in return, they relied on the approach of hope for it is easier on the heart and more pleasant than the other approach.¹¹⁰ As a result, *fasād* increased and the transgressors persisted in their transgression as al-Ghazālī sadly noted.¹¹¹

6. Pride: Pride is another symptom of *fasād* among the '*ulamā*' according to the diagnosis of al-Ghazālī. He generally thinks that it is very rare to find a scholar ('*ālim*') free from pride. Moreover, according to him, it was very unusual to find a scholar in his time who would have felt sorry for losing the quality of being free from pride.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*', Vol. 4, p. 369.

¹⁰⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*', Vol. 4, p. 146.

¹¹⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*', Vol. 4, p. 146.

¹¹¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*', Vol. 4, p. 146.

¹¹² See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*', Vol. 3, p. 349.

7. Being fully engaged in controversies and debate: Al-Ghazālī accused the ‘*ulamā*’ in his age of being fully engaged in juridical controversial issues. In the *Ihyā*’, he explains that the reason behind this was that there were celebrities who enjoyed listening to debates in jurisprudence, so the ‘*ulamā*’ favoured what these celebrities favoured but they claimed that they were doing this for the sake of Allāh.¹¹³

8. Fanaticism (*ta ‘aṣṣub*): According to al-Ghazālī, the evil ‘*ulamā*’ in his age adopted fanaticism (*ta ‘aṣṣub*) as their rule of conduct and their method of approach (‘*ādatahum wa-alatahum*).¹¹⁴ In the context of discussing the causes of fanaticism and the reasons behind its continuation in his time, al-Ghazālī states in the *Ihyā*’:

“The *madāris* (religious institutions of learning) have been given to people whom fear of Allāh has become little, whose insight into religion has grown weak, whose desire of this present world has become intense, and greed to seek followers has grown strong. They have not been able to have a follower and attain fame (*jāh*) except through fanaticism. So they have veiled this fact within their own breasts, and have not reminded their followers of the wiles of Satan therein, but indeed they have acted as the agents of Satan in carrying out his wiles against them. So men have continued in fanaticism and have forgotten the major principles of their religion (*ummahāt dīnihim*). Thus they have perished and caused others to perish.”¹¹⁵

4.2.2.7 *Fasād* of Ruling Members:

In addition to the ‘*ulamā*’, al-Ghazālī holds the rulers responsible for the spread of *fasād* in the society. In general, the *fasād* of the subjects (*ra ‘īyah*), al-Ghazālī believes, is due to the *fasād* of the kings.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 1, p. 42, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 170, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, pp. 102f.

¹¹⁴ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 1, p. 40, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 136.

¹¹⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 3, p. 35, trans., see Skellie “*The Religious Psychology*,” pp. 138f.

¹¹⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 2, p. 150.

Al-Ghazālī on one hand believes that the caliphate after the rightly guided caliphs passed on to men who—generally speaking—undeservedly occupied it.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, he legitimized the Abbasid Caliph of the time and the sultans who give him their pledge of allegiance.¹¹⁸ This legitimization, however, does not mean a complete approval of their policies and administrations.

As in the case of the *fasād* of the ‘*ulamā*’, al-Ghazālī in various places of the *Ihyā’* diagnoses aspects of *fasād* among ruling members in his time. He states that injustice among them was widespread.¹¹⁹ One of the most crucial aspects of their *fasād* diagnosed in the *Ihyā’*, besides their general injustice, is that related to their financial policies. In his detail discussion on what is lawful (*halāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*) of the income of the sultans of his time, he states that the majority of their wealth (*amwāl*) is *ḥarām*, and that the *halāl* in their hands is nothing or rare.¹²⁰ Similarly he states that the majority of the wealth of the militant men is *ḥarām*.¹²¹ This is mainly because of their unlawful financial policies such as taking *jizyah* (per capital tax) unjustly,¹²² applying *kharāj* (tax on agricultural land) on Muslims, and accepting bribery (*rashwah*).¹²³

In addition, other aspects of *fasād* among ruling members were highlighted by al-Ghazālī’s in some of his letters to some Seljuk sovereigns, as shall be seen below.

4.3 Al-Ghazālī’s *Iṣlāḥī* Attempts to Eradicate the Roots of *Fasād*:

Al-Ghazālī did not satisfy himself with simply getting at the roots of *fasād*, but he, as is evident in his *iṣlāḥī* treatises, attempted to eradicate them. His attempts will be illustrated below in the same order as the roots of *fasād* demonstrated above.

¹¹⁷ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 1, pp. 42f, trans., see Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 101.

¹¹⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 2, pp. 141f.

¹¹⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 2, p. 105.

¹²⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 2, p. 136.

¹²¹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 2, p. 65.

¹²² al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 2, p. 139.

¹²³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 2, p. 135.

4.3.1 Counteracting the Causes of Ignorance:

The main efforts of al-Ghazālī which can be considered as counteractions of the causes of ignorance listed above are summarized under the following sub-headings.

4.3.1.1 Distinguishing between Acceptable and Unacceptable *Taqīd*:¹²⁴

In general, al-Ghazālī strongly condemns *taqīd* since it can lead to ignorance or lack of perception of realities, as mentioned above. Rejecting the view of the Ta'limīyah that the way to get at truth (*ṭarīq ma'rifat al-ḥaqq*) is *taqīd*, he, in the *al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*, which is his latest known book in the genre of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, clarifies that “by *taqīd* we specifically mean accepting an opinion (*qawl*) without proof (*ḥujjah*) so whenever there is a lack of proof, and truth is not known, neither by common sense (*bi-ṭarūrah*) nor by evidence (*bi-dalīl*), then imitation (*al-ittibā'*) therein would be based on ignorance (*jahl*).”¹²⁵ Furthermore, in the course of his refutation of the Ta'limīyah's speculations, he quotes a number of *āyāt* (Qur'ānic verses) which, he states, forbid *taqīd* and direct to knowledge,¹²⁶ namely: **“Pursue not that you have no knowledge...” (Q.44:36) “Produce your proof, if you speak truly.” (Q.2:111)**

He, however, does not completely oppose *taqīd*,¹²⁷ rather he distinguishes between acceptable and unacceptable *taqīd*. While he strongly supports the prevailing view of the 'ulamā' that *taqīd* is *ḥarām* (Islamically unlawful) in the case of those who are capable of *ijtihād*,¹²⁸ he totally refuses the odd argument of a group of Qadarīyah that

¹²⁴ For an extended outline of al-Ghazālī's position on *taqīd*, see Richard M. Frank, “Al-Ghazālī's on *taqīd*: Scholars, Theologians, and Philosophers,” *Zeitschrift Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften*, no. 7, 1992, pp. 207-252.

¹²⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*, ed., Ḥamzah Zuhayr Ḥāfīz, Jeddah: Sharikat al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah li-al-Ṭibā'ah, n.d., Vol. 4, p. 140.

¹²⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā*, Vol. 4, p. 144.

¹²⁷ As Frank points out, “...since, under his [i.e. al-Ghazālī's] analysis, belief held by *taqīd*, though intrinsically weak, is not universally characterized by instability and contaminated with doubt, he has, unlike earlier Asharites, no prima facie reason to reject it outright as a valid basis for orthodox religious assent...” (Frank, “Al-Ghazālī's on *taqīd*,” p. 208).

¹²⁸ The scholarly mental activity of deriving a rule of the *Sharī'ah* from authoritative evidence.

even *al-‘awāmm*, i.e., the ordinary people or general folks, must look profoundly into the evidence (*yalzamuhum al-naẓar fī al-dalīl*).¹²⁹ He entirely rejects this opinion on the basis of the following two proofs. The first is, “the consensus of the Companions (*ijmā‘ al-ṣaḥābah*), for they used to give *fatwā* (jurisprudence views) to the *‘awāmm* without ordering them to achieve the rank of *ijtihād*.”¹³⁰ The second is that, “a consensus has been reached (*al-ijmā‘ mun‘aqid*) that *al-‘āmī* (an ordinary man) is charged (*mukallaf*) with *al-aḥkām* (Islamic rules), and thus enjoining him to achieve the rank of *al-ijtihād* is impossible, because it would lead to the abandon of crops and live-stock, the quit of the industries and the crafts, and the ruin of the world when all people would have to seek *al-‘ilm* ([religious] knowledge).”¹³¹ In short, *al-itibā‘*, i.e., the following of the *‘ulamā’* or the *mufīīs* in this context, is, for practical reasons, unavoidable in the case of the *‘awāmm* according to al-Ghazālī.

In addition, al-Ghazālī sets out some conditions which have to be met in order that *taqlīd* or *itibā‘* in the case of the *‘awāmm* proves to be acceptable. With respect to seeking *fatwā*, a *‘āmī* must ask only a person who is known for *‘ilm*, i.e., religious knowledge, and *‘adālah* (righteousness).¹³²

In the matter of *imān* (Islamic faith), however, al-Ghazālī necessitates, as in the *Iḥyā’* for example, that every *mukallaf* firstly learn and understand the *Shahādah*, i.e., there is no god but Allāh and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh, and secondly firmly believe in it without any doubt or hesitation.¹³³ This, however, can, as he assures,

¹²⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā*, Vol. 4, p. 147.

¹³⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā*, Vol. 4, p. 147.

¹³¹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā*, Vol. 4, p. 148.

¹³² al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā*, Vol. 4, p. 150.

¹³³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 149, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 53, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 24.

be obtained by mere *taqlīd* without necessarily the means of investigation (*baḥth*), penetration (*naẓar*), and formulating evidence (*tahrīr al-addillah*).¹³⁴

This is why al-Ghazālī seriously attacks in *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah bayn al-Islām wa-al-Zandaqah* a group of *mutakallimūn* who charge the ‘*awamm* with unbelief (*kufr*) just because they do not acquire Islamic creed through their own way of *Kalām*.¹³⁵ He accuses them of being extremist, because firstly they restrict the mercy of Allāh and the entrance of Paradise to a limited group among the *mutakallimūn*, and secondly they are ignorant of what has been reported, through *tawātur* way, that the Prophet (S.A.A.W.) and his Companions accepted the Islam of the illiterate Arabs who did not concern themselves with the science of reasoning (‘*ilm al-dalīl*).¹³⁶ Similarly, he challenges the speculation that the means to find *imān* is *Kalām* and abstract reasoning, because *imān*, he declares, “is light (*nūr*) which is cast by Allāh on the hearts of His servants as a bestowal and gift from Him.”¹³⁷ Al-Ghazālī, however, does not deny that the reasoning of the *mutakallimūn* may lead to *imān*, but this, according to him, is very rare and it is not the only way to *imān*.¹³⁸

According to al-Ghazālī, *Kalām* is not only unnecessary for the ‘*awamm* but also extremely risky, because it may lead this group of people to unbelief (*shirk*).¹³⁹ To warn against this potential risk, he composed his book *Iljām al-‘Awāmm ‘an ‘Ilm al-Kalām* (Restraining the General Folks from the Science of *Kalām*). In the opening of the book, he states that one of the purposes of the book was to distinguish between what is obligatory on general people in matters of faith and that which they should be

¹³⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 149, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 53, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 24.

¹³⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah bayn al-Islām wa-al-Zandaqah*, compacted with other works of al-Ghazālī in *Majmū‘at Rasā’il al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, n.d., Part 3, p. 93.

¹³⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah*, p. 93.

¹³⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah*, p. 93.

¹³⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah*, p. 94.

¹³⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iljām al-‘Awāmm ‘an ‘Ilm al-Kalām*, compacted with other works of al-Ghazālī in *Majmū‘at Rasā’il al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, n.d. Part 4, p. 57.

restrained from.¹⁴⁰ Answering a possible objection that forbidding the ‘*āmmī*’ from investigation in matters of faith would lead him to be ignorant about the belief in Allāh and his divine attributes, which are obligatory, he asserts that firmly rooted belief (*al-taṣdīq al-jāzim*) has six levels and that some of which can be obtained by the ‘*awāmm*’ without being involved in *Kalām* and that the Qur’ānic evidences are enough to secure their faith.¹⁴¹ Although he states that the most superior belief is that which is supported by sound reasoning, he still believes that the ‘*āmmī*’, with such acceptance of faith, is no doubt a believer.¹⁴²

To fully appreciate al-Ghazālī’s position from *taqlīd* on matters of faith, we need to be acquainted with his view on the role of the intellect on these matters, which shall become clear below.

4.3.1.2 Assuring the Need for Both Intellectual Knowledge and Religious Knowledge:

Against the two extreme attitudes towards intellectual knowledge and religious knowledge, demonstrated above, al-Ghazālī assures the need for both and calls for unity and harmony between them.¹⁴³ To correctly understand his position from both, we need first to be acquainted with what he means by the two types of knowledge.

By intellectual knowledge (*al-‘ulūm al-‘aqlīyah*), he means that “by which the innate intellect makes its judgments and which does not come into existence through imitation (*taqlīd*) and hearing (*samā’*);”¹⁴⁴ and he divides it into: a) axiomatic (*tarūrīyah*) such as man’s knowledge that one person cannot be in two places, and b)

¹⁴⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Ijām al-‘Awāmm*, p. 41.

¹⁴¹ al-Ghazālī, *Ijām al-‘Awāmm*, pp. 79-81.

¹⁴² al-Ghazālī, p. 81.

¹⁴³ See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, pp. 16f, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” pp. 61-6.

¹⁴⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 16, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 61.

acquired knowledge (*'ulūm muktasabah*) which is gained by learning and deduction (*istidlāl*).¹⁴⁵ While by religious knowledge, he means that which is gained by way of acceptance on authority (*taqlīd*) from the prophets and it is “acquired by learning the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of the Apostle of Allāh, and understanding their meaning after having heard them.”¹⁴⁶

Now regarding the need for these types of knowledge, al-Ghazālī asserts that with religious knowledge, man’s soul can be perfected in quality and cured from its diseases.¹⁴⁷ Intellectual knowledge, he adds, is not sufficient to cure man’s soul, though it is needed.¹⁴⁸ Explaining how the intellect is needed, while it is insufficient alone, he further states:

“...just as the intellect is not sufficient to make continuous the causes of physical health, but needs to gain the experiential knowledge of the properties of medicines and herbs by learning them from the physicians (*aṭibbā'*) and not by reading in books, since the intellect alone cannot find this knowledge. But after it is heard it cannot be understood except by means of the intellect.”¹⁴⁹

Thus, he concludes, “the intellect cannot dispense with hearing (*samā'*) [i.e., revelation in this context] nor can hearing (*samā'*) dispense with the intellect.”¹⁵⁰

Rejecting the supposition of those who think that intellectual knowledge is opposed to that of religion, and that it is impossible to achieve harmony between them, he declares that such supposition “arises from blindness in the eye of insight (*'ayn al-baṣīrah*).”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 16, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 65.

¹⁴⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 17, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 65.

¹⁴⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 17, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 65.

¹⁴⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 17, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 65.

¹⁴⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 17, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 65.

¹⁵⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 17, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 65.

¹⁵¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 17, trans., see Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 66.

Despite his assertion of the need for intellectual knowledge, al-Ghazālī does not consider all intellectual sciences praiseworthy. In this respect, he divides these sciences into three types:

A. Praiseworthy knowledge (*'ulūm maḥmūdah*): all the intellectual sciences which are connected with what is beneficial to the present world, as medicine and arithmetic, and they are two divisions: a) *farḍ kifāyah* (Islamically ordained on the Muslim community as a whole): every branch of knowledge which is indispensable to the welfare of this world, such as medicine and arithmetic; but if some members of the community undertake it, the obligation falls away from others; and b) *faḍīlah* (a virtuous knowledge but not obligatory) which is the extra investigation into the details of the above sciences, which, though helpful in reinforcing the efficacy of whatever is absolutely needed, is not necessary.¹⁵²

B. Blameworthy (*madhmūmah*) knowledge: any intellectual knowledge which is blamed for one of the following three reasons:

1. When it leads either its possessor or someone else into harm, such as magic and talismans which are used for harming people.¹⁵³
2. When it is harmful to its possessor in the majority of cases, such as astrology, which in itself is not blameworthy, for it has two parts: (a) one concerned with calculation, and (b) one concerned with the decree of the stars and is inferential.¹⁵⁴ The Prophet (S.A.A.W.) has warned against it for three reasons: (a) It is harmful to most people who get the impression that the stars cause effects, as

¹⁵² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 16, trans., see McCall, "The Book of Knowledge," pp. 60-2, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 30.

¹⁵³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 29, trans., see McCall, "The Book of Knowledge," pp. 116f, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 67.

¹⁵⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 29, trans., see McCall, "The Book of Knowledge," p. 118, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 68.

most of man's observation is limited to the subordinate causes.¹⁵⁵ (b) The rules based on it are purely conjecture (*takhmīn maḥḍ*) and prognostication is right only by coincidence; thus, disapproval of it lies in the fact that it is ignorance from this respect.¹⁵⁶ (c) There is no benefit in it and results in a great loss of valuable time; what it decreed is finished, and it is impossible to guard against it.¹⁵⁷

3. When its practitioner does not gain a real learning advantage because it is beyond his depth, as learning details of sciences before their major principles, or the obscure things before the plainly seen; so such knowledge is blameworthy for this particular practitioner.¹⁵⁸

C. Permissible (*mubāḥ*) knowledge: such as learning poetry which has nothing unsound in it, history, and the like.¹⁵⁹

However, with regard to the religious (*shar'īyah*) branches of knowledge, al-Ghazālī states that they are all praiseworthy (*maḥmudah kulluhā*), but sometimes they are confused with those which are thought to be religious, though really blameworthy (*madhmūmah*),¹⁶⁰ as shall be further explained below.

4.3.1.3 Revealing Aspects of the Reality of Man:

It has been stated earlier that one of the major causes of ignorance according to al-Ghazālī is the lack of knowing the reality of man's own heart (*qalb*), which leads man to be ignorant about his reality and his Lord. As a counter to this, al-Ghazālī reveals in

¹⁵⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, pp. 29f, trans., see McCall, "The Book of Knowledge," p. 119, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 69.

¹⁵⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 30, trans., see McCall, "The Book of Knowledge," p. 120, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, pp. 69f.

¹⁵⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 30, trans., see McCall, "The Book of Knowledge," p. 122, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 70.

¹⁵⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 30, trans., see McCall, "The Book of Knowledge," pp. 122f, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 71.

¹⁵⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 16, trans., see McCall, "The Book of Knowledge," p. 62, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 16, trans., see McCall, "The Book of Knowledge," p. 62, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 31.

the *Ihyā'* various aspects of man's reality, which shall be briefly illustrated under the following sub-headings.

A. THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MAN'S HEART:

One fundamental aspect of the reality of man can be identified, in the view of al-Ghazālī, by exposing the essential characteristics of man's heart (*qalb*). This is based on his belief that if a man knows his heart, he would know himself.¹⁶¹ This is why al-Ghazālī often stresses the importance of the knowledge of the heart. For him “the knowledge of the heart (*qalb*) and of the true meaning of its qualities is the root of religion.”¹⁶²

For the purpose of exposing the characteristics of man's heart as one aspect of his reality, al-Ghazālī devoted the first *kitāb* (book) of the third *rub'* (quarter) of the *Ihyā'* to this matter. At the beginning of this *kitāb*, he clarifies that the word heart (*qalb*) does not refer to the physical heart; however, it is employed—as in the Qur'ān—in the following sense: “a spiritual, divine subtlety (*latīfa*)...which is the essence of man...is what perceives, knows, and realizes...is spoken to, punished, blamed and responsible.”¹⁶³

For various states of this spiritual essence, al-Ghazālī applies three other terms: spirit (*rūḥ*), self or soul (*nafs*), and intellect (*'aql*).¹⁶⁴ Because he noticed that there was great obscurity about the difference and applications of these terms among the '*ulamā'*', al-Ghazālī explains their meanings and applications right at the beginning of the above

¹⁶¹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 2, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 310.

¹⁶² al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 2f, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 310.

¹⁶³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 3, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 311.

¹⁶⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 3f, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 311.

mentioned *kitāb*: entitled *Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajā'ib al-Qalb* (Book of Explanation of the Wonders of the Heart).¹⁶⁵

Unlike the body, which belongs to the material world, the heart in the teachings of al-Ghazālī is immortal. Thus, it is more precious and essential than any other part of man. In his view, it is considered the sixth unique sense of man, which can also be called *nūr* (light).¹⁶⁶ What is perceived by this sense—he believes—cannot be mistaken, whereas what is perceived by citation can be wrong—e.g. seeing what is far, close and what is small, big.¹⁶⁷

Only through the heart—al-Ghazālī believes—man is prepared to know Allāh, and not by any members of his body.¹⁶⁸ It is the means by which man works for Allāh, strives towards Him, and draws near to Him.¹⁶⁹ Allāh's acceptance or rejection of man relies on the condition of his heart.¹⁷⁰

In addition, the good and evil qualities of a man's external aspect are merely reflections of the condition of his heart—al-Ghazālī points out.¹⁷¹ Moreover, all members of the body are originally under the control of the heart and all follow its instructions.¹⁷²

In order to fully understand the relationship between the heart and the bodily members, al-Ghazālī specifies that the original purpose for which the heart is created is to travel over the spiritual stations (*manāzil*) to the meeting of Allāh.¹⁷³ In its spiritual journey, the heart is in need of two essential things: the body as a mount and knowledge

¹⁶⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 3-5, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 310-3.

¹⁶⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 297.

¹⁶⁷ See, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 30.

¹⁶⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 2, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 309.

¹⁶⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 2, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 309.

¹⁷⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 2, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 310.

¹⁷¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 2, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 310.

¹⁷² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 5, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 313.

¹⁷³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 5, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 314.

as provisions.¹⁷⁴ Thus, caring for the body and maintaining it is—al-Ghazālī believes—a necessity for fulfilling the original purpose of the heart.¹⁷⁵ For this purpose, the heart is provided with the following helpers or soldiers (*junūd*) according to al-Ghazālī's terminology: First, for the need of feeding the body, the necessary appetites or desires (*al-shahwāt*) are created in the heart, and the organs are created as their tools.¹⁷⁶ Second, for protecting the body from destructive things, anger (*ghaḍab*) and the hand and foot, which function under the demands of anger, are created.¹⁷⁷ Third, for knowing nourishment, the senses and the sense organs are created.¹⁷⁸

All these soldiers are originally submissive to the heart, but the soldiers of anger (*ghaḍab*) and desire (*shahwah*) may, as al-Ghazālī explains,¹⁷⁹ oppose it to the extent of dominating and enslaving it and thus becomes a real loser, as it is being cut off from its spiritual journey. However, the heart has other soldiers, namely knowledge (*'ilm*), wisdom (*hikmah*), and reflection (*tafakkūr*), which are provided—al-Ghazālī further explains—as helpers against anger (*ghaḍab*) and desire (*shahwah*).¹⁸⁰

Furthermore, the unique characteristics of man's heart are, according to al-Ghazālī, knowledge and will (*irādah*) which are not found in animals.¹⁸¹ Al-Ghazālī illustrates that this will (*irādah*) is different than that of desire (*shahwah*) and can even be contrary to desire.¹⁸² Without this *irādah*, the judgment of the intellect or reason (*al-'aql*), which perceives the consequences of matters, would be wasted, because this

¹⁷⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 5, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 314.

¹⁷⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 5., trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 314.

¹⁷⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 5., trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 314.

¹⁷⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 5f, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 314.

¹⁷⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 6, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 314.

¹⁷⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 6, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 315.

¹⁸⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 6, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 315.

¹⁸¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 6, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 315.

¹⁸² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 8, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 317.

irādah is the spur that moves the bodily members according to the judgment of reason.¹⁸³

B. THE REAL PURPOSE OF MAN'S LIFE:

Another aspect of the reality of man, which is clarified by al-Ghazālī, is the real purpose of man's life. This can be seen as a response to the people's forgetfulness or failure to know the real purpose of their life, which resulted from their full busyness and engagement in worldly works, as mentioned above.

Al-Ghazālī's account on this aspect is based on his rejection of some assumptions about the purpose of man's life. Five of these assumptions are worth mentioning before presenting what is regarded the real purpose of life in the view of al-Ghazālī. The first is of those who think that the purpose of life is just to survive for some time, so they work hard to gain food and then eat to be able to work again and so on.¹⁸⁴ The second assumption which is rejected by al-Ghazālī is of those who claim that the aim of this life is not to be exhausted by hard work, but rather to enjoy life by satisfying the desires for food and sex, which in their view is the ultimate happiness.¹⁸⁵ The third wrong assumption in the view of al-Ghazālī is of those who think that achieving happiness is the purpose of life and it consists in gaining big wealth, so they work day and night for this purpose.¹⁸⁶ The fourth view about the purpose of life, which al-Ghazālī rejects, is of those who assume that widespread fame is what brings happiness in this life, so they exhaust themselves in gaining money not to spend it on food but in getting expensive things in order to attract attention and seen to be wealthy.¹⁸⁷ The fifth rejected assumption is of those who claim that happiness is not about gaining respect and

¹⁸³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 8, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 317.

¹⁸⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 228.

¹⁸⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 229.

¹⁸⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 229.

¹⁸⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 229.

influence, so their efforts are directed towards gaining wide political authorities so that their orders would be followed.¹⁸⁸

Totally unlike these assumed purposes of life, the real purpose of life according to the teachings of al-Ghazālī is to prepare for being qualified for attaining the otherworldly happiness, which is, he believes, the true ultimate aim of man and is the true blessing as it consists of life without death (*baqā' lā fanā'a lah*), joy without sorrow (*surūr lā ghamma fīh*), knowledge without ignorance (*'ilm lā jahla ma'ah*), and wealth without poverty (*ghinā lā faqra ba'dah*).¹⁸⁹

C. THE TRUE PERFECTION OF MAN:

A further aspect of the reality of man which is illuminated by al-Ghazālī is the true perfection of man. Although al-Ghazālī admits that evilness is part of human nature,¹⁹⁰ he believes that man can achieve true perfection in this life.¹⁹¹

However, as in the case of man's purpose of life, the true perfection of man was—as al-Ghazālī noticed—widely confused with fancied perfection.¹⁹² For the purpose of unveiling the truth on this critical matter, al-Ghazālī devoted a section in the *Ihyā'* titled: “Exposing real perfection and fancied (*wahmī*) perfection which is not real.” In this section he sets criteria for true perfection.

For al-Ghazālī what forms true perfection of man are the qualities that are characterised by both eternality in a sense of accompanying man's soul after death, and usefulness in the Afterlife in a sense of bringing man's soul nearer to Allāh.¹⁹³ Based

¹⁸⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 229.

¹⁸⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 103.

¹⁹⁰ See, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, pp. 3 & 44.

¹⁹¹ See, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 282.

¹⁹² al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 282.

¹⁹³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 284.

on these criteria, al-Ghazālī explains that man's true perfection has three aspects.¹⁹⁴ The first is the perfection of knowledge that consists of knowing Allāh, His attributes, His works, and His wisdom in the creations. The second aspect of perfection is power that is needed only as a mean to knowledge. The third aspect of perfection is freedom (*ḥurrīyah*) from enslavement to carnal desires.

In light of this concept of perfection, al-Ghazālī states that most people are concerned with what they mistakenly think is perfection, namely fame, and wealth which are not eternal.¹⁹⁵

4.3.2 Guiding to the Way of Being Free from Love of the *Dunyā*:

Since love of the *dunyā* (purely worldly pleasure) is a very dangerous cause of *fasād*, as explained earlier, al-Ghazālī paid considerable attention to attempting to show how to be free from this love. His effort can be divided into two major thrusts: the first is the explication of the reality of the *dunyā* and the second is the illustration of the true nature of death and the Afterlife.

4.3.2.1 Explicating the Reality of the *Dunyā*:

In the *Iḥyā'*, al-Ghazālī explicates the dispraise (*dhamm*) of the *dunyā*, its reality, its features, the need of it, and the way by which it deceives people.¹⁹⁶ By this detailed explanation, he aims to warn from the harm of the *dunyā* so that it can be avoided.¹⁹⁷ In his view, to remove its harmful love from the heart it is not enough that its lovers know the dispraise of the *dunyā* but also they should know what is meant by the dispraised

¹⁹⁴ See, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 284.

¹⁹⁵ See, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 282.

¹⁹⁶ For this purpose, he devoted a whole *kitāb* in the *Iḥyā'* under the following title: *Kitāb Dham al-Dunyā* (The Book of Condemnation of the World), see al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 201-30.

¹⁹⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 201.

dunyā and how to distinguish between that which should be avoided in it from that which should not be shunned.¹⁹⁸

The dispraised *dunyā*, al-Ghazālī explains, is every purely worldly desire that would not have any fruit in the Afterlife at all,¹⁹⁹ and is called *hawā*²⁰⁰ (base desire). Consequently, he excludes two types of worldly desires from the dispraised *dunyā*: any desire in the worldly life the fruit of which continues into the Afterlife, and every desire that is necessary for survival and health in this life, unless the intention behind it is purely worldly.²⁰¹

Attempting to show to what extent the *dunyā* in this sense is dispraised, al-Ghazālī quotes and comments on numerous influential citations from Prophetic traditions (*akhbār*), non-Prophetic *exempla* (*āthār*), and exhortations (*mawā'iz*) which dispraise the *dunyā*.²⁰² He, however, does not quote from the Qur'ān because, as he points out, the *āyāt* on this theme are so many and so obvious to be cited.²⁰³

In order to explain how the *dunyā* deceives people, al-Ghazālī illustrates some remarkable features of it using imaginary examples.²⁰⁴ Among these imaginary examples are:

- In its quick and invisible movement, the *dunyā* like shadow appears still, but in reality it is moving continuously, and its movement is not noticed except when it disappears.²⁰⁵
- In its unnoticed decisiveness, the *dunyā* is similar to confused dreams in that their decisiveness is not realized except after awakening.²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 21.

¹⁹⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 219.

²⁰⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 222.

²⁰¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 220.

²⁰² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 202-14.

²⁰³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 202.

²⁰⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 214-19.

²⁰⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 214.

²⁰⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 214.

