SELECTIONS FROM RAWDAT AL-MUHIBBIN · 1

What Love Is

Selections from Ibn al-Qayyim's Rawdat al-Muhibbin

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah
d. 751 AH

IBN JĀZĪ · FUSTAT SERIES

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Editor's Preface

Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, known as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (691–751 AH), was a scholar of Damascus and the foremost student of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah. His *Rawdat al-Muhibbin wa-Nuzhat al-Mushtaqin* (The Garden of the Lovers and the Delight of the Yearning) is a book of twenty-nine chapters on love: its names and causes, the gaze, passionate love, chastity, jealousy, the unlawful, and finally the love of Allah. It draws on the Qur'an, the hadith, the reports of the Salaf and a great deal of poetry.

This first booklet of eight is drawn from the opening of the book: the author's introduction; Chapter One, On the Names of Love; Chapter Two, On the Derivation of These Names and Their Meanings; and Chapter Four, That the Upper and the Lower World Came to Exist Only Through Love and for Its Sake. From the long word study of Chapter Two only a few passages have been taken. The reader will find here the author's opening praise of love, his words on reason and desire and the purpose of his book, what has been said of what love is, the meanings of some of its chief names, and his chapter on love as the cause and end of every motion in creation.

The text is Ibn al-Qayyim's own, in the words of the full English translation, abridged by selection. Cuts are shown by "...". The full translation gives the complete text.

◆ *Love, the road to the Beloved* ◆

Praise be to Allah, who made love a path to attaining the beloved, and set up obedience to Him and submission to Him as a proof of the truthfulness of love; who moved souls by it towards every kind of perfection, preferring to seek them and to attain them; who placed it in the upper and the lower world, to bring their perfection out from potential into act, as bringing into being, as sustaining and as receiving; and who stirred by it lofty aspirations and high resolves towards the noblest of their aims, singling them out for it and making them fit for it. So glory be to the One who turns hearts towards it as He wills and for what He wills by His power, and who draws out by it, through His wisdom, that for which every living thing was created; who apportioned it in kinds and shares among His creation and set it out in detail, making every beloved a portion for its lover, whether he erred in his love or was right, and making him, by his love, either one who enjoys bliss or one who is slain. So He divided it among the lover of the Most Merciful, the lover of idols, the lover of fires, the lover of crosses, the lover of homelands, the lover of brothers, the lover of women, the lover of boys, the lover of prices, the lover of faith, the lover of melodies, and the lover of the Qur'an. And He gave the people of love for Him, and of love for His Book and His Messenger, preference over all other lovers. So by love and for love the earth and the heavens came into being, and upon it the created beings were fashioned, and for it the revolving spheres moved; and by it motions reached their ends, and their beginnings were joined to their conclusions. By it souls won what they sought, and obtained the attainment of their aims, and were delivered from their perils, and took a path to their Lord, and He alone, and no other, was what they hoped and asked for. By it they gained the good life, and tasted the sweetness of faith, when they were pleased with Allah as Lord, with Islam as religion, and with Muhammad as Messenger.[1] 5

To proceed: Allah - جل ثناؤه، وتقدست أسماؤه - made these hearts vessels. The best of them is the one that holds the most good and right

1 An allusion to the hadith of al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib: "He has tasted the sweetness of faith who is pleased with Allah as Lord, with Islam as religion and with Muhammad as Messenger" (Muslim, 34).

guidance, and the worst of them is the one that holds the most error and corruption. He set desire over them and tested them with opposing it, so that by opposing it they might attain the Garden of Refuge, and so that whoever is not fit for the Garden might, by following it, deserve a Fire that blazes. He made it the mount of the soul that commands to evil, its strength and its nourishment, and the sickness of the soul at rest; and opposing it is that soul's remedy. Then He, سبحانه, obliged the servant, in this short span - which, set beside the Hereafter, is like an hour of a day, or like the moisture that touches a finger when it is put into one of the seas[2] - to disobey the commanding soul, to keep away from its desire, and to restrain it from its appetites, in the attaining of which is its ruin; to prevent it from inclining to its pleasures, and from demanding what the glancing eyes call for with their looks, so that it may receive its portion of His honour and His reward, whole and complete, and in the end enjoy manifold what it left for Allah in the present. And He commanded it to fast from His prohibitions, so that its breaking of the fast would be with Him on the day of meeting Him; and He told it that most of the day of fasting has gone, and that the feast of the meeting has drawn near, so the time should not seem long to it through slowness in its coming. 8

فما هي إلا ساعة ثم تنقضي ◆ ويذهب هذا كله ويزول

It is only an hour before it ends its stay,
and all of this goes, and passes away.

It is only an hour, and then it ends ◆ and all of this goes and passes away

2 An allusion to the hadith of al-Mustawrid ibn Shaddad: "By Allah, this world compared with the Hereafter is only as if one of you put his finger into the sea; let him see what it brings back" (Muslim, 2858).

◆ *The scale of reason* ◆

He prepared it for a mighty matter, and made it ready for a grave affair, and stored up for it what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived, of lasting bliss.[3] His far-reaching wisdom required that it not reach Him except by way of hardships and toil, and not cross to Him except upon the bridge of difficulty and weariness. So He veiled it with disliked things,[4] to guard it from base souls that prefer vile and low things; and the lofty souls and high aspirations girded themselves for it, and rode in the journey to Him upon the backs of resolutions, and travelled upon them to the noblest of goals ... They answered the caller of the Beloved when he announced to them: "Come to success." They gave their souls for His good pleasure, as the lover gives, in contentment and generosity; and they kept on journeying to Him morning and evening. At arrival they praised their night-journey, for "the people praise the night-journey at dawn." They toiled a little and so rested long; they left something paltry and took in exchange something immense. 9

They placed the immediate pleasure and the praiseworthy end in the scale of reason, and the difference between them became plain to them. So they saw it as among the greatest of folly to sell the good life, everlasting in bliss abiding, for the pleasure of an hour whose appetite goes away while its wretchedness remains. 10

And even if the days of pleasures were to stay clear for the servant from the beginning of his life to its end, they would be like a summer cloud that soon clears away, or the phantom of a night visitor who has not finished the visit before he gives notice of departure. 11

Allah تعالى said: ﴿أَفَرَءَيْتَ إِن مَّتَّعْنَـٰهُمْ سِنِينَ ثُمَّ جَآءَهُم مَّا كَانُوا۟ يُوعَدُونَ مَآ أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا۟ يُمَتَّعُونَ﴾ "Then have you considered if We gave them enjoyment for years And then there came to them that which they were promised? They would not be availed by the enjoyment with which they were provided." [al-Shu'ara' 26:205–207] And whoever wins what he hoped for of the reward of Allah, it is as if he had never been wronged by

3 The hadith qudsi: "I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived" (al-Bukhari, 3244, and Muslim, 2824).

4 An allusion to the hadith "Paradise is surrounded by disliked things, and the Fire is surrounded by desires" (Muslim, 2822).

his time in what he used to guard against and fear. Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه used to cite this verse:

كأنك لم توتر من الدهر مرة ◆ إذا أنت أدركت الذي أنت طالبه

It is as if time had never once done wrong to you,
when you have attained the thing you pursue.
It is as if you had never been wronged by time, even once,
when you have attained what you are seeking

And this is the fruit of the reason by which Allah سبحانه وتعالى is known, and His names, the attributes of His perfection and the descriptions of His majesty; by it the believers believed in His books, His messengers, the meeting with Him, and His angels; by it the signs of His lordship, the proofs of His oneness and the miracles of His messengers were known; by it His commands were carried out and His prohibitions avoided. It is what looks ahead to the outcomes and so watches over them, and acts according to what their benefits require; it stands against desire and turns back its army broken; it helps patience until it prevails over it, after having been slain by desire's arrows; it urges to the virtues and forbids the vices ... When it is left with its authority, it captures the troops of desire and confines them in the prison of "whoever leaves something for Allah, Allah will give him in exchange what is better than it."[5] It lifts its possessor to the stations of kings, once it has made desire, though a king, stand in the position of a slave owned. It is a tree whose roots are reflection on outcomes, whose trunk is patience, whose branches are knowledge, whose leaves are good character, whose fruit is wisdom, and whose sustenance is the success granted by Him in whose hands are the reins of all affairs; its beginning is from Him and its end is to Him.

And if this is its description, it is ugly that its enemy should be given the upper hand over it, so that he removes it from its kingdom, lowers it from its rank, and brings it down from its degree, and it becomes a captive after having been a commander, ruled over after having been a ruler, a follower after having been followed. Whoever is patient under its rule, it lets him graze in the meadows of hopes and wishes; and whoever departs from its rule, it brings to the pools of destruction and ruin. 12

5 Ahmad, *Musnad* (20758), from a Companion; the Arabic editor says its chain is sound.

◆ *Turning desire, not uprooting it* ◆

When the dominion belongs to reason, desire makes peace with it and becomes one of its servants and followers; just as, when the dominion belongs to desire, reason becomes a captive in its hands, ruled over. And since the servant is never free of desire as long as he lives - for his desire is inseparable from him - the command to leave desire entirely is as if impossible. But what lies within his power and what he is commanded is to turn his desire away from the pastures of destruction to places of safety and security. 17

An example: Allah سبحانه وتعالى did not command him to turn his heart away from desire for women altogether, but commanded him to turn that desire to marrying whichever of them is good for him, from one to four, and of slave women whatever he wishes. So the course of desire was moved from one place to another; the wind was the west wind, and it changed into the east wind.[6] Likewise the desire for triumph, victory and domination: He did not command him to leave it, but commanded him to turn it to triumph and domination and victory over falsehood and its party; and He legislated for him kinds of contests, such as racing and others, which train him and prepare him for triumph. Likewise the desire for pride, boasting and haughtiness is permitted, indeed recommended, in fighting the enemies of Allah.

Allah has not forbidden His servants anything except that He gave them better in exchange for it. So He forbade them seeking decision by divining arrows,[7] and gave them in exchange the prayer of seeking guidance (istikharah); He forbade them usury, and gave them in exchange profitable trade; He forbade them gambling, and gave them in exchange the taking of wealth through contests beneficial in religion, with horses, camels and arrows; and He forbade them silk, and gave them in exchange all kinds of splendid garments of wool, linen and cotton; He forbade them fornication and sodomy, and gave them in exchange marriage and the taking of concubines from every sort of beautiful women; He forbade them drinking intoxicants, and gave them in exchange delicious drinks

6 *Al-dabur*, the west wind, is harsh and dry; *al-saba*, the east wind, is soft and welcome.

7 *Al-istiqsam bi-l-azlam*: the pre-Islamic practice of seeking a decision by drawing unfletched arrows, marked for "do" and "do not" [al-Ma'idah 5:3].

beneficial to the spirit and the body; He forbade them listening to instruments of diversion, the stringed and other instruments (المعازف والمثاني), and gave them in exchange listening to the Mighty Qur'an and the seven oft-repeated verses (السبع المثاني);[8] He forbade them the impure kinds of food, and gave them in exchange good foods. 18

Whoever observes this and reflects on it, finds it easy to leave ruinous desire and to take in exchange for it what is beneficial and profitable, and he knows the wisdom of Allah, His mercy, and the completeness of His favour to His servants in what He commanded them, forbade them and permitted them; and that He did not command them what He commanded out of need of them, nor forbid them what He forbade out of stinginess toward them, but commanded them what He commanded out of kindness and mercy from Him, and forbade them what He forbade as protection and safeguard for them. For this reason we composed this book in the manner of a treaty of peace between desire and reason; and when the treaty is complete between them, it becomes easy for the servant to fight the soul and Satan. And Allah is the One whose help is sought, and upon Him is reliance. Whatever in it is right is from Allah, who grants success in it and helps toward it; and whatever in it is a mistake is from me and from Satan, and Allah and His Messenger are free of it. 19

8 *Al-ma'azif*: instruments of music and play; *al-mathani*: the strings of the lute. *Al-sab' al-mathani*, "the seven oft-repeated verses" [al-Hijr 15:87], is Surat al-Fatihah: a play on the same word.