- In its enmity for its people and its dreadful harm, the *dunyā* is like a woman who attracts men to marry her, but kills them after they do.²⁰⁷
- In that its appearance does not reflect its evil essence, the *dunyā* is like an elderly woman who puts on adornments to deceive people by her look.²⁰⁸

Following these and other imaginary examples of the *dunyā*, al-Ghazālī exposes how people have become fully engaged in the *dunyā* and how they have misunderstood the purposes of this life and have thus gone astray.²⁰⁹ To fulfil this aim, al-Ghazālī first classifies the substances²¹⁰ of the *dunyā* and highlights their main benefits for man.²¹¹ Second, he specifies their relationships with man: a relation with the heart (*al-qalb*), i.e., his love for them, and another relation with the body, i.e., being busy in making them usable.²¹² Third, he discusses in detail the causes, the needs, and the consequences of the crafts and careers generated from the second relation of man with the substances of the *dunyā*.²¹³ Finally, he gives various examples of people whose way of thinking had been spoiled by the full engagement in the works of the *dunyā*, and thus hold false views about how to live in this life.²¹⁴

Al-Ghazālī also clarifies the real purpose of this world by repeated reminder that this world is only the sowing-ground of the next (*al-dunyā mazra‘tu al-ākhirah*).²¹⁵ From this aspect, the world is very essential: it is a venue for the happiness in the Afterlife, which is the only complete or perfect happiness in the teachings of al-Ghazālī, as stated earlier. In order to gain this happiness, however, its necessary means

²⁰⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 214.

²⁰⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 215.

²⁰⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, pp. 224-30.

²¹⁰ According to al-Ghazālī, “all what is on earth can be classified into three sections: mineral, plants, and animals,” al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 224.

²¹¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 224.

²¹² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 224.

²¹³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, pp. 225-8.

²¹⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, pp. 228f.

²¹⁵ See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 58.

need to be achieved in this life.²¹⁶ This is why each breath in this life is considered by al-Ghazālī as “a precious jewel which does not have an equivalent substitute.”²¹⁷

Based on this discussion, it is wrong to assume, as al-Ghazālī explains, that hating the *dunyā* is intended in itself.²¹⁸ He believes that the perfect position to adopt regarding the *dunyā* is neither to hate nor to love it, as both distract from the love of Allāh.²¹⁹

He also believes that the way of totally removing the love of the *dunyā* from the heart is by patiently living an abstinent (*zuhd*)²²⁰ life.²²¹

The above account, however, is only a general treatment for the malady of love of the *dunyā*, and since the *dunyā* consists, as al-Ghazālī states,²²² of various elements, he also gives a detailed treatment for each primary element which is considered an aspect of the love the *dunyā*. Among these primary elements is, for example, love of wealth (*al-māl*), which al-Ghazālī discusses in a considerable detail.²²³

4.3.2.2 Illustrating the true Nature of Death and the Afterlife:

In addition to explicating the reality of the *dunyā*, al-Ghazālī illustrates the true nature of death and the Afterlife in the concluding *kitāb* (book) of the *Ihyā'* as an attempt to awaken the heedless lovers of the *dunyā*.

²¹⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 103. For a detailed discussion of these means, see Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī: A Composite Ethics in Islam*, Selangor (Malaysia): Central Printing Sendirian Berhad, 1976, pp. 58-64.

²¹⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 394.

²¹⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 192.

²¹⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, pp. 191f.

²²⁰ al-Ghazālī defines *zuhd* as a state in which man controls his desires (*shahawāt*) and anger (*ghadāb*) so that they follow the motive (*bā'ith*) of *dīn* and the signal (*ishārah*) of faith (*imān*), see al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 79.

²²¹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 316.

²²² al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 231.

²²³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 231-52. For an extended discussion of this aspect, though in an ethical context, see Abul Quasem, *The Ethics*, pp. 127-9.

After refuting three false and mistaken notions about the nature of death, al-Ghazālī exposes death as only a change in the state of man in which the spirit (*al-rūḥ*) after leaving the body—i.e., the body is no longer subject to its dictates—is not extinguished but rather it will continue to survive either in a condition of torment or bliss.²²⁴ Between the states of death and life, he continues, there are two differences: The first is that man upon death is deprived of all his bodily parts as he is deprived from all of his belongings and relatives and the second is that certain things which have never been disclosed to man in life are going to be revealed to him after death.²²⁵

In addition to this exposition of the true nature of death, al-Ghazālī covers, in the same *kitāb*, other topics related to death, its preludes and consequences, and the conditions of the next world, so that, as he states, “this may act as an encouragement to preparedness.”²²⁶ This is because, he believes, “preparation for something can never be easy unless its memory is constantly renewed in the heart, and this can only be done through reminding oneself by paying attention to those things which cause it to be recalled and by looking to those matters which tell of it.”²²⁷

4.3.3 Introducing Measures to Strengthen the Impulse of Religion:

To resolve weakness of the impulse of religion (*bā'ith al-dīn*), al-Ghazālī introduces measures by which this impulse or motive is strengthened. In his view, this can be strengthened in two primary ways: a) Reflecting on the fruits of struggling against (*mujāhadah*) what oppose the impulse of *dīn*, i.e., the desires (*al-shahawāt*);

²²⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, pp. 493f, trans., see T. J. Winter, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*, translation of *Kitāb Dhikr al-Mawt wa-ma Ba'dah* of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1989, p. 122.

²²⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 494, trans., see Winter, *The Remembrance*, pp. 123f.

²²⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 494, trans., see Winter, *The Remembrance*, p. 2.

²²⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 494, trans., see Winter, *The Remembrance*, p. 2.

and b) training the will-power (*quwwat al-irādah*) gradually to overcome the desires by acting against them.²²⁸

In addition to these measures, al-Ghazālī suggests a negative way to strengthen this impulse. That is weakening the motive of passion (*bā'ith al-hawā*), against which the impulse of *dīn* continuously struggles; the weaker the motive of passion becomes, the stronger the strength of *dīn* would be, and vice versa, as al-Ghazālī teaches us.²²⁹ According to al-Ghazālī's teachings, the motive of passion is weakened by self disciplining, as shall be further explained below.

4.3.4 Withstanding the Innate Stimuli of *Fasād*:

Al-Ghazālī discusses how to withstand the innate stimuli of *fasād*, when he deals with what he calls the disciplining of the soul (*riyādat al-nafs*). Since the teachings of al-Ghazālī on this form of disciplining are going to be discussed below under the means of treating sickness of the heart, it seems better to postpone the discussion on this point till then.

4.4 Al-Ghazālī's *Iṣlāhī* Treatments of the Phenomena of *Fasād*:

In addition to his attempts to eradicate the roots of the *fasād*, al-Ghazālī was predominantly concerned, at this stage in his life under study, with treating the phenomena of *fasād* diagnosed by him. The purpose of this section is to show how al-Ghazālī treated these phenomena. For each phenomenon mentioned above, particular treatments are evident in al-Ghazālī's works of *iṣlāhī* nature, as will be shown below.

²²⁸ See, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 76.

²²⁹ See, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 63.

4.4.1 Prescribing Remedies for the Weakness of *Imān*:

After analysing the four reasons behind the phenomenon of widespread weakness and laxity of *imān* (Islamic faith) as mentioned above, al-Ghazālī mentions in the *Munqidh* four remedies for this phenomenon.²³⁰

The first treatment is for those who were perplexed by the teachings of the Ta'limites or Baṭinīs. The treatment for them is, al-Ghazālī says, “what we have mentioned in our book *al-Qiṣṭās al-Mustaqīm* (The Correct Balance).”²³¹ In *al-Qiṣṭās*, al-Ghazālī records an argumentative dialog between him and a Baṭinī who questioned him and disputed with him over the true balance by which true knowledge is perceived. The dialog starts with the following question from the Baṭinī:

“I see that you claim the perfection of knowledge. By what balance, then, is true knowledge perceived? Is it by the balance of independent reasoning (*al-ra'y*) and analogy (*al-qiyās*)? But that is extremely contradictory and ambiguous and is the cause of disagreement among men. Or is it by the balance of authoritative instruction (*al-ta'lim*)? In this case you would be obliged to follow the infallible Teacher-*Imām*-but I do not see you desirous of seeking him out.”²³²

After totally rejecting balancing true knowledge by independent reasoning and analogy, al-Ghazālī states that he weighs knowledge by the “correct balance” following the Qur'ān²³³ [Q.17:35]. According to him, this balance consists of five Qur'ānic scales of knowledge.²³⁴

By being asked about the way by which he knew the correctness of this balance, al-Ghazālī answers:

²³⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp.124-31, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 93-8, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 77-85.

²³¹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p.124, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 93, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 77.

²³² al-Ghazālī, *al-Qiṣṭās al-Mustaqīm*, ed. Maḥmūd Bījū, Damascus: al-Maṭba'ah al-'Ilmīyah, 1983, pp. 11-2, trans., see McCarthy, “the Correct Balance,” in McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 245.

²³³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Qiṣṭās*, p. 14, trans., see McCarthy, “the Correct Balance,” p. 246.

²³⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Qiṣṭās*, p. 14, trans., see McCarthy, “the Correct Balance,” p. 246.

“I also know that by authoritative teaching (*al-ta'lim*) but from the Imām of Imāms Muḥammad b. ‘Abd-Allāh b. ‘Abd-Al-Muṭalib (S.A.A.W.). For I, though I do not see him, hear his teaching which has come to me through impeccable transmission (*tawātur*) which I cannot doubt. His teaching is simply the Qur’ān, and the clearness of the correctness of the Qur’ān’s scales is known from the Qur’ān itself.”²³⁵

Following that, he explains in detail each of the five scales by elucidating its meaning, its standard, and its use in argumentation.²³⁶ Then, he mentions examples of the scales by which Baṭīnīs weighed their arguments and he highlights their falsity.²³⁷ Finally, he discusses the dispensation by Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.A.W.) and the ‘*ulamā*’ from any other *imām*.²³⁸

The second treatment targets those who offer one of the specious arguments of the Latitudinarians (*Ahl al-Ibāḥah*) as an excuse for the slackness of their faith. Al-Ghazālī says in the *Munqidh*: “as for the fanciful assertions of the Latitudinarians (*Ahl al-Ibāḥah*), we have listed their specious arguments under seven categories and resolved them in our book *Kīmyā’ al-Sa‘ādah* (The Alchemy of Happiness).”²³⁹

The third treatment is directed to those “whose faith has become corrupt through philosophy to the extent of rejecting the very principal of prophesy (*nubuwwah*).”²⁴⁰

²³⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Qiṣṭās*, p. 15, trans., see McCarthy, “the Correct Balance,” p. 247.

²³⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Qiṣṭās*, pp. 19-41, trans., see McCarthy, “the Correct Balance,” pp. 249-61.

²³⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Qiṣṭās*, pp. 48f, trans., see McCarthy, “the Correct Balance,” pp. 264f.

²³⁸ al-Ghazālī, *al-Qiṣṭās*, pp. 55-61, trans., see McCarthy, “the Correct Balance,” p. 268f.

²³⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 124, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 93, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 77.

²⁴⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 124, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 93, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 77.

For them, al-Ghazālī discusses in the *Munqidh*²⁴¹ the true nature of prophesy and its existence.²⁴²

This discussion is founded on the main argument of al-Ghazālī that man goes into various stages in perception, and in each stage he perceives particular categories of existents by specific means of perception. Al-Ghazālī lists eight stages of perception.²⁴³

1. The stage of touching in which certain categories of existents are perceived such as heat and cold, moisture and dryness, smoothness and roughness.
2. The stage of sighting in which colours and shapes are perceived.
3. The stage of hearing of sounds and tones.
4. The stage of tasting.
5. The stage of perceiving the other sensibles.
6. The stage of discernment (*tamyīz*) at nearly the age of seven, in which things additional to the world of sensibles are perceived.
7. The stage of perceiving through the intellect (*al-'aql*), in which things necessary, possible, and impossible that do not occur in the previous stages are apprehended.
8. The stage of perceiving through prophecy, in which things beyond the ken of intellect are seen, i.e., the unseen (*al-ghayb*).

Against the doubt of some intellectuals about the existence of things perceptible through prophecy, al-Ghazālī states that they do not have any supporting reason except that they have not attained that stage themselves.²⁴⁴ Moreover, he presents two further

²⁴¹ See al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 110-4, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 83-7, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 63-8.

²⁴² This can be considered as al-Ghazālī's positive solution for the phenomenon in view whereas his earlier attempt in the *Tahāfut* to disillusion those who think too highly of the philosophers by exposing the incoherence and contradiction involved in their metaphysical thought was a negative solution.

²⁴³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 110f, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 83f, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 63f.

²⁴⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 111, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 84, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 64.

proofs for its existence. The first is that there is an analogous sample of the special character of prophecy; in that which is apprehended in dreaming.²⁴⁵ “For the sleeper perceives the unknown that will take place in the future, either explicitly or in the guise of an image, the meaning of which is disclosed by interpretation.”²⁴⁶ The second proof is that there is knowledge in the world of the same sort as that perceptible through prophesy; that is knowledge which could not conceivably be obtained by the intellect or observation alone, but can be acquired only by a divine inspiration.²⁴⁷ “For instance there are some astrological rules (*aḥkām nujūmīyah*)²⁴⁸ based on phenomena which occur only once every thousands years; how, then, could knowledge of that be obtained empirically?!”²⁴⁹

In addition to the above discussion, al-Ghazālī discusses the claim of those who verbally profess belief in prophecy, but equate the prescriptions of revelation with philosophic wisdom. According to al-Ghazālī, this is in reality a disbelief in prophecy because “faith in prophecy is to acknowledge the affirmation of a stage beyond reason: in it an eye penetrates whereby a special perception of certain perceptibles (*mudrakāt khāṣah*) is apprehended; from the perception of these, the intellect is excluded.”²⁵⁰

Attempting to convince them of the possibility of the existence of such prophetic perception, al-Ghazālī relies on proofs drawn from arguments which pertain to the philosophers’ own science. Setting forth examples of marvellous perceptions acknowledged by natural philosophers and astrologers as ‘special perceptions,’ al-

²⁴⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 111f, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 84-5, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 64-6.

²⁴⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 111, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 84, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 64.

²⁴⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 112, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 84f, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 65f.

²⁴⁸ This term has been mistranslated as ‘astronomical’ by both McCarthy (*Deliverance*, p. 85) and Watt (Watt, p. 65).

²⁴⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 112, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 85, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 65.

²⁵⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 124, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 93, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 78.

Ghazālī wonders how those who are influenced by philosophers believe in such perception, while they deny the prophetic special perceptions which are confirmed by miracles!²⁵¹

The fourth treatment is devoted to tackling the weakness of faith resulting from scandalous conduct of the *'ulamā'*. This treatment consists of three lines of thought,²⁵² which are summarized as follows:

1. The *'ālim*²⁵³ who commits forbidden deeds knows that such deeds are prohibited, and yet he does so because his desire overcomes him as in the case of an ordinary man.
2. The ordinary man ought to believe that the *'ālim* can be brought to safety even if he leaves some duties undone because of the merit of his knowledge, though it might be additional evidence against him. But the ordinary man has no intercessor whatsoever if he gives up good works.
3. True knowledge stands between the learned man and commission of sins, except slips from which, in moments of weakness, no man is free. This sort of knowledge, however, is not attained by means of the various types of knowledge with which most people busy themselves.

4.4.2 Teaching How to Cure Sickness of the Heart and Refine Character:

As an *islahī* response to the wide spread of sickness of the heart and bad characters, al-Ghazālī taught how to cure sickness of the heart and refine character. In the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī gives two accounts of how sickness of the heart can be treated and how the

²⁵¹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 125-9, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 94-7, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 78-83.

²⁵² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 130f, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 97f, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 84f.

²⁵³ singular of *'ulamā'*.

traits of character may be refined: the first is general and the second is detailed. These two accounts are briefly presented below. Before this, however, it is worth listing what can be considered as guiding rules in al-Ghazālī's treatment.

4.4.2.1 Setting out Guiding Rules for Curing Sickness of the Heart and Refining Character:

Throughout the *Iḥyā'*, one comes across what can be considered as guiding rules or principles for curing sickness of the heart and refining the character. The most striking of such rules are the following:

1. Whenever the cause of a disease is not known, such disease cannot be cured, because curing it is nothing but treating its causes.²⁵⁴
2. The disease does not vanish unless its origins are suppressed or uprooted and any other way of treating it is only an easement for it, but the disease appears again and again.²⁵⁵
3. There has to be a great deal of seriousness in treating a particular disease after knowing its causes and danger.²⁵⁶
4. The heart diseases should be treated one by one and in order.²⁵⁷
5. Patience is an essential pillar in the treatment of sickness of the heart and refining character.²⁵⁸
6. Awareness of the harm of a disease, without will and strength, is not enough.²⁵⁹
7. Every disease needs a special theoretical knowledge, as well as an empirical action to treat it.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 287, & Vol. 4, p. 49.

²⁵⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 199.

²⁵⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 49.

²⁵⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 64.

²⁵⁸ See, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, pp. 49f.

²⁵⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 63.

4.4.2.2 Providing a General Account for Curing Sickness of the Heart and Refining Character:

In the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī gives the second “book” (*kitāb*) of the third “quarter” (*rub'*) the following title: “The Book of Disciplining the Soul, Refining the Character, and Curing the Sicknesses of the Heart” (*Kitāb Riyāḍat al-Nafs wa-Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa-Mu'ālaḥat Amrāḍ al-Qulūb*). The purpose of this *kitāb*, as al-Ghazālī himself clarifies, is not to mention the treatments for particular sickness of the heart or to give details about refining specific traits of character, but rather to teach in an overall way how to treat sickness of the heart and how the traits of character can be refined as an introduction to a more detailed discussion of this topic.²⁶¹ The main points which show how al-Ghazālī fulfilled this purpose are presented below under the following sub-headings.

A. UNVEILING THE TRUE NATURE OF GOOD AND BAD CHARACTER:

To unveil the true nature of good and bad character, al-Ghazālī first examines some of previous sayings on what good character is, and concludes that they only treat the fruit of good character, not its essence, and they do not even cover all of its fruits.²⁶² Then, he defines a trait of character in general as follows: “a firmly established condition of the soul (*hay'ah rāsikhah fī al-nafs*), from which actions proceed easily without any need for thinking or deliberation.”²⁶³ Thus, a good character according to al-Ghazālī is a name given for this condition, if it causes beautiful and praiseworthy acts, i.e., those which are acknowledged by the intellect and the *Shari'ah* (Islamic

²⁶⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 75.

²⁶¹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 49, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 5.

²⁶² al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 52f, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, pp. 15f.

²⁶³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 53, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 17.

Revealed Law), whereas a bad character trait is a name for the condition which causes ugly acts.²⁶⁴

In the light of this definition, al-Ghazālī states that character is none of the following: a) the acts themselves, for there may be a man of generous character, for example, but does not make donation because of lack of wealth or any other obstacles; b) the ability to act, since every man has been created to be by disposition (*fiṭrah*) capable of acting ugly or beautifully; and c) one's knowledge of the beautiful and the ugly, for knowledge pertains to both in the same way.²⁶⁵

To elucidate more, al-Ghazālī compares and contrasts between “creation” (*khalq*) and “character” (*khuluq*), as the former refers to the external form of man, while the latter refers to the inward or the internal form, but both forms can be either ugly or beautiful. Moreover, as man's external appearance looks perfectly beautiful only when all his features are beautiful, so too in order to achieve beautiful character in all aspects, the following four pillars of man's internal must all be beautiful, i.e., settled, balanced, and in the correct proportion to each other: the faculty of rationalness (*quwwat al-'ilm*), the faculty of irascibility (*quwwat al-ghaḍab*), the faculty of desire (*quwwat al-shahwah*), and the faculty which makes a just equilibrium between these three things (*quwwat al-'adl bayn hādhih al-quwā al-thalāthah*).²⁶⁶

B. SPECIFYING CRITERIA FOR GOOD CHARACTER:

For each of the four faculties mentioned above, al-Ghazālī specifies the criteria by which its goodness can be recognised:

²⁶⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 53, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 17.

²⁶⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 53, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 18.

²⁶⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 53, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 19.

“The faculty of rationalness (*quwwat al-‘ilm*) is sound and good when it is easily able to distinguish honesty from lies in speech, truth from falsehood in beliefs, and beauty from ugliness in actions. When this faculty is sound it bears fruit in the form of wisdom (*hikmah*), which is the chief of the good traits of character...Regarding the faculty of anger (*quwwat al-ghadab*), this is sound when its movements lie within the bounds required by wisdom. Likewise, the faculty of desire (*quwwat al-shahwah*) is sound and good when it is under the command of wisdom, by which I mean the command of the *Shar‘* (Islamic revealed law) and the intellect (*al-‘aql*). As for the faculty of making a just equilibrium (*quwwat al-‘adl*), it is this which sets desire and anger under the command of the intellect and the *Shar‘*.”²⁶⁷

C. PROVING THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING THE TRAITS OF CHARACTER:

In this general account, al-Ghazālī also proves that the traits of character are susceptible to change. This is his response to the claim of those who state that “the traits of a man’s character cannot conceivably be refined, and that human nature is immutable.”²⁶⁸ He states that their claim, which is due to their deficiency, remissness, foulness, and slothness, may be supported by two things: firstly, as the created outward form (*khalq*) of man cannot be changed, and so is the case with the inward form, i.e., character (*khuluq*), secondly, goodness of character requires suppression of one’s desire and anger, which are part of human nature, and thus this, as tested by means of a long inward struggle, is impossible.²⁶⁹

In order to refute this view and unveil the reality of this matter, al-Ghazālī adduces the following points in support of the possibility of changing the traits of character:²⁷⁰

- All commandments, discipline, and teachings would be useless, if the traits of character were unchangeable.

²⁶⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 54, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 19.

²⁶⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 55, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 24.

²⁶⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 55, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 24.

²⁷⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, pp. 55f, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, pp. 24f.

- Since it is possible to change even the character of an animal through training, how could such change be denied with respect to man.
- Although anger and desire cannot be suppressed and dominated completely, yet they can be rendered docile by means of self-discipline.

Al-Ghazālī, however, admits that men's temperaments vary in their susceptibleness.²⁷¹ This, al-Ghazālī explains, depends on two factors: the first is the original strength of man's instinct (*gharīzah*) and its existing time length.²⁷² The second factor for this disparity is the degree to which man acts in accordance with his traits of character—as they are reinforced by acting accordingly—and the degree of his satisfaction with them.²⁷³ Accordingly, al-Ghazālī classifies people into four degrees: a) Those who are simply innocent (*ghufl*), but not indulged into desires and thus their character can be refined in a very short time; b) those who know evilness and know they are not acting righteously as they should, but still follow their desires as they are controlled by them; the refining of the character of such people is possible but it is more intractable than the first; c) those who regard evil character as right; the reforming of such people is almost impossible and very rare; and d) those who, due to their being reared with corrupted way of thinking and work accordingly, believe that merit lies in evilness; they are the most difficult to reform.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 56, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 25.

²⁷² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 56, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, pp. 25f.

²⁷³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 56, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 26.

²⁷⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 56, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, pp. 26f.

D. DEMONSTRATING WAYS FOR DISCOVERING THE FAULTS OF THE SELF:

Since discovering the faults of the self or the soul, according to al-Ghazālī, is a prerequisite for treating them, he teaches four ways by which a man may discover the faults which acquire his soul (*'uyūb nafsīh*):²⁷⁵

1. Being a disciple of a *Shaykh* (spiritual master) who is insightful into the faults of the soul so that the *Shaykh* will ascertain his faults.
2. Appointing a truthful, perceptive, and a religious friend to be his overseer so that he draws his attention to his dislikeable traits.
3. Listening to what his enemies say about him, for a hostile eye brings out defects (*'ayn al-ṣukhṭ tubdī al-masāwiyā*).
4. Mixing with people and attributing to one-self their blameworthy traits, because men's temperaments are very similar.

However, al-Ghazālī admits that the first two ways are hardly accessible in his age: such *Shaykh* is hardly to be found, and it is rare to find a friend who is neither a flatterer concealing some of your defects, nor jealous, so considering something a fault when it is not.²⁷⁶

E. OFFERING MEANS FOR CHARACTER'S REFINING AND THE SOUL'S PURIFICATION:

Although al-Ghazālī believes that some people may possess good character naturally through Divine grace, such as being born with good character, he suggests in this general account other means of refining character and purifying the heart. A primary mean suggested by al-Ghazālī is spiritual struggle (*mujāhadah*) and self-training (*riyāḍah*) in a sense of “constraining of the self to perform the actions which

²⁷⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 64f, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, pp. 51-4.

²⁷⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 64, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, pp. 51f.

necessarily proceed from the required trait.”²⁷⁷ For example, the arrogant man who wishes to possess the quality of modesty should struggle against his self in imitating the behaviour of the modest for a long time, until modesty becomes part of his nature and delightful to him.

Refining character and purifying the soul may also be achieved by renouncing everything one finds blameworthy in others. Al-Ghazālī considers this a very effective way of self-discipline.²⁷⁸ He tells us that “were all people only to renounce the things they dislike in others, they would not need anyone to discipline them.”²⁷⁹

The best mean of all in the view of al-Ghazālī is to be a disciple of a qualified *Shaykh* in self refinement and to follow his instructions in disciplining (*mujāhadah*).²⁸⁰ For al-Ghazālī all other means are just alternatives for the one who does not have a *Shaykh*, but the one who finds such a qualified *Shaykh*, he “should stay with him, for it is he who will deliver him from his sickness.”²⁸¹

4.4.2.3 Giving a Detailed Account for Treating Sickness of the Heart and Blameworthy Character:

The detailed treatment of al-Ghazālī of sickness of the heart and blameworthy character generally consists of two parts: theoretical and practical. As al-Ghazālī repeatedly states, there is no treatment for any heart disease except through theoretical knowledge (*‘ilm*) and empirical action (*‘amal*),²⁸² or in other words a mixture of the two.²⁸³ These two parts are broadly illustrated in the following lines.

²⁷⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 58, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 32.

²⁷⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 65, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 54.

²⁷⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 65, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 54.

²⁸⁰ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 64, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 51.

²⁸¹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 65, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 54.

²⁸² See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 3, pp. 196 & 358.

²⁸³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 75.

Although knowledge in general is a treatment for sickness of the heart, each heart disease or blameworthy character needs a specific type of knowledge according to al-Ghazālī's teaching.²⁸⁴ Thus, he teaches in the *Iḥyā'* the detailed knowledge required to cure a number of major heart diseases. His account on such knowledge commonly consists of the following: (1) a collection of numerous passages—selected from the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth, and the dicta of the early Muslim generation—on condemnation of the disease, (2) explanations of the disease and the causes of it, and (3) exposition of its harmful effects.

In addition to the theoretical part, al-Ghazālī gives practical prescriptions for treating each of the heart diseases or blameworthy character discussed in the *Iḥyā'*.²⁸⁵

4.4.3 Providing a Guiding Reference for True Religiousness:

To treat spurious religiousness, al-Ghazālī provides a guide to true religiousness in the *Iḥyā'*. The introduction of the book indicates that the book is intended to be a comprehensive reference for a true religious life. Moreover, throughout the book al-Ghazālī is very concerned to set standards for a true religious man in almost all aspects of his life, including those which relate to his inward self, those which regard his relation with God, and those which concern his relation with his fellow-men.

4.4.4 Reviving the Knowledge of Commanding Good and Forbidding Wrong:

Responding to the main cause behind the phenomenon of the wide spread of public wrongs (*munkarāt*) mentioned above, al-Ghazālī devotes a whole *kitāb* in the *Iḥyā'* to

²⁸⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 50.

²⁸⁵ See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 199.

the duty of commanding right and forbidding wrong (*al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar*).²⁸⁶ Following his announcement of the near-absence of anyone seeking to revive the knowledge and practice of this vital duty, al-Ghazālī states that he shall teach its knowledge in four chapters,²⁸⁷ indicating a revival of it. The first chapter is on the obligatoriness of the duty, its merits, and the condemnation of ignoring it, as indicated in the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth, and the dicta of early Muslim generation.²⁸⁸ The second chapter discusses the four pillars (*arkān*) of the duty—which are the performer of the duty, the incident in which the duty shall be performed, the wrongdoer to whom the duty shall be directed, and how to perform the duty—and the conditions (*shurūṭ*) of each pillar.²⁸⁹ The third chapter lists some representative selection of “common wrongs in customs” (*al-munkarāt al-ma'lūfah fī al-'ādāt*),²⁹⁰ as was referred to earlier. The fourth chapter focuses on how to perform the duty when the wrongdoer is an emir or a sultan.²⁹¹

In addition to theoretically reviving the knowledge of this duty, al-Ghazālī performed the duty himself, particularly against the wrongs committed by some sultans and viziers of the time, as will be demonstrated below.

4.4.5 Refuting Widespread Innovations and Warning from their Drawbacks:

As a response to the spread of the three forms of heretic innovations mentioned above, al-Ghazālī occupied himself, particularly at the *islāhī* point in his career, with

²⁸⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 2, pp. 306-57. For an extended summary of this chapter in English, see Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 428-46.

²⁸⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 2, p. 306.

²⁸⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 2, pp. 306-12.

²⁸⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 2, pp. 312-35.

²⁹⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 2, pp. 335-42.

²⁹¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 2, pp. 343-57.

refuting them and warning of their drawbacks. Starting with the first form, which is Sufic heretic ecstasy (*shataḥ*), al-Ghazālī strongly attacks in the *Iḥyā'* such form of innovation and warns from its harmful consequences.²⁹² Moreover, he states in the *Munqidh* that he has explained in his book *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā* (The Noblest Aim) the nature of the error in such Sufic ecstatic utterances, namely oneness or unity (*itiḥād*) with God, and inherence or incarnation (*ḥulūl*).²⁹³ In the *Maqṣad*, al-Ghazālī clearly asserts that the claim of unity between man and God is obviously false, because unification between any two similar essences is impossible and it is more impossible when it applies to different essences such as black colour and knowledge, to say nothing of much greater different essences as those of man and God.²⁹⁴ Similarly, he asserts that inherence (*ḥulūl*) in the sense that the Lord inheres in man and man inheres in the Lord is also impossible because “anything which is self-subsisting cannot inhere in something else which is self-subsisting save in terms of the proximity that may exist between bodies; if inherence is inconceivable in respect of two men, then how is it conceivable between man and the Lord Most High.”²⁹⁵

As regard to the second form, which is Philosophic heresy, al-Ghazālī states in the *Munqidh* that the refutation of this form of innovation is the subject matter of his book *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers),²⁹⁶ which was composed prior to the stage under study and thus is beyond the focus of this chapter.