◆ *The names of love, and what love is* ◆

Since people's understanding of this thing named is greater, and it clings more to their hearts, its names among them are more numerous. This is their habit with everything for which understanding is intense, or which often comes to their hearts: out of esteem for it, or concern with it, or love for it. The first is like the lion and the sword; the second is like the calamity; and the third is like wine. All three of these meanings have come together in love, so they coined close to sixty names for it ... Other names have been mentioned for it which are not among its names, but are rather among its effects and its states, so we have left them out. 25

As for love (المحبة), it is said that its origin is purity (الصفاء), because the Arabs say of the purity of the whiteness of the teeth and their radiance: the habab of the teeth (حبب الأسنان). And it is said that it is taken from al-habab (الحباب), which is what rises upon the water in heavy rain; on this basis love is the boiling and surging of the heart when it is stirred to meet the beloved. And it is said that it is derived from clinging (اللزوم) and steadfastness (الثبات), and from it: "the camel ahabba" (أحب), when it kneels and does not rise. ... So it is as if the beloved clings to the lover's heart and it does not seek to move away from him. 27

And it is said: rather, it is taken from al-habb (الحب), which is a wide vessel in which a thing is put and it is filled by it so that it holds nothing else; likewise the heart of the lover has no room for anything other than his beloved. 28

As for what people have said in defining it, it is much. It is said: it is the constant inclination of the wandering heart. It is said: preferring the beloved over everything that accompanies one. It is said: agreement with the beloved in presence and absence. It is said: the union of the will of the lover and the will of the beloved. It is said: preferring the will of the beloved over the will of the lover. It is said: rendering service while maintaining reverence. It is said: counting the much from you as little for your beloved, and counting the little from him as much for you. It is said: the mention of the beloved gaining mastery over the lover's heart. It is said: its reality is that you give all of yourself to the one you love, so that nothing of you remains to you of yourself. It is said: it is that you wipe out of your heart whatever is besides the beloved. It is said: it is jealousy for the

beloved lest his sanctity be diminished, and jealousy over the heart lest anything besides him be in it. 31

It is said: it is the blindness of the heart to the sight of anything other than the beloved, and its deafness to hearing blame of him; and in the hadith: "Your love of a thing makes one blind and deaf." Al-Imam Ahmad narrated it.[9] 33

It is said: it is your inclining to the beloved with your whole self, then your preferring him over yourself, your soul and your wealth, then your agreeing with him in secret and in public, then your knowing your shortcoming in loving him.

It is said: it is stillness without agitation, and agitation without stillness: the heart is agitated, and finds stillness only in its beloved, and it is agitated out of yearning for him, and is still in his presence.

It is said: it is the constant companionship of the beloved, as it was said:

ومن عجب أني أحن إليهم ◆ وأسأل عنهم من لقيت وهم معي

How strange that I yearn for them, and ask whomever I see
about them, while they are with me.

It is a wonder that I yearn for them
and ask about them of everyone I meet, while they are with me

وتطلبهم عيني وهم في سوادها ◆ ويشتاقهم قلبي وهم بين أضلعي

My eye seeks them, though in its pupil they abide;
my heart longs for them, who between my ribs reside.

My eye seeks them while they are in its pupil
and my heart longs for them while they are between my ribs

9 Ahmad, *Musnad* (21694, 27548), and Abu Dawud (5130), from Abu al-Darda'. Abu Bakr ibn Abd Allah ibn Abi Maryam, in its chain, is weak.

◆ *Desire and passionate love* ◆

As for desire (الهوى): it is the inclination of the soul to a thing ... It is used mostly of blameworthy love, as Allah تعالى said: ﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ وَنَهَى ٱلنَّفْسَ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰ فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَنَّةَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ﴾ "But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge." [al-Nazi'at 79:40–41] It is said that it was named hawa only because it brings down (يهوي) its possessor. It may also be used of praiseworthy love, in a restricted usage. From this is the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: "None of you believes until his desire follows what I have brought."[10] 37

And in *al-Sunan*, a Bedouin said to the Prophet ﷺ: I have come to ask you about desire (الهوى). He said: "A man is with the one he loves."[11] 38

As for passionate love (العشق): it is the commander of these names and their anchor. ... This word does not occur in the Qur'an, nor in the Sunnah, except in the hadith of Suwayd ibn Sa'id,[12] and we shall speak on it, if Allah تعالى wills. 43

People have differed whether this name is applied to Allah تعالى. A group of the Sufis said: there is no harm in applying it, and they mentioned a report about it which is not established, in which is: "So when he does that, he loves me passionately and I love him passionately."[13] 45

And the majority of people said: that is not applied to Him سبحانه, so it is not said that He loves passionately, nor is it said: His servant loves Him passionately.

Then they differed on the reason for the prohibition in three views: 46

The first: the absence of textual authorisation, unlike love (المحبة).[14]

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10 Ibn Abi Asim, *al-Sunnah* (15), from Abd Allah ibn Amr. Al-Nawawi calls it hasan sahih; Ibn Rajab holds that its authentication is very far-fetched.

11 Al-Tirmidhi (3536), al-Nasa'i in *al-Sunan al-Kubra* and Ahmad, from Safwan ibn Assal al-Muradi; the Arabic editor says its chain is hasan.

12 Suwayd ibn Sa'id al-Hadathani (d. 240 AH) narrated the hadith "Whoever loves passionately, remains chaste, conceals it and dies, dies a martyr". The author takes it up later in the book and judges it false against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

13 These words are a report from Abd al-Wahid ibn Zayd (d. c. 177 AH), the Basran ascetic, added to the well-known hadith qudsi «لا يزال عبدي يتقرب إلي بالنوافل...» (al-Bukhari, 6502).