What concerns us here, however, is al-Ghazālī's response regarding this innovation in his works belonging to his late career. Generally speaking, al-Ghazālī in these works,

²⁹² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 36 & Vol. 3, p. 405.

²⁹³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 107, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 82, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 61.

²⁹⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Ma'ānī Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, ed. Faḍlah Shaḥādah, Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1971, p. 165, trans., see Robert Stade, *Ninty-Nine Names of God in Islam*, translation of the major portion of al-Ghazālī's *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*, Ibadan (Nigeria): Daystar Press, 1970, pp.132-3.

²⁹⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad*, p. 169, trans., see Stade, *Ninty-Nine Names*, p.136.

²⁹⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 83-4, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 66, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 37.

particularly in the *Munqidh*, concerns himself much with warning from the drawbacks which may arise from dealing with philosophy. In the *Munqidh*, he records the drawbacks which he believes resulted from or are connected with the six divisions of philosophical sciences at the time, i.e., mathematics, logic, physics or natural science, theology or metaphysics, politics, and ethics.²⁹⁷

Although he believes that mathematical sciences deal with demonstrated facts (*umūr burhānīyah*) which cannot be denied and nothing in them entails denial or affirmation of religious matters, yet he finds two drawbacks connected to them.²⁹⁸ The first is that by admiring the fine precision of their details and the clarity of their proofs, one may wrongly assume that all sciences of the ancient philosophers have the same degree of preciseness and thus blindly follow them, even in their metaphysical views contradicting religion, refusing to admit that their arguments in mathematical topics are apodictic (*burhānī*), whereas those in metaphysical questions are conjectural (*takhmīnī*).²⁹⁹ Because of this drawback, al-Ghazālī warns off anyone who would embark upon the study of these mathematical sciences.³⁰⁰ In the *Ihyā'*, however, he classifies them as permissible and thus no one should be barred from studying them, except the weak-minded person who by studying them might step over into blameworthy sciences and heretic innovations, like most of those who devoted themselves to these sciences as noted by al-Ghazālī.³⁰¹ The second drawback connected to these sciences derives from an ignorant friend of Islam who rejects all sciences ascribed to the philosophers, accusing them of ignorance therein and claiming that all

²⁹⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 79-90, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 63-70, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 32-43.

²⁹⁸ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 79, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 63, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 33.

²⁹⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 79-80, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 63-4, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 33-4.

³⁰⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 80, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 64, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 34.

³⁰¹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 22, trans., see McCall, "The Book of Knowledge," p. 87, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 46.

their sciences contradict with the *Shari'ah*, even their theory of the eclipses of the sun and the moon.³⁰² Al-Ghazālī accuses anyone who supposes that Islam is defended by the denial of these sciences of committing a great crime against religion because this denial leads those who have knowledge of such matters to believe that Islam is based on ignorance and the denial of apodeictic proof.³⁰³

Similarly, while asserting that nothing in the logical sciences should be denied, al-Ghazālī states that those who admire the apodeictic demonstrations therein may think that the infidel doctrines of the philosophers are backed up by similar demonstrations and thus hasten into unbelief.³⁰⁴

With regard to physical sciences, he concludes that nothing therein should be rejected except certain points which he mentioned in the *Tahāfut*.³⁰⁵

Turning to metaphysical sciences, al-Ghazālī argues that they include most of the errors of the philosophers, because they could not satisfy the conditions of proof they lay down in logic.³⁰⁶

As regard to political sciences, he argues that the philosophers “took them from the Divine scriptures revealed to the prophets and from the maxims handed down by the predecessors of the prophets.”³⁰⁷ Similarly, he argues that the philosophers took the ethical sciences from the teachings of the mystics, and mixed them with their own doctrines in order to promote the circulation of their own false doctrines using the lustre

³⁰² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 80, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 64, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 34.

³⁰³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 81, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 64, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 34-5.

³⁰⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 80, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 65, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 36.

³⁰⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 83, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 66, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 36-7.

³⁰⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 83, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 66, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 37.

³⁰⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 85, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 67, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 38.

afforded by these mystic teachings.³⁰⁸ According to al-Ghazālī, from this practice of incorporating prophetic and mystic teachings in the philosophers' books, two wrong tendencies arise.³⁰⁹ The first is in the case of those who totally eschew these teachings and even blame anyone who cites from them, assuming that they are erroneous since they are recorded in the philosophers' books and mixed with their false doctrines.³¹⁰ Al-Ghazālī strongly criticizes this tendency, and accuses its adherents of being weak-minded who measure the truth by men and not vice versa.³¹¹ The second wrong tendency is in the case of those who through approving and accepting the prophetic and mystic teachings, which are mixed with the philosophers own doctrines, form a high opinion of the philosophers and thus may readily accept their false doctrines.³¹²

Concerning the third form of heretic innovation, which is esoteric interpretation of Baṭinīs, al-Ghazālī summarizes his refutation to this innovation in the *Munqidh*.³¹³

The starting point in his refutation is his acknowledgment of the Baṭinīs' argument on the need for an authoritative infallible teacher.³¹⁴ Opposing their claim of the hidden Imām, al-Ghazālī asserts that this infallible teacher must be the Prophet (S.A.A.W.).³¹⁵ Following that, he answers all of their possible objections. Next, he explains how they deceive common folk and weak-minded people by effectively proving the need for an authoritative teacher and his teaching, until such people concede to them that much and

³⁰⁸ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 86, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 67, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 38.

³⁰⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 86, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 67, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 39.

³¹⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 86, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 67-8, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 39.

³¹¹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 87, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 68, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 39.

³¹² al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 89, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 70, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 42.

³¹³ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 93-9, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, pp. 72-7, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 45-54.

³¹⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 93, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 72, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 46.

³¹⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 93, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 72, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 46.

ask them for some of his teaching, then they pause and say go and search for it yourself, knowing that if they were to say anything more, they would be put to shame as they would be unable to resolve even the least problematic matters.³¹⁶

4.4.6 Renewing the Mission of True ‘*Ulamā*’:

Al-Ghazālī made every effort to renew the mission of true ‘*ulamā*’, as an *islāhī* reaction to the *fasād* of the vast majority of the ‘*ulamā*’, which he considered a crucial phenomenon of *fasād* in his time as shown above. The foundation of his effort in this regard is his determined attempt to set standards for true ‘*ulamā*’ or those whom he calls ‘*ulamā*’ *al-ākhirah* (otherworldly scholars), and to distinguish between them and those who only apparently resemble them. He clearly states in the *Ihyā*’ that “one of the great tasks is to know the signs which distinguish between ‘*ulamā*’ *al-dunyā* (worldly scholars) and ‘*ulamā*’ *al-ākhirah* (otherworldly scholars).”³¹⁷

By ‘*ulamā*’ *al-dunyā*, he means those “whose sole purpose in pursuing knowledge is enjoying the pleasure of this life and gaining fame (*jāh*) and status (*manzilah*) among its people.”³¹⁸ Following this definition, he quotes a number of traditions condemning such ‘*ulamā*’ and concludes that they “will occupy a more inferior position and will receive a more severe punishment than the ignorant person.”³¹⁹ Conversely, the true ‘*ulamā*’, or ‘*ulamā*’ *al-ākhirah* (otherworldly learned men), “will be the winners and will be brought close to God.”³²⁰

³¹⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 99, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 77, and also Watt, *The Faith*, pp. 53f.

³¹⁷ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 1, p. 58, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 242, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 147.

³¹⁸ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 1, p. 59, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 242, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 147.

³¹⁹ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 1, p. 60, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 248, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 150.

³²⁰ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 1, p. 60, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 248, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 150.

To distinguish them from the ‘*ulamā*’ of the *dunyā*, al-Ghazālī mentions twelve signs or characteristics of the ‘*ulamā*’ of the *ākhirah*.³²¹ Al-Ghazālī’s reference in specifying these signs are the qualities of the true ‘*ulamā*’ of the early blessed generation (*al-salaf*). He states that each one of these signs “represents several qualities of the ‘*ulamā*’ of the early blessed generation (*al-salaf*).”³²²

These signs are summarised as follows:

1. They do not seek the worldly desires by their knowledge, rather they give the Hereafter the priority over the present world.
2. Their deeds do not contradict their words; they do not enjoin what they would not be the first to do.
3. Their concern is to obtain knowledge which is useful for the Hereafter and they avoid knowledge which is of little benefit or which leads to disputation.
4. They are not interested in luxurious life, but prefer moderation and are satisfied with the least of the necessary worldly things.
5. They try to distance themselves from sultans, avoid visiting them and being their associates as long as they can do so, for the present world is attractive and one who visits sultans may not help being smitten with it. “On the whole, mingling with them is the key to evils, while the way of the otherworldly ‘*ulamā*’ is circumspection.”³²³
6. They do not to hasten to give *fatwā* (jurisprudence opinions), but rather avoid it whenever possible.

³²¹ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 1, pp. 60-82, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” pp. 248-345, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, pp. 150-212.

³²² See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 1, p. 82, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 345, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 212.

³²³ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 1, p. 68, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 283, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 172.

7. Most of their attention is directed toward knowledge of the inward (*'ilm al-bāṭin*) and spiritual development.
8. They are greatly concerned with strengthening their certitude (*yaqīn*).
9. They reflect signs of awe towards God in all aspects of their life.
10. They direct most of their study towards knowledge of practical religion (*'lm al-a'māl*) and what may corrupt the deeds as well as knowledge of the condition of the heart (*qalb*).
11. Their learning should depend on their insight and understanding with purity of heart, not books or *taqlīd*, for only the Prophet (S.A.A.W.) and his Companions are the ones who should be followed.
12. They strictly guard themselves from religious innovations, and not being deceived by people's agreement on innovations contradicting with the norms of the time of the Companions.

The *'ulamā'* of such qualities occupy a very important position in the *islāhī* teachings of al-Ghazālī. He believes that their degree in religious dignity is second after the prophets.³²⁴ Thus, following the prophets, their real role is to be guides to the right path.³²⁵ And the extent in which they occupy themselves with *islāh* of their selves and others reflects the degree of their dignity.³²⁶

In addition, true *'ulamā'* are regarded by al-Ghazālī as the doctors of religion (*aṭibā' al-dīn*) for they deal with the knowledge of treating sickness of the heart (*amrād al-qulūb*).³²⁷ Accordingly, al-Ghazālī says that it is a must (*farḍ 'ayn*) on all *'ulamā'* not only to treat the transgressors who seek treatment from them, but also to enlighten

³²⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 98.

³²⁵ See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 2, trans., see McCall, "The Book of Knowledge," p. 3, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. x.

³²⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 98.

³²⁷ See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 50, trans., see Stern, *al-Ghazzali on Repentance*, p. 115.

those who are unaware of their transgression, and those who are ignorant in religion since those sick in the heart (*marḍā al-qulūb*) do not know about their illness.³²⁸ For this reason, al-Ghazālī necessitates that each *‘ālim* should become responsible for a particular area, instructing its inhabitants in their religion and distinguishing that which may harm them and make them miserable, from that which may benefit them and lead them to true happiness.³²⁹ The *‘ālim*, he states, must not wait to be approached and rather he “must devote himself to call the people, as the *‘ulamā’* are the heirs of the prophets and the prophets did not abandon the people to their ignorance, but instead, they called upon the people in their assemblies,...seeking them one by one in order to give them guidance.”³³⁰

Al-Ghazālī considers the true *‘ulamā’* to be safeguards from wrong religious practices. On various occasions, al-Ghazālī necessitates the supervision of a qualified *‘ālim* in order to guarantee true religiousness. For instance, to be safe from extravagance in scrupulousness (*wara’*), al-Ghazālī warns from engaging in details of *wara’* without the consultation of an experienced *‘ālim*.³³¹

In addition to his substantial theoretical effort to renew the mission of true *‘ulamā’*, al-Ghazālī tried seriously to be a good example of such *‘ulamā’* himself. In light of the discussion in the previous chapter about his life-experience, it can be stated that from the period of his self-*islāḥ* onwards, he was very concerned to meet the standards of true *‘ulamā’* which he specified. The testimony of his associate, al-Fārisī, about him, which has been quoted above, shows that his attempt in this regard was highly successful.

³²⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 50, trans., see Stern, *al-Ghazzali on Repentance*, p. 115.

³²⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 50, trans., see Stern, *al-Ghazzali on Repentance*, p. 115.

³³⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 50, trans., see Stern, *al-Ghazzali on Repentance*, p. 115.

³³¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 112.

After being successful with his self, al-Ghazālī occupied himself with bringing up and training a new generation of ‘*ulamā*’, who fulfil the mission of true ‘*ulamā*’. This was initially through his experience of teaching in the Nizāmīyah of Nīshāpūr and then by setting up a private *madrāsah* and *khāniqāh* (sojourn), as has been shown in the previous chapter.

Besides all this effort, he concerned himself with advising and urging the ‘*ulamā*’, with whom he was contemporary, to undertake their supposed responsibilities and possess the attributes of true ‘*ulamā*’. This is clearly evident in a number of his letters directed to some ‘*ulamā*’ of his time. In his letter to a judge (*qadī*) in al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā, he writes “I would like to employ a rich counsel which I offer you as a gift from the learned,”³³² and he goes on to advising him by saying:

“You should open your eyes and look into the future and find out what good deeds you have done for tomorrow. Remember none is more sympathetically inclined towards you than your own heart. Think deeply for a minute or two and decide what it is that you run after.”³³³

He warns him from being attracted to worldly temptations by stating:

“If you want to dig up wells or canals, think how many of them have fallen into ruins with time. If you intend to build a grand house, remember how fast the magnificent buildings, already erected have disappeared and if you want to lay out a beautiful garden read: “How many were the gardens and the water springs that they left behind. And the corn lands and the good sites and pleasant things wherein they took delight! Even so (it was) and we made it an inheritance for other folk: And the heaven and the earth wept not for them, nor were they reprieved.”(Q.44:22-5)...”³³⁴

³³² Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 116.

³³³ Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 118.

³³⁴ Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 119.

He further warns him from being associated with the ruler: “God forbid, if you want to serve the king, you should read this Ḥadīth: “On the Day of Resurrection the Kings and the viziers would rise like ants from earth and the common folk would tread them roughly under their feet.”³³⁵

4.4.7 Counselling Ruling Members and Forbidding their Wrongdoing:

The ruling members are given a considerable amount of attention in al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* teaching. To adequately understand his *islāhī* attitudes towards them, we need to be acquainted with the following two starting points. The first is his idea about their supposed role. According to him, “the state (*al-mulk*) and religion are twins; religion is a foundation while the sultan is a guard, and whatever has no foundation is destroyed, and whatever has no guard is lost.”³³⁶ Moreover, he believes that the degree of religious dignity of just sultans or rulers comes immediately after the degree of the ‘*ulamā*’, because they put right the life of people, while the ‘*ulamā*’ put right their religion.³³⁷ In addition, he considers that being a just and sincere caliph or emir is one of the best types of worship (*min afdal al-‘ibādāt*).³³⁸ Furthermore, he makes the rulers responsible for vital *islāhī* tasks. He, for example, demands that “all sultans must appoint, in each village and quarter, a devout *faqīh* to instruct the people in their religion.”³³⁹

The second point, with which we need to be acquainted, is his opinion on the association with them. In general, al-Ghazālī at his late age used to warn from associating with the rulers or sultans, though, before his experience of self-*islāh*, he used to frequently associate with them and even served as an ambassador between the

³³⁵ Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 119.

³³⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 1, p. 17, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 68, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, pp. 33-4.

³³⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 4, p. 98.

³³⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 3, p. 324.

³³⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*’, Vol. 4, p. 51, trans., see Stern, *al-Ghazzali on Repentance*, p. 116.

Seljuk Sultanate and the Abbasid Caliphate.³⁴⁰ He clarifies in the *Ihyā'* the risk of associating with them by stating the following:

“One who associates with them is not free from undertaking to seek their approval and to incline their hearts towards him, although they are unjust. Every religious person (*kul mutadayyin*) ought to disprove of them and straiten their bosoms by making their injustice obvious and by showing the foulness of their deeds. One who visits them either shows regard for their luxury and despises the grace of Allāh or he refrains from disapproving them. Then he becomes a dissimulator to them, or in his speech he pretends to please them and approve their condition, and that is clear calumny; or he longs to obtain some of their worldly goods, which is downright unlawful (*suht*).”³⁴¹

This explains why he vowed, while he was in Jerusalem, that he shall neither attend the court of a ruler, nor take any form of governmental emoluments.³⁴²

Bearing in mind these two points, we turn now to al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* response to the *fasād* among contemporary ruling members. His response to that phenomenon of *fasād* can be classified into direct response and indirect response. The latter took the form of daring *fatāwā* against the contemporary unjust sovereigns in general. A number of such *fatāwā* appear in the *Ihyā'*. One of these, is his *fatwā* that the majority of the wealth (*amwāl*) of the sultans and militant men of the time is *ḥarām*, as stated earlier. Accordingly he forbids taking gifts from sultans except under strict conditions.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ In one of his letters to the Sultan Sanjar, al-Ghazālī writes: “on several occasions I served as an ambassador on behalf of your father to the court of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph Muqtadar Billāh and did all that was possible to remove certain misconceptions between the Seljūq Empire and the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate.” (Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 28).

³⁴¹ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 68, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 283, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 172.

³⁴² He mentioned this incident in a letter to the Seljuq Sultan, Sanjar (Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 28). He mentioned the same incident in a letter to the Seljuq Vizier, Muḥammad b. Fakhr al-Mulk b. Niẓām al-Mulk (for an English translation of this letter from Persian, see Jonathan AC Brown, “The Last Days of al-Ghazālī and the Tripartite Division of the Sufi World: Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī's Letter to the Seljuq Vizier and Commentary,” in *The Muslim World*, Vol. 96, Jan. 2006, pp. 89-113).

³⁴³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, pp. 135-42.

Similarly, he devotes a section of the book to discuss in detail what is lawful and unlawful with respect to mingling with unjust sultans.³⁴⁴

The direct response of al-Ghazālī to the *fasād* among contemporary ruling members is reflected in his letters to a number of Seljuk sovereigns,³⁴⁵ counselling them, urging them to fulfil their duties, warning them of letting any injustice to appear in the territories under their control, soliciting them to care for their subjects, and forbidding their wrongdoing. To vividly illustrate the *islāhī* nature of his letters to those sovereigns, we shall quote selective extracts from three of his letters in the following lines.

In one of his letters to the Seljuq Vizier, Niẓām al-Dīn Fakhr al-Mulk, he blames him of using flattering titles: “Be it known that the flattering titles conferred on men are a devilish invention and as such are improper for a pious Muslim to accept.”³⁴⁶ Urging him to control his lusts and passions, he continues: “According to the strict letter of Islam, the *Amīr* is the one who rules with absolute authority over his lusts and passions.”³⁴⁷ He further advises him to be a practicing Muslim: “I, therefore, exhort you to live the ascetic life and fear God and lay upon a store of good works against the day of Reckoning.”³⁴⁸

In another letter to the same vizier, he brings to his attention how bad the condition in Tūs was, due to famine and savage actions of the administrators, urging him to look after the welfare of the residents: “Let me tell you that this city was a howling wilderness due to famine and cruelty meted out to the inhabitants by all government officials...You should be merciful to your subjects and God would be merciful to

³⁴⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 2, pp. 142-52.

³⁴⁵ As Brown rightly points out, “in the *Faḍā’il al-anām* alone we have twelve letters that al-Ghazālī wrote to viziers and five to military commanders,” (Brown, “The Last Days of al-Ghazālī,” p. 96).

³⁴⁶ Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 30.

³⁴⁷ Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 30.

³⁴⁸ Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 37.

you.”³⁴⁹ After continuing his daring advice, he concludes his letter by stating: “Meditate on possibilities for an hour or two and think deeply upon the poor people, whose blood and sweat is being consumed by the Government officials...”³⁵⁰

To another Seljuk vizier, Mujīr al-Dīn, al-Ghazālī writes a letter of strong words, warning him from oppression and injustice: “Refrain from torturing the innocent masses or else great will be your disgrace from Allāh. If you want to escape this punishment, fight the forces of cruelty and injustice like a spiritual here and do not yield to their behests.”³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 45.

³⁵⁰ Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 48.

³⁵¹ Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 87.

CHAPTER FIVE

ASSESSMENT OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S *ISLĀHĪ* TEACHINGS

5.1 Introduction:

Having shown the extent of al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāhī* efforts in the previous chapter as objectively as I am able, now it is proper that I carry out a general assessment of his *iṣlāhī* teachings, attempting to firstly discover the main strengths and weaknesses therein, and secondly to show how far they stand against main criticisms. By doing so, hopefully I will make a further key step towards the verification of the hypothesis of the present thesis.

Hoping to achieve this aim, the present chapter judges al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāhī* teachings in general, according to the following major criteria: (1) originality, (2) clarity, (3) deepness, (4) balance between individualism and collectivism, (5) realism and practicality, and (6) Islamic-justification.

With this selection of criteria, I certainly do not claim that I will conduct a full or detailed examination of al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāhī* teachings. This range of criteria, however, shall fulfil the purpose of the present chapter.

5.2 Originality:

It can be generally stated that originality characterizes al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāhī* teachings in the main. This is clearly reflected in his diagnosis of *fasād* above, which is mainly based on his own observation and reflection, as is evident in the many fresh

and contemporary examples provided in his examination of the roots and phenomena of *fasād* in his time. His lengthy list of the various deluded groups and his detailed explanation of how they were deluded, in the *Ihyā'*,¹ reflects his own wide observation and fresh reflection. His selection of the “Common Wrongs in Customs,” mentioned above, which includes various contemporary examples also shows his continuing dependence on his observation and reflection.

Another aspect of al-Ghazālī's originality which is reflected in his diagnosis is his reliance on his own investigation. This is particularly visible in his approach to discovering the reasons behind the phenomenon of the widespread weakness and laxity of *imān* (Islamic faith). As has been mentioned above, he questioned for a period of time those who fell short in following the Islamic Revealed Law (*al-Sharī'ah*) and came out with his own conclusion.

The originality of al-Ghazālī is also reflected, to a great extent, in his treatments of the phenomena of *fasād*, which are supported by his fresh insights and unique reasoning. In fact it is typical of al-Ghazālī that he does not simply represent previous thoughts in the topics he discusses, rather he often highlights their shortcomings before he presents his own treatment. This makes his treatments very far from being blindly imitative to any previous ones. A good illustration of this is his discussion of the true nature of good and bad character, which is based on his critical examination of the views of his predecessors and on his highlighting of their shortcomings, as has been stated above.

Al-Ghazālī's originality has greatly impressed a number of distinguished scholars in the East and West, to the extent that he has been considered by some as “the most

¹ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 88-410.

original thinker that Islām has produced.”² This, however, may be challenged by the following. As is commonly known among the students of al-Ghazālī, his teachings contain various elements which are identical, in one way or another, to their counterparts in other earlier works, namely Sufi, philosophical, and religious sources. This has led some to accuse al-Ghazālī of plagiarism in a sense of copying from these sources without crediting them. In his book on al-Ghazālī’s critics and admirers, al-Qaradāwī³ lists this attitude,⁴ which he himself has noticed also, as one of the criticisms which have been raised by some of the contemporary Arab critics of al-Ghazālī.

This criticism is also popular among the orientalist; Arberry, for instance, criticizes al-Ghazālī of extensively plagiarising from *Kitāb al-Tawahhum* of al-Muḥāsibī in the concluding *Kitāb* of the *Iḥyā’*.⁵ Likewise, in the brief entry on al-Makkī in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, Massignon writes that whole pages of his *Qūt al-Qulūb*⁶ have been copied by al-Ghazālī in the *Iḥyā’*.⁷ In a similar way, but without taking it as a judgment on al-Ghazālī’s ethical attitude, Lazarus-Yafeh states that “al-Ghazālī evidently copied not only ideas, images, proverbs, quotations and such like; he copied whole parts of books without mentioning the authors’ names.”⁸ Similarly, Margaret Smith, in her article entitled “The Forerunner of al-Ghazālī,” asserts that to al-Muḥāsibī “al-Ghazālī owes much more of his teaching than has been generally realized, and much that has been attributed to al-Ghazālī as representing his original

² Macdonald, “al-Ghazālī,” *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 146.

³ al-Qaradāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, pp. 165-7.

⁴ For an apology for al-Ghazālī on this attitude, see al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, pp. 169-73.

⁵ A. J. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1956, p. 64.

⁶ As it has been stated above (2.5.1), this book became one of the classical and original references for later Sufis.

⁷ Massignon, *EI*, Vol. 3, p. 174, “al-Makkī.” Cf. Mohamed Ahmed Sherif, *Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975, p. 106, who states “al-Ghazali’s originality can be seen in his selection, arrangement, and synthesis of the material he extracted from al-Makkī.”

⁸ Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzali*, p. 20.

ideas, are in fact based upon the earlier teaching of al-Muḥāsibī and, in many instances, is directly borrowed from him.”⁹

All this apparently contradicts what have been stated about al-Ghazālī's originality. For various reasons, however, it is difficult to follow those who make such accusations, and it cannot be taken as a postulate and without considerable reservation. The accusation, firstly, does not seem to consider the fact that the concept of plagiarism and the attitude towards it have changed over time; the criteria of this act in the current age is considerably different than that in al-Ghazālī's time.¹⁰ Therefore, it is not a fair approach to use criteria which have been comparatively recently developed in judging works that belong to an age heavily relying on memorisation of knowledge by heart, and on oral transmission of it, as that of al-Ghazālī.

Secondly, in some places of his books, al-Ghazālī does indeed credit the sources from which he directly quotes.¹¹ In his general account of condemning richness (*al-ghinā*) and praising poverty (*al-faqr*) in the *Iḥyā'*, for instance, he acknowledges borrowing al-Muḥāsibī's teaching on this topic and clearly states that it deserves to be quoted literally.¹²

Thirdly, the approach of selecting particular passages from al-Ghazālī's works and accusing him of copying them from other sources without looking to each work as a whole, leads, I argue, to misleading conclusions. However, by considering each of his works as a whole and then comparing it with the earlier sources which he consulted, one may come to entirely different conclusions. The *Iḥyā'*, for example, is evidently a

⁹ Margaret Smith, “The Forerunner of al-Ghazālī,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1936, p. 65, available online in PDF form on <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/smith-frnr.pdf>.

¹⁰ Cf. Gustave E. Von Grunebaum, “The Concept of Plagiarism in Arabic Theory,” in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 3 (4), pp. 234-253.

¹¹ Cf. al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 170.

¹² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 264-71.

unique book of its kind, compared to all the sources from which al-Ghazālī borrowed some material here and there. None of al-Ghazālī's critics dares to argue that the *Iḥyā'*, as a whole, is similar to any earlier work of al-Ghazālī's predecessors such as al-Makkī's *Qūt al-Qulūb* or al-Muḥāsibī's *Kitāb al-Tawāḥḥum*. Thus, by viewing al-Ghazālī's works from this angle, his originality proves itself.

As a matter of fact, achieving such a sort of originality was intended by al-Ghazālī when he composed the *Iḥyā'*, as he clearly states in the introduction of the book:

“Indeed people have composed books concerning some of these ideas, but the present book differs from them in five ways: First, by clarifying what they have obscured and elucidating what they have treated causally; second, by arranging what they have scattered and organizing what they have separated; third, by condensing what they have made lengthy and proving what they have reported; fourth, by omitting what they have repeated and affirming what they have written correctly; fifth, by determining ambiguous matters which have been difficult to be understood and which have not been dealt with in books at all.”¹³

Fourthly, it is partial and simplistic approach to accuse al-Ghazālī of plagiarism by merely highlighting materials which al-Ghazālī borrowed from other sources and isolating them from their wider respective contexts. What really matters is not whether al-Ghazālī borrowed particular ideas from other sources, but rather how he uses them in his works. This question seems to be ignored by those who have accused al-Ghazālī of plagiarism.

To scholarly deal with this critical question, it is essential, as Sherif puts it, “to reconstruct and obtain a comprehensive view of al-Ghazālī's thought and understand the way he synthesizes the different traditions...”¹⁴ By attempting to tackle this

¹³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 3, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 144, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. xiv.

¹⁴ Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, p. 108.

question in this way, Sherif has proven that al-Ghazālī's deployment of these various and diverse elements serves particular functions in his own teachings, which are very different from their functions in their original sources. By deeply studying al-Ghazālī's ethical teaching—as presented in his principal works—which is, as he observes, a central theme in al-Ghazālī's writings and a good representative of all the diverse fields to which he contributed,¹⁵ Sherif has explored in detail the nature of this aspect of al-Ghazālī's originality, though he has called it “the unity in al-Ghazālī's thought.”¹⁶ He has thoroughly examined the treatment of al-Ghazālī of three different and apparently contradictory elements which are present in his ethical writings, namely virtues in philosophical, religious-legal, and mystic traditions, and has intelligently shown how al-Ghazālī was able to synthesize his unique composite theory of virtue—which is in his view a key aspect of his ethical theory—¹⁷by bringing all of these elements together in a special way in which they complement each other and makes a whole “which is not merely the sum of the parts, but has its own characteristics as an ethical theory.”¹⁸ Thus, he assures that al-Ghazālī “never merely copies or combines diverse ideas in a random way, but selects, transforms, and weaves certain aspects of them together with a view to a particular end, ultimate happiness.”¹⁹ Sherif concludes by stating that al-Ghazālī freely moves “from one tradition to another, filling in the gaps in the one with the complementary element of the other, and modifying those aspects which cannot, in their original form, be incorporated into his new framework.”²⁰

¹⁵ Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, p. 2.

¹⁶ Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, p. 1.

¹⁷ Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, pp. 22f.

¹⁸ Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, p. 22.

¹⁹ Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, p. 164.

²⁰ Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, p. 163.

In a wider scope, Abul Quasem in his lengthy account of the ethical theory of al-Ghazālī has discussed this composite nature of al-Ghazālī's teaching and has asserted that "with his extraordinary genius, al-Ghazālī was able to mingle the various elements and systemize them into a well-ordered and consistent whole."²¹

Another testimony to the originality of al-Ghazālī, but in another subject area, is delivered by Michael Cook in his book, which surveys the accounts of the duty of "commanding good and forbidding wrong" appearing in literature of the major Islamic sects and schools. Although al-Ghazālī belongs to the Shāfi'ī law-school, Cook is convinced that a distinction should be made between al-Ghazālī's account on the duty and that of all other Shāfi'īs.²² Therefore, he devotes a whole chapter to al-Ghazālī's account. A major reason behind this, as he points out, is the high distinctiveness of al-Ghazālī's account.²³ Recording his observation of the originality of al-Ghazālī's account of this duty as presented in the *Ihyā'*, Cook states: "to the best of my knowledge it is almost entirely his own."²⁴ He further states that even when al-Ghazālī employs earlier thoughts, he presents them in clearly different wordings.²⁵ In addition, he has observed two further aspects of al-Ghazālī's originality in his account: its striking structure with its unique divisions and its innovative terminologies, and its uncommon perspective which includes the practicalities of the duty.²⁶

All these scholarly testimonies effectively acknowledge al-Ghazālī's originality and thus render any further discussion of the accusation of plagiarism unnecessary.

²¹ Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, p. 35.

²² Cook, *Commanding Right*, p. 340.

²³ Cook, *Commanding Right*, pp. 340 & 446.

²⁴ Cook, *Commanding Right*, p. 446.

²⁵ Cook, *Commanding Right*, p. 446.

²⁶ Cook, *Commanding Right*, pp. 447-50.

5.3 Clarity:

Besides originality, admirable clarity is a striking strength of al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* teachings. By this quality, I mean that his teachings are highly readable and remarkably coherent. As a matter of fact, this characterizes al-Ghazālī's style in general. To illustrate this characteristic, I shall highlight below a number of aspects of the clarity of al-Ghazālī's style supported by representative examples.

A. PRESENTING OVERVIEWS BEFORE DETAILED DISCUSSIONS:

In his discussion of a particular topic, al-Ghazālī often presents a vivid overview of the topic under study first, then he follows it with detailed discussion. This attitude is very evident, for example, in his treatment of curing heart sicknesses in the *Ihyā'*. Before discussing the cures for specific heart sicknesses in detail, he gives a general account of the topic in "The Book of Disciplining the Soul, Refining the Character, and Curing the Sicknesses of the Heart" (*Kitāb Riyāḍat al-Nafs wa-Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa-Mu'ālaḥat Amrāḍ al-Qulūb*). In the introduction of this *Kitāb*, he explains the purpose of this general account as follows:

"In this Book we shall indicate a number of sicknesses of the heart, and provide a general discourse on how these are to be treated, without giving details of cures for specific ailments, since these will be set forth in the remaining Books (*Kutub*) of this Quarter (*Rub'*). Our present purpose is to review in an overall fashion how the traits of character may be refined, and to provide a preparatory method for this."²⁷

In addition to being important in preparing the reader for the detailed discussion to come, al-Ghazālī is convinced that this method is essential for attaining a

²⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 49, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 5.

comprehensive understanding. Commenting on the interesting organization of his book *al-Mustasfā*, al-Ghazālī explicitly mentions this additional significance:

“I have composed it and brought to it an admirable, delicate organization. The reader shall at first look become aware of all the aims of this science and shall grasp all the dimensions of thoughts within it. For every science where the student cannot get at the outset its foundations and structure, leaves him no chance of attaining its inner secrets and goals.”²⁸

B. PRÉCISING AFTER DETAILING:

What adds to the clarity of al-Ghazālī’s writing is his habitual stylistic attitude of making concise précis after his extended discussions. This is very visible in al-Ghazālī’s works in general and in the *Ihyā’* in particular, where précising phrases, such as “in short” (*bi-al-jumlah*),²⁹ appear quite often.³⁰ A good representative example for this stylistic habit in the *Ihyā’* is the précis given at the end of the exposition of the reasons of arrogance (*al-kibr*). Al-Ghazālī summarizes his detailed discussion of these reasons in the following very well thought out and precise sentence: “In short, every a blessing (*ni‘mah*) which may be regarded as a perfection (*kamāl*), even if it is not really perfection in itself (*bi-nafsih*), can become a matter of arrogance.”³¹

C. GIVING DIFFERENT NAMES TO DISTINGUISH DISTINCT IDEAS:

For the purpose of clarity, al-Ghazālī usually distinguishes between the ideas or the thoughts which he discusses by giving a name to each distinct one. This point

²⁸ al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā*, Vol. 1, p. 6, trans., see Ḥammād, “Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s Jurist Doctrine, p. 305.

²⁹ In some contexts, al-Ghazālī uses the same expression for generalization.

³⁰ See, for instance, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 1, pp. 58 & 188, Vol. 2, pp. 78 & 103, and Vol. 3, pp. 328, 353, & 356.

³¹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 353.

becomes clearer by considering the following example from the *Iḥyā'*. In discussing the involuntary suggestions (*khawāṭir*) which take place in the heart (*al-qalb*) and stir up the desire (*al-shahwah*), he divides them into two categories: “that which provokes evil (*al-sharr*), I mean that leading to a harmful aftermath; and that which motivates to good (*al-khayr*), I mean that which is profitable in the next world.”³² Explaining the need for giving each type a different name, he says that “these are two different suggestions and thus need two different names.”³³ Then, he distinguishes between them by name: “The praiseworthy suggestion (*khāṭir*) is called *ilhām* (inspiration) and the blameworthy suggestion, I mean that which leads to evil is called *wiswās* (whispering).”³⁴

This attitude is based on the general rule, which al-Ghazālī mentions in several places in the *Iḥyā'* that “there is no restraint in terminologies when the meanings are understood” (*lā ḥajra fī al-asāmī ba'da fahm al-ma'ānī*).³⁵ This explains why al-Ghazālī focuses on meanings or contents rather than expressions.³⁶

D. DEFINING THE MEANINGS OF THE TECHNICAL TERMS:

Normally al-Ghazālī does not leave the key terms which he uses in technical or special usage without a clear definition, and thus his reader would not become uncertain about what he really means by them. This habitual practice adds to the clarity of al-Ghazālī's teachings, as is very noticeable in his works in general and the *Iḥyā'* in particular. It has been shown in the above survey of al-Ghazālī's *isḥāhī* efforts that a number of key terms used in al-Ghazālī's diagnosis and treatments in special

³² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 27, trans., Skellie “The Religious Psychology,” p. 104.

³³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 27, trans., Skellie “The Religious Psychology,” p. 104.

³⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 27, trans., Skellie “The Religious Psychology,” p. 104.

³⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 189.

³⁶ See Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzali*, p. 253.

meanings are fully defined by him, such as *al-taqlīd*, *al-qalb*, *al-dunyā*, *bā'ith al- dīn*, and *al-khuluq*.

E. USING APT METAPHORS:

Another aspect of the clarity of al-Ghazālī's style is that he frequently uses apt metaphors to illustrate his teachings, particularly when he wants to clarify subtle ideas. Many of such metaphors are given in the *Iḥyā'*. A striking example is his use of a pig, a dog, a devil, and a sage to represent the four inherent qualities of man's heart (*qalb*) in order to elucidate the harm of these qualities, when any of them becomes predominant, and to show how to bring them under control. After specifying these four qualities, which are wildness (*al-bahīmīyah*), bestiality (*al-sab'īyah*), devilry (*al-shayṭānīyah*), and superiority (*al-rabbānīyah*), and the forms of *fasād* resulting from each one of them when it becomes predominant, he uses these four metaphors as follows:

“Every man has within him a mixture of these four qualities—I mean superiority (*al-rabbānīyah*), devilry (*al-shayṭānīyah*), bestiality (*al-sab'īyah*), and wildness (*al-bahīmīyah*)—and all of these are collected in the heart (*al-qalb*), as though the total in a man's skin is a pig, a dog, a devil, and a sage. The pig is appetite (*al-shahwah*), for a pig is not reproached because of its colour or shape or form, but because of its greed, covetousness, and avidity. The dog is anger, for the carnivorous beast and the mordacious dog are not dog and beast from the standpoint of their appearance or colour or shape, but rather the essence of the meaning of bestial quality is voracity and hostility and mordacity. Now in man's interior are the voracity and rage of the beast, and the greed and lust of the pig. Thus, the pig through greed invites to the vile and the abomination, and the wild beast by anger calls to injustice and harmful acts. The devil continuously stirs up the appetite of the pig and the wrath of the wild beast, and seduces one by the other and presents to them in a favourable light that for which they have a natural propensity. The sage, who represents the intellect (*al-'aql*), is in duty to repel the

craftiness and cunning of the devil by revealing his deception through its piercing insight and radiant and clear light; and to break the greed of this pig by making the dog its master. For by means of anger he breaks the vigour of appetite. He wards off the voracity of the dog by making the pig its master and bringing the dog in subjection under its rule. If he does that and is capable of it, the matter is in equilibrium (*i'tdal al-amr*) and justice is manifest in the kingdom of the body, and all proceeds on the straight path; but if he is unable to overcome them, they dominate him and bring him into servitude, and so that he is continually seeking out stratagems and carefully thinking to satisfy the pig and please the dog, and thus he will always be in servitude to a dog and a pig.”³⁷

F. GIVING IDENTICAL SIMILES:

In addition to parables, al-Ghazālī's writings are full of similes which clarify abstract notions. He has a striking ability of giving similes which are highly identical to the ideas which he wants to explain. A good example is the simile in which he compares the disciplining of the soul (*riyādat al-nafs*) to the weaning of young children and the training of riding beasts. After stating that the soul (*al-nafs*) “does not become tame before its Lord or enjoy His remembrance until it is weaned from its habits...,”³⁸ and that “this is a heavy burden for the aspirant at the outset, but ultimately becomes a source of pleasure,”³⁹ he gives the following two similes:

“Like a small boy who finds being weaned from the breast a hardship, and cries bitterly and with anguish, and is repelled by the food which is set before him as a substitute for his milk. However, if he is then denied any milk at all, he finds his abstinence from food extremely exhausting, and when hunger overmasters him, he eats. Although this is an effort at first, in due course it becomes second nature to him, so that were he to be returned to the breast he would leave it alone and dislike its milk, having acquired a familiarity with food. Similarly, a riding-beast initially shies away from saddle and bridle, and will not be ridden, and has to be

³⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 11, trans., see McCarthy, “*Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajāb al-Qalb*,” p. 321, and also Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” pp. 38f.

³⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 68, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 64.

³⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 68, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 64.

forced to endure these things, and must be restrained with chains and ropes from the roaming at will which had been its custom. Later it becomes so familiar with these things that when it is left untethered it stands quite still.”⁴⁰

G. MAKING HELPFUL CROSS-REFERENCES:

Al-Ghazālī's habit of cross-referring to relevant information in his works contributes to the clarity of his style. Throughout his principal books, rich cross-references are often made, an impressive skill prior to the invention of the press particularly in works in the size of the *Ihyā'*.

There are three forms of cross-references that appear in al-Ghazālī's works. The first is that directing to pertinent discussion to come in the same work.⁴¹ The second is that referring to relevant information mentioned earlier in the same source.⁴² The third is that pointing to other books of al-Ghazālī.⁴³ All this make tracing the related discussions easy and thus helps in attaining a comprehensive understanding of al-Ghazālī's views.

H. ARRANGING AND STRUCTURING HIS THOUGHTS IN A LOGICAL WAY:

The writings of al-Ghazālī are easy to follow because they, in general, are arranged and structured in a logical way. In addition, it is one of his stylistic habits that he explains the logic behind the arrangement and the structure of the topics he intends to discuss right at the introduction of his works and also at the beginning of almost every chapter of his books. A case in point is the logic behind the structure of

⁴⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 68, trans., see Winter, *On Disciplining*, p. 64.

⁴¹ See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, pp. 24, 36, 47, 82, Vol. 2, p. 287, Vol. 3, pp. 09, 118, 171, & Vol. 4, p. 15.

⁴² See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 284, Vol. 2, pp. 238, 245, Vol. 3, p. 62, & Vol. 4, p. 316.

⁴³ See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 37, where he refers to his book *al-Mustazhirī*, see also Vol. 1, p. 40, where he refers to his book *Qawā'id al-I'tiqād* and his three books of *fiqh*, *al-Baṣīṭ*, *al-Waṣīṭ*, and *al-Wajīz*, and also Vol. 1, p. 50, where he refers to his book *Mi'yār al-'Ilm*.

the whole *Ihyā'* which is explained by al-Ghazālī in the introduction of the book as follows:

“What have made me to arrange this book in four parts is two things: The first, which is the fundamental motive, is that this arrangement in establishing what is true and in exposition is imperative; because the branch of knowledge by which one approaches the next world is divided into the knowledge of the Praxis (*'ilm al-mu'āmalah*) and the knowledge of the Unveiling (*'ilm al-mukāshafah*)... This book only concerns with the knowledge of the Praxis and not with the knowledge of the Unveiling, which is not permitted to be recorded in books... The knowledge of the Praxis is divided into outward knowledge (*'ilm zāhir*), I mean the knowledge of actions done by bodily members (*'ilm a'māl al-jawāriḥ*), and inward knowledge (*'ilm bāṭin*), I mean the knowledge dealing with the activities of the hearts (*a'māl al-qulūb*)... The outward part, which is connected with the physical members, is subdivided into acts of worship (*'ibādah*) and habitual acts (*'ādah*). The inward part, which is connected with the states of the heart and the characteristics of the soul, is subdivided into blameworthy and praiseworthy states. So the total makes four divisions... The second motive is that I have noticed that the eager interest of students is in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) ... which is set fourth in four divisions, and he who follows the style of one who is beloved becomes beloved.”⁴⁴

I. ADOPTING CONSISTENT STYLE:

The considerable consistency in al-Ghazālī's style is another factor of his clarity. This is also typical of al-Ghazālī. The analysis of Lazarus-Yafeh of the expressions and idioms which very frequently appear in al-Ghazālī's basic and authentic works and thus can be considered, according to her,⁴⁵ typical of al-Ghazālī's style shows that there is a remarkable consistency in his style throughout his life.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, pp. 3f, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” pp. 10-2, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. xv.

⁴⁵ Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzali*, p. 16.

⁴⁶ Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzali*, p. 50.

J. USING LUCID AND UNSOPHISTICATED LANGUAGE:

A further element of al-Ghazālī's clarity is that the language of his writing is lucid and free from sophisticated expressions. Thus, it is highly readable. This would be very appreciated if al-Ghazālī's language is compared to, for example, that of his teacher, al-Juwaynī, which has been considered as mysterious even by early established scholars such as al-Subkī.⁴⁷

5.4 Deepness:

Deepness is another strength of the *islāhī* teachings of al-Ghazālī. I have particularly noticed this in his diagnosis of *fasād*, which reflects a deep scrutiny of the nature of the *fasād* in his time. As has been shown in the preceding chapter, he deeply diagnosed not only various phenomena of *fasād* in his time, but also the roots of *fasād* in general.

This aspect of al-Ghazālī's deepness has been highlighted in other studies on al-Ghazālī. With reference to the *Ihyā'*, al-Nadwī, for instance, points out that al-Ghazālī examined therein the whole of the Muslim society at the time.⁴⁸ Following his outline of al-Ghazālī's wide and thorough examination of the society and its various classes, al-Nadwī assures that the *Ihyā'* shows that al-Ghazālī's observation is deep and that he was expert in people's ways of life.⁴⁹

The deepness of al-Ghazālī is also reflected on his scholarly approach in both his diagnosis of *fasād* and his *islāhī* treatments. It is typical of al-Ghazālī that when tackling a particular issue, he does not satisfy himself with partial treatment of it, but rather he amazingly gives careful attention to almost all the related aspects. In his

⁴⁷ al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyih*, Vol. 6, p. 243.

⁴⁸ al-Nadwī, *Rijāl*, Vol. 1, p. 309.

⁴⁹ al-Nadwī, *Rijāl*, Vol. 1, pp. 309-10.

discussion of the main roots of *fasād*, for example, we have seen how he pays close attention to various aspects of these roots, explaining in detail what causes them and what their consequences are.

Likewise, al-Ghazālī's deepness is evident in the scholarly methods, which he adopted in his diagnosis of the phenomena of *fasād*. A good illustration of this is his investigation of the reasons behind the phenomenon of widespread laxity of *Imān*. He did not rely on his mere impression or quick observation, but rather he questioned for a period of time a number of those who were affected by this phenomenon, as was mentioned above.

What adds to al-Ghazālī's deepness is his insightful analysis. This is also typical of his teachings, which are full of deep insights. A good illustration for this is his profound psychological analysis of man's reality, as has been outlined above.

5.5 Balance between Individualism and Collectivism:

The question of whether al-Ghazālī in his *iṣlāhī* teachings balances between individualism and collectivism, as a test of quality, is problematic and thus requires careful examination.

To begin with, al-Ghazālī has been seriously accused of failing to meet this criterion. Commenting on al-Ghazālī's ethics, Muḥammad Mūsā, for instance, has strongly attacked al-Ghazālī for not being concerned with the interest of the collective in his school of ethics, and that he was solely concerned with the interest of the individual, for he specifies as the ultimate goal of ethics, achieving the individual's happiness and not the happiness of the community as a whole.⁵⁰ Similarly, Su'ād al-Hakīm has condemned al-Ghazālī for overemphasizing the salvation of the individual

⁵⁰ Muḥammad Y. Mūsā, *Falsafat al-Akhlāq fī al-Islām*, cited in al-Qaradāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, pp. 160-3.

whereas Islam, as she has described, commingled between the salvation of the individual and that of the collective.⁵¹

It is true that what may be called “individual-orientedness” characterizes al-Ghazālī’s *iṣlāhī* teachings in general, and by this it is meant that the utmost goal of his teachings is the individual spiritual salvation of man and his attainment of the ultimate happiness in the next world.⁵² It is also true that al-Ghazālī’s emphasis on the individual may create a sort of selfish spirit among his followers; by literally following specific instructions in the *Ihyā’*, in particular, one may end up living a selfish life in the meaning of being exclusively, and probably excessively, concerned with the spiritual development of the self. For example, after warning from being concerned with *iṣlāh* of others before finishing the task of *iṣlāh* of the self, al-Ghazālī explains in the *Ihyā’* what he means by finishing from the self-*iṣlāh*: “When you have finished purifying yourself and you have become able to forsake the outer and the inner sins and that has become a habit and a second nature...”⁵³ Now, since it is very difficult, if not impossible, to reach that level of purification, the ardent follower of this advice most likely will never become concerned with *iṣlāh* of others.

Although such instruction of explicitly individualistic nature strongly supports the above criticism against al-Ghazālī, it is difficult to form a definitive judgment on the question in view. This is simply because there are several other instructions from al-Ghazālī which clearly show that caring for the collective and taking on responsibilities towards them are two essential elements in his teachings. A good

⁵¹ Su‘ād al-Hakīm, “*Makanat al-Ghazālī min al-‘Ulūm al-Ṣūfiyyah*,” in *Majalat al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*, Damasqus: Itihād al-Kuttāb al-‘Arab, Issue 22, year 6, Jan. 1996, cited online: <http://www.awu-dam.org/trath/22/turath22-009.htm>, visited on 22/12/2006, no pagination.

⁵² Sherif has noticed this in his study on al-Ghazālī’s theory of virtue; he states that his theory “is oriented towards the well-being of the individual. It concerns itself primarily with man’s individual spiritual salvation, the attainment of ultimate happiness in the Hereafter,” (Sherif, *al-Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue*, p. 169).

⁵³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 39, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 159, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 95.

representative example for this is his teachings on the duties of brotherhood, companionship, neighbourhood, relatives, and Muslims in general for which he devoted a whole *Kitāb* in the *Ihyā'*.⁵⁴ A more self-evident example is his account on the duty of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” (*al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar*).⁵⁵ This account as a whole, and particularly his strong argumentation against the view that uprightness (*al-'adālah*) is one of the conditions for performing the duty and that a transgressor (*fāsiq*) cannot perform it,⁵⁶ clearly shows apparently opposite position on the issue of *iṣlāḥ* of others before the completeness of *iṣlāḥ* of the self, in contrast with the above view.

Now, the difficult problem is how to resolve the apparent contradiction between al-Ghazālī's teachings of individualistic spirit and those of collective nature. This, in our view, is a very challenging problem and really deserves a separate study, but meanwhile one cannot but affirm such contradiction and consider it a serious weakness in his *iṣlāḥī* teachings. As a provisional attempt to interpret this apparent contradiction, I may suggest that it is a partial contradiction between al-Ghazālī's *fiqhī* views and his teachings, which are based on Sufi tradition or legacy.

I would now like to discuss another criticism levelled against al-Ghazālī, which is not unrelated to the criterion in view. That is the accusation of being passive toward the grave challenge of the Crusaders facing the Muslim *Ummah* in his time. It is a popular criticism among contemporary critics of al-Ghazālī that he kept silent on this external crisis, as there is no reference to it in his works or *fatāwā*, although he witnessed the Frankish invasion of some Muslim lands, namely Jerusalem in 492/1098.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, pp. 157-220.

⁵⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, pp. 306-57.

⁵⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, pp. 312-4.

⁵⁷ See, for example, al-Qaradāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, pp. 172f.

There have been various theories on this unexpected silence. Al-Qaradāwī, for example, while admitting that al-Ghazālī's position on this regard is “puzzling,” for a man of his status knows what should have been said and done in such condition,⁵⁸ he offers two interpretations which can be paraphrased as follows. The first is that when that external threat started and developed al-Ghazālī was in seclusion during which his main concern was self-purification and his own salvation; but even after his abandonment of seclusion, there was no indication of being concerned with that issue, which was related to the future of the whole Muslim *Ummah*.⁵⁹ This, al-Qaradāwī continues, has led some to say that Sufis, including al-Ghazālī, believed that the Crusader invasion was a Divine Punishment for Muslims as a result of their sins; and thus, they were negative towards it.⁶⁰ The second interpretation offered by al-Qaradāwī, which is more apologetic, is that al-Ghazālī was primarily preoccupied with *iṣlāḥ* from within, for internal *fasād* paves the way for external invasion, as the Qur'ān indicates.⁶¹

Similar to this second interpretation is the view of Abu-Sway who says:

“In my opinion, Al-Ghazzāliyy [sic.] realized that the Islamic Caliphate at the time was corrupt and filled with social and ideological trends that ran against Islamic Shari‘ah. I think he was convinced that the disease was within the state, and that the Crusaders were nothing but the symptoms. Al-Ghazzāliyy [sic.] understood that the core of the issue was moral. To solve this problem, he wanted to educate people and to revive the role of the Shari‘ah and its aims (*maqāṣid*).”⁶²

⁵⁸ al-Qaradāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 172.

⁵⁹ al-Qaradāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 173.

⁶⁰ al-Qaradāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, pp. 173f.

⁶¹ al-Qaradāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 174, referring to the opening of Q.17.

⁶² Mustafa Abu-Sway, *al-Ghazzāliyy [sic]: A Study in Islamic Epistemology*, Kuala Lumpur: Diwan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1996, p. 14.

What really matters to the present study is whether this criticism disproves the classification of al-Ghazālī as a *muṣṭah*. In order to fairly answer this question, it is important to consider the following points:

1. The real position of al-Ghazālī on the challenge of the crusaders is not known for certain. This is simply because it is difficult to claim that everything about him was reported, especially during his seclusion period, about which only little is known for sure, as stated above. The fact that nothing was reported as a direct response from him to that challenge does not seem a sound proof to base on it a positive view about his real position or to put in his mouth words that he had not uttered. Silence alone is open to interpretation.
2. By recalling the historical context of the First Crusade and the overall Muslim response, which I have been purposely illustrated in the appendix of this study, it can be stated that one of the major reasons behind the defeat of Muslims by the Crusaders was the internal conflicts among Muslim leaders in particular, and lack of unity among Muslims in general. As Hillenbrand puts it in short: “It is a familiar tenet of Crusader history that the warriors of the First Crusade succeeded because of Muslim disunity and weakness. Had the First Crusade arrived even ten years earlier, it would have met strong, unified resistance from the state then ruled by Malikshah, the last of the three so-called Great Seljuq sultans.”⁶³
3. These internal conflicts mainly resulted from the struggle over worldly interests, or according to al-Ghazālī’s terminology in his *iṣlāhī* teachings “love of the *dunyā*.” So, by treating this particular reason behind the internal conflicts, which was one of the major concerns of al-Ghazālī as was shown

⁶³ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 33.

previously, one can say that he was indirectly responding to the major cause of the defeat of Muslims. In other words al-Ghazālī was concerned with treating what has been called by al-Kīlānī “becoming disposed to defeat” (*qābilāt al-hazīmah*).⁶⁴

4. As was shown in the previous chapter, al-Ghazālī’s attempts at *islāh* focused on several internal challenges of the Muslim *Ummah*, which were no less serious than the external ones, not to mention the challenge of the Baṭīnīs, which contributed to the general weakness of Muslims. Now, even if he did not directly respond to the challenge of the Crusader invasion, despite its seriousness, this alone is not enough to discredit him as a *muṣliḥ*. It is not necessary that one has to deal with all the challenges of one’s time in order to be considered as a *muṣliḥ* from the Islamic perspective, for not even every prophet did so.

5.6 Realism and Practicality:

For the sake of convenience, realism and practicality are considered here as a dual criterion because they are somehow related.

Making a general judgment on whether al-Ghazālī’s *islāhī* teachings meet this dual criterion is problematic. On one hand, there are various aspects of realism and practicality clearly appearing in his teachings. To start with, it is very evident that al-Ghazālī in his *islāhī* teachings focuses on practical issues. This can be considered as a characteristic of his religious and spiritual teachings in general. As Timothy Gianotti has recently emphasised, “when it comes to spiritual and religious direction, al-

⁶⁴ al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Zahra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 106.

Ghazālī is a most practical man.”⁶⁵ This, he further states, “is nowhere more clearly seen than in the *Ihyā’* itself, which is designed to be a step-by-step manual for religious and spiritual formation.”⁶⁶ Gianotti has concluded his study on what he calls “al-Ghazālī’s unspeakable doctrine of the soul” by the following statement: “In the end, I argue that he was, above all else, a practical man, even in his mysticism.”⁶⁷

This characteristic appears right at the Introduction to the *Ihyā’* in which al-Ghazālī states that “the book only concerns with the knowledge of the Praxis (*‘ilm al-mu’āmalah*) and not with the knowledge of the Unveiling (*‘ilm al-mukāshafah*), which is not permitted to be recorded in books.”⁶⁸ Commenting on this, Gianotti says:

“So, even though he touches on the knowledge of the Unveiling in this and many other parts of the *Ihyā’*, he tells us in no uncertain terms that the work itself is about the knowledge of Right Practice—which is for everyone—and not about the disclosure of the contents of mystical noesis—which is beyond most people’s ability to bear and is no way a requirement for salvation.”⁶⁹

Al-Ghazālī’s practicality is also reflected in his continuous warning in the *Ihyā’* from wasting time on issues that do not lead to actions, or issues for which there is no actual need. For example, he blames the *‘ulamā’*, who rather than occupying themselves with problems of their day and those of frequent occurrence, pursue the unusual issues and exhaust themselves in dealing with problems which most likely never occur.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Timothy J. Gianotti, *al-Ghazālī’s Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul: Unveiling the Esoteric Psychology and Eschatology of the Ihyā’*, Leiden: Koninklijke Brill Nv, 2001, p. 28.

⁶⁶ Gianotti, *al-Ghazālī’s Unspeakable Doctrine*, p. 28.

⁶⁷ Gianotti, *al-Ghazālī’s Unspeakable Doctrine*, p. 176.

⁶⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 1, pp. 3f, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” pp. 10-2, and also Fāris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. xv.

⁶⁹ Gianotti, *al-Ghazālī’s Unspeakable Doctrine*, p. 51.

⁷⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 1, p. 77.

In addition to being focused on practical issues, al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* teachings are based on existing facts rather than visionary. All the problems which are mentioned in the survey above existed in his time, and none of them can be classified as imaginary.

Furthermore, al-Ghazālī often explicitly rejects impracticable thoughts and ideal solutions. For instance, as has been shown previously, he does not necessitate a complete suppression of desires in order to achieve goodness in character;⁷¹ and he rejects the assumption of a group of Sufīs that the purpose of spiritual struggling (*mujāhadah*) is to completely suppress all desires.⁷²

On the other hand, there are elements of apparent idealism or extremeness voiced in al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* teachings, and this has led students of Islamic thought to evaluate some of al-Ghazālī's teachings as being impractical, and even harmful, in the case of many people, if not the majority. Al-Ḥakīm, for example, has condemned al-Ghazālī's division in the *Iḥyā'* of a twenty-four-hour Muslim day into specified parts (*awrād*) and his arrangement of obligatory and voluntarily Islamic worship accordingly,⁷³ reserving that such an "ideal" pattern of Muslim day cannot be followed except by very few Muslims, and blaming him of addressing himself to a restricted group of Muslims, i.e., devoted worshipers (*al-'ubbād*). In reference to the *Iḥyā'* also, al-Nadwī, though he appraises the book in general, states that many of those who restrict their reading to this book, or very often and avidly read in it, would adopt an extreme attitude of asceticism, renouncement of permissible worldly pleasure, and excessive disciplining to the extent that it would affect their health and mind.⁷⁴

⁷¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 44.

⁷² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 42.

⁷³ See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 42.

⁷⁴ al-Nadwī, *Rijāl*, Vol. 1, p. 314.

To fairly deal with this problematic issue, it is important to consider the following clarifying points about al-Ghazālī's teachings. First, his teachings are based on his differentiation between the strong in religiousness (*al-aqwiya' fi al-din*) or the select few (*al-khawāṣ*), who have high religious and spiritual qualities, and the weak (*al-du'afā*).⁷⁵ In fact, he explicitly states in the *Ihyā'* that “the aim of such a book as this is that it be helpful to the *aqwiya'* and established '*ulamā*’,” though he says that “we shall strive to make the *du'afā*' understand by means of giving examples so that it may be close to their understandings.”⁷⁶ Thus, it is crucial to distinguish his teachings which are merely directed to the *aqwiya'* or the *khawāṣ* from those which are intended for the others. Failing to do this may lead to imprecise judgment.

Second, al-Ghazālī usually takes into consideration the differences in the circumstances of people in his teachings. He, for example, states that “the method of struggle (*mujāhadah*) and discipline (*riyāḍah*) varies from one person to the next, in accordance with their circumstances.”⁷⁷ Therefore, applying his teachings without considering the different circumstances of people may lead to unfavourable effects.