14 *Al-tawqif*: the principle that Allah's names and attributes are known only from revelation, so that a word not found in the Qur'an or the Sunnah is not applied to Him.

The second: that passionate love (العشق) is excess of love, and that is not possible with regard to the Lord تعالى, for Allah تعالى is not described as being excessive in a thing, and His servant does not reach what He deserves of His love, let alone it being said: he was excessive in loving Him.

The third: that it is taken from change, as the plant mentioned is called ashiqah (عاشقة), and that is not applied to Allah سبحانه.

◆ *Yearning, and the sadness that goes with love* ◆

As for yearning (الشوق): it is the journey of the heart to the beloved. This name has occurred in the Sunnah. In *al-Musnad*, from the hadith of Ammar ibn Yasir, that he prayed a prayer and made it brief, and it was said to him: You made it brief, O Abu al-Yaqzan! He said: I made in it supplications which I heard from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ supplicating with: "O Allah, by Your knowledge of the unseen and Your power over creation, keep me alive as long as life is better for me, and cause me to die when death is better for me. I ask You for fear of You in the unseen and the witnessed, and I ask You for the word of truth in anger and in contentment, and I ask You for moderation in poverty and in wealth, and I ask You for bliss that does not run out, and I ask You for the coolness of the eye that is not cut off, and I ask You for contentment after the decree, and I ask You for the coolness of life after death, and I ask You for the pleasure of looking at Your Face and for yearning (الشوق) for meeting You, in no harm that harms and no trial that misleads. O Allah, adorn us with the adornment of faith, and make us guides, rightly guided."[15] 48

The people of yearning differed: does yearning cease with union or increase? One group said: it ceases, for yearning is the journey of the heart to the beloved, so when it reaches him the journey ends. 51

They said: and because yearning is only for one absent, it has no meaning with presence; for this reason it is said only to the absent: I am yearning for you, whereas one who has always been present with the lover is not described as yearned for. Another group said: rather, it increases with nearness and meeting, and they argued from the saying of the poet:

وأعظم ما يكون الشوق يوما ◆ إذا دنت الخيام من الخيام

And the greatest that yearning ever presents
is on the day when the tents draw near to the tents.

And the greatest that yearning will ever be on a day
is when the tents draw near to the tents

15 Ahmad (18325), Ibn Hibban (1971) and al-Nasa'i (1305), from Ammar ibn Yasir; the Arabic editor says its chain is hasan.

They said: and because yearning is the burning of love and the blazing of its fire in the lover's heart, and that is something nearness and continued union increase.

The correct view is that the yearning that arises at meeting and union is not the same kind as that which was during absence from the lover. 52

As for sadness (الحزن): it has been counted among the names of love, but the correct view is that it is not among its names; rather it is a state that occurs to the lover, which is the coming of what is disliked upon him, and it is the opposite of gladness. And since love is never free of the coming of what does not please upon the lover's heart, sadness is among its necessary accompaniments. And in the sound hadith: that the Prophet ﷺ used to say: "O Allah, I seek refuge in You from worry (الهم) and sadness (الحزن), incapacity and laziness, cowardice and miserliness, the burden of debt and the domination of men."[16] 61

So he ﷺ sought refuge from eight things, each two of which are a pair. Worry and sadness are a pair, for the coming of what is disliked upon the heart: if it concerns what has passed, it is sadness, and if it concerns what is to come, it is worry. ... And Allah سبحانه has negated fear and sadness for the people of Paradise, so they do not grieve over what has passed, nor fear what is to come, and life is not good except by that; and love necessarily carries fear and sadness with it.

16 Al-Bukhari (6369) and Muslim (2706), from Anas ibn Malik.

◆ *Affection and intimate friendship* ◆

As for affection (الود): it is the purest of love, its subtlest and gentlest; it stands to love as compassion (الرأفة) stands to mercy (الرحمة). [74]

I say: al-wadud (الودود) is among the attributes of Allah سبحانه وتعالى, and its origin is from al-mawaddah (المودة); and there are two views on it: [75]

It is said: it is wadud (ودود) in the sense of wadd (واد) ... And it is said: rather, it is in the sense of mawdud (مودود), and that is the beloved (الحبيب), and with this al-Bukhari explained it in his *Sahih*, saying: al-wadud (الودود): the beloved (الحبيب).[17]

The first is clearer, because of its being joined with al-Ghafur in His saying: ﴿وَهُوَ ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلْوَدُودُ﴾ "And He is the Forgiving, the Affectionate" [al-Buruj 85:14], and with al-Rahim in His saying: ﴿إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ﴾ "Indeed, my Lord is Merciful and Affectionate." [Hud 11:90] and in it is a subtle secret, that He loves His servant after forgiveness, so He forgives him and loves him, as He said: ﴿إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلتَّوَّٰبِينَ﴾ "Indeed, Allāh loves those who are constantly repentant" [al-Baqarah 2:222], so the one who repents is the beloved of Allah. So affection (الود) is the purest of love and its gentlest.

As for intimate friendship (الخلة): it is the singling out of love (توحيد المحبة); so the khalil (الخليل) is the one who singles out his love for his beloved, and it is a rank that does not accept sharing; for this reason the two khalils, Ibrahim and Muhammad, صلوات الله وسلامه عليهما, were specially given it in the world, as Allah تعالى said: ﴿وَٱتَّخَذَ ٱللَّهُ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ خَلِيلًا﴾ "And Allāh took Abraham as an intimate friend." [al-Nisa' 4:125] And it is authentically reported from the Prophet ﷺ that he said: "Allah has taken me as an intimate friend (خليلا), as He took Ibrahim as an intimate friend."[18] [76]

And in the *Sahih*, from him ﷺ: "Had I been taking an intimate friend from the people of the earth, I would have taken Abu Bakr as an intimate friend. But your companion is the intimate friend of al-Rahman."[19]

And since khullah (الخلة) is a rank that does not accept sharing, Allah سبحانه tested Ibrahim al-Khalil with the slaughter of his son when a

17 In al-Bukhari's *Sahih*, in the commentary on Surat al-Buruj.

18 Muslim (532), from Jundub ibn Abd Allah.

19 Muslim (2383), from Ibn Mas'ud.

branch of his heart had taken hold of him; so He سبحانه wished to make that branch pure for Him, and for it not to be for another, so He tested him with the slaughter of his son, and what was meant was his slaughtering him in his heart, not slaughtering him with the knife. So when the two submitted to the command of Allah, and he put love of Allah تعالى before love of the child, the station of khullah became pure, and the child was ransomed from the slaughter.