Third, he considers gradualness a condition for success in religious disciplining and soul purification; and thus he continuously warns from ignoring gradualness for it may lead to reversing results. For example, in his direction of breaking the greed of the stomach, he highlights the harm of not applying gradualness by stating that “the constitution of a man who is accustomed to eating much, and who then changes all at once to eating only a little, will not be able to sustain this, and will be weakened, resulting in considerable hardship and distress.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 98, 318, 323 & 325.

⁷⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 6, trans., see McCarthy, “*Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajāb al-Qalb*,” p. 315, and also Skellie, “The Religious Psychology,” p. 18.

⁷⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 69, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 65.

⁷⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 89, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 134.

Fourth, moderation is an essential general guiding principle in al-Ghazālī's teachings for he clearly states that “the most exalted desideratum in all matters and morals is the mean (*al-wasat*), for the best of affairs is the middle course, and both extremes in any matter are blameworthy,”⁷⁹ and that “the mean is required in all traits of character which have opposite,”⁸⁰ quoting the saying of the Prophet (S.A.A.W.), “the best of affairs is the middle course (*khayr al-umūr awāṣituhā*).”⁸¹

Fifth, although al-Ghazālī teaches that moderation should be aimed for, he at the same time believes that following the middle course should be only after one's nature has been set in equilibrium. A good illustration for this precise point is particularly found in al-Ghazālī's “Exposition of the Variance in the Rule and Merit of Hunger in Accordance with Circumstances of Men” (*Bayān Ikhtilāf Ḥukm al-Jū' wa-Faṭīlatih wa-Ikhtilāf Aḥwal al-Nās Fīh*).⁸² After his general statement about the mean (*al-wasat*) quoted above, he goes on to say:

“Our discourse concerning the merits which attach to hunger may have suggested that extremeness is required in this regard, but this is certainly not the case. For it is one of the secret wisdom of the *Sharī'ah* that whenever man's nature demands that he go to an unsound extreme, the *Sharī'ah* also goes to extreme in forbidding this, in a fashion which to an uninformed man might suggest that it requires the complete opposite of what human nature (*tab'*) demands. The *'ālim* (the learned), however, realises that it is the mean that is required. This is because human nature, demanding as it does the maximum of satiety, must be countered by the *Sharī'ah* with praise of extreme hunger, so that the instincts of man's nature and the prohibitions of the *Sharī'ah* stand opposite one another, thereby bringing about an equilibrium. For it is unlikely thing that a man might suppress his nature entirely, rather he will realise that he shall never

⁷⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 96, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 154.

⁸⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 96, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, pp. 155f.

⁸¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 96, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, pp. 155f.

⁸² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 96-8, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, pp. 154-60.

reach this goal. Even were he to go to the greatest extreme in countering his nature, the *Sharī'ah* would indicate that he had erred.”⁸³

Explaining the mean in eating for a man of moderate nature, he continues:

“You should also know that the best course for a man of moderate nature is to eat so that his stomach is not heavy, but without feeling the pangs of hunger. One should forget one’s belly, and not harbour any preference for hunger. For the purpose of eating is the preservation of life and the gaining of strength for worship: a heavy stomach is an obstruction to worship, and so are the pangs of hunger, for they distract the heart.”⁸⁴

Al-Ghazālī, however, makes the following exception for this general principle:

“This, however, comes about after one’s nature has been set in equilibrium. At the outset, should the soul have a tendency to bolt, crave the satisfaction of its desire, and incline to excess, the mean (*al-wasat*) will yield it no advantage; instead one must go to extreme lengths to hurt it with hunger, in the way that one must employ hunger, blows and other things to hurt a riding beast that is not broken in until it becomes moderate in its temperament. When it is broken in, becomes balanced, and reverts to the equilibrium, one may cease training and hurting it.”⁸⁵

Although this extreme disciplining is exception to the rule, the following explanation from al-Ghazālī indicates that he believes that it is the best way of disciplining in most cases:

“Since the dominant condition of the soul is one of greed, desire, rebellion, and refusal to worship, the most profitable thing for it is hunger, the pain of which it feels under most circumstances, and which leads to its subjugation. The intention

⁸³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 96, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 154.

⁸⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 96, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 155.

⁸⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 96, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 155.

is that the soul should be broken in this way until it becomes balanced, which condition will abide even after it returns to its food.”⁸⁶

In his closing of this “Exposition,” al-Ghazālī directly addresses those who are in charge of disciplining “wayfarers on the Path of the next world” (*sālīkī tarīq al-ākhirah*) by stating:

“These secrets should not be unveiled by a *Shaykh* of the Path to his aspirants. Instead he should confine himself to praising hunger, and not summon them to moderation (*al-i’tidāl*), for if he did so they would certainly fall short of it: he should rather summon them towards the very extremes of hunger, in order that such moderation might become easy for them. He should not tell them that the perfect gnostic (*al-‘arīf*) may dispense with self-discipline, for this would furnish the devil with a pathway to their hearts, so that he would constantly be whispering to each of them, “You are a perfect gnostic; what more gnosis and perfection could you need?”...The strong (i.e., in religiousness: *al-qawī*), when he devotes himself to disciplining and *islāh* of others, must descend to the level of the weak in order that he might resemble them and be gentle when driving them towards their saving felicity...”⁸⁷

In the light of all the discussion above, I conclude that al-Ghazālī’s *islāhī* teachings are considerably realistic and practical, particularly his general principles, but when it comes to matter of details, especially with regard to Soul disciplining, there appear unrealistic and impractical aspects. This is mainly because he necessitates extreme disciplining in most cases, though he believes in moderation as a general rule. In our view, such extreme disciplining can easily lead to alienation from the outset in the case of many people. Thus, I consider it a major weakness in al-Ghazālī’s *islāhī* teachings, regardless of his attempt to justify it, simply because his way of justifying this particular point does not stand criticism, as shall be further discussed below.

⁸⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 96, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 156.

⁸⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 98, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 160.

5.7 Islamic-Justification:

In the main, al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāhī* teachings are supported by proofs from the Islamic fundamental sources, namely the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. This typifies the works of al-Ghazālī under study. Even in presenting his own insights and reflections in these works, al-Ghazālī almost always justifies them by quoting evidences from the Islamic primary sources. As a general rule, “any insight (*istibṣār*),” he explicitly states, “which can't be justified by (*lā-yashhad lah*) the Qur'ān and the Sunnah is not reliable.”⁸⁸ Thus, there is no wonder that his works are full of citation from these two sources.

Al-Ghazālī's justification of his teachings, however, has been seriously challenged by a number of distinguished Muslim scholars over the centuries. This will be further discussed under the following three sub-headings: (1) the “foreign elements” in al-Ghazālī's teachings, (2) al-Ghazālī and the unjustified Sufi tradition, and (3) al-Ghazālī's reliance on unsound *aḥādīth*.

5.7.1 The “Foreign Elements” in al-Ghazālī's Teachings:

This section focuses on the question of justification of what have been called “foreign elements” presented in al-Ghazālī's works and which may be traced back directly or indirectly to un-Islamic sources, namely the works of ancient philosophers. Because of such elements, al-Ghazālī has been criticized since his time. His contemporary al-Māziri⁸⁹ (d. 536/1141), the celebrated Maliki scholar, is a good representative early example of those who raised such criticism. In the course of his reply to a question about his view on the *Iḥyā'*, he accused al-Ghazālī of (a) relying

⁸⁸ See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 13.

⁸⁹ Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Māziri.

much on Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) in his philosophical thought, (b) engaging in reading *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* which, as he pointed out, a mixture of philosophy and knowledge of *Sharī'ah*, and (c) mingling between the knowledge of Sufīs and the views of philosophers.⁹⁰

Al-Māzīrī was undoubtedly a distinguished Muslim scholar, but one cannot regard his accusation as serious, though it has been continually repeated by the critics of al-Ghazālī, because of the following reasons. First, strangely enough, his view was based on what he heard from al-Ghazālī's students and companions and not on his own reading of the *Ihyā'*, as he admitted.⁹¹

Second, his accusation has been effectively challenged by other established Muslim scholars, namely al-Subkī (d. 771/1370).⁹² Deprecating the claim that the *Ihyā'* includes un-Islamic philosophical thoughts, al-Subkī, who unlike al-Māzīrī was a close reader of al-Ghazālī's works, refuted the view of al-Māzīrī and stated that al-Ghazālī charged Ibn Sīnā and the philosophers with disbelief, so how can it be said that he followed them and based his work on their teaching.⁹³ In his view, the difference in the school of jurisprudence (*fiqhī madhhab*), the approach (*tarīqah*), and the disposition (*mazāj*) of al-Māzīrī in contrast with al-Ghazālī necessitated repulsion between the two.⁹⁴

Third, the criticism of al-Māzīrī is far from being as convincing as al-Ghazālī's own detailed reply to some of his contemporaries who accused him of recording in some of his books thoughts from the works of the ancient philosophers. He states in the *Munqidh*, "as a matter of fact, some of them [i.e., the claimed philosophical thoughts] are the product of my own reflections and it is not improbable that ideas

⁹⁰ Cited in al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 123.

⁹¹ Cited in al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 122.

⁹² Cited in al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, pp. 124-6.

⁹³ Cited in al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, pp. 126f.

⁹⁴ Cited in al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 4, pp. 124f.

should coincide, just as a horse's' hoof may fall on the print of another hoof.”⁹⁵ In addition to the possibility of coincidence, al-Ghazālī further clarifies that some of the thoughts under question “are found in the *shar‘ī* (religious) books and the sense of most is found in the writings of the Sufis.”⁹⁶ Even with the assumption that a thought is found only in the writings of the philosophers, al-Ghazālī further states that “if what is said is reasonable in itself and corroborated by apodictic proof and not contrary to the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, then why should it be shunned and rejected?”⁹⁷

This last statement reflects, to begin with, al-Ghazālī’s open-mindedness; as a principle he did not totally reject a thought just because it was mentioned by the philosophers. Thus, he, in the words of Winter, “was not a crude ‘fundamentalist’, opposed on principle to any possibility of learning from abroad.”⁹⁸ In fact one of al-Ghazālī’s concerns was to highlight the harm which may result from such tendency. He states in the *Munqidh* that “if we were to open this door and aim at forgoing every truth which had been first formulated by the mind of one in error, we would have to forgo much of what is true.”⁹⁹ He further says that such tendency “would be an invitation to those in error to wrest the truth from our hands by putting it into their own books.”¹⁰⁰ This principle position of al-Ghazālī agrees with the well-known teaching of the Prophet of Islam who says: “Wisdom is the lost animal of the believer; wherever he finds it, it is he that has the most right to it.”

⁹⁵ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 88, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 69, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p.p 40f.

⁹⁶ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 88, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 69, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 41.

⁹⁷ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 88, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 69, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 41.

⁹⁸ Winter, *Disciplining*, p. XLVII.

⁹⁹ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 88, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 69, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁰ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 88, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 69, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 41.

The above statement of al-Ghazālī also shows his criteria for accepting “foreign elements”. The first is that they have to be supported by justified proofs. The second is that they do not contradict the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.

It is far beyond the limitation of the present study and the limitation of my own knowledge too, however, to fully verify whether al-Ghazālī complied with these criteria in all his *iṣlāḥī* teachings which may be traced back to the works of philosophers. Nevertheless, this can be partially proved by the finding of the previously mentioned study of Sherif with regard to the compliance of al-Ghazālī with these criteria in his theory of virtue, which is very relevant to the present study. Sherif has interestingly demonstrated how al-Ghazālī justifies his employment of some philosophic analysis, which he finds useful in synthesising his own theory of virtue either by drawing upon direct related Islamic argument or at least by showing that they do not contradict with Islamic teaching.¹⁰¹ Eliminating any possible wrong assumption that al-Ghazālī’s attitude is a superficial way of “Islamization,” Sherif has concluded that,

“unlike some other Muslim thinkers who welcome any device which can be used to reconcile philosophic ethics with Islamic moral teachings, al-Ghazālī does not consider the partial modifications he introduces into philosophic virtues sufficient to justify synthesizing those virtues with their Islamic counterparts; a more comprehensive approach, transforming these virtues into an integral part of a new, wider framework, is necessary.”¹⁰²

5.7.2 Al-Ghazālī and the Unjustified Sufi Tradition:

Another criticism which has been raised since a very early time against al-Ghazālī’s justification of his teachings is that he often relies on Sufi traditions which

¹⁰¹ Sherif, *Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue*, pp. 24-76.

¹⁰² Sherif, *Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue*, p. 162.

contradict with Islamic principles found in Islamic primary sources, or at least cannot be supported by Islamic evidence. One of the earliest holders of this criticism and a well-known representative of it is Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) who strongly attacked al-Ghazālī in a number of his books, namely *Talbīs Iblīs*, and whose attack has been noticeably repeated since his time. Because his criticism has been widely followed and because it has been considered a very serious criticism, it deserves a detailed discussion.

In *Talbīs Iblīs*, Ibn al-Jawzī criticizes al-Ghazālī in the context of his extreme lengthy criticism against the approaches of the Sufis and his polemic against a number of their teachings which in his view completely contradict with the *Sharī'ah*.¹⁰³ Concerning al-Ghazālī, the starting point of his criticism is that he accused him of composing the *Ihyā'* in the same approach of earlier Sufis chiefly al-Muḥāsibī and that he acknowledged their wrong teachings and strongly supported them.¹⁰⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī mentions three reasons behind al-Ghazālī's support of such teachings:

- Dispensing with *fiqh* and ignoring its law for the sake of Sufism.¹⁰⁵
- Becoming Sufi himself made him in fully support of the Sufi teachings.¹⁰⁶
- Relying on fabricated and unsound traditions attributed to the Prophet (S.A.A.W.) without knowing that they are spurious.¹⁰⁷

By examining the criticism of Ibn al-Jawzī, the following comments regarding the validity of his criticism can be made, excluding the point concerning al-Ghazālī's reliance on fabricated prophetic traditions, which will be discussed in the following sub-heading.

¹⁰³ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, Riyadh: Dār al-Mughnī, 2000, pp. 181-424.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 181.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, pp. 397 & 399.

¹⁰⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 197.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 186.

First, there is a considerable misquoting of al-Ghazālī by Ibn al-Jawzī; he quite often omits some of al-Ghazālī's words which have crucial effect in understanding the true position of al-Ghazālī on the issues under question. For example, he denounces al-Ghazālī for writing the following statement in the *Ihyā'*: "The disciple should not concern himself with marriage,"¹⁰⁸ whereas the original text of the *Ihyā'* reads: "The disciple, **in his beginning**,¹⁰⁹ should not concern himself with marriage."¹¹⁰ Noticeably and very strangely the phrase "**in his beginning**" is omitted in Ibn al-Jawzī's quoting, indicating that al-Ghazālī discourages marriage in general and not in a particular situation and for particular reasons as the original words as well as the context clearly reveal.

Second, Ibn al-Jawzī often disconnects al-Ghazālī's quotes from their respective contexts and does not seem to consider these contexts in his criticism.¹¹¹ This leads to great misrepresentation of al-Ghazālī's views. Ibn al-Jawzī, for example, attacks al-Ghazālī's saying in the *Ihyā'* that "some say: The Lordship has a secret if it was unveiled, the Prophecy would become null...,"¹¹² while unexpectedly he totally ignores al-Ghazālī's comment immediately following this quote which says: "The one who says this if he did not mean by it that nullity of the Prophecy is with reference to weak people due to their shortcoming in their understanding, then **what he said is not true** and the reality is that there is no controversy on it [i.e., the *Sharī'ah*]."¹¹³

Third, similarly, the approach of Ibn al-Jawzī in presenting the view of al-Ghazālī which he criticizes is very selective; he selects specific quotes from particular places in the *Ihyā'* and ignores some related discussions either in the same context or

¹⁰⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 336.

¹⁰⁹ The emphasis here, and in the following quotes as well, is mine.

¹¹⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 101.

¹¹¹ This attitude of Ibn al-Jawzī has been noticed also by al-Shāmī, see al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, pp. 175-9.

¹¹² Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 384.

¹¹³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 100.

elsewhere in the same book, which are important in understanding the true position of al-Ghazālī regarding the problems in view. This shortcoming of Ibn al-Jawzī can be perfectly illustrated in the following example.

In the context of his refutation of the wrong assumption of groups of Sufis who think that having trust (*tawakkul*) in God necessitates giving up means (*al-asbāb*), Ibn al-Jawzī accused al-Ghazālī of being apologist to such groups by accepting the idea of travelling in a desert without food with the intention of relying on God, though with some conditions.¹¹⁴ This, however, does not precisely reflect the true view of al-Ghazālī on giving up means in the name of having trust in God or *tawakkul*. This is because al-Ghazālī in this particular context is just discussing the conditions that should be met in order to make such travel lawful, as it obviously appears from the context.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, his true position from this issue is clearly stated after couple of lines from the above quote where he clearly states that “being away from all means **is in defiance of (*murāghamah*) wisdom and an act of ignorant of the Norm (*sunnah*) of Allāh Almighty; for acting according to the Norm of Allāh Almighty with having trust in Him..., and not the means, does not contradict with *tawakkul*.”¹¹⁶ He further states that if one decides to live in a mountain where there is no water nor grass and where no one normally passes by, then one would be sinful and leading one’s self to destruction.¹¹⁷**

Furthermore, in another context in which al-Ghazālī gives examples for self-delusion (*ghurūr*) among Sufis, he mentions the following example, which Ibn al-Jawzī entirely ignores:

¹¹⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 343.

¹¹⁵ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 266.

¹¹⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 266.

¹¹⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 266.

“Among them [i.e., Sufis] one who travels in desert without food in order to justify his claim of *tawkkul*, but he does not realize that this is innovation in religion (*bid‘ah*) and it has not been reported from the righteous previous generations (*al-salaf*) nor the companions of the Prophet, who were more knowledgeable in *tawkkul* than him, yet they did not understand *tawkkul* as an act of risking life and giving up food....”¹¹⁸

Fourth, it is difficult to follow Ibn al-Jawzī without any reservation on fully equating the approach of al-Ghazālī in the *Ihyā’* with that of the previous Sufis on the basis of al-Ghazālī’s support for their views. In addition to what has been already mentioned with regard to the originality of al-Ghazālī with reference to his use of Sufi works, the following reservation can be expressed over Ibn al-Jawzī’s opinion. Although al-Ghazālī in various places in the *Ihyā’* relies on the literature of earlier distinguished Sufis, he does not restrict himself to their views, and does not simply follow their teachings without critically examining them. In fact, he often highlights the shortcomings of their views and adds essential remarks to their thoughts.¹¹⁹ Moreover, as a general evaluation, al-Ghazālī characterizes the views of the Sufis as deficient (*qāṣir*) because every one of them, he clarifies, habitually talks on the basis of his own experience or condition (*hāl*) only.¹²⁰ This is why in various issues, especially those which were debatable among the Sufis, al-Ghazālī did not satisfy himself with what had been said by the earlier Sufis, and thus made his independent examination and came up with his own views on those issues.¹²¹

Fifth, Ibn al-Jawzī’s argument that al-Ghazālī dispensed with the law of *fiqh* in the *Ihyā’* in favour of Sufism is an unfair generalized judgment. Throughout the book, the

¹¹⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 406.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, his remark on the classification of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī of the major sins where he states that it is not sufficient, see al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 18.

¹²⁰ See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 4, p. 42.

¹²¹ See, for example, his examination in the *Ihyā’* of what is better: patience or thankfulness, Vol. 4, pp. 135-41.

fiqh of al-Ghazālī is distinctively voiced. In fact, even when he agrees with particular views of earlier Sufis, including those which are quoted by Ibn al-Jawzī, he normally justifies his choice using the reasoning of *fiqh*, in addition to other sorts of reasoning, regardless of whether we agree or disagree with his justification. A case in point is his agreement with al-Muḥāsibī's view that poverty is better than richness.¹²² Following his long quote of al-Muḥāsibī's argument on this issue, al-Ghazālī states that this view can be supported by all the traditions which he mentioned in the "Book of Condemnation of the *Dunyā*" and the "Book of Poverty and Abstinence" of the *Iḥyā'*, in addition to other evidences, which he would further mention.¹²³ Thus, he did not follow the view of al-Muḥāsibī just because al-Muḥāsibī was a Sufi, but because al-Ghazālī was convinced that it could be justified by evidences from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, notwithstanding how sound his evidences were. It is worth noting that al-Ghazālī quotes al-Muḥāsibī in this specific context because he wanted to show that poverty is better than richness in general, but his detailed view on the issue is presented in the "Book of Poverty and Abstinence" in which he discusses the controversy on the issue and deeply examines it,¹²⁴ which itself shows his deepness in *fiqh*.

This, however, does not mean at all that the *Iḥyā'* is free from Sufī tradition which clearly contradict with *fiqhī* rules. In fact, al-Ghazālī himself does not deny this, as shall be seen in a moment. This poses the challenging question about al-Ghazālī's true position on such tradition. To adequately tackle this problem, there is a need for a separate detailed study, but, meanwhile, I ought to sum up the controversy surrounding this problem and then give a provisional assessment.

¹²² al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 264-74.

¹²³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 264-74.

¹²⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 4, pp. 201-5.

A good representative example of the Sufi tradition contradicting *fiqh* rules quoted in the *Ihyā'* is the following story. In his discussion of the practical part of treating love of status (*jāh*), and specifically in the course of describing how some Sufis may treat their soul diseases by some methods which can be seen as unlawful from a *fiqh* perspective, al-Ghazālī recounts the incident of a Sufi whose well-known abstinence had brought him high status and many followers; thus, he entered a bath-house and intentionally wore the clothes of someone else, then, he stood outside on the road; consequently, he was caught, and beaten, and the clothes were taken from him, and as a result, people renounced him.¹²⁵

Referring to this incident, but again not giving any attention to the related discussion in the same context, Ibn al-Jawzī severely condemns al-Ghazālī's telling of such incidents and states:

“Glorious is He who moved Abū Ḥāmid from the circle of *fiqh* by his composition of the book of the *Ihyā'*, I wish that he had not mentioned in it such things which are unlawful. Strange enough from him to say them, praise them, and call their people *Arbāb Aḥwāl* (People of Spiritual States).”¹²⁶

Defending al-Ghazālī, with reference to the same story, Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (1205/1791) argues that Sufis are *mujtahidūn* in the way of soul purification, so, what they find most beneficial for their hearts they go for it; and that particular incident is consistent with the Islamic principle which states that when two potential harms are in dilemma, the less harmful should be committed.¹²⁷

More convincing apologia for al-Ghazālī and a recent strong counter-argument against Ibn al-Jawzī is that of al-Shāmī:

¹²⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 288.

¹²⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 399.

¹²⁷ Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, Vol. 1, p. 52.

“We side with Ibn al-Jawzī on wishing that al-Ghazālī had not mentioned that story, but we don’t side with him in disconnecting it from its immediately preceding context in which al-Ghazālī gives his *fiqhī* opinion: al-Ghazālī asserts that “the action of the Malāmatīyah—that is committing apparently disgraceful deeds (*al-fawāḥish*) in order to lower their status in the eyes of people—is unlawful for every individual...But what is lawful is doing permissible acts (*fi’l al-mubāḥāt*) which lower the status among people...” That is what al-Ghazālī has asserted and that is a clear legal opinion, free from ambiguity...”¹²⁸

After emphasising that the story under question is mentioned in that particular context and that al-Ghazālī points out that such an act is questionable from a *fiqh* point view, i.e., there is no agreement that it is lawful or unlawful, al-Shāmī states “al-Ghazālī, then, mentions a fact that Sufī *mashāyikh* sometimes treat their personal conditions with different methods than that of *faqīh*. So, what is wrong in al-Ghazālī’s position, and where did that cross him out from the circle of *fiqh*!”¹²⁹

Now, I agree with al-Shāmī on the total importance of considering the context in which al-Ghazālī mentions such Sufī tradition, and I side with him on that al-Ghazālī’s telling of such incidents in such contexts does not bring him out of the circle of *fiqh*, but I cannot agree with him that there is nothing wrong in al-Ghazālī’s approach. Instead, I may argue that al-Ghazālī’s reporting of such deviant acts, of which nothing similar seems to have been reported from the early Muslim generations, which is one of al-Ghazālī’s own criteria of justification, as has been quoted above, despite his true position on them, is an unfortunate mistake. Such acts are potentially harmful, for they may direct, though unintentionally, to excessive religiousness among the eager readers of al-Ghazālī. In addition, they can easily lead to misunderstanding of the actual position of al-Ghazālī, particularly because not

¹²⁸ al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, pp. 177f.

¹²⁹ al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 178.

every reader of the *Ihyā'* has the ability to perform close and comprehensive reading, bearing in mind the large size of the work. Lastly, these odd stories, as I have personally experienced, often sidetrack the reader from the major principles of al-Ghazālī's teachings.

5.7.3 Al-Ghazālī's Reliance on Unsound *Aḥādīth*:

A very popular criticism against al-Ghazālī's justification of his teachings, namely in the *Ihyā'*, is that he heavily relies on weak and fabricated *aḥādīth* (traditions attributed to the Prophet of Islam). On this, in the words of al-Shāmī, "there is a consensus among the critics."¹³⁰ In his harsh criticism of the *Ihyā'*, Ibn al-Jawzī, for example, frankly accused al-Ghazālī of filling the *Ihyā'* with spurious (*bāṭilah*) *aḥādīth* without knowing their spuriousness.¹³¹

Although no one can deny al-Ghazālī's reliance on such *aḥādīth*, this fact has been greatly overstated, and thus it deserves a careful reassessment. As a humble attempt to do so, I would like to highlight the following points.

First of all, it is a gross exaggeration and even a false accusation to say, as al-Tartūshī reported claiming, that al-Ghazālī filled the *Ihyā'* "with lying upon the Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him, for I do not know a book over the face of the Earth which is more lying than it."¹³² To totally reject such a puzzling claim, it is important to emphasise that al-Ghazālī quoted the traditions under question from earlier works without being aware of their falsity. Al-Subkī asserts that al-Ghazālī in the *Ihyā'* "did not report a single *ḥadīth* on his own

¹³⁰ al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 166.

¹³¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 186.

¹³² al-Dhahabī, *Siyar 'Alām al-Nubalā'*, Vol. 14, p. 321.

authority.”¹³³ This means that al-Ghazālī did not commit the crime of *ḥādīth* fabrication, and this can be supported by al-Ghazālī’s strict view about that major sin:

“Some presupposed that it is permissible to fabricate *ahādīth*, encouraging virtuous deeds and warning from sins, and they claim that such a purpose is right; but it is an absolute wrong, for the Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him, said: ((Whoever lies upon me, deliberately, should reserve his seat in Hill-fire)) and that must not be committed except when there is an absolute necessity; but there is no absolute necessity, for truthfulness is an alternative to lying and the revealed *āyāt* and the reported traditions are enough. Now, the word of that who says, “those have been repeated and have become ineffective, while what is new is more influential,” is a mania (*hawās*) because that is not a justified purpose in contrast with the harmful consequences of lying upon the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him, and upon Allāh Almighty, and that will open the door for things which confuse (*tushawwish*) the *Sharī‘ah*, so, the intended good purpose does not resist the evilness of its consequences. Moreover, lying upon the Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him, is one of the major sins (*min al-kabā‘ir*)...”¹³⁴

Secondly, there is a real need to revise what has been considered as a postulate among the students of al-Ghazālī that he ignored the study of the discipline of Ḥadīth.¹³⁵ It is true that this has been supported by al-Ghazālī’s utterance in his book *Qānūn al-Ta’wīl* that his knowledge in *‘ilm al-Ḥadīth* is little (*biṭā‘atī fī al-ḥadīth muzjāh*),¹³⁶ but this should not be taken at its face value. The fresh and unique study of al-Mahdalī about al-Ghazālī’s knowledge in the field of Ḥadīth has interestingly shown that he had a considerable interest in this discipline, and that he had a wide study of it.¹³⁷ By carefully studying al-Ghazālī’s books, the *Mankhūl*, the *Iḥyā’*, and

¹³³ al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īyah*, Vol. 6, p. 127.

¹³⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 139.

¹³⁵ al-Mahdalī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-‘Ilm al-Ḥadīth*, Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1998, p. 28.

¹³⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Qānūn al-Ta’wīl*, ed. Maḥmūd Bījū, Damascus: n.p. 1993, p. 30.

¹³⁷ al-Mahdalī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-‘Ilm al-Ḥadīth*, p. 14.

the *Mustasfā*, al-Mahdalī has found thereupon expositions and allusions, which clearly show that al-Ghazālī had a knowledge of Ḥadīth.¹³⁸

Thirdly, the accusation of Ibn al-Jawzī, and those who follow him, that al-Ghazālī filled the *Ihyā'* with such traditions¹³⁹ is only an exaggeration,¹⁴⁰ for it indicates that the majority of the traditions in the *Ihyā'* are false, and that is incorrect, as has been statistically proven in the study of al-Mahdalī employing the following steps.¹⁴¹ As a starting point, he counted the number of all the traditions in the *Ihyā'* for which al-Subkī could not find *isnād*¹⁴² (chain of narrators), and thus he found that they are about a quarter of the total number of the quoted traditions in the *Ihyā'*.¹⁴³ This, al-Mahdalī states, “shows that most of the traditions of the *Ihyā'* have *isnād*, but not finding *isnād* for the rest of the traditions does not necessarily mean that the rest do not have *isnād* because al-Subkī's verification (*takhrīj*) is not final.”¹⁴⁴ Next, based on Mamdūh's index of the *aḥādīth* of the *Ihyā'*,¹⁴⁵ al-Mahdalī has added up the total number of these *aḥādīth*, which becomes four thousand eight hundred and forty eight (4,848) traditions, excluding the repeated ones which are not included in the index.¹⁴⁶ It is worth mentioning, as al-Mahdalī clarifies, that there are other traditions in the *Ihyā'* which are not included in the index, though they are few.¹⁴⁷ Now, this total number, al-Mahdalī has concluded, shows the following:¹⁴⁸

¹³⁸ al-Mahdalī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*, p. 14.

¹³⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 186.

¹⁴⁰ al-Mahdalī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 89f.

¹⁴¹ al-Mahdalī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 91-116.

¹⁴² al-Mahdalī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*, p. 91.

¹⁴³ al-Mahdalī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*, p. 91.

¹⁴⁴ al-Mahdalī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*, p. 91.

¹⁴⁵ See Maḥmūd Saʿīd Mamdūh, *Is ʿāf al-Mulḥḥīn bi-Tarīb Ihyā'* 'Ulūm al-Dīn, Beirut: Dār al-Maʿarifah, n.d., pp. 3-75.

¹⁴⁶ al-Mahdalī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*, p. 116.

¹⁴⁷ al-Mahdalī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*, p. 116.

¹⁴⁸ al-Mahdalī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*, p. 116.

1. Al-Ghazālī quoted the *ahādīth* of the *Ihyā'* from many sources, books of Ḥadīth in particular and other sources in general, because this number is not found in the works of Sufis and *fuqahā'*, nor even half of it.
2. Al-Ghazālī used to consult books of Ḥadīth.
3. He had knowledge of Ḥadīth and this is what led him to consult books of Ḥadīth, before and after the *Ihyā'*.

Finally, the important question which should be raised here is to what extent were al-Ghazālī's teachings influenced by unsound or weak traditions? This is another critical question which deserves a detailed study, but for the time being, I can offer the following provisional answer.

I have noticed that at least a number of al-Ghazālī's teachings were influenced to a considerable extent by such traditions and that is a serious weakness in his teachings. To representatively illustrate this, I shall go back to the above discussion of his "Exposition of the Variance in the Rule and Merit of Hunger in Accordance with Circumstances of Men" (*bayān ikhtilāf hukm al-jū' wa-faṭīlatih wa-ikhtilāf aḥwal al-nās fih*).¹⁴⁹ The starting point of his exposition, as has been quoted above, is the following:

"Our discourse concerning the merits which attach to hunger may have suggested that extremeness is required in this regard, but this is certainly not the case. For it is one of the secret wisdom of the *Sharī'ah* that whenever man's nature demands that he go to an unsound extreme, the *Sharī'ah* also goes to extreme in forbidding this..."¹⁵⁰

Now, what is the basis of al-Ghazālī's argument that "whenever man's nature demands that he go to an unsound extreme, the *Sharī'ah* also goes to extreme in

¹⁴⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 96-8, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, pp. 154-60.

¹⁵⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 96, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 154.

forbidding this”? It seems that it is those traditions quoted by him at the beginning of “The Book of Breaking the Two Desires” (*Bāb Kasr al-Shahwatayn*) which encourage hunger.¹⁵¹ Based on the verification (*takhrīj*) of al-‘Irāqī¹⁵² and that of al-Zabīdī as well,¹⁵³ all these traditions are unsound.¹⁵⁴ Thus, al-Ghazālī was influenced here by these unsound traditions. This renders his point on extreme disciplining, discussed above, which is based on this argument, unjustified Islamically and that proves our point.

¹⁵¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 96, trans., see Winter, *Disciplining*, p. 154.

¹⁵² See al-‘Irāqī’s examination of these traditions in the footnotes of the *Iḥyā’*, Vol. 4, pp. 80-2.

¹⁵³ Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Iṭḥāf*, Vol. 9, pp. 8-17.

¹⁵⁴ There are few sound traditions condemning satiety, but they are irrelevant to the present point.

CHAPTER SIX

THE EFFECTS OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S ATTEMPTS AT *ISLĀH*

6.1 Introduction:

The analytical definition of *iṣlāḥ* in the first chapter suggests that in order to fully judge an effort from the *iṣlāḥ* perspective, one needs to know to what extent it has led to the desired corrective change. Based on this, the present chapter attempts to study the main effects of al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāḥī* efforts, in order to complete the task of verifying the hypothesis of the present study.

Achieving this purpose in full, however, is almost an impossible dream. As Knysh has pointed out “a balanced account of the influence of al-Ghazālī will probably not be possible until there has been much more study of various religious movements during the subsequent centuries.”¹ What intensifies the difficulty of such a balanced evaluation is the nature of the historical sources. As al-Kīlānī has correctly noticed,² the mainly biographical nature of the historical sources has shattered the thematic unity of many historical social phenomena, and thus it has become difficult to reconstruct the whole pictures of these phenomena. In the words of Cook, speaking about the limitation of the sources, “it is notorious that we tend to know too much about scholars in the pre-modern Islamic world and too little about anyone else—apart from rulers.”³

¹ Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 147.

² al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Zahra jīl Salāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 101.

³ Cook, *Commanding Good*, p. xiii

Despite the limitation of the sources, various phenomena have been considered as effects of al-Ghazālī's efforts, but the evaluation of these effects has been very controversial. I shall discuss below a number of such effects, and assess the main controversial evaluations of them.

6.2 The Impact of al-Ghazālī's *Islāhī* Teachings on his Pupils:

A central aim of al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* efforts was to bring up and train a generation of true '*ulamā*', as a major part of his attempt to renew the mission of true '*ulamā*', as was shown above. I seek here to discuss the extent to which he achieved in this aim.

In his discussion of al-Ghazālī's effect, as a founder of an *islāhī* movement, al-Kīlānī stresses that he, through organized and independent teaching, was able to lend his personality together with his line of thought to a large number of pupils, who undertook his message and started to propagate it among all classes of society, and in the schools and the mosques in which they held guiding positions.⁴ This argument, however, has been insufficiently supported.⁵ In fact it seems almost impossible to fully evaluate such an effect, because we neither know exactly all the pupils of al-Ghazālī, particularly in his *islāhī* stage, nor do we know to what extent his pupils were influenced by his *islāhī* teachings, and what their exact role in the claimed *islāhī* movement was. Therefore, it is difficult to fully and confidently accept al-Kīlānī's overstated argument. Nevertheless, it may at least be partially supported by the following historical data.

To begin with, we recall here that al-Ghazālī returned to teaching in the Nizāmīyah of Nishapur for some time, and in his private school in Tūs afterwards,

⁴ al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Zahra jīl Salāh al-Dīn*, p. 172

⁵ As a support for this generalized argument, al-Kīlānī strangely gives only three examples of al-Ghazālī's pupils and mentions too little information about them, see al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Zahra jīl Salāh al-Dīn*, pp. 172f.

until his death, as has been illustrated in chapter three. In that period, it is most likely that many pupils were eager to be taught by al-Ghazālī because of his previous great reputation as an impressive teacher⁶ in addition to the reputation of his books, particularly the *Ihyā'*, as has already been mentioned. As a matter of fact, al-Ghazālī mentioned in one of his late letters that there were one hundred and fifty students who were studying under him at Tūs.⁷

Some relevant information about at least a number of al-Ghazālī's pupils can be highlighted by studying the biographical sources which mention some of them by name. In his introduction to the *Ithāf*, al-Zabīdī⁸ lists twenty three of al-Ghazālī's pupils. At least four of them were taught by him in Tūs,⁹ in which he spent his last years teaching in his private school, one was taught in Nishapur,¹⁰ where he returned to official teaching, and two accompanied him in al-Shām,¹¹ where he started his self-*islāh*. Thus, they were certainly belonging to al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* stage, and as a result they were most likely influenced highly by his *islāhī* teachings.

Even some of the pupils who were taught by al-Ghazālī in the period earlier to his *islāhī* stage became highly interested in his late works, including those of *islāhī* nature, and consequently played a considerable role in popularizing them. Among these were Abū 'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abd-Allāh al-'Irāqī al-Baghdādī

⁶ In Baghdad, the number of students attending al-Ghazālī's lessons reached three hundred, as has been mentioned above.

⁷ Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 65.

⁸ Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, Vol., 1, pp. 60-2. By checking some biographical sources, namely al-Subkī's *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrā*, some of these names appear to be inaccurate or misspelled in the *Ithāf*, at least in the edition which I have used. Thus, the spelling which is given here is what I think is more accurate.

⁹ These are Abū Naṣr Aḥmad b. 'Abd-Allah b. 'Abd-al-Raḥmān al-Khamqarī (d. 544/1149), Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad b. Asa'ad b. Muḥammad al-'Aṭārī al-Tūsī (d. 573/1177-8), 'Abd-al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī b. Abī al-'Abbās al-Na'imī al-Muwaffaqī (d. 542/1147) and Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥamawayh al-Juwaynī (d. 539/1147), see Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, Vol., 1, pp. 60-2.

¹⁰ His name is Abū Sa'id Muḥammad b. Yahyā b. Maṣṣūr al-Nisābūrī (d. 548/1153), see Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, Vol., 1, p. 61.

¹¹ These are Abū Tāhir Ibrāhīm b. al-Muṭṭahir al-Jurjānī (d. 513/1119) and Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muslim b. Muḥammad al-Silmī, titled Jamāl al-Islām (d. 533/1139), see Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, Vol., 1, pp. 61f.

(d. 540f./1145) and Abū Sa'īd Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abd-Allāh al-Jāwānī (d. c. 560/1164) who both narrated al-Ghazālī's book *Ijām al-'Awām*.¹² Among them was also Abū Ṭālib 'Abd-al-Karīm b. 'Alī al-Rāzī (d. c. 522/1128) who memorized the *Ihyā'* by heart.¹³ In addition to al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148) and Abū Sa'd Muḥammad b. As'ad b. Muḥammad al-Nawaqānī (d. 556/1161) who were both among those who orally received the *Ihyā'* from al-Ghazālī, and they in turn narrated it to others.¹⁴

Other than these, al-Zabīdī¹⁵ lists seven names of those who orally received the *Ihyā'* from al-Ghazālī and transmitted it to others. These names contributed to the phenomenon of the continuous and wide narration of the book down the centuries, as will be demonstrated in the following section.

By referring to the biographies of all these names,¹⁶ two further remarks are worth making in this context. Firstly, some of these had certain qualities of high righteousness, which shows that those who carried al-Ghazālī's teachings, particularly in his *iṣlāḥī* stage, were in general of righteous qualities. Since the biographies do not clearly state whether this was a result of al-Ghazālī's influence on them, we cannot be certain on this particular point, but it is most likely that he played an essential role in this. Secondly, a number of the above names became very distinguished scholars and impressive intellectuals. This tentatively indicates that they played an effective role in propagating the *iṣlāḥī* teachings of al-Ghazālī.

Table (1) below summarizes the biographical notes about the standing and the qualities of some of the above names.

¹² al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*,

¹³ al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol., 7, pp. 179f, and Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, Vol., 1, p.62.

¹⁴ See Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, Vol., 1, pp. 64-5.

¹⁵ See Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, Vol., 1, pp. 62-5.

¹⁶ For this purpose, I have consulted a number of biographical sources, see the table below.

TABLE (1): AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S PUPILS: SELECTED LIST

Name	Biographical Notes
1. Abū al-Fath Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Barhān (d. 518/1124)	- Became a “model of knowledge.” - One to whom crowds of pupils were bound. - Taught in the Nizāmīyah for some time. (al-Subkī, <i>Ṭabaqāt</i>)
2. Abū Naṣr Aḥmad b. ‘Abd-Allāh b. ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān al-Khamqarī (d. 544/1149)	- Became a well-known <i>faqīh</i> . - His preaching attracted many people. - A virtuous man. (al-Subkī, <i>Ṭabaqāt</i>)
3. Abū ‘Abd-Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd-Allāh al-‘Irāqī al-Baghdādī (d. 540f./1145)	- Became one of the most distinguished <i>Shāfi</i> scholars. (al-Dhahbī, <i>Tārīkh al-Islām</i> , Vol. of ys. 541-550, p. 85)
4. Abū Sa‘d Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Manṣūr al-Nīsābūrī (d. 548/1153)	- Became “the head of the <i>fuqahā</i> ” in Nīsābūr and taught in its Nizāmīyah. - His name became widely recognized. - Unique in knowledge and asceticism at the time. - Even scholars used to travel to him, seeking knowledge. (al-Dhahbī, <i>Tārīkh al-Islām</i> , Vol. of ys 541-550, p. 337)
5. Abū Ṭāhir Ibrāhīm b. al-Muṭṭahir al-Jurjānī (d. 513/1119)	- Became one of the distinguished scholars. - His teaching and preaching were widely welcomed because of his virtuousness. (Ibn Manzūr, <i>Mukhtaṣar Tarīkh Dimashq</i>)
6. Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muslim b. Muḥammad al-Silmī, titled Jamāl al-Islām (d. 533/1139)	- Became an authoritative scholar. - Became in charge of teaching in the <i>Amīnīyah</i> school in Damascus (al-Subkī, <i>Ṭabaqāt</i>)
7. ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī b. Abī al-‘Abbās al-Na‘īmī al-Muwaffaqī (d. 542/1147)	- Became an established <i>faqīh</i> . - A pious and virtuous man. (al-Subkī, <i>Ṭabaqāt</i>)
8. ‘Abd-al-Khālīq b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd-al-Qādir al-Baghdādī (d. 548/1153)	- A man of Ḥadīth. - A religious, virtuous, humble, and beneficial man. (al-Dhahbī, <i>al-‘Ibar fī Khabar man Ghabar</i> , Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 6)
9. Muḥammad b. Thābit b. al-Ḥasan al-Khūjandī (d. 483/1090f.)	- Became in charge of the Nizāmīyah of Aṣbahān. - Was among the most well-known scholars at the time. - A well-mannered man (al-Subkī, <i>Ṭabaqāt</i>)
10. al-Qādī Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Abd-Allāh b. al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1148)	- Was very well-established in various sorts of knowledge. - A well-mannered man. (al-Dhahbī, <i>Tārīkh al-Islām</i> , Vol. of ys 541-550, p. 159)
11. Abū al-Ṭāhir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Silafī (d. 576/1180)	- For whom pupils travel in long journeys. - Was in charge of a school in Alexandria. (Ibn Khallikān, <i>Wafayāt al-A‘yān</i> , Vol. 1, p. 121)

6.3 The Claimed Studentship of Ibn Tūmart under al-Ghazālī:

Having discussed al-Ghazālī's influence on his pupils, it is relevant to investigate the conflicting claims about the effect of al-Ghazālī on Ibn Tūmart, who succeeded in establishing a reformist movement in the Maghrib which resulted in the rise of the dynasty of al-Muwahhīdūn (Almohads).

Within his outline of al-Ghazālī's positive effects as a founder of an *islāhī* movement, al-Kīlānī¹⁷ includes the claimed influence on Ibn Tūmart. Relying solely on Ibn Khaldūn's account about the claimed studentship of Ibn Tūmart under al-Ghazālī in Baghdad, al-Kīlānī plainly states that after being influenced by his teachings, Ibn Tūmart returned to the Maghrib in order to put these teachings into practice.¹⁸

This positive claimed effect, on the contrary, has been negatively evaluated by others. Al-Ṣallābī in his book on al-Muwahhīdūn, for instance, presents Ibn Tūmart's movement as a deviated and oppressive school of preaching; and thus he criticizes those who positively evaluate his studentship under al-Ghazālī, arguing that al-Ghazālī was unsettled in his theological teachings.¹⁹

In both of these opposing evaluations, however, no attention at all has been given to the doubtfulness connected with the story about Ibn Tūmart's studentship under al-Ghazālī. Although the claimed meeting between the two appears in a number of historical sources, it is still a very doubtful story. For example, Ibn Khaldūn, on whose account al-Kīlānī based his argument, reported the story, but his report denotes uncertainty for he uses the phrase "*fī mā za'imū*"²⁰ (as they have claimed). Moreover,

¹⁷ al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Ḥāra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, pp. 108 & 174.

¹⁸ al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Ḥāra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 108.

¹⁹ 'Alī Muḥammad al-Ṣallābī, *I'lām Ahl al-'Ilm wa-al-Dīn bi-Aḥwāl Dawlat al-Muwahhīdīn*, Sharjah: Maktabat al-Ṣahābah, 2001, pp. 5 & 16.

²⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *al-'Ibar*, Vol. 6, p. 267.

some other early Muslim historians, such as Ibn Al-Athīr,²¹ asserted that Ibn Tūmart never met al-Ghazālī.²² This assertion can be supported by some historical evidences. Historical sources agree that Ibn Tūmart's trip to the Mashriq did not start before the year 500 A.H., but by this time al-Ghazālī had already permanently left Baghdad, where the meeting between the two was claimed to have occurred.²³

This strong doubt, nevertheless, may be questioned by the clear reference to Ibn Tūmart appearing in the introduction to *Sir al-Ālamīn*, a book which has been attributed to al-Ghazālī. This reference, it has been argued, removes the doubts which have been raised on the meeting between the two.²⁴ Based on this, Ḥanashī argues that the book is considered the manifesto of Ibn Tūmart's movement against the state of al-Murābiṭūn (Almoravids).²⁵

However, this argument can be strongly challenged by the questionable authenticity of the book under question. Several studies, which have discussed the authenticity of the works attributed to al-Ghazālī, have agreed that the book is almost certainly not authentic.²⁶ This is based on eternal evidences which may be summarized in the following points:

1. The connection between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Tūmart mentioned in the introduction is spurious.²⁷

²¹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 195.

²² Cf. René Basset, "Ibn Tūmart," in *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 426.

²³ Cf. J. F. Hopkins, "Ibn Tūmart," in *EF*², Vol. 3, p. 458.

²⁴ See, for example, Muḥammad 'Umrānī Ḥanashī, *Shataḥāt Lifuqahā'*, electronic book:

<http://www.alhiwar.org/ar/content/view/208/29/>, no pagination, visited on 1/2/2007.

²⁵ Ḥanashī, *Shataḥāt Lifuqahā'*, electronic book: <http://www.alhiwar.org/ar/content/view/208/29/>, visited on 1/2/2007, no pagination.

²⁶ See, for example, M. Bouyges, *Essai de chronologie des œuvres d'al-Ghazālī*, Beirut: Librairie Catholique, 1959, p. 75 (I am indebted to my friend, Mokhtar Ben Fredj, for translating the relevant part of the cited work from French); W. Montgomery Watt, "The Authenticity of the Works Attributed to al-Ghazālī," in *JRAS* (Journal of Royal Asiatic Society), 1952, pp. 34f; Badawī, *Mullafāt*, pp. 271-2; and Mashad al-'Allāf, *Taṣānīf al-Imām Ḥujjat al-Islām*, 2002, electronic book: <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/ma2.htm#d>, visited on 1/2/2007, p. 40.

²⁷ Watt, "The Authenticity," p. 34.

2. The book includes materials of superstition, which are almost impossible to be written by a Muslim scholar in the weight of al-Ghazālī.²⁸
3. Contrary to al-Ghazālī's distinguished stylistic characteristic, which appears in his genuine works, the materials' distribution in this book is not that systematic.²⁹
4. The author makes references to some of his works, such as *Nasīm al-Tasnīm*, which neither appears in any other authentic book of al-Ghazālī, nor in the sources listing his genuine works.³⁰
5. The book in general is biased against Umawīs and this, as al-'Allāf states, suggests that it was written by a Bāṭinī.³¹

In addition to these remarks, I may add that the purpose of the book which is to provide a guide for kings to support them in their worldly purposes, as frankly stated in the introduction,³² entirely conflicts with the interests and the teachings of al-Ghazālī at the time in which the book supposed to be written.

This strong doubt on the direct connection between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Tūmart from the outset renders any judgment of direct effect of the former on the latter very shakily founded. This of course does not eliminate the possibility of indirect influence on Ibn Tūmart by al-Ghazālī, i.e., through the works of the latter, but that is another issue which is beyond our present concern.

²⁸ al-'Allāf, *Taṣānīf*, electronic book: <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/ma2.htm#d>, visited on 1/2/2007, p. 40, and Watt, "The Authenticity," p. 34.

²⁹ Watt, "The Authenticity," p. 34, quoting Asin.

³⁰ Badawī, *Mu'allafāt al-Ghazālī*, p. 273; al-'Allāf, *Taṣānīf*, electronic book: <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/ma2.htm#d>, visited on 1/2/2007, p. 40; and Watt, "The Authenticity," pp. 34f.

³¹ al-'Allāf, *Taṣānīf*, electronic book: <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/ma2.htm#d>, visited on 1/2/2007, p. 40.

³² al-Ghazālī?, *Sir al-'Ālamīn*, compacted with other works of al-Ghazālī in *Majmū'at Rasā'il al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, n.d., Part 6, p. 3.

6.4 The Influence of the *Iḥyā'*:

As has been previously illustrated, the *Iḥyā'* of al-Ghazālī is his major project of *iṣlāḥ*, and it includes most of his main *iṣlāḥī* teachings. Therefore, assessing the influence of the book as a whole serves principally the purpose of the present chapter. This is hoped to be achieved firstly by highlighting the great interest in the *Iḥyā'* over the centuries, and then by generally evaluating this interest.

6.4.1 The Great Interest in the *Iḥyā'*:

Since al-Ghazālī's time and down the centuries, there has been exceptionally great interest in the *Iḥyā'*. This phenomenon can be supported by plentiful evidences. The following are striking selective pieces of these evidences.

Firstly, there has been considerable eagerness with which the book was studied and taught to others over centuries. A denoting early story illustrating this is that of Abū al-Faṭḥ Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Barhān (d. 518/1124), who was one of al-Ghazālī's pupils for some time, and who then became a distinguished and hard-working teacher to the extent that he had teaching circles from early dawn to after dark; when he was once asked by a group of students to teach them the *Iḥyā'*, he initially declined due to lack of time, but at their insistence, he devoted a teaching circle on the book at midnight.³³

Secondly, down the generations, the *Iḥyā'* has been transmitted by various chains of narrators which go back to al-Ghazālī himself. Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791) was one of those who received the book via various *asānīd* (chains of narrators by whom the book was transmitted) which go back to the author. In the lengthy introduction of his extensive commentary on the *Iḥyā'*, al-Zabīdī lists a number of

³³ al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 6, p. 30.

these *asānīd* starting from the ones who orally received the book from al-Ghazālī all the way down to him: several ones were through Jamāl al-Islām ‘Alī b. al-Muslim al-Salamī (d. 533/1139), another was through ‘Abd-al-Khāliq b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd-al-Qādir al-Baghdādī (d. 548/1153), two others were through Muḥammad b. Thābit b. al-Ḥasan al-Khūjandī (d. 483/1090f.), several others were through al-Qādī Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1148), another was through Abū Ṭāhir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Silafī (d. 576/1180), and several more.³⁴

Thirdly, there has been incredible attitude of people who learned the book by heart. One of those who memorized the entire *Iḥyā’* is Abū Ṭālib ‘Abd-al-Karīm b. ‘Alī al-Rāzī (d. c. 522/1128) who was one of al-Ghazālī’s pupils.³⁵ In later centuries there were people who had similar attitude towards the *Iḥyā’*, indicating a continuous remarkable interest in the book. At the beginning of the sixth/seventh century, the Tunsian Sufi Abd al-Salām al-Tunīsī (d. 486/1093) succeeded in convincing the intellectual circle in Tilimsen of the importance of the *Iḥyā’* and consequently the book began to be transcribed and memorised by the people of Tilimsen.³⁶ In the seventh/thirteenth century, there was, for example, Sharaf al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. al-Shaykh al-Mawṣilī (d. 622/1225) who was teaching the *Iḥyā’* from memory.³⁷ Similarly, in the nine/fifteenth century there was Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Bilālī (d. 820/1417), who was continuously reading from the *Iḥyā’* until he developed a special ability in it and almost memorized it all.³⁸

³⁴ See Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Iḥāf*, Vol., 1, pp. 60-5.

³⁵ See al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol., 7, pp. 179f; and Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Iḥāf*, Vol., 1, p. 62.

³⁶ al-Ṭāhir Būnābī, “*Nash’at wa-Taṭwwur al-Adab al-Ṣūfī fī al-Maghrib al-Awsat*,” in *Ḥawliyat al-Turāth*, Algeria: Mistiganim Univesity, Issue # 2, Sept. 2004, electronic version: <http://annales.univ-mosta.dz/texte/ap02/15bounabi.htm>, visited on 17/11/2006, citing Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Tashawwuf ilā Rijāl al-Taṣawwuf*, al-Ribat, 1958, p. 158.

³⁷ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A’yān*, Vol., 1, p. 23.

³⁸ al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497), *al-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi’*, Cairo: 1354 AH, 8:178, cited in Cook, *Commanding Good*, p. 457, n. 211.

These particular reported examples, however, do not seem in any way enough to say, as al-Kīlānī puzzlingly claims, that all of al-Ghazālī's pupils down the centuries had this attitude.³⁹ They can, however, be used as additional examples for the exceptional interest in the *Ihyā'* down the centuries.

Fourthly, the book has been very widely disseminated. This, as Cook has rightly observed, "is documented by a mass of evidence that remains largely unstudied."⁴⁰ A good representative of these is the multiple transcripts of the book available around the globe. There are at least one hundred and nine manuscripts of the *Ihyā'*, which have been written at different dates since the time of the author, available in various cities around the world; they are listed and briefly described in Badawī's work on al-Ghazālī's books.⁴¹

Lastly, a vast number of summaries and customised versions of the *Ihyā'* have been written over the centuries by people from different origins, sects, schools of thought, and even different religions. To obtain a good idea of the multiplicity, as well as the variety of the summaries and customised versions of the *Ihyā'* and the diversity of their authors as well, it is worth listing in table (2) below, a number of these in chronological order and highlight the sect, religion or school to which the authors belong, in addition to their origins and places of residence.⁴²

³⁹ Although al-Kīlānī strangely claims that all al-Ghazālī's pupils down the centuries had learned his books by heart, he only mentions two examples, see al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Ḥahra jil Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 173.

⁴⁰ Cook, *Commanding Good*, pp. 450f

⁴¹ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Mu'allafāt al-Ghazālī*, Kuwait: Wakālat al-Maṭbū'āt, 1977, pp. 98-112.

⁴² In this table I have benefited much from Cook's well-referenced outline of a number of the summaries of the *Ihyā'*, both published and unpublished (Cook, *Commanding Good*, pp. 451-55). However, I have not restricted myself with this outline for I have consulted other sources as well, and I have mentioned more summaries than those mentioned by Cook.

TABLE (2): SUMMARIES AND CUSTOMISED VERSIONS OF THE *IHYĀ'*

#	Title	Author	Category & Origin of the Author	Short Description
1	<i>Lubāb al-Ihyā'</i>	Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. c.520/1126)	Sufi-Shāfi'ī from Ṭūs resided in Baghdad	He is al-Ghazālī's brother who, according to al-Zabīdī, was the first who composed a summary of the <i>Ihyā'</i> . (Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, <i>Ithāf</i> , 1:56)
2	Unknown title	Muḥammad b. al-Walīd al-Fihri al-Turtūshī (d. 520/1126)	Andalusian Mālikī resided in Alexandria	In this work, the renowned author “is described as emulating (<i>yu'arīḍ bihi</i>)” the <i>Ihyā'</i> . (Cook, <i>Commanding Good</i> , p. 373 citing Manūnī, <i>Ihyā'</i> , pp. 135-7, and others) He states in the introduction that “of the countless works on piety (<i>taqwā</i>), the <i>Revival</i> is the best, but that it suffers from a number of faults which he proceeds to list.” (Cook, <i>Commanding Good</i> , pp. 453f, citing Manūnī, “ <i>Ihyā'</i> ,” p. 135.10)
3	<i>Mukhtaṣar al-Ihyā'</i>	Yaḥyā b. Abī al-Khayr al-'Imrānī (d. 558/1163)	Yemeni Shāfi'ī	A second summary of the <i>Ihyā'</i> . (al-Subkī, <i>Ṭabaqāt</i> , 7:338.6.)
4	Unknown title	Ibn al-Rammāmah (d. 567/1172)	Mālikī who was the judge of Fez	A third summary of the <i>Ihyā'</i> . (Cook, <i>Commanding Good</i> , p. 373 citing Manūnī, <i>Ihyā'</i> , pp. 132f.)
5	<i>Mukhtaṣar al-Ihyā'</i>	Muḥammad b. Sa'īd al-Qurayzī (d. 575/1179)	Shāfi'ī who was the judge of Lahj (Yemen)	A fourth summary of the <i>Ihyā'</i> . (Cook, <i>Commanding Good</i> , 451-2)
6	<i>Al-Tafakur Fīmā Tashtamīl 'Alayh al-Suwar wa-al-Āyāt min al-Mabādi' wa-al-Ghāyāt</i>	Abū 'Alī al-Hasan b. 'Alī al-Masīlī (d. late sixth/twelfth century)	Malikī lived in Bijāyā (which is now in Algeria)	It is reported that this book was written on the model of the <i>Ihyā'</i> and it became more popular than the <i>Ihyā'</i> particularly in Bijāyā. (Būnābī, “ <i>Nash'at</i> ,” opcit, citing Aḥmad Bābā al-Timbikī, <i>Nayl</i> , p. 104; and al-Ghubrīnī (d. 704/1304f.), “ <i>Unwān</i> ,” p. 67)
7	Unknown title	Muḥammad b. Sa'īd al-Yamanī (d. 595 A.H.)	Yemeni	A fifth summary. (al-Zabīdī, <i>Ithāf</i> , Vol. 1, p.56)

TABLE (2) (CONT.): SUMMARIES AND CUSTOMISED VERSIONS OF THE *IḤYĀ'*

#	Title	Author	Category & Origin of the Author	Short Description
8	<i>Minhāj al-Qāṣidīn</i>	Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī, widely known as Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201)	Ḥanbalī from Baghdad	As stated in his introduction, Ibn al-Jawzī noticed that the true disciple resolving to live in spiritual seclusion and wanting a guiding book would prefer the <i>Iḥyā'</i> , claiming it to be unique of its type and valuable by itself (<i>infirāduh fī jinsih wa-nafāsatuḥ fī nafsih</i>), but since it has faults known only to the scholars, he decided to compose for such a person this work which, as he states, is free from the faults of the <i>Iḥyā'</i> but it preserves its sound elements. So this is a reworked summary of the <i>Iḥyā'</i> . (See the abridged version of this work made by Aḥmad b. ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān b. Qudāmah al-Maqdisī (d. 689/1290), <i>Mukhtaṣar Minhāj al-Qāṣidīn</i> , Beirut & Damascus: Dār al-Khayr, 1998, p. 14)
9	<i>Rūḥ al-Iḥyā' wa-Rawḥ al-Aḥyā'</i>	Sharaf al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. al-Shaykh al-Mawṣilī (d. 622/1225)	Shāfi‘ī from Iraq	A seventh summary of the <i>Iḥyā'</i> . (Ibn Khallikān, <i>Wafayyāt al-A'yān</i> , 1: 24. For a brief description of the manuscript of this summary, see Cook, <i>Commanding Good</i> , p. 452 n. 162.)
10	Unknown title	“ ”	“ ”	An eighth summary by the previous author but a bigger size than <i>Rūḥ</i> . (See Ibn Khallikān, <i>Wafayyāt al-A'yān</i> , 1:108.8.)
11	<i>Dhukhr al-Muntahī fī al-‘Ilm al-Jālī wa-al-Khāfī</i>	Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Abd-Allāh al-Khwārazmī al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 679/1280f?)	Sufi-Shāfi‘ī from Mecca	A ninth summary. (See Cook, <i>Commanding Good</i> , 452 n. 163, including a description of the manuscript of this summary and some additional information about the author.)
12	<i>Ethicon</i>	Gregory Barhebraeus (d. 684/1286)	Syrian Christian	Cook describes this book as a Christian recension of the <i>Iḥyā'</i> and he states that “a characteristic feature of this book is its extensive dependence on the <i>Iḥyā'</i> ...” (Cook, <i>Commanding Good</i> , pp. 455 & 601)
13	<i>Tasfiyat al-Qulūb min Daran al-Awzār wa-al-Dhunūb</i>	al-Mu‘ayyad Yaḥyā b. Ḥamzah (d. 749/1348f)	Yemeni Zaydī	This book, as Cook noticed, can fairly be considered as a Zaydī recension of the <i>Iḥyā'</i> . (Cook, <i>Commanding Good</i> , 246)

TABLE (2) (CONT.): SUMMARIES AND CUSTOMISED VERSIONS OF THE *IHYĀ'*

#	Title	Author	Category & Origin of the Author	Short Description
14	<i>Qanāṭir al-Khayrāt</i>	Abū Tāhir Ismā'īl b. Mūsā al-Jayṭālī (d. 750/1349f)	Ibādī from Jīṭāl (now in Libya)	This Ibādī book was written on the model of the <i>Ihyā'</i> . (Cook, <i>Commanding Good</i> , p. 401)
15	<i>Janat al-Ma'ārīf or Ihyā' al-Ihyā' fī al-Taṣawwuf</i>	Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Bilālī (d. 820/1417)	Sufi-Shāfi'ī lived in Cairo	A tenth summary which was written in 807/1405. (See Cook, <i>Commanding Good</i> , p. 457 n. 211) The summary was widely beneficial especially for Maghribīs. (al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497), <i>al-Daw' al-Lāmi'</i> , Cairo: 1353 AH, Vol. 8, p. 178)
16	<i>'Ayn al-'Ilm wa-Zayn al-Ḥilm</i>	Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. 'Uthmām al-Balkhī (d. 830/1426f.)	Indian Ḥanafī	An eleventh summary for which the Meccan Ḥanafī al-Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī (d. 1014/1606) wrote a commentary entitled <i>Sharḥ 'Ayn al-'Ilm</i> . (Ḥājī Khalīfah (d. 1067/1657), <i>Kashf al-Zunūn 'an Asāmī al-Kutub wa-al-Funūn</i> , Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1992.)
17	<i>Mukhataṣar al-Ihyā'</i>	Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd-al-Raḥmān b. Abū Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505)	Shāfi'ī from Cairo	A twelfth summary. (Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, <i>Ithāf</i> , Vol. 1. p. 56)
18	<i>al-Mahajjah al-Bayḍā' fī Tahdhīb al-Ihyā'</i>	Muḥammad Muḥsin b. Murtaḍā known as al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680)	Persian Imāmī-Shi'ī	This is another recension of the <i>Ihyā'</i> but in Imāmī version. (Cook, <i>Commanding Good</i> , 246)
19	<i>Ithāf al-Sādah al-Mutaqīn bi-Sharḥ Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn</i>	Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Zabīdī, widely known as Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791)	Indian Sufī Ḥanafī lived in Zabīd (Yemen) for long time and then in Cairo where he died.	This is an extensive commentary on the <i>Ihyā'</i> . In addition to its lengthy explanations and comments on al-Ghazālī's words, it includes the author's extended <i>takharīj</i> (Ḥadīth verification) of the Prophetic traditions mentioned in the <i>Ihyā'</i> . (See Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, <i>Ithāf</i> , Vol. 1, p. 3)
20	<i>Maw'izat al-Mu'minīn min Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn</i>	Muḥamma Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1332/1914)	Syrian Salafī	A thirteenth summary the author of which states in the introduction that in his long experience in teaching, he has found that the most useful source from which preaching topics can be selected is the <i>Ihyā'</i> . (al-Qāsimī, <i>Tahdhīb Maw'izat al-Mu'minīn</i> , n.p., n.d., p. 31.)