Some who have no knowledge supposed that the beloved (الحبيب) is better than the intimate friend (الخليل), and said: Muhammad is the beloved of Allah, and Ibrahim is the intimate friend of Allah. This is false in many respects: 78

Among them: that khullah is specific, while love is general, for Allah loves those who repent, and loves those who purify themselves, and He said of His believing servants: ﴿يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُۥٓ﴾ "a people He will love and who will love Him" [al-Ma'idah 5:54].

And among them: that the Prophet ﷺ denied that he had an intimate friend among the people of the earth, and he informed that the most beloved of women to him was Aishah, and of men her father.[20]

And among them: that he said: "Had I been taking an intimate friend from the people of the earth, I would have taken Abu Bakr as an intimate friend, but the brotherhood of Islam and its affection."[21] 79

20 Al-Bukhari (3662) and Muslim (2384), from Amr ibn al-As.

21 Al-Bukhari (3654, 3657) and Muslim (2382), from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri.

◆ *The love of servitude* ◆

As for enthralment (التعبد): it is the utmost of love with the utmost of humility; it is said: abbadahu al-hubb (عبده الحب), that is: it humbled him. And a road mu'abbad (معبد) by feet, that is: made smooth; and likewise the lover, love has humbled him and trodden upon him. This rank is not fit for anyone but Allah عز وجل; and Allah سبحانه does not forgive one who associates others with Him in His worship, and forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. [83]

So the love of servitude is the noblest kind of love, and it is the pure right of Allah over His servants. In the *Sahih*, from Mu'adh, that he said: I was travelling with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and he said: "O Mu'adh!" I said: At your service, O Messenger of Allah, and happy to serve! He said: Then he travelled for a while, then he said: "O Mu'adh!" I said: At your service, Messenger of Allah, and happy to serve! Then he travelled for a while and said: "O Mu'adh!" I said: At your service, Messenger of Allah, and happy to serve! He said: "Do you know what is the right of Allah over His servants?" I said: Allah and His Messenger know best. He said: "His right over them is that they worship Him and associate nothing with Him. Do you know what is the right of the servants over Allah when they do that? That He not punish them with the Fire."[22] And Allah سبحانه mentioned His Messenger by servitude in his noblest stations, and they are the station of the challenge, the station of the night journey, and the station of the call. He said in the challenge: ﴿وَإِن كُنتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا۟ بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِۦ﴾ "And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down [i.e., the Qur'ān] upon Our Servant [i.e., Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)], then produce a sūrah the like thereof" [al-Baqarah 2:23], and He said in the station of the night journey: ﴿سُبْحَـٰنَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِۦ لَيْلًا مِّنَ ٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْحَرَامِ﴾ "Exalted is He who took His Servant [i.e., Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)] by night from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām" [al-Isra' 17:1], and He said in the station of the call: ﴿وَأَنَّهُۥ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ ٱللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ﴾ "And that when the Servant [i.e., Prophet] of Allāh stood up supplicating Him," [al-Jinn 72:19]. And when those of firm resolve pass the greatest intercession from one to another on the Day of Resurrection,

22 Al-Bukhari (6267, 6500) and Muslim (30), from Mu'adh ibn Jabal.

al-Masih says to them: “Go to Muhammad, a servant whom Allah has forgiven what came before of his sin and what came after,”[23] so he attained that station by the perfection of servitude to Allah and the perfection of Allah's forgiveness of him. So the noblest attribute of the servant is the attribute of servitude, and the most beloved of his names to Allah is the name of servitude, as it is established from the Prophet ﷺ that he said: “The most beloved of names to Allah are Abd Allah and Abd al-Rahman, the truest of them are Harith and Hammam, and the ugliest of them are Harb and Murrah.”[24] 84

23 Part of the hadith of the great intercession: al-Bukhari (7410) and Muslim (193), from Anas.

24 The first part, "the most beloved of names...", is in Muslim (2132), from Ibn Umar. The whole is in Abu Dawud (4950) and al-Bukhari's *al-Adab al-Mufrad* (814), from Abu Wahb al-Jushami; the Arabic editor notes that Abu Wahb was not a Companion, so that his report from the Prophet ﷺ is *mursal*.

◆ *Every motion springs from love* ◆

This is a noble chapter, among the noblest chapters of the book, and before establishing it an introduction must be given, namely that motions are three: voluntary motion, natural motion and forced motion.[25] ... When this is established, voluntary motion follows the will of the moving thing, and the thing willed is either willed for itself or for another, and what is willed for another must end in something willed for itself, to avert circularity and infinite regress. And the will is either to bring benefit and pleasure, whether to the moving thing or to another, or to ward off pain and harm, whether from the moving thing or from another; and the man of reason does not bring benefit to another or ward off harm from him except for the pleasure and the warding off of pain he himself has in that. So his voluntary motion becomes dependent on his love; indeed, this is the rule of every living moving thing. 88