TABLE (2) (CONT.): SUMMARIES AND CUSTOMISED VERSIONS OF THE *IḤYĀ'*

#	Title	Author	Category & Origin of the Author	Short Description
22	<i>al-Mustakhlaṣ fī Tazkiyat al-Anfus</i>	Sa'īd Ḥawwā (d. 1409/1989)	One of the leaders of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in the last century	A fourteenth summary but with modifications and rearrangement of the selected materials. The author states in the introduction that he summarized from the <i>Iḥyā'</i> the uncontroversial elements on purifying the soul for which there is a real need in the modern age with some rearrangements and addition of some new topics. (Sa'īd Ḥawwā, <i>al-Mustakhlaṣ fī Tazkiyat al-Anfus</i> , Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 1984, p. 5)
23	<i>Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn fī al-Qarn al-Wāḥid wa-al-'Ishrīn</i>	Su'ād al-Ḥakīm (contemporary author)	Lebanese academic specialized in Sufi traditions particularly Ibn al-'Arabī's thoughts	This is a contemporary rewrite of the <i>Iḥyā'</i> . The purpose of this work, as the author states, is to show that there is "a consensus Islam" (<i>Islām muttafaq 'alayh</i>) which suits "an absolute man" (<i>insān muṭlaq</i>). To achieve this purpose, she has put for herself a number of guidelines, namely: (1) simplifying al-Ghazālī's wording, (2) omitting issues which have been criticized by distinguished scholars, (3) rearranging the topics of the <i>Iḥyā'</i> , and (4) recording al-'Irāqī's verification of the Prophetic traditions cited in the <i>Iḥyā'</i> . (Su'ād al-Ḥakīm, <i>Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn fī al-Qarn al-Wāḥid wa-al-'Ishrīn</i> , Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2004, pp. 8 & 45)

6.4.2 Evaluation of the Great Interest in the *Iḥyā'*:

Although the above mass of evidence for the considerable interest in the *Iḥyā'* needs intense study in order to come out with a thorough assessment, the following quick observations can be recorded as a provisional evaluation.

The first observation is that the *Iḥyā'* has proven to be very successful across different generations, different schools of thought, different sects and even different religions.⁴³ This can be used as a sufficient proof for Lazarus-Yafeh's general evaluation of al-Ghazālī's thoughts that they "are expressed so convincingly that they crossed the barriers of time and religion."⁴⁴

This extraordinary success of the *Iḥyā'* proves that the book, and consequently al-Ghazālī's *islāhī* teachings, has been continuously very influential. It is interesting to note that even the critics of al-Ghazālī have been influenced by him to some extent. This is clearly evident in the works of some of his critics, which are based on the *Iḥyā'*, and their admiration for the book in general, or at least in part, as shown in table (2) above. It is possible to argue, though, that these works could be seen as attempts from these critics to reduce or to stop the harm, which may result from what they considered as faulty elements in the *Iḥyā'*.

In fact the noticeable interest in the book may be used as evidence for accusing al-Ghazālī of being responsible for unfortunate phenomena, such as the wide publicity of fabricated traditions quoted in it among Muslims. As al-Qaradāwī states, "because of the dignity of al-Ghazālī among Muslims and the value of the *Iḥyā'*, these weak and fabricated traditions have spread among the Muslim masses."⁴⁵

⁴³ Cf. Cook, *Commanding Good*, p. 450.

⁴⁴ Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzali*, p. 3.

⁴⁵ al-Qaradāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 157.

Another evaluative observation about the great interest in the *Iḥyā'* is that the reproduction of the *Iḥyā'* in various forms over centuries signifies that the book, in general, has proven generally usable up to our present time. The imitations of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, as Fierro points out, “indicates that the work itself was considered as catering for certain religious needs.”⁴⁶

However, it is important to bear in mind that the customized versions and critically modified summaries, such as al-Ṭurṭūshī's and Ibn al-Jawzī's, indicate partial agreement only. Moreover, the omission and the partial modification of the original materials in most of the above customised versions and reworked summaries may indicate that there is an agreement among their authors that the teachings of al-Ghazālī cannot be taken in full and that they need partial modification or correction. At the same time, nevertheless, it may be stated that they seem to admire the *Iḥyā'* in general since they considered the book as a model for their works.

In short, such continuing interest in the *Iḥyā'* clearly shows that the book has proven to be very influential, but on this alone we cannot confidently judge whether the influence has been positive or negative and this is open to debate.

6.5 Al-Ghazālī's Effect on Sufism:

It seems pointless to show how relevant to the purpose of the present chapter is the question of al-Ghazālī's effect on Sufism. So, without being detained by such unnecessary activity, let us turn to the real business and say that al-Ghazālī's announcement of being a champion of Sufism has been considered the greatest victory which the movement has ever made.⁴⁷ The rapid spread of Sufism in the

⁴⁶ Maribel Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus,” in Frederick De Jong & Bernd Radtke (eds.) *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, p. 196.

⁴⁷ See, Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 74.

successive centuries has been linked with his influence. In addition, after being limited to particular distinguished scholars before al-Ghazālī, Sufism, al-Anṣārī argues, became popular also among general folks after al-Ghazālī.⁴⁸

The evaluation of al-Ghazālī's effect on Sufism, however, has been controversial. On one hand, it has been evaluated as a great achievement by a number of students of Islamic thought. Arberry, for example, states that al-Ghazālī perfected the work of earlier distinguished Sufis, and thus Sufism started to be “accepted as a Muslim science, as a reasonable and laudable way of life.”⁴⁹ In addition, a reconciliation and assimilation of Sufism with Sunni theology and *fiqh*, Arberry further states, was achieved by al-Ghazālī.⁵⁰ Similarly, Nicholson assures that “through his work and example the Sūfistic interpretation of Islam has in no small measure been harmonised with the rival claims of reasons and tradition.”⁵¹

In addition, it has been positively argued that al-Ghazālī largely succeeded in making corrective changes to the movement of Sufism, namely the following:

1. Trying to set right some Sufi words and actions, so that they agree with the *Sharī'ah*.⁵²
2. Transferring Sufism “from being concerned solely with *dhawq* (mystical intuition), *tahlīq* (spiritual flying), *shataḥ* (ecstasy) and *tahwīl* (exaggeration) into a practical ethical science.”⁵³
3. Treating the causes of deviation through Sufism, such as ignorance and being concerned with self-discipline before mastering knowledge.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Farīd al-Anṣārī, *al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Waṣāṭah fī al-Tarbīyah al-Da'awīyah*, Doha: Wazarat al-Awqāf, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 63.

⁴⁹ Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 83.

⁵⁰ Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 74.

⁵¹ Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul LTD, 1963, p. 25.

⁵² al-Qaraḏāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 136.

⁵³ al-Qaraḏāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 135.

⁵⁴ al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, pp. 132f.

On the other hand, al-Ghazālī's effect on Sufism has been negatively evaluated in some studies; the emergence of “deviated” Sufi trends and thoughts has been traced back, by some writers, to al-Ghazālī's influence to certain degree. Farīd al-Anṣārī is a good representative for this viewpoint. In the course of his criticism of what he calls Sufi spiritual mediating (*wasāṭah rūḥīyah*), i.e., religiousness through a Sufi mediator (*wasīṭ*), which in his view is a serious deviation from the original path of Islam, al-Anṣārī seriously accuses al-Ghazālī of being responsible for the publicity of such a way of religiousness in the Muslim *Ummah*.⁵⁵ Although al-Anṣārī states that “al-Ghazālī did not explicitly necessitate the adherence to a mediator (*wasīṭ*) or paying homage (*mubāya‘ah*) to a *shaykh* and rather he asserted that it is wrong,”⁵⁶ he still holds al-Ghazālī responsible for implanting the idea of *wasāṭah* through the following:

(a) legitimizing the Sufi approach in general by considering Sufism as the essence of Islam and the best of all methods, which was an extreme reaction that resulted from his spiritual conversion; that was enough for people to adopt Sufism in that age which was known for blind imitation (*taqlīd maḥṭ*); and thus, Sufism, with its pitfalls namely the *wasāṭah*, became widespread;⁵⁷

(b) giving *fiqh* the name of ‘*ilm al-dunyā*’ (worldly knowledge) while naming Sufism ‘*ilm al-ākhirah*’ (knowledge of the next world); and that is the beginning of implanting the Sufi *wasāṭah*, for naturally the followers would have inclined towards Sufism and would have become disinterested in *fiqh* and even the *fuqahā’* themselves would have sought Sufi mediators;⁵⁸

⁵⁵ al-Anṣārī, *al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Waṣāṭah*, Vol. 2, p. 63.

⁵⁶ al-Anṣārī, *al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Waṣāṭah*, Vol. 2, p. 71.

⁵⁷ al-Anṣārī, *al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Waṣāṭah*, Vol. 2, pp. 68, & 71f.

⁵⁸ al-Anṣārī, *al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Waṣāṭah*, Vol. 2, p. 69.

(c) highly praising Sufism and Sufis, with exaggeration, which led to a negative effect in the *Ummah*, for religiousness would have to be sought only through Sufis;⁵⁹

(d) mentioning the spiritual importance and the high value of a Sufi *Shaykh* in the *Iḥyā'*.⁶⁰

Having summarized the major controversy over the evaluation of al-Ghazālī's effect on Sufism, I would like to make the following concluding remarks:

1. It is an overstatement to say that al-Ghazālī succeeded in reconciling Sufism and Sunni theology and *fiqh*, because firstly this argued reconciliation between *Sharī'ah* and Sufism, as Arthur has pointed out, could not put an end to the debate on the authenticity of Sufism.⁶¹ Secondly, as Knysh points out, “the extent to which his teachings were responsible for “reconciling” Sunnism with Sufi piety is difficult to ascertain.”⁶² This is particularly because the tendency “to bring Sufism into the fold of Sunnī Islam by demonstrating its consistency with the ideas and practices of the “pious ancestors”...”⁶³ had started before al-Ghazālī.
2. It is difficult to positively hold al-Ghazālī responsible for the emergence of “deviated” Sufi trends, for Sufism had been already established by his time, as illustrated in chapter two above. In addition, Sufi deviated thoughts started before al-Ghazālī, who himself attacked some of them and attempted to correct them, as illustrated in chapter four. It is equally difficult to deny that some of his teachings, particularly those which can be regarded as an extreme

⁵⁹ al-Anṣārī, *al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Waṣāṭah*, Vol. 2, p. 69.

⁶⁰ al-Anṣārī, *al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Waṣāṭah*, Vol. 2, p. 72.

⁶¹ Buehler, Arthur F. “Charismatic Versus Scriptural Authority: Naqshbadī Response to Deniers of Meditational Sufism in British India,” in Frederick De Jong & Bernd Radtke (eds.) *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, p. 491.

⁶² Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 148.

⁶³ Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 140.

reaction resulting from his personal experience, can potentially lead to, or justify, extreme Sufi trends.

3. The influence of al-Ghazālī on the movement of Sufism cannot be denied since his books of Sufi nature, namely the *Ihyā'*, have become main references in the field. To make a balanced judgment, this influence, in our view, is two sided, good and bad; the first is the result of the strengths of his teachings, while the second is due to the pitfalls therein.

6.6 The Effect on the Movement of Philosophy:

“Al-Ghazālī’s study of philosophy undoubtedly had far-reaching results.”⁶⁴ What concern us here, though, are the following two questions: the first is to what extent al-Ghazālī’s criticism affected the movement of philosophy in Islamdom and the second is what the value of his effort in this regard is.

There have been noticeable controversies over these two questions. Although there is some measure of agreement among the researchers that there was a sort of decline in the movement of philosophy in Islamdom for some time after al-Ghazālī, there is a considerable dispute over whether this phenomenon can be linked to al-Ghazālī’s criticism of philosophy. This link, on one hand, has been asserted by a number of researchers. According to Nakamura, “philosophy declined in the Sunnī world after al-Ghazālī, and his criticism of philosophy certainly accelerated this decline.”⁶⁵ Even with the serious efforts of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) to resist this decline by his refutation of al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut*, he, Nakamura further states, could not stop

⁶⁴ Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, Edinburgh: The University Press, 1985, p. 90.

⁶⁵ Kojiro Nakamura, “al-Ghazālī,” in *Concise Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, London & New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 314.

the trend.⁶⁶ Similarly, Mclean asserts that “despite Averroes’s reply in *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* some decades later, Ghazali succeeded in quite marginalizing philosophy, especially in Sunnite Islam, and thereby terminating the tradition of Islamic work in Greek philosophy.”⁶⁷ In a stronger expression al-Ghazālī’s criticism has been widely described as the fatal blow to philosophy.⁶⁸

On the contrary, this claimed strong effect has been rejected by others. Badawī,⁶⁹ for instance, argues that it is the most serious illusion about al-Ghazālī, and he gives two reasons for this. One is that al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut*, as Badawī has investigated, does not appear in the works of those who dealt with philosophy in the Mashriq during the four successive centuries after al-Ghazālī, such as those of the killed al-Sahrūdī (d. 587/1191), al-Fakhr al-Razī (d. 606/1209), al-Shahristānī (d. 548/1153), ‘Umar al-Kātibī (d. 675/276), ‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ijī (d. 675/1276), indicating, Badawī argues, that they did not pay attention to the book and that it did not have the claimed effect in turning people away from philosophy.⁷⁰ The second reason is that it “is very naive to think that a single book or a criticism of a single author—regardless of how great he was—could put an end to an established branch of knowledge such as philosophy.”⁷¹

Likewise, Watt states that the claim that philosophy was killed off by the effort of al-Ghazālī may be supported by the fact that there were no pure philosophical works

⁶⁶ Nakamura, “al-Ghazālī,” in *Concise Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, p. 314.

⁶⁷ George F. Mclean, in his introduction to the *Deliverance From Error: A Translation of al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*, translated by Muhammed Abulaylah, Council of Research in Values and Philosophy, March 2002.

⁶⁸ See, for example, al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 82; al-Nadwī, *Rijāl*, Vol. 1, p. 287; and al-Qaradāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 38.

⁶⁹ Badawī “*Awhām Ḥawl al-Ghazālī*,” a paper presented in a conference on al-Ghazālī in the University of Muḥammad al-Khāmis, Rabat, 1988, cited online: <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/bd-whm.pdf>, visited on 1/2/2007.

⁷⁰ Badawī “*Awhām*,” cited online: <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/bd-whm.pdf>, visited on 1/2/2007.

⁷¹ Badawī “*Awhām*,” cited online: <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/bd-whm.pdf>, visited on 1/2/2007.

in the Islamic East after al-Ghazālī's time,⁷² but how far this decline of philosophy was due to his critique or other factors is not evident.⁷³ Since the distinguished philosopher, Avicenna, had died twenty years before al-Ghazālī, the decline of philosophy, Watt concludes, may have started much earlier than the *Tahāfut*.⁷⁴ In addition, since "the traveller Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217) could still find people who professed to follow al-Fārābī and Avicenna," then al-Ghazālī's critique, Watt argues, did not put an end to philosophizing, but it may have contributed to the transformation of its study into two new trends: the first was that philosophical conceptions and methods became part of rational theology and *Kalām*, and the second was the fusion of philosophy with Shiite views."⁷⁵

The arguments of both sides of this dispute, however, do not seem that satisfactory, and thus a conclusive study of the question under review is largely needed in order to provide a definite conclusion. Provisionally, one may conclude that no one can deny the effect of al-Ghazālī's criticism on the weakening of the movement of philosophy to some extent, but it is hardly convincing that this criticism put an end to philosophising in Islamdom.

This brings us to the second question regarding the value of this effect which is also disputable. On the one hand, it has been seen as a great achievement by some. According to al-Nadwī,⁷⁶ for example, al-Ghazālī provided outstanding support for the religion by putting down the scientific value of philosophy, which had been very influential and prestigious, since the philosophy circle could not present a strong refutation of his *Tahāfut* till the time of Ibn Rushed. Similarly, al-Qaradāwī⁷⁷ argues

⁷² Watt, *Islamic Philosophy*, p. 91.

⁷³ Watt, "al-Ghazālī," in *IEP*, Vol. 2, p. 1041.

⁷⁴ Watt, *Islamic Philosophy*, p. 91.

⁷⁵ Watt, *Islamic Philosophy*, p. 91.

⁷⁶ al-Nadwī, *Rijāl*, Vol., 1, p. 287.

⁷⁷ al-Qaradāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 38.

that al-Ghazālī had won the battle against philosophy, and that his attack on it succeeded in removing its past halo. In the same way, al-Shāmī⁷⁸ considers al-Ghazālī's attack as a victory for Islam, and that he succeeded at least to put philosophy in a state of defence, after it had been in a state of attack.

On the other hand, the same effect has been negatively valued by others. Nasr, for example, has accused al-Ghazālī of being responsible to a large extent for the destruction of rationalism as a major force in the Islamdom,⁷⁹ which resulted from his attack against “rationalistic” philosophers.⁸⁰ Similarly, El-Ehwany argues that al-Ghazālī unintentionally shut the door on science by his enthusiastic defence of religion, his attack on the doctrines of philosophers, and by his adaptation of the Sufis method, which, in the view of El-Ehwany, is incompatible with rational methods of science.⁸¹ Consequently, since he was considered the Proof of Islam (*Hujjat al-Islām*), the Muslims, El-Ehway further argues, followed him and gradually neglected the study of the sciences.⁸²

It seems that this dispute is mainly due to the difference of the reference of judgment. The reference of the negative evaluation seems to be the intellectual movement, in general, regardless of whether it is incompatible with Islamic justification. In contrast, the positive evaluation is judged by whether the effect was in favour of Islamic religiousness. In our view, based on the Islamic criteria of *iṣlāḥ* discussed in chapter one, this effect is obviously an *iṣlāḥī* outcome.

⁷⁸ al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, p. 88.

⁷⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1987, pp. 307f.

⁸⁰ Nasr, *Science and Civilization*, p. 27.

⁸¹ Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany, “Ibn Rushd,” in *History of Muslim Philosophy*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963, p. 556.

⁸² El-Ehwany, “Ibn Rushd,” p. 556.

6.7 The Effect of al-Ghazālī's Quarrel with the Bāṭinīs:

Unlike the case with his effect on philosophy, it does not seem that al-Ghazālī's quarrel with the Bāṭinīs has significantly attracted the attention of the researchers. In my search for relevant literature, I have not been able to find sufficient discussions of this effect. Therefore, only a few tentative remarks can be made here:

1. Al-Ghazālī's refutation of the Bāṭinīyah doctrine seems to be successful, since there is no mention of noticeable counter-argument of al-Ghazālī's refutation appears in the relevant sources.

2. The decline of the Bāṭinīyah movement is evident in the sources, but how far al-Ghazālī's efforts contributed to it is not evident. However, by being noticeably influential as shown above, it could be assumed that al-Ghazālī's effort had a considerable effect on the trend.

3. Watt seems to be correct in the following provisional assessment of the influence of al-Ghazālī's criticism of the Bāṭinīyah: "[it] may have helped to reduce the intellectual attractiveness of the movement, but its comparative failure, after its success in capturing Alamūt, is due to many other factors."⁸³

6.8 The Influence of al-Ghazālī on the Successive *Iṣlāhī* Movement:

The most striking claimed outcome of al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāhī* effort has been enthusiastically argued by al-Kīlānī; the main point in this argument is that the reformed generation of Salāḥ al-Dīn, who succeeded in restoring Jerusalem to Muslims, was an outcome of a reforming process started by al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāhī* efforts.⁸⁴ As support for this claim, al-Kīlānī has linked al-Ghazālī to the rise of many reforming *madrāsahs*, mainly Sunnī-Sufī, in the successive years which, in the view

⁸³ Watt, "al-Ghazālī," in *El²*, Vol. 2, p. 1041.

⁸⁴ al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Zāhira jil Salāḥ al-Dīn*, pp. 26f & 101.

of al-Kīlānī, reflect a Sufi *iṣlāḥī* movement, the fruit of which was the rise of that generation.⁸⁵ He further argues that these *madrasahs* were largely inspired by al-Ghazālī's approach to *iṣlāḥ*.⁸⁶ Foremost among these is the Qādirīyah *madrasah* in Baghdad, which was founded by 'Abd-al-Qādir al-Jilānī who, as al-Kīlānī states, was largely influenced by al-Ghazālī as appears in his works.⁸⁷ Al-Ghazālī's influence on al-Jilānī, al-Kīlānī further argues, appears also in his approach to self-*iṣlāḥ* which was an adaptation of al-Ghazālī's attitude of "withdrawal and return" (*al-insihāb wa-al-'awdah*).⁸⁸

Although the argument has been interestingly presented, it has some grave pitfalls. The most crucial of which is that it includes some assumptions which lack sufficient supports or proofs. A case in point is al-Kīlānī's central argument that all the *madrasahs* mentioned by him had a unified curriculum, which is virtually identical to that of al-Ghazālīyah and al-Qadiriyyah *madrasahs*, an argument for which no evidence has been given at all.⁸⁹ Thus, the argued link cannot be regarded as a postulate, because it has not been convincingly verified.

⁸⁵ al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Zahra jil Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 177.

⁸⁶ al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Zahra jil Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 177.

⁸⁷ al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Zahra jil Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 184.

⁸⁸ By this expression, al-Kīlānī refers to al-Ghazālī's retirement from formal teaching in the Nizāmīyah for the purpose of self-*iṣlāḥ* and his return to formal teaching afterwards, see Ibid, p.184.

⁸⁹ al-Kīlānī, *Hākadhā Zahra jil Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 238.

CONCLUSION

The significant findings of all the six chapters above, despite their limitations which are quite unavoidable especially in a timed study like the present, are positive enough to make us rather confidently say that our suggested hypothesis is reasonably verified and that the intended purposes of the study are considerably accomplished. To illustrate this in short, I shall conclude this challenging and time-consuming, though worthwhile, study by summing up the key findings of all the discussion above and add few fresh clarifying points, which have not found a proper place in the previous chapters.

1. Based on the interesting results of the semantic analysis of the lexical, Qur'ānic, and Prophetic usages of the term *iṣlāḥ* (1.2 & 1.3), *iṣlāḥ*, as an Islamic concept, has been provisionally defined (1.4) as a human corrective task in which any state of *fasād* is correctively changed into its opposite Islamically justified state, where *fasād* means a state of loss of the benefit of a thing, inexcusable detriment, or unjustified deviation from a moderate norm. This has provided us with a very useful objective measure of classifying al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ*; to attain a basic level of justifying such a classification, one needs to know the extent of which he correctively responded to the states of *fasād* at his time, and also the extent to which his response led to the intended corrective change. This important finding has largely shaped the entire study.
2. The examination of the degree of equivalence between this Islamic concept and the meaning and usage of the English term “reform,” which is usually

considered as a rendering of *iṣlāḥ*, has shown that the gap between the two is considerably wide; therefore, for the sake of preciseness and to avoid confusion, I have concluded (1.5) that the term *iṣlāḥ* should not be replaced by “reform” and instead needs to be transliterated and defined whenever it is necessary, but when translation is unavoidable, then “Islamic reform” seems a more precise and less confusing rendering.

3. By comparing and contrasting between the Islamic concept *iṣlāḥ* with the following three concepts: *tajdīd* (renewal or restoration), *taghyīr* (change), and *al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (commanding right and forbidding wrong), it has become very evident that although there are some similarities and partial overlapping between *iṣlāḥ* and these concepts, there are considerably major differences between them (1.6). This confirms that *iṣlāḥ* is a distinctive Islamic duty and thus it deserves to be studied as a separate topic, without confusing it with other Islamic concepts.
4. The extended, and hopefully balanced, overview of the historical context at the time of al-Ghazālī (Ch. 2) has clearly demonstrated that he lived in an exceptionally complex, diverse, changeable, and challenging age. Considering that context throughout the study has proven to be crucially important, and has really helped in dealing with the controversy surrounding al-Ghazālī's life and thought.
5. The relatively lengthy discussion of al-Ghazālī's life-experience (Ch. 3) has led to the following two main findings. The first is that his period of seclusion, which was a dramatic turning point in his entire life, marked the starting point of his determined *iṣlāḥī* efforts (3.7). This has been readily justified by the following two successful *iṣlāḥī* outcomes of that period (3.7): (a) he went

through a fundamental self-*iṣlāḥ* or corrective conversion, which is a necessary condition for desiring general *iṣlāḥ*, according to his teachings, and (b) he formulated his main *iṣlāḥī* teachings in his most famous book, the *Iḥyā'* which is aimed to be a major *iṣlāḥī* project. These outcomes, as has been shown (3.7), were asserted by al-Ghazālī's contemporary and associate, al-Fārisī, whose eyewitness testimony renders the doubts which have been cast on the truthfulness of al-Ghazālī's account in the *Munqidh* about his conversion totally unreasonable. The second main finding is that the entire period following al-Ghazālī's successful self-*iṣlāḥ* can be properly considered as a stage in which he strived for general *iṣlāḥ* (3.8). This has been supported by the following proofs (3.8): (a) al-Ghazālī's assertion in the *Munqidh* that his sole desire at that stage was *iṣlāḥ*, (b) al-Fārisī's biographical notices concerning the same stage which back up the above classification, (c) and almost all of al-Ghazālī's reported activities during that stage are of *iṣlāḥī* nature. Based on these two very significant findings, the proceeding survey of al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāḥī* efforts has been justifiably limited to that stage.

6. By surveying al-Ghazālī's main *iṣlāḥī* efforts during the stage in which he devoted himself to *iṣlāḥ* (Ch. 4), it has become quite clear that the extent of such efforts is remarkable. In light of the analysis of the concept of *iṣlāḥ* performed in Chapter One, the extended, and hopefully objective, survey has amply illustrated firstly al-Ghazālī's analysis of the major roots of *fasād* (4.2.1), secondly his diagnosis of a number of widespread phenomena of *fasād* at his time (4.2.2), thirdly his *iṣlāḥī* attempts to eradicate the roots of *fasād* analysed by him (4.3), and lastly his *iṣlāḥī* treatments of the phenomena of *fasād* diagnosed by him (4.4). Considering these enormous efforts, which all

appear to be of *iṣlāhī* nature, is of crucial importance in verifying the suggested hypothesis, but before giving our final judgment the following findings need to be taken into account.

7. The focused assessment of al-Ghazālī's overall *iṣlāhī* teachings, namely those in the *Ihyā'*, has revealed that his teachings, generally speaking, are highly original (5.2), abundantly clear and easy to follow (5.3), noticeably deep (5.4), and considerably realistic and practical, particularly his general principles (5.5). Besides these striking strengths, the assessment has shown that his teachings have some serious weaknesses as well, namely: (a) the apparent contradiction between his teachings of individualistic spirit and those of collective nature (5.5), which is really problematic and thus deserves a separate detailed study, (b) there are some elements of extremeness in his teachings, though he believes in moderation as a general rule (5.6), (c) his reporting of some Sufi practices which clearly contradict *fiqhī* rules, regardless of his true position which is also problematic and thus needs a separate detailed study (5.7.2), (d) and a number of his views were considerably influenced by unsound or weak traditions attributed to the Prophet (S.A.A.W.) (5.7.3). Such weaknesses, in our view, can be easily singled out for valid criticism.
8. By discussing a number of criticisms, which have been directed against al-Ghazālī's teachings (Ch. 5), it has been found that most of them are not convincingly justifiable and thus they cannot be considered as postulates, though they have been continuously repeated and widely accepted. These are: (a) the accusation of copying from earlier sources without crediting them; for various reasons (5.2), it is difficult to follow such accusation, (b) the

accusation of implementing in his teachings un-Islamic or “foreign elements,” which may be traced back directly or indirectly to the works of ancient philosophers; but again for a number of reasons (5.7.1), this criticism cannot be regarded as serious or convincing, (c) the criticism that he fully supported Sufi tradition even those which contradict Islamic principles found in the Islamic primary sources; yet various reservations can be raised against such a criticism (5.7.2), (d) and the commonly repeated criticism that he relied heavily on weak and fabricated *ahādīth*, namely in the *Ihyā’*; but there is an element of exaggeration on this criticism (5.7.3).

9. By discussing a number of phenomena which have been considered as effects of al-Ghazālī’s efforts and assessing the main controversial evaluations of these (Ch. 6), the following results have been reached.

(a) Because of the limitations in the sources, it is almost impossible to fully assess the effects of al-Ghazālī’s *iṣlāḥī* attempts or his efforts in general (6.1).

(b) Al-Ghazālī’s *iṣlāḥī* teachings most likely influenced many pupils, but the extent of this influence, the whole number of these pupils, and their exact role in passing on his teachings cannot be known for certain (6.2).

(c) The direct connection between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Tūmart, the founder of Almohad dynasty, is extremely doubtful, if not a myth, and thus the available evaluations of al-Ghazālī’s direct effect on him are shakily founded (6.3)

(d) The exceptionally great interest in the *Ihyā’* can be supported by ample evidences (6.4.1). This clearly shows that the book, and thus its *iṣlāḥī*

teachings, has proven to be very successful, highly influential, and largely useable over the centuries and across different generations, despite their different schools of thought, sects, and even religions (6.4.2). However, whether its influence has been positive or negative remains debatable.

- (e) Al-Ghazālī's effect on Sufism cannot be denied, but it has been overstated by those who positively evaluated it as well as those who negatively looked at it (6.5). In our view, this effect has both a positive side and a negative one.
- (f) It is difficult to totally reject that al-Ghazālī's criticism of philosophy weakened its subsequent movement to some extent, but to claim that it put an end to philosophising in Islamdom is far from being convincing (6.6). The debate over the value of this effect is mainly because of the difference on the reference of judgment; the negative evaluation seems to disregard the Islamic justification, while the positive evaluation is based on whether the effect was in favour of Islamic religiousness, but looking at it from the *iṣlāḥ* perspective, it becomes evident that it is a favourable *iṣlāḥī* effect (6.6).
- (g) The effort of al-Ghazālī with regard to the challenge of the *Baṭinīyah* movement seems to be fruitful, but how far it contributed to its decline is not clear (6.7).
- (h) The theory which links al-Ghazālī to the emergence of the Muslim generation which succeeded in freeing Muslim lands from the Crusaders has not been convincingly supported, and thus this cannot be positively regarded as one of al-Ghazālī's *iṣlāḥī* effects (6.8).

By weighing up all these findings, and considering in a balanced way all the points for and against al-Ghazālī, I can quite confidently assert that classifying al-Ghazālī as a *musliḥ* is fairly justified and that he significantly contributed to the rich “legacy of the *muṣliḥūn*”. His remarkable *iṣlāḥī* efforts, the great strengths of his *iṣlāḥī* teachings, and his favourable effects considerably outweigh his weaknesses and his unappreciative effects, regardless of how serious they are. I believe that it is gravely unfair to overstate his weaknesses, and disregard his impressive achievement. In fact, it sounds very unreasonable to expect from a single person like al-Ghazālī to accomplish more than what he achieved in order to consider him as a *musliḥ*, particularly in his extremely challenging and complex time.

Appendix: The Chronological Sequence of the First Crusade and the Muslim Response:

Through the determined and successful efforts of both Pope Urban II and the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenus, large allied western European forces, under various independent princes joined with several priests and assisted militarily and logistically by the Emperor, devotedly launched a military campaign—which has become known as the First Crusade—aiming eventually to capture the sacred city of Jerusalem from Muslims after freeing the way across Asia Minor and the Levant from the Seljuk and any other Muslim rulers; and thus reoccupying the lands which had been recently lost from the Christian Byzantine Empire following its grave defeat by the Seljuks at Malazgirt in 463/1071.¹

Unwilling to wait for the arrival of the main crusading forces and ignoring the advice of the Byzantine Emperor, over 20,000 initial French, German and Italian Crusader armies, called the People's Crusade in the sources, launched savage raids into western Anatolia, plundered a number of villages—torturing and killing their Greek Christian inhabitants—and drove to the gates of Nicaea, the capital city of the Seljuk Sultan of al-Rūm, Qilij-Arsalān. Eventually, however, they were completely defeated by this Sultan towards the end of 489/1096.²

Underestimating the actual threat of the coming Crusades, and self-deluded by his dazzling victory, Qilij-Arsalān left his capital city at that critical time and marched eastwards to deal with his rival, the Emir Dānishmend, who had controlled north-eastern Anatolia—after the death of Qilij-Arsalān's father—and blockaded the

¹ See, for instance, Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 1951, Vol. 1, pp. 110-18, 169 & 175; and Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, pp. 264f. For a discussion of the motives behind the First Crusade based on Islamic chronicles, see Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, pp. 50-4.

² See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 1951, Vol. 1, pp. 121-33; and Amīn Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Salibiyyah Kamā Ra'āhā al-'Arab*, trans., from French to Arabic by 'Afīf Dimishqīyah, Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī, 1989, pp. 21-6.

Armenian city Melitene.³ This was the ideal chance for the Crusaders to advance towards Nicaea. When he received the news that the Franks had laid siege to Nicaea, Qilij-Arsalān declared a truce with Dānishmend and rushed to save his capital.⁴ After a valiant but unsuccessful attempt to break through the firm Crusader siege all around the city, the Sultan helplessly withdrew eastward, leaving the garrison of Nicaea to their own devices. They soon completely surrendered on 29-6-490/18-6-1097; and Byzantine troops entered the city, and thus it came under the mercy of the Emperor, which provoked the bitterness of the European Crusaders.⁵

Soon after his painful withdrawal, the Sultan Qilij-Arsalān started to prepare seriously for undertaking *jihād* against the Christian invaders, gathering more Turkish troops and even allying with his opponent the Emir Dānishmend against their common enemies.⁶ On 12/7/490-30/6/1097, these joint Turkish troops set up an ambush near Dorylaeum, and waited for the arrival of the Crusaders who had set out from Nicaea in regiments.⁷ Shortly after a Crusading army set up camp close to Dorylaeum, it was fully surrounded by the Turks and shot by hail of arrows which killed many Christian soldiers.⁸ Unaware that the trapped army was just a group of the Crusaders, the Turks were badly shocked as they saw another Crusading army come to reinforce their fellow Christians.⁹ In a while, panic spread through the Turk camp as a third Crusading army appeared suddenly from the rear, whereupon the Turkish

³ See Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḃ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 28.

⁴ See Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḃ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 28.

⁵ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 179-81; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḃ al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 30-1.

⁶ See Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḃ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 33.

⁷ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 184-5; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḃ al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 33f.

⁸ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 185-7; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḃ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 35.

⁹ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 185-6; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḃ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 35.

troops put to flight in crucial defeat.¹⁰ In his flight, Qilij-Arsalān met Syrian troops who came to assist him, but it was too late.¹¹

This decisive defeat of the Turkish forces opened the way for the Crusaders to advance up to the frontiers of the Levant in a period which lasted from 15/7/490-3/7/1097 to 6/11/490-20/10/1097, during which they entered several Anatolian cities, ending the Turkish control over them, and these were restored to the Byzantine Empire.¹² This period did not witness Muslim resistance which is worth mentioning, save occasional appearance of limited Turkish troops and garrisons which could not withstand the Crusaders. Nevertheless, in particular parts of their expedition, the Crusaders encountered severe difficulties due to scarcity of water and provisions, as well as bad weather and road conditions, which caused the loss of many lives. However, by having a number of refreshing rests in some relieving fertile lands on their way, they eventually managed to approach to the walls of Antioch,¹³ which had slipped from the Byzantines to the Seljuks in 477/1085.¹⁴

When the Crusaders crossed the frontiers of the Levant, time was on their side. As shown above, the main Seljuk armies in the east, which were supposed to play an effective role in resisting the Crusading invasion, were fully engaged in ongoing internal warfare. Moreover, the Levant itself was a field of internal serious dispute among various emirs, namely between the Seljuk Emir Riḍwān b. Tutush of Aleppo and his brother the Emir Duqāq of Damascus.¹⁵

¹⁰ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 186; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 35.

¹¹ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 187; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 36.

¹² See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 188-193.

¹³ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 188-193.

¹⁴ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 435: trans., see Ricahards, *The Annals*, p. 217.

¹⁵ Not long before the advance of the Crusaders to Antioch, there was a bloody war between the Emir Riḍwān, supported by a large host of Turcomans under Suqmān b. Artuq of Saruj, on one side and the Emir Duqāq with the governor of Antioch, the Turcoman Emir Baghī-Siyān (or Yaghi-Siyan), who had recently abandoned the Emir Riḍwān and inclined towards his brother, and their forces on the other side, which ended with the defeat of Duqāq and his forces (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 11: trans., see Ricahards, *The Annals*, pp. 293f).

On 6/11/490-20/10/1097 the Crusading armies arrived at the walls of Antioch, and laid siege to the city, which was strongly fortified against attack and full of supplies.¹⁶ As the blockaders' almost ran out of provisions in about two months, the Prince of Taranto, Bohemond I, and the Count of Flanders, Robert II, with 20,000 men were dispatched to raid the villages in the Orontes valley and to bring more supplies.¹⁷ At the village of Albara, Robert with his men, who were in the vanguard, were suddenly surrounded by Muslim forces, under Duqāq b. Tutush of Damascus, to whom Baghī-Siyān had sent his own son to directly appeal for rescuing his city, and joined with the Emir of Ḥamāh, who were in their way to relieve Antioch. However, a surprising assault commanded by Bohemond on the rear of the Muslim forces, at the last moment, rescued Robert's men and forced the Muslims to withdraw to Ḥamāh with more grievous losses than their enemies.¹⁸ Consequently, Bohemond and Robert returned, with almost nothing but exhaustion caused by this clash, to their camp at Antioch, which they found in an extremely depressing state due to the shock of a night attack by a group of Turks from inside the blockaded city shortly after they had left, followed by bad winter weather condition, in addition to the growing food and health crisis.¹⁹

Following the withdrawal of Duqāq's relief army, Baghī-Siyān of Antioch was forced to urgently plead for help from the Emir Ridwān of Damascus, who had remained extremely unresponsive to the threat of the Crusaders in short-sighted revenge for Baghī-Siyān's disloyalty during the previous war with his brother Duqāq. Nevertheless alarmed by the seriousness of the threat, he finally embarked on a

¹⁶ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 216; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 40.

¹⁷ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 219f.

¹⁸ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 220f; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 44f.

¹⁹ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 220f; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 45.

campaign to deal with the Crusaders supported by the Emir Suqmān b. Artuq of Diyār-Bakr and the Emir of Ḥamāh.²⁰ Learning of their approach to Antioch, 700 knights among the Crusaders set up an ambush for the Riḍwān's joint forces between the river and the lake of Antioch.²¹ On 28/2/491-8/2/1098, the knights took these forces by surprise, and a fierce battle took place leading to the retreat of the Riḍwān's forces to Aleppo in total disarray.²² Meanwhile, Baghī-Siyān suddenly attacked in full-scale the Camp of the blockaders, forcing its defenders to be driven back, but by seeing the victorious knights coming back, he ordered his soldiers to return to the city.²³

By the sixth month of the siege of Antioch, the Crusaders' condition had been eased, while the situation of their blockaded enemies had become more critical. Provided by workmen and building materials from Constantinople, the blockaders had built fortresses to completely prevent any access to the city.²⁴ As a result, they had succeeded in capturing large quantities of provisions destined for the people of Antioch.²⁵

While the situation in Antioch was getting worse, Karbughā²⁶ of Mosul, accompanied with other forces from various quarters under different emirs, was on his way to rescue the city.²⁷ Miscalculation led Karbughā, despite the reservation of other army chiefs, to march first against Edessa, which had come under the rule of Count Baldwin who had separated from the Crusaders to raid into Armenia. Karbughā was unaware that Baldwin was too weak to attack him, yet was wholly secure in his strong

²⁰ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 225; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 46.

²¹ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 225.

²² Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 226.

²³ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 226; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 47f.

²⁴ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 226-9.

²⁵ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 229.

²⁶ Also spelled Kerbogha and Kirbogha.

²⁷ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 15; Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 230; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 51.

fortresses; however, after wasting three critical weeks before the walls of Edessa, he finally turned to Antioch.²⁸ In the meantime, Bohemund, through top secret communication, concluded an agreement with a senior commander in Antioch's government on selling the city to the Crusaders.²⁹

The approach of the Karbughā's forces caused panic among the Crusaders to the extent that many of them started to desert.³⁰ Shortly before the actual arrival of the relief forces, however, the city had suddenly fallen. Through the plot of the treacherous commander who was in charge of guarding one of the Antioch's towers, the Crusaders stormed into the city at the break of dawn of 25/6/491-3/6/1098, massacring all the Turk population who they found, men and women alike; while Baghī-Siyān with some of his men fled in terror; however, he was eventually killed by a band of Armenians.³¹ Unlike Baghī-Siyān, his brave son Shams-al-Dawlah managed to gather some soldiers and firmly hold the citadel of the city, repelling the assaults of the invaders against it, but unable to mount any offensive attack.³²

A few days after the fall of Antioch, Karbughā arrived and laid siege to the invaded city.³³ Shams-al-Dawlah sought help from Karbughā and requested that he retain command, but the latter demanded that the citadel should be handed over to his

²⁸ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 231; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 52f.

²⁹ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 231; Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 54; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 14.

³⁰ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 232.

³¹ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 233f; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 54f. The chronicler Ibn al-Athīr narrated the fall of Antioch, mentioning the story of the treachery and the retreat of Baghī-Siyān, but according to his narrative, the march of Karbughā started after the city had fallen and his account does not include any of the previous rescue attempts (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, pp. 14f). In my description of this event, as well as other events mentioned in this section, I have chiefly relied on the detailed account of the distinguished historian Steven Runciman on the First Crusade which is an outcome of an in-depth scholarly research on numerous original Western European, Latin, Greek, Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Syriac and Hebrew sources in addition to many secondary sources, as appears in his rich footnotes and extensive bibliography.

³² See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 234; Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 55f.

³³ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 234; Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 56.

commander Aḥmad b. Marwān.³⁴ To prevent any attempt to break into the city from this most vulnerable part, the Frankish invaders had fortified it by constructing a separate wall and by intensifying their defence there.³⁵ These precautionary measures proved successful. Ibn Marwān mounted an attack from the citadel, but was driven back with heavy loss.³⁶

As the siege continued, the blockaded city sank into gloom.³⁷ Provisions were growing scarce to the extent that the poor among the Franks started to eat carrion and the leaves of trees, while the rich were eating their sumpters.³⁸ The morale of the Crusaders declined dramatically.³⁹ However, “at this juncture the spirits of the Christians were raised by a series of events which seemed to them to show God’s special favour,”⁴⁰ namely the finding of a lance which claimed to go back to the time of Christ.⁴¹

Meanwhile, Karbughā’s coalition of forces started to look dangerously shaky. His arrogance and mistreatment alienated the other commanders in the coalition and many of them decided to desert him.⁴² Moreover, there was growing discord among Karbughā’s own troops.⁴³ Despite these worrying internal problems, Karbughā refused a proposal for conditional surrender of the Franks and insisted on fighting.⁴⁴

³⁴ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 237.

³⁵ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 237.

³⁶ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 238.

³⁷ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 238.

³⁸ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 15.

³⁹ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 238.

⁴⁰ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 238.

⁴¹ Ibn al-Athīr (*al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 15) states that the lance was buried by a priest who was among the Crusaders. For a discussion of this story, see Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 241-6.

⁴² See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 15; Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 246; and Ma‘lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 56f.

⁴³ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 246.

⁴⁴ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 15; and Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 246f.

Consequently, the Crusaders marched out on 20/7/491-28/6/1098, prepared for the clash with high courage.⁴⁵ While they were emerging in small groups, the Muslims wanted to pick them off straight away but Karbughā forbade them, preferring to attack all of them in one blow; however, when all the Franks came out and stood in a great array, many of Karbughā’s troops deserted the battle field due to Karbughā’s mistreatment and his order of delaying the attack.⁴⁶ Shortly, Karbughā himself fled, following other chief commanders, but a group of true *mujāhids* stood firm, fighting for the sake of God and aiming martyrdom.⁴⁷ Thousands of these Muslims were killed by the Franks.⁴⁸ When the men in the citadel saw that the Muslims were defeated, they surrendered and thus the Crusaders won unexpectedly a complete victory.⁴⁹

Before the fall of Antioch, the Fatimids had come onto the scene of the Muslim-Crusader conflict, but rather shamefully in a bad spot. During the Crusader siege of Antioch, a suspicious embassy was dispatched by the Fatimid all-powerful Vizier and actual ruler of Egypt, al-Afdal, to the Crusaders.⁵⁰ The proposal of al-Afdal, as Runciman points out, “seems to have been that a division should be made of the Seldjuk empire; the Franks should take northern Syria and Egypt should take Palestine.”⁵¹ The Franks, however, “far from being willing to aid the Egyptians to recover Palestine, had every intention of themselves marching on Jerusalem.”⁵²

⁴⁵ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 247.

⁴⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 16. In her discussion of the fall of Antioch, Hillenbrand unfortunately misrepresents Ibn al-Athīr’s account particularly on this quote by firstly mistranslating the phrase “*ṭarabū maṣāḥifan ‘aẓīman*” as “they attacked strongly,” when it should be translated as “they stood in a great array,” and secondly by omitting the reported reason behind the desertion of the Muslim troops (Cf. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 58).

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 16.

⁴⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 16.

⁴⁹ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 249.

⁵⁰ This contact is clearly mentioned in the Western Crusader sources, see Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 229.

⁵¹ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 229.

⁵² Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 265.

Nevertheless, underestimating the actual plans of the Franks⁵³ and profiting from the weakness of the Turks, their traditional enemies, who had been recently defeated by the Crusaders in Antioch, the Fatimid army under al-Afdal undertook an ill-timed expedition to Jerusalem and after blockading it for more than forty days they eventually recaptured it from the Seljuks,⁵⁴ despite the initial resistance of its population.⁵⁵ Al-Afdal, however, would discover too late the real objectives of the Crusaders,⁵⁶ as we shall see shortly.

In addition to al-Afdal, there were other Muslim leaders who had unfortunate contacts and forms of collaboration with the Crusaders against their fellow-Muslim political opponents. For example, after the fall of Antioch, the Emir of A‘zāz (Azaz), ‘Umar, who rebelled against the Emir Ridwān of Aleppo, sought the help of the Franks when his old master intended to suppress his rebellion.⁵⁷

Following the Franks’ complete victory in Antioch, there was a delay to the Crusade for a couple of months due firstly to a serious disagreement among chief Crusader princes, namely Bohemond I of Taranto and Raymond IV of Saint-Gilles, over the possession of Antioch, and secondly to a major epidemic which broke out in the city.⁵⁸ An eminent victim of the epidemic was the Bishop of Le Puy, Adhemar, who, as the Pope’s representative in the Crusade, had played a very significant role in its success.⁵⁹

Before the resumption of the march to Jerusalem, a number of successful small but fierce raids into the lands nearby Antioch were conducted by segments of the

⁵³ Cf. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 47.

⁵⁴ The city was in the actual hands of the two Turkman emirs: Suqmān b. Artuq and his brother Ilghāzī, who had vowed homage to the Seljuk Emir of Damascus, Duqāq, see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 19; and Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 265.

⁵⁵ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 19.

⁵⁶ Cf. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 47.

⁵⁷ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 257.

⁵⁸ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 249-56.

⁵⁹ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 252.

Crusaders, securing provisions and capturing some Syrian towns including Rugia and Albara.⁶⁰ On 26/12/491-28/11/1098, a Frankish attack was launched against the town of Ma'rrat al-Nu'mān but it was strongly resisted by its Arab population, whereupon the city was entirely blockaded.⁶¹ After thirteen days of blockading the town, the Franks, using a large movable wooden tower, forced their way into the town, massacring thousands of its population⁶² and even engaging in cannibalism.⁶³

In early 492/1099, Raymond and his army set out from Ma'rrat al-Nu'mān to resume the Crusade independently, helplessly leaving Antioch in the full control of the Prince Bohemond.⁶⁴ Shortly, other Crusading leaders, save Baldwin and Bohemond, decided to join Raymond and thus he became unchallenged leader of the Crusade.⁶⁵

As Raymond reached Kafartab, the Emir of Shayzar⁶⁶ sent a delegation to him, proposing to provide the Franks with provisions and guides on condition that they would not invade his lands.⁶⁷ By accepting the proposal, Raymond followed the Emir's guides and led the Franks across the Orontes River.⁶⁸ When they reached the town of Masyaf on 22/2/492-22/1/1099, its head reluctantly entered into a treaty with them.⁶⁹ Next, they captured Ḥiṣn al-Akrād, taking considerable booty.⁷⁰ At this fortress, the Crusaders received envoys from the independent emirs of Hums and Tripoli, helplessly offering precious gifts and proposing treaties.⁷¹ Despite the

⁶⁰ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 257.

⁶¹ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 16; and Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 259.

⁶² See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 16; and Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 260.

⁶³ See Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 63f.

⁶⁴ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 261.

⁶⁵ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 261.

⁶⁶ Or Shaizar.

⁶⁷ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 267; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 65.

⁶⁸ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 267.

⁶⁹ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 267.

⁷⁰ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 269; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 66.

⁷¹ See Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 66f.

initiative of the Emir of Tripoli, the Crusaders raided his territory and laid siege to the city of Arqa on 15/3/492-14/2/1099.⁷²

In the meantime, a detachment of the Crusaders, encouraged by Raymond, made a surprise attack on the coastal port of Tortosa, which led to its evacuation and thus it easily fell into the hands of the Crusading army, a key triumph for the Crusade; for “it opened up easy communications by sea with Antioch and Cyprus and with Europe.”⁷³ This accomplishment provoked feelings of jealousy among the Crusaders who had remained in Antioch and consequently groups of them set out to follow Raymond.⁷⁴

The siege of Arqa, however, was not successful, mainly because of its strong fortifications and determined resistance of its garrison.⁷⁵ After camping behind the walls of the city for three months, Raymond disappointedly decided to lift the siege and continue his march southwards.⁷⁶

As the Crusaders drew near Tripoli, its Emir provided them with guides, provisions and horses.⁷⁷ On 20/6/492-19/5/1099, they entered the Fatimid northern lands where they did not meet any resistance.⁷⁸ When they approached Beirut, its people offered them gifts and safe passage through, if they would leave their rich gardens undamaged and so the Crusaders did.⁷⁹ Unlike the case of Beirut, when the Crusaders reached Sidon, they were daringly attacked by its garrison, but it was repelled by the Crusaders who in return damaged the gardens in the suburbs.⁸⁰

⁷² See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 270; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 68.

⁷³ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 270.

⁷⁴ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 270f.

⁷⁵ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 271; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 68f.

⁷⁶ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 274f; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 69.

⁷⁷ Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 69.

⁷⁸ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 275.

⁷⁹ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 276; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 73.

⁸⁰ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 276; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūḅ al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 73f.

Next, the Crusaders marched along the coast and passed by Tyre, Naqoura, Acre, Haifa, Caesarea and Arsuf without any opposition worth mention.⁸¹ Then they turned inland and by the time they reached the fully Muslim town, Ramleh, its inhabitants had already fled, leaving the city to easily become a Christian prize.⁸²

On 10/7/492-7/6/1099 the Crusaders arrived before the walls of Jerusalem and besieged the Sacred City, which was a great fortress and which had been well prepared for long siege by its Fatimid governor Iftikhār al-Dawlah.⁸³ Soon the Franks were in great hardship due to scarcity of water and food, in addition to the rough summer weather.⁸⁴ After their initial assault failed, they started to construct wooden siege towers in order to enhance their attack.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, the priest Peter Desiderius played a considerable role in boosting the morale of the Crusades, which had been sapped by the disappointing circumstances.⁸⁶

Despite being continuously struck with stones and liquid fire from the defence, the Crusaders succeeded in bringing their wooden towers right up to the walls and forced entry into the city on 23/8/492-15/7/1099.⁸⁷ Consequently, showing no mercy to its inhabitants, even those who sought refuge in the mosque of al-Aqṣā, the Crusaders horribly massacred a great number of Muslims and Jews alike.⁸⁸

Similar to what happened after capturing Antioch, the fall of Jerusalem generated tension among the remaining Crusader princes over the issue of the throne, but it was finally released by the election of Godfrey of Bouillon as ruler and the hopeless

⁸¹ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 276; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 74.

⁸² Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 277.

⁸³ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 279-81; and Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 74.

⁸⁴ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 281 & 283.

⁸⁵ See Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 75; and Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 282.

⁸⁶ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 284.

⁸⁷ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 285f; Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 75f; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 19.

⁸⁸ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 285f; Ma'lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, pp. 75f; and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 19.

departure of other chief princes, namely Raymond, from the city.⁸⁹ Despite this tension, as the news came to them that a relieving Egyptian army under the Fatimid Vizier, al-Afdal, had approached the Palestinian city of Ascalon, the Frankish princes agreed to join together against this threat.⁹⁰ On 22/9/492-12/8/1099, the Franks caught the Egyptian army entirely by surprise as they suddenly attacked their camp near Ascalon, killing many of them and taking a lot of booty.⁹¹ Al-Afdal and some of his men, however, managed to flee back to Egypt, suffering a bitter defeat.⁹²

Following the defeat of al-Afdal, the Muslims in the city of Ascalon, followed by those in the town of Arsuf, offered to surrender to Raymond in person, because of his reputation of keeping his word to those who had surrendered to him at Jerusalem; however, the deal fell through as a result of the objection of Godfrey to such surrender.⁹³ Consequently, Raymond and other Frankish chief commanders, with their men, angrily deserted Godfrey and thus he became too weak to attack the garrisons of these two locations.⁹⁴

Subsequently, Tancred, the Crusader leader who remained in Palestine after the Battle of Ascalon, raided with his small army in the Palestinian central plateau, over which there had been recent warfare between the Fatimids and the Emir Duqāq of Damascus.⁹⁵ Profiting much from the disunity of the Muslims and the ongoing family fights among the Turkish emirs, Tancred easily overran this region and established himself as Prince of Galilee.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ See Hans Eberhard Mayer, *The Crusades*, translated from the German by John Gillingham, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 56f; and Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 289-95.

⁹⁰ See Mayer, *The Crusades*, p. 57; and Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 289-95.

⁹¹ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 21; Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 296; and Ma'lūf, *al-Hurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 79.

⁹² See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 21; Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 296.

⁹³ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 297f.

⁹⁴ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 297f.

⁹⁵ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 304.

⁹⁶ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 304f.

By strengthening his armed power with many of the Frankish pilgrims who had arrived at Jerusalem five months after its fall, the ruler of Jerusalem, Godfrey, was able to extend his sway over new Palestinian lands.⁹⁷ From April 1100 (5/493), the emirs of Ascalon, Caesarea and Acre ended up paying monthly tributes to him.⁹⁸

Shortly before Godfrey's death on 9/9/493-18/7/1100, he had concluded a treaty of alliance with a strong Venetian fleet at the port of Jaffa, agreeing to arrange a joint expedition against the coastal cities of Acre and Haifa.⁹⁹ His death postponed the assault on Acre, but the expedition against Haifa was carried out under a number of Crusader commanders with the support of the Venetian fleet.¹⁰⁰ Despite the determined resistance of its small Fatimid garrison and its inhabitants, who were mainly Jews, which initially discouraged the Venetians, the city was finally captured by the Franks, who massacred the majority of its Muslim and Jewish inhabitants.¹⁰¹

In the summer of 493/1100, the situation in northern Syria was developing remarkably. Responding to an appeal for help from the ruler of Melitene, Gabriel, against the threat of the Danishmend Emir Gümüştekin, who had been raiding Gabriel's territory, the Prince Bohemond set out from Antioch with a small army to save Melitene.¹⁰² On his way, Bohemond was caught in ambush which had been set up by the Danishmend Emir; Bohemond's army was routed and he was taken captive.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 303, & 307-9.

⁹⁸ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 309.

⁹⁹ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 312f.

¹⁰⁰ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 316.

¹⁰¹ See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 316.

¹⁰² See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 29; Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 320f; and Ma' lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 88.

¹⁰³ See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, p. 29; Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, p. 321; and Ma' lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, p. 88.

Regardless of such occasional and limited successful resistance, the Muslims, throughout al-Ghazālī's age, could not liberate their occupied lands from the Crusaders.

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Notes:

- Dates of publications shown are Christian dates, unless they are followed by A.H., which stands for *hijrī* date.
- Last names starting with “al-” are kept with “al-” but are listed under the letter following the “al-”.
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