As for natural motion, it is the motion of a thing to its resting place and its centre, and that follows the motion which required its leaving its centre, and that is forced motion, which occurs only through the compulsion of a compeller who took it out of its centre, either by his choice, like the motion of a stone downward when it is thrown upward, or without the choice of its mover, like the winds' moving of bodies in the direction of their blowing. This motion follows the compeller, and the compeller's motion is not from himself but its origin is from another; for the angels are entrusted with the upper and the lower world, directing it by the command of Allah عز وجل, as Allah تعالى said: ﴿فَٱلْمُدَبِّرَٰتِ أَمْرًا﴾ "And those who arrange [each] matter" [al-Nazi'at 79:5], and He said: ﴿فَٱلْمُقَسِّمَٰتِ أَمْرًا﴾ "And the [angels] apportioning [each] matter" [al-Dhariyat 51:4]. 89

Allah سبحانه has entrusted the spheres, the sun and the moon to angels who move them, and has entrusted the winds to angels who direct them by His command; they are its keepers. Allah تعالى said: ﴿وَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَأُهْلِكُوا۟ بِرِيحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ﴾ "And as for ʿAad, they were destroyed by a screaming, violent wind" [al-Haqqah 69:6]. 90

He has entrusted the rain to angels, and the clouds to angels who drive

25 A division taken from Aristotelian physics as the philosophers and the theologians received it: a body's natural motion is toward its proper place, its "centre", and any motion away from it is forced.

them to where they are commanded.

It is established in the *Sahih* from the Prophet ﷺ that he said: "While a man was in an open stretch of land, he heard a voice in a cloud saying: Water the garden of so-and-so. The cloud moved on until it came to a garden and poured out its water in it. He looked, and there was a man in the garden turning the water with his spade. He said to him: What is your name, O servant of Allah? He said: So-and-so - the name that he had heard in the cloud. He said: I heard someone saying in this cloud: Water the garden of so-and-so. What do you do in this garden? He said: I look at what comes out of it, and I make it three thirds: a third I give as charity, a third I spend on my family, and a third I return to it."[26]

26 Muslim (2984), from Abu Hurayrah.

◆ *Love and will, the root of every act* ◆

So the affair of the upper and the lower world, of Paradise and the Fire, is by the directing of the angels, by the permission of their Lord تبارك وتعالى and His command: ﴿لَا يَسۡبِقُونَهُۥ بِٱلۡقَوۡلِ وَهُم بِأَمۡرِهِۦ يَعۡمَلُونَ﴾ "They cannot precede Him in word, and they act by His command." [al-Anbiya' 21:27] and ﴿لَّا يَعۡصُونَ ٱللَّهَ مَآ أَمَرَهُمۡ وَيَفۡعَلُونَ مَا يُؤۡمَرُونَ﴾ "they do not disobey Allāh in what He commands them but do what they are commanded." [al-Tahrim 66:6] 92

For this reason belief in the angels is one of the pillars of faith without which it is not complete, and they are five: belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day.[27] And when that is known, it is known that every motion in the world has the angels as its cause, and their motion is obedience to Allah by His command and His will; so the whole matter returns to the carrying out of the will of the Lord - تعالى - legislatively and by decree,[28] and the angels are those who carry that out by His command ... The point is that the motions of the spheres and what they contain follow voluntary motion, which necessarily implies love; so love and will are the origin of every action and its beginning, and no action is except from love and will, even his repelling of things he hates and dislikes, for he repels them only by his will and his love for their opposites, and the pleasure he finds in the repelling, as it is said: he healed his rage, and he healed his breast; and healing and well-being come by the beloved, even if it is disliked, such as drinking the medicine by which the pain of illness is repelled; for even if it is disliked in one respect, it is beloved, because of the removal of what is disliked and the attainment of what is loved in it. Likewise the doing of things that oppose desire: even if they are disliked, they are done only out of love and will, and even if they are not loved for themselves, they necessarily imply what is loved for itself. So a living being does not leave what he loves and desires except for what he loves and desires, but he leaves the weaker of the two in love for the stronger of them in love; for this reason love and will were the origin of hatred and dislike, for the

27 In the hadith of Jibril (Muslim, 8) the articles of faith are six, belief in the decree (*al-qadar*) being added.

28 The legislative will (*shar'an*) is what He commands and loves in the religion; the will of decree (*qadaran*) is what He brings about in creation, whether He loves it or not.

hated, disliked thing is contrary to the existence of the beloved, and the action either deals with the existence of the beloved or the repelling of the disliked that implies the existence of the beloved; so the action as a whole returns to the existence of the beloved.

◆ *The truth for which creation was made* ◆

And voluntary motion has its origin in will, while forced and natural motion follow it, so the matter returns to voluntary motion. So all the motions of the upper and the lower world follow will and love, and by it the world moved and for its sake; so it is the efficient and the final cause,[29] indeed it is that by which and for which the world came to exist. So no motion moves in the upper and the lower world except that love is its cause and its end; indeed, the reality of love is the motion of the lover's soul toward his beloved, so love is motion without rest. 94

And the perfection of love is servitude, humility, submission and obedience to the beloved, and it is the truth by which and for which the heavens and the earth, this world and the Hereafter were created. Allah تعالى said: ﴿وَمَا خَلَقْنَا ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَآ إِلَّا بِٱلْحَقِّ﴾ "And We have not created the heavens and earth and that between them except in truth." [al-Hijr 15:85] and He said: ﴿وَمَا خَلَقْنَا ٱلسَّمَآءَ وَٱلْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَـٰطِلًا﴾ "And We did not create the heaven and the earth and that between them aimlessly." [Sad 38:27] and He said: ﴿أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَـٰكُمْ عَبَثًا﴾ "Then did you think that We created you uselessly" [al-Mu'minun 23:115].

And the truth by which and for which creation was created is the worship of Allah alone, which is the perfection of love for Him and submission and humility to Him, and what servitude to Him necessarily involves, of command and prohibition, reward and punishment; and for that reason He sent the messengers, sent down the books, and created Paradise and the Fire.

And the heavens and the earth stand only by justice, which is the path of Allah upon which He is, and it is the most beloved of things to Him. Allah تعالى said, relating of His prophet Shu'ayb عليه السلام:[30] ﴿إِنِّى تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ رَبِّى وَرَبِّكُم مَّا مِن دَآبَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ ءَاخِذٌۢ بِنَاصِيَتِهَآ إِنَّ رَبِّى عَلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ﴾ "Indeed, I have relied upon Allāh, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature but that He holds it by its forelock [i.e., controls it]. Indeed, my Lord is on a path [that is] straight." [Hud 11:56] So He is on a

29 The efficient cause is what produces a thing; the final cause is that for the sake of which it is produced.

30 The print has «شعيب»; the verse [Hud 11:56] is the speech of Hud عليه السلام, not Shu'ayb.

straight path in His legislation and His decree, and it is the justice by which creation and command, reward and punishment appeared. And it is the truth by which and for which the heavens and the earth and what is between them were created; and for this the believers said in their supplication: ﴿رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَـٰذَا بَـٰطِلًا سُبْحَـٰنَكَ﴾ "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]" [Al Imran 3:191], so they declared their Lord سبحانه far above having created the heavens and the earth in vain, without wisdom or a praiseworthy end; and He سبحانه is praised for these praiseworthy ends, as He is praised for His essence and His attributes; so the praiseworthy ends in His actions are the wisdom that He loves and is pleased with.

◆ *The test: His command and His decree* ◆

And He created what He dislikes because it necessarily implies what He loves, and the ordering of what He loves upon it; and likewise He سبحانه refrains from doing some of what He loves, because of what follows from it of the loss of a beloved greater to Him than it, or the occurrence of a disliked thing more disliked by Him than that beloved. This is as He held back the hearts of His enemies from faith in Him and obedience to Him, because He dislikes their acts of obedience, and by them is lost what is more beloved to Him than them, namely the striving against them, and what follows from it of allegiance for His sake and enmity for His sake, and His friends' giving of their souls for Him, and their preferring His love and His pleasure over their souls; and for this He created death and life, and made what is on the earth an adornment for it. Allah تعالى said: ﴿ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلْمَوْتَ وَٱلْحَيَوٰةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا﴾ "[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed" [al-Mulk 67:2] and He said: ﴿إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا﴾ "Indeed, We have made that which is on the earth adornment for it that We may test them [as to] which of them is best in deed." [al-Kahf 18:7] and Allah تعالى said: ﴿وَهُوَ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ فِى سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُۥ عَلَى ٱلْمَآءِ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا﴾ "And it is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days - and His Throne had been upon water - that He might test you as to which of you is best in deed." [Hud 11:7] So He سبحانه informed, about the creation of the world, death and life, and the adorning of the earth with what is on it, that it is for trial and testing, to test His creation as to which of them is best in deed, so that his deed accords with what the Lord تعالى loves, and so accords with the end for which He created him and for the sake of which He created the world, and that is servitude to Him, which includes love for Him and obedience to Him; and it is the best deed, and it is among the consequences of His love and His pleasure; and He سبحانه decreed decrees that oppose it, by His wisdom in decreeing them, and tested His creation between His command and His decree,[31] to test them as to which of them is best in deed. 95

31 His command (*al-amr*) is what He enjoins and loves; His decree (*al-qadar*) is what He ordains to happen.

So creation was divided in this trial into two groups: one group who turned with His commands and what He loves, and stopped where the command made them stop, and moved where the command moved them, and applied the command to the decree, and boarded the ship of the command in the sea of the decree, and made the command judge over the decree, and contended with the decree by the decree, in compliance with His command and following His good pleasure; these are the ones who are saved. [96]

◆ *The second group, and its four kinds* ◆

And the second group set the command against the decree, and what He loves and is pleased with against what He decreed and ordained, and then they split into four groups: 97

A group denied the decree, in order to safeguard the command, so it invalidated the command at the very point at which it safeguarded the decree; for belief in the decree is the foundation of belief in the command, and it is the order of tawhid, so whoever denies the decree, his denial breaks his faith.

And a group rejected the command by the decree, and these are among the most disbelieving of people, and they are those whose saying Allah related in the Qur'an when they said: ﴿لَوْ شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ مَآ أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَآ ءَابَآؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَّمْنَا مِن شَىْءٍ﴾ "If Allāh had willed, we would not have associated [anything] and neither would our fathers, nor would we have prohibited anything." [al-An'am 6:148] ... So Allah سبحانه made them by this deniers, conjecturers, with no knowledge, and informed that they are in clear error.

And a group turned with the decree, so it travelled with its course and alighted with its alighting, and made it its religion, and did not care whether it agreed with the command or opposed it; rather its religion is the decree. So the lawful is what is allowed to its hand by decree, and the unlawful is what it is forbidden by decree; and they are with whoever prevails by decree, of Muslim or disbeliever, righteous or wicked. And the elite of these and their worshippers, when they witnessed the reality of the cosmic, decreed order, went over to the disbelievers who are given power by decree, and became their protectors; so these also are disbelievers.

And a group stopped with the decree while acknowledging that it is contrary to the command, and did not take it as a religion, but gave themselves up to it, and did not make the command judge over it, and were unable to repel the decree by the decree in following the command; so these are negligent, and they are between the incapable and the disobedient to Allah. And all these groups follow their shaykh Iblis, for he was the first to put the decree before the command and set it against it, and said: ﴿رَبِّ بِمَآ أَغْوَيْتَنِى لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ﴾ "My Lord, because You have put me in error, I will surely make [disobedience]

attractive to them [i.e., mankind] on earth, and I will mislead them all" [al-Hijr 15:39]. ... So he rejected the command of Allah by His decree, and argued against his Lord by the decree. And his followers were divided into four groups as you have seen. [98]

So Allah sent the messengers with the command, and commanded them to fight the people of the decree with it, and legislated for them from His command ships, and commanded them to board them, they and their followers, in the sea of the decree, and singled out for salvation whoever boarded them, as He singled out for salvation the people of the ship, and made that a sign for the worlds.

So the people of the command are at war with the people of the decree until they return them to the command, and the people of the decree fight the people of the command until they bring them out of it; so the messengers' religion is the command, with their belief in the decree and making the command judge over it, while Iblis and his followers' religion is the decree and repelling the command by it. So reflect on this question of the decree and the command, and the division of the world in it into these five divisions. And with Allah is success. [99]

◆ *What He loves, and the praise of all creation* ◆

So the motions of the upper and the lower world and what is in them accord with the command: either the religious command that Allah loves and is pleased with, or the cosmic command that He decreed and ordained; and He سبحانه did not decree it in vain, nor ordain it uselessly, but for the wisdoms and praiseworthy ends He has in it, and what follows from it of matters whose ends He loves even if He dislikes their causes and beginnings. For He سبحانه وتعالى loves forgiveness, even if He dislikes His servants' acts of disobedience; He loves concealment, even if He dislikes what He conceals for His servant; He loves emancipation, even if He dislikes the cause by which He frees him from the Fire; He loves pardon, as in the hadith: "O Allah, You are Pardoning, You love pardon, so pardon me",[32] even if He dislikes the burdens of sin He pardons; He loves those who repent and their repentance, even if He dislikes their acts of disobedience from which they repent to Him; and He loves jihad and its people, indeed they are the most beloved of His creation to Him, even if He dislikes the deeds of those they fight.

This is a subject for which many volumes would be too narrow, and the discerning enters it by its door. And the secret of this chapter: that He سبحانه is perfect in His names and attributes, so He has absolute perfection in every respect, with no deficiency in any way; and He loves His names and attributes, and loves the appearance of their effects in His creation, for that is among what follows from His perfection. For He سبحانه is Odd and loves the odd;[33] Beautiful and loves beauty;[34] All-Knowing and loves the knowledgeable; Generous and loves the generous; Strong, and the strong believer is more beloved to Him than the weak believer;[35] Modest and loves the people of modesty;[36] Faithful and loves the people of faithfulness; Grateful and loves the grateful; Truthful and loves the

32 Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi (3513), al-Nasa'i in *al-Sunan al-Kubra* (7665) and Ibn Majah (3850), from Aishah; al-Hakim calls it sahih.

33 Al-Bukhari (6410) and Muslim (2677), from Abu Hurayrah: "Allah is odd (*witr*) and loves the odd."

34 Muslim (91), from Ibn Mas'ud.

35 Muslim (2664), from Abu Hurayrah.

36 Ahmad, Abu Dawud (4012) and al-Nasa'i, from Ya'la ibn Umayyah.

truthful; Good-doing and loves those who do good. [100]

So when He loves pardon, forgiveness, forbearance, overlooking and concealment, there could not but be His decreeing of the causes in which the effects of these attributes appear, and by which His servants take evidence for the perfection of His names and attributes, and that is more apt to bring them to love Him, praise Him, glorify Him and extol Him as He deserves; so the end for which creation was created is attained, and even if it is lost from some of them, that loss is a cause of its perfection and its appearance; so that disliked loss includes a matter more beloved to Him than its absence. So reflect on this point with due reflection.

And this will be uncovered on the Day of Resurrection for all creation together, when He gathers them in one plain, and brings to every soul what it is fit to bring to it of good and evil, pleasure and pain, down to the weight of an atom, and brings every soul to its ends, for which it itself testifies that it is more deserving of them. Then the whole of creation will speak His praise تبارك وتعالى, in word and in state, as He سبحانه وتعالى said: ﴿وَتَرَى ٱلْمَلَـٰٓئِكَةَ حَآفِّينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ ٱلْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَقُضِىَ بَيْنَهُم بِٱلْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَـٰلَمِينَ﴾ “And you will see the angels surrounding the Throne, exalting [Allāh] with praise of their Lord. And it will be judged between them in truth, and it will be said, "[All] praise to Allāh, Lord of the worlds."” [al-Zumar 39:75] So the doer of the saying is omitted because he is not specified; rather everyone praises Him for that judgement which He judged, so the people of the heavens and the people of the earth praise Him, the righteous and the wicked, men and jinn, even the people of the Fire. [101]

Al-Hasan or another said: They entered the Fire while His praise was in their hearts; they found no way against Him. And this - and Allah knows best - is the secret for which the doer was omitted in His saying: ﴿قِيلَ ٱدْخُلُوٓاْ أَبْوَٰبَ جَهَنَّمَ خَـٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا﴾ “[To them] it will be said, "Enter the gates of Hell to abide eternally therein” [al-Zumar 39:72], and His saying: ﴿وَقِيلَ ٱدْخُلَا ٱلنَّارَ مَعَ ٱلدَّٰخِلِينَ﴾ “and it was said, "Enter the Fire with those who enter."” [al-Tahrim 66:10] as if all of creation spoke it and said it to them. And Allah knows best what is right.

Glossary

hadith qudsi: a saying of the Prophet ﷺ in which he relates the words of Allah.

hasan: "good"; a grade of hadith just below sahih.

hawa: desire; as a name of love, passion.

istikharah: the prayer of seeking guidance.

jihad: striving and fighting in the path of Allah.

khalil: the intimate friend; **khullah**: intimate friendship.

al-Masih: the Messiah, Isa ibn Maryam عليه السلام.

mursal: a report in which a Successor relates from the Prophet ﷺ without naming the Companion.

sahih: "sound"; the highest grade of hadith.

the Salaf: the early generations of Muslims.

tawhid: the affirmation of the oneness of Allah.

al-wadud: the Affectionate, one of the names of Allah.



This booklet is a selection, in Ibn al-Qayyim's own words, from the complete English translation of *Rawdat al-Muhibbin wa-Nuzhat al-Mushtaqin*. Omissions within a passage are shown by "…". The small numbers after the paragraphs give the page of the complete translation, where the full text, its sources and its notes may be found.

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